



Report to Council

From the Office of Councillor Amy Lubik

Date: May 14, 2021

Subject: Support for Celebration of National Indigenous People's Day

Purpose

To propose that the City of Port Moody acknowledge National Indigenous People's Day in 2021 and actively support/organize celebrations annually starting in 2023.

Recommendations

WHEREAS Port Moody is based on unceded Coast Salish Territory;

AND WHEREAS Settlers need to understand and embrace reconciliation and the significance of the work that has been done and needs to be done for healing on this land;

AND WHEREAS Port Moody is the site of many community-led reconciliation projects, including "In the Presence of Ancestors";

AND WHEREAS the City acknowledges Canada Day and BC Day annually, but not National Indigenous People's Day;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT in 2021, Council release a statement about the importance of National Indigenous People's Day and sincere dedication to working towards reconciliation as recommended in the report dated May 14, 2021 from Councillor Amy Lubik regarding Support for Celebration of National Indigenous People's Day;

AND THAT staff be directed to support the ongoing work of the "In the Presence of Ancestors" project to celebrate National Indigenous People's Day in 2022, and use learnings from that event, as well as the 2018 and 2019 ceremony celebrations, to create annual City-led celebrations starting in 2023.

Background

From York University Press¹:

*On, **June 21**, celebrations across Canada will take place in the name of National Indigenous Peoples Day. [This year most activities will be online; however, in non-COVID-19 years,] some may attend powwows, others may feel inclined to stop in at one of the bustling Indigenous pop-up street markets or adorn their First Nations-made beaded earrings. There are many ways to celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day, however many Canadians may not understand what this day is, why it is needed or how to appropriately celebrate.*

What is National Indigenous Peoples Day?

The date of June 21 was chosen to celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day because it corresponds to the summer solstice, the longest day of the year and a time of year that many Indigenous groups have traditionally celebrated their culture and heritage. In 1996, the Governor General of Canada proclaimed that the federal government would recognize National Aboriginal Day on this date. In 2017, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the symbolic renaming to “National Indigenous Peoples Day,” coinciding with the preferred term to refer to the original inhabitants of what we now know as Canada.

Most often, a generic explanation of National Indigenous Peoples Day will define it as being a day for all Canadians to celebrate the cultures of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples and their contributions to Canada. This only reflects half of its purpose, the other being to recognize Canada’s colonial history, the contemporary issues and realities of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous futurism.

Why is it important to have a National Indigenous Peoples Day?

It is important to celebrate Indigenous contributions to Canada and the rich and diverse cultures of Indigenous Peoples. What many Canadians do not realize is that there are many Indigenous nations in Canada: there is no one “Indigenous perspective” or universal belief, style of art or dance. National Indigenous Peoples Day is an opportunity to learn about and celebrate the unique Indigenous Peoples in the community and region.

To choose only to recognize certain aspects and contributions of Indigenous Peoples as worth celebrating can do more harm than good. If colonial legacies are ignored and individuals only choose to recognize the beautiful artwork or ceremony of Indigenous Peoples then not only is the harsh historical and contemporary realities of Indigenous Peoples erased, but there is also a failure recognize the resiliency and strength it took to keep these cultures and these people alive (which only makes everything worth celebrating all that more impressive and inspiring).

National Indigenous Peoples Day offers everyone an opportunity to deepen their understanding and awareness of the unique adversities that Indigenous Peoples face and have overcome. With a flood of efforts to indigenize and improve relations with Indigenous Peoples after the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, culturally appropriate resources and information are readily accessible (and comprehensive) for all Canadians.

¹ <https://yfile.news.yorku.ca/2018/06/19/what-why-and-how-to-celebrate-national-indigenous-peoples-day/>

As MP Georgina Jolibois said in 2017: "We can't change the past; however, we can be honest and educate ourselves so that history does not repeat itself... Through a sense of hope, we can develop a path forward together, as our ancestors intended."

Appropriate ways to celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day

Here are some considerations to ask yourself and some steps to take before and while celebrating National Indigenous Peoples Day:

- **Learn some Indigenous language.** Just as a responsible and courteous traveller learns some basic language skills before immersing oneself in a culture and place that is not familiar, so should Canadians with Indigenous languages. There is a nation-wide push for Indigenous language revitalization and for some to be recognized as official languages. (If this became the case, more than just Indigenous people would have to speak the language(s).) Furthermore, in the short term, you could make someone's day by taking the time and respect to learn a few greeting and parting words. To learn more about Indigenous language revitalization and languages of Ontario, visit <http://mncfn.ca/ontario-investing-in-indigenous-language- revitalization/>.
- **Know whose land you are on.** If you are non-Indigenous, you are occupying land that is being colonized. To have a greater understanding of the land's original caregivers and history, visit [Whose Land](#), an educational tool and interactive map. It is useful for understanding Indigenous treaties and communities across Canada. The website offers videos of appropriate land acknowledgments.
- **Understand what allyship to Indigenous people can look like.** An outline of allyship and responsibilities by an Anishinaabe-kwe scholar can be found in the [Ally Bill of Responsibilities](#) (a PDF file that is available for download). This is important to review if one is concerned about practicing allyship appropriately.
- **Understand that it is not the job of Indigenous People to teach you.** Métis-Irish author, Melanie Lefebvre, wrote, "If you don't have time to educate yourself, then I can't help you," in ["It's Not My Job to Teach You about Indigenous People"](#) published in *The Walrus*. Individuals should not expect that all Indigenous people are experts on all things Indigenous, or that they have the time and energy to teach.
- **Support Indigenous businesses and services.** There are many Indigenous businesses and services across Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area that would benefit from non-Indigenous customers, and shopping with them can be a great way to support Indigenous people. Visit the [Canadian Council for Aboriginal Businesses Membership Directory](#) to find an array of Indigenous businesses from across Canada (search by province, name or sector).
- **Know the protocol.** Take the time before going to powwows or a ceremony to understand the protocol, whether that be by researching or kindly asking a volunteer or worker once you've arrived.

