
MEMORANDUM

CAO 6-2022

Subject: Council Endorsement of a Public Statement and Commitment to Address Systemic Discrimination and Anti-Indigenous Racism

Date: June 23, 2022

To: Niagara Regional Council

From: Ron Tripp, Chief Administrative Officer

On June 24, 2021, Regional Council adopted Niagara's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan which included the recommendations of the Mno Bmaadziwin (Living the Good and Healthy Life) Indigenous Engagement Report.

As an organization, we recognize that we have work to do to continue to confront systemic anti-Indigenous racism and discrimination. We are committed to taking specific, measurable, and continued action by implementing the recommendations in the Mno Bmaadziwin Report.

One of the first recommendations in the Report is the creation of a Joint Roundtable to establish sustainable relationships between local, urban Indigenous and Regional leadership. In late 2021, a Joint Roundtable was created with representation from the Niagara Indigenous Community Executives (N.I.C.E.) and corporate leadership from Niagara Region including the Niagara Regional Police Service. Three meetings have taken place to-date focused on building those relationships and setting a framework to co-develop an **Indigenous Action Plan** before the end of the year. The Plan will work towards reconciliation between Niagara Region and First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, and will include the following:

- Identifying activities to implement the Truth & Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Inquiry's Calls to Justice, which fall under municipal jurisdiction;
- Developing responsive, inclusive policies, programs and services with, and that meet the needs of, off-reserve Indigenous communities and organizations;
- Identifying and implementing ways to make Regional spaces and buildings welcoming and safe for Indigenous Peoples; and,

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- Identifying and removing barriers that exist for Indigenous peoples in gaining employment with Niagara Region, and create career development opportunities for Indigenous employees.

The second recommendation in the Mno Bmaadziwin Report seeks a public statement from the Region on its intention to address systemic racism within all its systems as it pertains to Indigenous people. With the work of the Joint Roundtable and progress on the development of an **Indigenous Action Plan**, the organization is in a better position to support a public statement that includes a commitment to action.

The proposed public statement below has been reviewed by Corporate Leadership and members of N.I.C.E., which includes organizations such as:

- Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre
- Niagara Regional Native Centre
- Niagara Chapter Native Women
- Ohsto: Seri Urban Aboriginal Homes
- Oonuhseh Niagara Native Homes Inc.
- Niagara Region Métis Council
- De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre

Recommendation

If Council is supportive of endorsing the release of a public statement confirming Niagara Region's commitment to address system discrimination and anti-Indigenous racism within its institution, the following motion would be in order:

That Regional Council **APPROVE** the release of the following public statement and commitment:

Niagara Region Commits to Address Anti-Indigenous Racism and to Work Towards Reconciliation

Municipal governments, as well as other levels of government in Canada, share responsibility and have an important role to play in eradicating anti-Indigenous racism and discrimination, and fostering equity and respect for all.

Niagara Region acknowledges that colonialism and past actions and inactions across all levels of government have created discriminatory policies and practices against Indigenous Peoples. This has had direct, widespread and devastating effects on the health and well-being of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. Acknowledging this reality is essential to changing it.

Niagara Region hereby issues a commitment to address systemic discrimination and anti-Indigenous racism within its institution.

Niagara Region recognizes that this statement will not stand alone. As an organization, we have work to do to continue to confront systemic anti-Indigenous racism and discrimination. We are committed to taking specific, measurable, and continued action. As a start, a Joint Roundtable has been established with the Niagara Indigenous Community Executives (N.I.C.E.) and leadership from Niagara Region, including the Niagara Regional Police Service. The Joint Roundtable will be working alongside First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities to co-develop an **Indigenous Action Plan**. The plan will work towards reconciliation between Niagara Region and First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, which will include the following actions.

- Identifying activities to implement the Truth & Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Inquiry's Calls to Justice, which fall under municipal jurisdiction
- Developing responsive, inclusive policies, programs and services with, and that meet the needs of, off-reserve Indigenous communities and organizations

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- Identifying and implementing ways to make Regional spaces and buildings welcoming and safe for Indigenous Peoples
 - Identifying and removing barriers that exist for Indigenous peoples in gaining employment with Niagara Region, and create career development opportunities for Indigenous employees

Over thousands of years, Niagara region has served as an important gateway, trade route and meeting place for many generations of Indigenous people and their nations. These lands are steeped in the rich history of the First Nations such as the Hatiwendaronk (also known as the Attawanderon or Neutral), the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishinaabe, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

Niagara Region looks to the historical foundational values of peace, mutual respect and friendship, as demonstrated by the Two Row Wampum, to guide our path forward to ensure safety, equity and access to opportunity for all Indigenous Peoples in Niagara.

By putting these values into practice, Niagara Region and Indigenous communities can build trust, address challenging issues and new opportunities, and act collaboratively to achieve social and economic well-being for Indigenous Peoples living in Niagara.

This work aligns with the recommendations from [local Indigenous engagement reports](#) (*Creating Our Way Forward* and *Mno Bmaadziwin*), the commitments identified under [Niagara Region's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan](#), and the spirit of the Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Respect signed by Niagara Region Council and the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

Ron Tripp, P. Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer