

### Item for the Information of the Regional Watershed Alliance

**TO:** Chair and Members of the Alliance  
Wednesday, May 22, 2024 Meeting

**FROM:** John MacKenzie, Chief Executive Officer  
On behalf of Government & Community Relations

**RE: TRCA'S COMMITMENT TO INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS**

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#### **KEY ISSUE**

To provide an update on Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's (TRCA) Indigenous engagement efforts and initiatives.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT the update on TRCA's Commitment to Indigenous Engagement Efforts, be received for information.**

#### **BACKGROUND**

TRCA is committed to building meaningful relationships with Indigenous peoples and advancing reconciliation. Through engaging, partnering, and collaborating with First Nations and Indigenous communities, TRCA can foster effective, inclusive, and sustainable conservation strategies that respect local knowledge, promote social justice, and empower communities through its Indigenous engagement efforts. Indigenous engagement is undertaken at TRCA using a two-fold engagement approach, one which takes the form of a formal mandated consultative approach with First Nations and Treaty holders, and the second, a more informal and broader engagement approach to develop and sustain long-term meaningful relationships with First Nations and Indigenous communities within TRCA's jurisdiction.

For formal and mandated engagement and consultation, TRCA aims to develop positive relationships with nations, confederacies and councils that have established or asserted rights that may be impacted by TRCA projects and programs through a process of meaningful, mutually respectful engagement. This type of engagement and consultation process is typically formal when responding to legislative requirements related to infrastructure projects which TRCA is advancing on behalf of partners. The Supreme Court of Canada has determined that the provincial and federal governments ("the Crown") and its agents have a Duty to Consult Indigenous peoples when it contemplates conduct that may adversely affect existing or asserted Indigenous or treaty rights. While third parties, including not for profits such as TRCA, do not have this duty, the Crown may delegate procedural aspects of consultation to TRCA through legislation or other means. For example, TRCA may be asked to undertake an Environmental Assessment (EA) process or engage with Indigenous communities for projects funded all or partially by the Crown. In addition, TRCA is responsible for

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managing the consultation process, including Indigenous engagement, for EA projects as a proponent under the Conservation Ontario Class EA process and as a joint proponent under the Municipal Class EA or individual EA process. In 2015, TRCA penned Engagement Guidelines, which outline the general principles of engagement, in which instances TRCA is required to engage, and the internal engagement process, primarily under a formal engagement (Duty to Consult) scenario.

To complement formal engagement efforts, TRCA has a long history of work and informal engagement outside of the delegated responsibilities under the Duty to Consult with First Nations and Indigenous communities through various TRCA Divisions and their projects and programs. In 2017, TRCA developed a Community Engagement Strategy, which contains high level recommendations regarding the enhancement of relationships with TRCA's watershed communities. Discussions involving First Nations, the TRCA Chair, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), and staff, along with evolving best practices prompted TRCA to undertake a refresh of the Engagement Guidelines in 2023. In May 2022, an internal TRCA working group was established with representation across all TRCA divisions to inform and help to advance meaningful engagement, relationship building, and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples at TRCA. Administered by TRCA Government and Community Relations staff, the Indigenous Engagement Working Group (IEWG) is responsible for facilitating TRCA staff input on corporate-wide guidelines, policy, and practices for engagement with Indigenous partners so that TRCA may achieve this goal. Where TRCA undertakes projects on behalf of senior governments, which require the Duty to Consult, they will continue to be coordinated through TRCA's Archaeology business unit with regular reporting to the IEWG on key interests from First Nations and Métis.

TRCA has a great interest from staff to discuss opportunities to incorporate Indigenous engagement in their project or program work. Currently, each TRCA Business Unit is represented on the IEWG by two to three staff representatives recommended by the Division's Senior Leadership Team member. The work of the IEWG is also complementary to broader Indigenous engagement efforts at TRCA, and the engagement efforts of TRCA's municipal partners including supporting implementation of various municipal Reconciliation Plans. For example, recently TRCA participated in interagency conversations related to Indigenous engagement which were led by the City of Toronto through an Interagency Indigenous Engagement Coordination Working Group (IECW).

### **RATIONALE**

The following section provides highlights of TRCA's Indigenous engagement efforts, including a summary of the activities of TRCA's IEWG and key considerations that will continue to guide TRCA's broader strategic Indigenous engagement efforts in 2024. In addition to the work spearheaded by the Working Group, staff across the organization are engaging First Nations and Indigenous communities through various TRCA programs, projects, and initiatives. A summary of Indigenous engagement and consultation efforts at the program and project level is included in Attachment 1.

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### Indigenous Engagement Highlights – TRCA Public Programming and Spaces

#### Morningside Legacy Project

TRCA secured a \$470,000 grant from TD Friends of the Environment Fund (TDFEF) to build an Indigenous outdoor gathering space known as the Morningside Legacy Project. This project aims to restore Indigenous presence at Morningside Park by creating a series of outdoor spaces for shared learning and celebration along an educational trail. Implemented in phases over time, the trail will have five main stations, or feature areas, interpreting First Nation history, cultural significance, and connection to ecologically sound and sustainable approaches to land management.

