

Staff Report

Report To: Corporate Services Committee
Report From: Melissa Clancy, Strategic Human Resources Manager
Meeting Date: September 14, 2023
Report Code: CR-23-069
Subject: Land Acknowledgment

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CR-23-069 respecting Land Acknowledgment, the Corporate Services Committee recommends that City Council:

1. Support the Land Acknowledgment Policy; and
2. Direct staff to send an invitation to Trish Meekins, Diana Giroux, Ningwakwe George, and the two local Chiefs to attend City Council for the inaugural reading of the Land Acknowledgment and a smudging ceremony for Council Chambers.

Highlights:

- Connected with Giiwe (Diane Giroux), Trish Meekins, and elder Ningwakwe George for guidance and assistance in developing a Land Acknowledgment for the City of Owen Sound.
- Developed a City policy that encompasses several circumstances where a Land Acknowledgment may be appropriate.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: Safe City - KR4 - Create a comprehensive corporate Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy by December 2022

Climate and Environmental Implications:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

Previous Report/Authority:

CR-23-049 – Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy

Background:

Land or territorial acknowledgments have emerged in several municipalities following the publication of The Truth and Reconciliation Report in 2015. A land acknowledgment recognizes Indigenous Peoples on whose traditional territories we work and live. These acknowledgments demonstrate the recognition and respect for Indigenous Peoples, both in the past and present, and their contributions to our communities and nation.

In 2018, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) established an Indigenous Relations Task Force that is to be a resource to assist member municipalities with creating traditional land acknowledgments “as a practice of reconciliation aimed at recognizing traditional or treaty territories of Indigenous peoples.” These statements are most often read at the beginning of Council meetings, municipal events, and celebrations, with others being read occasionally only to continue for them to be meaningful and relevant.

Several municipalities within the province have implemented land acknowledgment statements. While there is no standard wording for these statements or consistent practice, the overarching need is for the acknowledgment to be genuine, with a commitment to acknowledge and educate people on the complex history of Indigenous people. Therefore, land acknowledgments should be completed in collaboration with other areas of consultation and education.

Locally, the following municipalities currently have a Land Acknowledgment process – Saugeen Shores, Grey County, Georgian Bluffs, Township of Southgate, Town of the Blue Mountains, and Hanover. Each municipality mentioned has developed varied directions on when the Land Acknowledgment is recited.

Analysis:

Rather than simply including a Land Acknowledgment at the beginning of every Council meeting, it is recognized that a more overarching policy covering various areas of City business would provide a more meaningful process for the use of land acknowledgments.

In order to implement a land acknowledgment that not only recognizes the Indigenous People, their history, and ongoing contributions, a more formal ceremony with invitations being extended to both Chief Conrad Ritchie from the Saugeen First Nation and Chief Greg Nadjiwon from the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation, as well as the three individuals who were consulted in the development of the Proposed Acknowledgment, to attend and speak to the history of Indigenous People in Owen Sound is also recommended.

The City of Owen Sound wants to acknowledge Indigenous People with this Land Acknowledgment and ensure that it remains meaningful and sincere. The Policy recommends that a Land Acknowledgment be used in the following circumstances:

- a. Council and Committee Meetings
 - i. at the Inaugural Session of City Council following the municipal election; and
 - ii. at council meetings where there is a report related to land matters, including planning matters or the disposition or acquisition of land.
- b. Corporate Documents
 - i. in the City's Strategic Plan, Official Plan or Official Plan Amendments, Annual Budget, and other documents as directed by the City Manager in consultation with the Strategic Human Resources Manager and City Clerk.
- c. Corporate Website
 - i. on the homepage, on the About page, or in the site footer.

Land acknowledgments are to be given in a sincere manner, with an appreciation for their cultural meaning, and in a manner that is not scripted. Therefore, in addition to the formal land acknowledgment script provided below, personal adaptations reflecting an individual's historical context, reconciliation, meaning, and learning may be utilized as a land

acknowledgment. Individuals are encouraged to reach out and build their own relationships with local Indigenous Peoples, which will support the recognition and reconciliation process.

Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge with respect, the history, spirituality, and culture of the Anishinaabe people, who consist of The People of the Three Fires known as Ojibway, Odawa, and Bodéwadmi Nations on whose traditional territories we gather and whose ancestors signed Treaties with our ancestors. We recognize also, the Metis and Inuit, whose ancestors shared this land and these waters. May we all, as Treaty People, live with respect on this land, and live in peace and friendship with all its diverse peoples.

In addition to the Land Acknowledgment, the local Giiwe organization has created several actions for community organizations to consider, including promoting cultural standard policies and practices. The City has been educating staff on smudging when this takes place in City Hall for Indigenous purposes, as well as educating staff on tobacco offerings. A Tobacco Offering Guidance Document has been created, and staff would recommend purchasing traditional tobacco products and materials to support the continued action of tobacco offerings when working with Indigenous partners.

Financial Implications:

The financial implications of purchasing traditional tobacco products and materials to make traditional tobacco ties would be \$100; there are no financial implications to other aspects of this report.

Communication Strategy:

The Land Acknowledgment will be communicated as indicated in the Policy.

The Tobacco Offering Guidance Document and materials will be made available to staff working with Indigenous partners.

Consultation:

Diane Giroux – Giiwe

Trish Meekins – Nikaanaganaa Counselling & Learning Centre

Ningwakwe George – Elder, Saugeen Ojibway Nation

Attachments:

Land Acknowledgment Policy

Tobacco Offering Guidance Document

Recommended by:

Melissa Clancy, Strategic Human Resources Manager

Kate Allan, Director of Corporate Services

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Melissa Clancy, Strategic Human Resources Manager at mclancy@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 ext. 1214.