

City of Thunder Bay
Aboriginal Liaison
Strategy





DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT

Strengthening Relationships between the City of Thunder Bay and Urban Aboriginal People

Our Declaration of Commitment is an important component to the building of a strong and respectful relationship with the Aboriginal community in Thunder Bay. Aboriginal peoples include Indian, Inuit and Metis peoples (as defined by Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982). It is also a realization of a commitment made in the Aboriginal Liaison Strategic Plan accepted by City Council on March 29, 2010.

Our commitment to the Aboriginal peoples of the City of Thunder Bay is based on the understanding and recognition that:

- Aboriginal peoples were the first peoples to inhabit this land and have a unique and special relationship with it;
- Aboriginal peoples have traditionally gathered here;
- Aboriginal peoples have the right to make decisions for themselves;
- Aboriginal peoples have and continue to participate in and support the economic well-being of our community;
- Aboriginal peoples have distinct languages, cultures and spiritual practices that need to be respected;
- Aboriginal peoples have endured many hardships and injustices since first contact that have created serious social and economic disadvantages;
- Aboriginal peoples have made invaluable contributions throughout our collective history that has created a stable and rich community;

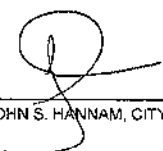
- Aboriginal peoples are the fastest growing population in our region.

The City of Thunder Bay's declared commitment is to:

- Partner with Aboriginal peoples in creating an inclusive community that values and respects the diversity that exists in the City of Thunder Bay
- Work with Aboriginal peoples to identify and assist with the removal of barriers that hinder their full participation in community life
- Recognize the resourcefulness of Aboriginal youth and assist with the creation of opportunities that will encourage them to participate in building our community
- Work with the community to create a safe and welcoming environment that Aboriginal peoples will feel comfortable in
- Recognize and celebrate the valuable contributions Aboriginal peoples have made and continue to make in our community
- Maintain and support the living document – "Aboriginal Liaison Strategic Plan".


MAYOR LYNN PETERSON




JOHN S. HANNAM, CITY CLERK



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Preamble

To provide clarity when reading this document, “we” refers to the Corporation of the City of Thunder Bay. The City of Thunder Bay also refers to the Corporation.

Foundation

The foundation for this plan was built on years of dialogue, information gathered from research material (2006 Stats Can, UAS Circle of Certainty, The Urban Aboriginal Taskforce Report, The Roots of Youth Violence Report and the Quality of Life Report) and engaging in focused discussions with municipal and Aboriginal leaders, administrators, service providers, community groups, Elders, youth and community members.

City Council honoured a significant Aboriginal custom when it supported the creation the Elder’s Advisory Council. The Elder’s council has provided guidance on issues of protocol, ceremony and has, through the creation of the Aboriginal Liaison Logo, revealed our direction – Maamawe: All Together.

To create the vision of togetherness, we needed to define the Corporation’s responsibilities and roles as they relate to the Aboriginal community. By clarifying our roles and responsibilities we are able to take the appropriate actions.

Through focused discussions, we were able to define what the City of Thunder Bay’s responsibility to Aboriginal people is and what role the City of Thunder Bay plays in creating a higher quality of life for Aboriginal people. They are:

Responsibilities

- Creating an inclusive community
- Providing programs and services that are accessible to Aboriginal people
- Providing employment opportunities
- Providing leadership
- Providing/creating a safe community
- Recognizing Aboriginal contributions to community life

Roles

- Leader
- Partner
- Employer
- Service Provider



Areas of Focus

During a two-day Strategic Planning forum that was comprised of a cross-section of municipal and Aboriginal leaders, administrators, community representatives and Elders, it was determined that the City of Thunder Bay's Aboriginal Action plan should focus on:

- Leadership from the City of Thunder Bay
- Communication/Awareness
- Youth
- One Stop Access to Services/Cultural Centre
- Racism
- Employment
- Economic Development
- Seniors' Homes and Services
- Service Gaps

Commitment

The City of Thunder Bay's Aboriginal Liaison Strategy is the realization of a commitment City Council made in the 2007-2010 Strategic Plan under the pillar of high quality of life - develop Aboriginal Liaison strategy to be implemented in 2010.

Through formal and informal gatherings with our Aboriginal community, through respecting and honouring Aboriginal traditional wisdom and through the creation of a collective vision of the Aboriginal Liaison Logo, we have laid a solid foundation on which to build the City Thunder Bay Aboriginal Liaison Strategy.

