
Subject: Updated Land Acknowledgement Statements

Report to: Regional Council

Report date: Thursday, August 26, 2021

Recommendations

1. That the short, long and documents versions of Land Acknowledgement Statements outlined in Report CAO 15-2021 **BE APPROVED** and that the short version be recited at Council and Committee meetings on a go forward basis;
2. That the Region's Land Acknowledgement Statements **BE REVIEWED** and updated as new understandings of treaties and agreements in the Niagara Region evolve; and
3. That this report **BE SHARED** by the Regional Clerk with Local Area Municipalities.

Key Facts

- Land Acknowledgement Statements are increasingly being used as a practice of reconciliation aimed at recognizing the traditional or treaty territories of Indigenous peoples. The statements are typically made at the introduction of meetings, gatherings, events, or presentations
- Various versions of a Land Acknowledgement are currently in use by the Local Area Municipalities and the Region
- At the request of community members and the Local Area Municipalities, and as one step in demonstrating the Region's commitment to advancing the recommendations in the Creating our Way Forward Indigenous Engagement report (<https://www.niagararegion.ca/health/equity>) and Niagara's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan (<https://www.niagararegion.ca/projects/community-safety-well-being/>), a consultation was undertaken with multiple Indigenous organizations to develop an updated Land Acknowledgement for the Region
- There are diverse perspectives surrounding the treaties relevant to Niagara. Due to these complexities, there is not consensus among First Nations to the treaties and the historical details relevant to the proposed Land Acknowledgement
- It is proposed that the Region's Land Acknowledgement be reviewed and updated as new understandings of treaties and agreements in relation to the Niagara region evolve

- Staff have created three versions of the Land Acknowledgement for different purposes (long, short, and documents versions)

Financial Considerations

There are no financial considerations associated with this report.

Analysis

Traditional land acknowledgement statements are increasingly being used in Canada by governments, schools, post-secondary institutions, non-governmental organizations, and other civil institutions as a practice of reconciliation aimed at recognizing the traditional or treaty territories of Indigenous peoples. The statements are typically made at the introduction of meetings, gatherings, events, or presentations. Some are featured on organization websites or event description pages. Understanding and recognizing Indigenous history, and an individual's personal and ancestral relationship to this history, is the foundation of respect and reciprocity, which are the building blocks of reconciliation between settlers and First Nations.

Updating the Land Acknowledgement is one step among many that the Region has committed to as a means to improve local understanding and relationships with First Nations communities and those living off-reserve in Niagara. Additional events slated for this Fall will provide opportunities for senior-level staff, Regional Council and Local Area Municipal Councils to engage, learn, and work together with local Indigenous organizations and First Nation governments.

Through consultation with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River Elected Council, and leaders from the Niagara Indigenous Community Executives, staff have developed an updated Land Acknowledgement. The history of this land is complex and there are diverse perspectives surrounding the treaties. Due to these complexities, there is not consensus among First Nations to the treaties relevant in Niagara and the historical details relevant to the Land Acknowledgement.

The Land Acknowledgement is a dynamic, living document and should be reviewed on a regular basis as new understandings of treaties and agreements in relation to the Niagara Region evolve.

Feedback from Indigenous community members encourages any person reading or using an acknowledgement to take time to consider its content so that it is not

something that is said and forgotten, or checked off an agenda, but requires thought and intention. The statement should also be part of an integrated process of moving words to action by establishing meaningful relationships and a path towards reconciliation with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people and organizations in the area.

Staff strongly recommend that everyone who uses a Land Acknowledgement receive locally relevant Indigenous Cultural Safety Training so that the terms, treaties, history, and Nations included become familiar and staff feel comfortable using it. Supports and reference material are being developed. Staff reading the Acknowledgement should practice the pronunciation of the Nations.¹

Proposed Land Acknowledgement

Staff have created three versions of the Land Acknowledgement for different purposes. The short version of the Acknowledgement was designed to fit on a presentation slide and would be used by Niagara Regional Council and related Committee meetings and events. This can be used for official openings, large public gatherings, and at any event when a prominent Indigenous person (Chief or Band Councillor), or political representative of the Provincial or Federal government is present. The long version has more details and can be read at the beginning of other meetings, presentations, or gatherings where you would like to provide a bit more context. The document option is the most direct and can be used in written documents (such as strategies, engagement reports, etc), job postings, newsletters, training sessions, websites, and in email signatures.

Long version

As we take a moment today to reflect on the importance of the land on which we gather, our provider and sustainer, we look to understand the history of the land. Niagara Region is situated on treaty land. These lands are steeped in the rich history of the First Nations such as the Hattiwendaronk, the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishinaabe, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

¹ You can watch a video on how to pronounce Anishinaabe here, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHFqWyZQ4T0>. You can watch a video on how to pronounce Haudenosaunee here, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jKV9u-pEevk>

Intended to guide the relationship between the First Nations and Europeans, the Two Row Wampum is an important symbol of everlasting equality, peace, and friendship. It remains the foundation upon which Canada was built, and we recognize that this mutually respectful relationship between nations is essential for reconciliation today.

There are many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people from across Turtle Island that live and work in Niagara today. The Regional Municipality of Niagara stands with all Indigenous people, past and present, in promoting the wise stewardship of the lands on which we live. We recognize that we must do more to learn about the history and current situation of Indigenous people. This will help us better understand our roles and take responsibility towards reconciliation as treaty people, residents, and caretakers.

Short version

Niagara Region is situated on treaty land. This land is steeped in the rich history of the First Nations such as the Hatiwendaronk (Hat-i-wen-DA-ronk), the Haudenosaunee (Hoe-den-no-SHOW-nee), and the Anishinaabe (Ah-nish-ih-NAH-bey), including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. There are many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people from across Turtle Island that live and work in Niagara today. The Regional Municipality of Niagara stands with all Indigenous people, past and present, in promoting the wise stewardship of the lands on which we live.

Documents

Niagara Region is situated on treaty land. This land has a rich history of First Nations such as the Hatiwendaronk, the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishinaabe, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. There are many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people from across Turtle Island that live and work in Niagara today.

Alternatives Reviewed

Land Acknowledgements established by other municipalities that fall within the traditional territory of the respective First Nations were consulted to ensure consistency and accuracy of Indigenous history and language is reflected in the new Niagara Region Land Acknowledgement.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

The Land Acknowledgement relates to the strategic priority of Sustainable and Engaging Government by providing a statement that is supported by the local Indigenous community.

Other Pertinent Reports

[CAO 12-2021](#) – Niagara’s Community Safety and Well-Being Plan 2021-2025

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This report was prepared in consultation with Gina van den Burg, Government and Stakeholder Relations Specialist, and Michelle Johnston, Community Safety and Well-being Program Manager, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River Elected Council, leaders from the Niagara Indigenous Community Executives, ASI Heritage Consultants, and reviewed by Ann-Marie Norio, Regional Clerk.