



CITY OF NEW WESTMINSTER

Truth Before Reconciliation: Our Journey

June 2023

Message from the Mayor



New Westminster was incorporated in 1860, and is often described as the oldest City in Western Canada.

Along with this comes the modern acknowledgement of its unique role in the colonization of the Lower Mainland: that of a beachhead and a seat of colonial government even prior to the formation of British Columbia or Canada. The City has a responsibility to understand and acknowledge that deep history, and where possible, correct the wrongs associated with that history.

Until very recently, much of our preliminary Reconciliation activity has occurred without clarity for much of the community. The purpose of this journal is to open up this process and provide a comprehensive review of recent City activities. It is a journal of work begun and of work in progress.

As a Local Government and a Council, we admit that we have made mistakes in our early steps toward Reconciliation, but are committed to learning and making the necessary corrections. We have also achieved some successes for which our community should be proud. The reality of Reconciliation work, when done mindfully and honestly, is that the mistakes and successes are part of the same journey.

The publication of this journal signifies our commitment to truth-telling, to truth-seeking and to Reconciliation that directly responds to our part in colonization, both past and present. I invite our entire community to join us on this path.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Johnstone'.

Patrick Johnstone
Mayor



For more information:
yearoftruth.ca

Published by the City of
New Westminster, June 2023.

New Westminster Reconciliation Backgrounder

NEW WESTMINSTER

British Columbia.

SCALE TWELVE INCHES TO A MILE. (5273.)

NEW WESTMINSTER'S RECONCILIATION EFFORTS are motivated by a responsibility to recognize and to honour the deep original connections to the land by Halkomelem speaking Nations. Because of the City's proximity to the Fraser River, these Nations are vast and far-reaching. There are many examples of Nations who used the land and river for many purposes. Some Nations lived on the land and river while others travelled between the river and their traditional territories or maintained seasonal fishing villages connected to the river. The City acknowledges that its very existence was built upon the destruction of these connections, and of the lives and livelihoods of the original inhabitants of the land. The Nations that have connections to the land include but may not be limited to, Katzie First Nation; Kwantlen First Nation; Kwikwetlem First Nation; Musqueam Indian Band; Qayqayt First Nation; Squamish Nation; and Tsleil-Waututh Nation. Unless referring to specific Nations by name, we will use the term 'local Nations' for the purposes of this report.

In December of 2016, a group of New Westminster residents presented their commitment to Reconciliation to the City's Mayor and Council. It was also during this time that the New Westminster Museum and Archives hosted the Witness Blanket at the Anvil Centre from December 5th, 2016 to April 21st, 2017, The Witness Blanket display was the catalyst that inspired the community-led event, *Community Stories of Truth and Reconciliation*. In April of 2017, City Council endorsed the resultant recommendations from *Reconciliation and the City of New Westminster: A Community Journey*.

THIS PAGE: MAKING "KUS-KIS" IN CAMP, 1868, NEW WESTMINSTER. IMAGE P143 COURTESY OF THE ROYAL BC MUSEUM.

COVER IMAGE 1: "INDIAN HUTS AND SHELTER TENTS AMONGST THE PINE TREE STUMPS OF "STUMP CITY" ALIAS NEW WESTMINSTER, FRASER RIVER. B. COL. OOLACHINS, OR CANDLE FISH DRYING. INDIAN CHILDREN SQUATTING." 1868, NEW WESTMINSTER. IMAGE J-07910 BY FREDERICK DALLY, COURTESY OF THE ROYAL BC MUSEUM.

COVER IMAGE 2: PARTICIPANT AT NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY, 2022.



In 1859 settlers occupied this land that was actively supporting local First Nations.

None of this was done legally, and the nations whose land was taken are still here.



RECOMMENDATIONS FROM RECONCILIATION AND THE CITY OF NEW WESTMINSTER: A COMMUNITY JOURNEY:

- That the City of New Westminister makes a concrete and actionable commitment to the TRC 'Calls to Action', in particular those that apply to municipal government responsibilities as presented by Dr. Marie Wilson to the UBCM in 2015.
- That the Mayor and Council request a report from staff regarding the notes above TRC 'Calls to Action' and how the City of New Westminister will operationalize actions that are undertaken.
- That the City of New Westminister agrees to find ways to name and rename civic assets that would reflect Reconciliation, acknowledge the unceded territory of Coast Salish people, and demonstrate diversity and inclusivity.
- That the City of New Westminister support, through funding and other tangible resourcing, a community-led process of Reconciliation that would include forums and dialogue, Indigenous-led events and actions, and other creative civic minded actions that demonstrate the spirit and principles of Reconciliation.

The Witness Blanket display was the catalyst that inspired the community-led event, "Community Stories of Truth and Reconciliation".



In 2018, the City of New Westminster's identified Reconciliation, Inclusion and Engagement as a priority in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan. The key directions were as follows:

- Actively and meaningfully engage with Indigenous Nations, Bands, communities and individuals to develop enduring relationships.
- Ensure that the organization's engagement practices and processes are representative of the entire community.
- Continue to monitor, evaluate and respond to emerging community and social issues.
- Create a welcoming, inclusive and accepting community, which promotes a deep understanding and respect for all cultures.

The primary actions identified to accomplish this were as follows:

- Complete a Reconciliation Framework that includes information on the practices of other jurisdictions and is based on engagement with Indigenous Nations, Bands, communities, individuals and the community at large.
- Incorporate the principles and guidelines of the Reconciliation Framework in the development and update of City strategies, plans and policies.
- Develop and implement an outreach, education, awareness and advocacy program around Reconciliation actions for City Council, City staff and the community at large.



PHOTO OF CHIEF JOE ALPHONSE FROM 2022 CHIEF AHAN MEMORIAL EVENT WITH THE T'SILHQOT'IN NATION

During this period, the City experienced a sharp learning curve as it navigated the complexities of building relationships with local Nations and with the urban Indigenous community, as well as discovering the City's true history of colonization and its impacts on local Nations. In the beginning, the City took an ad hoc approach to Reconciliation while it observed and gathered information that would inform its direction. The City quickly recognized that the ad hoc approach was resulting in unintended consequences, so in January of 2019, it engaged the Castlemain Group; a Reconciliation consulting firm to assist the City in the development of a Reconciliation Strategy.

Reconciliation Strategy Preparation



PHOTO FROM 2022 CHIEF AHAN MEMORIAL EVENT WITH THE T'SILHQOT'IN NATION

AS OF THE WRITING of this report, the City has spent time learning about the priorities associated with Reconciliation and the various ways with which, it might answer the 'Calls to Action' identified by the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission**. One of the ways it did this was through internal workshops with the Castlemain Group in May 2019. The purpose of these workshops were to develop a communications strategy to assist in the co-development of a Reconciliation Framework between the City and Local First Nations. This process resulted in a draft Reconciliation Framework Communications Strategy framed around a set of guiding principles.

Reconciliation is a process of healing relationships that requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms.



COMMUNICATIONS GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **Authenticity:** transparency, “walk the talk”
- **Humility:** We do not know all the answers, holding an open space, asking questions
- **Informal:** Not procedures-or agenda-focused. It is relationship-focused (sharing meals, no set agenda)
- **Resourcing:** Recognizing that communities may not have the means (financial, human resource capacity) to fully engage or to engage at the same level as other communities
- **Flexibility:** Willing to travel; meeting format; balance of meeting attendees; sudden cancellation due to death in the community
- **Leadership-driven:** Mayor to make initial communication; Mayor and Councillor(s) to attend meetings with communities
- **Unassuming:** Not making assumptions about what First Nations may, or may not, want. Ensuring that actions taken are done in partnership with First Nations, not on the assumption that this is what they may want

During the workshop, there was also discussion around consultation methods regarding regulated projects that were in progress at the time. The projects include: Riverfront Connection; 660 Quayside Drive and Riverfront Park Development; Q to Q Ferry Dock Improvements; and the City’s ‘Calls to Action’ update.

The City’s ‘Calls to Action’ Update

THE STRATEGY prioritized communication with Nations that either have existing relationships with the City or are in close proximity to the City. It contemplated three methods of initial engagement that included a formal letter of introduction from the Mayor followed by a phone call from the Mayor to the First Nation or Tribal Council Chair with the goal of securing a meeting between Mayor and Nation leadership.

As a City, our Reconciliation efforts are led by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s ‘Calls to Action’. Municipal ‘Calls to Action’ include, but are not limited to:

CTA #	AREA OF IMPACT
#17	Language and Culture
#23	Health
#40, #41	Justice
#43	UN Declarations on Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)
#47	Doctrine of Discovery
#55	National Council for Reconciliation
#57	Professional Development
#64	Education
#75, #76	Missing Children, Commemoration and Monuments
#77	National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR)
#87, #88, #91	Indigenous Sports
#92	Business and Reconciliation
#93	Newcomers



The **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** informs Reconciliation frameworks for Canada's institutions. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission provides the following principles to help guide New Westminster's Truth and Reconciliation journey:

1. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is the framework for Reconciliation at all levels and across all sectors of Canadian society.
2. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, as the original peoples of this country and as self-determining peoples, have Treaty, constitutional, and human rights that must be recognized and respected.
3. Reconciliation is a process of healing relationships that requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms.
4. Reconciliation requires constructive action on addressing the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have had destructive impacts on Aboriginal peoples' education, cultures and languages, health, child welfare, administration of justice, and economic opportunities and prosperity.
5. Reconciliation must create a more equitable and inclusive society by closing the gaps in social, health, and economic outcomes that exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.
6. All Canadians, as Treaty peoples, share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships.
7. The perspectives and understandings of Aboriginal Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers of the ethics, concepts, and practices of Reconciliation are vital to long-term Reconciliation.
8. Supporting Aboriginal peoples' cultural revitalization and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and connections to the land into the Reconciliation process are essential.
9. Reconciliation requires political will, joint leadership, trust building, accountability, and transparency, as well as a substantial investment of resources.
10. Reconciliation requires sustained public education and dialogue, including youth engagement, about the history and legacy of residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal rights, as well as the historical and contemporary contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canadian society.

All Canadians, as Treaty peoples, share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships.

The Commission was mandated to “guide and inspire a process of truth and healing, leading toward reconciliation within Aboriginal families, and between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal communities, governments, and Canadians generally.”

Three themes emerge from the 15 Calls to Action highlighted by the City which support this process. They are, Health and Wellness; Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation; and Community and City Education.



A. HEALTH & WELLNESS

The City of New Westminister is committed to supporting the health and wellness of Indigenous Peoples. Health and wellness encompasses mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health. Two examples of City activities that relate to health and wellness include the removal of the Judge Begbie statue from the courthouse and the naming of the t̓am̓asew'tx̓w Aquatics and Community Centre.

The calls to action that further reinforce this commitment are:

- #17: Language and Culture
- #23: Health
- #40: Justice

B. INDIGENOUS RIGHTS & RECONCILIATION

The City of New Westminister recognizes the inherent rights of the First Nations of this land. The City is committed to establishing and maintaining respectful relationships that acknowledge those inherent rights and that cultivate healthy Indigenous Nations and New Westminister community. Examples of the ways in which the City has accomplish this are through the endorsement of Reconciliation New West recommendations around Reconciliation and the endorsement of UNDRIP. In 2020, a New Westminister City staff representative assumed chair of Metro Vancouver Municipal Technical Advisory Committee on Indigenous Relations and in March of 2022 the City hired an Indigenous Relations Advisor to assist the City in the development and implementation of Indigenous Engagement and Reconciliation strategies.



THE BEGBIE STATUE AT THE NEW WESTMINSTER MUSEUM

The calls to action that further reinforce this commitment are:

- #43: UN Declarations on Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)
- #47: Doctrine of Discovery
- #55: National Council for Reconciliation
- #92: Business and Reconciliation



C. COMMUNITY & CITY EDUCATION

Before Reconciliation can be genuinely effective, Truth must come first. The City of New Westminster is committed to truth-telling through education of the community and City staff and Council around our shared colonial history and the collective generational trauma that has resulted in the lives of Indigenous people.

The City has engaged in many activities that support community and City education. A selection of those include: engaging Brad Marsden for a Community Reconciliation Workshop on legacies of Residential School and Indian Act; the expectation that all Cultural and Recreation Managers and senior program staff participate in Medicine Wheel Workshop; The presentation of 4 films presented with virtual talk-back by Gordon Loverin, Pamela Jones, Phyllis Webstad, Bruce McIvor, Kamala Todd and T'uy't'ananat-Cease Wyss; working closely with the Spirit of the Children Society on a variety of projects and programs; and the 215 exhibition with Johnny Bandura at the Museum.

