

To:	Warden Hicks and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	April 8, 2021
Subject / Report No:	SSR-CW-01-21
Title:	Association of Municipalities of Ontario and Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship
Prepared by:	Barb Fedy, Director of Social Services
Reviewed by:	Kim Wingrove, CAO
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	All Municipalities of Grey County
Status:	

Recommendation

1. That Report SSR-CW-01-21 be received; and
2. That Grey County Council authorize the Warden and the Clerk to sign, along with the M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre, the joint Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres' Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship and Addendum, as adapted, on behalf of Grey County; and
3. That staff be directed to work with the M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre for the signing of the declaration and all actions contained within the declaration itself; and
4. That Grey County and the M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre work together to advance the commitments of the joint Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship.

Executive Summary

At the annual conference in August 2020, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that brought both organizations to the table on issues that matter to our communities. The MOU will help strengthen the relationship between Ontario's Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

For several years AMO and the OFIFC have been working together to develop relationships and explore opportunities for collaboration for municipal governments and services for Indigenous peoples who do not reside on Indigenous territory across Ontario. From this work, a joint declaration was developed. Many individual municipalities have moved ahead to adopt the joint Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship as written and several have adapted it to suit

their unique community while still others have re-written it to further support distinct and inclusive engagements with one another.

The intent of the declaration as developed by AMO and OFIFC is to identify ways that municipalities and Friendship Centres can work together to improve the quality of life of Indigenous people living across the province of Ontario, as 85% of Indigenous people live off-reserve and in urban settings. This work has been supported by both the AMO Board of Directors and the AMO Indigenous Relations Task Force, as well as OFIFC's Board of Directors.

Background and Discussion

Prior to the joint signing at the AMO Conference in August 2020, Grey County was approached by the M'WIKwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre, located in Owen Sound and serving Indigenous people living in Grey and Bruce Counties, to identify interest in participating in signing the Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship as developed by AMO and OFIFC.

As described on the AMO website, OFIFC is a provincial Indigenous organization that represents the collective interests of twenty-nine (29) member Friendship Centres who improve the quality of life of Indigenous people living in an urban and rural environment by supporting self-determined activities which encourage equal access to and participation in Canadian society and which respects Indigenous cultural distinctiveness. The OFIFC administers several culture-based programs and services which are delivered by local Friendship Centres in areas such as health, poverty reduction, homelessness, ending family violence, justice, family support, and employment and training. OFIFC member Friendship Centres currently deliver culture-based programs and services in most of these areas, which has had a positive impact on Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities across Ontario. Friendship Centres do not operate in a vacuum, and often develop meaningful relationships and innovative partnerships with local municipalities to ensure that urban and rural Indigenous people are receiving equitable access to culturally-based services. As such, Friendship Centres are recognized as Indigenous community hubs in the cities and towns in which they are located, providing services in a self-determining, holistic, and integrated manner to local Indigenous people and communities

Here in Grey County, staff work closely with M'WIKwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre in many capacities. Recent County advocacy with the Ministry of Education (MEDU) to flex funding approval at a new site allowed for additional programming growth as well as bringing previously separated services under one roof. The M'WIKwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre addresses the social, spiritual, mental and physical needs of the urban Indigenous population in Owen Sound and area but also offers outreach services and programs to others who reside across the region. Grey County has a diverse population and it is important to forge new ways of working together in the spirit of reconciliation in order to advance the wellbeing of Indigenous residents in urban and rural communities.

The declaration supports collaboration on initiatives that create tangible opportunities and outcomes for the County of Grey and the M'WIKwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre for a common objective to build a foundation for a strong, mutually-beneficial relationship. The following guiding principles provide the foundation for this positive and productive relationship as AMO and OFIFC work together, on behalf of member municipalities, and in turn Grey County and M'WIKwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre, to advance the wellbeing of urban and rural Indigenous communities:

- **Equity and Access:** Equitable access requires working to address barriers to ensure all urban and rural Indigenous people are able to receive services, regardless of geographic or physical location.
- **Collaboration and Co-development:** The value of Indigenous expertise and knowledge to design, plan, implement and evaluate public policy and programs that impact the wellbeing of Indigenous people is recognized.
- **Indigenous Leadership:** Urban and rural Indigenous communities have involvement and responsibility over planning and development of policies and services for urban and rural Indigenous people.
- **Responsiveness to Community Priorities:** Community-identified needs and priorities provide the basis for policy and program development.
- **Respect for Indigenous Diversity and Cultures:** The distinctions and diversity of Indigenous people across Ontario are recognized and respected, with additional consideration given to gender, sexual orientation, age, language, ability, religion and socioeconomic difference.

