



The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

Briefing Note

To: Council

File No.: 0340-00

From: City Manager (CAO)

Date: May 8, 2024

Subject: Reconciliation Framework Update

PURPOSE: To provide Council with an update on the City's progress towards the development of the Reconciliation Framework.

BACKGROUND:

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was established in 2007 to protect and promote the rights of indigenous peoples worldwide. This declaration recognizes their collective rights to lands, resources, cultures, and self-determination, as well as their right to be involved in decisions that impact them. UNDRIP was created in response to historical injustices and ongoing discrimination faced by indigenous peoples globally, providing a framework to acknowledge and respect their rights. Local governments are essential in implementing UNDRIP within their communities, including respecting Indigenous rights, facilitating their participation in decision-making, and celebrating their diverse cultures. Through policies and programs that prioritize Indigenous well-being, local governments can help advance reconciliation and promote inclusivity and equity in society.

The City of Courtenay is committed to advancing and upholding the principles of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, pledging to use it as the framework for reconciliation. Recognizing the importance of acknowledging colonization history and fostering positive relationships with the K'ómoks First Nation, the City aims to promote cultural understanding, support Indigenous rights, and implement UNDRIP principles in governance and decision-making processes. By actively pursuing reconciliation, Courtenay strives to create a more inclusive and equitable community for all residents.

Since adopting UNDRIP, the City has and is conscientiously undertaking work in the spirit of reconciliation:

- In 2017, the City of Courtenay adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
- In 2018, the City signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the K'ómoks First Nation and an environmental non-profit to collaboratively purchase, restore and manage a key property in the heart of the community.
- The City participates in and contribute to events and initiatives such as National Indigenous Peoples Day and the Orange Shirt Day campaign to raise awareness of the impacts of colonization and the importance of reconciliation.
- The City supports initiatives to promote Indigenous languages, culture, and traditions, including the installation of Indigenous art installations and the creation of public spaces to honor Indigenous history and heritage.
- The City developed a local Indigenous Procurement Policy that encourages the inclusion of Indigenous-owned businesses in procurement opportunities.

- The City actively seeks to partner with local First Nations communities on economic development initiatives and infrastructure projects. For example, Courtenay has collaborated with the K'ómoks First Nation on various projects, including the development of the Courtenay Riverway Park.
- The City has also participated in Indigenous procurement training and workshops to better understand and incorporate Indigenous values and practices into their procurement processes.
- City staff have participated in a cultural training program called the "Blanket Exercise Workshop" where they gained a deeper understanding of First Nations experiences, the lasting impacts of colonization, and the devastating effects of residential schools in Canada.
- The City's Official Community Plan identifies "Reconciliation" as one of the four cardinal directions, emphasizing the importance of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples recognizing the significance of the land and resources to local First Nations. The plan acknowledges the need to engage in meaningful dialogue, collaboration, and partnership with Indigenous communities to address the historical injustices and work towards reconciliation.

Overall, the City of Courtenay remains strongly committed to building positive and respectful relationships and working towards reconciliation and healing.

DISCUSSION:

The City, as it begins to develop the Reconciliation Framework has engaged an indigenous relations specialist, Ginger Gosnell-Myers (see biography attached), to support this important work - ensuring culturally appropriate approaches and processes as we continue to develop relations with the K'ómoks First Nation. Ms. Gosnell-Myers, is quoted in the City's Official Community Plan under the cardinal direction of Reconciliation:

"Indigenous people need to experience truth and reconciliation, not have to constantly fight for it."

- Ginger Gosnell-Myers, Nisga'a-Kwakwaka'wakw,
Indigenous Fellow with SFU Morris J Wosk Centre for Dialogue

Upon the early advice of Ms. Gosnell-Myers, the City will be also be engaging a local indigenous contractor to assist in local relationship and trust building activities. Our expert consultant will offer invaluable advice and guidance to both the City and the relationship builder, drawing upon their extensive experience and expertise in Indigenous engagement and reconciliation. This collaboration will ensure a culturally appropriate approach that is also tailored to the specific needs and priorities of the K'ómoks First Nation community.

At this time, it is not possible, and would be inappropriate to identify any timelines for framework activities, as all efforts and processes are intended to be mindful and respectful of the expectations of the K'ómoks First Nation. It is crucial for local governments to be patient when undertaking First Nations reconciliation work because deep-rooted systemic issues and historical injustices cannot be resolved overnight. Rebuilding trust, healing intergenerational trauma, and addressing the impacts of colonization all take time and dedication to dismantle. Rushing the process can further harm the relationship with First Nations communities and hinder progress towards reconciliation. By being patient and taking the necessary steps to listen, learn, and collaborate with Indigenous peoples, local governments can build stronger, more meaningful relationships and create lasting positive change for all involved. As such, Council will receive regular updates on activities and opportunities when determined and as appropriate.

POLICY ANALYSIS:

City of Courtenay’s Official Community Plan: Reconciliation is one of the City’s four cardinal directions. As outlined in the OCP, “the City commits to incorporating Indigenous perspectives into its work and decision-making process, and to providing equitable and inclusive services that benefit Indigenous peoples. The City will seek guidance from Indigenous partners in how to make this commitment a reality” (City of Courtenay, 2022, p. 20).

