



Briefing Memo

Office of the Manager, Communications and Organizational Development

From: Ellen Van Wageningen
Communications Officer

Date: Monday, July 31, 2023

Subject: Land Acknowledgement Review

Purpose

The purpose of this briefing memo is to provide Essex County Administration with a review of the wording and use of the land acknowledgement used by the Corporation of the County of Essex (**County**). It also provides the reasoning for recommending the County annually review its progress in building respectful, reciprocal relationships with First Nations and Indigenous Peoples.

Background

On October 6, 2021, Essex County Council adopted a land acknowledgement "as a living document, open for revisions for one year to allow for feedback and advice regarding its ongoing use." The current County Council approved land acknowledgment is:

We begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, comprised of the Ojibway, Odawa and Potawatomie Peoples.

To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude to those whose territory you reside on, and a way of honouring the Indigenous people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial.

We value the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all the Original Peoples of Turtle Island.

(See Appendix A: Administrative Report to Council 2021-1006-CCS-008-MB)

The acknowledgement is read at the beginning of council meetings and other significant County events. The wording was based on a review of historical reports and land acknowledgements used by local municipalities and organizations, as well as consultation with Caldwell First Nation. The County decided to adopt the general and inclusive wording used by the Essex Region Conservation Authority (**ERCA**), which was among the first organizations locally to have a land acknowledgement statement.

ERCA has since revised its land acknowledgement to recognize Caldwell First Nation by name. While Caldwell First Nation is part of the Three Fires Confederacy, it is unique in that it was not a signatory to Treaty No. 2, also known as the McKee Purchase, which covered much of southwestern Ontario. Caldwell members lived in the area that includes Essex County prior to the 1790 treaty and continue to live here. Caldwell First Nation reached a land settlement agreement with the Government of Canada in 2010 and has since purchased parcels of land in the Leamington area that have been given "reserve" status (**Caldwell Lands**).

While Caldwell First Nation has always been here, it has had to fight for recognition for over two centuries and "acknowledgement would be nice," notes Carrie Ann Peters, culture and language coordinator for Caldwell First Nation, who was consulted as part of the drafting of this memo. She also cautioned that words are more meaningful if they are accompanied or followed by actions to support them. Recognizing Caldwell First Nation specifically in the County's land acknowledgement would be a respectful gesture that can be followed by actions aimed at building a reciprocal and respectful relationship.

As well as incorporating input provided by Carrie Ann Peters, of Caldwell First Nation, and ERCA, this memo takes into consideration the land acknowledgements of the local municipalities in Essex County. (See Appendix B: Essex County Land Acknowledgements.)

Amberley John, cultural resource coordinator with the Can-Am Indian Friendship Centre, was contacted twice by phone and email but did not respond. As such, no input has been provided by the Can-Am Indian Friendship Centre in the drafting of this memo.

Land acknowledgement and reconciliation

The County's acknowledgement includes its purpose, namely: "an expression of gratitude to those whose territory you reside on." This is important to recognize but does not have to be part of the spoken acknowledgement. Kelly Lendsay and Craig Hall of Indigenous Works summarize the purpose of a land acknowledgement as:

- A verbal or written statement acknowledging the ancestral and traditional land of Indigenous Peoples;
- A respectful act of reconciliation; and
- An acknowledgement offered up at meetings, events and forums, both in person and online.

A land acknowledgement helps keep reconciliation top of mind, they say in a webinar recorded for the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion. Canada has a history of excluding Indigenous people and a land acknowledgement is one step toward reconciliation and inclusion, Lendsay and Hall note. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was clear in its final report issued in 2015 that addressing the legacy of the residential school system requires establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.

“In the face of growing conflicts over lands, resources, and economic development, the scope of reconciliation must extend beyond residential schools to encompass all aspects of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations and connections to the land,” says the report.

The 94 calls to action contained in the commission's report are aimed mainly at the federal government. But they are also directed at all Canadians and all levels of government. The Association of Municipalities Ontario (**AMO**) lists the calls to action that municipalities can address in [Resources on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission \(TRC\) Calls to Action](#).

How municipalities are responding

Municipalities across Canada have adopted land acknowledgements and taken a range of steps toward building respectful, reciprocal relationships with First Nations and Indigenous Peoples within and connected to their communities. AMO provides guidance and suggestions in two documents:

- [What Municipal Leaders Can Do To Better Support Indigenous Residents And Neighbours At This Time](#); and
- [Indigenous-Municipal Relationship Agreements: A Guide for Municipal Leaders](#)

All local municipalities in the County have adopted land acknowledgement statements, recognize the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, and are taking other steps to promote awareness and provide education for staff.

Some examples are:

- The Town of Kingsville has a [Land Acknowledgement & Reconciliation page](#) on its public website;
- The Municipality of Lakeshore has made building relationships with local First Nations and Indigenous groups and implementing an Indigenous engagement and education program a priority in its [Communications & Engagement Master Plan](#);
- The Municipality of Leamington has an Indigenous community liaison on staff; and
- County Administration has purchased a membership in the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion to provide training and education opportunities for staff.

Discussion

Revising the County's land acknowledgement to specifically recognize Caldwell First Nation, which has unceded traditional territory and the Caldwell Lands – which as noted above have reserve status – would be a respectful gesture of recognition. This was done quietly by ERCA, without the requirement for board approval. Since Essex County Council approved its current land acknowledgement, it would be appropriate for it to review and approve any changes. Further revisions to the land acknowledgement may be suggested and adopted as the County's relationships with First Nations and Indigenous Peoples in the region evolve.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission clearly states in its final report that the abuse and deaths of Indigenous children in Canadian residential schools is a symptom of a larger issue that must be addressed: the disrespectful way Indigenous Peoples have been treated. For mutually respectful relationships to be formed and maintained “there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour,” the report says.

The commission's call to action No. 57 presents the most obvious opportunity for the County to act. The commission is calling on all levels of 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 County has provided staff access to training materials covering these topics through the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, including one workshop focused on Indigenous history and culture that was promoted and offered to staff during work hours. How much staff have taken advantage of these resources through their own initiatives is difficult to measure. Educating staff about the history and current contributions of Indigenous Peoples – particularly in the County – will require a sustained commitment by council and administration. This could be managed by setting a target of one educational event a year and then tracking progress in a report summarizing the event and other steps taken by the County toward fostering respectful, reciprocal relationships with the County's local Indigenous partners.

There may also be an opportunity for the County to offer friendship and support to the Caldwell First Nation by making and installing signs that direct traffic to the Caldwell Lands. Directional signage was mentioned by Carrie Ann Peters as an example of a concrete way of recognizing the Caldwell First Nation community that would be appreciated. (She did not suggest that the County should be responsible.) The Caldwell First Nation council and administration would have to be consulted to determine whether this is something for which they would like County assistance. Essex County Council, on the advice of County Administration, would first have to determine what the County would offer as a “gift” and whether there would be charges that would have to be covered by Caldwell First Nation.

Financial Implications

To be determined.

Consultations

In drafting this memo, ERCA and Carrie Ann Peters (Culture and Language Coordinator, Caldwell First Nation) were consulted.

Summary

The County should:

- (1) revise its 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.

Recommendation

That Administration recommend that County Council adopt the following revised land acknowledgement:

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 further, that 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.

Prepared by,

Ellen van Wageningen

Ellen van Wageningen
Communications Officer

Appendix Number	Appendix Title
A	Administrative Report to Council: 2021-1006-CCS-008-MB
B	Essex County Land Acknowledgements



Administrative Report

Office of the Director of Council & Community Services/Clerk

To: Warden McNamara and Members of Essex County Council

From: Mary Birch
Director of Council & Community Services/Clerk

Date: Wednesday, October 06, 2021

Subject: Land Acknowledge Statement

Report #: 2021-1006-CCS-R008 -MB

Purpose

To recommend that Essex County Council adopt a Land Acknowledge Statement, to be recited at the beginning of Essex County Council meetings and other County of Essex events.

