



CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE

# Walking Together Reconciliation Gathering 2022

## What We Heard Report

City of Yellowknife

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# WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

The City of Yellowknife invited Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members to *Walking Together – Reconciliation Gathering 2022*, a public gathering at the Tree of Peace on the evening of August 31<sup>st</sup>. The intent of the gathering was to: provide a forum for all interested residents and partners to engage on reconciliation in Yellowknife; seek ideas for actions within the City’s mandate that the City can undertake; and welcome all ideas on reconciliation and forward those beyond the City’s mandate to respective leads/governments/partners for consideration, advocacy and/or follow up.

Tanya T Consulting, led by Tanya Tourangeau, was contracted, along with Deneze Nakehk’o, to co-design and facilitate the gathering, and prepare a follow up report.

### Background

The City of Yellowknife embarked on their journey of Reconciliation soon after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Actions were declared in June of 2015, with City Council endorsing them on July 27, 2015. Since then, the City has developed and approved a Reconciliation Framework and Reconciliation Action Plan with the goal that: All of the City’s work on reconciliation needs to be directed at building positive, respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples and ensuring a welcoming community for all.

The *Walking Together – Reconciliation Gathering 2022* provided an opportunity to connect with the community, hear from them about the City’s reconciliation efforts to date, and to provide a forum to share ideas that may be added to the Reconciliation Action Plan and/or advocated for on behalf of the community.

### Community Engagement

Community members were provided with several options to share feedback and ideas through various forms of engagement. In addition to large group discussions, *input stations* were available to share ideas through: small group discussions, artistically, on post-it notes, and an online survey. The City also continually accepts feedback via a dedicated email address [reconciliation@yellowknife.ca](mailto:reconciliation@yellowknife.ca).

## Themes

Initial themes were identified to help guide the discussion and to share what the City has done and is actively working on.

### City Introduced Themes:

1. Relationships
2. Learning and Culture
3. Events / Celebrations
4. Indigenizing Space
5. Advocacy
6. Business and Economy
7. Inclusive Representation within the City government

The themes encouraged community members to participate with robust, meaningful responses that went beyond the suggested themes with several suggested internal and external actions.

### What We Heard Themes

1. Truth
2. Reconciliation
3. Canada's Colonial Legacy
4. Indigenize Reconciliation
5. Language, Arts, and Culture
6. Public Education
7. Leadership, Governance, and the Law
8. Health, Housing, and Poverty
9. Commemoration
10. Yellowknife of the Future

Each of the themes have several actions identified within.

## Summary

The *Walking Together – Reconciliation Gathering 2022* provided great insight to what priorities community members would like the City of Yellowknife to focus on. Next steps will be to review and analyze the recommended actions to determine how the City can implement and / or advocate for them.

# What We Heard

## Themes

All feedback and ideas resulting from the *Walking Together – Reconciliation Gathering 2022* have been compiled into the following themes: (1) Truth; (2) Reconciliation; (3) Canada’s Colonial Legacy; (4) Indigenize Reconciliation; (5) Language, Arts, and Culture; (6) Public Education; (7) Leadership, Governance, and the Law; (8) Health, Housing, and Poverty; (9) Commemoration; and (10) Yellowknife of the Future. This section provides a summary of ideas, concerns, recommendations, and future directions of these themes.

### 1. Truth

#### *Reconciliation is listening to the truth and taking action*

We heard that we require the truth. Reconciliation work requires truth-telling and sharing. Without the truth, there can be no reconciliation. However, we must use caution while asserting that we must start with the truth. For a long time, Indigenous Peoples have been seeking to speak the truth, but those in positions of power have not taken the time, comprehended the depth, or even acknowledged it. Thus, the truth must be recognized and accepted, and it must become the new standard. We heard that we would miss the mark if we do not first comprehend the truth.

Participants raised concerns that the truth is uncertain. Yellowknife cannot move forward with reconciliation when everyone holds varying accounts of the facts. As a capital city, Yellowknife is in a position of leadership, so we need to be careful of how others interpret the truth. Participants suggested that we are all on the same team, and we must move forward with certainty in the truth.