The calls to action that further reinforce this commitment are:

- #57: Professional Development
- #64: Education
- #75, #76: Missing Children, Commemoration and Monuments
- #77: National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR)
- #87, #88, #91: Indigenous Sports



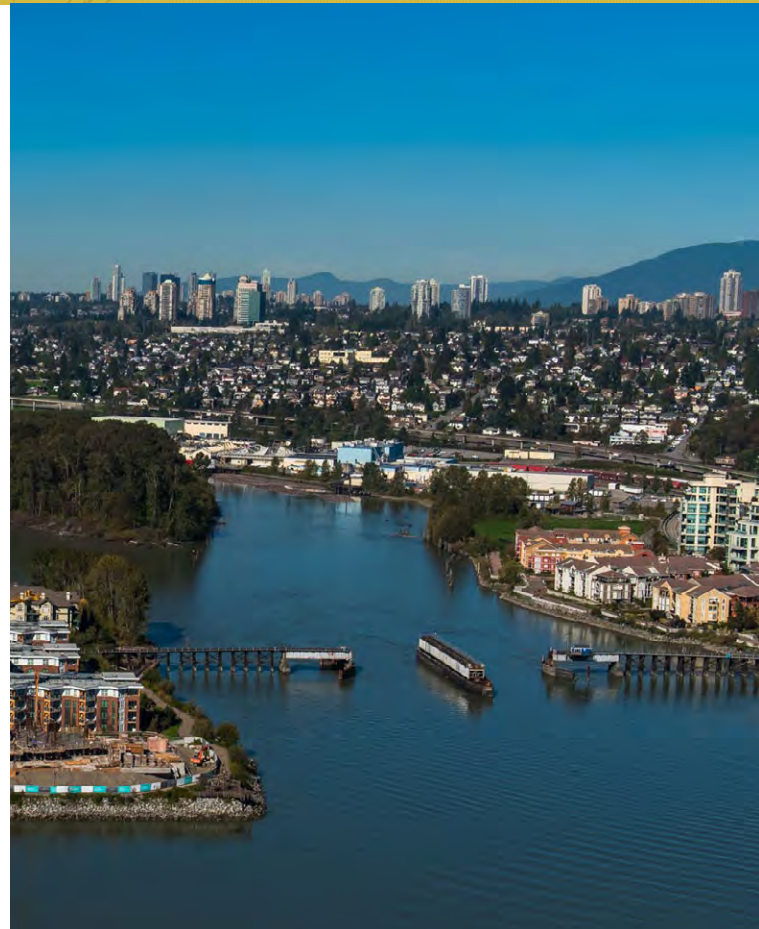
QAYQAYT ARTIST JOHNNY BANDURA TALKS ABOUT HIS PIECE "THE 215" WITH STUDENTS

Overview of Indigenous and First Nation Engagement 1990s through 2023

NEW WESTMINSTER has a vast and complex colonial history; because of this several First Nations have been displaced from this land but continue to claim it as part of their unceded traditional territories. The City recognises that its knowledge of these Nations is limited and that the act of colonization has worked to erase their memory from this land. We are committed to improving our understanding of impacts of these colonial legacies through the development of respectful and reciprocal relationships.

Prior to 2017, the City engaged exclusively with one Nation in matters related to rights and title, land use, customs, practices, traditions and histories. During this time, Indigenous engagement could be characterized as ceremonial; with invitations being extended for civic occasions such as council inaugurations and public events, or requests for letters of support to municipal projects. However, beginning in 2014, the City began hearing from other local Nations and senior levels of government that there are multiple claims to the New Westminster area. Consequently, the City understood it must develop a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to First Nations engagement in advance of developing large City initiatives.

By 2018, New Westminster had begun engaging more broadly with multiple Nations around projects falling under local government authority. This work would include consultation around amendments to the Official Community Plan and projects such as the City's Flood Management Plan, our Biodiversity and Natural Areas Strategy and our Community Energy and Emissions Plan.



Beginning in 2014, the City began hearing from other local Nations and senior levels of government that there are multiple claims to the New Westminister area.

Notable Actions



Naming of Aquatic Centre

IN EARLY 2019 the City worked with the urban Indigenous community to obtain their feedback and suggestions on how the new aquatic and community centre could support them. Throughout the engagement, participants emphasized the need to have appropriate representation of Indigenous culture reflected in the future facility. They also advised the city give the future Aquatic and Community Centre an Indigenous name and include Indigenous language throughout the facility.

In November the City re-engaged with this community along with representatives from the Kwantlen, Musqueam, Qayqayt and Squamish Nations to establish a Naming Advisory Panel to guide the identification of a name for the future facility. Panel members discussed the process and provided recommendations to City staff around potential questions for a broader public engagement, and to seek input on the name for the new facility.

Təməsewtx^w means Sea Otter House in the həńqəmińəń language.

Public engagement took place from December 2019 – January 2020 and included an online survey and open house. The Advisory Panel met again in February 2020 to review the findings and the themes identified through this engagement work. The Panel also consulted Language Keepers, and developed consensus to identify a name for the facility. They chose to recommend the name of an animal that could bring people together and best reflect the themes identified in the public engagement. The Panel also wanted to reflect the importance of the Fraser River by selecting a fish or aquatic animal. To this end they recommended Council choose “təməsewtx^w Aquatic and Community Centre” for the facility.

Təməsewtx^w means Sea Otter House in the həńqəmińəń language. həńqəmińəń was used as it is the downriver Halkomelem dialect spoken in the area now known as New Westminster.

City's Historical Analysis Work

On April 19, 2019 Council passed the following motions:

- THAT the City undertakes research to better understand the historical actions of the City as they relate to First Nations; and
- THAT the City provides opportunities for the community to learn the history and legacy of colonialism in New Westminster.

The above motions have been addressed through a detailed review of historic City actions and an analysis of these actions through the lens of three guiding documents:

1. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action which Council committed to on April 10, 2017.

2. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which was endorsed by Council as a framework for Truth and Reconciliation on December 3, 2018 (18 of the 44 UNDRIP Articles interface with the findings of this work).
3. "In Plain Sight Report: Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in B.C. Health Care", which in itself, is a response to the Articles of UNDRIP.

Outcomes of this work will support New Westminster's reconciliatory efforts with First Nations holding current or past interests in the New Westminster area. Moreover, this work will facilitate educating the community around the history and legacy of colonization in the City. In particular, two of the 16 "Calls to Action" identified for response by municipal government are addressed through this work - numbers 43 and 57 which include requirements for "skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism."

