

RECONCILIATION

FRAMEWORK

JUNE 2021



CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE





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# INTRODUCTION

This City of Yellowknife *Reconciliation Framework* is the foundation for how the City will build respectful relationships with, and create a more inclusive representation of, Indigenous Peoples within the City of Yellowknife. It includes:

- Background on the City's Reconciliation journey;
- Overarching goals and principles of the City's Reconciliation initiatives; and
- How the City will engage Indigenous peoples, Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations and the community at large on the City's Reconciliation initiatives.

Complementing the *Reconciliation Framework* is the *Reconciliation Action Plan*. The *Reconciliation Action Plan* lays out concrete actions the City plans to take to move forward on our collective Reconciliation journey.

The *Reconciliation Action Plan* also includes a list of actions the City has already taken and actions or ideas within the City's mandate that the City received through the *Reconciliation: Starting the Conversation* discussions and from reviewing best practices in other municipalities which may become actions the City chooses to undertake in the future.

The *Reconciliation Action Plan* is a living document that will be refreshed and adapted to reflect the City's work and priority areas across our community.



# BACKGROUND



The City of Yellowknife honours and recognizes the importance of First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples to the development of our city. Indigenous peoples have contributed leadership, traditions, culture, values and vision – contributions that continue to be vital to our political, social, environmental, economic and cultural future.

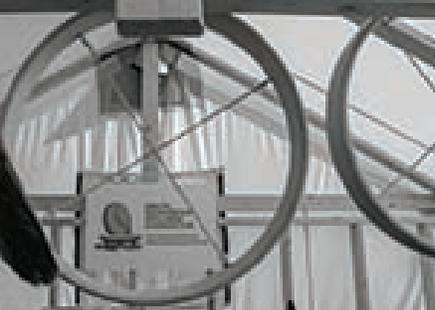
The City of Yellowknife recognises that our settler footprint here is new, and we must honour the original residents and the significant contributions of Indigenous peoples. We are actively working towards reconciliation, balancing this with a common vision for our community and needs articulated by all our citizens. Other Indigenous people from Turtle Island (North America), European settlers and immigrant descendants; and new immigrants now contribute to the diversity and culture of Yellowknife – and are all active participants in the journey toward reconciliation.

Recognising the importance of respectful relations with YKDFN and other Indigenous stakeholders, the City of Yellowknife began to undertake actions, including joint Council meetings and the first Memorandum of Understanding entered into with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation. Since then, there has been an increasing acknowledgement by the City of the harms and ongoing effects of colonization on Indigenous people. There is also recognition that, as stated by the TRC, in order for reconciliation to happen “there has to be awareness of the past, an acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behavior.” Forging a new relationship based on recognition of Indigenous rights, respect, cooperation and partnership will require hard work, changes in perspectives and actions, and compromise and good faith, by all.

For the City, first steps towards Reconciliation have included adopting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action in July 2015, followed by adopting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in October of that year. In 2019, City Council identified Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples as one of its core values in the 2019-2022 City of Yellowknife Strategic Plan.

During 2019, the City released the *Reconciliation: Starting the Conversation* document as a means to engage with the community in a concrete way, seeking input through coffee breaks, online and written comments, one-on-one engagement and community gatherings (including gatherings for Yellowknives Dene First Nation members in Ndilo and Dettah). There was a broad range of input which provides the foundation for this *Reconciliation Framework* and the *Reconciliation Action Plan*.





# THE CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE'S ROLE

As a municipal government, the City of Yellowknife is mandated to provide good government to community residents, to maintain a safe community and to provide programs and services that Council feels are necessary or desirable. To do this, we carry out a number of functions that serve residents, businesses, visitors and other orders of government. It is these areas that we intend to enhance by developing a *Reconciliation Action Plan*. Our main functions include:

GOVERNANCE	COMMUNITY SERVICES	PHYSICAL SPACES	PUBLIC SAFETY	BUSINESS COMMUNITY RELATIONS	MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE
City Council, City Manager, Office of the City Clerk and Corporate Services	Library, City and Recreational Facilities, Recreation Programing and Special Events	Community land planning, building approval and inspections	Fire Department, ambulance, By-law enforcement and emergency response	Business Licencing and Economic Development	Roads, sidewalks, water and sewer

The City's focus for reconciliation will be on these functions and responsibilities. If any of the ideas or feedback we receive falls beyond our scope, the City will seek to support contributors in bringing their ideas to the appropriate agency or order of government.





# OUR COMMITMENT

The City of Yellowknife is committed to building relationships with Indigenous Peoples in the spirit of reconciliation. City Council recently confirmed its Strategic Priorities for 2019-2022 and reconciliation is highlighted as one of six core values for the City.

