

Signing of the AMO-OFIFC Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship with Niagara Region and Friendship Centre Support

Origins of the AMO-OFIFC Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship with Municipalities and Local Indigenous Friendship Centres

Since 2018, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) staff and the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) have been meeting on an ongoing basis to develop a relationship and explore collaborative opportunities for municipal governments and Indigenous peoples in urban centres (off-reserve) across Ontario.

The OFIFC is a provincial Indigenous organization that represents the collective interest of twenty-nine (29) Friendship Centres operating across Ontario. Friendship Centres are community hubs where Indigenous people living in urban centres can access culturally-based programs and services.

AMO and the OFIFC have been working on the collaboration of an AMO-OFIFC Friendship Declaration, which influenced preliminary discussions of the Municipal Declaration Working Group – made up of AMO, OFIFC, Friendship Centre Executive Directors, and municipal elected officials and staff, around the formation of a vision for an Ontario Declaration.

The declaration would recognize that municipal governments and the respective Friendship Centres are diverse and have varying capacities and resources. The declaration would involve a strategic alliance and combined participation between AMO and the OFIFC. Broadly, the AMO-OFIFC declaration is planned to acknowledge the respectful relationship between municipalities and Friendship Centres in urban areas to jointly improve the well-being of Indigenous people while maintaining an ongoing partnership and communication. The key intent is to identify common priorities of interest and having consistent messaging around serving people in our communities.

Signing of the Declaration at the 2020 AMO Virtual Conference

Both AMO and the OFIFC's Presidents will be signing this declaration at AMO's upcoming virtual conference during August 17-19. Municipal participation presents an opportunity for Niagara Region to be recognized for its good partnership work and leadership that municipalities and Friendship Centres are undertaking at the local and regional levels.

Once the signing occurs between the Region and local Friendship Centre Board, AMO will acknowledge the Region at the official Declaration-signing ceremony during the AMO Conference.

Additional Signatories

Rural and urban indigenous peoples are supported by two Native Friendship Centres in Niagara region – the Niagara Regional Native Centre located in Niagara-on-the Lake, and the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre located in Fort Erie. Although staff work closely with both Friendship Centres, the Niagara Regional Native Centre has not yet responded to Niagara Region's invitation to participate in the signing of the Declaration. Although the deadline to submit Council's signing of the Declaration to AMO is July 24th, the Declaration enables additional signatory's to participate when they are able to do so. Staff will continue to engage with Niagara Regional Native Centres and seek its expression of interest to participate in this Declaration of mutual commitment and friendship.

Council Resolution

Signing of the AMO-OFIFC Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship with Local Municipality and Friendship Centre Support

WHEREAS Niagara Region is working with the local Indigenous Friendship Centres, the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre and the Niagara Regional Native Centre;

WHEREAS the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre and the Niagara Regional Native Centre have been active contributors to the wellbeing of residents in the community;

WHEREAS Niagara Region has a good and ongoing relationship with the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre and the Niagara Regional Native Centre and wants to set a leading example in the area of Indigenous relations by demonstrating overlapping community interest and work;

WHEREAS the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship reflects the municipality's understanding of and working relationship with Indigenous people in the community;

WHEREAS the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre and the Niagara Regional Native Centre are contemplating the signing of this declaration and participation in related concurrent activities during the virtual AMO Conference in August of 2020;

WHEREAS this declaration is a living document that additional local Friendship Centres can sign onto at any future date;

NOW THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED

1. That Niagara Regional Council **AUTHORIZES** the Regional Chair to sign in conjunction with the local Indigenous Friendship Centres, the joint AMO-OFIFC Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship on behalf of the Region and participate in related concurrent activities during the AMO 2020 Conference;
2. That Council **DIRECT** staff to work with AMO in order to coordinate the declaration signing and related concurrent activities in advance of the AMO 2020 Conference; and
3. That the Regional Clerk **CIRCULATE** the AMO-OFIFC Declaration of Mutual Commitment to the Local Area Municipalities of Niagara for consideration by their respective local Councils.

Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship (FINAL)

Improving the Quality of Life of Indigenous People Across Ontario's Municipalities Joint and Ongoing Commitment Between Signatories: the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC)

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1. WHEREAS in Ontario, over 85 percent of Indigenous people live in municipalities;
 2. WHEREAS the growing percentage of Indigenous people living in municipalities and the Friendship Centres that serve them participate in and contribute to municipal community life;
 3. WHEREAS the Friendship Centres have existed in Ontario municipalities for over half a century and have vital roles to play in community development, social cohesion, and improving the quality of life for Indigenous people living in urban and rural areas;
 4. WHEREAS the Friendship Centres receive their mandate from their communities and are inclusive of all Indigenous people;
 5. WHEREAS municipal governments have a growing and critical role in human and social services and community development and many have shown leadership in working in partnership with Indigenous organizations;
 6. WHEREAS the Truth and Reconciliation Commission defines reconciliation as “an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships”;
 7. WHEREAS strengthening relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is essential to municipal governments, Friendship Centres, and communities across Ontario;
 8. WHEREAS municipal governments play an important role in providing and delivering valuable programs and services to meet the needs of their residents, as well as being responsible, in all or some part, for over two hundred and eighty (280) pieces of provincial legislation that impact daily life of all who live in Ontario;
 9. WHEREAS many municipal governments and Friendship Centres have taken up the responsibility to collaborate on a variety of initiatives that improve Indigenous quality of life and have had tangible community impacts;
 10. WHEREAS municipal governments are on the front-lines working directly with all individuals to support and determine social determinants of health, demonstrating a notion of direct responsibility contributing to community wellbeing and prosperity;
 11. WHEREAS the AMO has developed the Indigenous Relations Task Force to advise the AMO Board of Directors on municipal-Indigenous relationship building;
 12. WHEREAS the OFIFC was founded in 1971 and works to support, advocate for and build the capacity of member Friendship Centres across Ontario;
 13. WHEREAS the Friendship Centre Movement is the largest Indigenous service network in the province supporting the vibrant and quickly-growing Indigenous population through programming, research, education, and policy advocacy;
 14. WHEREAS AMO and OFIFC are partnering on a variety of initiatives to improve collaboration and information sharing amongst our membership, not limited to the work

of the AMO-OFIFC Indigenous Relations Working Group and the AMO-OFIFC Memorandum of Understanding signed on date; AND

