

STAFF REPORT

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG



Report to:	Mayor and Council Members	Priority:	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low
Submitted by:	Jamie Kramer, Accessibility Coordinator, Legislative Services, Corporate Services, jkramer@cobourg.ca	Meeting Type: Open Session <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Closed Session <input type="checkbox"/>	
Meeting Date:	October 25, 2021		
Report No.:	Corporate Services-125-21		
Submit comments to Council			

Subject/Title: **Endorsing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at the Town of Cobourg**

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council accept the report from the Accessibility Coordinator for information purposes, and;

FURTHER THAT Council endorse the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for the Town to use in its on-going process of reconciliation with local First Nations and urban Indigenous peoples in Cobourg.

1. STRATEGIC PLAN

- **PEOPLE:** The Town of Cobourg supports and cares for the Social and Physical Well-Being of its Citizens
- **PLACES:** The Town protects, preserves, and promotes its natural assets, heritage, arts, culture, and tourism.
- **PROGRAMS:** The Town provides efficient and effective corporate, community, and business and recreational services for its residents, businesses, and visitors.
- **PARTNERSHIP:** The Town engages in strong, sustainable public-private partnerships to improve the quality of life for everyone.
- **PROSPERTIY:** The Town plans for, markets, and develops assets for economic growth and financial security.

2. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's endorsement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as the framework for reconciliation in Cobourg. This responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) Call to Action #43 that calls upon Canadian governments (including municipal governments) to fully adopt and implement UNDRIP as the framework for reconciliation.

4. ORIGIN AND LEGISLATION

On June 7, 2021, Town Council approved the following resolution:

THAT the delegation be received for information;

AND FURTHER THAT the reference to Hector-Louis Langevin's name in historic association and/or formal naming of the West Headlands/Pier be removed immediately;

AND FURTHER THAT Council direct the Accessibility Coordinator to investigate options for renaming the West Headlands/Pier in consultation with the local Indigenous community as part of the Town's ongoing commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.

On August 30, 2021, Town Council approved the following resolution:

WHEREAS at the Committee of the Whole Meeting on August 23, 2021, Council considered a Memo from the Accessibility Coordinator regarding the (Re)Naming of the West Headlands/Pier;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council adopt the colloquial name of "The West Headlands" for the area described as the West Headlands/Pier until the Stewardship Study is completed, and;

FURTHER THAT the renaming of the entire West Headlands, Pier, and Beach area should be referred to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee for further consideration at the time of completion of the Stewardship Study keeping in guidance with the Town of Cobourg's Naming Policy and recommendations from our Indigenous community, and;

FURTHER THAT a full audit of historical names of areas in Cobourg be undertaken to ensure that we are not unintentionally impacting our Indigenous community, and;

FURTHER THAT Council consider adding funding in the 2022 budget for the entirety of the Town of Cobourg staff members, Board and Committee Members, and other volunteers to participate in Indigenous Awareness training.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Calls to Action

The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the largest class-action settlement in Canadian history, began to be implemented in 2007. One of the elements of the agreement was the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada to facilitate reconciliation among former students, their families, their communities, and all Canadians.

The official mandate (PDF) of the TRC is found in Schedule "N" of the Settlement Agreement which includes the principles that guided the commission in its important work.

Between 2007 and 2015, the Government of Canada provided about \$72 million to support the TRC's work. The TRC spent 6 years travelling to all parts of Canada and heard from more than 6,500 witnesses. The TRC also hosted 7 national events across Canada to engage the Canadian public, educate people about the history and legacy of the residential school system, and share and honour the experiences of former students and their families.

The TRC created a historical record of the residential school system. As part of this process, the Government of Canada provided over 5 million records to the TRC. The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation at the University of Manitoba now houses all of the documents collected by the TRC.

In June 2015, the TRC held its closing event in Ottawa and presented the executive summary of the findings contained in its multi-volume final report, including 94 "calls to action" (or recommendations) to further reconciliation between Canadians and Indigenous peoples.

In December 2015, the TRC released its entire 6-volume final report. All Canadians are encouraged to read the summary or the final report to learn more about the terrible history of Indian Residential Schools and its sad legacy.

[To read the reports, please visit the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation website.](#)

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration) provides us with a road map to advance lasting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. It shows us that further steps must be taken to respect, recognize and protect the human rights of Indigenous peoples and to address the wrongs of the past.

In 2016, the Government of Canada endorsed the Declaration without qualification and committed to its full and effective implementation.

In December 2020, the Government of Canada introduced legislation to implement the Declaration. On June 21, 2021, Bill C-15, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act received Royal Assent. This Act will provide

a road map for the Government and Indigenous peoples to work together to fully implement the Declaration.

Legislation to advance federal implementation of the Declaration is an important step in moving Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples forward. It is a key building block in fully recognizing, respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of Indigenous peoples. Further, both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls called on the federal government to implement the Declaration as the framework for reconciliation.