In summary, this work found six categories of action where the City's past actions have been found to contravene the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples. As well research has found five emergent narratives that describe the story of council actions between 1859 and 1999.

Historically, Indigenous Peoples are categorized as an administrative and financial burden.



"SKAGIT INDIAN CANOES AT NEW WESTMINSTER" (1868-1870) IMAGE J-00921 BY FREDERICK DALLY, COURTESY OF THE ROYAL BC MUSEUM.

CATEGORIES OF ACTION

1. Removal, Displacement and Relocation of Indigenous Peoples
2. Use, Lease, Purchase and Sale of Reserve Lands
3. Regulation of Indigenous Peoples
4. Management of Indigenous Bodies
5. Engagement With Indigenous Peoples
6. General Impacts of Colonization

The summary report was released on October 3rd, 2022 with ongoing engagement with local Nations. This engagement will ensure that the Nations' historical and current title to the land now known as New Westminster, are included in any further emerging narrative resulting from this work.

EMERGENT NARRATIVES

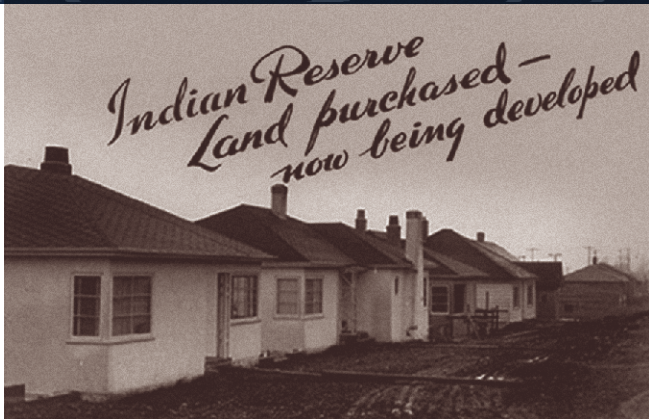
When considering the overall record set in its entirety, lasting narratives emerge from the story of New Westminster and action taken involves Indigenous peoples:

1. The infringement on the rights of Indigenous peoples in New Westminster built many of the municipal structures we still know today. In other words, the removal, management, regulation of Indigenous peoples and First Nations provided a tangible avenue for the formation and growth of various municipal structures.
 - a. Special committees, boards, local police, and City Solicitors are the key components of this process – along with City Council itself.

2. From the onset of colonization, Indigenous peoples have been treated as separate from City Council's vision of New Westminster.
 - a. Significant effort has been put into the removal, displacement, and relocation of Indigenous peoples from New Westminster – from lands designated as reserves, and lands previously inhabited by First Nations.
 - b. Indigenous Peoples are repeatedly cited as a "nuisance" to city development, sanitation, and civility. This pattern was identified by tracking how the term "nuisance" was used across the Minutes of Council and New Westminster Health Bylaw of 1869:8
 - i. Indigenous peoples are often defined as a "nuisance" (when, on or near private property, experience poor living conditions, are ill, or use alcohol or drugs).



IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ROYAL BC MUSEUM.



6TH AVENUE. IN 1943, THE CITY PURCHASED RESERVE LAND FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA FOR CITY DEVELOPMENT.

Council's 1999 request for treaty lands to become a part of the municipality illustrates a longstanding priority of lands to serve the City.

3. The City characterizes Indigenous peoples and First Nations as a homogenous group.
 - a. In the record, there are no or few accurate instances of distinguishing First Nations.
 - This is evident in the assignment of reserves to no First Nation in particular and,
 - By a general use of pan-indigenous language by Council (long-term use of the term "Indian" in all affairs with Indigenous peoples).
4. Indigenous Peoples are categorized as an administrative and financial burden. Neither the municipality nor Provincial Government will claim they are liable in matters of:
 - a. Treatment or death due to illness
 - b. Compensation for the destruction of homes and belongings
 - c. Legal proceedings
5. The City worked to retain its colonial image and function.
 - a. Long-term effort has been put into accessing and controlling local lands and waters, with an intended use for the benefit of the City, for the benefit of European settlers and businesses, and in the image of European settlers.
 - This effort was intentional and calculated, with Council repeatedly acknowledging the economic value and potential of local lands and waters from the onset of colonization to the development of the foreshore and eventual purchase of all Indian Reserves.
 - b. Little action was done to act upon land claims and concerns of First Nations within the time frame of this analysis.
 - In fact, Aboriginal Rights to local lands, including reserves, were repeatedly questioned in the Minutes of Council. Moreover, Council's 1999 request for treaty lands to become a part of the municipality illustrates a longstanding priority of lands to serve the City.
 - c. The majority of the City's energy to commemorate individuals has been for colonial figures and stories, while very little has been done to appropriately acknowledge or celebrate Indigenous peoples or their material heritage across the cityscape.
 - d. Very few instances of Indigenous resistance to removal are recorded in the record

Sister Community Agreement

ON OCTOBER 15, 2020, the City of New Westminster and the T̓silhqot̓'in Nation (which is made up of the six communities of Tl'etinqox, ʔEsdilagh, Yunešit'in, T̓sideldel, Tl'esqox and Xenigwet'in) became "sister communities" with the virtual signing of a sister community agreement.

The signing followed a July 18, 2019 ceremony co-hosted by New Westminster and the T̓silhqot̓'in Nation to commemorate the wrongful trial and hanging of T̓silhqot̓'in War Chief ʔAhan. In October 1864 Justice Matthew Begbie tried and ordered the execution of five T̓silhqot̓'in chiefs. The following summer, on July 18, 1865, a sixth, Chief ʔAhan, was tried and executed in New Westminster after being arrested while attempting to negotiate peace in the aftermath of the Chilcotin War. It is believed that Chief ʔAhan is most likely buried in New Westminster. On July 7, 2019, a T̓silhqot̓'in delegation also joined with City leaders to witness the removal of Judge Begbie's statue from outside the provincial courthouse in New Westminster, on Carnarvon Street in Begbie Square.

"The T̓silhqot̓'in National Government (TGN) was established in 1989 to meet the needs and represent the T̓silhqot̓'in Nation and T̓silhqot̓'in communities of Tl'etinqox, ʔEsdilagh, Yunešit'in, T̓sideldel, Tl'esqox and Xenigwet'in to re-establish a strong political government structure. The communities work as a Nation to continue the fight of their six war Chiefs of 1864. The war Chiefs stood against the Canadian Government in an effort to gain T̓silhqot̓'in Aboriginal Rights and Title to the lands we call T̓silhqot̓'in. TNG has a dedicated obligation to its people to establish programs that reflect T̓silhqot̓'in culture and customs in every aspect of governance." ¹

¹ T̓silhqot̓'in National Government. (2020). Our National Government. <http://www.tsilhqotin.ca/>

The T̓silhqot̓'in National Government (TGN) was established in 1989 to meet the needs and represent the T̓silhqot̓'in Nation and T̓silhqot̓'in communities of Tl'etinqox, ʔEsdilagh, Yunešit'in, T̓sideldel, Tl'esqox and Xenigwet'in to re-establish a strong political government structure



STARS OF THE NORTH PERFORMERS AT 2022 NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY.

The signing of this Sister Community **Memorandum of Agreement**, written both in English and in the T̓silhqot̓in language, reflected the commitment of both the City of New Westminster and the T̓silhqot̓in Nation to work together and support one another for the enrichment of both communities. It was the culmination of several years of relationship building – including through the 2017 wildfires – and a shared commitment to advance understanding and Reconciliation. This was not the first time the City of New Westminster has entered into a sister city relationship, but it was historic because it marks the first time that the City had formed a sister relationship with an Indigenous Nation.

COUNCIL TO COUNCIL MEETINGS

Several Council-to-Council meetings, as well as Mayor-to-Chief meetings have taken place from 2018 to 2022 with local First Nations. Through this engagement, Mayor and Council have had the opportunity to hear Nations' concerns, as well as to discover their individual priorities. The purpose of these conversations are to develop a deeper understanding of local Nations' connections to the land and to seek ways to collaborate that are mutually beneficial. The City will continue to pursue leadership meetings with the Nations on a regular basis in order to build trust and to develop more honest and meaningful relationships with all of the local Nations.

INDIGENOUS RELATIONS ADVISOR

In March of 2022, the City hired an Indigenous Relations Advisor to help guide their Reconciliation efforts. Up until that point, the City had engaged with Castlemain as a source of guidance and through that process came to understand the benefits of including a full-time Indigenous Relations Advisor to advise staff on their own consultative requirements, and to develop comprehensive engagement and Reconciliation strategies.

New Westminister Police Department

IN THE LAST WEEK OF JUNE 2022, the New Westminister Police Department (NYPD) invited the City's Indigenous Relations Advisor to spend the week with them. She participated in ride-alongs, and met with most of their units for brief overviews of the work they do.

HISTORY

The New Westminister police were the primary method of removing Indigenous people from their land and homes within the city limits of New Westminister when deemed a nuisance to City Council's vision for public spaces, public health, public sanitation, and when faced with the preferences of white property owners and business owners. In 1873, the City hired its first constable, Jonathan Morey for the specific purposes of displacing Indigenous people from their homes, and for the management of Indigenous people and their bodies after death.

NEW WESTMINSTER POLICE DEPARTMENT TODAY

The Indigenous Relations Advisor met with a wide cross section of units. Throughout the week, several common themes emerged. The following are recommendations from the Indigenous Relations Advisor that can be acted upon at any time:

1. *The need for records analysis, both historical and current*

In order to fully understand the depth of the internal issues, one first needs to take an honest look at the structures that are problematic. We can't change what we don't know. This process does not require Indigenous participation and can be acted upon immediately. The only thing that is required is the willingness to be unreservedly honest.

2. *Understanding how to ask the question around Indigeneity*

Subject matter experts are needed to train law enforcement agencies on how to ask the question around Indigenous



INDIGENOUS RELATIONS ADVISOR CHRISTINA COOLIDGE AND CONSTABLE LINDSAY SOO-CHAN

identity. The choice to self-identify is deeply personal but is vital for the collection of accurate statistics. Such statistics better enable departments to provide Indigenous people with appropriate resources. When it comes to law enforcement asking the question around Indigeneity, Indigenous people tend to be highly guarded. However, the knowledge of an individual's Indigenous identity will provide the NYPD with the ability to offer culturally appropriate resources. Cultural sensitivity training with subject matter experts can assist the department in walking this very fine line.

3. *The need for Indigenous-centered resources and individuals, such as Liaisons, Advocates and Elders*

Indigenous advocates are becoming more common in places like hospitals and schools. We need to ensure that they are available in law enforcement agencies as well. Providing that support is vital to the health and wellness of Indigenous people, such as access to Elders. Providing Elders for Indigenous staff and Indigenous community members interacting with police can provide a sense of belonging and build trust more easily. The benefits of this process will naturally extend outward to non-Indigenous staff who have the opportunity to build relationships with Indigenous Elders as well, by experiencing Indigenous ways of being.



CHRISTINA COOLIDGE AND SERGEANT ANDREW LEAVER

In order to fully understand the depth of the internal issues, one first needs to take an honest look at the structures that are problematic. We can't change what we don't know.

4. Training. Training. Training.

More education and training for law enforcement is urgently needed. Currently, the NWPD does receive some trauma-informed training but there is a need for trauma-informed training from an Indigenous perspective. In order to ensure that harm will not come to Indigenous people as a result of police policy and processes, a clear and meaningful understanding of generational trauma, the impacts of the residential school system, the Indian Act and the differences between stakeholders and rights holders from a community perspective will be necessary as a long-term and ongoing element of NWPD's strategic plan.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The City's Indigenous Relations Advisor has noted her appreciation of the NWPD's honest willingness to listen, learn and change. Examples of those efforts are their leadership, including the Chief of Police attending her Medicine Wheel workshop; their time spent with the City's Elder-in-Residence; their continued attendance at Soup and Bannock; and their participation in the City's Reconciliation Working Group. She also notes her appreciation that the department has recently made significant changes to their investigative processes in relation to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2 Spirit people; and that several NWPD leadership attended the Spirit of the Children Society's Red Dress Day ceremony out of uniform in acknowledgement of the difficult relationship between the police and Indigenous communities, and out of respect for the trauma the uniform can often trigger for Indigenous people.

Development of Truth Before Reconciliation Strategy 2022-23

THE TRUTH BEFORE RECONCILIATION STRATEGY (TBRS) was developed in order to address systemic barriers within the City that are preventing meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities and curtailing Reconciliation efforts. The strategy includes seven phases. Phase one was completed in July, 2022. Phase two began in January, 2023.

