

REPORT

Oakville Public Library Board

Meeting Date: October 27, 2022

FROM: Oakville Public Library

DATE: October 18, 2022

SUBJECT: Debwewin Project – Declaration of Truth and Allyship

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Debwewin Project - Declaration of Truth and Allyship report be received and the Declaration of Truth and Allyship be endorsed.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- Debwewin: The Oakville Truth Project is a partnership between the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) and the Oakville Community Foundation to further a shared understanding of Oakville's Indigenous past and support local Truth & Reconciliation.
- OPL's CEO was asked to participate in the Ally Leadership Council to further community-to-community allyship and reciprocity.
- The Debwewin project will launch the Acts of Allyship and Grateful Treaty person-campaign during Treaty Recognition Week in November (6-12) and the Ally Leadership Council has been asked to be the first representatives/organizations to sign on to the Declaration of Truth and Allyship (Appendix A) to reaffirm our organization's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation.
- The endorsement of the Declaration of Truth and Allyship aligns with OPL's dedication to inclusion and our commitment to elevating Indigenous voices and lived experiences in order to cultivate reconciliation in Oakville.

BACKGROUND:

Debwewin: The Oakville Truth Project is a partnership between the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) and the Oakville Community Foundation to further a shared understanding of Oakville's Indigenous past and support local Truth & Reconciliation. Debwewin will raise questions about Oakville's Truth such as: "What happened to the local Treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation?"

and “Why did Treaty 22 which includes coverage of Oakville main waterways, Sixteen Mile and Bronte Creek leave the Mississaugas homeless?”

The Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation have long historical roots in Oakville. Understanding the local history of the Indigenous people in Oakville from an Anishinaabek perspective is an important first step on the path towards Truth and Reconciliation. The overall project is large, ambitious, multi-year and a necessary step on the local Truth & Reconciliation journey.

As part of the project, Debwewin invited key community members to participate in an Ally Leadership Council. The Council will work to reimagine and bring community-to-community allyship and reciprocity forward into the present, offering tangible outcomes for local reconciliation. Members were invited to serve because of the work being led locally by their respective organizations and their personal commitment and passion to move local Truth and Reconciliation forward.

The following Indigenous leads will serve as Council advisors:

- **Elder Peter Schuler**, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
- **Georgia LaForme**, Debwewin Lead, MCFN
- **Angela Bellegarde**, Indigenous Lead, Our Kids Network

The following members of the Oakville community have agreed to serve as members of the Ally Leadership Council:

- **Kyle Barber**, President & CEO, YMCA Oakville
- **Jeff Bradley**, Regional Vice President, RBC
- **Bindu Cudjoe**, General Counsel, Laurentian Bank and Board Chair, Oakville Community Foundation
- **France Fournier**, President & CEO, Oakville Chamber of Commerce
- **Sarah Iley**, Interim Executive Director, Oakville Galleries
- **Dr. Jane Ngobia**, Vice President, Inclusive Communities, Sheridan College
- **Don Pangman**, Founder & Executive Director, ArtHouse
- **Blair Richardson**, Chair, Justice and Servant Ministries, St Jude’s Church
- **Andrea Rowe**, Director Sustainable Programs, Halton Environmental Network
- **Andrew Tyrrell**, President, Canadian Caribbean Association of Halton
- **Tara Wong**, CEO, Oakville Public Library

- **Susanna Zagar**, CEO, Ontario Energy Board and Oakville resident

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

The Debwewin project will launch the Acts of Allyship and Grateful Treaty person campaign during Treaties Recognition Week in November (6-12) and the Ally Leadership Council has been asked to be the first group of organizational representatives to sign on to the Declaration of Truth and Allyship (Appendix A) to reaffirm our organization's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation.

The Debwewin Project is looking to the leadership of the Ally Leadership Council to bring community-to-community allyship and reciprocity forward into the present. It is a big task to reimagine the treaty relationship between two communities that are distant and have had limited relationships but OPL believes it is well-positioned to take on the task. OPL is deeply committed to a continuous learning journey in allyship.

OPL seek to elevate Indigenous voices and lived experience to cultivate reconciliation in Oakville. As a community leader in Oakville, OPL has the ability to build and model community-to-community allyship. As a member of the Ally Leadership Council, I would like OPL to be one of the first community organizations to sign the attached Declaration of Truth and Allyship. The declaration calls on community organizations and individuals to act by:

- Seeking opportunities to learn about the Treaty territories upon which they live and work, including the traditional territories of the First Nations, which have been here since time immemorial; building relationships with Indigenous peoples upon whose territories we live and work;
- Sharing our voices, our networks, and our resources to include and benefit Indigenous peoples upon whose lands we live and work, to fulfill our responsibilities as Treaty partners;
- Sharing our understandings within the context of our work, in policy and practice, to honour and respect these relationships;
- Exploring new opportunities to support the spirit and intent of Treaty relationships more broadly.
- Engaging in Acts of Allyship and Reciprocity with the MCFN to respect the original intent of the treaties asserting that all should benefit from the land and at the same time offer Mother Earth our protection.

Public libraries across Canada are striving to become leaders in building community connection with tangible outcomes as a result of their work on Truth and

Reconciliation. Endorsing the proposed Declaration of Truth and Allyship reaffirms that commitment for OPL.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Declaration of Truth and Allyship

Prepared and Submitted by:
Tara Wong, CEO