The following quotes from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC)

*What We Have Learned: Principles Truth and Reconciliation* document reflect the City's understanding of reconciliation:

*"Reconciliation must support Aboriginal peoples as they heal from the destructive legacies of colonization that have wreaked such havoc in their lives. But it must do even more. Reconciliation must inspire Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples to transform Canadian society so that our children and grandchildren can live together in dignity, peace, and prosperity on these lands we now share."*

*"At a Traditional Knowledge Keepers Forum sponsored by the TRC, Anishinaabe Elder Mary Deleary spoke about the responsibility for reconciliation that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people carry. She emphasized that the work of reconciliation must continue in ways that honour the ancestors, respect the land, and rebalance relationships. She said,*

*I'm so filled with belief and hope because when I hear your voices at the table, I hear and know that the responsibilities that our ancestors carried ... are still being carried ... even through all of the struggles, even through all of what has been disrupted ... we can still hear the voice of the land. We can hear the care and love for the children. We can hear about our law. We can hear about our stories, our governance, our feasts, [and] our medicines.... We have work to do. That work we are [already] doing as [Aboriginal] peoples. Our relatives who have come from across the water [non-Aboriginal people], you still have work to do on your road.... The land is made up of the dust of our ancestors' bones. And so to reconcile with this land and everything that has happened, there is much work to be done ... in order to create balance."*

*"To the Commission, 'reconciliation' is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country."*

<sup>1</sup>Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation* (<http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Principles%20of%20Truth%20and%20Reconciliation.pdf>), page 113.

<sup>2</sup>What We Have Learned, page 114.





# GOAL AND PRINCIPLES

From the *Reconciliation: Starting the Conversation* discussions, the City pulled out the following goal and principles. This goal and principles need to be woven into all the work the City does.

**GOAL: ALL OF THE CITY'S WORK ON RECONCILIATION NEEDS TO BE DIRECTED AT BUILDING POSITIVE, RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND A WELCOMING COMMUNITY FOR ALL. EVERYTHING ELSE FLOWS TO AND FROM THIS GOAL.**



## PRINCIPLES: THE PRINCIPLES THAT SUPPORT THIS GOAL INCLUDE:

### **RELATIONSHIP BUILDING IN ALL WAYS**

Everything is based on relationships that need to be fostered including individual to individual, individual to institutions, and institution to institution.

### **INVOLVE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE**

Indigenous people must be involved in developing actions/plans/events and the City needs to adapt to collecting input in ways Indigenous people provide it.

### **ACTION**

Taking action is necessary to show the City is serious about this work. Positive actions contribute to building relationships and trust.

### **LEARNING/UNLEARNING/RELEARNING**

The City needs to facilitate its representatives, staff and the community at large in learning about the history of this place, about the Yellowknives Dene, the North Slave Métis and all other Indigenous Peoples who call Yellowknife home, and about the ongoing effects of colonization.

### **SPECIAL RECOGNITION**

Yellowknife exists on Chief Drygeese territory, the traditional lands Yellowknives Dene, which is also home to the North Slave Metis so special recognition is warranted while working towards reconciliation with all Indigenous peoples in Yellowknife.

### **PARTICIPATE**

City representatives, City staff, and residents all need to participate, get involved and do their part. We are all Treaty people.

### **LEARN FROM MISTAKES**

On the journey to reconciliation, there will be missteps and mistakes – there is no clear absolute path when forging a new foundation for relationship building and valuable learning comes from these experiences. Fear of making mistakes should not paralyze authentic action toward reconciliation.



# TRC PRINCIPLES OF RECONCILIATION

The goal and principles above will be further guided by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Principles of Reconciliation:

1

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is the framework for reconciliation at all levels and across all sectors of Canadian society.

2

First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, as the original peoples of this country and as self-determining peoples, have Treaty, constitutional, and human rights that must be recognized and respected.

3

Reconciliation is a process of healing relationships that requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms.

4

Reconciliation requires constructive action on addressing the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have had destructive impacts on Aboriginal peoples' education, cultures and languages, health, child welfare, administration of justice, and economic opportunities and prosperity.

5

Reconciliation must create a more equitable and inclusive society by closing the gaps in social, health, and economic outcomes that exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.





**6**

All Canadians, as Treaty peoples, share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships.

**7**

The perspectives and understandings of Aboriginal Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers of the ethics, concepts, and practices of reconciliation are vital to long-term reconciliation.

**8**

Supporting Aboriginal peoples' cultural revitalization and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and connections to the land into the reconciliation process are essential.

**9**

Reconciliation requires political will, joint leadership, trust building, accountability, and transparency, as well as a substantial investment of resources.

**10**

Reconciliation requires sustained public education and dialogue, including youth engagement, about the history and legacy of residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal rights, as well as the historical and contemporary contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canadian society.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation* (<http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Principles%20of%20Truth%20and%20Reconciliation.pdf>), p. 3-4.





# INDIGENOUS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The City will engage Indigenous peoples, Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations and the community at large on the City's Reconciliation initiatives. Depending on the initiative, involvement may include any of the following:

## **External Indigenous guidance:**

Indigenous advisors and/or reference panels can inform and advise on reconciliation principles, plans, actions and approaches for engaging on and implementing the Reconciliation Framework, Action Plan and any specific initiatives.

