

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL**

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR  
AND COUNCILLORS*

**SUBJECT: CORPORATE GUIDELINES FOR INDIGENOUS TERRITORY  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. THAT Council authorize staff to pursue the approach and process, as outlined in Section 6.0 of the report.

**REPORT**

The Executive Committee of Council, at its meeting held on 2021 February 03, received and adopted the attached report seeking Council authorization for an approach and process for updating the Corporate Indigenous Territory Acknowledgement.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor S. Dhaliwal  
Chair

Mayor M. Hurley  
Vice Chair

Copied to: City Manager Director Planning & Building Director Corporate Services Director Engineering Director Finance Director Human Resources Director Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Director Public Safety & Community Services Chief Information Officer Chief Librarian City Archivist City Solicitor Fire Chief OIC – RCMP Museum Service Supervisor
--

---

**TO:** CHAIR AND MEMBERS  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL

**DATE:** 2021 January 14

**FROM:** DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

**FILE:** 2135 00

**SUBJECT: CORPORATE GUIDELINES FOR INDIGENOUS TERRITORY  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS**

**PURPOSE:** To provide an update and propose next steps for Corporate Indigenous Territory Acknowledgement.

---

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **THAT** the Committee request Council to authorize staff to pursue the approach and process as outlined in *Section 6.0* of this report.

**REPORT**

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

As part of the City's continued efforts to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) 'Calls to Action' for local governments, Council in 2019 June officially recognized that Burnaby is on the unceded territory of the hənq̓əminəm and Sḵw̓xwú7mesh speaking peoples, and provided direction on how territory should be corporately acknowledged verbally.

The Committee and Council approved a further report in 2019 November, which outlined how territory should be acknowledged in written form. Both reports referenced that an annual review process of the wording and corporate application of the territory acknowledgement would be undertaken by staff in order to incorporate continued learnings from relationships with local Nations, and from Indigenous knowledge keepers.

This report provides information on the 2020 review process, and proposes additional avenues for territory acknowledgment in written form.

**2.0 POLICY SECTION**

The acknowledgment of unceded territory by the City is supported by the following policy context:

- *Official Community Plan* (1998) includes 'Section 12.0 – Heritage Planning', which has introductory statements on Indigenous history and presence in Burnaby.

To: *Executive Committee of Council*  
From: *Director Planning and Building*  
Re: *Corporate Guidelines for Indigenous Territory*  
*Acknowledgement: Update and Next Steps*  
2021 January 14..... Page 2

- ***Burnaby Social Sustainability Strategy*** (2011), includes a primary goal of ‘Community Inclusion’. This goal is particularly concerned with ensuring the City is “welcoming of all cultures, identities and abilities”.

In addition to the policies noted above, the recognition of Indigenous territory is supported by a number of goals and sub-goals of the *Corporate Strategic Plan*:

- ***A Connected Community***
  - Partnership – Work collaboratively with businesses, educational institutions, associations, other communities and governments.
- ***An Inclusive Community***
  - Create a sense of community – Provide opportunities that encourage and welcome all community members and create a sense of belonging.
- ***A Healthy Community***
  - Lifelong learning – Improve upon and develop programs and services that enable ongoing learning.
- ***A Thriving Organization***
  - Organizational culture – Ensure that our core values are reflected in our policies, programs and services delivery.
  - Communication – Practice open and transparent communication among staff, Council and the community.

### 3.0 LOCAL CONTEXT

Before Burnaby existed, its lands were home to the ancestors of several local Central Coast Salish Nations. Today, their descendants continue to live in Burnaby and the adjacent municipalities that developed within their traditional territories. These are the hənqəminəm and Skwxwú7mesh speaking peoples. Since time immemorial, each of these Nations has celebrated its own unique culture and history, while remaining connected to the others by family, social life, traditions, protocols, and language. Each has oral traditions to explain their origins and ongoing connections to local lands<sup>1</sup>.

According to the most recent information from Statistics Canada, approximately 4,195 Burnaby community members self-identify as being Aboriginal. This accounts for approximately 1.8% of the total city population. Approximately 1,000 persons within this number self-identify as being Métis. Based on enrollment information from the Burnaby School District, the Burnaby neighbourhoods with the highest percentage of Indigenous families are the Heights, Edmonds, Cameron, and Stride.

---

<sup>1</sup> More information can be found in the Indigenous History in Burnaby Resource Guide: <http://www.burnabyvillagemuseum.ca/assets/Documents/Teachers-Guides/Indigenous%20History%20in%20Burnaby%20Resouce%20Guide.pdf>

### **3.1 BC Treaty Process**

Prior to the modern treaty processes, only fifteen treaties were made with local Nations in BC. These are the 14 so-called Douglas Treaties on Vancouver Island, and 1 treaty in northeastern BC. This is in contrast to much of the rest of Canada, where treaties are largely in place. In 1990 the Federal Government, the Province of BC, and the Nisga'a Tribal Council agreed to negotiate a treaty together. These negotiations resulted in the Nisga'a Treaty, implemented in 2000. Out of this process, the BC Treaty Commission was created to oversee further negotiations. The BC treaty negotiations process is voluntary and open to all Indigenous Nations in British Columbia. Modern treaties provide Nations with autonomy over their land, and replace federal Indian Act jurisdiction.

