



MEMORANDUM

TO: Chair and Members of the Community and Corporate Affairs Committee

FROM: Beverley King, Manager of Community and Adult Services

DATE: January 24, 2020

MEMORANDUM NO.: MEM-LIB-2020-0002

RE: Truth and Reconciliation

PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform Community and Corporate Affairs Committee of the Council of the Library's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation efforts.

BACKGROUND:

Indigenous people are individuals with a direct connection to the original people of North America. Indigenous is used as a collective term to acknowledge three unique and distinct groups within Canada: Inuit, Métis and First Nations.¹ The Inuit are Indigenous people who live primarily in Inuit Nunangat, a Canadian Inuit term that refers to the land, water and ice that make up their homeland in Northern Canada. The Métis are groups of people who can trace their descent to both the First Nations people and early, primarily French settlers to Canada. First Nations describes the original people of Canada who have lived primarily south of the Arctic Circle. There are more than 50 different Nations across Canada, each with their own distinct language and culture, and spread among more than 630 First Nations communities from coast to coast.

The Halton Hills Public Library (HHPL) is on the treaty lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nations (MCFN). Treaty 19, also known as the Ajetance Purcahse was signed on October 28, 1818 by representatives of the Crown and Anishinaabe peoples.

According to the 2016 Census, 1,025 people (1.7%) identified as Aboriginal in Halton Hills. This includes those who are First Nations (North American Indian), Métis, or Inuk (Inuit) and/or those who are Registered or Treaty Indians and/or those who have membership in a First Nation or Indian band. There were 150 people who identified as having Aboriginal ancestry which refers to whether a person has ancestry associated

¹ AIRS Inform Canada I&R Training Manual 2019

with the Aboriginal peoples of Canada that is First Nations (North American Indian), Métis, and Inuit.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released a final report in December 2015 that contained 94 calls to action² including calls to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation.

Of the 93 calls to action, call 69 refers directly to libraries:

Library and Archives Canada must respect and respond to the inalienable right of Indigenous peoples to know the truth of the residential school experience and legacy. We call upon Library and Archives Canada to:

- i. Fully adopt and implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the *United Nations Joint-Orientlicher Principles*, as related to Aboriginal peoples' inalienable right to know the truth about what happened and why, with regard to human rights violations committed against them in the residential schools.
- ii. Ensure that its record holdings related to residential schools are accessible to the public.
- iii. Commit more resources to its public education materials and programming on residential schools.

Members of the Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA) recognized that all libraries, archives and cultural memory institutions in Canada must participate in reconciliation efforts. On April 24, 2017, the CFLA's Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Committee released its initial report that includes a set of 10 recommendations³ to support and guide these efforts. These recommendations have informed HHPL's approach to TRC.

The Library officially took up the call to action in 2016 when it applied for and received a Community Foundation of Halton North grant to support Canada 150 programming in 2017. The program was called Celebrating our Indigenous Roots. Since then, the Library has continued to incorporate strategies for Indigenous initiatives into the Library's strategic plan. Throughout the journey, Indigenous leaders have all stressed the importance of asking questions and taking time to learn the appropriate traditions and ceremonies to ensure that staff are respectful of their culture and beliefs. Although progress may feel slow, the Library has adhered to this advice and as a result, staff are developing meaningful and respectful relationships with the Indigenous community. HHPL has also learned from the experiences of other Library systems and communities and used this knowledge to inform decision making.

² http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

³ <http://cfla-fcab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Truth-and-Reconciliation-Committee-Report-and-Recommendations.pdf>

COMMENTS:

Many public libraries drafted recommendations to help inform the direction of their library. Halton Hills Public Library has divided those initiatives into the following categories modeled on those established by Toronto Public Library:

1. Breaking Down Organizational Barriers
2. Indigenizing Library Spaces: Physical and Virtual
3. Incorporating Indigenous Content into Programming
4. Improving Access to Indigenous Content through Collections
5. Enabling and Empowering Indigenous Communities
6. Building Capacity and Staff Competency

Breaking Down Organizational Barriers

In order to break down organizational barriers, Halton Hills Public Library must first conduct their own research on their treaty lands and then connect with their Indigenous community through appropriate channels. Lessons learned from larger Library systems have been unanimous that senior leaders must be involved in leading organizational change. Many systems hired junior staff dedicated to establishing programs and developing relationships with First Nation communities, however, these staff members were unable to make organizational decisions to move the relationships forward. Senior leaders were required to be involved in the processes to maintain respectful consultation and advance their organizations truth and reconciliation objectives.

The Mayor of Halton Hills is the appropriate first contact for Chief Stacey Laforme of the MCFN. That does not preclude the Library from establishing their own relationship, but it does limit what the Library can do to break down barriers in the larger municipality.