With support from the City of Toronto Indigenous Affairs Office, TRCA collaborated with 4 Directions Conservation Consulting Services to engage with Williams Treaty First Nation communities to shape the vision for the site and complete a conceptual plan. In 2023, TRCA re-engaged 4 Directions to refine the concepts developed through these earlier workshop exercises and advance detailed design of the first station for implementation in 2024.

#### Renaming of Black Creek Pioneer Village

Since the establishment of Black Creek Pioneer Village (BCPV) in 1960, scholarly and public awareness of the complex role that story-telling and history-keeping plays in our communities has continued to evolve. It is now understood that not only does BCPV not reflect an accurate depiction of the mid-Victorian era in Ontario at the time, but by portraying that period through a romanticized lens, with an emphasis on the Eurocentric “pioneer” experience including in the name of museum, TRCA continues to perpetuate historic injustices against marginalized and diverse peoples.

To remedy the above, at Meeting #4/23 held on April 28, 2023, TRCA’s Board of Directors approved RES.A#69/23 to officially rename BCPV to *The Village at Black Creek*. The renaming of Black Creek Pioneer Village results from discussions with Indigenous community representatives and stakeholders that the word “pioneer” presents a significant barrier to inclusion and participation for both Indigenous communities and new Canadians by focusing on a specific period in Canadian and local history that did not and does not reflect the rich cultural heritage of local communities from pre-contact to the current period.

From an Indigenous perspective, scholars and researchers from York University and representatives from Mississaugas of the Credit, Six Nations of the Grand River, Mississaugas of Scugog Island, Chippewas of Georgina Island, and Chippewas of Rama, through the Changing the Narrative partnership, specifically identified the word “pioneer” in the name of BCPV as a particular barrier to participation in further scholarly and interpretive collaboration related to the Indigenous History Gallery. As such, the new proposed name *The Village at Black Creek* removes Pioneer from the name, thereby taking an additional important step towards improved relationship-building and reconciliation with Indigenous communities.

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Furthermore, renaming to The Village at Black Creek maintains a geographic connection to both the Black Creek tributary of the Humber River, as well as the local community within which the museum is located. It additionally leverages the idea of The Village, which BCPV is already colloquially known as internally to TRCA staff and provides a social and cultural touch-point in that everyone, in some form, can connect with the idea of a village.

Building on the above renaming, in 2023 TRCA integrated a permanent Land Acknowledgement into the McNair Gallery, along with an Indigenous art installation by Metis encaustic sculptor, Tracey-Mae Chambers. Since 2021, Tracey-Mae Chambers has worked with TRCA and BCPV on a series of temporary art installations within various historic buildings with the Village and this installation and Land Acknowledgement honours the important relationship TRCA has with our Indigenous partners, while looking ahead to the opening of a new permanent Indigenous exhibit space at The Village in 2024.

### Reconciliation Day Public and Staff Events – September 29-30, 2023

The IEWG collaborated with True North Aid, a non-Indigenous organization to deliver two self-guided Truth and Reconciliation events at TRCA's Kortright Centre for Conservation on September 29th (for TRCA staff) and September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (for members of the public). The stories shared during this self-guided walk were reviewed by two Indigenous members of True North Aid's advisory committee. Furthermore, TRCA staff engaged the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation to review and provide input for the educational materials being presented. The annual Truth and Reconciliation Day Event at Heart Lake Conservation Park, led by Four Colours Drum Circle and supported by TRCA staff, was also held on September 30th.

### Updates on the Indigenous Engagement Working Group (IEWG)

IEWG is a formal mechanism by which TRCA can create more meaningful opportunities to support relationship building, reconciliation and creating spaces for Indigenous communities to share and celebrate their history in a way that is respectful and relevant to them. Since May 2022, the IEWG has been actively working on a wide range of initiatives, a summary of the IEWG's accomplishments is provided below.

#### Administrative Items

Between May 2022 and November 2023, eight meetings of the IEWG were held. Administrative items completed during this time include the development of an IEWG Terms of Reference and 2023 Work Plan.

#### Staff Training and Development

- *Personal Land Acknowledgments*: Members of the IEWG deliver personal land acknowledgments at the beginning of each IEWG meeting on a rotating basis. This helps TRCA staff cultivate a supportive space to practice the development and

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delivery of their own personal land acknowledgment, and to recognize and celebrate the lands which they are seated on from their own unique perspective.

- *TRCA Land Acknowledge Recording*: A recording of the TRCA land acknowledgment is being developed which will be available on the Staff Hub and through TRCA's Learning Management System as a resource to staff, TRCA Board of Directors, Chairs of formal TRCA meetings (i.e., Regional Watershed Alliance, Partners in Project Green Executive Committee) to use as a resource for correct pronunciation of Indigenous names.