Background

A land acknowledgement is an act of reconciliation. It recognizes that long before other peoples arrived in Canada, Indigenous Peoples were inhabitants and stewards of the land and that they continue to play a vital role in its future. This recognition commemorates the close relationship Indigenous Peoples have with the land. It is also an important step in increasing awareness of Canada's Indigenous history and addressing the damage caused by attempts to eradicate or diminish Indigenous culture.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, established in 2009 to hear the stories of survivors and address the legacy of residential schools, issued 94 calls to action in 2015. Recommendation No. 57 states:

"We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments 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.”

This education begins with recognition. Increasingly, governments, schools, non-governmental organizations and even businesses are adopting land acknowledgement statements as an early step in a process of reconciliation. These statements are read at the beginning of meetings, gatherings and events. To be meaningful, the reading of a land acknowledgement must be done deliberately and respectfully with the full attention of all those present.

Discussion

Land acknowledgements recognize Indigenous traditional and treaty territories. The history of these territories is not always agreed upon, so statements are often general and strive to be respectful of all views. Several municipalities and organizations in the County of Essex have adopted land acknowledgement statements after researching the Indigenous history of the region. The statements are similar, and some municipalities have said their statements may be changed based on further input.

Most recently, the Town of Essex adopted a land acknowledgement in June 2021 for a trial period of six months. The City of Windsor, in July 2021, adopted its land acknowledgement as a living document open to revisions for a year.

In preparing this report, the recently adopted land acknowledgement statements and reports to Councils for the Towns of Essex and Amherstburg, and the City of Windsor were reviewed. Also reviewed were the land acknowledgement statements of the Essex Region Conservation Authority, Municipality of Chatham-Kent, University of Windsor, Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board, Greater Essex County District School Board and Point Pelee National Park.

All of these statements acknowledge the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, comprised of the Ojibway, the Odawa, and the Potawatomie Peoples. Some, including those for Amherstburg and Essex, also refer to the Huron-Wendat Peoples.

In 1790, the British colonial government’s agent, Alexander McKee, negotiated a treaty with representatives of all these peoples known as Treaty No. 2, or the McKee Purchase. The treaty covered most of the land in

the southwestern tip of Ontario. In 1833, Treaty No. 35 was signed by the Huron-Wendat living on the Huron Reserve, which was on land in parts of present-day Amherstburg, LaSalle and Essex.

The Caldwell First Nation, part of the Three Fires Confederacy, was consulted about the wording for a land acknowledgement statement for the County of Essex. The response was that a statement like the one used by the Essex Region Conservation Authority, which incorporates the same territory, would be appropriate. The Authority's acknowledgement does not specifically refer to the Huron-Wendat but encompasses the contributions of "local and regional First Nations and all of the Original Peoples of Turtle Island."

A special thanks is extended to our Communications Officer, Ellen van Wageningen, for her research on local Land Acknowledgements.

If Council adopts the recommendation of this report, Administration will prepare the next revision to the Essex County Procedure By-law to include an amendment, codifying the reciting of a Land Acknowledgement Statement at meetings of Essex County Council.

The adoption of a Land Acknowledgement, as well as the recent recognition of the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation by Essex County Council, has prompted Administration to look for opportunities to promote an educational and cultural awareness program for Staff. As a first step, Administration has recently obtained a membership to the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion.

Financial Implications

At this time there are no financial resources required to adopt and implement a Land Acknowledgement Statement. Expenditures for memberships and training resources can be accommodated within the current budget and will be expanded upon in future budgets.

Recommendation

That the Essex County Council adopt the following Land Acknowledgement Statement, as a living document, open for revisions for one year to allow for feedback and advice regarding its ongoing use:

We (I) begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First

Nations, comprised of the Ojibway, Odawa and Potawatomie Peoples. To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude to those whose territory you reside on, and a way of honouring the Indigenous people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial. We value the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all the Original Peoples of Turtle Island.