The Library will:

1. *Identify the appropriate committees where the Library can connect with Indigenous community associations and leaders to help the Library break down barriers to access, drive inclusion and create community connections through cultural experiences.*

Without a formal friendship centre in Halton Region, the Library is working closely with the Halton Information Providers network to develop relationships with the Oakville Partnership on Truth and Reconciliation and joint Halton School Board's Indigenous Education Advisory Committee. These relationships take time and commitment to develop and maintain.

Through the teaching of Chief Stacey Laforme, Kim Wheatley, Carolyn King and many other local Indigenous community leaders, the Library is now more fully aware of the cultural practices that should be observed when hosting Indigenous leaders, performers, artists and authors. For example two leaders graciously explained to one staff member the cultural significance of the tobacco offering and then taught the appropriate way to prepare and present the offering. It is also important to note that not all Indigenous people accept tobacco offerings so

asking the appropriate cultural practice is critical to ensure understanding and maintaining respect.

Through these local community connections, the Library was invited to be part of the Moccasin Identifier Project and as such, has been able to share the kit with the Town's Economic Development, Innovation and Culture Division and enabled the community to explore the material in the kit during Culture Days.

2. *Make land and treaty acknowledgement statements before meetings, programs and events.*

Currently the Library is using the MCFN land acknowledgement statement as it appears on their website:

We would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is part of the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit

Recognizing that offering land acknowledgements for every meeting, program and event has been viewed as repetitive and the effectiveness is debated within Indigenous advisory committees (specifically those of the Ontario Public Library and Toronto International Film Festival), at this time, HHPL has chosen to make land and treaty acknowledgement statements at larger programs and events. The intention is not to undermine the importance or significance of land and treaty acknowledgements, but instead to ensure that those statements will be more impactful when delivered.

The Library recently hosted Chief Stacey Laforme of the MCFN as part of the Local Author Showcase on Culture Days weekend. This event provided an opportunity to speak informally with Chief Stacey and ask for his preferred direction on the land and treaty acknowledgement statement. Chief Stacey prefers that communities within MCFN treaty lands use the official MCFN statement provided.

The Library is welcome to submit a request for a more formal statement to be approved after the Library has thoroughly researched who was on the land and considered the appropriateness of the proposed statement. Library staff are currently researching and considering the appropriate wording for a longer statement.

Indigenizing Library Spaces: Physical and Virtual

1. *Post land and treaty acknowledgement statements in all public branches.*

The MCFN has drafted recommended wording for signage.

Halton Hills Public Library is located on the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit.

In addition to the MCFN wording, the signs also feature the logo of the MCFN and the Anishinaabe Moccasin as highlighted in the Moccasin Identifier Kit and recommended by Carolyn King and Chief Stacey Laforme. The moccasin is the official recognized symbol for all First Nations communities in Ontario.

2. *Encourage, enable and empower Indigenous peoples to practice their beliefs by removing barriers and restrictions on smudging at Library programs, meetings and events.*

The Library acknowledges that the use of the four sacred medicines (tobacco, sweet grass, sage and cedar) of the First Nation people forms part of First Nation cultures, practice and heritage. In order to achieve this goal, the Library must work closely with appropriate municipal staff to establish protocols to ensure that the use of medicines is done in the safest and most respectful manner. Currently smudging has taken place in the Library and Cultural Centre on an adhoc basis.

3. *Advocate for and support the Town's activities aimed at promoting Indigenous culture. This includes supporting art exhibits and other activities planned by the Economic Development, Innovation and Culture Division.*

The Library will continue to work collaboratively to support and cross-promote Indigenous cultural activities.

4. *Support the issues deemed important by the MCFN by providing spaces for members to meet, share information, and deliver programs through opportunities for co-sponsorship.*

The Library is open to honouring the general terms of our partnership agreements if the situation ever arises that the MCFN requires space for meetings or programs. Considering the historical context of formalized agreements, the Library will not pursue a formal partnership agreement with the MCFN. Currently the Library has only held one program in cooperation with the MCFN. The Library adhered to the MCFN's Logo Usage Policy as presented on their website and respected their request for an honourarium. Indigenous leaders should be compensated for their time when asked to speak or consult.

5. *Engage in local consultation with members of Indigenous communities, through a variety of approaches, both formal and informal, on ways to make the Library more culturally relevant, respectful and welcoming.*

Currently the Library has relied heavily on informal consultations. Formal relationships with the MCFN would be better managed through the Mayor of the Town of Halton Hills.

6. *Consider engaging and consulting with Indigenous agencies and community members in future capital projects if Indigenous design or art will be incorporated.*

The Library has informally suggested that the Economic Development, Innovation and Culture Division and the Recreation and Parks Department consider incorporating Indigenous art as part of the courtyard design outside of the Library and Cultural Centre.