15. WHEREAS this declaration is a living document that municipal governments and Friendship Centres can sign onto or use as a framework for the development of local or regional declarations that can be addended to this declaration;

THAT SIGNATORY MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS RECOGNIZE:

16. THAT Indigenous people reside and build community and resilience in municipalities across Ontario;
17. THE value of Indigenous knowledge and expertise to design, plan, implement, and evaluate public policy and programs that impact the wellbeing of Indigenous people is paramount;
18. THE responsibility taken up by Indigenous Friendship Centres to meet Indigenous community need;
19. THE value of building relationships and partnerships with Friendship Centres to improve the quality of life of Indigenous people in their municipality; AND
20. THAT the exchange of information and skills within and between municipal governments and related associations contribute to improved understanding in the area of Indigenous relations.

THAT SIGNATORY ONTARIO INDIGENOUS FRIENDSHIP CENTRES RECOGNIZE:

21. THAT they are and have been leaders in urban Indigenous community development and in reflecting and responding to the needs of Indigenous people in municipalities for over half a century;
22. THAT they are engaged in local and regional affairs and that they contribute to municipal life and that they lead the Indigenous social, community, economic, and cultural development of municipalities across Ontario;
23. THE responsibility taken up by municipal governments to meet and serve Indigenous communities;
24. THAT municipal governments provide essential services that Friendship Centre community members rely on to thrive;
25. THAT municipal governments are leaders in Ontario in meeting community needs through local programs, services and community development, be they in human and social services, public safety or public works/infrastructure, and are integral to community well-being and the social determinants of health;
26. THAT the development and maintenance of good relationships and partnerships with municipal governments is essential to achieving long-term positive impact on Indigenous communities; AND
27. THAT Friendship Centres acknowledge that they operate in a municipal landscape and rely on municipal governments.

ALL SIGNATORIES RECOGNIZE:

28. THAT we are uniquely positioned to improve community-wellbeing through local policy development, programs and services as we are well-equipped to be responsive to community needs;
29. THAT community-identified needs and priorities should provide the basis for policy and program development, and that we are uniquely positioned to improve the quality of life of Indigenous people living in municipalities;
30. THAT mutual respect, responsibility, trust, transparency and collaboration to meet common community priorities are key principles of relationship building between non-Indigenous and Indigenous organizations;
31. THAT the Friendship Centres and municipal governments play key roles in working against racism, inequality, discrimination, and stigma within and between communities;
32. THAT the goal of this declaration is to provide municipal governments and Friendship Centres with a framework for relationship-building to advance reconciliation in communities across Ontario;
33. THAT the goal of this declaration is to enhance social cohesion between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and support closer cultural, social and civic ties between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people;
34. THAT we can play a leadership role and set a standard by advancing reconciliation locally and regionally through partnerships and collaboration;
35. THAT fostering local and regional partnerships is integral to improving the quality of life for all communities; AND
36. THAT we establish and maintain an ongoing dialogue and working relationships at the local and provincial orders.

SIGNATORIES AND ADJACENT DATES:

AMO

OFIFC

Ongoing Signatures:

Municipal Governments (Elected Officials)

Friendship Centres (Presidents)

**Declaration between
Niagara Region and the
Indigenous Friendship Centres of Niagara
Addendum to the AMO-OFIFC Declaration**

WHEREAS the culture and traditions of Indigenous peoples are woven into the fabric of Canada's heritage and particularly in the historical roots of the Niagara region;

WHEREAS the federal census data indicates the Niagara area includes over 12 thousand individuals of Indigenous ancestry;

WHEREAS the population of rural and urban Indigenous peoples is significantly underrepresented in government data that is creating a disconnect with information on the essential services that are required by Niagara's Indigenous population;

WHEREAS to better understand how best to enhance the quality of life and increase the prosperity among Niagara's urban and rural Indigenous peoples, it is critical for Niagara Region to actively collaborate with representatives of the Indigenous community;

WHEREAS corporate service areas within Niagara Region that directly support the needs of Niagara's Indigenous population have fostered and maintained a close working relationship with Niagara's Native Friendship Centres;

WHEREAS Regional studies indicate there is a critical need to co-ordinate all relevant social services in the Region and to educate all persons involved in these and other applicable services unique to the needs of Indigenous people;

WHEREAS opportunities exist for collaboration with other service areas within the Region in the development of effective engagement practices for the purposes of

- increasing representation of the urban and rural Indigenous organizations in the delivery of Regional services and
- enhancing the presence of the Indigenous community in Regional events

ALL SIGNATORIES RECOGNIZE:

THAT Niagara Region and the Niagara's Indigenous Friendship Centres work together to achieve the articles of the AMO-OFIFC Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship

SIGNATORIES AND ADJACENT DATES:

Niagara Region

Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre