

Committee of the Whole (1) Report

DATE: Tuesday, June 1, 2021

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: INDIGENOUS LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

FROM:

Michael Coroneos, Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services, City Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To amend Item 10, Report No. 21, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on June 5, 2017.

Report Highlights

- Rationale for changes to existing Aboriginal Territorial Acknowledgement
- Amended Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

Recommendations

1. That the existing title “Aboriginal Territorial Acknowledgement” be amended to “Indigenous Land Acknowledgement”; and
2. That the following statement as the revised Indigenous Land Acknowledgement be adopted:

“We respectfully acknowledge that the City of Vaughan is situated in the Territory and Treaty 13 lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We also recognize the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and the Haudenosaunee. The City of Vaughan is currently home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit people today. As representatives of the people of the City of Vaughan, we are grateful to have the opportunity to work and live in this territory.”

Background

The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Indigenous peoples: First Nations, Inuit and Métis. These are three distinct peoples with unique histories, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

'First Nations people' include Status and non-Status Indians. There are more than 630 First Nation communities in Canada, which represent more than 50 Nations and 50 Indigenous languages.

Inuit are the Indigenous peoples of the Arctic. The word Inuit means "the people" in the Inuit language of Inuktitut. The singular of Inuit is Inuk.

The Métis people emerged as a distinct Indigenous people and nation in the historic Northwest during the late 18th century. The historic Métis Nation Homeland encompasses the Prairie Provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta and extends into contiguous parts of Ontario, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories and the northern United States.

Land Acknowledgement

Land acknowledgement statements are used in Canada by governments, schools, post-secondary institutions, non-governmental organizations, and other civil institutions as a practice of reconciliation aimed at recognizing the traditional or treaty territories of Indigenous peoples. Land acknowledgement statements are avenues for recognizing what is known of past Indigenous usage and occupancy of land. The statements are typically made at the introduction of meetings, gatherings, events, or presentations.

Treaties

According to the Government of Ontario, treaties are legally binding agreements that set out the rights, responsibilities and relationships of First Nations and the federal and provincial governments. They form the basis of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Although many treaties were signed more than a century ago, treaty commitments are just as valid today as they were then.

First Nations were the original occupants of this land we call Ontario. The British Crown (government) and First Nations negotiated and signed treaties with the intent of delivering mutual benefits. First Nations signed as independent, self-governing nations.

Ontario is covered by 46 treaties and other agreements.

Treaty rights:

- are the specific rights embodied in the treaties that were entered into with the British government, and later Canada
- often address the creation of reserves for the exclusive use of First Nations, and their rights to hunt, fish and trap on provincial Crown lands
- are protected by subsection 35(1) of the Constitution Act, 1982

Source Reference:

Government of Ontario, Treaties, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/treaties>

Government of Canada, Indigenous Peoples and Communities, <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100013785/1529102490303>

Métis National Council, <https://www2.metisnation.ca/about/>

City of Vaughan Aboriginal Territorial Acknowledgement

The existing “Aboriginal Territorial Acknowledgement” is part of the recognition of National Aboriginal Day (now known as National Indigenous Peoples Day) submitted to Council as item 10, Report No. 21, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on June 5, 2017. The statement is read at the beginning of the Council meeting, beginning on June 27, 2017, acknowledging traditional Indigenous territories. The existing Aboriginal Territorial Acknowledgement is as follows:

“We respectfully acknowledge that we are situated on Traditional Territories and Treaty Lands, in particular those of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, as well as the Anishinaabeg of the Williams Treaty First Nations, the Huron-Wendat, and the Métis Nation. As representatives of the people of the City of Vaughan, we are grateful to have the opportunity to work and live in this territory.”

The City has been made aware that Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation has made formal changes to their name from Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation and have requested that changes be reflected in City business. Furthermore, the City has been made aware of some errors in the existing “Aboriginal Territorial Acknowledgement.”

Previous Reports/Authority

Item 10, Report No. 21, of the Committee of the Whole

Analysis and Options

In collaboration with Darin P. Wybenga of Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Traditional Knowledge and Land Use Coordinator, the following changes are necessary

to address existing inaccuracies within the existing Aboriginal Territorial Acknowledgement:

1. Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation are the only treaty holders in the City of Vaughan.
2. Refer to 'Toronto Purchase Treaty 13' to reflect the name of the specific treaty.
3. Remove reference to Williams Treaty First Nations. Chief R. Stacey Laforme of Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation confirms that Williams Treaty Boundary does not extend to any portion of the City of Vaughan.
4. Remove reference to "Anishinaabeg." Anishinaabe refers to a group of culturally related Indigenous peoples residing in Canada and the United States of America.
5. The Huron-Wendat and Six Nations of the Grand River, who identify as Haudenosaunee, have traditional territories in Vaughan.
6. Métis Nation and people do not hold traditional land rights; however, the City will honour and recognize Métis people as residents using the land.

Financial Impact

N/A

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

N/A

Conclusion

Adopting the following collaboratively developed Land Acknowledgements is a small yet significant way to show respect and acknowledge the presence of Indigenous peoples past and present:

"We respectfully acknowledge that the City of Vaughan is situated in the Territory and Treaty 13 lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We also recognize the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and the Haudenosaunee. The City of Vaughan is currently home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit people today. As representatives of the people of the City of Vaughan, we are grateful to have the opportunity to work and live in this territory."

For more information, please contact: Zincia Francis, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Ext. 8159

Attachments

1. Extract from Council Meeting Minutes Of June 5, 2017
2. Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation Treaty Map
3. E-mail, Councillor Erma Ferrell of Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, May 7, 2021
4. E-mail, Councillor Erma Ferrell of Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, May 10, 2021
5. Treaties in Ontario
6. Treaties in Ontario by the Numbers

Prepared by

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Approved by



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Reviewed by



Jim Harnum, City Manager