

RECONCILIATION

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**STARTING THE  
CONVERSATION**

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JUNE 2019



CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE





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# PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The City of Yellowknife is working to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan that will confirm the foundation for how the City will build respectful relationships with, and create a more inclusive representation of, Indigenous Peoples within the City of Yellowknife. Our community is a hub and we are fortunate to have a large and diverse population of Indigenous peoples from across the North, and elsewhere in Canada. At the same time, it is important to particularly honour and recognise the Yellowknives Dene First Nation and the North Slave Metis Alliance, whose shared traditional lands our community is located upon.

The City invites input from Indigenous governments, organizations, businesses, and all people who call Yellowknife and the surrounding area home. This discussion paper is intended to encourage ideas and recommendations on how the City can continue its path toward reconciliation.





# THE CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE'S ROLE

As a municipal government, the City of Yellowknife is mandated to provide good government to community residents, to maintain a safe community and to provide programs and services that Council feels are necessary or desirable. To do this, we carry out a number of functions that serve residents, businesses, visitors and other orders of government. It is these areas that we intend to enhance by developing a Reconciliation Action Plan. Our main functions include:

GOVERNANCE	COMMUNITY SERVICES	PHYSICAL SPACES	PUBLIC SAFETY	BUSINESS COMMUNITY RELATIONS	MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE
City Council, City Administrator, Clerks Office and Corporate Services	Library, City and Recreational Facilities, Recreation Programing and Special Events	Community land planning, building approval and inspections	Fire Department, ambulance, Bylaw enforcement; and emergency response	Business Licencing and Economic Development	Roads, sidewalks, water and sewer

The City's focus for reconciliation will be on these functions and responsibilities. If any of the ideas or feedback we receive falls beyond our scope, the City will seek to support contributors in bringing their ideas to the appropriate agency or order of government.





# OUR COMMITMENT

The City of Yellowknife is committed to building relationships with Indigenous Peoples in the spirit of reconciliation. City Council recently confirmed its Strategic Priorities for 2019-2022 and reconciliation is highlighted as one of six core values for the City.

The following quotes from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) "What

We Have Learned: Principles Truth and Reconciliation" document reflect the City's understanding of reconciliation:

"Reconciliation must support Aboriginal peoples as they heal from the destructive legacies of colonization that have wreaked such havoc in their lives. But it must do even more. Reconciliation must inspire Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples to transform Canadian society so that our children and grandchildren can live together in dignity, peace, and prosperity on these lands we now share."

"To the Commission, 'reconciliation' is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country."

"At a Traditional Knowledge Keepers Forum sponsored by the TRC, Anishinaabe Elder Mary Deleary spoke about the responsibility for reconciliation that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people carry. She emphasized that the work of reconciliation must continue in ways that honour the ancestors, respect the land, and rebalance relationships. She said,

*I'm so filled with belief and hope because when I hear your voices at the table, I hear and know that the responsibilities that our ancestors carried ... are still being carried ... even through all of the struggles, even through all of what has been disrupted ... we can still hear the voice of the land. We can hear the care and love for the children. We can hear about our law. We can hear about our stories, our governance, our feasts, [and] our medicines.... We have work to do. That work we are [already] doing as [Aboriginal] peoples. Our relatives who have come from across the water [non-Aboriginal people], you still have work to do on your road.... The land is made up of the dust of our ancestors' bones. And so to reconcile with this land and everything that has happened, there is much work to be done ... in order to create balance."*

<sup>1</sup>Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation (<http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Principles%20of%20Truth%20and%20Reconciliation.pdf>), page 113.

<sup>2</sup>What We Have Learned, page 114.





# TRC PRINCIPLES OF RECONCILIATION

The City will use the TRC Principles of Reconciliation as a compass in our work:

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.

<sup>3</sup>What We Have Learned, page 115.

<sup>4</sup>What We Have Learned, p. 3-4.





**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.





**The Drum** - The drum has been known to Indigenous peoples to represent the heartbeat of Mother Earth - the universal mother to us all. The first sound we all hear before entering in the world, is the heartbeat of our mother. The drum stick is known in some Nations as our Elder's Arms. The drum beats and heart beats manifest into the balance of four areas of our existence, our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual being.