This plan will help guide our relationship and inspire collaboration. It will define our roles and responsibilities and build on the positive steps the City of Thunder Bay has already taken to improve its relationship with the Aboriginal community; that community being made up of First Nations, Non-status Indians, Métis, and Inuit.

Aboriginal people have always shared their gifts. Through the Aboriginal Action Plan, the City of Thunder Bay commits to accepting those gifts, understanding them and to find ways in which to help those gifts grow and flourish. By creating an environment of acceptance, recognition, support and collaboration we will create a dynamic future where we will all grow and flourish.

Vision

Through the creation of the Aboriginal Liaison Logo, the City of Thunder Bay's Elders Advisory Council has provided us with our vision - *Maamawe - All Together*.

By respecting our uniqueness, sharing our gifts and celebrating our successes we will live, learn, grow, and build *Maamawe - All Together*.



The Logo



The logo was painted by Kevin Belmore in the traditional Woodlands style. The sweetgrass braid represents healing, the four colours represent the diversity in our community, and the sun represents the Inuit people as well as the new light that is shining on our relationship. The man (wearing a Métis sash) and woman represent a balanced approach and are at the centre of what is important – people. They are kneeling on the Sleeping Giant which represents the City of Thunder Bay.

Mission Statement

To enhance the well-being of Thunder Bay's Aboriginal communities through the creation of a new civic relationship and partnership that promotes the full participation of Aboriginal citizens in the social, economic, political and cultural life of the community to improve the quality of life for all citizens in Thunder Bay.

Guiding Principles

Trust

Trust is a fragile thing. It is something that must be worked on at all levels and during all times of a relationship. By communicating in meaningful ways and doing what we say we're going to do, we can establish a relationship built on trust and good faith.

Inclusion

Inclusion is the cornerstone to developing and implementing programs, services and initiatives that provide an opportunity for the Aboriginal community to participate to its fullest extent.

Collaboration

Through the establishment of effective partnerships and rooted in the Aboriginal tradition of sharing, our vision will become reality when we draw upon the resources and knowledge of the three orders of government and the Aboriginal community and all citizens of Thunder Bay.

Sustainability

To build a future that is healthy and vibrant, the value of specific initiatives needs to be evaluated by its impact on citizens today and on future generations.

Flexibility

Flexibility encourages creative thinking and avoids decisions which impose one solution on different problems. Flexibility also implies all initiatives will be reviewed and adapted to changing circumstances or needs.

Commitment

We are committed to dialogue and to find ways for Municipal and Aboriginal leaders, Administration and community members to work together to respond to community needs



Values

The Aboriginal Liaison Strategy provides us with a framework. We will realize this plan and approach this relationship in a meaningful way, guided by the values of:

- Respect
- Honesty
- Humility
- Love
- Bravery
- Truth
- Wisdom

Strategic Approach

The areas of focus that have been identified will be addressed through the four roles the City of Thunder Bay plays and will become part of the Corporation's work.

By embracing our guiding principles, participation and engagement of our Aboriginal community is crucial to the success of this plan. The plan will be reviewed each year, to identify the areas of focus for the next working year and the financial supports that will be required.

During the Municipal-Aboriginal Leadership Gathering the indicators of success were identified as:

- Improvements to Stats Canada numbers (Employment, education, homelessness, poverty)
- Increased participation by the Aboriginal community in City services and programs
- Aboriginal people becoming more engaged in municipal politics and governance (boards and committees)
- Feeling welcomed and respected
- More and on-going involvement with Mayor, Council and Administration
- Seeing Aboriginal people being positively represented in the community

Measurement and evaluation is critical to the success of the plan. Measures will be built and refined as the plan is implemented and reviewed.

*Respect
Honesty
Humility
Love
Bravery
Truth
Wisdom*





1.0 The Role of Leader

Goal

To communicate and demonstrate the commitment of our City Council to working closely with our Aboriginal people to improve the social, cultural, political and economic well-being of our community.

It's important because...

