



A COLLABORATIVE  
**PATHWAY  
FORWARD**

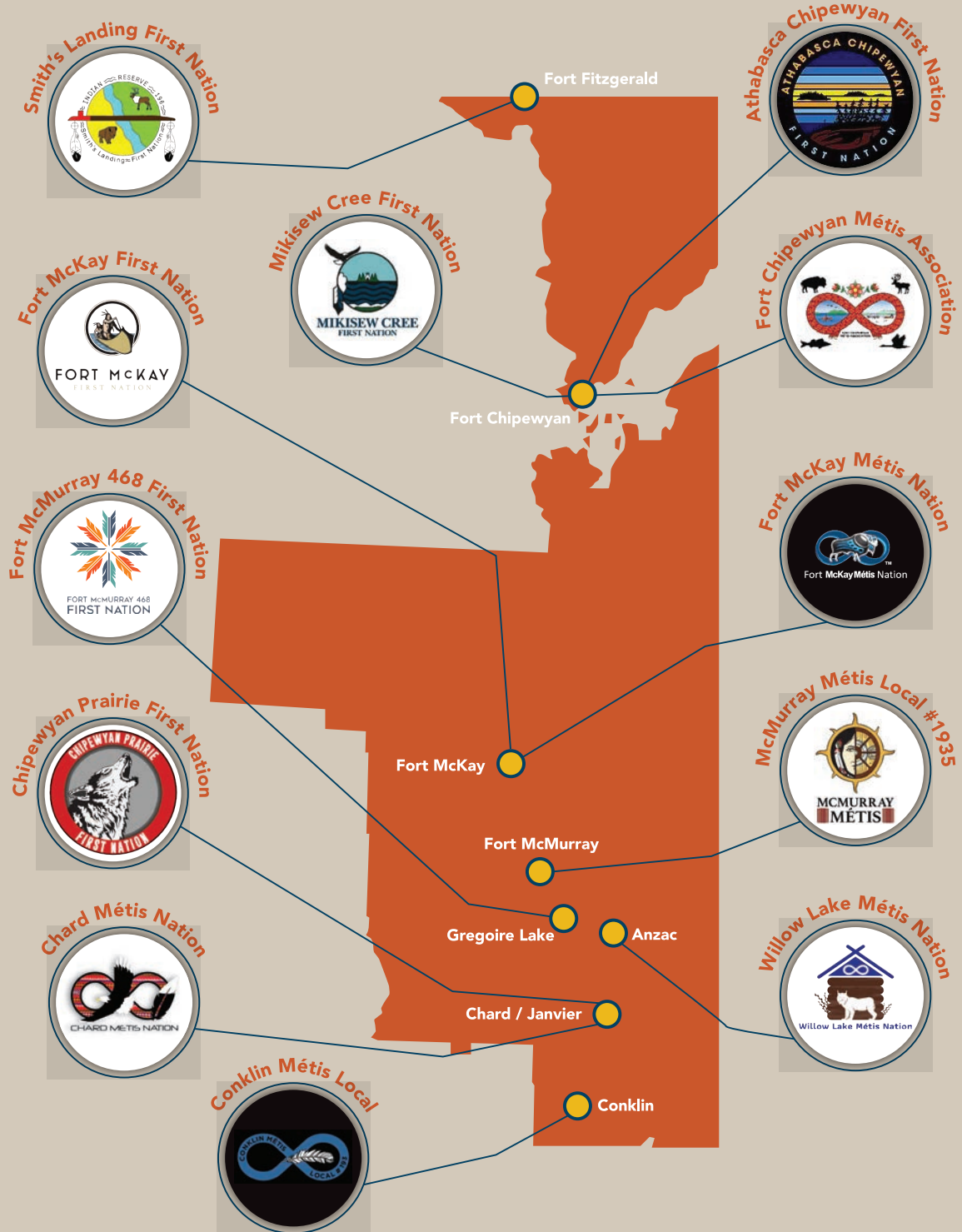
Responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action:  
*Principles for a Collaborative Pathway Forward in Wood Buffalo*



REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY  
OF **WOOD BUFFALO**



# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



*With gratitude, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo acknowledges this land is Treaty 8 Territory, the traditional lands of the Cree, Dene, and the unceded territory of the Métis people.*

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# Responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action: *Principles for a Collaborative Pathway Forward in Wood Buffalo*

## A Note on Terminology

*This Report uses the term "Indigenous" to describe the original Peoples of the land (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis). The term "Indigenous" has been adopted by the provincial and federal government and used around the world and in key documents such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. At the time of publishing its Final Report, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) used the term Aboriginal. Where the work of the TRC is quoted, the term Aboriginal is left as is. The term "Indian" is used to align with official federal documents and systems, such as the Indian Act and the Indian Residential School System. In this Report, when a specific Indigenous group within Wood Buffalo is discussed, that group's preferred name is used. In all other instances, the term Indigenous will be used.*

One of the largest municipalities by area in Canada, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) includes a substantial and vibrant urban and rural Indigenous population. The not-so-distant history of residential schools, as evidenced by the recent confirmation of unmarked graves in several provinces, the Sixties Scoop, and the numerous attempts by governments to assimilate Indigenous Peoples into Euro-Canadian culture, has had devastating consequences.

Multiple generations of Indigenous Peoples and communities in this country have endured racist, colonial, and genocidal practices at the hands of the government and the churches. Federal assimilation policies and residential schools were developed to eliminate Indigenous cultures from existence. The legacy of residential schools and these policies systematically undermined Indigenous Peoples and communities across Canada, disrupting and harming families for generations, and contributing to a profound and sustained loss of language, land, culture, and humanity.

A recent Memorial Gathering and Walk in Solidarity stood as a stark reminder of the impact that residential schools have had on Indigenous people in Wood Buffalo and the need for collective action. Hosted by the Athabasca Tribal Council, the event honoured residential school survivors and included five First Nation Chiefs, the Treaty 8 Grand Chief, and Métis community leaders as they led a walk into Fort McMurray. In an act of solidarity and support, approximately 350 Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants joined the seven-day, 130 kilometer walk as it began in the community of Janvier, Alberta on July 1, 2021 and concluded at Fort McMurray's Snye Point Park on July 7, 2021. It was here that over 1000 people gathered to listen and learn from residential school survivors, hear their stories, and memorialize the children who never made it home. The Municipality stands in solidarity with the region's residential school survivors, supporting a path to healing for survivors and their families as the truth of this terrible legacy continues to be unveiled.



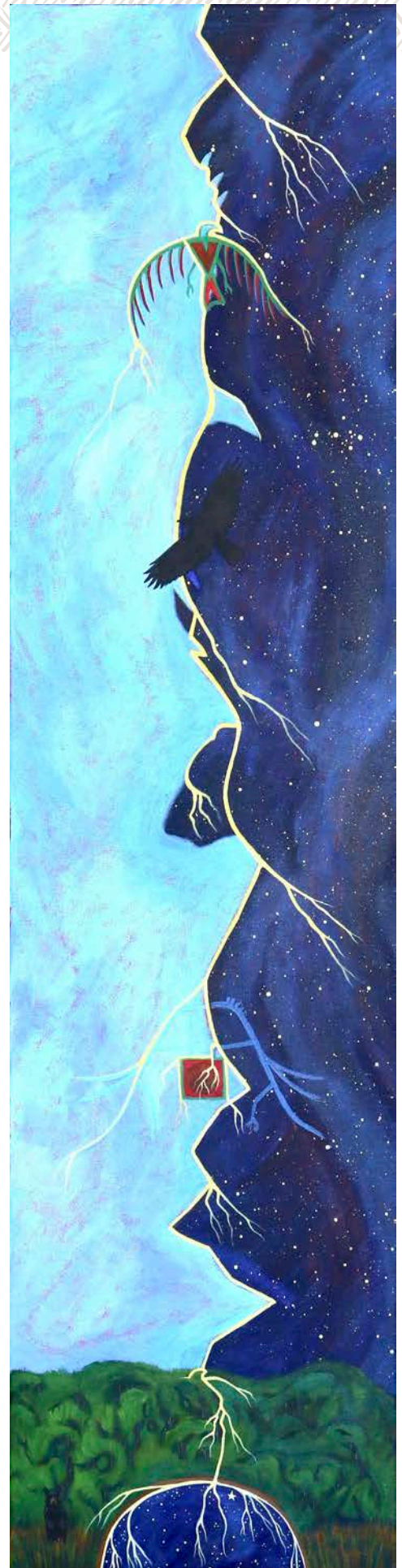
## The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the Indian Residential School System

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established to uncover the truth about Canada's Indian Residential School System, and to guide and inspire a process of healing towards reconciliation. From the 1870s to the 1990s, at least 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children in Canada were forcibly taken from their families and housed in residential schools, with Alberta having the most residential schools in operation. Many students experienced poor living conditions that included malnutrition, disease, and physical, psychological, emotional, and sexual abuse. These children were forbidden to speak their languages or even acknowledge and practice their cultures. The last residential school in Canada closed in 1996, and the negative impacts on Indigenous Peoples, throughout Canada and here in Wood Buffalo, continue to be experienced today.

Between 2008 – 2014, the TRC researched official records and visited communities across the country to hear from thousands of survivors and their families about the impacts of residential schools. The Commission's work and the strength of the survivors acted as a catalyst for the creation of the TRC's 94 Calls to Action. Highlighted in the Commission's 2015 Summary Report, these Calls urge all levels of government – federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal – to work together to change policies and programs in a concerted effort to repair the harm caused by residential schools in Canada.

Central to the TRC's findings was the statement that "knowing the truth about what happened in residential schools in and of itself does not necessarily lead to reconciliation." All levels of government in Canada, including many municipalities and cities, have taken active steps to reconcile and strengthen relationships with Indigenous Peoples and communities.

Spirits are With Me #2, 2010



The Calls to Action, the TRC's Ten Principles of Reconciliation, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples form the core of the Municipality's efforts and initiatives to reconcile and renew relationships with Indigenous Peoples and communities in Wood Buffalo.

Repairing and restoring relationships is central to reconciliation and improved relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples, both across the country and here in Wood Buffalo. Considering the recent confirmations of unmarked gravesites, honest dialogue on reconciliation is more critical and urgent than ever. This ongoing process requires listening, learning and acknowledging the true history of Canada. Mutual trust and respect from all involved parties is required, and most importantly, collective action must be taken. As such, this Report captures the detailed reconciliation work the Municipality has undertaken over the past five years with Indigenous community partners. Beginning with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation - the Report lays out a path forward to strengthen the Municipality's response to the Calls to Action and its overall relationships with Indigenous Peoples in Wood Buffalo.



## **The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

*The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration)* is an international instrument that was the product of almost 25 years of deliberation between UN member states and Indigenous groups. Containing 46 articles and adopted by 148 countries, the UN Declaration establishes a universal framework to enshrine the minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of Indigenous Peoples of the world.

The Municipality has identified Call to Action 43 as one of the 23 Calls to Action it can implement or influence. Call to Action 43 calls upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to fully adopt and implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as the framework for reconciliation. Through this lens, the UN Declaration is the document providing the foundation for all the Municipality's reconciliatory efforts in Wood Buffalo.

Utilizing the UN Declaration, the TRC's ten Principles of Reconciliation, the current 23 Calls to Action and additional Calls the Municipality is seeking to adopt, this Report describes in detail the Municipality's actions and responses to reconciliation in actively working toward improved relationships with Indigenous Peoples and communities in Wood Buffalo. Accompanied by a series of recommendations, the Report lays out a pathway forward, to advance and strengthen reconciliation in a way that is meaningful, achievable, and measurable; as the organization continues this important and necessary work, today and into the future.





## A WORD FROM **MAYOR DON SCOTT**

"The Municipality is deeply committed to working closely with Indigenous communities and partners in moving the region further on the path to Reconciliation. Indigenous leaders, communities and those that live within them, as well as the Reconciliation Advisory Circle are fundamental to this process. They are the ones providing Indigenous perspectives and recommendations on Municipality projects and initiatives to help guide the Municipality's Reconciliation efforts.

We all have a responsibility to understand the true history of the region and the country. We all have a responsibility to work collaboratively to build a better future for the region. Together, let's move forward in a spirit of relationship that honours and commemorates the experiences of the past, while moving forward on the path of Reconciliation for a better tomorrow."

*"If you're truly going to bring about healing, you've got to admit where the wrong occurred and you've got to apologize for wrongs that happened."*

## FROM **JUSTICE MURRAY SINCLAIR**, CHAIR, TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

"There are among you those who will define the path to reconciliation with greater clarity than we can at present. We know the objective – a relationship of mutual respect – but like a marathon, we can't see the finish line yet, or the challenges along the way. We may not see them for a while, but like every marathoner, you have to believe there's a finish line and that you can get there with effort, or you will not even start. If you don't believe in the race you will not know the importance of continuing to the finish. You have to believe that doing something about this history is the right thing to do, and you have to be fearless in doing what you can."

## MESSAGE FROM **THE RECONCILIATION ADVISORY CIRCLE AND ELDER ALICE MARTIN**

"I am honored to send this message to the Indigenous groups within the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. I sincerely hope the work we will do, to guide the process in building a trusting relationship with the Municipality will produce positive results for the Indigenous people and the Municipality. We can ask ourselves, what is it that we want to reconcile? My belief is, first we want to tell the truth about what has happened to all Indigenous people across the country and then to us in Wood Buffalo, our local history.

The reconciliation of this truth is the work we want to set in motion as the Reconciliation Advisory Circle. This Advisory Circle is comprised of Indigenous people from the region, working beside non-Indigenous representation from the Municipality. With the objective to develop a strategy that will engage both parties to observe, evaluate and report to the communities of the Indigenous people and Wood Buffalo. An important component of this work is the commitment to be a champion of creative thinking and the willingness to take action."



# ACKNOWLEDGING THE PAST TO BUILD A BETTER FUTURE

**Since 2016, the Municipality has made efforts to improve relationships with Indigenous communities in Wood Buffalo. Starting with identifying the Calls to Action, considered in tandem with Indigenous community partners, and greatly informed by the 2017 TRC Symposium, the 2018 TRC Engagements, and the 2019 TRC Sharing Circle; the Municipality prioritizes making space for dialogue to co-create a path forward.**

## The Path

In 2016, Council directed Administration to identify areas where the Municipality had jurisdiction to implement the TRC Calls to Action. Engagement with Indigenous Nations, leaders, communities, and organizations led to the creation of a multi-partner Steering Committee. Once formed, the TRC Steering Committee had the objective to identify the specific Calls to Action and the procedural steps required for the Municipality to advance reconciliation efforts in Wood Buffalo.

Indigenous partners provided preliminary feedback in 2017 on what a reconciled relationship with the Municipality could look like and the ways to achieve

this vision. Later that year, Council approved further engagement with Indigenous partners on the TRC Calls to Action. This included a meeting with the Holy Angels Former Student Committee in Fort Chipewyan, the site of a former residential school, and a 2017 TRC Symposium that saw over 100 Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants.

In 2018, the Municipality adopted its *2018-2021 Strategic Plan*. The Plan specifically identified Rural and Indigenous Communities and Partnerships as one of four key priorities. Within this key priority, several strategies and initiatives were outlined as actionable steps the Municipality could take to advance partnerships with rural and Indigenous communities in the region. Strategy and initiative 4a in the Plan highlights implementation of the Calls to Action the Municipality has the jurisdiction to influence, laying the foundation for broader reconciliation efforts across the organization.

Heartbeat of Our Nation – Commissioned by the  
Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, 2021



## The Municipality's Identified 23 Calls to Action

Originally identifying 14 TRC Calls to Action as a priority for the region – those calling on municipal governments – guided by Indigenous community engagement, the TRC Steering Committee recommended that the Municipality pursue 9 more Calls. These additional Calls were ones that the Municipality felt it could help to influence by

advocating to the federal and provincial government to assist with closing socio-economic gaps in critical areas. What resulted was a total of 23 Municipality identified Calls to Action.

As set out in Table 1 below, these included the Calls identified by the Steering Committee, those the TRC called on municipal governments to implement, and the Calls to Action for all levels of government to action.

**Table 1: 23 RMWB Calls to Action**

### Calls to Action identified by the Municipality Internal Steering Committee

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5.  | We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate parenting programs for Aboriginal families.                                                                                                                                   |
| 7.  | We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.                                                                                                          |
| 8.  | We call upon the federal government to eliminate the discrepancy in federal education funding for First Nations children being educated on reserves and those First Nations children being educated off reserves.                                                                             |
| 11. | We call upon the federal government to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking a post-secondary education.                                                                                                                                              |
| 12. | We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families.                                                                                                                   |
| 16. | We call upon post-secondary institutions to create university and college degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages.                                                                                                                                                                |
| 22. | We call upon those who can effect change within the Canadian health-care system to recognize the value of Aboriginal healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders where requested by Aboriginal patients.       |
| 31. | We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to provide sufficient and stable funding to implement and evaluate community sanctions that will provide realistic alternatives to imprisonment for Aboriginal offenders and respond to the underlying causes of offending. |
| 40. | We call on all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal people, to create adequately funded and accessible Aboriginal-specific victim programs and services with appropriate evaluation mechanisms.                                                                             |



|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 57. | We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal Peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 75. | We call upon the federal government to work with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, churches, Aboriginal communities, former residential school students, and current landowners to develop and implement strategies and procedures for the ongoing identification, documentation, maintenance, commemoration, and protection of residential school cemeteries or other sites at which residential school children were buried. This is to include the provision of appropriate memorial ceremonies and commemorative markers to honour the deceased children.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 77. | We call upon provincial, territorial, municipal, and community archives to work collaboratively with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation to identify and collect copies of all records relevant to the history and legacy of the residential school system, and to provide these to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 79. | <p>We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal organizations, and the arts community, to develop a reconciliation framework for Canadian heritage and commemoration. This would include, but not be limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Amending the Historic Sites and Monuments Act to include First Nations, Inuit, and Métis representation on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and its Secretariat.</li> <li>ii. Revising the policies, criteria, and practices of the National Program of Historical Commemoration to integrate Indigenous history, heritage values, and memory practices into Canada's national heritage and history.</li> <li>iii. Developing and implementing a national heritage plan and strategy for commemorating residential school sites, the history and legacy of residential schools, and the contributions of Aboriginal Peoples to Canada's history.</li> </ul> |
| 88. | We call upon all levels of government to take action to ensure long-term Aboriginal athlete development and growth, and continued support for the North American Indigenous Games, including funding to host the games and for provincial and territorial team preparation and travel.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |



## Calls to Action identified within the TRC Calls to Action Report that call on all municipal levels of government

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 43. | <i>We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation.</i>                                                                                                                                |
| 47. | <i>We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous Peoples and lands, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius, and to reform those laws, government policies, and litigation strategies that continue to rely on such concepts.</i> |

## Calls to Action identified within the TRC Calls to Action Report that call on all levels of government

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.  | <i>We call upon all levels of government to fully implement Jordan's Principle.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 17. | <i>We call upon all levels of government to enable residential school Survivors and their families to reclaim names changed by the residential school system by waiving administrative costs for a period of five years for the name-change process and the revision of official identity documents, such as birth certificates, passports, driver's licenses, health cards, status cards, and social insurance numbers.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 23. | <i>We call upon all levels of government to:</i><br><i>i. Increase the number of Aboriginal professionals working in the health-care field.</i><br><i>ii. Ensure the retention of Aboriginal health-care providers in Aboriginal communities.</i><br><i>iii. Provide cultural competency training for all health-care professionals.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 53. | <i>We call upon the Parliament of Canada, in consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal Peoples, to enact legislation to establish a National Council for Reconciliation. The legislation would establish the council as an independent, national, oversight body with membership jointly appointed by the Government of Canada and national Aboriginal organizations, and consisting of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members. Its mandate would include, but not be limited to, the following:</i><br><i>i. Monitor, evaluate, and report annually to Parliament and the people of Canada on the Government of Canada's post-apology progress on reconciliation to ensure that government accountability for reconciling the relationship between Aboriginal Peoples and the Crown is maintained in the coming years.</i><br><i>ii. Monitor, evaluate, and report to Parliament and the people of Canada on reconciliation progress across all levels and sectors of Canadian society, including the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action.</i><br><i>iii. Develop and implement a multi-year National Action Plan for Reconciliation, which includes research and policy development, public education programs, and resources.</i><br><i>iv. Promote public dialogue, public/private partnerships, and public initiatives for reconciliation.</i> |



