



## **Administrative Report**

### **Office of the Director, Legislative and Community Services/Clerk**

**To:** Warden MacDonald and Members of Essex County Council

**From:** Mary Birch  
Director, Legislative and Community Services/Clerk

**Date:** Wednesday, September 20, 2023

**Subject:** Land Acknowledgement Review and Update

**Report #:** 2023-0920-LCS-R20-MB

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#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide Essex County Council with a revised Land Acknowledgement for use by the County. This report and appendices provide the rationale for this review and a proposal for establishing a schedule for subsequent re-examinations of the statement.

#### **Background**

In October 2021, Essex County Council adopted a land acknowledgement which is read at the beginning of Council meetings and other significant County events. At the time of adoption, it was recognized that this would be a living document that would be reviewed and amended over time.

#### **Discussion**

In recent months, County of Essex Communications Officer, Ellen van Wageningen, conducted a review and some consultation on how municipalities and other public organizations within the region are addressing Land Acknowledgement Statements and reconciliation. The attached Briefing Memo, prepared by Ellen and attached as Appendix A, provides a summary of some other Land Acknowledgements used in Essex County. As well, Ellen has consulted locally with the Caldwell First Nation.

Based on her research and discussions, she has identified three actions that could be considered in addressing action No. 57 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Report. The Commission called on all levels of

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government “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 (UNDRIP), 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.”

The three potential actions identified are:

- (1) revise County land acknowledgement to specifically name Caldwell First Nation in recognition of its significant and ongoing connection to the County;
- (2) commit to providing County staff at least one opportunity, and preferably more, a year, to learn about Indigenous history, culture, rights and laws – particularly as they relate to the County; and
- (3) consider assisting Caldwell First Nation in making and erecting directional signage to the Caldwell Lands, following consultation with and confirmation that Caldwell First Nation wishes to accept such an offer.

## **Financial Implications**

There is no cost to amending the County Land Acknowledgement Statement.

Should the County decide to implement other potential actions identified, it should be noted that there may be costs associated with some of the implications of the recommendations offered as discussion in the Briefing Memo.

The County of Essex already has a subscription to the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion which provides opportunities for staff training on Indigenous history and culture. Renewal of the subscription will be included in the 2024 budget.

The cost of providing directional signage to the Caldwell Lands will require further consultation. Should there be a desire to proceed, the funds would be requested in the 2024 budget proposal.

## **Consultations**

During the drafting of this report, Don McArthur, Manager, Communications and Organizational Development, as well as the Communication Officer, Ellen Van Wageningen were consulted. The County Senior Leadership Team was also consulted. Attached to this report as Appendix A, is the Briefing Memo prepared by the Communications Officer, dated July 31, 2023.

Further consultations were sought during the preparation of the Briefing Memo by the Communications Team, as outlined in Appendix A.

## Recommendation

That Essex County Council receive report 2023-0920-LCS-R20-MB Land Acknowledgement Review and Update as information, and further approve the use of a revised land acknowledgement statement as follows:

*We acknowledge the land on which the County of Essex is located is the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, comprised of the Ojibway, Odawa and Potawatomie Peoples. **We specifically recognize Caldwell First Nation and other First Nations which have provided significant historical and contemporary contributions to this region.** We also value the contributions of all Original Peoples of Turtle Island, who have been living and working on this land from time immemorial.*

And, that County Administration report annually on steps taken to educate staff and build respectful, reciprocal relationships with Indigenous Peoples, as outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action.

## Approvals

Respectfully Submitted,

*Mary Birch*

Mary Birch, Director, Legislative and Community Services/Clerk

Concurred With,

*Sandra Zwierys*

Sandra Zwierys, MAcc, CPA, CA, Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix	Title
A	Briefing Memo – Land Acknowledgement Review, dated July 31, 2023 from Ellen Van Wageningen with associated Sub-Appendices A (Administrative Report 2021-1006-CCS-R08-MB) and B (Essex County Land Acknowledgements)