

<b>DEPARTMENT/ DIVISION</b>	City Manager's Office - Corporate Strategic Services - Indigenous Relations & Inclusion (IRI)	<b>REPORT NO.</b>	R 79/2021
<b>DATE PREPARED</b>	05/20/2021	<b>FILE NO.</b>	
<b>MEETING DATE</b>	06/28/2021 (mm/dd/yyyy)		
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Annual Report Responding to Seven Youth Inquest		

## **RECOMMENDATION**

WITH RESPECT to Report R 79/2021 (City Manager's Office - Corporate Strategic Services, Indigenous Relations & Inclusion (IRI)), we recommend that the Fifth Annual Report as described in Attachments A, B, C and D be approved and submitted to the Ontario Chief Coroner;

AND THAT any necessary By-laws be presented to City Council for ratification.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Inquest into the Deaths of Seven First Nations Youth (the "Inquest") concluded on June 28, 2016 when the Jury rendered its verdict. The Jury issued 145 recommendations including 31 directed to the City (among other parties to the Inquest). The City of Thunder Bay had standing at the Inquest and responded to the Jury's recommendations.

While the recommendations are not legally binding, the Inquest's main purpose was to prevent future deaths of First Nations youth who must live away from their home communities to attend high school in Thunder Bay. The recommendations are mainly aimed at improving or implementing programs provided by the City in the areas of physical, social, and cultural infrastructure so that everyone coming to Thunder Bay is:

- treated equitably;
- included and engaged;
- safe; and
- able to access opportunities needed to succeed.

The recommendations were a catalyst for systemic change within the City, leading to updated approaches, including the Indigenous Relations and Inclusion Strategy. In that spirit, the Indigenous Relations and Inclusion (IRI) Section is undertaking an in-depth analysis of each recommendation to gauge to which degree each is adopted in the daily operations of the City, and if the original intent of each recommendation is adequately met. The In-Depth Analysis will

be shared with Council during the IRI Section's annual update presentation at the November 2021 Committee of the Whole.

A summary of this year's efforts are within the *Update on Recommendations in Progress*.

### **Guiding Statements**

Wherever the recommendation is directed to the City and other partners, the first step was to meet with the parties to discuss the approach in keeping with the intent of the Guiding Statements.

Recommendation 7 from the Jury states that, in moving forward with any initiatives that respond to the Inquest recommendations, the parties should be guided by the following:

- i. All of the Treaty Partners, including Indigenous communities and governments, Canada and Ontario, must respect the treaty rights of others and work together towards fulfilling treaty obligation;
- ii. First Nations governments exercise inherent control over their education systems;
- iii. First Nation communities seek to have a greater responsibility to govern their own spiritual, cultural, social, and economic affairs;
- iv. Without the improvements of conditions in First Nations reserve communities, a gap in education outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students will remain;
- v. Canada should support individual First Nations communities as they develop local solutions to the effects of colonial policy; and
- vi. In order to ensure timely delivery of publicly funded services to First Nations children, where jurisdictional divisions or disputes within or between governments threaten to delay or impede the provision of services, Jordan's Principle\* should apply.

*\*Child first principle intended to ensure First Nations children do not experience delay, denial or disruption of services due to jurisdictional issues, and normally available to other children. A members motion passed (M-296) in the House of Commons in 2007, effectively adopting Jordan's Principle. Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action 3 states: We call upon all levels of government to fully implement Jordan's Principle.*

Locally, Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN), through the Office of Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler, has provided the political leadership to bring together the parties at a number of different tables to review and discuss various recommendations.

On August 1, 2017, Fort William First Nation, the City of Thunder Bay and Nishnawbe Aski Nation signed a Statement of Commitment to First Nation Youth and Families. The City's response to the Seven Youth Inquest continues to be informed by that Commitment, which

recognizes, among other statements, that “the safety and well-being of First Nation students attending high school in Thunder Bay is a priority and demands immediate action.”

## ***DISCUSSION***

### **I. Recommendations Directed at the City of Thunder Bay**

This Report provides an overview of actions being undertaken in response to the 31 Recommendations directed to the City among other parties and the steps Administration is taking up to June 28, 2021, since our last report of August 10, 2020 (R93/2020).