Discussion

Port Moody currently has the honour of being the site of the "In the Presence of Ancestors"² Project directed by Ms. Tasha Feye Evans, with follows the "Welcome Post Project,"³ the City

² <https://www.tricitynews.com/local-arts/new-port-moody-house-post-honours-kfn-story-3111765>

³ <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2019/08/23/tsleil-waututh-return-port-moody>

has also recently voted to work towards meaningful reconciliation with the Traditional Stewards of This Land.⁴ Reconciliation and learning is a continual process and will need to be consistently renewed and acknowledged.

In the April 7, 2021 Arts and Culture committee minutes⁵, Ms. Tasha Feye Evens provided an overview of In the Presence of Ancestors and the following was noted:

- *the Shoreline Trail will be home to five locations where Coast Salish house posts will be raised to create a new path called In the Presence of Ancestors;*
- *the art installation will contribute to healing efforts and provide an opportunity to share the history of the lands and water cared for since the beginning of time by the Nations, and share knowledge about the mutual responsibility we have as stewards of the land;*
- *the shoreline was once lined with welcome figures, house posts, carved sculptures, and long houses that communicated information related to the families who cared for the land and included symbols that communicated the family values and history;*
- *the house posts will represent the five Nations [who are the original caretakers of this area], once known as Saymahmit, []:*
 - *the first house post is being carved by Tsleil-Waututh Nation artist Zachary George and will tell the Tsleil-Waututh Nation's Grandmother's Prayer creation story of the first grandmother who was born out of Salish Sea and Burrard Inlet, and will set the tone for the rest of the Pathway;*
 - *the second house post, Spirit of Kwikwetlem, is being carved by artist Brandon Gabriel on behalf of the Kwikwetlam Nation and will tell the big fish story; o the third house post will represent the Musqueam Nation; and o the fourth and fifth house posts will represent the Katzie and Squamish Nations;*
- *the house posts will commemorate each Nation uniquely by expressing who they are, their values, and their story, through the design;*
- *the house posts will be carved at Noons Creek Hatchery and the community is encouraged to view and participate in the carving, at the carver's invitation:*
 - *Musqueam Nation artists will be in attendance in the spring including Crystal Sparrow who will be carving spindle whorls representing women and medicine; and Squamish Nation artists will be in attendance in the fall including Brandon Gabriel, Zachary George, James Harry, and Xwalacktun OBC;*
 - *the house posts offer an opportunity for the Nations to re-engage with their ancestral territories and to rebuild relationships with the land and each other;*
- *the project offers an opportunity for Port Moody to recognize the importance of sharing and respecting the history of the land and ensuring all members feel welcome back in their territory and land again, and that future generations feel the same;*
- *the house posts will include educational programming where knowledge keepers and artists will share stories and history related to each Nation;*

⁴ <https://www.tricitynews.com/local-news/port-moody-to-consider-reconciliation-with-first-nations-3419848>

⁵ <https://calendar.portmoody.ca/meetings/Detail/2021-05-03-1900-Cancelled-Arts-and-Culture-Committee/c465dd6f-931a-4718-aabf-ad16012002d1>

- *the house posts will include signage at each site to tell the history of the Nation that the house post represents;*
- *the house posts must receive a blessing ceremony to awaken the spirit prior to being raised;*
- *the blessing ceremony is scheduled for National Indigenous Peoples Day 2022 and will include an event hosted in Port Moody where guests will be invited into the community for a blessing ceremony and feast; ...*
- *the project is about embracing and sharing the core indigenous values of the sacred responsibility of caring for each other including the land, the waters, the winged ones, and the swimming ones;*
- *there is still much work to be accomplished to correct relationships with these Nations and to align with indigenous values to ensure we are good ancestors for future generations;*
- *the City needs to make efforts to recognize and acknowledge the history of Port Moody before it was known as Port Moody to ensure the City is worthy of hosting the house posts and an indigenous future of respect and wellbeing; the Heritage Commission, Port Moody Museum, and PoMoArts could collaborate to ensure streamlined efforts and messaging.*

The last point is extremely important to remember “City needs to make efforts to recognize and acknowledge the history of Port Moody before it was known as Port Moody to ensure the City is worthy of hosting the house posts and an indigenous future of respect and wellbeing.”

Celebrating National Indigenous people’s day annually and inviting the community to take part in the work and education needed for reconciliation is one important step we should be taking and leading, with input from Indigenous community members and the Traditional Caretakers of this Land, potentially in conjunction with the Museum, Heritage Society, and PoMo Arts.

Other Option(s)

THAT the report dated May 14, 2021 from Councillor Amy Lubik regarding Support for Celebration of National Indigenous People’s Day be received for information.

Financial Implications

Staff time and funds for celebrations of National Indigenous People’s Day starting in 2023. The Government of Canada provides some grant opportunities as of May 2021.

Communications and Civic Engagement Initiatives

Communications regarding acknowledgement of National Indigenous People’s Day and promotion of related events.

Council Strategic Plan Objectives

Council’s strategic plan objectives are met by demonstrating dedication to:

- The health and wellness needs of residents;
- Reconciliation;
- Social inclusion; and
- Courage to lead and embrace new ideas.