

From: [Lindsay Kretschmer](#)
To: [Executive Committee](#)
Subject: [External Sender] Re: Request to appear before March 19, 2025 Executive Committee on item 2025.EX21.14
Date: March 19, 2025 1:57:11 PM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image001.png](#)
[TASSC Indigenous Relations and Equity Discussion Paper.pdf](#)

She:Kon,

I am writing to withdraw my decision to appear. In lieu I am enclosing a document to be put forward on this item, that I encourage Mayor and Councillors and the public; and in particular those registered to depute consider reviewing to enhance their understanding of Indigenous people and issues.

Lindsay

Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council

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TASSC Indigenous Relations *and* Equity Discussion Paper



TORONTO ABORIGINAL SUPPORT SERVICES COUNCIL

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Looking backward, looking forward

Since time immemorial, Indigenous peoples have been an enduring presence across Turtle Island and in the geographic area known today as Toronto/T'Karonto. Indigenous peoples and communities share an intrinsic relationship with this place, long before the first visitors, and generations before Indigenous lives and livelihoods were forever changed by the arrival and permanent occupancy of settlers.ⁱ From first contact, these relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples have been marked by oral histories and treaties.ⁱⁱ Originally, we understood how to peacefully co-exist and had agreements that honoured our distinct ways. This is exemplified by the Kaswentha, otherwise known as the Two Row Wampum. The Kaswentha is one of the first treaties of Turtle Island, a living history that acknowledges the agreement that the Original people will travel the river of life with their laws and customs and that the newcomers will travel alongside them as equals with their own laws and customs. It is a treaty of co-operation and non-interference based on the principles of peace, friendship and respect and is forever binding, for as long as the sun shines.ⁱⁱⁱ

History has also documented how the breaking and dishonouring of treaties was used as a catalyst and a tool by colonial governments to dishonour and attempt to break down Indigenous communities' governance and leadership, and to dissolve Indigenous ways of seeing, knowing, doing, and being. In the hundreds of years since first contact, the detrimental impacts of colonization remain imprinted into the everyday lives of Indigenous people. Decades of research and reports, including but not limited to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP),^{iv} the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC),^v and, various reports in response to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women inquiry^{vi} account for the many systemic issues and barriers Indigenous peoples continue to face from over-representation in the prison system, child welfare system, poverty, violence against women, and the statistics that too often attempt to define us.





Looking back a decade ago, Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council's (TASSC) Toronto Aboriginal Research Project report^{vii} identified that the pervasiveness of racism towards Indigenous people in Toronto was a prevalent issue for its' time. This truth remains relevant today. We know that the complex issues that continue to plague Indigenous people inarguably have their roots in systems of colonization and racism, and that dismantling those very mechanisms requires intentional and systematic action. A significant aspect of that work is anchored in Indigenous people's leadership, governance, delivery and evaluation of the programs and services intended for Indigenous communities. The way forward recognizes that our issues cannot be resolved by people who today continue to benefit from historically racialized systems. As has been clearly evidenced at the tumultuous start of this new decade, Indigenous-led organizations continue to demonstrate that the best solutions emerge when we ourselves take decisive and intentional actions for the betterment of our communities.

Friendship and Non-Interference are not mutually exclusive.

Right now, we are witnessing an explosion of equity, diversity, and inclusion discourse that is not only emerging across the local social services landscape, but also one widely influenced by media and social media and multiple sources, e.g., foundations, governments, non-profit agencies, community-based networks, and by the public.^{viii} These efforts mark a significant paradigm shift in race and community relations in the city and the world, with many individuals and groups working hard to better describe their expectations, commitments, and relationships with racialized, marginalized and other equity-seeking groups. These conversations are beyond overdue. We acknowledge that many different race-based communities have different needs that deserve appropriate attention and address. Fairness, truth, and justice are values that we believe in as an Indigenous-led organization, and these values extend to our relations with all peoples and all races. However, there must also be acknowledgement of the structural advantages in place for many race-based groups that are not equitably nor equally accessible to Indigenous people. Our efforts must seek to understand the uniqueness of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, but more importantly to put into motion a process that recognizes and prioritizes Indigenous autonomy in pursuit of building of a better world, informed by unique Indigenous practices, cultures, and generations of wisdom.^{ix}