Attachment A is a Chart that provides a high-level update of actions undertaken over the past year and summarizes past actions taken in response to recommendations directed to the City.

The recommendations are aimed at improving or implementing programs relating to the City’s physical, social and cultural infrastructure so that everyone coming to Thunder Bay is:

- treated equitably;
- included and engaged;
- safe; and
- able to access opportunities to succeed.

### **II. Operational Impacts of COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic, first declared in March 2020 had a widespread impact on the City and its population. Last year’s report was delayed until August 10, 2020.

Some of actions undertaken by the City also experienced delays due to the pandemic. Despite such delays, action continues to take place and the eventual full implementation of those recommendations is still expected.

### **III. Past Grades and Progress**

The City reports annually to the Chief Coroner’s Office and Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto on its progress in responding to the Recommendations. Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto issues an annual report card parties’ progress. Below is a synopsis of the City’s grades:

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Grade	C+	A-	A	B

The drop in grade from 2019 was attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, in which students could not travel to Thunder Bay, and others were unable to attend school in-person. Planning, activities and launches were on hold until social distancing measures eased. Despite the limitations, the City resumed meetings virtually to continue its response to the Recommendations. Those involving in-person participation, e.g., recommendations 49, 74, 102, 107, mainly depend on the

resumption of in-person schooling. Plans are in place for their implementation once school resumes.

#### **IV. Progress to Date**

Implementing the City's response to the Seven Youth Inquest is being undertaken by an internal team comprised of the Manager of Indigenous Relations & Inclusion, the City Clerk, the Director of Recreation & Culture, the Director of Human Resources & Corporate Safety, the Supervisor – Staffing, Development & Support Services, the Manager of Transit, Program Supervisor – Children and Youth, Coordinator – Planning, Projects & Development (Community Services), the Crime Prevention Council Coordinator, the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy Coordinator and Legal Services.

Of the 31 recommendations directed to the City:

- 25 recommendations could reasonably be expected to be implemented in one to two years (short-term). Of those:
  - 20 have been implemented
  - One alternate recommendation has been implemented
  - Four already had the content or intent of recommendation in place.
  
- Six recommendations could reasonably be expected to be implemented in two to four years (medium-term). Of those:
  - Three are implemented (#75, #112, #139)
  - Two have plans or materials completed for implementation (#110, #116)
  - One has been identified as a needing additional action, though work is on hold due to COVID-19 (#114)

The City of Thunder Bay also continues to lead working groups tasked with implementing specific recommendations such as Recommendation 49 (one-on-one meetings with education partners), Recommendation 100 (youth partner forum), Recommendation 115 (watercourse/river safety audits), and Recommendation 116 (public awareness). In other cases, the City has participated in working groups and meetings called by other partners responding to the Inquest such as Ontario Recommendation 78 (coordination of services), and Recommendation 91 (missing person investigations and searches).

Attachment A describes the latest developments on recommendation implementation and follows up on the First Annual Report R61/2017 (City Manager's Office - Corporate Strategic Services), the Second Annual Report R82/2018 (City Manager's Office - Corporate Strategic Services), the Third Annual Report R108/2019 (City Manager's Office - Corporate Strategic Services), and the Fourth Annual Report R93/2020 (City Manager's Office - Corporate Strategic Services).

As of last year's report (R93/2020), the lead for the Corporation's response to the Inquest has transferred to the Manager of Indigenous Relations & Inclusion. An in-depth analysis of the Inquest Recommendations is currently underway to assess positive systemic change being made on how the Corporation has addressed all of the Recommendations. The results of the analysis

will further inform the Corporation's implementation of the Indigenous Relations and Inclusion Strategy, the Anti-Racism and Inclusion Accord and future actions resulting from the Inquest.

## **V. Update on Recommendations in Progress**

Highlights of efforts in the fifth year of response for medium-term recommendations include:

### **Recommendation 110**

The Wayfinding Plan acknowledges the local Indigenous community through the use of signage. The integrated signage orients people to their locations and directs them to selected primary destinations. Despite delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of signs for Phase 1 were delivered last winter. Work is ongoing to have the signs installed. The delivery of the large kiosk signs is expected during the summer and fall of 2021.