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|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 55. | <p>We call upon all levels of government to provide annual reports or any current data requested by the National Council for Reconciliation so that it can report on the progress towards reconciliation. The reports or data would include, but not be limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The number of Aboriginal children – including Métis and Inuit children – in care, compared with non-Aboriginal children, the reasons for apprehension, and the total spending on preventive and care services by child-welfare agencies.</li> <li>ii. Comparative funding for the education of First Nations children on and off reserves.</li> <li>iii. The educational and income attainments of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada compared with non-Aboriginal people.</li> <li>iv. Progress on closing the gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in a number of health indicators such as: infant mortality, maternal health, suicide, mental health, addictions, life expectancy, birth rates, infant and child health issues, chronic diseases, illness and injury incidence, and the availability of appropriate health services.</li> <li>v. Progress on eliminating the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in youth custody over the next decade.</li> <li>vi. Progress on reducing the rate of criminal victimization of Aboriginal people, including data related to homicide and family violence victimization and other crimes.</li> <li>vii. Progress on reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the justice and correctional systems.</li> </ul> |
| 64. | <p>We call upon all levels of government that provide public funds to denominational schools to require such schools to provide an education on comparative religious studies, which must include a segment on Aboriginal spiritual beliefs and practices developed in collaboration with Aboriginal Elders.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 87. | <p>We call upon all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal Peoples, sports halls of fame, and other relevant organizations, to provide public education that tells the national story of Aboriginal athletes in history.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |





## Municipal Government and TRC Implementation

Municipal governments have faced the challenge of implementing the TRC's findings within their limited jurisdiction, compared to the federal and provincial governments. While Municipalities approach the Calls to Action in the context of their own unique circumstances, the TRC was clear in stating that governments must strive to resolve jurisdictional disputes when providing services to Indigenous communities. While municipalities have limited jurisdiction in several areas, including post-secondary education, health care, and justice, it is also true that they as organizations have a great deal of influence on the day-to-day lives of communities, and can affect positive change.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) provides some direction as to how municipalities might undertake this task. While the majority of the 94 Calls to Action are addressed to federal, provincial, and territorial governments, there are nine that reference "all levels of government," and five that specifically address municipal governments. The FCM thus recommended that municipal governments take a "pathways" approach that aligns with the TRC's Ten Principles of Reconciliation. Those Ten Principles are highlighted throughout this Report and are included within the five themes that consistently arose from the Municipality's TRC engagements taking place in 2017, 2018, and 2019.

Spirits are With Me #1, 2010



# THEME 1 – Relationships Strengthened in Partnerships

*“Reconciliation in Wood Buffalo requires a joint commitment from the Municipality and local Indigenous People. It has to be driven by both as an equal partnership.”*

*~ Cree Elder Alice Martin,  
Fort Chipewyan.*

**Principle 6 – All Canadians, as Treaty Peoples, share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships.**

**Principle 7 – The perspectives and understandings of Aboriginal Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers of the ethics, concepts, and practices of reconciliation are vital to long-term reconciliation.**

Relationships founded on mutual respect are central to advancing reconciliation in Wood Buffalo. At times, the fragility of these relationships can be felt, but the Municipality prioritizes work that looks to strengthen these relationships, while creating space for dialogue and understanding. As stated in Principle 6 - All Canadians, as Treaty Peoples, share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships. In other words, reconciliation is not someone else's responsibility. Reconciliation is the responsibility of all Canadians.

## **Sharing Circle Inspires the Reconciliation Advisory Circle's Creation**

On October 23, 2019, the Municipality proudly hosted a Truth and Reconciliation Sharing Circle. Attended by Indigenous Elders, the Mayor, Municipal Councillors, Municipal Senior Leadership, Indigenous leaders in the region, and drawing over 100 community members, the Sharing Circle stimulated open and honest dialogue about truth and reconciliation in Wood Buffalo. As a direct outcome of this regional forum, the Municipality announced the formation of the Reconciliation Advisory Circle (RAC), bringing together Indigenous Elders, partners, and community leaders to share important perspectives while guiding municipal reconciliation efforts.

Comprised of a group of local Indigenous people and representatives from the Municipality, the RAC has become a critical partnership that has a vision to be a catalyst for creating positive change within the Indigenous communities and the Municipality. Close to two years later, the RAC offers a collaborative space for the Municipality and Indigenous community members to identify stewardship efforts towards reconciliation while honouring and working with Indigenous culture and traditions.



*Business Development – Commissioned by David and Julie Tuccaro – 2016*

Emphasizing the Indigenous way of knowing and the Seven Sacred Teachings, the RAC helps to develop meaningful engagement processes between the Municipality and local Indigenous communities on municipal projects and initiatives. The Circle serves to advise, guide, and provide Indigenous perspectives that have too often been excluded from important processes, discussions, and decisions. It is a grassroots collective; comprised of individuals who bring unique knowledge and skills that can support accountability and lead reconciliation efforts in Wood Buffalo. Fundamentally, this work is driven by both the Indigenous people and the Municipality in an equal partnership. The Circle complements the ongoing municipal practices and processes through providing Indigenous knowledge infused with stewardship and traditional teachings.

Offering a lens reflective of local Wood Buffalo history and culture, the RAC provides advice to collectively guide the Municipality's reconciliation actions. The scope of the RAC's roles and activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Act as a conduit between the region's Indigenous communities and the Municipality.
- Guide the Municipality in developing policies and processes that cooperatively involve and include Indigenous Peoples and communities in Wood Buffalo.
- Advise the Municipality on projects and programs to support and reflect local Indigenous culture, language, and history.
- Provide mutual accountability, in the spirit of collaborative partnership.

## THEME 2 – Partnerships in Housing, Land, and Heritage Resources

**Principle 2 – First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people, as the original Peoples of this country and as self-determining Peoples, have Treaty, constitutional, and human rights that must be recognized and respected.**

**Principle 3 – Reconciliation is a process of healing relationships that requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms.**

**Principle 8 – Supporting Aboriginal Peoples' cultural revitalization and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and connections to the land into the reconciliation process are essential.**

### Housing

One of the most pressing issues facing Indigenous communities in Canada is a lack of adequate housing. Building on its commitment to reconciliation, the Municipality continues to seek out opportunities to strengthen relationships and create partnerships to address important issues such as housing shortages for Indigenous Peoples in Wood Buffalo. An opportunity for such partnership developed in early 2020, following Cenovus Energy's total commitment of \$50M over the next five years for an Indigenous Housing Initiative. This program addresses the lack of quality housing and homelessness in six Indigenous communities, including Chard, Janvier and Conklin.

Viewing this as an important opportunity to support Cenovus and local Indigenous communities in their efforts to build safe

and affordable housing, Municipal Council approved the nominal sale of residential lots in both Chard and Conklin. Through this initiative, Indigenous people will be able to secure safe, affordable housing in Wood Buffalo. With ongoing Municipal support, Cenovus hopes to inspire other companies, governments, and organizations to get involved, further reaffirming a commitment to reconciliation in the region.

While there has been progress, a distinct lack of housing supports for Indigenous Peoples in the region continues to persist. There is a need for more affordable and culturally appropriate housing, as many of the existing houses are in poor condition, or unable to accommodate larger families. There are also several barriers keeping Indigenous people from secure housing. Strategies developed to reduce Indigenous homelessness often do not account for the impacts of intergenerational trauma, the deep sense of loss of culture, and the need to include Indigenous world views. When examining the root cause of Indigenous homelessness, the lack of culturally appropriate policies and practices, unavailability of wrap around support services, and the inter-jurisdictional bureaucracy and confusion that often exists, only serve to perpetuate the problem. The Municipality continues to hold discussions with Indigenous communities and external organizations to explore opportunities for Indigenous-led housing initiatives.

The Tawâw Housing First Partnership is an example of a recent housing initiative dedicated to removing barriers for Indigenous people and families experiencing homelessness in Wood Buffalo. Tawâw (A Cree word meaning "Come in, Welcome"),



is a tri-partnership between the McMurray Métis, Wood Buffalo Housing & Development Corporation, and the Wood Buffalo Wellness Society. Supported with funding from the Municipality's Community Investment Program – under the 2020/2021 Community Plan on Homelessness, the project creates access to culturally appropriate housing with funds allocated by Council through the federal government's Reaching Home initiative.

Seeking to become a leader in addressing homelessness, including amongst Indigenous Peoples, the partnership is drawing on the expertise, experience, and networks of three established regional community organizations. Wood Buffalo Housing owned units will be converted into transitional and supportive housing spaces, and services will be guided by the leadership of McMurray Métis and the Wood Buffalo Wellness Society to serve residents. As self-sufficiency is achieved, residents may transition to other nearby Wood Buffalo Housing units as they continue along the path to wellness.

The Tawâw Partnership is supporting vulnerable populations, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, to help achieve the goal of eliminating chronic homelessness in the region. In doing so, the Partnership will also enable a unique, culturally sensitive environment to assist residents transitioning from lives of addiction, intergenerational trauma, impaired educational and employment outcomes, marginalization, and homelessness into a place of support, dignity, structure, community, and cultural pride.

In addition, the Municipality works with the federal and provincial government and local non-profit and social profit organizations to address homelessness in the region. Agencies are supported in delivering intensive case management, housing support programs, assertive community treatment, outreach, and permanent supportive housing programs. The Municipality's Homelessness Initiative

Strategic Committee (HISC) is an action-focused group which stewards and advocates for the Municipality's Community Plan on Homelessness and includes Indigenous membership, reviewing housing applications to ensure they align with identified program priorities and funding criteria. Under the Municipality's 2021-2022 Community Plan on Homelessness Grant, local non-profits received \$3.9M in funding, including support for the Tawâw Housing First Partnership.

As well, during 2021, in another Indigenous housing-related initiative, the Municipality's Indigenous and Rural Relations department (IRR) has facilitated monthly meetings with the Fort Chipewyan Métis Association through a Housing Committee to create connections within the Municipality and with various partner agencies. The goal is to assist in addressing the housing needs and the persistent issue of homelessness for Métis people from Fort Chipewyan and those who have relocated to the urban service area. Collaborative partners participating in the Fort Chipewyan Housing Committee include the Municipality, McMurray Métis, Wood Buffalo Housing, and the Fort Chipewyan Métis Association. The Committee continues to collaborate with the Municipality, connect with local agencies and other levels of government, and liaise with Wood Buffalo Housing to determine further strategies and action to actively address housing and homelessness in the area.

## Land

Absence of land from the broader reconciliation dialogue is a huge and persistent gap. While focusing on the residential school system and the Sixties Scoop and supporting survivors is vitally important, this is only part of the conversation. At the end of the day, justice for Indigenous Peoples and communities, and the path to reconciliation, is premised on the importance of the inherent connections the land has to

Indigenous Peoples' culture, sustainability, and overall well-being.

