

Memo

To: Members of Council

From: Rebecca Brookes, Corporate Strategy Program Advisor
Strategy, Policy and Communications

CC: EMT
Vicki Tytaneck, Town Clerk

Date: June 20, 2022

Subject: Truth and Reconciliation

Comments

This memo provides an update on the motion related to Truth and Reconciliation from the Council meeting of September 28, 2021.

Motion

The motion reads:

WHEREAS the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its final report on June 2, 2015, which included 94 Calls to Action to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation;

AND WHEREAS the recent discoveries of remains and unmarked graves across Canada have led to increased calls for all levels of government to address the recommendations in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action;

AND WHEREAS all Canadians and all orders of government have a role to play in reconciliation including eight specific recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for municipalities to consider;

AND WHEREAS Recommendation #80 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission called upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process;

AND WHEREAS the Federal Government has announced September 30th, 2021, as the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (National Orange Shirt Day) and a statutory holiday;

AND WHEREAS the Town of Oakville's Culture Plan and Special Events Strategy commits to supporting Indigenous culture resurgence through creating meaningful experiences for the community to learn about Indigenous history, culture and the impacts of colonialism to define a reconciled future.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the Town of Oakville does hereby commit to recognizing September 30th, 2021, as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (National Orange Shirt Day) and encourages residents to participate in the full program of activities such as wearing an orange shirt to raise awareness about the intergenerational impact and trauma of residential schools, take guided and self-directed walks on our Moccasin Trails to learn about the history of the lands from an Indigenous perspective, enjoy Indigenous performances at the Oakville Centre of the Performing Arts and watch Indigenous films, as well as read books about Indigenous history recommended by the Oakville Public Library;

AND FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED THAT staff review the eight recommendations by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission pertaining to municipal responsibilities and report back to Council with a proposed call to action, where appropriate;

AND THAT an orange crosswalk be installed to commemorate all Indigenous children, and demonstrate the Town's ongoing commitment to an inclusive community including our local Indigenous community, and staff report back to Council on the funding and implementation plan;

AND THAT Council direct staff to explore opportunities for future initiatives and partnerships in consultation with our Indigenous community members and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, to commemorate all Indigenous children, support cultural resurgence and recognize our local Indigenous community.

Town commitment and update on Truth and Reconciliation:

Staff has been building and strengthening the town's relationship with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) whose Treaty Lands and traditional territory spans from Toronto to Niagara and includes 67 municipalities as well as with the urban Indigenous community in Halton.

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, September 30

As Council is aware, the town recognized September 30, 2021 as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. To raise awareness about the intergenerational impact and trauma of residential schools, staff hosted a number of performances and activities for residents to participate in during the month of September. Some of the activities

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included: guided and self-directed walks on our Moccasin Trails with members of our Indigenous community, performances at the Oakville Centre of the Performing Arts by Indigenous artists, Indigenous films presented in association with Indigenous community leaders, Oakville Public Library (OPL) and other community partners, as well as recommending books by Indigenous authors and about Indigenous history offered through the OPL.

In addition to activities offered throughout September, the Every Child Matters orange flag was flown at half-mast at Town Hall from September 1-30, and during the week of September 27, Town Hall and the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts were lit in orange. Full-time staff were also granted a floater day in recognition of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

For 2022, the Every Child Matters orange flag will again be flown at half-mast at Town Hall from September 1-30, and during the week of September 26, Town Hall and the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts will be lit in orange. There will be activities offered throughout the month of September and a concert is being planned for September 30 at the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts in collaboration with the Indigenous community. September 30 will be recognized by the town and OPL as a statutory holiday with town recreation facilities staying open to offer programming to the community. For others, it will allow time to reflect on the residential school experience and our shared commitment to truth and reconciliation.

Orange crosswalk

Staff has been working with the MCFN to install Oakville's first orange-painted crosswalk in June, to align with Indigenous History Month.

A solid orange crosswalk bordered by white lines (for safety) has been installed at the intersection of Thomas St. and Church St. This site was chosen in consultation with the MCFN based on its proximity to the downtown where there is high foot and vehicular travel, as well as its proximity to town cultural facilities including the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts, the OPL and Oakville Museum.

Accompanying the crosswalk will be an interpretative sign and traffic cabinet wrap with the four moccasins representing the Indigenous linguistic groups in this region which are Huron-Wendat (east), Cree (north), Anishinaabe (south), and Seneca (west). The moccasins are already used in Oakville as part of the Moccasin Identifier project.

Staff also consulted with the town's Accessibility Advisory Committee to ensure accessibility was considered in the design, location and specifics of the site. The Halton local municipalities have been in contact to ensure there is consistency in any orange crosswalk undertakings across our municipalities.

Staff has submitted a grant application to the Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Tourism Association to fund the vinyl traffic cabinet wrapping and crosswalk programming which will include a heritage walk. We anticipate a response in June.

The unveiling ceremony will be on June 22 at 10 a.m. (rain date June 23 at 10 a.m.). An invite has been sent to Council with the details, should you wish to participate. The crosswalk is a wonderful way to demonstrate the town's commitment to reconciliation and awareness in a visual way.

Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its final report: [Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future](#) in 2015, which details the experiences, trauma and impacts of the residential school system and outlines 94 Calls to Action to forward reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.

The 94 Calls to Action are directed at:

- Federal, provincial, municipal and Indigenous governments
- Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities
- Post-secondary institutions
- Health care institutions
- Faith-based institutions
- Media organizations, and
- Members of the corporate sector.

Thirteen of the Calls to Action apply to municipalities, either specifically or through a call to “all levels of government”. While 13 apply to municipalities, it is incumbent on us to explore how each of the 94 might have some municipal applicability or to otherwise examine what role the town can play to advance progress with other levels of government. The process of reconciliation involves reconsidering many of the standard practices which govern municipal processes and hearing truths which are uncomfortable and challenging. It is in taking these actions that the town will continue to honour and respect the Treaties which were signed for the land, the Indigenous Peoples who have lived here, and the process of reconciliation.

Staff has been building relationships with the Indigenous community who live in Halton and the MCFN who are the land treaty holders. The town has led or participated in a number of initiatives and activities to support the broad Indigenous community to advance reconciliation. The attached document, Appendix A, is a listing of the various initiatives by the town and the OPL, listed by 21 relevant Calls to Action.

Projects the town worked on with the MCFN include:

- Truth and reconciliation crosswalk (June 2022): installation of an orange crosswalk in the downtown core to honour the children and families of the

residential school system as well as learn more about the treaty lands we are on and Indigenous culture.

- Debwewin “the Oakville truth” project (2021-2022): is an MCFN and Oakville Community Foundation project. The sign procurement and installation was in partnership with the town, of about 20 signs in town parks in spring and summer 2022 to further the community’s shared understanding of Oakville’s Indigenous past and support local truth and reconciliation.
- Proclamation (2022): by the Mayor on February 28, 2022, to honour the 202nd anniversary of the signing of Treaty 22 at the Oakville Museum’s Erchless Estate. MCFN Gimaa Laforme and Indigenous Knowledge Guide Stephen Paquette spoke to mark the occasion.
- Moccasin Identifier and Indigenous history wall (2019): at Tannery Park, the [Moccasin Identifier](#) and outdoor classroom gathering circle were installed to promote awareness of the significant cultural historic sites and the ancestral presence of First Nations, Métis and Indigenous communities.
- MCFN permanent flag (2019): At Town Hall, the flag of the MCFN is permanently flown alongside the national, provincial and municipal flag. Town Hall also features Canoe Garden, a special ArtHouse partnership with Halton Environment Network.
- Moccasin Trails (2017): along Bronte Creek Heritage Trail and along Sixteen Mile Creek Inner Valley to Dundas Street West at Lions Valley.

Projects the town worked on with the urban Indigenous community in Oakville include:

- Indigenous room names (2021): five meeting rooms at Town Hall were renamed to honour the Indigenous land and territory where Oakville resides. This was done to embrace a meaningful connection to Indigenous languages and teach and preserve them.
- Land acknowledgment plaques (2021): permanent plaques with a land acknowledgement were installed in prominent areas at Town Hall and all our community centres to acknowledge the appreciation and gratitude we carry for the enduring presence and deep traditional knowledge, laws and philosophies of the Indigenous people with whom Oakville shares this land today. This is in addition to the plaque that was introduced at the Oakville Museum in 2020.
- One Dish garden (2021): a beautiful garden was planted at Iroquois Ridge Community Centre, honouring the One Dish covenant that teaches that all people need to collectively care for and respect the land, water, animals and each other in the interests of peace and friendship, for the benefit of not only ourselves but for our future descendants. The Indigenous names of each plant are highlighted on the garden signage to increase awareness, and teach and preserve the languages.
- RedDress project (every year): red dresses are hung at Town Hall, all recreation and culture facilities, and all library branches as our communities’ response to the 231 Calls for Justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls 2S+. The red dresses are displayed from October 4 Sisters in Spirit Day to November 25 the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

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The town has taken several notable actions in its efforts to renew and strengthen our relationship with the Indigenous community but more work is needed to proactively support reconciliation efforts. The listing in Appendix A is a good start but it is not a plan to respond to the Calls to Action. A plan for Oakville will involve a process of listening, understanding and actioning that should be led in partnership with the Indigenous community.

As the town develops its multi-year inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility plan, the development of a Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan, as other municipalities such as Toronto and Mississauga have done, is anticipated to be scoped and appropriately resourced. Toronto's Reconciliation Action Plan was developed over three years with input from First Nations, Inuit and Métis community members, organizations, Elders, Knowledge Carriers, youth, and Indigenous employees and allies in the Toronto Public Service. The town would take a similar approach to consultation and engage the Indigenous community broadly and where possible, in partnership with Halton Region and the local municipalities.

For your interest, we have a dedicated page on the town's website with information on the [Indigenous Culture and Community](#).

If you have any questions or comments for staff, please feel free to contact me.

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