



# COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

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## COMMITTEE REPORT

**To:** CAO and Members of County Council  
**From:** Colleen Brunelle (Fergus Programme Manager) Chair: Indigenous Advisory Committee  
**Date:** Thursday, October 28, 2021  
**Subject:** **Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) Update**

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### Background:

In February 2020, County Council passed a motion to consider implementation of an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement prior to Council meetings. This motion was referred to County staff for further research and deliberation.

### Update:

After discussions with the County CAO, support was provided to construct an Indigenous-led staff committee to advise on the subject of territorial Land Acknowledgements.

Communication was sent to all County staff seeking volunteers to form the County's Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC). Priority was given to those who self-identified as Indigenous and the first meeting of the IAC took place on October 2, 2020.

It was agreed that a County Land Acknowledgement would need to be delivered in a manner that was genuine, sincere and meaningful. A failure to focus on these basic elements could result in a perception of tokenism and subsequent criticism. In order to effectively achieve this, the IAC determined that education and cultural awareness of Indigenous issues by County staff would need to occur while researching the Crown Treaties of Wellington County.

In collaboration with the Planning Department and Province of Ontario website outlining provincial Treaties, a map was constructed specifically for Wellington County. (See Appendix 1) According to these details there are 6 Treaties which lie within County municipal boundaries.

- Treaty 3 (1793) – **Between The Lakes Purchase**
- Treaty 4 (1793) – **Haldimand Tract / Simcoe Patent**
- Treaty 18 (1818) – **Nottawasaga Purchase**
- Treaty 19 (1818) – **Ajetance Purchase**
- Treaty 29 (1827) – **Huron Tract Purchase**
- Treaty 45½ (1836) – **Saugeen Tract Purchase**

Research conducted on the Treaties provided insights into Wellington's rich history with Indigenous peoples but also detailed many complexities. It should be noted that ongoing legal challenges exist with Six Nations and Treaty 4 – with many land claim disputes still before the courts. It remains unclear how Treaty 4s' Haldimand Tract / Simcoe Patent effect requests for consultation. To date, multiple requests to meet on the subject of this Treaty in relation to a Land Acknowledgement remain unanswered. *Note: These complexities are also confirmed on page 22 of the Centre Wellington Cultural Heritage Landscape Study and Inventory of 2020. (See Appendix 2)*

Acknowledging the cultural sensitivity with respect to this issue, the IAC proceeded to construct a respectful Land Acknowledgement worthy of the County's rich Indigenous history (see Appendix 3). Completed in August 2021, it remains in draft form awaiting Council approval should they wish to proceed with implementation.

However, it is the IAC's position that to provide a genuine, respectful Land Acknowledgement, those who wish to do so should possess a basic understanding of the Treaties that make up the County of Wellington. In addition, there should be a general comprehension of Indigenous issues and culture. Failure in this regard does not provide a Land Acknowledgement that is genuine and respectful. Furthermore, and of greater concern, is that this could be regarded as tokenism.

Given the IAC's purview that a movement towards Land Acknowledgements should include Indigenous cultural awareness and education, several projects have been organized with this goal in mind:

1. The Wardens Inauguration was held on December 11, 2020. The IAC had not finalized a formal Land Acknowledgement, but did create an acknowledgement specific to the occasion, which was a part of the ceremony befitting the importance of good leadership. Training was provided to all County Councilors via ZOOM (due to Covid pandemic) and was a direct effort to incorporate Indigenous understanding into County business.
2. A bi-monthly newsletter is emailed to County staff to educate about the Treaties of Wellington County and Indigenous cultural pedagogy (Moon teachings, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, social issues etc)
3. Moose Hide Campaign and Gender Based Violence awareness education was shared with staff to participate in training addressing this issue that affects Indigenous women and children.
4. The IAC encouraged staff to participate in Orange Shirt Day and designed an Indigenous logo for County shirts. Proceeds from the sale of these shirts are being donated to Anishnabeg Outreach Healing & Wellness programs that support Residential School survivors. This fundraising effort donated \$ 5,517.06 to this very worthy cause.
5. On Thursday, September 30<sup>th</sup> (first National Day for Truth & Reconciliation) the IAC held a virtual Lunch and Learn. Subjects discussed included Residential Schools, the TRC and the 94 Calls to Action and Indigenous peoples through a historical and contemporary context in Canada. Ten books of "The Stranger" by Gord Downie were randomly drawn and issued to County staff who attended the sessions. (To understand the impacts of this training on County staff, please see Appendix 4)

6. There exists an Indigenous voice and representation on the County's BeWell Diversity & Inclusion Committee
7. Consulted and supported plans to incorporate a Medicine Garden at Wellington Place as a means to provide community Indigenous space in conjunction with Green Legacy.
8. Provided email address ([Indigenous@wellington.ca](mailto:Indigenous@wellington.ca)) to enable County staff from various departments, Municipal Townships and Community Members/Agencies to connect with the County IAC. Constructed IAC logo for communications purposes. (to understand work impact of email communications over a 9 month period – see Appendix 5).
9. Training opportunities are being offered to County staff through online, self-directed courses such as Indigenous Canada at the University of Alberta. The IAC will be undertaking guided online training through Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. Both training options are being supported by the County's Human Resources budget.

The following are a list of projects that remain on the IAC's task list to complete in the coming months:

- Finalize objective of County of Wellington Land Acknowledgement use on direction from County Council.
- Construct Indigenous landing page on County website as a place to list resources and Treaty information.
- Consult with County Library staff on the use of appropriate cultural activities as it relates to Indigenous education in local communities.
- Implement and advise on Medicine Garden and Indigenous space at Wellington Place and Green Legacy Nurseries. This project allows for inter-departmental and community fellowship in the ongoing responsibilities of managing such a space. This includes programming opportunities for enthusiastic seniors at Wellington Terrace and young learners at the Children's Early Years Centre – all within walking distance of the garden and centrally located in the County. Plans further include that the Museum & Archives and County Library assist in educating the public and volunteer community members. Moreover, this garden would demonstrate the County's commitment to maintaining Indigenous space for Indigenous teachings in a natural, educational and purposeful setting.
- Construct and provide Lunch and Learn type training opportunities to County staff as requested.
- Continuation of bi-monthly IAC Newsletters. There are growing requests from member municipalities to share this document with their staff through Communications. The newsletter is currently designed as an internal communication and sharing it in whole or in part will require some consideration from the IAC and management how best to proceed with these requests.

## **Attachments:**

- Appendix 1 – Wellington County Treaties (MAP)

- Appendix 2 – Centre Wellington Heritage Landscape Study (EXERPT)
- Appendix 3 – Land Acknowledgement (DRAFT)
- Appendix 4 – Communications / Workload (STATS)
- Appendix 5 – Email Communications – Workload Impact (STATS)

**Recommendation:**

To accept the Land Acknowledgement – Indigenous Advisory Committee Update Report as submitted for information.

Respectfully submitted,

Colleen V. Brunelle

Fergus Programme Manager & Chair: Indigenous Advisory Committee