Thunder Bay has seen dramatic growth in our Aboriginal population in the past five years. Between 2001 and 2006 our Aboriginal population increased by 17.6% (2006 Census). 75% of our Aboriginal population is First Nation. There is strong political representation here from Fort William First Nation, the Northern Ontario Chiefs, Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, Nokiiwin Tribal council, Matawa Tribal council, the Métis Nation of Ontario, and the Red Sky Métis Association. We are also home to a diverse urban Aboriginal population that includes over 35 Aboriginal organizations that provide valuable services and tremendous economic impact to our community.

This reality positions Thunder Bay to become the centre for Aboriginal affairs in Northwestern Ontario, if not in all of the province. Thunder Bay has always been a gathering place for First Nation and Métis people from all over the region since time immemorial. Our city continues to be that junction point where Aboriginal people gather to learn, share, heal, create, negotiate, play, work, live and celebrate. With the promise of the Northern Growth Plan and exciting new opportunities in the mining, energy, forestry and knowledge-based sectors, we have the infrastructure to support First Nation and Métis people in the region in determining the best options for their own futures.

With leadership from Mayor and Council we will establish a healthy environment for Municipal-Aboriginal relations to grow. As this environment evolves, Aboriginal people will feel welcomed, respected and included in all aspects of community life and that will have a positive impact on the quality of life for the citizens of Thunder Bay.



Objectives, Recommended Actions

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|--|---|
| <p>1.1 Affirm Council's commitment to the Aboriginal community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a formal declaration of Council that articulates Council's commitment to the Aboriginal community • Adopt a formal welcoming protocol that recognizes the Robinson Superior Treaty and the traditional land owners • Provide appropriate resources to support and expand the work of the Aboriginal Liaison • Engage with Aboriginal leaders to discuss common issues and explore opportunities for collaboration and partnership • Advocate and promote Aboriginal interests with the other orders of government and the City of Thunder Bay | <p>1.3 Improve community race relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the work of the Thunder Bay Racism Advisory Committee • Promote opportunities for appointments to Boards, Commissions and Committees |
| <p>1.2 Improve communication between the Corporation and the Aboriginal community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and implement an Aboriginal Communication Strategy • Reflect the Aboriginal community in City created publications (i.e. Your City) • Utilize Aboriginal publications to share information about City services, employment opportunities or new initiatives | <p>1.4 Recognize and support Aboriginal ontributions to community life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create awareness within the Aboriginal community about the Citizens of Exceptional Achievement Awards • Participate in community initiatives and gatherings • Provide a source of funding within the Cultural and Community Funding program that Aboriginal not-for-profit organizations and groups can access for programs and projects |

A community approach to problem-solving will result in a healthier, stronger and more collaborative community.



2.0 The Role of Partner



Goal

To support and recognize the work of the Aboriginal community by sharing expert knowledge, information, and resources, and contributing to the creation of partnerships that will improve the well-being of the Aboriginal community.

It's important because...

There are over 35 Aboriginal service agencies as well as many community groups and committees. They are experts in understanding the challenges and needs within the community. Through partnership with these agencies, groups and committees we will be able to review our programs and services, and make changes as required.

A good example of partnership at work is the Neighbourhood Capacity Building Project (NCBP - a project overseen by the Urban Aboriginal Advisory Committee) and our recreation department. The NCBP identified a gap in one of their programs and the recreation department was able to fill it. This has resulted in a continuity of programming for the children that attend NCBP programs and the sharing of training costs (cultural awareness for City staff and First Aid training for NCBP staff) for the partners. This pairing is a fine example of putting the needs of the community first and exploring options on how to best meet those needs.

Partnerships need to extend beyond the Aboriginal community and reach into the other orders of government, not-for-profit and the private sector. These partnerships would clarify jurisdictional responsibilities, open channels of communication, coordinate services and expand resources. This community approach to problem-solving will result in a healthier, stronger and more collaborative community.



Objectives, Recommended Actions

2.1 Partner with the Urban Aboriginal Advisory Council

- Provide support (financial and in-kind) for the creation of the Collaborative Working Groups

2.2 Explore Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Federal and Provincial Governments

- Research existing models and initiate discussions about an MOU that clarifies jurisdictional responsibilities, coordinates services and expands resources

2.3 Partner with community groups, organizations and businesses

- Continue to seek opportunities to partner with various organizations and individuals that improve relations and enhance the cultural fabric of the community



“Where will our future workforce come from?”



3.0 The Role of Employer

Goal

To broaden our understanding of Aboriginal culture, to build a workforce that is reflective of our community's diversity and to strengthen the City of Thunder Bay as an employer of choice.

