



To: Regional Chair Emmerson and Members of Regional Council
Meeting Date: September 14, 2023
From: Stephen Maio
Senior Executive Officer, People, Equity and Culture
Re: **York Region's Ongoing Progress on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action**

This memorandum provides Council with information regarding York Region's actions to addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action directed at municipalities in the past year since the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation which is also referred to as Orange Shirt Day.

York Region is located on the traditional territory of many Indigenous peoples including the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat and Métis peoples and the treaty territories of the Haudenosaunee, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and Williams Treaties First Nations. Today this area is home to many diverse Indigenous peoples. York Region recognizes their history, spirituality, culture and stewardship of this land and acknowledges the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation as the Region's closest First Nation community.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report includes Calls to Action to promote reconciliation and change

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established to create a record of the Residential School System and provide the opportunity for survivors and their families to publicly share their stories, promote healing and encourage reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. The final report of the Commission was published in 2015 with Calls to Action intended to promote reconciliation and changes that could be made by all levels of government, organizations and the public.

Of the 94 Calls to Action, there are [seven Calls to Action directed at municipal governments](#). Some of the matters addressed by these Calls to Action are not capable of being implemented by York Region because they are not within the Region's jurisdiction, the services it provides or are matters more fully within the authority and capabilities of senior levels of government. As a result, staff have focused on Calls to Action that most directly relate to matters that could be implemented by York Region.

In 2021, the Federal Government proclaimed September 30th as the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, establishing a new statutory holiday for federally regulated employers and employees. The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is intended for reflection and to increase public awareness of the harm caused by the Residential School System in our country and unite efforts towards healing and reconciliation. York Regional Council received memos [September 2021](#) and [September 2022](#) outlining York Region's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

York Region has a long history of providing services to local Indigenous communities and peoples

Over York Region's 50-year history, staff have worked closely and in partnership with Indigenous communities to provide a variety of services, including ongoing provision of:

- Public Health supports and partnerships including breastfeeding clinics, healthy school programs, vaccine distribution, oral health clinics, beach water monitoring, food handling certification and annual Health Fairs
- Support for managing invasive forest species, water conservation and partnership through the York Region District School Board (YRDSB) Indigenous Learning Program at the Bill Fisch Forest Stewardship and Education Centre
- York Telecom Network extension of fibre optic cable to the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation through the Federal Connect to Innovate Broadband program
- Transit services through Mobility on-Request and Transit Assistance Pilot Program
- Emergency response by York Region Paramedic Services and York Regional Police

York Region introduces an Indigenous Relations Advisor position

With the approval of the 2023 Budget, Council approved the addition of a full-time permanent staff member to support the Region's Indigenous relations, recognizing reconciliation and continued development of trusted relationships between York Region and Indigenous peoples requires dedicated resource investment. Staff have been working with senior indigenous advisors to create a meaningful and appropriate job description for this role.

York Region's Indigenous Relations Advisor will lead York Region's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action as well as internal policy, planning and program development for staff's Indigenous engagement activities, education, and initiatives. Following the process to develop the position, it was posted for a month and closed end of August. Candidate interviews are currently underway. The Region recognizes this position as a step on a very important journey towards truth and reconciliation.

York Region continues to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #47

Since the last update to Council in September 2022, York Region has continued to work closely and in partnership with Indigenous communities to respond to the Calls to Action, making particular progress on Calls to Action #47 and #57. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #47 calls upon federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and lands, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius*, and to reform those laws, government policies and litigation strategies that continue to rely on such concepts. *Terra nullius*, "nobody's land," is a concept that unoccupied lands can be claimed by a state that finds and occupies it. To get around the fact that most colonized lands were already inhabited, Indigenous people were declared non-people, making their territories *terra nullius*. In response to Call to Action #47 in the past year, York Region:

- Continued engagement with Indigenous communities on Regional Infrastructure Plans to drive a collaborative way forward in acknowledgement and accommodation of Indigenous Rights
- Incorporated recommendations to the Wayfinding Strategy for the York Regional Forest that included the use of education and partnerships with Indigenous groups to encourage learnings of Indigenous culture and heritage, recognizing the inclusion of Indigenous communities and partnerships within educational elements of wayfinding encourages the acknowledgement and celebration of Indigenous knowledge
- Incorporated a key action within the Greening Strategy to explore opportunities to partner with First Nations, including incorporating traditional ecological knowledge into Greening Strategy programs; and
- Celebrated the 100th Year Anniversary of the York Regional Forest through guided forest walks with an Anishinaabe Grandmother and incorporating signage and displays with Anishinaabemowin content

York Region continues to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #57

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #57 calls upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations. This requires skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism. In the past year, York Region:

- Hosted an Indigenous Cultural Awareness workshop with Natural Heritage and Forestry Division staff led by an Anishinaabe consultant

- Continued to collate and develop resources to assist with and strengthen staff education, awareness and relationship building with Indigenous communities, including a diversity calendar and regular diversity communications recognizing dates and months significant for Indigenous communities
- Provided access to training opportunities such as webinars and resources from the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion related to Indigenous Peoples and inclusion as well as the 4 Seasons of Reconciliation course, which promotes a renewed relationship between Indigenous Peoples and Canadians through transformative learning about truth and reconciliation and which has seen steady increases in staff uptake and completion
- Provided further access to learning opportunities through the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Division and the Community of Belonging for Indigenous Staff, which hosted several learning opportunities and events, including lunch and learn sessions in celebration of National Indigenous History Month and National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

York Region remains committed to creating welcoming and inclusive communities by learning from the mistakes of the past. We continue to move forward in partnership with Indigenous peoples by intentionally listening and learning from the past while supporting ongoing, sustained and meaningful relationships.

For more information on this memo, please contact Stephen Maio, Senior Executive Officer, People, Equity and Culture at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 71420. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.



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Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer

September 5, 2023