Respectfully Submitted

Mary Birch

Mary Birch Director of Council & Community Services/Clerk

Concurred With,

Mike Galloway

Mike Galloway, Chief Administrative Officer

Essex County Region Land Acknowledgments as of June 2023

County of Essex

We begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, comprised of the Ojibway, Odawa and Potawatomie Peoples.

To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude to those whose territory you reside on, and a way of honouring the Indigenous people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial.

We value the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all the Original Peoples of Turtle Island.

Essex Region Conservation Authority

We acknowledge that this land is the traditional territory of the Caldwell First Nation, members of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, comprised of the Ojibwe, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi Peoples.

We value the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original Peoples of Turtle Island who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial.

Town of Amherstburg

The Town of Amherstburg acknowledges that the land on which we gather, live and raise our families is the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, (comprising the Ojibway, the Odawa, and the Potawatomie Peoples), and of the Huron-Wendat and Wyandot Peoples. We recognize the land as an expression of gratitude to those whose traditional territory we reside on, and a way of honouring the Indigenous people who have been living and thriving on the land since time immemorial. We value the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original Peoples of Turtle Island.

(Acquired from Caldwell First Nation, in early 2021.)

Town of Essex

We acknowledge that this land is the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations (comprised of the Ojibway, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi Peoples), and of the Huron-Wendat Peoples. We value the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original Peoples of Turtle Island who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial.

(Adopted June 21, 2021)

Town of Kingsville

We acknowledge the Three Fires Confederacy (Ojibwe, Potawatomi and Odawa) and the Traditional ancestral, unceded territory of Caldwell First Nation; the original people of Point Pelee, Pelee Island and its surrounding waters. We recognize and respect the First Nations who are stewards of the land and waters of Turtle Island and who have embraced this stewardship since time immemorial. We would also like to acknowledge all the moccasins who have walked the lands of Turtle Island.

Web page: <https://www.kingsville.ca/en/our-community/land-acknowledgement-reconciliation.aspx#:~:text=We%20recognize%20and%20respect%20the,the%20lands%20of%20Turtle%20Island.>

Municipality of Lakeshore

The Municipality of Lakeshore is located on the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy (comprised of the Ojibway, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi Peoples) and is steeped in a deep and rich Indigenous history. Today we acknowledge the people of these nations whose traditional territory we are meeting on, as well as our responsibility to continue the stewardship of the land with them. We also acknowledge all of the Indigenous people who have called, or continue to call, this place home.

Town of LaSalle

We acknowledge that the ground on which we live is the Traditional territory of the Caldwell First Nation; of the Three Fires Confederacy and the original people of Point Pelee & Pelee Island and its surrounding lands and waters, and that of the Huron-Wendat and Wyandot Peoples. We recognize and respect the First Nations who are stewards of the land and waters of Turtle Island and who have embraced the stewardship since time immemorial. We would also like to acknowledge the contributions of other nearby First Nation communities and all Original People across Turtle Island.

Municipality of Leamington

The Municipality of Leamington acknowledges that this land is the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, comprised of the Ojibway, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi Peoples and specifically, the traditional territory of the Caldwell First Nation.

The Municipality of Leamington values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original Peoples of Turtle Island – North America who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial.

Town of Tecumseh

We acknowledge that we are on land and surrounded by water, originally inhabited by Indigenous Peoples who have travelled this area since time immemorial. This territory is within the lands honoured by the Wampum Treaties; agreements between the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Lenni Lenape and allied Nations to peacefully share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Specifically, we would like to acknowledge the presence of the Three Fires Confederacy Ojibwe, Odawa, Potawatomi and Huron/Wendat Peoples. We are dedicated to honouring Indigenous history and culture while remaining committed to moving forward respectfully with all First Nations, Inuit and Métis.