

May 7, 2010

Proposed:

City of Toronto Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal Communities in Toronto

Building Strong Relationships, Achieving Equitable Outcomes

The City of Toronto recognizes and respects the unique status and cultural diversity among the Aboriginal communities of Toronto. The City of Toronto continues its commitment to supporting the Aboriginal right to self-determination by working inclusively with Aboriginal communities in Toronto to achieve equitable outcomes for Aboriginal people within their communities and their day to day lives.

Recognize:

The City of Toronto recognizes the inherent rights of Aboriginal people provided by the Canadian Constitution. The City acknowledges that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of the land now known as the City of Toronto and that this area holds historical significance where diverse Aboriginal nations came together to exchange goods and as a sacred place for cultural practices. The City of Toronto values its Aboriginal history and the meaningful contributions of Aboriginal people to the development and the prosperity of Toronto.

The City of Toronto recognizes the rich diversity that exists within Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people are First Nations, Métis and Inuit people. The City understands that the term Aboriginal includes diverse communities and cultures that originate from all areas across Canada as well as being indigenous to Toronto. Aboriginal people are part of the social fabric of the city and live in neighbourhoods throughout Toronto.

The City of Toronto understands that many Aboriginal people living in Toronto are affected by historical and contemporary injustices which continue to have profound impacts on most, if not all, aspects of life. The City acknowledges that reconnecting with, maintaining, and celebrating a strong sense of Aboriginal identity, through cultural expression, retention of language, spiritual practice, and/or community relations, is fundamental to the well-being of many Aboriginal communities.

The City of Toronto respects the strength and capacity of organizations that exists within Aboriginal communities in Toronto and acknowledges that this has fostered positive change for Aboriginal people living in Toronto

Listen, Learn, Share, Promote:

The City of Toronto acknowledges that an understanding of the Aboriginal history of the city is an important element in creating the foundation for a strong working relationship with Aboriginal communities and in the collaborative development of successful programs and policies. The City of Toronto also understands that public reflection and celebration of Aboriginal cultures and life are important elements of achieving the City's vision of access, equity and human rights – a vision that seeks to achieve a City that is inclusive for all Torontonians.

Commitment:

The City commits to creating training opportunities for the Toronto Public Service to learn about the history and its current day impacts from Aboriginal Elders and other Aboriginal partners. The City also commits to working with Aboriginal communities to improve public awareness of Aboriginal life in Toronto.

The City of Toronto acknowledges that Aboriginal approaches to healing, growth, and mutual understanding are often holistic in nature, and that these approaches may differ from non-Aboriginal methods. The City understands that Aboriginal people are well served when services and programs are culturally appropriate. The City also understands that the programs and practices of Aboriginal organizations are culturally based.

Commitment:

The City commits, when working with the Aboriginal communities in Toronto, to learn about the elements of an Aboriginal holistic approach from its Aboriginal partners. The City further commits to supporting this approach in the belief that this will provide the greatest benefit to the community being served.

Partner and Engage:

The City of Toronto acknowledges that Aboriginal communities have the knowledge and experience to work with the City to develop strategies for addressing Aboriginal issues and expanding Aboriginal opportunities. The City also understands the value in initiatives that are both led and delivered by Aboriginal people.

Commitment:

The City commits to working with Aboriginal partners to explore ways to strengthen the capacity of Aboriginal organizations and associations to plan, lead and deliver initiatives for local Aboriginal communities. The City also commits to engaging Aboriginal communities in the City's decision making process, to removing barriers to civic participation and to increasing the representation and role of Aboriginal people on municipal boards and committees.

The City of Toronto values diversity and equity within the Toronto Public Service and is committed to the achievement of its Employment Equity Policy so that the workforce represents the population that it serves.

Commitment:

The City of Toronto commits to implement employment practices that ensure that opportunities for employment are accessible to Aboriginal people and increases the number of Aboriginal employees at all occupational levels.

The City of Toronto recognizes that collaborative and seamless approaches to service delivery from all orders of government, institutions and community organizations are important for Aboriginal communities.

Commitment:

The City of Toronto commits to working formally and informally with all orders of government and other municipalities, institutions and community organizations to continue exploring promising practices and opportunities for collaboration on Aboriginal initiatives and to promote the interests of Aboriginal people in Toronto, as defined by the Aboriginal communities.

TOWARDS AN ACTION PLAN

The City of Toronto will demonstrate through its actions the value it places on contributions made by Aboriginal people and its belief that a diverse, inclusive, and equitable Toronto is a strong Toronto. The City believes that this *Statement of Commitment* will result in meaningful advancement of equitable opportunities for Aboriginal people when actions are taken and resources are allocated.

Commitment:

The City of Toronto commits to the development of an action plan in partnership with Aboriginal communities in Toronto. The City of Toronto also commits to ensuring an accountability process is established in order to measure the success of the *Statement of Commitment*.