

Committee: Committee of the Whole – Administration & Operations

Date: December 4, 2023

Department: Administration

Topic: Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

Purpose: To update the Procedural Bylaw to incorporate an indigenous land acknowledgement.

Background: At the August Committee of the Whole Members requested a report on preparing a land acknowledgement statement for the Township.

A land acknowledgement is a formal statement to recognize the relationship between Indigenous peoples and their traditional territories. Acknowledging the land is an Indigenous protocol used to express gratitude to those who reside here, and to honour the Indigenous people who have lived and worked on this land historically and presently. Strengthening relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians is important to municipal governments and residents across the Township and Ontario.

Traditional Indigenous territories do not typically align to provincial and municipal boundaries and normally overlap each other. This is the case with the Township of Edwardsburgh Cardinal, which finds itself located on Algonquin (Anishinabewaki and Omàmìwininiwag), Mohawk (Kanien'kehá:ka), Huron-Wendat (Wendake-Nionwentsio), and Iroquois (Haudenosaunee) traditional and unceded territory.

There are a number of methods/options Council may choose from to incorporate a land acknowledgement statement into meetings:

1. The land acknowledgement could be an agenda item on Council agendas following the "Call to Order" item. The acknowledgement would be read by the Mayor at the Council meeting.
2. During Committee meetings the land acknowledgement could be placed on the agenda cover special comments section that would be displayed at the top of the agenda.
3. Provide more fulsome land acknowledgement at Council meetings and incorporate a more general simplified version for Committees.

See examples attached.

Through best practice review, it appears that the land acknowledgement statement is done only at Council meetings, whether that be on the agenda cover, incorporated into the agenda as an item to be read aloud at each meeting, or just recognized. With Committee meetings, it appears that the land acknowledgement is either noted on the agenda cover and rather than being incorporated into the meeting itself, still recognizing the importance, or not mentioned at all.

In various locations across the province, there have been concerns raised with Councils/Committees struggling to pronounce the indigenous names properly. A potential method to circumvent this would be to incorporate the more specific acknowledgement on the agenda cover top comment section and have Council read aloud a shortened version recognizing the First Nations, Metis and Inuit which constitute indigenous peoples within Canada.

Draft wording with Indigenous names:

As we gather, we are reminded that the Township of Edwardsburgh Cardinal is situated on traditional territory of Indigenous peoples dating back countless generations, which is rich in history and home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit people today.

The Township of Edwardsburgh Cardinal acknowledges that we operate on the unceded and traditional aboriginal territory of the Anishinabewaki, Haudenosaunee, Kanien'kehá:ka, Omàmiwininiwag, and Wendake-Nionwentsio .

We acknowledge the historic relationship of the Anishinabewaki, Haudenosaunee, Kanien'kehá:ka, Omàmiwininiwag, and Wendake-Nionwentsio people to this land and our shared obligations to respect, honour and sustain these lands and the natural resources contained within.

We recognize all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit who now call Edwardsburgh Cardinal their home. The Township values and respects their cultural heritage and relationship to the land.

Draft wording for shortened version:

As we gather, we are reminded that the Township of Edwardsburgh Cardinal is situated on traditional territory of Indigenous peoples dating back countless generations, which is rich in history and home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit people today.

As a Township, we have a responsibility for the stewardship of the lands on which we live, work and play, and today, this meeting place is still home to Indigenous people and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on and call this land home.

Policy Implications: If Council wishes to incorporate a land acknowledgement within the main agenda following the "Call to Order", the Procedural Bylaw would need to be updated under section 19 of the bylaw to reflect this change to the agenda template.

Financial Considerations: None.

Recommendation: That Committee recommends that Council: 1. Direct staff to update the Procedural Bylaw to incorporate a "Land Acknowledgement" agenda item to the Council agenda; and 2. Incorporate a land acknowledgement statement as part of the agenda cover page of all Committee agendas; and 3. Provide direction to staff with respect to preferences on wording/phrasing for the land acknowledgement statement(s) to be used.



Clerk



CAO