

DATE: 5/31/2024

SUBJECT: Revised Land Acknowledgement

CONTACT: Karla Findlay, Executive Assistant to Mayor, Council and CAO

REPORT NUMBER: 2024/06/13-07

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** the report titled: Revised Land Acknowledgement, to the Council meeting of June 13, 2024, be received; and
2. **THAT** the presentation from Muckpaloo Ipeelie of the Urban Inuit Identity Project be received; and
3. **THAT** Council adopt the revised Land Acknowledgement Statements (Appendix C & D) for use at the start of all council, committee and advisory committee meetings and other significant meetings and events.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- **The current Land Acknowledgement statement lacks specificity to the Town of Wasaga Beach. The revised statement proposed is a more accurate and meaningful recognition of the Town's commitment to recognizing, and working in partnership with, the First Nations, Inuit and Metis people.**

BACKGROUND:

Land acknowledgements recognize and honor the local Indigenous community, their historical and current connection to the land, and the impacts of colonialism. However, they risk becoming token gestures rather than a meaningful practice if not approached thoughtfully.

In September 2022, previous Council adopted the current Land Acknowledgement (Appendix A). This statement was a direct duplication of Clearview Township's, with the simple revision of the municipality's name.

Staff recommend revising the current Land Acknowledgement statement to be more accurate and meaningful to the First Nations that have, and currently, occupy our specific geographic region.

In late 2023, staff began working with the Inuit Identity Project to look for ways to promote greater inclusivity and increase First Nations representation in Town programming and events. Inuit Identity Project curated both the Pipe Ceremony and Art Exhibit in the RE/MAX Room during the Breaking the Ice Festival.

DISCUSSION:

Inuit Identity Project, in collaboration with Vanessa Kennedy of Red Quills, have authored the revised Land Acknowledgement statement.

During the June 13, 2024 Council meeting, CEO of the Inuit Identity project, Muckpaloo Ipeelie, presented Council with an educational session on the Indigenous groups that have occupied our region.

Wasaga Beach is located on the historical Lands of the Tionontati people, who were part of a larger Wyandot group until 1650. These lands spanned from Midland, Barrie to Craigeleigh and were collectively known as Wendake. The Beaver wars and European interaction weakened the Wyandot group and they left or became absorbed into local First Nations groups. Since that time, the Anishanaabe and Three Fires Confederacy, and Haudenosaunee groups have continued to care and use this Land.

The strong spiritual connection to the waterways for these First Nations groups is highlighted in the revised Land Acknowledgement statements.

The revised Land Acknowledgements also states our commitment to inclusivity and reconciliation as we move forward in being sustainable caretakers of the land and waterways.

Staff suggest using the **Revised Land Acknowledgement statement – long form** (Appendix C) during Council and inter-organizational meetings, and the **Revised Land Acknowledgement statement – short form** (Appendix D) during committee, and internal meetings.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications for Council to consider.

Term of Council Priorities:

This report establishes the TOCP's #42 – Celebrate Diversity and Inclusion: Increase representation of First Nations in cultural events.

CONCLUSION:

The proposed revised Land Acknowledgement statement embodies a more accurate and meaningful recognition of the Town's commitment to recognizing, and working in partnership with, the First Nations, Inuit and Metis people. It emphasizes inclusivity and sustainable stewardship, and better reflects the spirit of truth and reconciliation.

Authored by:

Karla Findlay
Executive Assistant to the Mayor, Council and CAO

Appendices:

- Appendix A: Current Land Acknowledgement statement
- Appendix B: Revised Land Acknowledgement Package – Urban Inuit Project & Red Quills
- Appendix C: Revised Land Acknowledgement statement - long form
- Appendix D: Revised Land Acknowledgement statement - short form