# OUR JOURNEY

Over the years since the community of Yellowknife was established, the City has been evolving in our understanding of the culture, traditions and rights of Indigenous peoples whose traditional lands our community now inhabits. Historically, there have been

many wrongs and more recently, a growing awareness of the importance of honouring, respecting and coexisting with Indigenous peoples.

In the spirit of reconciliation, some actions that the City has undertaken include:

City Council took steps to address Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action 43, 47, 57, 75, 76 and 77 (which relate to City responsibilities) and in particular adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Persons (UNDRIP) in fall 2015

The City has adopted protocols to open meetings that acknowledge that the City is on the shared traditional lands of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation (YKDFN) and the North Slave Metis Alliance (NSMA)

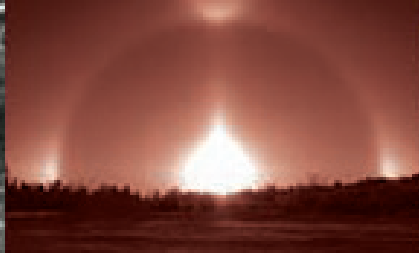
Regular Joint Council meetings between the elected leaders of YKDFN and the City started in the 1990's and continue to the present day

The City and the YKDFN entered into a Memorandum of Understanding on relationships and services in 2002; this is currently being reviewed and updated

The YKDFN flag flies next to the Canadian, NWT and City of Yellowknife flag in front of City Hall year round

The City has supported the Urban Hide Tanning Camp in downtown Yellowknife financially and through use of outdoor City space since its inception 3 years ago





YKDFN and the City have worked together on a number of initiatives since 2017, including:

- Being selected as a partnership under the First Nations-Municipal Community Economic Development Initiative (CEDI) to advance areas of shared interest
- Successfully working, together with the North Slave Metis Alliance, to secure funding for the submarine water pipeline which brings water from upstream of Giant Mine to the City’s water treatment plant which serves all
- Successfully obtaining funding under Climate Change Preparedness in the North (CCPN) to work to protect Dettah/N’dilo and Yellowknife from wildfires
- YKDFN’s Chief Executive Officer and the City Administrator have a standing monthly meeting to work on issues of common interest
- Actively working to reaffirm, align and support respective lands interests as the Akaitcho negotiations towards Agreement-in-Principle proceed

The City supported the Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation (AIWF) in its work to establish a healing camp by providing the land for the camp through an unprecedented , non-colonial process

City Recreation staff have worked in partnership with the Aboriginal Sports Circle of the Western Arctic to host Traditional Games Nights at the Multiplex

All City staff participate in training on the History and Legacy of Residential Schools and Colonization

Outreach is underway to YKDFN, NSMA and the Dene Nation to seek their suggestions for street and park names that honour Indigenous citizens within the City

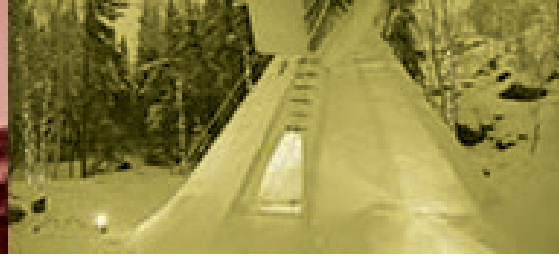
The Intercultural Heritage and Placemaking Plan was approved in the summer of 2018, and recognizes areas of significance to Indigenous peoples in the area; an implementation schedule is in the works for 2019

Including Indigenous programming such as Naturally Dene Workshops, in recreational programming

The City has initiated regular meetings with the leadership of the North Slave Metis Alliance

The City sought funding and hired an Indigenous Relations Advisor





# RELATIONSHIPS

The City recognizes that relationships are the foundation of any reconciliation initiatives.

## **Public truth sharing (TRC Principle #3)**

Part of building relationships is truth sharing. TRC Principle of Reconciliation #3 emphasizes that “reconciliation requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms.”

