

**For Information**

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**REPORT TITLE:**     **Peel's Approach to Indigenous Engagement**

**FROM:**                Gary Kent, CPA, CGA, ICD.D, Chief Financial Officer and Commissioner  
                                 of Corporate Services

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## **OBJECTIVE**

To provide the Diversity, Equity and Anti-Racism Committee with an update on Peel's approach to building meaningful, reciprocal and sustainable relationships with Peel's Indigenous Communities.

## **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Region of Peel is on a journey to become a more diverse and inclusive community.
  - To date, the organization's engagement with Indigenous community agencies and residents has been ad-hoc and siloed across the organization.
  - As a Regional government, we have a responsibility to advocate for, and advance, truth, reconciliation, health and social outcomes for all Peel residents and Indigenous communities.
  - The Region of Peel has established collaborative working relationships with Indigenous community partners through its mass vaccination planning.
  - Building on the success achieved through mass vaccination planning, meetings have begun with the objective of understanding what an Indigenous-centered approach to working with Indigenous communities in supportive and sustainable ways, would look like.
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## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. Background**

The Region of Peel is working to build a more diverse and inclusive community where everyone feels a sense of belonging and has the support needed to thrive regardless of differences.

In January 2021, a report was brought to the Diversity, Equity and Anti-Racism Committee regarding an update to the Region's Indigenous Land Acknowledgement. At this meeting a motion was brought forward and subsequently approved by Regional Council on February 11, 2021 (Resolution 2021-105), which states:

*"That staff be directed to report back to a future meeting of the Diversity, Equity and Anti-Racism Committee on corporate policy B00-03-01 Naming of Facilities, with suggestions for renaming the Region of Peel Council Chambers in honour of an Indigenous person; And*

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*further, that the subject report include a review of opportunities for additional expressions of Indigenous acknowledgement.”*

### **2. Engagement with Indigenous Communities in Peel**

To date, the organization's engagement with Indigenous community agencies and residents has been siloed across the organization and comprised mostly of one-way information seeking on an as-need basis or has been compliance driven. (e.g., land-use planning and consultation)

Since 2020, the Region has been supporting the community through its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout this time, mass vaccination planning has been a key initiative in identifying and informing areas of concern and inequities for the community. Through the efforts of the organization's Indigenous Population Planning table and community partners that include members of The Indigenous Network, Metis Nation of Ontario (Credit River), Tungasuvvingat Inuit (TI Ontario) and a self-identified former urban Indigenous resident of Peel, the following have been achieved:

- Formed and created meaningful relationships and ongoing dialogue with respect to the experience of urban Indigenous people living amidst Covid and vaccine confidence
- Collectively, shared insights on how to promote vaccine eligibility and vaccination clinics to the Indigenous population
- Worked together to provide timely and transparent communications and messaging with shared networks
- Provided culturally appropriate instructions/guidance to clinic operations teams, Mass Vaccination Planning (MVP) leadership and Communications
- Created culturally appropriate messaging and educational materials for the Region of Peel and for partners to distribute and promote

Building on the success achieved through MVP, staff have engaged in preliminary discussions with some of these partners to gain a deeper understanding of what an Indigenous-focused approach to working together would look like beyond the scope of MVP.

Acknowledging there are more voices to hear, staff will build on the insights provided through these initial discussions and bring recommendations to Regional Council on next steps for building meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities to improve health and social outcomes and advance truth and reconciliation. This broader approach to relationship building and engagement will enable the Region of Peel to collaborate with Indigenous partners and prioritize areas of focus. Through this engagement, Resolution 2021-105 will be addressed along with discussions about other opportunities for Indigenous acknowledgement that are meaningful to Indigenous communities.

### **3. Next Steps**

The Association of Municipalities Ontario has endorsed three documents to support municipalities in establishing and strengthening relationships with Indigenous communities.

As a next step, staff will bring forward a proposal that begins with solidifying the Region of Peel's commitment to building a long-term, sustainable relationship with Peel's Indigenous communities. Similar to the resolution and letter signed October 25, 2021, between the

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Town of Caledon and Chief Stacey Laforme (Appendix I), creating and entering into a relationship agreement is the first step to meaningful, long-term engagement.

At present, the Region of Peel will continue to engage with Indigenous communities through:

- MVP for Peel's urban Indigenous communities
- Focus on commitment to relationship building and advancing efforts with truth and reconciliation
- Procurement of an Indigenous vendor to create a customized Indigenous e-learning course for all staff
- Community consultations as part of development of the organization's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion strategy

## **RISK CONSIDERATIONS**

The Region of Peel, as a regional government, has a responsibility to advocate for, and advance, truth, reconciliation, health and social outcomes for all Peel residents and Indigenous communities.

The Region of Peel has a duty to respond and deliver on the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action. Moving forward without a real commitment to relationship building and understanding of Indigenous communities will only exacerbate the mistrust in government that currently exists. Furthermore, efforts may be viewed as insincere and tokenistic to the community.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Region of Peel will continue to move forward with activities and initiatives that will advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Peel. In doing so, it will move closer to building a diverse and inclusive community where all members feel a sense of belonging and have the opportunities to thrive.

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix I – Letter from Chief LaForme to Town of Caledon

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*Authored By: Melissa Magder, Strategic Advisor – Culture and Inclusion*