A number of Nations in the Lower Mainland that recognize Burnaby as within their traditional territory are engaged in the treaty process. However, except for the Tsawwassen Nation<sup>2</sup>, the process is still ongoing. As such, the land that Burnaby is on remains unceded – or territory that was never ceded through treaty, war or surrender by the original inhabitants.

### **4.0 CITY RECONCILIATION EFFORTS**

The City has made significant efforts towards implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) 'Calls to Action' for local governments. Key recent achievements include opening government-to-government relationships with the Tsleil-Waututh Nation (TWN), the Musqueam Indian Band, the Squamish Nation and the Kwikwetlem Nation. The relationship with TWN has progressed furthest, with an inaugural joint Council meeting held on 2020 November 3.

Other significant efforts to implement the 'Calls to Action' include commissioning a staff training video from a local Indigenous film maker, creating and hiring a full-time 'Manager of Indigenous Relations' staff position, and developing further policy to protect and celebrate archaeological resources in Burnaby. A report providing a status update on TRC related activities to the Committee and Council is forthcoming.

### **5.0 INDIGENOUS TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGMENT – CURRENT WORDING AND PROCESS**

Through relationships with local Nations, as referenced above, the following territorial statement wording for verbal acknowledgement was approved by Council in 2019 June. It is noted that the lower case letters are deliberate:

"Before we start, I would like to take a moment to recognize we are on the ancestral and unceded homelands of the hənqəmīnəm and Sḵwxwú7mesh speaking peoples, and to extend appreciation for the opportunity to hold a meeting on this shared territory."

The reasons for this approved wording is as follows:

---

<sup>2</sup> The Tsawwassen First Nation Final Agreement took effect on April 3, 2009.

**To: Executive Committee of Council**  
**From: Director Planning and Building**  
**Re: Corporate Guidelines for Indigenous Territory**  
**Acknowledgement: Update and Next Steps**  
**2021 January 14.....Page 4**

- Coast Salish Territory, while technically correct, refers to a long swath of land ranging over much of the BC coast down into Washington/Oregon. Local Nations have advised that just using this phrase in territorial acknowledgments is not grounded enough in southwestern BC; and,
- Referring to the language groups has been recommended by some local Nations as a more specific option that still avoids listing Nation names, which is problematic in the event that one group is accidentally left out, or should another Nation indicate that their territory includes all or part of the land on which Burnaby is situated.

Based upon Council's direction, territory is verbally acknowledged in the following circumstances:

- City Council meetings;
- Boards, Commission and Committees of Council meetings;
- Sub-committees and working groups of Council;
- Public consultation events where opening remarks are offered;
- Public Hearings;
- Formal ceremonies or programs at special events, celebrations, award presentations, and open houses (both in person and digital);
- Staff and volunteer training and education opportunities;
- Department and divisional staff meetings with formal agendas, programs, presentations, and/or minutes; and,
- Other instances at the discretion of staff.

In 2019 November, Council further approved the following statement to recognize territory in written form. Phrasing is sometimes slightly altered depending on the prose of the document:

“Burnaby is located on the ancestral and unceded homelands of the hən̓q̓əmi̓nəm̓ and Sk̓w̓x̓w̓ú7mesh speaking peoples. We are grateful for the opportunity to be on this shared territory.”

Again following Council's direction, territory is currently acknowledged in written form in the following circumstances:

- Minutes of City Council, as well as Boards, Commissions and Committees of Council;
- Meeting minutes where the acknowledgment is verbally offered;
- Public educational or historical resources; and,
- Publicly-available, strategic City documents such as Community Plans, the Official Community Plan; financial plans, annual reports, and final reports from public consultation processes.

To: *Executive Committee of Council*  
From: *Director Planning and Building*  
Re: *Corporate Guidelines for Indigenous Territory*  
*Acknowledgement: Update and Next Steps*  
2021 January 14.....Page 5

It is also noted that Indigenous territory is recognized on the City website within the 'About Burnaby – History' page and the 'Social Planning – Indigenous Peoples' page. A prominent, central location on the anticipated, new version of the City website is being determined.

## **6.0 INDIGENOUS TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGMENT – UPDATED WORDING AND PROCESS**

As directed by the initial 2019 June and 2019 November reports on this matter, staff (Social Planning) consulted with local Nations in order to confirm and update the territory acknowledgement statement. Based upon these conversations, the word 'shared' has been removed from the statement, with the remainder of the language remaining the same.