Wayfinding signage for multi-use trails constructed over the past several years (e.g. Ford Street Trail from Walsh to Confederation College and the Neebing River) will go out for procurement in late summer or fall 2021 with the intent of installing signage in the Spring of 2022. The Waterfront Trail construction and signage have similar timelines planned.

Parks and Open Spaces has adopted Wayfinding signage to reflect local Indigenous presence as the 'standard' to which it will develop future trails and rehabilitate or redevelop existing trail networks throughout the City. This ongoing commitment underscores the importance of implementing Recommendations to include Indigenous contributions to Thunder Bay in a meaningful and sustainable way in the spirit of reconciliation.

Other actions by the Community Economic Development Commission (CEDC) and Tourism Thunder Bay contributing to Recommendation 110 include:

- The redevelopment of welcome signage at the Thunder Bay International Airport to include greetings in Ojibway,
- Supporting and advocating for Indigenous tourism development in its 2017-2021 Tourism Product Development Strategy, and
- Membership and Memorandum of Understanding with Indigenous Tourism Association of Ontario, including holding workshops on Indigenous Tourism in Ontario.

### **Recommendation 112**

Hate-motivated crimes targeting Indigenous people in Thunder Bay continue to be a leading cause for concern for Indigenous students who must move to the city to undertake secondary school education. A public education and awareness campaign will be launched on June 29, 2021 after delays due to COVID-19. Campaign materials will include posters, postcards, radio, print, and social media ads.

### **Recommendation 114**

The Planning Committee for the fourth sobering site was able to hold several meetings during the pandemic. A Health Services Improvement Plan (HSIP) has been developed to request funding from the Northwest LHIN to create additional Safe Sobering Services in Thunder Bay to support existing services provided by Matawa Education & Care Centre, Dennis Franklin

Cromarty, and Keewaytinook Okimakinak. All four locations will provide a similar service, and will work together, however, the fourth location will accept all other youth that are not under the jurisdiction of the named education authorities, and will be open year-round.

The Safe Sobering Service will provide a safe space for youth 25 years of age and under who are intoxicated by alcohol and/or other substances, who are walking, talking, and cooperative and who do not require emergency services. At this time, there is no lead agency identified to submit the HSIP. The COVID outbreak among individuals experiencing homelessness and precarious housing has put planning meetings on hold since February 2021.

### **Recommendation 116**

A public education campaign centered on challenges faced by Indigenous youth when they come to Thunder Bay for their secondary school education. A short film made in collaboration with Kingfisher Lake First Nation was in development, however the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the filming from taking place. Instead, the working group pivoted, and have been developing an animated film with the help of local design firm Generator. In addition to animation, the campaign includes posters, postcards, radio, print, and social media ads. The launch of the campaign will coincide with the return of students to Thunder Bay this fall of 2021.

### **Recommendation 139**

The enhanced Indigenous Cultural Awareness training was finalized in August 2020 and is currently being delivered to City staff, in which the full-day training is mandatory for all staff. The curriculum was co-developed with Lakehead University in consultation with the Indigenous community and City union representatives.

The training program launched in fall 2020 and will take up to three years to complete. As of May 2021, ten sessions were held, with approximately 166 managerial and non-unionized employees working from home who were able to attend virtually. COVID-19 has affected the Corporation's ability to deliver the training to other employees, mainly unionized groups, due to inability to hold in-person sessions during provincially-mandated COVID-19 restrictions. As restrictions ease this summer and fall, additional training will be scheduled for more employees.

Discussions have taken place with Lakehead University to explore how they may aid the Indigenous Relations and Inclusion office in evaluating the Walk a Mile training curriculum. Tourism Thunder Bay, an arm of the CEDC, is also supporting delivery of cultural awareness training for the hospitality sector.

## **VI. Addressing Anti-Indigenous Racism in the Local Community**

Longer term efforts of orientation and outreach will continue to be undertaken in efforts to address anti-Indigenous racism. This will remain an ongoing focus for the City. This work is consistent with the Anti-Racism & Inclusion Accord signed June 19, 2018, by Chief Executive Officers/Chief Administrative Officers of 11 major public organizations in Thunder Bay.

Since March 2019, 31 additional businesses and organizations signed onto the Accord, bringing the membership to 42.