Establishment of a Reconciliation Strategy Working Group

City staff attended the first meeting of “Gathering to Work,” or “Reconciliation Working Group” (RWG) on July 26th 2022. It includes a wide cross section of departments as all departments are welcome and encouraged to participate in order to engage all levels of the organization, external rights holders, stakeholders, and City Council to create a coordinated approach, and holistic strategy to advance Reconciliation.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Two-Eyed Seeing governs the structure of the Reconciliation Working Group.

Two-Eyed Seeing (Elder Albert Marshall) is the process of learning to see with one eye, the strengths of Indigenous knowledge and ways of being; and with the other eye, the strengths of western knowledge and ways of being. When we use them both together, it creates a third space where both knowledge systems work together to produce holistic outcomes that nurtures health and wellness.

Authority

Any decisions needed in regard to the ways in which activities are accomplished are decided by consensus by those present in the meeting. This means *whatever we can live with*. We may not agree with everything, but we are willing to compromise if it's something we can live with. If one or more find they cannot live with it, then discussion is required until compromise can be reached.



IT'S A SUNNY DAY on the rez. Bessie sits at her sewing machine, stitching together the traditional blankets she has been making since she was a child. The house is alive as it always is with sounds of her children, her nieces and nephews. The women are making a mess in her kitchen and the men are telling jokes and laughing on the porch.

As she listens to their laughter and the whir of the machine, one of the young men stands beside her, “But Aunty” he says, “Can you really call those blankets traditional if you are using a sewing machine?”

She releases the pedal and looks upon his fine face and big brown eyes. And as she turns back to the hum of the machine she replies, “Back in the olden days, if we’d had sewing machines we would have used them.”



STARS OF THE NORTH PERFORMING AT 2022 NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY.

The Working Group will be responsible for advancing an Indigenous Engagement Strategy to remove barriers between the City and Indigenous Peoples.

There is no hierarchy in the RWG. The Indigenous Relations Advisor is neither the Chair nor the facilitator of the meetings, she is simply a meeting champion who ensures they continue. Any member is welcome to draft agendas or chair meetings.

Membership

The RWG has an open-door policy. Staff from all department and all levels are welcome to attend as little or as much as wanted. Four staff have volunteered to keep journals and are encouraged to write about their subjective experiences of the process. The researcher becomes part of the research, which is a demonstration of Participatory-Action Research. Participatory-Action Research is often used by Indigenous researchers as a form of storytelling.

HOW WE WILL BUILD AN ORGANIZATIONAL RECONCILIATION STRATEGIC PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

The Working Group will be responsible for advancing an Indigenous Engagement Strategy to remove barriers between the City and Indigenous Peoples. To determine the scope, the Working Group will explore Who, What, Where, Why, When, and How.

Then a Public and Private Sector Review will identify leading practices and approaches (in the region and beyond) with focus in the areas of employment, engagement and representation on boards, committees and advisory committees but includes all operational areas.

With these best practices, we will then conduct an inventory of the City by taking a holistic approach to identify and address current systemic barriers with the City. This phase will use an equity lens to complete a full, corporate wide review of policies, procedures, programs, practices, and resources. This review would begin in the areas of employment, engagement and representation



SPIRIT OF THE CHILDREN SOCIETY COLLABORATED WITH THE CITY TO HOST A SUCCESSFUL NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY EVENT, 2022



on boards, committees, and advisory committees but would include all operational areas. The inventory will also outline the intended outcomes of these initiatives to identify ways to address systemic barriers. This City review will help identify the barriers or obstacles for local Indigenous engagement, recruitment and retention with the City and participation on Boards and Committees.

The next phase will focus on a gap analysis and assessment to identify areas where the City is doing well, areas where more resources or a different approach is required, and where gaps or barriers may still exist that are not currently being addressed.

It will include a series of recommendations and associated outcomes, propose a methodology for ongoing measurement, and a cost benefit analysis. Upon completion, it will have identified various potential approaches for a strategic plan.

To summarize, the processes described above include an inventory, review and gap analysis that is the foundation for the development of a strategic plan and implementation roadmap. Upon completion, the Indigenous Relations Department will submit an approval report to Council on strategic plan and roadmap. This is all to guide and inform the right actions and changes moving forward.

2022 AND BEYOND

a. *Medicine Wheel Workshops*

A monthly Medicine Wheel workshop has been offered to staff beginning in the month of May. Up to the time of the writing of this report, more than 250 staff have voluntarily attended the day-long workshop including senior management; and as well as the Library, the New Westminster Police Department senior management team and the previous Mayor and Council. The current Mayor and Council are planning to participate in the workshop together as well.

The workshop offers an understanding of many Indigenous worldviews that includes the interdependence of community. It provides participants with the opportunity to learn more holistic ways of being and begin to reflect on the ways in which the City can begin to decolonize some of its internal structures. The workshops will be offered indefinitely as the City continues to evolve.



MEDICINE WHEEL WORKSHOP

The **Medicine Wheel workshop** offers an understanding of many Indigenous worldviews that includes the interdependence of community.



b. Update to New Westminster’s Indigenous Relations Website

In August, 2022, the City updated the website with a thorough summary of Indigenous relations activities dating back to 2014. This includes information about the City’s efforts to answer the ‘Calls to Action’, as well as an update on their Indigenous engagement efforts. Up to that point, there was very little information for the public regarding the City’s Reconciliation work, so it was a necessary first step in increasing transparency for the community and local First Nations. The City is committed to maintaining and improving upon communication in their Indigenous-focused work.

c. Elder in Residence

Elder-in-Residence with William Nelson, and Soup and Bannock began in September, 2022. It began casually but has expanded into a profound experience for everyone involved. The City’s Indigenous Relations Advisor along with Elder William, a residential school survivor and urban Indigenous man from Nisga’a and Gitxsan families, host weekly soup and bannock lunches with staff and guests. This weekly gathering has evolved into a joint effort by City staff. The time spent during those two hours provide an opportunity for staff to commune with one another,

as well as with Elder William. This in turn, is improving cross-departmental communication and exposing staff to Indigenous ways of being without the pressure of expectation. The relationships that are building from this experience and the resulting sense of wellness has permeated throughout the working environment.

Soup and bannock is often hosted at City Hall but it is also offered throughout City locations giving all staff the opportunity to participate. Elder William is also available to provide advice on special projects, attend meetings or provide one-on-one counsel for staff who want or need a connection with an Elder. Indigenous staff have also begun to identify themselves as many of them have expressed, some for the first time that they are in fact, Indigenous. Also, that through this initiative, they feel like they have value beyond their work title but also simply because they are Indigenous.