Staff have reviewed the declaration and intentions with the Executive Director of the Friendship Centre as well as a Board of Directors representative and further worked with representatives at both AMO and at the OFIFC offices to discuss next steps on behalf of the County of Grey and the local Friendship Center in order to advance this important work. Intentions are to continue to build upon existing relationships and establish opportunities and priorities for serving Indigenous people who live in Grey County. Bruce County Council has endorsed a similar report and Declaration and given the Friendship Centre serves both municipalities, the amendments made to the declaration for Bruce County fit well with Grey County too. Current Covid 19 protocols have restricted opportunities for face to face engagement and it is hoped that as restrictions ease over the coming months there will be a site tour arranged of the new space where M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre relocated in later 2020. Staff also anticipate opportunities to share in ceremony to celebrate our mutual intentions and commitment for working together later this summer or fall.

Finally, it is the intention of Grey County to be robust in embracing the intentions of the declaration and not to be trivial in any way. Recently Grey County adopted a Land Acknowledgement Policy to formally acknowledge the land at County Council and other occasions as a commitment to this ongoing work of respect and building stronger relationships. This action is reflective of change for true reconciliation; supporting the joint declaration furthers this important work as both the municipality and M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre care about community.

Legal and Legislated Requirements

None.

Financial and Resource Implications

None.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal
- External

M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre Representatives

- Meredith Staveley-Watson, AMO Municipal Advisor
- Louloua Habli, OFIFC Urban Issues Policy Analyst

Appendices and Attachments

1. Addendum to the Declaration (using AMO template and added clause from Bruce County's addendum)
2. Joint AMO – OFIFC Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship

**Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship
Between
M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre and the
Corporation of the County of Grey
Addendum to the AMO-OFIFC Declaration**

WHEREAS the culture and traditions of Indigenous peoples are woven in the fabric of Canada's heritage and particularly in the historical roots of Grey County;

WHEREAS the County of Grey is working with the M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre;

WHEREAS the M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre has been an active contributor to the wellbeing of residents in the community;

WHEREAS the County of Grey has a good and ongoing relationship with the M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre and wants to set a leading example in the area of Indigenous relations by demonstrating overlapping community interest and work;

WHEREAS the County of Grey and the M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre recognize this is an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the administrations of the Friendship Centre and the County and to achieve greater impact in the lives of urban Indigenous people within Grey County through strategically partnering resources and sharing expertise when possible;

WHEREAS the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship reflects the municipality's understanding of and working relationship with Indigenous people in the community;

WHEREAS the M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre is contemplating the signing of this declaration and participation in related activities following the virtual AMO Conference in August of 2020;

THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED THAT Grey County Council authorizes the Warden to sign in conjunction with the M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre, the joint AMO-OFIFC Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship on behalf of the municipality and participate in related activities following the AMO 2020 Conference;

AND THAT Council direct staff to work with AMO in order to coordinate the declaration signing and related activities following the AMO 2020 Conference.

ALL SIGNATORIES RECOGNIZE:

THAT Grey County and the M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre will work together to achieve the articles of the AMO-OFIFC Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship.

Signatories and Adjacent Dates:

Selwyn Hicks, Warden

Tanya Shute, Vice-President

Heather Morrison, Clerk
Corporation of the County of Grey

Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship

Improving the Quality of Life of Indigenous People Across Ontario's Municipalities Joint and Ongoing Commitment Between Signatories: the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC)

1. WHEREAS in Ontario, over 85 percent of Indigenous people live in municipalities;
2. WHEREAS the growing percentage of Indigenous people living in municipalities and the Friendship Centres that serve them participate in and contribute to municipal community life;
3. WHEREAS the Friendship Centres have existed in Ontario municipalities for over half a century and have vital roles to play in community development, social cohesion, and improving the quality of life for Indigenous people living in urban and rural areas;
4. WHEREAS the Friendship Centres receive their mandate from their communities and are inclusive of all Indigenous people;

5. WHEREAS municipal governments have a growing and critical role in human and social services and community development and many have shown leadership in working in partnership with Indigenous organizations;
6. WHEREAS the Truth and Reconciliation Commission defines reconciliation as “an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships”;
7. WHEREAS strengthening relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is essential to municipal governments, Friendship Centres, and communities across Ontario;
8. WHEREAS municipal governments play an important role in providing and delivering valuable programs and services to meet the needs of their residents, as well as being responsible, in all or some part, for over two hundred and eighty (280) pieces of provincial legislation that impact daily life of all who live in Ontario;
9. WHEREAS many municipal governments and Friendship Centres have taken up the responsibility to collaborate on a variety of initiatives that improve Indigenous quality of life and have had tangible community impacts;
10. WHEREAS municipal governments are on the front-lines working directly with all individuals to support and determine social determinants of health, demonstrating a notion of direct responsibility contributing to community wellbeing and prosperity;
11. WHEREAS the AMO has developed the Indigenous Relations Task Force to advise the AMO Board of Directors on municipal-Indigenous relationship building;
12. WHEREAS the OFIFC was founded in 1971 and works to support, advocate for and build the capacity of member Friendship Centres across Ontario;
13. WHEREAS the Friendship Centre Movement is the largest Indigenous service network in the province supporting the vibrant and quickly-growing Indigenous population through programming, research, education, and policy advocacy;
14. WHEREAS AMO and OFIFC are partnering on a variety of initiatives to improve collaboration and information sharing amongst our membership, not limited to the work of the AMO-OFIFC Indigenous Relations Working Group and the AMO-OFIFC Memorandum of Understanding signed on xxx; AND
15. WHEREAS this declaration is a living document that municipal governments and Friendship Centres can sign onto or use as a framework for the development of local or regional declarations that can be addended to this declaration;

THAT SIGNATORY MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS RECOGNIZE:

16. THAT Indigenous people reside and build community and resilience in municipalities across Ontario;
17. THE value of Indigenous knowledge and expertise to design, plan, implement, and evaluate public policy and programs that impact the wellbeing of Indigenous people is paramount;
18. THE responsibility taken up by Indigenous Friendship Centres to meet Indigenous community need;
19. THE value of building relationships and partnerships with Friendship Centres to improve the quality of life of Indigenous people in their municipality; AND
20. THAT the exchange of information and skills within and between municipal governments and related associations contribute to improved understanding in the area of Indigenous relations.

THAT SIGNATORY ONTARIO INDIGENOUS FRIENDSHIP CENTRES RECOGNIZE:

21. THAT they are and have been leaders in urban Indigenous community development and in reflecting and responding to the needs of Indigenous people in municipalities for over half a century;
22. THAT they are engaged in local and regional affairs and that they contribute to municipal life and that they lead the Indigenous social, community, economic, and cultural development of municipalities across Ontario;
23. THE responsibility taken up by municipal governments to meet and serve Indigenous communities;
24. THAT municipal governments provide essential services that Friendship Centre community members rely on to thrive;
25. THAT municipal governments are leaders in Ontario in meeting community needs through local programs, services and community development, be they in human and social services, public safety or public works/infrastructure, and are integral to community well-being and the social determinants of health;
26. THAT the development and maintenance of good relationships and partnerships with municipal governments is essential to achieving long-term positive impact on Indigenous communities; AND
27. THAT Friendship Centres acknowledge that they operate in a municipal landscape and rely on municipal governments.

ALL SIGNATORIES RECOGNIZE:

28. THAT we are uniquely positioned to improve community-wellbeing through local policy development, programs and services as we are well-equipped to be responsive to community needs;
29. THAT community-identified needs and priorities should provide the basis for policy and program development, and that we are uniquely positioned to improve the quality of life of Indigenous people living in municipalities;
30. THAT mutual respect, responsibility, trust, transparency and collaboration to meet common community priorities are key principles of relationship building between non-Indigenous and Indigenous organizations;
31. THAT the Friendship Centres and municipal governments play key roles in working against racism, inequality, discrimination, and stigma within and between communities;
32. THAT the goal of this declaration is to provide municipal governments and Friendship Centres with a framework for relationship-building to advance reconciliation in communities across Ontario;
33. THAT the goal of this declaration is to enhance social cohesion between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and support closer cultural, social and civic ties between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people;
34. THAT we can play a leadership role and set a standard by advancing reconciliation locally and regionally through partnerships and collaboration;
35. THAT fostering local and regional partnerships is integral to improving the quality of life for all communities; AND
36. THAT we establish and maintain an ongoing dialogue and working relationships at the local and provincial orders.

SIGNATORIES AND ADJACENT DATES:

AMO

OFIFC

Ongoing Signatures:

Municipal Governments (Elected Officials)

Friendship Centres (Presidents)

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