Implementing the Declaration is about building a better Canada for Indigenous peoples and all Canadians today, and into our future.

5. BACKGROUND

The Town of Cobourg is committed to meeting the requirements for municipalities under the [94 Calls to Action](#) by providing Indigenous Awareness Training to all Council and Senior Staff (currently in progress), with follow up for all staff, volunteers, Board and Committee members within the next eight (8) months. Residents are encouraged to talk to Council members and Town of Cobourg staff about truth, reconciliation, and justice.

The Town hosted a talk with Bryanna R. Brown from Indigenous Climate Action through the Women in Governance Program who spoke about [Indigenous Climate Action and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Children](#). The Town is also supporting small, youth-owned Indigenous businesses by gifting all speakers and presenters from the Women in Governance Program with a scarf from [Kokom Scrunchies](#).

6. ANALYSIS

Cobourg is located on the traditional and treaty territory of the Michi Saagiig (Mississauga) and Chippewa Nations, collectively known as the Williams Treaties First Nations, which include: Curve Lake, Hiawatha, Alderville, Scugog Island, Rama, Beausoleil, and Georgina Island First Nations. In addition to the local land-based First Nations peoples, Cobourg has a young and growing urban Indigenous population that includes First Nations and Métis people.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

The TRC has had a profound impact on Canadians' awareness of the deep and lasting trauma of residential schools on Indigenous peoples, and the need for reconciliation to transform Canadian society.

The TRC's final report, released in 2015, includes 94 Calls to Action to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation. One of these, Call to Action #43, calls on the "federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to fully adopt and implement the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as the framework for reconciliation."

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

A United Nations General Assembly declaration is a document expressing political commitment on matters of global significance. A declaration is not legally binding, unlike a treaty or a covenant. Declarations are not signed or rectified by states, but can be adopted by consensus or by vote. Declarations only represent political commitment from the states that vote in favour of adopting them.

UNDRIP is a document that describes both individual and collective rights of Indigenous peoples around the world. It offers guidance on cooperative relationships with Indigenous peoples based on the principles of equality, partnership, good faith, and mutual respect. UNDRIP addresses the rights of Indigenous peoples on issues such as culture, identity, religion, language, health, education, and community.

UNDRIP was adopted by resolution of the United Nations General Assembly on September 13, 2007. In May 2016, the federal Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs announced that Canada was a full supporter, without qualification, of the declaration.

UNDRIP: A Framework for Municipal Governments

In 2016, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) released “Pathways to Reconciliation: Cities respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.” The FCM report notes that “across the country, Mayors and Councils are working with Indigenous leaders and organizations to create better cities by acknowledging and addressing the experience and needs of the growing urban Indigenous population, strengthening government to government partnerships and learning from the past.”

Related to UNDRIP, the FCM report notes that as sub-national governments, municipalities are not signatories to the United Nations and, therefore, look to the federal government to provide leadership by developing a national framework for reconciliation guided by UNDRIP. The Big Cities Mayors’ Caucus was supportive of the federal government’s commitment to adopt UNDRIP and “will continue to dialogue with the federal government to understand and address the local implications and needed actions.” Other municipalities such as Toronto and Vancouver have endorsed UNDRIP.

Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO) Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities’ Toolkit for Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples: A Holistic Approach

CCUNESCO’s Toolkit for municipalities to reconcile with Indigenous Peoples discusses the importance of adopting and endorsing the UNDRIP as the main facilitator of reconciliation. In their toolkit, they highlight that “UNDRIP is the most advanced and comprehensive declaration on Indigenous peoples’ rights: its 46 articles describe specific rights and actions that governments commit to in order to protect these rights. The “right to be free of discrimination” is one of the four main themes of the Declaration.”

The toolkit also notes that “With their capacity to bring the national reconciliation effort home to the local level, municipalities are not only critical partners. Municipalities have the capacities to be leaders in reconciliation through an authentic and inclusive dialogue with Indigenous peoples and governments.” As a member of the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities, the Town of Cobourg relies on these toolkits and information to guide the actions we take for reconciliation, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/BUDGET IMPACTS

There are currently no anticipated financial or budgetary impacts to adopt the UNDRIP as the framework for reconciliation. If there are costs that are out of scope for the Communications budget for 2021 or proposed for 2022, these will be brought forward with explanation and justification.

8. CONCLUSION

According to the TRC, “reconciliation requires that a new vision, based on a commitment to mutual respect, be developed.” UNDRIP provides a set of principles to guide the process of reconciliation.

Council’s endorsement of UNDRIP as the framework for reconciliation represents the Town’s commitment to a process of reconciliation and working collaboratively with the local First Nations and the urban Indigenous population in Cobourg to determine how UNDRIP’s principles can be implemented at the local level in the Cobourg context.