It should be noted that while Alberta is home to eight Métis Settlements and is the only province in Canada with a Métis land base, there are no Métis Settlements in Wood Buffalo. The Municipality is committed to addressing First Nations' and Métis' communities' rights in Wood Buffalo, building, and strengthening relationships, and meaningfully engaging with those communities on a wide variety of Municipal projects, programs, services, policies, and initiatives.

Following the signing of the Treaties, several outstanding land debts are still owed to First Nations across Canada. Additions to Reserve (ATRs) are an important way for First Nations to address historic and unjust loss of reserve and treaty land. ATRs are also important for accommodating growing populations, supporting strategic and economic development opportunities, and can contribute directly to advancing reconciliation and improving the treaty relationship. There has been extensive dialogue about what reconciliation means for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada. While this dialogue is important, reconciliation requires much more than conversation; reconciliation requires action.

On January 23, 2018, Municipal Council unanimously supported the motion that the Mayor send a letter of support to the federal Minister of the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada for the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN) ATR; and that Administration be directed to work with ACFN to enter into a Municipal Service Agreement (MSA). Later in 2020 marked the first time in Alberta's history that a fee simple parcel of land was converted into reserve land, drawing attention to the fact that Urban reserves and ATRs have a multitude of outcomes that are mutually beneficial to a municipality and a First Nation. Urban reserves create job opportunities, strengthen working

relationships, have a positive impact on local real estate markets, can create community construction activity, benefit local businesses, generate revenue, and increase economic self-sufficiency; all while improving living standards and quality of life.

As noted above, there can be no reconciliation without land, and that is as true in Wood Buffalo as it is across Canada. Recognizing the significance of land to reconciliation, in June 2020, Municipal Council unanimously approved the transfer of 7.8 acres of land on MacDonald Island Park in Fort McMurray to the McMurray Métis. The land transfer was completed to support the future construction of a Métis Cultural Centre. Council's action to transfer the land was in direct response to one of the recommendations for reconciliation set out in the McMurray Métis' September 2018 Report, titled *The Moccasin Flats Evictions: Home, Forced Relocation, and Resilience*. This seminal Report discusses the historical Moccasin Flats site evictions and makes a series of eight recommendations to redress the wrongdoings of the past and the negative Indigenous community-level impacts that continue to affect Indigenous people in Wood Buffalo.

Commemorating history with a monument to Moccasin Flats and a Métis Cultural Centre in Fort McMurray highlighted the Report's land-related reconciliation recommendations. On September 2, 2020, leadership from McMurray Métis, the Métis Nation of Alberta and Municipal Council members were joined by federal and provincial government Ministers at the McMurray Métis Cultural Centre groundbreaking ceremony on MacDonald Island. The facility will include an art gallery, museum, conference spaces and offices for child and family services, health care, employment training, smudging rooms, youth spaces, a community kitchen, and a rooftop greenhouse garden. Construction of the Cultural Centre commenced in spring 2021.

## Moccasin Flats Memorial Initiative

Moccasin Flats is an area of land at the confluence of the Athabasca and Clearwater Rivers in Fort McMurray and was an important historical gathering place for both Métis and First Nations people. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Indigenous residents of Moccasin Flats were unjustly evicted to make way for Fort McMurray's urban development at the time. These evictions had many lasting and negative impacts that includes social fragmentation, a disconnection from the land, experienced racism, and intergenerational trauma. To acknowledge the history and those impacted, on December 3, 2020, Municipal Council passed a motion allocating \$200,000 for a Memorial to commemorate Moccasin Flats.

The Municipality fully acknowledges the Moccasin Flats evictions, the trauma this has caused, and is committed to commemorating this painful series of events in the region's history, so that the truth can be known, acknowledged, and never repeated. Informed by Indigenous community engagement, it is hoped that the Memorial initiative will serve to strengthen the Municipality's ongoing reconciliation efforts with Indigenous communities in the region. Through this lens, and in response to the call to action outlined in the Moccasin Flats Report, the Memorial and land transfer can be viewed as central to advancing reconciliation in Wood Buffalo. The Memorial is intended to commemorate and honour all those affected, helping to bring about healing and reconciliation that is rooted in awareness, atonement, and action.

Further to TRC Principle 3, a Memorial to Moccasin Flats acknowledges that reconciliation is a process of healing relationships which requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration to address and redress past harms. The Moccasin Flats Memorial will honour all those who were impacted by the evictions at this site, further advancing, and strengthening the Municipality's overall commitment to reconciliation.

## Kiyām Community Park

Revitalization of downtown Fort McMurray is a key *2018-2021 Strategic Plan* priority. Committed to preserving, revitalizing, and strengthening Indigenous languages is part of its commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, Municipal Council approved the official naming of what was formerly known as the Franklin and Main Park, to Kiyām [key-yam] Community Park. With Kiyām being a Cree and Michif word meaning "Let it be", naming this park in local Indigenous languages was an opportunity to honour Indigenous heritage in Wood Buffalo, marking another important step forward in reconciliation.

The name Kiyām was supported by the Wood Buffalo Downtown Revitalization Advisory Committee and recommended by the Community Identification Committee, a Council-appointed Committee that makes recommendations to Council on the naming and renaming of public facilities within the region. It was also the result of extensive engagement and conversations with Indigenous community representatives on an appropriate name for the park in a traditional language spoken in the region and honouring and commemorating Indigenous heritage. Kiyām Community Park is currently under construction with completion expected in fall 2021.





## Highway 63 and 881 Signs

Treaty 8, signed by several First Nations and the federal government on June 21, 1899 in Grouard, Alberta, covers a vast geographical area, encompassing portions of three provinces and one territory: Northwest Saskatchewan, Northern Alberta, Northeast British Columbia, and the Southern Northwest Territories. The Municipality falls within Treaty 8 boundaries.

In December 2020, Municipal Council passed a Motion directing that Indigenous communities be engaged on the design elements and wording for the placement of signs on Highways 881 and 63, respectfully acknowledging and recognizing Treaty 8 and Métis Territory. One sign would be erected on Highway 881 South, after the Highway 63 turnoff. A second sign would be erected along Highway 63 North upon entering Fort McMurray.

Both highway signs will include land acknowledgements recognizing and expressing gratitude to First Nations and Métis people and communities in Wood Buffalo. The signs will seek to further reconciliation efforts between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Wood Buffalo, honouring this land and Indigenous Peoples as its original caretakers.

## Land Acknowledgement

Land acknowledgements honour and recognize Indigenous Peoples as the original stewards of the land as well as their inherent rights and strong kinship to the land. Inspired by the Calls to Action, the Municipality recognizes how institutional systems of power have been oppressive, negatively impacting the original inhabitants of this land and the generations who have followed them. The Municipality affirms through formal land acknowledgements that “the land on which we live, learn, work and play, is Treaty 8 Territory, the traditional lands of the Cree, Dene, and the unceded territory of the Métis people.”

In tandem with its reconciliation efforts, the Municipality’s land acknowledgements are intended to honour and respect Indigenous Peoples and communities in the region and their inherent connection to this land. The land acknowledgement is now delivered by the Mayor at the beginning of every Council meeting and at events held in the region.

In May 2021, the Municipality incorporated a land acknowledgement and Indigenous languages into its corporate signature organization-wide. The Municipality’s amended corporate signature includes a land acknowledgement, as well as translation of “Fort McMurray” into Cree, Dene, and syllabics. In a symbolic but impactful way, the Municipality’s land acknowledgements help confront the truth and realities of settler colonialism and create an improved environment to build better relationships with Indigenous Peoples and communities in Wood Buffalo.

## Flag Policy

On July 13, 2021, Municipal Council approved a new Flag Policy and allocated up to \$250,000 from the Capital Infrastructure Reserve to fund the installation of flagpoles in alignment with the policy. The proposed Flag Policy repeals the Flag Protocol, initially established in 1987. Given the passage of 34 years without a review and update of the initial protocol, there have been multiple challenges over the years in the application of the Flag Protocol. In addition to the usage of terms that are no longer relevant, there was no consideration given to the flying of Indigenous flags or mechanisms for community groups to request the flying of their flags or the half-masting of flags to recognize a solemn occasion.

Over the years, Indigenous communities in Wood Buffalo have requested that Indigenous flags be flown throughout several areas in the region. To help inform the new Flag Policy’s development, the Municipality engaged with

Indigenous governments, and as a result, the Municipality's new Flag Policy includes both the Treaty 8 and Métis flags as well as the option to fly Indigenous community flags within specific communities. A necessary step in advancing reconciliation, the updated Flag Policy recognizes and honours the government-to-government relationship that is vital to improved relations.

Following the adoption of the updated Policy, and for the first time in municipal history, two Métis flags are now permanently flying in Anzac – at the gazebo park and at the Anzac Fire Hall – as a visual reminder to recognize and honour that the land upon which we live is the traditional lands of the Cree, Dene, and Métis people. The Willow Lake Métis Nation Flag Raising Ceremony was held on Wednesday, August 18, at the gazebo park in Anzac and included Municipal representatives and Willow Lake Métis Nation leaders as well as community members.

At the event, Deputy Mayor Phil Meagher stated, "We hope actions like this show how the Municipality is committed to implementing recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and we look forward to continuing this work with all Indigenous communities as partners towards true reconciliation". Willow Lake Métis Nation's Vice President and Chief Executive Officer Justin Bourque added, "Today is an important and meaningful day of recognition for the Métis People of Willow Lake and the community of Anzac." Going on to state, "Today's flag raising ceremony and our Nation's flag to be flown alongside Canada, Alberta and the Municipality symbolizes a step in the right direction on the road to reconciliation and signifies an acknowledged union we all share with the lands in which we occupy."

## Heritage Resources

The Municipality is developing a broad Heritage Resources Management Plan that will specifically address and protect Indigenous heritage in Wood Buffalo. The Plan will incorporate an inclusive vision of heritage within the region and offer tools to identify, protect, and celebrate Wood Buffalo's heritage, including the rich Indigenous heritage that is central to community identity. Development of the Plan will build a framework to encourage and facilitate Wood Buffalo heritage conservation activities and to guide future initiatives for the identification, stewardship, and management of heritage resources. It will also explore ways to identify, celebrate, and protect stories and truths that have been historically silenced or obscured within the Municipality's heritage portfolio, including those of Indigenous Peoples, women, BIPOC, 2SLGBTQIAAPP+, individuals with disabilities, and other equity-deserving groups.

Indigenous communities are currently being engaged on the Plan's development, with opportunities to share their stories and better inform and strengthen the Municipality's heritage resources management practices and processes. Supporting First Nations and Métis communities' cultural revitalization through more effective Municipal heritage resource management will be vital to this initiative's success and will further advance reconciliation in Wood Buffalo.









# THEME 3 – Culture, Language, and Art

**Principle 4 – Legacies of colonialism and impacts on Aboriginal Peoples' cultures and language, education, health, child welfare, as well as justice issues and economic opportunities and prosperity, need to be addressed in reconciling relationships.**

**Principle 8 – Aboriginal Peoples' cultural revitalization, knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and connections to the land in the reconciliation process are essential.**

## Indigenous Language & Culture\*

'Linguicide' is defined by scholars Teresa L. McCarty, Mary Eunice Romero and Ofelia Zepeda as languages that have been exterminated "not because this has been a 'natural' development, but because they have been 'helped' on their way." Governments, agencies, and policies of assimilation, including the residential school system, have led in the "death" of many Indigenous languages in Canada. Recognizing, preserving, and strengthening traditional Indigenous languages is critical to redressing the harms that have been done, and is a crucial component to advancing reconciliation.

For the first time in municipal history, traditional Indigenous languages are being promoted, celebrated, and preserved in Wood Buffalo. This began with the naming of several dry ponds in Cree and the inclusion of Dene, Michif, and Cree on traffic stop signs throughout several communities in the region. The Emergency Management team has also had the safe evacuation and shelter in place information translated into Cree and Dene. In addition, the Covid-19 Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Masking Bylaw

and Community Emergency Management Plans were translated into Cree and Dene, and several initiatives like the 2020 Volunteer Appreciation campaign are utilizing local Indigenous languages.

In addition to Cree and Dene signage throughout the newly renovated first floor of the Jubilee Building in Fort McMurray, the newly designed park at Franklin and Main was named Kiyām [key-yam], a Cree and Michif word meaning "Let it be". In a conversation captured by the Fort McMurray Today, Melanie Walsh, Social Media and Events Coordinator for the McMurray Métis, impactfully states the importance of language for reconciliation when she says, "The first thing that these children were stripped of was their language, they were getting beaten so badly for speaking their Cree language, the only language they knew," said Walsh. "Now that's such a big full circle moment in reconciliation, naming a park a Cree name."

## National Indigenous Languages Day

Language is fundamental and central to identity, preservation of culture, worldview, expression of self-determination, and is critical to reconciliation. Since 1993, Indigenous Peoples in Canada have celebrated National Indigenous Languages Day to acknowledge the importance of language and culture to the well-being and resilience of Indigenous communities. On Wednesday, March 31, 2021, the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Fort Chipewyan Métis Association, and Mikisew Cree First Nation hosted a virtual National Indigenous Languages Day celebration. The Athabasca Tribal Council and the Municipality proudly partnered with the three communities to hold the event.

\* McCarty, Teresa L., Mary Eunice Romero and Ofelia Zepeda, 2006. "Reimagining Multilingual America: Lessons from Native American Youth." In Garcia, SkutnabbKangas and Torres-Guzman, 2006.

\* <https://www.fortmcmurraytoday.com/news/council-approves-naming-downtown-park-kiyam-community-park?fbclid=IwAR32yWZozDNN-MlfZ4glvrKv-9VZYHNX9lhGQ8Nu1Duh36WpVxYSxzywhzg>

The celebration honoured the strength and endurance of Indigenous languages and cultures in Wood Buffalo and around the world. The event's opening ceremonies featured recordings of Elders speaking their traditional language and a video of Mayor Don Scott welcoming all participants in Cree and Dene. Indigenous language teachers, working to revitalize and sustain traditional Indigenous languages, offered all participants opportunities to learn and invited participation in an Indigenous Language Learners Sharing Circle - a safe space created to share experiences and efforts to preserve and strengthen Indigenous languages.

In support of Calls to Action 13 and 14 (Language and Culture – proposed for adoption within this report), and in recognition of Indigenous language rights, the Municipality's Community Identification System Policy, includes the objective of honouring Indigenous place names and history. The Municipality's existing Community Identification Committee is the body that puts forward recommendations to Council on suggested naming and renaming of communities, subdivisions, public facilities, streets, and multi-family projects within the Municipality. It seeks to include Indigenous representation and has been essential in the recent efforts to utilize local Indigenous languages in places like Parsons Creek and the Franklin and Main Park, now known as Kiyām Community Park.

In addition, the year 2022 begins the United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Languages. The success of the March 31, 2021 National Day of Indigenous Languages events, and other critical Indigenous language and cultural retention initiatives the Municipality is proud to support in the region will help preserve and revitalize the Cree, Dene and Michif languages. Working closely with local First Nations and Métis communities, Elders, Traditional Knowledge Keepers, and Indigenous organizations, and following their leads; the Municipality is

committed to seeing traditional Indigenous languages flourish in Wood Buffalo and to integrating them in the Municipality's operational practices throughout the community and region.

### **Indigenous Speaker Series – 'It's Time to Talk'**

Launched in May 2021, the Municipality's Indigenous Speaker Series offers participants opportunities to learn, understand, and engage on important issues like homelessness, addiction, intergenerational trauma, and reconciliation. On May 27, the inaugural Indigenous Speaker event featured an interactive virtual discussion forum with Jesse Thistle, celebrated author of the national bestseller, *From the Ashes: My Story of Being Métis, Homeless and Finding My Way*. Thistle is a strong Indigenous rights advocate, York University Métis Studies Assistant Professor, and Métis Cree PhD candidate.

*From the Ashes*, published in 2019, chronicles his deeply personal experiences with, homelessness, addiction, and trauma. The book was a finalist for CBC Canada Reads and won the Kobo Emerging Writer Prize for Nonfiction. Thistle is also the recipient of an Indigenous Voices Award and a High Plains Book Award, who strongly advocates for an Indigenous understanding of homelessness and is the National Representative for Indigenous Homelessness for the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. His current academic focus is on theories of intergenerational and the historical trauma amongst Métis people.

At the event, Thistle discussed dimensions of Indigenous homelessness, work he undertook through the Observatory, noting the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples from their land as a major contributing factor, amongst others. The Indigenous Speaker Series is intended to raise awareness of Indigenous histories, experiences,

and cultures, highlighting the voices of Indigenous artists, writers, activists, and leaders. It will offer and present powerful examples of strength and resiliency and the positive impacts one individual can have, while contributing to the ongoing dialogue necessary for repairing and reconciling relationships with Indigenous Peoples.

## Arts and Commemoration

The TRC calls on cultural organizations, government, and academic institutions to increase overall competency around Indigenous issues, people, and knowledge systems. Indigenous art in this context is much more than just art – it is about restoring relationships, acknowledging voice and visibility, and carrying languages and ancestral teachings forward. Efforts at reconciliation through art offer the chance to advance truths that are removed from colonial narratives. Indigenous tradition, history, and culture are key to cultivating an inclusive community, where all cultural traditions and expressions are respected, promoted, and equitably resourced. The Municipality's reconciliation efforts align with Call to Action 79 regarding arts, heritage, and commemoration, where the Commission called for development of a reconciliation framework for Canadian heritage and commemoration involving arts communities. Through implementation of a first-ever municipal Public Art Plan, the Municipality commits to fulfilling this Call to Action with Indigenous communities and Peoples in the region, particularly individuals involved in the thriving arts community of First Nations and Métis groups in Wood Buffalo.



## Public Art Plan

Public art can be an important avenue in building and strengthening relationships between government and First Nations and Métis people. The TRC calls on government to increase overall competency around Indigenous issues, people, and knowledge systems. Through this lens, Indigenous art provides an opportunity to restore cultural connections to the land, while sharing historical truths that have often been removed and suppressed through the colonial narrative.

In May 2021, Municipal Council approved the Municipality's first-ever Public Art Plan, intended to support a vibrant public art program recognizing the region's cultural identity and character and sharing the true history of Wood Buffalo to strengthen community identity and provide a sense of place through public art.

Developed in collaboration with partners that included the Reconciliation Advisory Circle and 18 Indigenous voices, the Municipality's Public Art Plan includes creation of a Visible Indigenous Presence as a major theme. Prioritizing self-determination and reciprocal decision-making processes in public art planning, programming, and project development, the Plan will seek to restore self-autonomy and enable Indigenous self-determination in the public art space. A key element of the Plan includes the creation of a Wood Buffalo Indigenous Public Art Advisory Circle, also a first for the region, made up of many of the Indigenous voices who engaged on the Public Art Plan's development.

An Indigenous Public Art Curator, contracted to meet the Plan's priority needs, will work to strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities and the Municipality to decolonize processes associated with municipal public art selection and acquisition. The Curator will help ensure that local Indigenous artists have access to current and future municipal public art opportunities to tell and represent Indigenous stories, identities,



and histories. The Curator will also help facilitate the inclusion of a series of cohesive Indigenous public art projects within the Municipality and work towards implementing the Public Art Plan's artists focus on current and future reconciliation, commemorative, and planning initiatives.

Guided by the Plan, the Wood Buffalo Public Art Program will strengthen Indigenous engagement and Indigenous artist participation in the region, support local artists, including acquisition of local artwork, and improve the balance of rural and urban art site selection in Wood Buffalo. In addition to the Public Art Plan itself, there are several other Indigenous public art-related and commemoration projects and initiatives currently underway in the region, all of which have included and will continue to engage First Nations and Métis communities. These include:

- **Indigenous Artwork in Council Chambers:**

To foster an ongoing commitment towards reconciliation with First Nations and Métis communities, Council unanimously passed a motion on June 4, 2019 directing Municipal Administration to begin work to commission a local Indigenous artist, or artist team, that would create artwork for Council Chambers to respectfully pay recognition to Treaty 8 and unceded Métis territory, its people and to serve as an ongoing reminder of the importance of reconciliation. Sharing Circles with participating Wood Buffalo First Nations and Métis community Knowledge Keepers came together to have open and honest dialogue about art and reconciliation in summer 2021. The lead artist was selected by the Sharing Circle and is expected to complete the finalized artwork(s) design concept in fall 2021. Once completed, the piece(s) will be proudly displayed in Municipal Council Chambers as a visual reminder of the true history of the region, the country, and the importance that reconciliation holds for each of us as individuals and as an organization.