Staff have expressed their gratitude at being witness to such a remarkable atmospheric transformation for City staff simply by sitting together to enjoy soup and bannock, and to share in the joy of connection.

STAFF ENJOY INDIAN TACOS AT HOLIDAY GATHERING WITH ELDER WILLIAM

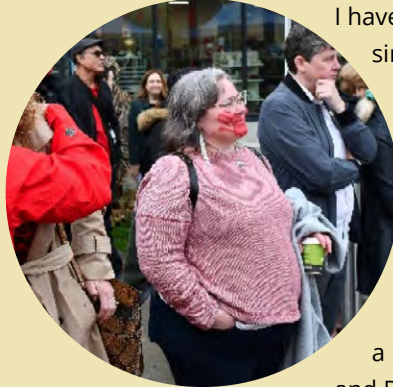




Tamara Scott, Intergovernmental Relations

I was first introduced to William Nelson as our Elder-in-Residence at the new program Christina Coolidge started called Soup and Bannock. Every Wednesday, she brought Elder William in and we all shared a communal pot of soup and homemade bannock from his niece. The hope was to open conversations in our Municipal Government and, in our professional and personal lives, to understand and work with our Indigenous friends and neighbours. I was very excited to take part in this initiative and immediately upon meeting Elder William, knew something special was about to happen. Elder William was warm, welcoming, and immediately accepting of us all and our questions. He has been a source of inspiration and comfort to every person who opens their heart to him. Through this relationship, I was personally honoured when I was invited to attend and represent our City at this year's Hobiye Welcome Dinner. I attended with Elder William as an honoured guest, and have never felt more welcome or part of a community. Attending Hobiye has been a highlight of my year and has opened my mind and heart. I cannot wait to attend next year's festivities.

Jen Arbo, Economic Development



I have been attending Soup and Bannock since the beginning and have found it educational, heartwarming, and very effective at breaking down silos. In March, I was asked to speak to Council about A Year of Truth and was grateful to be trusted to share Elder William's story of being a residential school survivor. It was a moving experience. At the next Soup and Bannock I was honoured when Elder William blanketed me, so that I know I am under his protection.

Erin Williams, Fire Chief

After I was appointed to Fire Chief, at Soup and Bannock Elder William presented me with an eagle feather. I have always struggled with our appropriation of the term, "Chief". When he presented me with the feather, he told me that in Indigenous communities, leaders are trusted servants who seek the best training, honing their skills so they are the very best they can be to serve their people. He said, "in our societies, we call those trusted servants, "Chief". Because of his words, it makes me feel proud to carry that title.



SOUP & BANNOCK



A
YEAR
OF
TRUTH

BUILDING ON THE GROUNDWORK of education and relationship-building, a next step is needed to more deeply understand what Truth and Reconciliation means. These two terms must be separated in order to truly learn and understand their significance. For this reason, March 2023 to March 2024 has been acknowledged as "A Year of Truth", with several actions that educate and acknowledge the truth of the harms of colonization and the Indian residential "school" system. It is important to note that this is A Year of Truth, not The Year of Truth; it may take several years to develop a deep enough understanding of the truth before truly meaningful reconciliatory acts can be undertaken.

Bringing forward the concept of A Year of Truth was inspired by work done by the previous Council and the release of the *Summary Report on Actions Taken by the City of New Westminster Involving Indigenous Peoples* in October of 2022. The work to uncover the dark history of New Westminster's violent past and its genocidal relationship with local Indigenous communities was an important and necessary first step in acknowledging, understanding and accepting the truth. Truth must come before Reconciliation because it is only through the seeking of truth that we will truly understand those things for which we need to reconcile.

Actions in Support of A Year of Truth

WHILE SOME ACTIONS have been determined already, some will be implemented as the need arises. Council will continue to receive updates as the work unfolds. There is an emphasis on interdepartmental collaboration and opportunities for learning in inclusive ways. Some of the planned actions include:

Continued professional development

- targeted for divisions or departments with unique needs such as police, fire, etc.

Truth must come before Reconciliation because it is only through the seeking of truth that we will truly understand those things for which we need to reconcile.

Economic Development Actions:

- Business Association Launch Program for Indigenous-Owned businesses. The Business Association launch program allows for grants of up to \$5,000 for a group to develop or revitalize a business association in three targeted areas - Queensborough, West End, and Sapperton - as well as two city-wide groups: Home-Based businesses, and Indigenous-Owned businesses. Staff in Economic Development have begun the task of promoting this opportunity and work is expected to take place over the course of 2023.
- E-Apply improvements to self-declare Indigeneity for data collection purposes. This, along with other voluntarily opt-in data, will provide a more robust picture of the types of business owners in New Westminster, and support the development of targeted programs.
- Opportunities for community participation through a variety of initiatives also exist. Some examples are:
- The Truth before Reconciliation Contest, which will take place in June and July.
- Public Art opportunities: Exploratory conversations with Public Art staff are underway to develop opportunities for the community to be involved, and more information will be shared as details are finalized.



STUDENT REFLECTS ON RECONCILIATION WHILE VISITING "THE 215" AT THE NEW WESTMINSTER MUSEUM IN 2021.

Heritage Services actions:

- Completing a Repatriation Policy this year to address Indigenous collections held by the museum.
- Working with Spirit of the Children Society and Buffalo Heart Medicine Healing Society to offer community programs aimed at improving respect and understanding of Indigenous ways of being.
- Extending the exhibition "Reconciling" that addresses Truths attached to acts of Reconciliation. Artist Luke Parnell explores a feeling of disenchantment through his piece *Neon Reconciliation Explosion*; the downed statue of Judge Begbie addresses the imposition of foreign laws on a land; and the 215 shoes placed at New Westminster's cenotaph reflects our community's response to the residential school legacy in Canada.

It is important to note that this is A Year of Truth, not The Year of Truth.

- Assisting local Indigenous groups to facilitate the planning and delivery of both National Indigenous Peoples Day and Truth and Reconciliation Day events for the residents of New Westminster. Each event is aimed at improving awareness of the diversity of Indigenous experience and culture in the city.
- Further advancing engagement with Kwantlen, Kwikwetlem, Musqueam, Qayqayt, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations around the findings of the City's historical analysis research. The intent of this engagement is to work with these Nations to seek support and guidance in educating City staff and the community on the impacts of past City actions. To this end, it is anticipated a series of workshops will be developed around The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as the histories of the Nations sharing interests to the settled lands now called New Westminster.

A Year of Truth Presentation for Council, March 13th, 2023

Billy is a St. Michael's Indian Residential School survivor from Alert Bay.

When he was twelve years old, he ran away from the school and found himself at a cliff about a half mile away. He looked down the edge into the darkness below through the blur of tears and sweat. He stood there alone thinking about his life. He said a prayer to a Creator he didn't believe in and silently said goodbye to his mother and his brothers and sisters. As he worked up the nerve to take this last step of his fragile young life, he thought he heard a voice. He listens hard for the source of this voice and spots, Jamie, perhaps a year younger on the beach below. He hears Jamie's voice again, "Billy, wait for me!" Billy looked at Jamie and felt his resolve fall away. He knew that he could not allow Jamie to witness his death. The boy had scars that were deep enough already, so in one long wretched exhale he realized, I can't do this. I am to return to Residential School.

Billy has no memory of how he descended the cliff side but never forgets his friend. After years of pain, Jamie died on the Downtown Eastside but his memory lives in the mind and heart of the boy he unknowingly saved that day.

60 years later on July 1st, 2021, that boy, once so defeated and near death, grasps the microphone speaking to the sea of orange around him. In a voice that is strong and even he declares,

"I don't want to cancel Canada. I just want Canada to grow up and do the right thing because it's the right thing to do."



"I don't want to cancel Canada. I just want Canada to grow up and do the right thing because it's the right thing to do."

Today, we at the City call him Elder William. He brings bannock and joy every time he steps through the doors of City Hall. His eyes are always kind and his hugs are always warm. Sometimes he shares stories from Residential School but mostly he shares stories of humour and wisdom and listens as we chatter about all things work and life. He has become an Elder to us all and his presence at City Hall, at Anvil Centre, at Queensborough Community Centre and all places yet to come, have shown us why the truth is so important. It is only through truth-telling that we will truly begin to heal as a nation and as a city. A Year of Truth will be a time of growth; a time for us to learn, to reflect and to practice humility. Keeping our eyes on the horizon and our feet on the ground, we will fearlessly embrace the truth no matter what it looks like, so that as a community, we can make Reconciliation matter and ensure that the mistakes of our past never happen again.

Definitions



SQUAMISH OCEAN CANOE FAMILY PERFORMS AT 2022 NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY.

RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, an acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behavior. — *National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation*

DECOLONIZATION/REDRESS

Decolonization, or redress, is the process of 'walking back' colonial processes. Decolonization requires 'space-making' for Indigenous peoples at all levels of society. — *Indigenous Corporate Training Inc.*

CONSULTATION

The minimum requirements for meaningful consultation with First Nations are that it must begin at the earliest stages of planning; governments must consult in good faith with an honest intention of substantially addressing Indigenous Peoples' concerns; government officials must have the required powers to change the project because consultation without the possibility of accommodation is meaningless; governments must listen carefully to concerns and work to minimize adverse effects on Aboriginal rights and treaty rights; and they should be open to abandoning or rejecting proposals.

If there is a decision to proceed, governments should demonstrably integrate responses to Indigenous Peoples' concerns into revised plans of action.

CONSENT-BASED RECONCILIATION

Consent is grounded on two important words: recognition and respect. Recognition and respect for the historical and legal fact that Indigenous Peoples have never relinquished their right and responsibility to make decisions about their lands. — *Standoff: Why Reconciliation Fails Indigenous People and How to Fix It, Bruce McIvor*



PERFORMING PRAYERS FOR PHOTOGRAPHER FREDERICK DALLY (1866-1870) IMAGE E-04419 COURTESY OF THE ROYAL BC MUSEUM.

RELATIONSHIP-BASED ENGAGEMENT

Encompasses all forms of engagement with Indigenous peoples and communities. Relationship-Based Engagement is for the purposes of building relationships that are founded on trust and respect, and are mutually beneficial.

REGULATED ENGAGEMENT

Refers to consultative-based work. The City is legally mandated to consult with and to accommodate local First Nations on all land-use planning and development whose unceded traditional territory includes the land now known as New Westminster.

ABORIGINAL

The term “Aboriginal” refers to the first inhabitants of Canada, and includes First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. This term came into popular usage in Canadian contexts after 1982, when Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution defined the term as such. This term is phasing out and being replaced by “Indigenous”.

FIRST NATIONS

For the purposes of this journal, it refers to the singular “First Nation”, or “local Nation” in relation to a band, a reserve-based community, or a larger tribal grouping and the status Indians who live in them.

INUIT

This term refers to specific groups of people generally living in the far north who are not considered “Indians” under Canadian law.

MÉTIS

The term Métis refers to a collective of cultures and ethnic identities that resulted from unions between Aboriginal and European people in what is now Canada. From a legal context, “Métis” refers to descendants of specific historic communities.

INDIAN

The term “Indian” refers to the legal identity of a First Nations person who is registered under the Indian Act. The term “Indian” should be used only when referring to a First Nations person with status under the Indian Act, and only within its legal context. “Indian Band” is also a legal term under the Indian Act to denote a grouping of status Indians.

INDIGENOUS

“Indigenous” is a term used to encompass a variety of Aboriginal groups. In the UN, “Indigenous” is used to refer broadly to peoples of long settlement and connection to specific lands who have been adversely affected by incursions by industrial economies, displacement, and settlement of their traditional territories by others.

URBAN INDIGENOUS

“Urban Indigenous” refers to up to 80% of Indigenous people who live off-reserve, including (status and non-status) First Nations, Metis or Inuit. Urban Indigenous are harmed by all levels of governments' distinctions-based approach that prioritize relations with First Nation, Metis and Inuit and denies rights of the urban Indigenous communities as defined by Canadian court decisions from Daniel's and Misquadis. — *National Urban Indigenous Coalitions Council*



The daffodil is a symbol of Truth. A Year of Truth is about looking inward and the artwork is all about reflection. The formline designs and colours reflect back on one another and the bulb acts as a mirror. It is only when we reflect upon ourselves, our past and present, and when we take inventory of our role in the harms inflicted upon Indigenous peoples, that the healing buds of Truth can begin to blossom. It is only then that Reconciliation can meaningfully take root.

A YEAR OF TRUTH

2023 and every year that follows it

NEW WESTMINSTER