Truth and Justice must come before reconciliation – The time is now

Transformative thinking and doing, grounded in empathy and awareness is fundamental to dismantling the roots of racism and re-shaping perspectives when it comes to Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations in this city and this country. While education and training activities are a good start, they are not cure-alls for deep-rooted and unconscious biases. Equity, diversity and inclusion frameworks are often targeted at those impacted, and rarely reflect how organizations, governments, foundations, etc., might themselves be more open and vulnerable in sharing their responsibilities in the reconciliation process. Any definition of equity work must recognize the important bridge this reinforces to reaching a time and place of reconciliation. All Torontonians, Ontarians, and Canadians share in the responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships with Indigenous people. Support for broad public policy that recognizes Indigenous relations and equity work as parallel processes would act as a reminder that we are all accountable for these relationships.

Governments, in particular, will be held accountable for the co-development and co-implementation of transformative measures to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among Indigenous peoples and all other segments of society. This must begin with re-establishing a renewed relationship with those in our society who continue to hold power in aspects of our lives and livelihoods, including political and civil service officials. Finding ways to support Indigenous peoples' leadership and Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and connections to the land are essential to the reconciliation process. Reconciliation requires political will, joint leadership, trust building, accountability, as well as a substantial investment of resources.

We call on all partners, governments, and allies to share and acknowledge their leadership role in respecting, distinguishing, and amplifying the inherent, constitutional and treaty rights of Indigenous peoples by pursuing relationship models that recognize and distinguish Indigenous relations and equity work in parallel and distinctive ways. The time is now to re-instate the original intentions of the first treaties, and to pursue a shared world where we live side by side, benefitting from lasting relationships grounded in peace, friendship and mutual respect.





ⁱ <https://ualbertalaw.typepad.com/faculty/2020/01/pre-contact-indigenous-systems-of-governance-.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.onondaganation.org/culture/wampum/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.onondaganation.org/culture/wampum/two-row-wampum-belt-guswenta/>

^{iv} <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/aboriginal-heritage/royal-commission-aboriginal-peoples/Pages/final-report.aspx>

^v <https://nctr.ca/reports2.php>

^{vi} https://b4e22b9b-d826-44fb-9a3f-afec0456de56.filesusr.com/ugd/4eaa9c_be059fe0cd844671839aef58558d893d.pdf

^{vii} <https://www.tassc.ca/tarp.html>

^{viii} At the time of writing, Ontario Ministry of Health, Toronto Foundation, United Way of Greater Toronto, City of Toronto, are all in development stages of equity frameworks/definition

^{ix} https://ssir.org/articles/entry/building_indigenous_power_and_investing_in_indigenous_self_determination

^x <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/page-16.html>

^{xi} <https://www.ontariohealth.ca/sites/ontariohealth/files/2020-12/Equity%20Framework.pdf>



Aboriginal Labour Force Development Canada (ALFDC)
2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations
Aboriginal Legal Services
Association for Native Development in the Performing and Visual Arts (ANDPVA)
Anduhyaun Inc.
Call Auntie
Centre for Indigenous Theater
ENAGB
Gabriel Dumont Non-Profit Homes Inc.
Miziwe Biik Development Corporation
Miziwe Biik Employment and Training
Native Canadian Centre of Toronto
Native Earth and the Preforming Arts
Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto (NWRCT)
Native Men's Residence (NAMERES)
Nishnawbe Homes Inc.
Ontario Aboriginal HIV | AIDS Strategy – Oahas
Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA)
Our Children's Medicine
Thunder Woman Healing Lodge Society
Toronto & York Region Métis Council (TYRMC)
Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre
Toronto District School Board - Urban Indigenous Education Centre (UIEC)
Tungasuvvingat Inuit Urban Inuit Knowledge Centre (T.I.)
Wigwamen Incorporated
Anduhyaun Inc.