- **Waterfront Park Revitalization:**

Fort McMurray's Waterfront Park is a highly anticipated development encouraging water connection and improving access to nature in the downtown area. The design covers six kilometers of waterfront and is part of the Municipality's overall Waterfront Park Revitalization Project. Once designed, the Waterfront Park will embrace natural elements while strengthening new community gatherings in outdoor event spaces, connecting the waterfront through trails and pathways, encouraging play, and honoring the rich and diverse Indigenous history within the region.

Indigenous people and communities have a strong and significant connection to the waterfront. The Municipality's Waterfront Park Revitalization initiatives recognize the significance that this area holds for local Indigenous communities, making Indigenous engagement a critical priority of the project. Acknowledging and celebrating the rich and diverse Indigenous cultures, stories, and histories and commemorating significant events in the region's past, while recognizing Indigenous connections to the land, is key to the success of the Waterfront Park Revitalization initiative.

The Indigenous Curator will be a key component necessary for executing strategies to share the history and connection that Indigenous Peoples have to this land through inclusion of public art in waterfront and downtown revitalization design plans. Working groups with Indigenous representation on Storytelling and History, Language, and Traditional Plants and Medicine are also to be included as part of the Waterfront Park project.



# THEME 4 – Indigenous Awareness Training

**Principle 1 – The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is the framework for reconciliation at all levels and across all sectors of Canadian Society.**

**Principle 10 – Reconciliation requires sustained public education about the history and legacy of residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal rights.**

## Indigenous eLearning Series

In direct response to Call to Action 57 (Professional Development and Training for Public Servants), and in recognition of Principle 10, the Municipality has instituted several initiatives to raise awareness internally and externally about the historical truths and injustices and how these impact relationships today. Understanding that awareness is a key component of reconciliation, several training opportunities for municipal employees and the Wood Buffalo community have been developed and were made mandatory for all new and existing staff in June 2020.

To develop its eLearning Series on Indigenous cultural awareness, the Municipality worked closely with a local Indigenous company and a local Indigenous artist to create two interactive online training Modules. The first module, titled *Indigenous Awareness*, will increase participants cultural awareness by exploring terminology, facts, and myths, and includes information about Indigenous communities in Wood Buffalo. The second module, titled *Moving Towards Reconciliation*, helps participants to explore the history and impacts of Canada's residential school system, the TRC's Calls to Action, and ways in which everyone can contribute to advancing reconciliation.

The Modules became publicly available on September 30, 2020 – known as Orange Shirt Day, providing learning opportunities to recognize the strength of present-day Indigenous communities and reflect upon ways individuals can personally work towards reconciliation in Wood Buffalo. Once the courses are completed, a certificate of participation is provided upon request. The Municipality encourages participants to share their certificate online and spread the word about the Series, raise awareness about reconciliation, and inspire others to learn.

Since the 2020 launch of the Modules, there has been an overwhelming positive response from staff and residents in the region. The courses are now also being used by the Wood Buffalo Regional Library and several schools in the district as a resource for new and existing staff. Several municipalities outside of Wood Buffalo have also reached out directly to say the courses have inspired them to look at working with local Indigenous voices to develop Indigenous Awareness training modules for their own organizations.

## Blanket Exercise

In September 2019, the Municipality's Senior Leadership Team and several municipal Councillors participated in a Blanket Exercise. The KAIROS Blanket Exercise is an interactive learning experience that teaches participants the history of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, concepts of colonialism and aspects of the treaty relationship. Developed in response to the *1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* – which recommended education on Canadian-Indigenous history as one of the key steps to reconciliation, the Blanket Exercise covers over 500 years of history in a participatory workshop.

In partnership with KAIROS and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, and developed in collaboration with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers and educators, the Blanket Exercise program helps educate and improve understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples to promote reconciliation. Standing on blankets representing the land, the exercise brings participants through periods of pre-contact, treaty-making, colonization, and resistance. By engaging on an emotional and intellectual level, the Blanket Exercise effectively educates and increases empathy. Through a continued partnership with KAIROS, local Elders, and the Municipality's Human Resources LEARN team, the course has since been made available to all staff.

### **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Workshop**

As described by the United Nations, the UN Declaration is a "universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the Indigenous Peoples of the world and it elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to the specific situation of Indigenous Peoples." The UN Declaration has been adopted by 148 nations, with the Government of British Columbia passing the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* into law in November 2019, thereby mandating the B.C. government to bring provincial laws into harmony with the UN Declaration.

In 2020, the Municipality's Senior Leadership Team participated in a UN Declaration Workshop that was developed and facilitated by Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. This increased understanding and broadened organizational awareness of the UN Declaration which proved to be especially important for departments that frequently

engage with Indigenous communities on municipal projects and initiatives. Workshop learnings on the UN Declaration are strengthening the Municipality's ongoing response to the TRC Principles and Calls to Action, the Municipality's framework for reconciliation, and overall relationships with Indigenous communities.

In addition, the Municipality has been engaging with the City of Vancouver after their Municipal Council passed a motion to implement the UN Declaration at a local government level, recognizing this as the minimum standard for the survival, dignity, well-being, and rights of Indigenous Peoples. Given that legislation has been passed to bring B.C. provincial laws into harmony with the UN Declaration, the City of Vancouver will have a foundation to implement change at the local level. While there is currently no similar legislation in Alberta, the Municipality continues to examine ways in which change can be adopted at a local level.

The UN Declaration is the framework for reconciliation across all levels and sectors of Canadian society, and the Municipality has recognized Call to Action 43 as one it can influence with other levels of government or implement within its municipal jurisdiction. Specifically stated, Call to Action 43 calls upon municipal governments to fully adopt and implement the UN Declaration as the framework for reconciliation. Vancouver's motion and related action plan is helping to inform the Municipality's potential implementation of the UN Declaration as the overarching framework for reconciliation in concerted action and partnership with Indigenous Peoples and communities in Wood Buffalo.

### **Elder-in-Residence Program**

Supported by the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan's priorities of Truth and Reconciliation and Rural and Indigenous Community Partnerships, the



Municipality's IRR department continues to develop an Elder-in-Residence Program (EIR). The Program seeks to further the commitment to strengthening relationships with First Nations and Métis communities, and is in direct response to feedback received during the Municipality's 2017-2019 formal TRC engagements.

Advancing the Municipality's ongoing commitment to the TRC Calls to Action and the UN Declaration as the framework for reconciliation, the EIR Program will serve to enrich the Municipality's programs, projects, and activities by partnering with Indigenous community Elders and Knowledge Keepers.

The Program will bring forth Elders to impart their traditional teachings and wisdom to help guide and better inform municipal strategies and initiatives. It will remove barriers while providing opportunities for Elders and the Municipality's staff to come together and exchange ideas and approaches on various projects and initiatives. In the spirit of reconciliation and based on the principles found within the TRC Calls to Action and the UN Declaration, the EIR is being co-created with Elders and Knowledge Keepers to ensure Indigenous ways of knowing form the foundation of Municipal projects, programs, services, and initiatives.



Mom (Margaret) – Commissioned by the Northern Lights Regional Health Authority, 2019

# THEME 5 – Socioeconomic Development

**Principle 5 – Reconciliation must create a more equitable and inclusive society by closing the gaps in social, health, and economic outcomes that exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.**

**Principle 9 – Reconciliation requires political will, joint leadership, trust building, accountability, and transparency, as well as a substantial investment of resources.**

TRC Call to Action 92 states, in part, that Indigenous communities should gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects. While the TRC has made Call to Action 92 the domain of business, the Municipality believes there are municipal applications tied to this Call, particularly related to Indigenous procurement and municipal hiring practices. Equitable access for Indigenous Peoples to jobs, training, and educational opportunities is not only the responsibility of the corporate sector, but has implications for government agencies as well.

The Municipality's Indigenous and Rural Relations department has identified Call to Action 92 as an important priority moving forward. Further commitment requires the development of strong and effective partnerships with the Northeastern Alberta Aboriginal Business Association, Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo Economic Development and Tourism, and the Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce, as well as local First Nations and Métis communities through their economic development and business ventures. To support the development of these partnerships, in 2020, the Indigenous and Rural Relations department created a Reconciliation Branch, with two Reconciliation Advisors, one of which to focus specifically on socioeconomic

development and reconciliation. As of February 2021, this position, filled within the Municipality's framework for reconciliation, is helping to advance initiatives such as procurement and local Indigenous socio-economic development, while building better overall community and business relationships with First Nations and Métis communities and Indigenous organizations. This work has placed the Municipality at the forefront in acknowledging that economic reconciliation is fundamental to enabling economic growth and development in Indigenous communities, recognizing their unique contributions to a thriving regional and national economy.

## Indigenous Procurement Policy

To make progress on Call to Action 92, seeking to be adopted by way of this report; the Municipality is committed to supporting procurement of goods and services from qualified Indigenous communities and businesses. In July 2021, Municipal Council unanimously supported a motion that directed the development of an Indigenous Procurement Policy through consultation with Northeastern Alberta Aboriginal Business Association and Indigenous businesses for this purpose. Further, Council directed Administration to continue to engage locally, including but not limited to, the Fort McMurray Construction Association, the Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce, and the Northeastern Alberta Aboriginal Business Association, to assist in the development of a social procurement program and bring forward a revised Council Procurement Policy inclusive of social procurement. Indigenous business opportunities were identified as one of the key priorities of the social procurement program.

There is an important link between procurement and Indigenous economic development, capacity investment, education, and training. As such, designing municipal solicitations that similarly include such evaluation criteria, through a stand-alone Indigenous Procurement Policy and the social procurement program, will ensure the proper inclusion and consideration of regional Indigenous businesses and support community economic benefits. Throughout July and August 2021, engagements were held for both initiatives with excellent feedback received from participating organizations and Indigenous communities and businesses. This feedback will help to guide the development and implementation of both initiatives. A revised Council Procurement Policy, inclusive of the social procurement and a status update on the development of the Indigenous Procurement Policy, will be presented to Council in September, 2021.