United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP): Sets out the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples, as well as their rights to self-determination, lands, territories, and resources. The declaration was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007 and serves as a framework for promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples around the world.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The development of the Reconciliation Framework and related relationship building activities are included in the City Manager’s operating budget.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:

This process will be led by the City Manager (Administrative) and Council (Government), but will ultimately include all City staff.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:

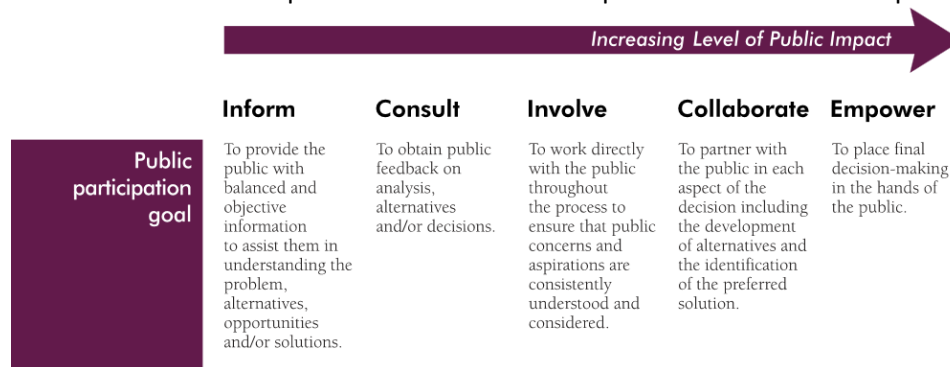
This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities:

- Good Governance - Develop a Reconciliation Framework

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

The City is currently undertaking the development of an Engagement Strategy. Recognizing colonial history, and the unique relationship between local governments and First Nations government, a tailored First Nations Engagement Strategy will be developed as part of the Reconciliation Framework. Distinct from First Nations government, organizations supporting or working with First Nations and indigenous peoples will be included in the development of the City’s overarching Engagement Strategy. These two strategies will ensure appropriate and impactful engagement with K’ómoks First Nation, community partners, and residents.

Staff would inform the public based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:



RECOMMENDATION: THAT Council receive the “Reconciliation Framework” briefing note.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Ginger Gosnell-Meyers Biography

Prepared by: Kate O’Connell, M.P.P., Director of Corporate Services

Concurrence: Geoff Garbutt, M.PI., MCIP, RPP, City Manager (CAO)

Attachment 1: Ginger Gosnell-Myers Biography

Ginger Gosnell-Myers, from the Nisga'a and Kwakwak'awakw Nations is passionate about advancing Indigenous rights and knowledge through public policy and engagement processes. Truth is the pathway to reconciliation, and her award-winning projects have broken down barriers while co-creating new approaches for systemic change.

Her work within urban planning centres on the creation of new engagement processes with local First Nations and urban Indigenous communities. She brings a critical process design approach to re-structuring capital and infrastructure projects so that Indigenous knowledge is reflected meaningfully throughout, ensuring co-learning for all parties in centered, going beyond the normal token or decorative only approaches used. Ginger's projects are used to re-define government policies and industry processes, creating new standards that meet commitments to UNDRIP and the TRC 94 Calls to Action.

In November 2019, Ginger was appointed as the first Indigenous Fellow with the Simon Fraser University Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue. This appointment reflects her distinguished achievements as a thought leader and practitioner who brings a deep understanding of urban Indigenous issues, years of practice in bridging Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in developing public policy and a passion for innovating new engagement processes that advance the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Ginger's fellowship focuses on [Decolonization and Urban Indigenous Planning](#), and builds upon the 20+ years she has in this field.

Ginger was the City of Vancouver's first Indigenous Relations Manager where she was central to advancing Vancouver as the world's first official [City of Reconciliation](#), and from 2013-2018 worked to bridge Indigenous policies, programs and relations. Through her work with the City, she identified tangible opportunities across all City departments to advance reconciliation. Guided by Ginger's leadership, more than 100 initiatives were launched in the first four years. Key to this work was Vancouver recognizing that it was on unceded Coast Salish territories – the only government in Canada to officially recognize this. Also integral was implementing the 29 out of the 94 Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Calls to Action, and strengthening the relationship between local First Nations, the urban Indigenous community.

Throughout 2008-2011 Ginger worked on the Environics [Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study](#) as both Project Manager and Public Engagement Director. The UAPS is Canada's largest research study on Aboriginal people living in urban environments and has become the leading research on urban Aboriginal people's values, aspirations, experiences, and identity. 11 major Canadian cities were part of this study and required over 100 mainly Indigenous surveyors to achieve the needed 2500 interviews with Indigenous peoples, and an additional 2500 mainstream Canadians. In 2010 the UAPS received the Public Policy Impact Award by the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association, and the IPAC/Deloitte Public Sector Leadership Award for not-for-profit organizations.

She has facilitated and spoken at many provincial, national and international events, including the International Indigenous Women & Wellness Conference, the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, and the United Nations Permanent Forum of Indigenous Peoples. An experienced event planner, Ginger has organized many successful events, conferences, and workshops across Canada. Her commitment to advancing Indigenous issues led her to work as the Western Assistant to the late and former Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Development Andy Scott, advising the Minister on issues pertaining to BC and Alberta.

Ginger has written for two books: "[Co-creating the Cities We Deserve through Indigenous Knowledge](#)" – Sacred Civics (2022); and, "Creating a Nation of Nations – Aboriginal youth and Canadian politics" - Notes from Canada's Young Activists: A Generation Stands up for Change (2007). In 2012 as part of the CBC documentary series "8th Fire", Ginger was highlighted and profiled for her views on Indigenous issues and relations in Canada. She has delivered a TedX Talk - '[Canadian Shame: A History of Residential Schools](#)'.

In 2022 and 2023 Ginger was recognized as one of BC's 500 most influential business leaders in British Columbia through Business in Vancouver Magazine, in 2023 she received the YWCA's Woman of Distinction Award – Reconciliation, and in 2024 was named one of Vancouver's 50 most powerful people through Vancouver Magazine. Ginger is a Fellow with the Environics Institute, is a 2004 Action Canada Fellow, and is currently the Chairperson of Greenpeace Canada's Board of Directors.