The path moving forward also includes an in-depth analysis of the Inquest's 31 recommendations to determine if they are wholly integrated into the Corporation's operating procedures and approaches. The intention is to complete this report for inclusion in the IRI Section's annual progress report to Council in November 2021 Committee of the Whole meeting.

### ***FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS***

The 2021 Budget includes an allocation of \$75,000 for costs related to the Inquest. These funds are a reflection of a permanent transfer of \$45,000 to Transit Services to allow the Division to continue to administer the First Nation Secondary School Transit Pass.

The 2021 budget provides for: enhanced Indigenous cultural awareness training (#139), continued implementation of the river and watercourse safety audit recommendations (#115), provide contributions to a social media campaign to raise awareness of challenges faced by youth coming to Thunder Bay from northern communities for education (#116), and develop a campaign to address racially-motivated crimes (#112). The budget is on target to utilize the budget for its intended purpose to implement these Recommendations.

### ***CONCLUSION***

It is concluded that the Fifth Annual Report as described in Attachments A, B, C and D be approved and submitted to the Ontario Chief Coroner, including a copy of this Corporate Report and Resolution of Council.

### ***BACKGROUND***

The Inquest began on October 5, 2015 to investigate the deaths of seven First Nations youth: Jethro Anderson, Reggie Bushie, Robyn Harper, Kyle Morrisseau, Paul Panacheese, Curran Strang, and Jordan Wabasse. The City was granted standing and evidence was provided by former City Manager Tim Commisso, Karen Lewis, Director – Corporate Strategic Services, John Hannam, City Clerk, and Donna Sippala, Director – Recreation & Culture (Acting).

The Inquest into the Deaths of Seven First Nations Youth concluded on June 28, 2016 when the Jury rendered its verdict. The Jury issued 145 recommendations, 31 of which are directed to the City (among other parties to the Inquest).

On November 3, 2016, Ontario Chief Coroner Dirk Huyer, MD, by letter, explained the purpose of an Inquest: to “look for lessons that can be learned from the deaths that may contribute to a safer future for the living.” Juries make recommendations based on these findings, and while not binding, it is hoped their implementation will prevent future deaths in similar situations.

On June 12, 2017, Committee of the Whole approved the City of Thunder Bay's First Annual Report as contained in Report R61/2017 (City Manager's Office - Corporate Strategic Services) on the Seven Youth Inquest for submission to the Ontario Chief Coroner.

The Chief Coroner requested response by the anniversary of the Inquest – June 28, 2017. He further wrote: "We trust they (the Recommendations) will be given careful consideration for implementation and, if not implemented, that your organization provides an explanation."

On June 25, 2018, Committee of the Whole approved the City of Thunder Bay's Second Annual Report as contained in Report 82/2018 (City Manager's Office - Corporate Strategic Services) on the Seven Youth Inquest for submission to the Ontario Chief Coroner.

On June 24, 2019, Committee of the Whole approved the City of Thunder Bay's Third Annual Report as contained in Report R108/2019 (City Manager's Office - Corporate Strategic Services) on the Seven Youth Inquest for submission to the Ontario Chief Coroner.

On August 10, 2020, Committee of the Whole approved the City of Thunder Bay's Fourth Annual Report as contained in Report R93/2020 (City Manager's Office - Corporate Strategic Services) on the Seven Youth Inquest for submission to the Ontario Chief Coroner.

On September 22, 2020, the Chief Coroner and parties were informed by the Director of Corporate Strategic Services that the Manager- Indigenous Relations and Inclusion is the lead on the City's response to the Inquest.

***REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED:***

Attachment A – City of Thunder Bay Fifth Annual Report on Seven Youth Inquest, June 28, 2021 – Highlights of recent work

Attachment B – Response to Jury Recommendations to City – Template provided by Chief Coroner, June 28 2021

Attachment C – Letter from Ontario Chief Coroner Dirk Huyer, MD, dated November, 3 2016

Attachment D – History of City Response to the Coroner's Inquest and Recommendations

***PREPARED BY: REGINA MANDAMIN, MANAGER – INDIGENOUS RELATIONS & INCLUSION***

THIS REPORT SIGNED AND VERIFIED BY: (NAME OF GENERAL MANAGER)	DATE:
--	-------