### Indigenous Engagement and Relationship Building

- *Engagement and Consultation Tracking Database*: The IEWG developed and implemented an internal tracking database to consolidate the Indigenous engagement and mandated Indigenous consultation efforts of each Division. Each Divisional representative on the IEWG is responsible for ensuring this information is up to date. This information will help to inform annual reporting to TRCA's Board of Directors on TRCA's Indigenous engagement and consultation efforts. Mandated consultation activities are tracked by TRCA Archaeology staff. In addition, this tracking spreadsheet will also help with coordination of TRCA's Indigenous engagement efforts organization wide.
- *Indigenous Engagement at IEWG Meetings*: The IEWG is making efforts to engage members of Indigenous communities at its Working Group meetings. To date, Indigenous guest speakers have attended meetings and conversed with IEWG members on a wide range of topics.

### Communications

- *Indigenous Communications Plan*: An Indigenous Communications Plan has been developed which lays out the communication objectives, communications approach, key messages, and a tactical plan to support organizational efforts to advance meaningful relationship building with Indigenous communities and reconciliation.
- *Conservation Ontario Tool Kits*: The IEWG provided input to the development of Conservation Ontario's Consultation and Indigenous Engagement Tool Kits. The Indigenous Engagement Tool Kit is a valuable resource which is available to all Conservation Authority staff to develop engagement plans for working with Indigenous communities.
- *Staff Hub Working Space and Staff Hub Update*: A space has been set up on the internal TRCA Staff Hub for the IEWG. This space includes the IEWG Terms of Reference, IEWG membership, and a contact form whereby TRCA staff across the organizations can send questions to the IEWG for deliberation. The IEWG is working on an additional Staff Hub update in 2024.

### Guidelines, Policies and Procedures

- *TRCA Indigenous Engagement Guidelines*: Indigenous Engagement Guidelines have been developed by the IEWG. The guidelines will be a living document and updated periodically as more guidance is available to support staff with their

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Indigenous engagement efforts. To date, guidelines have been developed around the delivery of TRCA's land acknowledgment in different settings, in addition to guidelines for participating in Indigenous ceremonies (i.e., preparation and presentation of ceremonial tobacco, smudging, etc.). TRCA continues to work with municipal partners to discuss best practices for First Nations monitors during archaeology and environmental studies. It is expected that further updates to the guidelines will be made in 2024 to reflect this.

- *TRCA Procurement Policy and Guidelines*: The IEWG will be providing input to TRCA's Procurement Policy and Guidelines to help expand sustainability procurement and to leverage Indigenous engagement opportunities. The IEWG will also work with TRCA procurement staff to provide direction around the process for gift giving (previously called honorariums) for members of Indigenous communities, to be incorporated into the Procurement Policy and Guidelines
- *Draft TRCA Public Naming and Recognition Principles*: The IEWG have been participating in ongoing discussions around how to include Indigenous names, histories, and narratives into signage for TRCA lands, facilities, and projects. Any guidance coming from the IEWG will help inform the development of the Public Naming and Recognition Principles or future updates to TRCA's Asset Naming Policy.
- *Agreements with Indigenous Communities*: A draft MOU is in the process for being developed to capture TRCA's relationship with the Four Colours Drum Circle, including the different activities that they deliver in partnership with TRCA and on their own at the Heart Lake Conservation Area Medicine Wheel Garden (ceremonies, events, garden maintenance, etc.). This MOU/agreement could potentially be used as a template to support staff for developing agreements with Indigenous communities. Discussions on relationship agreements with treaty holders also continue to ensure they have the capacity to participate in TRCA projects and initiatives.

In addition to the above, significant work has been undertaken through TRCA's Education and Training Division

### **Relationship to TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan**

This report supports the following Pillars and Outcomes set forth in TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan:

#### **Pillar 3 Community Prosperity:**

3.2 A culture of diversity, equity and inclusion contributing to community well-being

#### **Pillar 4 Service Excellence:**

4.4 Transparent decision making and accountable results

### **FINANCIAL DETAILS**

The administration of the IEWG and programming and projects costs for the noted activities in Attachment 1 have been funded through a variety of divisional budgets. Cost for potential relationship agreements with treaty communities are currently

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unknown and will vary depending on priorities for partnership. It is expected that TRCA would need to explore opportunities for contributions from programs and projects to advance these agreements, at least in the short term. Costing for engagement activities will be raised as a budget consideration related to fee for service projects, where, for example, Duty to Consult requirements are present. Opportunities to partner with First Nations on grants to support joint projects and programs will be explored. The specific administration of the IEWG, including honorariums for Indigenous speakers, is provided from account 101-03.

### **DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE**

2024 Indigenous engagement related priorities include:

- Develop the 2024 Work Plan for the IEWG;
- Continue to update and implement the Indigenous Communications Plan;
- Continue to deepen engagement and programming partnerships within TRCA public and educational spaces and centres;
- Continue to track Indigenous engagement and consultation efforts across the organization;
- Development of performance metrics for Indigenous engagement; and
- Continue to work with municipal partners to support implementation of actions in their Reconciliation Plan.

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**Date: February 1, 2024**

**Attachments: 2**

Attachment 1: Summary of TRCA Indigenous Engagement and Consultation Efforts, 2023

Attachment 2: TRCA 2024 Indigenous Engagement Events