7. Consider the use of Indigenous names for new building projects where possible.

The Library has already suggested that a future branch take on an Indigenous name to be approved by the MCFN. For example Esquesing may be appropriate. Esquesing is said to come from a First Nations word meaning “the land of the tall pine,” but is more likely to come from the Mississauga Annishinaabe word ishkwessin meaning “that which lies at the end,” which was the original name for Bronte Creek.⁴

Incorporating Indigenous Content into Programming

- 1. Incorporate land and treaty acknowledgement statements into introductory remarks at appropriate programs and events. When appropriate use a longer and more formal acknowledgement statement to educate participants on the importance of the statement and to acknowledge that Indigenous nations were vibrant and active on Turtle Island, the lands and territories now called “Canada”, thousands of years before confederation in 1867.*

The land and treaty acknowledgement statement has been incorporated into larger programs and event. A longer and more formal statement is being considered.

- 2. Continuously revisit programming with Indigenous content to ensure that programs remain fresh and relevant. Programs should be offered year round, not just during Aboriginal Month in June.*

Since the Canada 150 programming in 2017, the Library has continued to develop programs with Indigenous content. For example the Library hosted Chief Stacey Laforme as part of the Local Authors Showcase on Culture Days.

- 3. Support established Indigenous programs by integrating them into those of the Library.*

For example, Library staff members were encouraged to participate in Orange Shirt Day on September 30. Through participation staff members were able to raise awareness of the initiative and educate patrons through conversations. Similarly, the Library was included as a pilot site for the Moccasin Identifier Kit

⁴ <http://images.burlington.halinet.on.ca/9469/data>

and as such, has ensured that the kit is being used in programs in the community to raise awareness of Indigenous culture and heritage.

Improving Access to Indigenous Content through Collections

1. *Ensure that the Library's collection has a thorough representation of Indigenous content especially on the topics of Truth and Reconciliation, treaties, and residential schools. Collections should also be representative of the achievements, successes, and accomplishments of Indigenous communities by making available and accessible the rich diversity of Indigenous writers, authors and illustrators.*

A review of the Indigenous collection was completed in 2018 to ensure the collection is accurate with appropriate terminology, non-stereotypical depictions and imagery and an authentic voice.

2. *Ensure that children's materials with Indigenous content are well represented in the collection, and that the Indigenous content in children's collections is culturally relevant, appropriate, and respectful. Indigenous children should see themselves and their cultures reflected positively in the collection.*

A review of the children's collection was completed in 2018. Current collection development policies ensure that collections meet this objective.

3. *Incorporate Indigenous content into displays. Focal displays should be considered year-round, not just during Aboriginal Month in June.*

The Library strives to include Indigenous authors in general Library displays throughout the year.

4. *Consider updating cataloguing and classification practices to include more culturally relevant terminology that reflects Indigenous perspectives of knowledge.*

HHPL is currently monitoring the work of Toronto Public Library (TPL) which has followed the lead of many academic libraries in updating their cataloguing and classification processes. As discussed, most recently at Ontario Public Library's Community Led Think Tank during a presentation on Decolonizing Collections, there is no formal practice to follow at this time, but libraries are encouraged to make changes based on what updates would best suit their community. Adoption of a similar process (to that of TPL) that has already been established in consultation with the MCFN would help facilitate MCFN approval.

Enabling and Empowering Indigenous Communities

1. *Continue to consult local Indigenous community members to ensure that their cultural practices and interests are reflective in HHPL's programs and services.*

Library staff have established mutually respectful relationships with several local community leaders. These leaders have been consulted informally on everything from programs to land recognition signage.

Building Capacity and Staff Competency

1. *Provide staff with professional development opportunities and resources to augment their knowledge and understanding of Indigenous communities.*

The Library hosted a KARIOS Blanket Exercise for staff on November 25. Staff members were also provided with educational material and shirts in advance of Orange Shirt Day. Staff members are also encouraged to participate in local Indigenous cultural events such as the Indigenous Water Ceremony and Anishinaabe Relationships to the Natural World Hike held as part of Culture Days. Workshops and even online courses such as the University of Alberta's Indigenous Canada MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) are available to staff who would like to learn more. The Library is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment to support Indigenous staff.

2. *Establish protocols and best practices for staff engaging with Elders and Indigenous Leaders to ensure appropriate practices are exercised.*

Protocols and best practices should be established in collaboration with the Town of Halton Hills. Currently informal practices are being shared between the Library and Economic Development, Innovation and Culture Division. Culture

Protocols and best practices should be established in consultation with Elders.

CONCLUSION:

The Library is committed to the process of reconciliation with First Nations communities. We acknowledge that our work takes place on the treaty lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit.

Reviewed and approved by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Geoff Cannon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Geoff Cannon, Chief Librarian

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brent Marshall', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Brent Marshall, Chief Administrative Officer