## **Direct Dialogue with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation and the North Slave Métis Alliance:**

Depending on the initiative, there will be times when it is appropriate to engage directly with either or both of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation and/or the North Slave Métis Alliance.

## **Engagement with other Indigenous Governments and Organizations:**

Depending on the initiative, the City may reach out directly to various Indigenous governments, Indigenous institutions and partners.

## **General Public Engagement:**

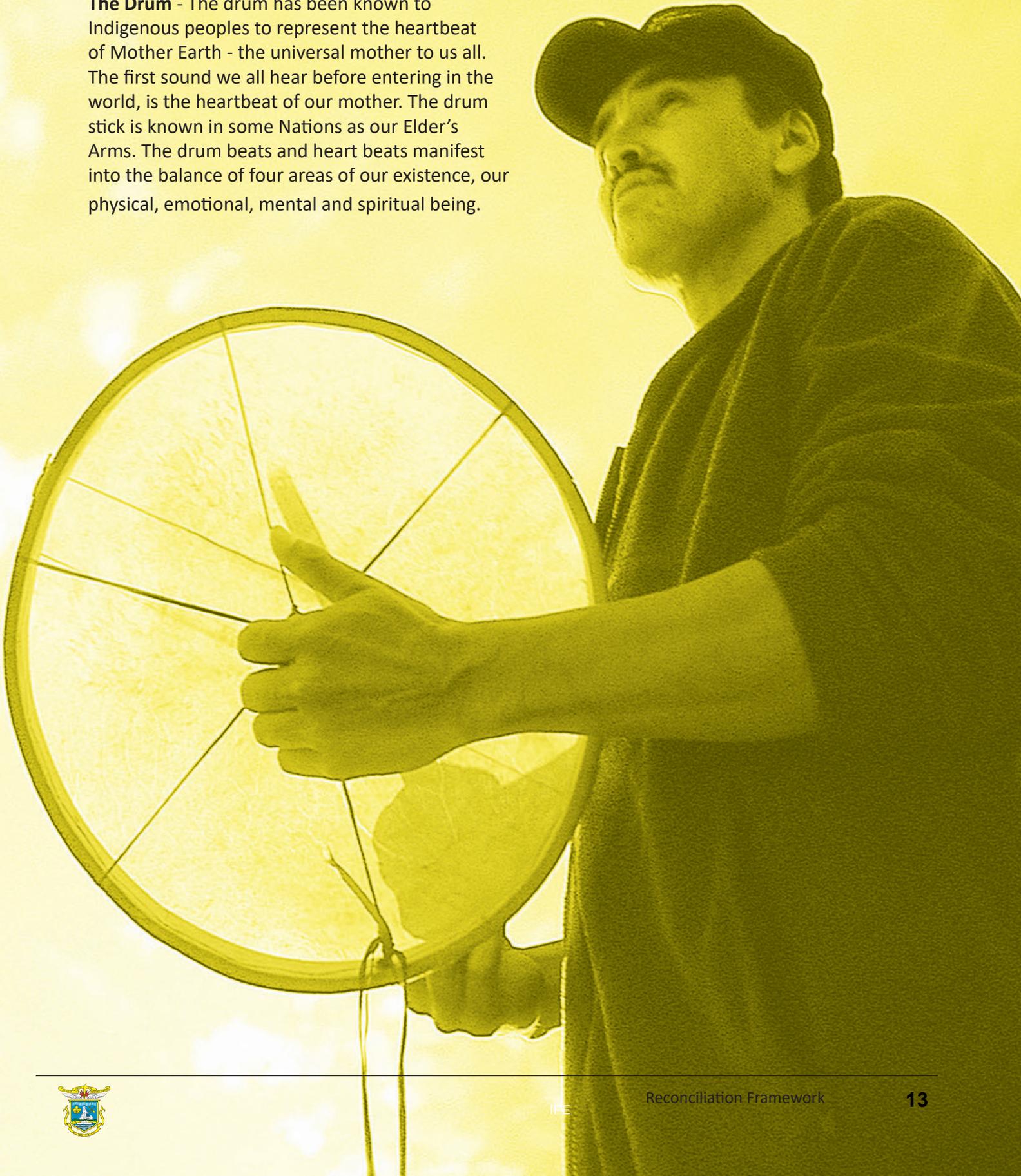
Engagement from the general public – including Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons - may take place in various ways including: community gatherings, meetings, online surveys and questionnaires.

## **Public Suggestions on the City's Website:**

At any time members of the public can provide input related to Reconciliation through a public suggestion box on the website at [www.yellowknife.ca/reconciliation](http://www.yellowknife.ca/reconciliation), via email at [reconciliation@yellowknife.ca](mailto:reconciliation@yellowknife.ca), or to council at [council@yellowknife.ca](mailto:council@yellowknife.ca).



**The Drum** - The drum has been known to Indigenous peoples to represent the heartbeat of Mother Earth - the universal mother to us all. The first sound we all hear before entering in the world, is the heartbeat of our mother. The drum stick is known in some Nations as our Elder's Arms. The drum beats and heart beats manifest into the balance of four areas of our existence, our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual being.





CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE