

Mayor's Minute - September 12, 2019

At our September 9 evening Council meeting, the District of Summerland Council ratified our commitment to deepen our relationship with the Penticton Indian Band. After a presentation by staff at the public Committee of the Whole meeting earlier in the day, Council discussed the matter in-depth before voting unanimously to direct staff to apply for Community to Community (C2C) funding to enable a forum between the Penticton Indian Band and the Summerland Council as well as to investigate a number of reconciliation activities (more on this below).

This work began in early January, when Council included First Nations relations as one of the guiding principles in the District's 2019-2022 Strategic Priorities Plan. I had the opportunity to meeting with Chief Eneas and Band senior staff twice during the spring to begin the discussions and ensure that not only was there a mutual commitment to building a stronger relationship between the two governments, but that the District was approaching the initiative in a manner that was both respectful and appropriate.

In late spring, interim CAO Ron Mattiussi, tasked the District's Community Development Coordinator with doing the necessary research and communication with the Band to develop the report that Council received on Monday.

Our evening meeting began with a delegation from one of the Summerland members of the Okanagan Circles for Reconciliation and the South Okanagan TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) Study Group. Summerland Council was called on, as leaders of the community, to "examine the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, in particular those relating to municipal governments, and further, to adopt and implement relative and constructive strategies of acknowledgement and action".

The delegation spoke specifically about the five (of 94) Calls to Action relevant to local government including #57 which calls on municipal government to provide education to public servants on the history of Indigenous people, including UNDRIP, Indigenous law and Indigenous-Crown relations. "This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism" (TRC of Canada: Calls to Action, 2012, p. 7).

As mentioned earlier, the ratified resolution also directed staff to research potential reconciliation activities. These actions fall into four categories: Education (for Council, Staff, and the Summerland Community); Cultural Activities (for Council, Staff, and the Leadership of Summerland Cultural Organizations); Political Activities (for District and Band Councils); and Operational Work (between District and Band Staff).

What is reconciliation? The TRC defines reconciliation as "an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships. A critical part of this process involves repairing damaged trust by making apologies, providing individual and collective reparations, and following through with concrete actions that demonstrate real societal change" (as cited in Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Volume One: Summary, 2015, p. 16). As discussed by Council, as we work on reconciliation it is important to recognize that the Penticton Indian Band is one of 198 bands in British Columbia: "They each have distinct languages, cultures, economies, capacity, challenges, stories, teachings and world views" (Dispelling Common Myths About Indigenous People's, 2019, p. 7).

Fortunately, local governments do not have to go it alone on the important work of reconciliation.

The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People's (UNDRIP, 2007) provides a framework on how to establish and maintain mutually respectful relationships between local and Indigenous governments.

On Monday, September 23, Summerland Council be attending a full-day pre-UBCM conference session called "*Financing Reconciliation: Supporting Inclusive Governance in BC*". This session will bring together

representatives from First Nations, local government and academia to consider opportunities and next steps for advancing new approaches to financing reconciliation.

The District of Summerland's next steps include a meeting between senior elected officials and staff of both governments. District staff will also bring a report to Council providing details on the four reconciliation areas, including operational and financial resource requirements, timeline, and draft policy recommendations.