### Updated Verbal Territory Acknowledgement Statement

"Before we start, I would like to take a moment to recognize we are on the ancestral and unceded homelands of the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm and Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh speaking peoples, and to extend appreciation for the opportunity to hold a meeting on this territory."

### Updated Written Territory Acknowledgement Statement

Burnaby is located on the ancestral and unceded homelands of the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm and Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh speaking peoples. We are grateful for the opportunity to be on this territory.

The reason for this change is to respect the entirety of territory areas for each Nation. While Nations historically moved through the territories of other Nations on a seasonal round of hunting, harvesting and visiting relations, it is important when recognizing unceded territory to understand the land base of each Nation as whole and complete, even when recognized boundaries overlap. This concept is supported by Action #47 of the TRC 'Calls to Action', which states "We call upon all levels of government to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and lands".

## **6.1 Further Proposed Indigenous Territory Acknowledgement – Verbal Statements**

The previous direction provided by the Committee and Council in terms of when and how to provide an Indigenous territory acknowledgement statement has largely proved both expansive and detailed enough to meet emerging eventualities. The process of verbally recognizing unceded territory is in wide use, and follows the guidelines noted above in *Section 5.0*. However, subsequent input from Nation partners has resulted in one additional recommended instance where a verbal acknowledgement statement should be offered:

- Official City videos, and recorded messages, being made publicly available – either as a voice-over, by the initial speaker, or another means determined at the discretion of staff.

To: *Executive Committee of Council*  
From: *Director Planning and Building*  
Re: *Corporate Guidelines for Indigenous Territory*  
*Acknowledgement: Update and Next Steps*  
2021 January 14.....Page 6

## **6.2 Further Proposed Indigenous Territory Acknowledgement in Written Documents**

The initial direction of Council of where to acknowledge ancestral and unceded territory has supported the City in its reconciliation efforts. However, subsequent input from Nations partners and staff research on approaches in other jurisdictions, has resulted in the following proposed further list of opportunities where staff recommend it would be appropriate to include a territory acknowledgement statement in written form:

- Burnaby ‘Be Active’ Program Guide;
- Burnaby Archives ‘Research Resources’ and other publications;
- Cultural Services publications at the discretion of staff including, for example, programs, posters, program notes for performances, educational documents, and exhibition catalogues;
- Recreation Services publications at the discretion of staff including, for example, newsletters, program descriptions and posters;
- Burnaby Public Library documents including the strategic plan, annual report, ‘welcome to the library’ brochures, and other external facing promotional materials;
- Internally produced staff training documents;
- City’s social media accounts, in the ‘about’ section, or other relevant location;
- As an option for staff and Council email signatures; and,
- Other documents which have a strategic, guiding and/or education intent (determined at the discretion of staff).

The inclusion of expanded and written territory acknowledgments in the above instances (*Sections 6.1 and 6.2*) would further advance the City’s implementation of the TRC ‘Calls to Action’ #43 (utilizing the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*<sup>3</sup>, as the framework for reconciliation) #47 (as noted above – “repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty”), #69 (the role of libraries), #79 (the role of the arts), and #87 (the importance of sports and recreation). As well, expanded usage of a territory acknowledgement in public facing documents and publications will provide community members with increased opportunity for learning about Truth and Reconciliation and the City’s efforts.

It is noted that additional work is needed by staff to determine the appropriate form and presentation of the territory acknowledgement in the staff and Council email signature blocks, in order to ensure consistency and to remain aligned with the City’s visual identity, including spacing and juxtaposition to the included Corporate Strategic Plan vision statement.

As referenced above, a prominent, central location for Indigenous territory acknowledgement on the revamped City website is being determined. An updated website anticipated to be online in 2021/22.

---

<sup>3</sup> The Declaration can be viewed here: [https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf). It is noted that the Province of BC has adopted the Declaration in 2019 November as an official guiding framework for reconciliation.

To: Executive Committee of Council  
From: Director Planning and Building  
Re: Corporate Guidelines for Indigenous Territory  
Acknowledgement: Update and Next Steps  
2021 January 14.....Page 7

Should the above be approved, the staff guidelines and accompanying 'frequently asked questions' for territory acknowledgement will be updated accordingly, and distributed to all staff.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

Long standing policies, the Social Sustainability Strategy, and the Corporate Strategic Plan support the City to take leadership in and continue to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) 'Calls to Action' for local governments. Pursuing a coordinated, respectful, and updated territory acknowledgement as a corporation is an important part of this process. As such, it is recommended the Committee request Council to authorize staff to pursue the approach and process outlined in *Section 6.0* of this report.

  
E. W. Kozak, Director  
PLANNING AND BUILDING

RM:sa

cc:	City Manager	Fire Chief
	Director Engineering	Chief Librarian
	Director Corporate Services	Chief Information Officer
	Director Finance	OIC - RCMP
	Director Public Safety and Community Services	City Solicitor
	Director Human Resources	City Clerk
	Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	City Archivist
	Museum Service Supervisor	