It's important because...

The 2006 Census, the Circle of Certainty (UAS report), the Urban Aboriginal Taskforce Report, the Roots of Youth Violence Report and the 2008 Quality of Life Report all have one thing in common – they speak of the inequities between employment rates and income levels of Aboriginal people vs. non-Aboriginal people. According to the North Superior Workforce Planning Board, “Aboriginal people continue to be under-represented in the labour force – 48.6% employment rate in 2006 compared against 58.5% for the Thunder Bay District.” (Building a Superior Workforce: 2009-2012 Labour Market Action Plan)

As society ages, many employers are faced with the same question: where will our future workforce come from? For Thunder Bay, the answer lies within the Aboriginal community. Not only is this a growing population, it is an exceptionally young population. “The median age for the total population of Thunder Bay is 41.8. Our Aboriginal population has a median age of 26.3. Within the Aboriginal population 38.9% are 19 years old or younger.” (2008 Quality of Life Report)

Statistical information shows that Aboriginal people in Thunder Bay have a higher rate of college and university completion than the provincial average for Aboriginal people. This data indicates that Aboriginal people have or will have the skills, knowledge and abilities that will help the Corporation become one of the best-run cities in Canada.

Promoting Aboriginal participation in the Corporation's workforce is the right thing to do and it's the smart thing to do. As our Aboriginal community grows, Aboriginal employees provide a unique perspective and approach so that our services and programs meet the community's needs. Supporting employment opportunities for Aboriginal people will provide a strong and vibrant economy for the City of Thunder Bay.



Objectives, Recommended Actions

3.1 Become an employer of choice for Aboriginal people

- Create recruitment material that reflect Aboriginal people within our workforce
- Participate in Aboriginal specific career fairs
- Partner with Aboriginal employment agencies and educational institutions to promote employment and placement opportunities
- Promote employment opportunities with the City by working with area educational institutions, and through Aboriginal specific publications
- Establish a Municipal Aboriginal Employee Network that can:
- Participate in career/job fairs to promote working for the City of Thunder Bay
- Mentor and support new Aboriginal employees
- Identify opportunities that create a more diverse workforce
- Network with other municipal Aboriginal employees to share ideas and best practices
- Maintain participation on the Aboriginal Employment and Resource Committee

3.2 Increase cultural understanding and acceptance within the workplace

- Provide cultural sensitivity training to all new employees as part of their orientation
- Develop an on-going internal educational program in a variety of formats that will allow staff to further explore Aboriginal culture
- Promote cultural learning through volunteerism with different Aboriginal organizations, events and activities
- Partner with Corporate programs (i.e. Wellness) to incorporate Aboriginal teachings

3.3 Provide employment opportunities

- Seek to establish internship opportunities
- Partner with Aboriginal agencies and community recreation providers to establish youth leadership forums





4.0 The Role of Service Provider



Goal

To increase Aboriginal participation in municipal services and programs, by providing those services and programs in a culturally sensitive manner.

It's important because...

When programs and services are offered in a culturally sensitive manner it reflects our knowledge of our community's demographics and our understanding of the community's needs. It also reflects the level of partnership and engagement the municipality wants with the different members of its community.

Since many of our programs and services have a direct impact on the quality of life for Aboriginal people, it's important that we strive to offer our services and programs in such a way as to eliminate barriers and encourage more participation from our Aboriginal community.



Objectives, Recommended Actions

4.1 To improve access to services for the Aboriginal community

- Expand the Fall Feast and Festival of Services
- Support service departments' participation on the Aboriginal Inter-Agency Council to help identify and remove barriers to City services
- Provide support to the 211 Community and Government Information and Referral line to expand its communication into northern communities
- Provide financial and in-kind support for participation in Aboriginal initiatives that promote and inform the community about City services (i.e. the school boards' Student Orientation Program)
- Create a working group that provides guidance to City-run Homes for the Aged addressing the needs of Aboriginal clients

4.2 To provide programs that reflects the Aboriginal community and interests

- Partner with Aboriginal organizations to provide Aboriginal specific programs
- Incorporate Aboriginal cultural components into City programs being presently offered (i.e. story telling, Aboriginal games and crafts in summer recreation programming)



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Thunder Bay Catholic School Board
St. Patrick High school
Fort William First Nation Arena



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This plan was adopted by City Council in March 2010