Views were expressed that an important component of reconciliation actions is to listen, hear, and understand. Listening instead of always trying to speak over one another is important. It is especially important for non-Indigenous people to listen when Indigenous Peoples are speaking. Further, in the discussions of reconciliation, there needs to be the willingness and bravery to have honest, uncomfortable, and difficult conversations, and they must include patience and kindness.

#### *Use an Indigenous perspective to engage in listening*

We heard that listening to the truth is key to reconciliation work. From a Cree perspective, there are four sets of ears: the physical set on the head, a set on the heart, a set on the mind, and a set on the soul. It teaches that listening involves deep connections to the heart, mind, and soul. Thus, listening to understand the truth at deeper levels is an important part of reconciliation. However, views were expressed that true listening is undervalued in Canadian culture. The issues with listening include willful ignorance and arrogance. It was suggested that people do not want to understand the truth, or believe they know better. One way to change these elements of Canadian culture is to have the courage to call them out and to become agents of change.

### *It is truth and reconciliation*

Some participants emphasized that it is important to talk about truth *and* reconciliation. Truth and reconciliation require one another. That is, reconciliation acts should be supported by the truth. People said that the public should know the truth about the region's history, treaty duties, land acknowledgements, and the relationships between the different communities. Also, participants said that public education should be used to find and spread the truth. We heard that understanding the truth will aid in the transformation of minds. Finally, connecting the truth to actions will inspire positive reconciliation work, while simple performative actions without truth-telling will not lead to positive change.

### *Honour Indigenous Treaty Rights*

Participants suggested that honouring the treaties, specifically treaties 8 and 11, is about positive, open, and meaningful relationships. It is among the best ways to represent reconciliation. This means accepting the facts about treaty history, recognizing who owns the land, and living up to the obligations of the treaties. It was suggested that the treaties are guides to the nature of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. However, an issue was raised that a lot of people are not interested in learning about the guide. But it is a guide to help the relationship, so it is important to know the path and build awareness. Lastly, we heard that the City of Yellowknife is encouraged to educate the public in a wide range of ways as part of this initiative.

## **2. Reconciliation**

### *Reconciliation has many different qualities*

We heard that "reconciliation" is a heavy word in many places and situations, and it is important to remember that it was the word chosen by the people who shared their truths about the residential school system.

Participants described reconciliation in many different ways. Reconciliation was identified as including equality, love, respect, trust, humility, harmony, honesty, a path forward, acceptance, participation, recognition, collaboration, positive change, creative actions, diversity, mutual agreement, dignity, an opportunity for all, understanding, learning, education, safety, acknowledgement, inspiring, decency, togetherness, fearlessness, inclusivity, individual responsibility, courage, bravery, everyday behaviour, and public awareness. Reconciliation was also described as hard, lonely, and scary.

For some participants, reconciliation was defined by what it was not as well. It is not: doing the easy thing first, a box to be checked off, surface-level changes, simplifying the truth, ignoring injustices, or one-off events.



*Reconciliation is difficult and mistakes will be made, but learn from them*

We heard that reconciliation is challenging work. It is hard to have these conversations, but we need to have them. It is important to give acknowledgement when things are challenging. It is part of growing. The path to reconciliation is not an easy walk. There are a lot of things that we must discover together, and there will be mistakes made on the path to reconciliation. It was suggested that we will seek to rectify mistakes and to move forward together. Finally, we heard that we must try to be open and supportive enough to learn from our mistakes.

*Reconciliation is missing from public awareness*

A few participants commented that they could not think of any meaningful examples of reconciliation work in the City of Yellowknife.

*Reconciliation is ongoing and evolving*

Participants recommended that the City can further reconciliation by continually gathering input on the public's understanding of reconciliation through surveys because the meaning of reconciliation will change, and the City should pay special attention to Indigenous Peoples' understandings.