### **Small Business Workshop**

In a direct response to Call to Action 92, on June 28 & 29, 2021, the Municipality held a two-day virtual Small Business Indigenous Awareness Workshops for the region's small business owners, employees, and entrepreneurs. Coordinated by the Athabasca Tribal Council, in partnership with McMurray Métis, the Fort McKay Métis Nation, the Northeastern Alberta Aboriginal Business Association, the Fort McMurray Chamber of

Commerce, Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo Economic Development and Tourism, Community Futures Wood Buffalo, and the Municipality, 74 Wood Buffalo and province-wide participants attended the virtual events. Facilitated by renowned local Indigenous awareness consultant, Holly Fortier of Nisto Consulting Inc., the Workshops provided education on Indigenous history and the legacy of residential schools, while offering participants training opportunities, and featured interactive dialogue and a question-and-answer session on how to grow businesses through greater Indigenous cultural awareness and learnings.

The Workshops focused on and led to key outcomes on understanding Indigenous perspectives, historical and current challenges; identifying respectful opportunities for businesses to thrive with improved Indigenous cultural awareness; incorporating diversity into businesses through a variety of means; and engaging with Indigenous artists and suppliers for retail sales in ways that are respectful of Indigenous cultures and protocols. Marking the first time that all these partners joined together to advance Call to Action 92, the Municipality continues to work with participants to develop additional training and awareness opportunities to build and strengthen business relationships. A follow-up workshop is planned for 2022.



# THE PATH FORWARD: RECONCILIATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Informed by Indigenous community engagement and to ensure the Municipality continually documents, reports, and evaluates its progress, a series of recommendations for future reconciliatory actions are outlined below:

- **Call to Action Progress Report:** Starting in 2022, and on an annual basis, the Municipality will publish a Report on its current state in addressing the identified Calls to Action. Coordinated and led by the Indigenous and Rural Relations department, the Progress Report will document how all Municipal departments are contributing to reconciliation efforts with Indigenous communities in Wood Buffalo.
- **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Plan:** It is recommended that the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (Call to Action 43) function as the Municipality's current and future framework for reconciliation and that it be fully and officially implemented by way of municipal Council Policy. Through the completion of a UN Declaration Implementation Plan, the Municipality formally re-commits to TRC Call to Action 43. Negotiation and finalization of Indigenous community-specific Protocol Agreements, continued implementation of the current Strategic Plan's Truth and Reconciliation priority initiatives, and development of future municipal plans will further affirm the UN Declaration as the Municipality's framework for reconciliation.
- **Report to Council:** To coincide with each Council term, and every four years, beginning with this Report and again in 2025, it is recommended that a comprehensive Report on the Municipality's progressive responses to and actions on reconciliation be published. Ongoing reporting will clearly demonstrate the Municipality's continued commitment to reconciliation, include detailed information about the Municipality's key areas of achievement, and describe in what ways more action is still required. Recommendations based on continuous Indigenous engagement and reconciliation regarding municipal projects and initiatives will be embedded within the Report to Council, identifying opportunities for further collaboration and partnership with First Nations and Métis communities and Indigenous organizations in the region. The four-year Report to Council will also include an evaluation framework to track progress in fulfilling the Municipality's stated reconciliation goals and objectives.
- **Truth and Reconciliation Strategic Plan Priority:** It is recommended that Truth and Reconciliation remain a standing municipal priority, with a recommitment to all related initiatives. Reconciliation is an ongoing and continual process. It is not a one-time action, a check the box activity, or someone else's responsibility. Reconciliation is an ongoing conversation that requires continued commitment and sustained action. By continuing to highlight and action Truth and Reconciliation as a Strategic Plan Priority, the Municipality commits to taking action to advance reconciliation in Wood Buffalo.

- **Indigenous Engagement Framework:**

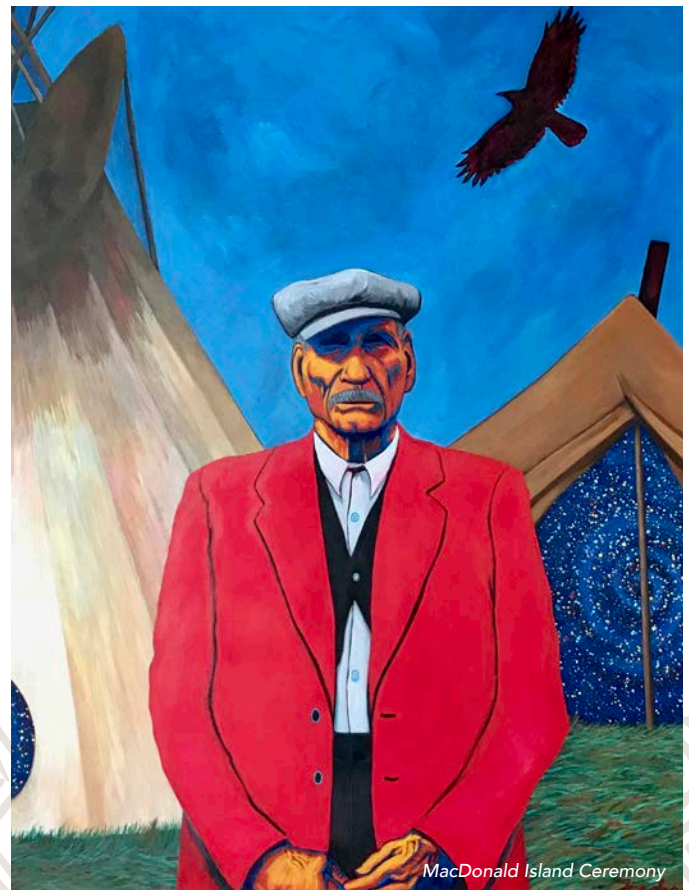
While the Municipality has an existing Public Engagement Policy, it is recommended that the Municipality develop and implement a dedicated Indigenous Engagement Framework and Council Policy. Suggested by Indigenous partners in the region, such a Framework and Policy would seek additional feedback from the local Indigenous community, draw from municipal best practices across Canada and be informed by the Municipality's experiences with Indigenous engagement on municipal projects, programs, and initiatives. Notably, the Framework will also be informed by the Municipality's learnings in engaging with First Nations and Métis communities to develop and implement Protocol Agreements.

- **Adoption of New Calls to Action:** Through the ongoing work over the last five years, it is recommended that the Municipality officially adopt five new Calls to Action for a total of 28 Calls to Action being implemented. Like the original 23 identified Calls to Action, the Municipality will engage, listen to, and continually collaborate with the First Nations and Métis communities, Indigenous organizations, and other partners in the region to fully address and implement this greater set of Calls to Action. The additional Calls to Action in numbered sequence are:

- Call to Action 1 (Child Welfare)
- Calls to Action 13 and 14 (Language and Culture)
- Call to Action 82 (Commemoration)
- Call to Action 92 (Business and Reconciliation)

- **National Day for Truth and Reconciliation:**

2021 marks the first *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation*. Also known as Orange Shirt Day, it is recommended that Administration include funding in the annual budgeting process to support the meaningful commemoration of the *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation* each year on September 30.



# TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

Premised on the Municipality's Calls to Action and the TRC's Principles of Reconciliation set out in this Report, the following series of recommendations initiate a continuation of the reconciliatory efforts taking place in Wood Buffalo with the objective of improving upon and strengthening relationships with Indigenous Peoples and communities in the region. Recognizing that partnerships are built on the Municipality's continuing efforts to establish trust through meaningful and measurable action over time, the following Action Plan recommendations create opportunities for progress and positive change.

## **Call to Action 1 (Child Welfare)**

Call to Action 1 is recommended to be formally adopted by the Municipality.

Municipal Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) strives to enhance, strengthen, and stabilize individual, family and community life by helping people identify and act on their own social needs. FCSS, a partnership between the Province of Alberta, municipalities, and Métis Settlements, develops locally driven, preventative social initiatives to enhance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

With the benefit of Indigenous community input, the Municipality will review its social support services in both the urban and rural areas, including the FCSS Municipal grant program. This review will seek to enhance the well-being of Indigenous individuals, families, children, and communities in the region.

## **Call to Action 3 (Jordan's Principle)**

To ensure all children residing in the region have equitable access to services offered, the Municipality will also review FCSS and its array of child and family services and programs with a particular lens on adapting existing programs and services to meet the needs of Indigenous children in the region and to improve the program delivery.

## **Calls to Action 7, 8, 11, and 12 (Education)**

Municipal and Wood Buffalo Indigenous community leadership realize the road to well-being and positive, long-term, sustainable outcomes lies in students' educational achievement, where First Nations and Métis learners are provided the same level of support, including funding, as non-Indigenous students.

The region's Indigenous communities have been strong proponents for First Nations' and Métis students' education in Wood Buffalo. The Municipality applauds these efforts and commits to joining Indigenous leaders in advocating for improved educational levels for the communities' children.

## **Calls to Action 13, 14 (Language and Culture)**

Calls to Action 13 and 14 are recommended to be formally adopted by the Municipality.

Building on the installation of Cree and Dene language traffic signs and support for National Indigenous Languages Day celebrations in the region, the Municipality commits to continuing to support local Indigenous Peoples and communities in preserving, revitalizing, and strengthening traditional Indigenous languages.



With 2022 initiating the United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Languages, the Municipality will strengthen its commitment to working with First Nations and Métis communities in the region to preserve and revitalize the Cree, Dene and Michif languages. This work will also build on the Municipality's land acknowledgement, the translation of "Fort McMurray" into Cree, Dene and syllabics in the corporate signature, the naming of Kiyām Community Park, the inclusion of Cree and Dene on signage in the Jubilee Building in Fort McMurray, and the Highway 881 and 63 land acknowledgement signs.

### **Call to Action 22 (Health)**

To promote greater cross-cultural understanding within the organization and support employees improved mental health and well-being, Human Resources initiatives will seek to include a broadening of the Municipality's current Employee and Family Assistance Program. To support the Municipality's culturally diverse staff, and in collaboration with Indigenous service providers and educators, such initiatives may include access to traditional medicines and healing practices and teachings, with financial support through employee benefit programs.

### **Call to Action 40 (Justice)**

The Municipality supports the annual Sisters in Spirit Walks and Vigils in Wood Buffalo in support of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit+ People and the National Inquiry's Calls to Justice. TRC Call to Action 40, on creation of adequately funded and accessible Aboriginal-specific victim programs and services was identified as one of the Municipality's original 23 Calls to Action.

At the April 27, 2021 Council meeting, Mayor Scott announced the Municipality's Proclamation on the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit+

People (May 5th). On that day, the Athabasca Tribal Council, in partnership with the Municipality and several local organizations, hosted a Facebook Live event to bring awareness to the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit+ People in Wood Buffalo.

The Municipality's Indigenous and Rural Relations department also participates in a cross-municipal group of officials sharing and exploring best practices on responding to the National Inquiry's Calls to Justice from municipal jurisdictional perspectives.