In order to build relationships we must share the truth of our collective history in this place we call home. Some of the following might be difficult to hear and challenge peoples’ perceptions of Yellowknife’s history. While it may be difficult, or make us uncomfortable, challenging ourselves to work through this discomfort is some of the work that needs to be done as part of reconciliation.

The City has historically pushed a narrative of Yellowknife being ‘discovered’ and established by prospectors, ignoring the truth that the

Yellowknives Dene First Nation are the original inhabitants of this area since time immemorial.

The City of Yellowknife acknowledges that it is a colonial government structure and our community exists because of the forced dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their traditional lands. This truth, and distorted truths such as the one below, need to be told to create an accurate shared history upon which respectful relationships can be built.

**Myth:** Gold was discovered in Yellowknife by non-Indigenous prospectors.

**Truth:** Yellowknives Dene Liza Crookedhand, while out picking berries discovered gold. She later showed prospectors where it was located. For showing prospectors where the gold was, Liza Crookedhand was given a new stove pipe, the prospector Johnny Baker was credited for the discovery of gold.

**WHAT OTHER TRUTHS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE ACKNOWLEDGED, CELEBRATED OR KNOWN?**





# RESPECT

The City acknowledges that relationships in the past have not always been respectful towards Indigenous people. The City is interested in hearing ideas on how we can move towards mutually

respectful relationships with the Indigenous community. One idea could be more community events and gatherings where understanding, appreciation and friendships can be established.

**IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU THINK THE CITY CAN CREATE MUTUALLY RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENTS, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, AND THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY?**





# OPPORTUNITIES

To proactively work towards reconciliation, the City wants to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan that includes actions which will create an environment that is inclusive to all Indigenous peoples. Many municipal governments in Canada and around the world have initiated work on reconciliation, recognising that outreach and collaboration are the best way to find a path forward.

Ideas being considered include:

- Communicate publicly the discussions and outcomes from the government-to-government meetings that take place between the City and the Indigenous Governments based in Yellowknife
- Establish an Elder-in-Residence program at the Yellowknife Public Library
- Create a sacred space for ceremonies in/ around Somba K'e Park
- Expand recreational and cultural

opportunities which have an Indigenous lens through City facilities and City programming

- Develop a strategy to increase the number of Indigenous people who work for the City
- Lobby the Federal and Territorial Governments to institute TRC Recommendation #82:

*We call upon provincial and territorial governments, in collaboration with Survivors and their organizations, and other parties to the Settlement Agreement, to commission and install a publicly accessible, highly visible, Residential Schools Monument in each capital city to honour Survivors and all the children who were lost to their families and communities.*

- Expand the opportunities for City Staff to be culturally aware and to create culturally safe spaces in programs and services

**WHAT ACTIONS SHOULD THE CITY TAKE? PLEASE SHARE YOUR IDEAS, SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIONS GOING FORWARD THAT THE CITY SHOULD LEAD, ENGAGE AND/OR PARTICIPATE IN**





# WHAT'S NEXT?

The City wants to meaningfully engage Indigenous governments, partners and all Yellowknife residents in advancing the important work towards reconciliation within our community. To advance this, the City is planning to do the following:

- Make this document widely available in print form and online
- Over the summer, the City will take this document out to the people for feedback
- through meetings and gatherings, and will also welcome any written comments from individuals and organizations
- The City will compile feedback received and use it to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (Fall 2019)
- The City will implement, monitor and continue to use the Reconciliation Action Plan as a living document (Winter 2020 and beyond)

## WHAT ELSE SHOULD THE CITY DO TO WELCOME OTHER IDEAS ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN?

For further information, to ask to meet, to have a conversation, or to provide ideas and feedback, please contact any of the following:

- Call the City at (867) 920-5693
- Email Council at [council@yellowknife.ca](mailto:council@yellowknife.ca)
- Write to the City at P.O. Box 580, Yellowknife, NT X1A 2N4
- Call the City's Indigenous Relations Advisor at (867) 669-3495
- Email [reconciliation@yellowknife.ca](mailto:reconciliation@yellowknife.ca)





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