*Reconciliation is truth-telling and action-based*

We heard that the focus should be on creating more opportunities for reconciliation, such as having more public gatherings for reconciliation work. It is truth-telling and sharing that are important to this type of work. Hopefully, it will keep our eyes open and provide us with a better understanding. Further, it was suggested that when there is no action or follow-through, people lose heart, which makes it difficult for further engagement in reconciliation. Participants suggested that acting based on the truth will inspire long-lasting positive change. Lastly, connecting the truth to actions will lead to positive reconciliation work, while just doing things without telling the truth will not change things for the better.

*Reconciliation embraces collective wisdom*

We heard that we all have wisdom. It was said that your lived experience, your knowledge, and your intelligence add up to your wisdom. If we want to work together and get the wisest results, it is important for people to share their wisdom. We heard that accepting the wisdom that comes from working together will help turn talks about reconciliation into real actions.

*Reconciliation is relationship and community building*

We heard that building stronger relationships and a sense of community were among the top priorities for reconciliation. Some participants emphasized that it is all about building them, maintaining them, and honouring them. However, the colonial system creates division. It keeps us apart and isolated. Yellowknife is a city with a wide range of cultures.

That is a strength and asset of Yellowknife. Participants stressed the need for equality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples from all parts of Canada and the world. It was suggested that acknowledging the diversity of the Yellowknife population, rather than excluding and labelling individuals as outsiders, goes a long way toward making individuals feel like they are a part of the community. Thus, there needs to be acknowledgement of everyone in the region to build a sense of community. We heard that community is important, not just in terms of the different cultures in the City of Yellowknife but also in terms of reconciliation. Finally, participants suggested that it is important that, as a community, we are all in this together and that we are all walking the walk together.

Participants suggested several ways to build stronger relationships and foster community with Indigenous Peoples:

- First, Council should reach out to and interact with Indigenous Peoples for its own purposes and not just as part of an agenda item. That is, Council should visit where the people are and listen to their experiences. In these contexts, Council should periodically ask Indigenous Peoples about their understanding of reconciliation. This will build real, trusting relationships.
- Second, participants said that community events like the Métis fish fry and Canada Day at City Hall were important for reconciliation. On a large scale, as one participant suggested, this could look like mandatory city-wide blanket exercises that are held a few times a year. In addition, non-Indigenous Yellowknife leaders should connect with people by bringing their families to Indigenous cultural events. For instance, the Yellowknives Dene First Nation hosts a Mother's Day barbecue that is inclusive of everyone. If non-Indigenous leadership makes a move to accept Indigenous Peoples, it will speak volumes.
- Third, the City could create and support a reconciliation volunteer program, so residents can volunteer where needed in Indigenous activities, businesses, and other organizations or events.
- Finally, Council could create a community supper program. The suppers could be guided by icebreakers, sponsored by businesses, and hosted by community leaders. The idea is to bring people together through food to get to know each other.

It was said that land and spaces hold a special place in people's hearts and minds, so developing spaces for future relationships and community building is important. Participants recommended a few approaches for the City to consider:

- First, the City of Yellowknife could create a green space with a park for children and families to connect to the land and water.
- Second, residents could embrace the water by developing the waterfront in Old Town, fixing the Frame Lake Trail, and creating more spaces where people can be outside enjoying all that Mother Nature has to offer.

- Third, the City could develop the Bristol Monument area for tourists and include an interactive area that provides education about Yellowknife and the Northwest Territories.
- Finally, participants recommended building an Indigenous cultural center or reconciliation center. As a living monument for reconciliation work, it could be a place for all Northerners to come together to build trusting and long-lasting relationships through community engagement.

### **3. Canada's Colonial Legacy**

#### *Acknowledge colonialism*

Participants suggested that the City can further reconciliation by acknowledging and educating the public on the historical colonial injustices and experiences that have led to the present-day circumstances of inequalities.

We heard that the City of Yellowknife operates a settler government on Chief Drygeese territory. Further, Yellowknife was not supposed to be built on the land. The area was said to be important to the traditional Yellowknives Dene way of life. The area was supposed to be left pristine because animals used the region for subsistence. But the City did not follow any of the Yellowknives Dene's protocols.

Participants raised concerns about an anti-Indigenous mindset in Canadian culture. It was discussed that Indigenous Peoples face overt racism and discrimination from a young age. So, getting rid of racism and white supremacy was mentioned as one of the most important steps toward reconciliation. We heard that this is obvious to Indigenous Peoples. But non-Indigenous people have the privilege of ignoring it or believing it is not true. It was suggested that when an Indigenous person discloses their experience, it must be listened to, believed, and acknowledged. In this respect, we heard that we need the courage to embrace visionary ideas, to not accept the unacceptable, to call it out, and to become agents of change. Some people said that education and awareness are the best ways to fight racism and discrimination.

We were told that it is important to remember that the United Kingdom colonized both Indigenous ways of knowing and the Canadian government. Our government system was originally created for small tracts of land in another part of the world. Thus, as Canadians, we originally did not have the opportunity to have a say in our own systems of government, but it was suggested that we have the power to work together to make new structures and processes that benefit everyone.

#### *Colonialism slows reconciliation*

People have said that compared to other Canadian cities, the presence of Indigenous Peoples' communities and cultures in Yellowknife seems to be growing, but not as much as they should be given that the city has a large Indigenous population and is on Chief Drygeese's territory. Participants suggest that if we did everything in terms of Dene law, reconciliation would proceed at

a faster rate. Thus, we heard that we need to embrace traditional Indigenous knowledge in our reconciliation work.

#### *Colonialism distorts Indigenous identities*

It was suggested that part of the colonial project of being an Indigenous person in Canada involves non-Indigenous people defining the meaning of Indigenous identities, such as being called an “Indian,” “Aboriginal,” or “Native American.” We heard that there is a lack of acknowledgement of Indigenous Peoples as people. Further, we heard the concern that the Yellowknives Dene have been stuck with that name not because of their choice but rather because an Indian agent named them. According to one participant, a lack of genuine listening to Indigenous Peoples exacerbates the problem.

#### *Indigenous people can struggle with a colonial inferiority complex*

A participant expressed concerns about a colonial inferiority complex that affects Indigenous Peoples. It is an internalization of colonial standards that has adverse effects on mental well-being. We heard that Indigenous knowledge could support resiliency against colonial oppression. As one participant suggested, an enduring strength of Indigenous Peoples is that no matter the hardships we are going through, we laugh because our Dene law is to be as happy as possible at all times.

#### *Decolonize the approach to public engagement for understanding reconciliation*

One participant said that the public survey on reconciliation was written from a Western point of view instead of from an Indigenous point of view on how everything is connected. However, Yellowknife has a large Indigenous population, so culturally informed approaches to community engagement would help to better understand reconciliation.

## **4. Indigenize Reconciliation**

#### *Respect Indigenous Ways of Being*

Participants suggested that the best way to show reconciliation is to take part in Indigenous ways of life. Further, we heard that we need to follow the direction of the Indigenous community and sincerely understand the struggles that the Indigenous community faces. It is important to acknowledge Indigenous Peoples’ resiliency and strengths. Reconciliation, therefore, for many participants, requires celebrating Indigenous cultures on equal terms.

#### *Embrace Indigenous knowledge for reconciliation work*

Participants commented that Indigenous knowledge is valuable to reconciliation. It is important to grow awareness of the traditional knowledge of all Indigenous groups that gather in the City of Yellowknife, and it is equally important to respect traditional intellectual property rights.

One participant quoted Shelia Watt-Cloutier. “Indigenous knowledge is the medicine the world seeks to attain sustainability.” As a result, Indigenous knowledge offers a way forward together.

People talked about using Dene laws as a set of rules for how to act when doing reconciliation work. Several laws were shared to facilitate reconciliation interactions: (1) helping each other; (2) loving each other as much as possible; (3) being respectful to Elders and everything around you; (4) working through the day; (5) being polite; (6) not arguing with anyone; (7) young girls and boys should behave respectfully on the teachings; and (8) be as happy as possible at all times.

## **5. Language, Arts, and Culture**

### *Support Indigenous language revitalization*

Street signs in the Wìlìideh dialect across the City of Yellowknife were identified as a good representation of reconciliation. Several people also talked about how important it was to improve the situation of Indigenous languages in the City of Yellowknife. Their concerns, ideas, and recommendations included (1) renaming streets; (2) supporting youth in language acquisition; (3) documenting Elders speaking and storytelling to connect to the community; (4) providing Indigenous language services throughout the City; and (5) providing an Indigenous languages pronunciation guide to the public. Ultimately, one participant commented that residents should be proud of the regional diversity of languages.

### *Support Indigenous arts*

Many people said that the public Indigenous art installations, murals, and performances were some of the best ways that the City of Yellowknife showed reconciliation. These included the Strong People, Strong Communities murals, the Old Town rock art, and the Dene drummers' statue. Though, others expressed criticism of reconciliation art projects as being shallow or failing to represent the local Indigenous Peoples, such as with the totem pole at City Hall.

Several participants said they would support more art projects that would bring more Indigenous Peoples to Yellowknife. They recommended many options.

- First, expand social and economic support for young artists.
- Second, put up more art downtown. For example, the City could put up metal bike racks that look like dog sleds or canoes.
- Third, hold an annual arts and music festival. Fourth, stamp fish, wildlife, and birds into the concrete when making new sidewalks.
- Finally, offer community art programs for beading, sewing, drum making, painting, and carving. It was suggested that it would be beneficial for reconciliation to seek out highly visible displays of Indigenous art.

### *Acknowledge the diversity of Indigenous cultures*

A couple of participants commented that Indigenous cultures are not well represented in Yellowknife. Other participants suggested that there should be a proper acknowledgement of all of the past and present Indigenous Peoples who have called the land home.

### *Embrace Indigenous cultural inclusion*

Community members suggested that participating in Indigenous cultural practices best represents reconciliation. We heard that reconciliation involves embracing the diversity of traditional cultures of all the nations that gather in Yellowknife. It requires actions of celebrating different cultures on equal terms. For instance, participants identified the Métis fish fry and Dene drumming as representations of reconciliation. Further, increasing city funding for Indigenous-led cultural events was recommended by participants. Future Indigenous culturally inspired reconciliation events could be directed toward hand games tournaments, drum dances, and culture camps at Samba K'e Park. It was suggested that the goal is to make residents feel that Indigenous culture is embedded in the Yellowknife community.

### *Indigenous culture provides resiliency during reconciliation work*

As one participant suggested, an enduring strength of Indigenous Peoples is that no matter the hardships we are going through, we laugh because our Dene law is to be as happy as possible at all times. Thus, an Indigenous perspective of the world can help successfully adapt to difficult reconciliation experiences.

### *Build a dedicated facility for Indigenous cultural practices*

Several participants recommended that a cultural space for Indigenous peoples would build positive community relationships. This could be in the form of a community arbour. The culturally focused facility could be used for prayer, healing, education, ceremonies, celebrations, performances, and other community gatherings. Ultimately, participants commented that it could be a gathering space for all northern Indigenous Peoples. One contributor commented that an Indigenous-themed playground should also be built beside the facility for families and youth.

## **6. Public Education**

### *Public education should include key topics to further reconciliation*

Participants suggested using public education to increase the representation of Indigenous Peoples, communities, cultures, and histories in Yellowknife. They identified the following topics as important to reconciliation: (1) Treaties 8 and 11; (2) educating all Canadians on local histories; (3) acknowledgement of all Indigenous cultures and lands in the region; and (4) Indigenous languages.

### *City of Yellowknife staff should receive specific ongoing training for reconciliation*

A few people said that the City of Yellowknife government should give its employees training in certain areas. These areas include intercultural competency, sensitivity training, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism. Also, one participant stressed how important it was to carry out the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 57.

#### **TRC's Call to Action #57 - Professional Development and Training for Public Servants**

We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skillsbased training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

### *Use diverse strategies for education for reconciliation*

Participants recommended many ways to approach education initiatives for the purposes of reconciliation. Twelve strategies were identified: (1) involving Elders and traditional knowledge keepers in the initiative; (2) focusing on early childhood education; (3) redesigning school curricula with required readings of Indigenous authors; (4) using art and monuments as a vehicle for education; (5) holding a speaker series on reconciliation; (6) providing free courses at the library; (7) using a reconciliation walk to teach about local histories; (8) providing a public Indigenous language pronunciation guide; (9) placing informational plaques in public spaces; (10) developing interactive areas for tourists to educate themselves; (11) providing Indigenous-led cultural camps at Samba K'e Park; and (12) offering residents the Government of the Northwest Territories' Living Well Together training and follow up support in a Yellowknife facility.

### *Provide special education to new residents of the City of Yellowknife*

One person said that a welcoming committee should meet with new residents in person to properly introduce them to Yellowknife. The goal would be to teach new residents in a respectful way about protocols, ceremonies, and other parts of Indigenous culture.

## **7. Leadership, Governance, and the Law**

### *Integrate Indigenous laws into the governance*

Participants recommended the creation of a more inclusive legal framework. We heard that the City should start incorporating Indigenous laws into governance. That is, legal pluralism could exist with equal representation and authority of Indigenous laws and City laws. Participants thought that putting less emphasis on Western legal processes could speed up reconciliation work.

### *Use Dene Laws to facilitate reconciliation work*

People have suggested that Dene laws can be used as a guide for conducting reconciliation work. Several laws were shared to facilitate reconciliation interactions: (1) helping each other; (2) loving



each other as much as possible; (3) being respectful to Elders and everything around you; (4) working through the day; (5) being polite; (6) not arguing with anyone; (7) young girls and boys should behave respectfully on the teachings; and (8) be as happy as possible at all times.

#### *Include Elders and traditional knowledge keepers in decision-making*

We heard that if reconciliation is going to work, everyone needs to be included. Participants suggested that it is important to consult with Elders and traditional knowledge keepers in decision-making processes. One suggestion for improving relationships with Indigenous Peoples is to create an Elder in Residence position on City Council. The responsibilities of the position could include providing feedback to the City of Yellowknife employees or operating as a liaison to connect youth, families, and other Elders to community resources.

#### *The City of Yellowknife should take a leadership role in Canada on reconciliation*

We heard that the City of Yellowknife should take charge of organizing, guiding, and managing reconciliation work by leading by example. Yellowknife could show the rest of the Canadian government how to reach reconciliation goals by being a leader with a clear vision.

#### *Focus on collaborative decision-making and relationship building*

Collaborative decision-making and continuing to build positive, respectful relationships with all Indigenous governments were identified as ways for the City Council to advance reconciliation. Many actions were suggested to achieve this goal.

- First, implement a Tri-Party Council of Yellowknives Dene First Nation, the North Slave Métis, and the non-Indigenous representatives to govern the City.
- Second, engage in continual consultation with Indigenous leadership.
- Third, non-Indigenous leadership should aim to build trust by participating in Indigenous cultural events. Fourth, co-host the region with representation from the Yellowknives Dene First Nations, all other Indigenous groups, and the City of Yellowknife.

A few participants identified actions that undermined this goal.

- First, the language of “joint” in initiatives creates a divide, so it should be removed.
- Second, managing significant development decisions without consultation with Indigenous stakeholders such as with the proposed development of Tin Can Hill for an Aurora College campus.
- Third, proposing to build an arbour without partnering with Indigenous stakeholders. Finally, implementing an Indigenous liaison position and later terminating it. We heard that these actions weaken reconciliation relationships.

#### *Acknowledge that the Indigenization of government is beneficial*

Views expressed the importance of acknowledging changing governance structures and processes. For instance, the Tlicho government is an example of Indigenizing government. It was negotiated by the federal and territorial governments with the Tlicho Indigenous Peoples. Representatives came



together and negotiated the territory with Indigenous ways of knowing. This is one way that the region is leading the way in political development and in creating governance structures. Further, the Tlicho government is a significant entity with over 100 employees. Further, its annual budget is over 75 million and grows every year. Thus, its contributions to the economy of the City of Yellowknife are substantial. We heard that there needs to be an acknowledgement of the Tlicho government's benefits to the region in order to advance reconciliation.

#### *Eliminate Indigenous prejudice and discrimination in the City of Yellowknife workplaces*

We heard that the City of Yellowknife workplaces need to be safe spaces for Indigenous Peoples. The deconstruction of racism was identified as a top priority for reconciliation to occur. Several suggestions were made to advance this goal: (1) create more inclusive policies; (2) follow the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 57; (3) implement 150 Acts of Reconciliation for city staff; (4) provide training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism for city staff; (5) require the City of Yellowknife staff to take the Government of the Northwest Territories' Living Well Together training; (6) conduct annual reviews of workplace policies; and (7) immediately reprimand discriminatory behaviours if they occur.

#### *Facilitate Indigenous leadership inclusion in the City of Yellowknife government*

We heard that making it easier for Indigenous people to take part in local government is a top priority for reconciliation. People strongly suggest adding more Indigenous leaders to the City of Yellowknife government as a way to make Indigenous communities and cultures more visible. A handful of suggestions were made to achieve this goal.

- First, implement a program to support Indigenous Peoples to run for City Council.
- Second, explore designating Council seats for Yellowknife Dene First Nations representatives.
- Third, designate funding and positions in the City to manage Indigenous relationships and to implement reconciliation advancements.
- Lastly, focus on recruitment and retention strategies for Indigenous peoples. We heard that the City of Yellowknife is a diverse, multicultural city, and it should be represented in government leadership.

## **8. Health, Housing, and Poverty**

#### *Support the health, healing and wellness of Indigenous peoples*

We heard that breaking the cycle of intergenerational trauma was an important step in furthering reconciliation. Many recommendations were made to improve the health, healing, and wellness of Indigenous Peoples. Yellowknife needs:

1. The equitable access to basic necessities, such as warmth, food, clean water, public hygiene facilities, and housing;
2. Public forums for Indigenous Peoples to determine the needs required for healing;

3. Free programs that promote healing, such as counselling, land-based healing programs, and healing camps;
4. Long-term, well-coordinated plans and strategies for healing, wellness, addictions, homelessness, poverty, and human trafficking;
5. Provide zoning for a treatment facility;
6. Build a publicly funded health, detox and reconciliation centre;
7. Increase access to social workers and medical professionals;
8. Engage in community outreach for Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness, poverty, and addictions;
9. Focus social support services on Elders; and
10. Provide an Indigenous Safe Watch program for families and children.

Ideally, we heard that programs and services would honour Indigenous-led and culturally appropriate approaches.

### *Special considerations must be made for treating addictions*

Many participants identified ameliorating issues of addiction as important to promoting reconciliation in Yellowknife. One participant commented that addictions have reached pandemic levels across communities. It was recommended that a publicly funded treatment centre in the City, or at least based in the Northwest Territories, with well-trained social workers and medical professionals, would be a move in the right direction for reconciliation. Also, the City of Yellowknife should pressure the Government of the Northwest Territories to act on this initiative.

### *End homelessness and provide equitable access to housing*

Participants emphasized that reducing homelessness would help promote reconciliation and improve relationships with Indigenous Peoples. The City could help provide housing through (1) leadership, ownership, and implementation of the existing Yellowknife Homeless Plan; (2) an all-party homelessness strategy; (3) a housing first initiative; (4) community engagement with the homeless population, such as by visiting the day shelter; (5) increased access to public and affordable housing; (6) pressure on the Government of the Northwest Territories to provide shelter services for the homeless and affordable housing for low-income residents; and (7) support for zoning for and the building of a tiny home park. Participants said that strategies to end homelessness and make housing more affordable should be decolonized and made in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples.