### **Call to Action 43 (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)**

Following Indigenous community engagement, the Municipality will put forward a plan to adopt the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration) as a framework for all future Municipal reconciliation efforts, with implementation by way of Council Policy.

In tandem with participating Indigenous communities, the Municipality will continue to collaboratively develop Indigenous community-specific Protocol Agreements. Within each Protocol Agreement, the Municipality proposes to include the implementation of the UN Declaration as a joint priority with signatory Indigenous communities. By adopting the UN Declaration as its framework for reconciliation, the Municipality is committing to engage in collaborative discussions on what implementation of Call to Action 43 would look like in the Municipality and how the UN Declaration would be operationalized in this context.

Finalized Indigenous community-specific Protocol Agreements will define, renew, and strengthen the Municipality's existing relationships with Indigenous communities, identify mutual priorities to address and implement, establish a dedicated

engagement process, and thereby advance reconciliation with signatory communities. Negotiated Protocol Agreements will also provide the foundation for future work on the UN Declaration's full implementation by the Municipality.

### **Call to Action 47 (Doctrine of Discovery and Tera Nullius)**

Antiquated ways of thinking have no place in laws, policies, and procedures at any level of government. The Municipality categorically repudiates any such hurtful concepts to Indigenous Peoples and all citizens of the region.

The Municipality will systematically analyze its existing policies, plans, and procedures to identify how it can make positive and meaningful changes to existing processes to meet Indigenous Peoples' needs more effectively. Examples may include, but will not be limited to, the Municipal Development Plan and Area Structure Plans, the Land Use Bylaw, Council Policies, and Administrative Procedures.

The review will be guided by Indigenous community feedback, working collaboratively with the Reconciliation Advisory Circle and other Indigenous partners. It will focus on identifying barriers to Indigenous Peoples and communities and identify ways to eliminate and overcome those barriers. A series of recommendations to Municipal Council will flow from this comprehensive review, as part of the four-year progress Report. Where Indigenous community feedback is beyond the scope of the Municipality's jurisdiction, the Municipality will, with recommendations, advocate to the appropriate level of government or agency to fully address.

### **Call to Action 57 (Professional Development and Training for Public Servants)**

Continuing to build on the success of the eLearning Modules, the Municipality will look to further extend access to Indigenous cultural awareness training beyond municipal full-time employees to include individuals contracted to work on municipal projects, particularly those undertaken in Indigenous communities. Much like a living document, the eLearning series will be updated and adapted as required to reflect current Indigenous academic studies, practices, and applications within a local, regional, and national context.

Further, the Municipality's work in this area will complement Indigenous cultural awareness training through the eLearning Modules, for both Municipal staff and the broader public. Similarly, this work will build on the priorities set out in the Municipality's Diversity and Inclusion in Wood Buffalo: A Community Plan 2017-2022 and that of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Taskforce. Additionally, the Municipality will review current processes to improve support for employees experiencing racism and discrimination as part of its commitment to foster greater equity and inclusion in the organization.

An Equity and Inclusion Program Manager position was recently approved by the Municipality's Chief Administrative Officer for an Equity and Inclusion Office. The position will advise the organization on equity and inclusion-related issues and support development and implementation of an Equity and Inclusion Framework and the work of the Equity and Inclusion Office overall. This strategic position, a first for the Municipality, will work interdepartmentally to support the organization's diversity, equity and inclusion practices, policies, and procedures.

### **Call to Action 66 (Youth Programs)**

Call to Action 66 states: “We call upon the federal government to establish multiyear funding for community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation and establish a national network to share information and best practices.”

To provide more economic opportunities for Indigenous youth to jump start their careers and business opportunities, and in keeping with Call to Action 66, the Municipality will explore development of a dedicated youth employment business and training program for the region’s Indigenous high school students.

### **Call to Action 75, 77, 79, and 82 (Commemoration)**

Along with previously identified Calls to Action 75, 77, and 79 regarding Commemoration, the Municipality formally adopts Call to Action 82.

With the Moccasin Flats Memorial as an example for future commemorative endeavors within the region, the Municipality is committed to working with Indigenous people and communities to ensure significant events impacting relationships with Indigenous Peoples are recognized, remembered, and honoured.

The Municipality’s Heritage Plaque Program tells the stories of the significant people, places, and events in the region’s history. The Municipality is amending the Program to ensure that plaques are developed to appropriately recognize the Indigenous heritage the region was founded on and built upon. For instance, all new plaques will feature the Municipality’s land acknowledgement in the plaque content. The soon to be completed Heritage Resources Management Plan, which will be developed in collaboration with Indigenous communities,

will be also guide the Municipality’s respectful and appropriate commemoration of Wood Buffalo’s Indigenous heritage and history.

An early Indigenous community engagement phase began on the Plan in August 2021, with a formal public and Indigenous engagement launch on this initiative scheduled for fall of 2021.

Light has been cast upon the ongoing tragic discoveries of unmarked graves at former residential schools across the country. To fully honour and commemorate the dignity of the region’s residential and day schools’ decedents and support their surviving family members, as information becomes available, the Municipality will make records on gravesites found at residential schools and other sites in the region.

The Municipality commits to mutually developing, in a sensitive manner, an appropriate process with interested and representative Indigenous communities and leadership to ascertain this information for the National Centre on Truth and Reconciliation. On an ongoing basis as information is produced, the Municipality will commemorate those who were tragically lost while attending residential and day schools and other sites in the region where remains may be found.

### **Call to Action 88 (Sports and Reconciliation)**

Under the Municipality’s Community Investment Program, through which community Grants are administered, Call to Action 88, one of the Municipality’s original 23 identified Calls to Action, was previously within the scope of the Program’s Games Legacy Grant and Community Impact Grant eligibility guidelines. Call to Action 88 is currently supported by the Grants, but the scope of the eligibility guidelines for TRC-related applications has expanded in 2022.



The Community Impact Grant partners with and funds local non-profit organizations to support Wood Buffalo community needs identified in, contributing to, and achieving the goals and priorities of the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan. The Grant has three streams: Community Programs and Projects; Community Events; and New Events.

The Games Legacy Grant supports development in amateur sport, cultural activities and the arts, and Wood Buffalo residents competing at a provincial, national, or international level. The Games Legacy Grant applications encourage Indigenous applicants to self-identify. With access to Indigenous-specific data, the Community Investment Program can determine the Grant's success in providing resources to Indigenous residents and supporting the Municipality's ability to develop strategies to ensure funding can be accessed by Indigenous residents.

With an enhanced Program focus on Truth and Reconciliation in the three Community Impact Grant streams, special consideration will be given to applicants whose planned programs, projects or events support or inspire reconciliation, as set out in the TRC's Calls to Action and Final Report, including promotion of Indigenous community healing, language, and cultural restoration. For the 2022 grant year, applications submitted under one of the three Community Impact Grant streams must identify one of the 94 specific Calls to Action and explain how it will be addressed by the program activities or event. Applications must be for community-based programs or events within the Municipality's geographic boundaries; and demonstrate that the Indigenous community being served has expressed support for, and has been actively engaged in, the discussion,

planning, execution, participation, and/or follow-up to the program, project, or event. This will help the Municipality both to better assess reconciliation-related applications for Program funding and effectively evaluate the Indigenous community impact of programs, projects, or events.

### **Call to Action 92 (Business and Reconciliation)**

The Municipality formally adopts Call to Action 92 and is developing an Indigenous Procurement Policy and strategy, aligned with the Social Procurement framework, to support and provide local Indigenous communities and members with business and contracting opportunities stemming from the procurement of municipal projects.

The Municipality will also examine Human Resources policies, procedures, and hiring practices, including current job descriptions, and summer student opportunities to adapt processes that encourage the hiring and training of Indigenous employees.





# THE **PATH** CONTINUES

Reconciliation is not straightforward and simple. It is layered and complex and requires deep and lasting commitment from all levels of government, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, businesses, industry, educational institutions, and religious organizations. In the spirit of the TRC, the Municipality is cognizant that recognition, rights, respect, cooperation, engagement, consultation, and partnership are the fundamental principles guiding current and future reconciliation initiatives and actions with Indigenous community partners.

The path to reconciliation requires ongoing commitment, action, and reflection. As highlighted throughout this Report, the Municipality's Truth and Reconciliation actions to date signify the strong desire to understand truth, support healing, and commit to doing better.

At the heart of this Report's Action Plan, recommendations, and ongoing Path to Reconciliation is the Municipality's genuine desire to build and strengthen all Indigenous community relationships. This work is critically important and is recognized as necessary for the ongoing betterment of the region and the people who call Wood Buffalo home. It is hoped that through this concerted proposed Path Forward, developed with input and feedback from Indigenous partners, the relationships we have now, and those we will build together, can be an example future generation of leaders will look back on and be proud of.



Spirits are With Me #1, 2010







# Marsi Cho, Kinanâskomitin, Thank you

The Municipality would like to sincerely thank local Elders, Survivors, Knowledge Keepers, leadership, staff, and members from the First Nations, Métis communities, and Indigenous organizations in Wood Buffalo who shared their thoughts and stories over the last five years. Your feedback and guidance make advancing reconciliation in Wood Buffalo possible.

The making of this Report has been a long-term process and the Municipality would also like to thank Peter Fortna of Willow Springs Strategic Solutions. Peter's early work for the Municipality in 2018, including dialogue with Indigenous community representatives, set a solid foundation for much of the work to continue.

With much gratitude, the Municipality is proud to display the work of Fort McKay First Nation artist Frederick R. McDonald throughout these pages. Your talent has brought new meaning to the words written within this report and it would not have been what it is without your kindness and humility. Thank you for sharing your beautiful work and advancing reconciliation through art. More of Frederick's painting, poetry, and photography can be found at: [www.mireillesampson.github.io/frederickrmcdonald](http://www.mireillesampson.github.io/frederickrmcdonald) – ALL MY RELATIONS STUDIO: Life, History & Spirituality thru Art.

The past four years of current Municipal Mayor and Council have coincided with significant progress, but there is clearly still more much more to achieve. The Municipality would not be able to deliver meaningful reconciliation actions without listening to and learning from Indigenous Peoples and communities in the region. Marsi Cho, Kinanâskomitin, and thank you.

This work is not over, there is still much to do. We look forward to continuing to listen and learn while walking on this path of reconciliation together.



*Trinity, 1999*





REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY  
OF WOOD BUFFALO

*Frederick*