### *Support economic opportunities for Indigenous Peoples*

It was suggested that the economic system is guided by colonial capitalism. Under those conditions, Indigenous Peoples have been disadvantaged. We heard that this must be changed. Participants said that making economic opportunities better is one way to fight poverty and bring people closer together. Some ways to reach this goal are (1) hiring Indigenous people to work for the City; (2) giving space to Indigenous businesses, like giving free space to Indigenous artists; and (3) keeping up an economic development partnership with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation.

## 9. Commemoration

### *Create more Indigenous-led commemoration projects*

Participants recommended that the City of Yellowknife can further reconciliation through Indigenous-led collaborative commemoration projects in highly visible, public locations. We heard that these actions will honour the history of residential schools, Survivors, and all the lost children. Further, we heard that commemoration projects should honour the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the Indigenous cultures, languages and values that contribute to the history of Yellowknife and northern Canada. Participants suggested several commemoration projects.

- First, build a living monument, such as a reconciliation center, in the core of the city, so it can be used by residents and visitors for healing, prayer, ceremonies, celebrations, and other public gatherings.
- Second, install Indigenous artwork and monuments around the city.
- Third, install memorial benches around the waterfront, so people can connect to the land, reflect, and give thanks. Fourth, provide sitting stools made of jack pine in a sitting circle dedicated to the official languages or dedicated to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.
- Finally, implement a reconciliation walk that acknowledges the Indigenous histories of the land that includes, for example, acknowledgement of the original families of the area, the berry picking area, the Long Lake Fishing area, and the moose habitat near the Bush Pilots Monument.

## 10. Yellowknife of the Future

Many participants discussed their hopes for Yellowknife in the next decade and envisioned that Yellowknife will be characterized by several major themes in the coming years. Specifically, we heard:

### *Reconciliation is the norm -*

that reconciliation becomes a normal part of our everyday ways of living.

### *Caring, united and working together*

that we are all one. We are doing the work of reconciliation, and we use all our different languages to work together and create a common voice with respect.

### *Protecting natural resources through Elders' guidance*

that we are stewards of the environment during these times of climate change. We are working to save and protect our shared resources: water, land, wildlife, and clean air. Our focus is on following the Elders' teachings on making resources our priority.

### *Listening to and nurturing the youth*

that we listen to our children and youth and encourage them to be open-minded. We focus on cultural exchanges and bringing together children and parents so they can learn from each other.

### *Breaking the cycle*

that we have broken the cycle of intergenerational trauma.

### *Solutions for homelessness and addiction are in place*

that private property rights do not prevent social services from being in the downtown area. Together with the Northwest Territories government, we are tackling homelessness and addiction. There is space for everybody, a homelessness solution, and comprehensive addiction therapies.

### *Indigenous culture is embedded into Yellowknife society*

that Yellowknife is infused with Indigenous cultural practices, languages, and ways of being while retaining cultural uniqueness. Further, Dene laws are known, respected, and followed in the City, and Indigenous art, sculpture, music, and culture beautify Yellowknife.

### *Leaders of reconciliation*

that Yellowknife sets the standard for other communities to follow. The Yellowknives Dene First Nation, the North Slave Métis, and non-Indigenous people all work together in a tri-party council to manage in an atmosphere of mutual respect and peace.

## Next Steps

The City of Yellowknife will review and analyze the recommended actions within each theme to determine how the City can to implement and/or advocate for them.

## Closing

Reconciliation is important for the City of Yellowknife, community members, and Indigenous neighbours. The City will continue to uphold the Principles within the Reconciliation Framework and update the Reconciliation Action Plan based on the review and analysis.

## Special Acknowledgements

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