

Subject: National Day for Truth and Reconciliation**Recommendation:**

WHEREAS the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its final report on June 2, 2015, which included 94 Calls to Action to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation;

AND WHEREAS the recent discoveries of remains and unmarked graves across Canada have led to increased calls for all levels of government to address the recommendations in the TRC's Calls to Action;

AND WHEREAS all Canadians and all orders of government have a role to play in reconciliation;

AND WHEREAS Recommendation #80 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission called upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process;

AND WHEREAS the Federal Government has announced September 30th, 2021, as the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (National Orange Shirt Day) and a federal statutory holiday;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Pelham Town Council receive Report #2021-0150 – National Day for Truth and Reconciliation for information;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT Pelham Town Council does hereby commit to recognizing September 30th as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (National Orange Shirt Day) in the Town of Pelham wherein focus shall be placed on sharing the stories of residential school survivors, their families, and communities;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Town of Pelham raise the orange "Every Child Matters" flag, with appropriate ceremony when/where possible, at town facilities to recognize the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation every year on September 30th;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT Council approve the one-time expenditure of up to \$12,000 for education and training of Town staff, volunteers, elected officials and committee members on the history, legacy and significance of the residential school system upon Canada's First Nations population, with funds to be taken from the Human Resources Opportunities and Contingencies Reserve.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Town of Pelham begin commencing Council, Council of the Whole and Committee of Adjustment meetings with a land acknowledgment, effective September 20, 2021;

AND FURTHER THAT Town Hall be (open/closed) _____ on September 30, 2021 and every year thereafter.

Background:

The government of Canada recently passed legislation to make September 30th a federal statutory holiday called the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. This day provides an opportunity for people to recognize and commemorate the legacy of residential schools and ensures this tragic part of Canadian history is never forgotten. It also responds to one of the ninety-four Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) report dated June 2, 2015.

September 30th coincides with National Orange Shirt Day, where people are encouraged to wear orange in honour of the Indigenous children who were forcefully removed from their families to attend Residential Schools across Canada from the late 1880s to the 1990s. The date reflects the time of year in which children were taken from their homes. To date, thousands of unmarked graves and remains of the Indigenous people who attended these schools have been recovered. There are 18 former Residential School locations across Ontario and the TRC has identified 12 unmarked burial sites, but there are likely more. Although local governments are unable to address many of the TRC's ninety-four Calls to Action, as these are addressed primarily to the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, municipal leaders do have a role to play in the reconciliation process.

Analysis:

The AMO Indigenous Relations Task Force is working with the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) and has provided some initial approaches to help municipal governments respond to the TRC's Calls to Action. AMO suggests

that municipalities provide Council and staff training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights and anti-racism, that they observe the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and fly the *Every Child Matters* flag for the month of September, and explore opportunities for formal and informal relationship agreements between municipal governments and First Nations.

While the Town of Pelham is a provincially regulated employer, many of the local area municipalities' collective agreements include provisions to allow for any newly established federal and provincial statutory holidays. As a result, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation will be observed by a number of the Niagara municipalities, beginning September of this year. Welland, Port Colborne, Thorold and Fort Erie will be closing their municipal buildings. At time of writing the City of Niagara Falls plans to remain open, but provide staff with a lieu day. Niagara-on-the-Lake plans to close facilities except recreational facilities, while Grimsby, Lincoln, West Lincoln and Wainfleet were uncertain at time of publication. Others plan to bring a similar recommendation to their Council in the coming weeks. The Region and St. Catharines will be using September 30th to train their staff on the intent of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and are planning educational and respect focused activities for the day, so while staff will be working, services to the public will be reduced.

Both the public and Catholic education systems will be operating on September 30, 2021. Federally regulated businesses such as banks will not be open. This will result in a patch-work quilt of what is and is not open in Niagara on the day in question. Staff look forward to receiving guidance from Council as to whether or not municipal services should be open or closed on September 30, 2021. Should council endorse facility closure, staff recommend that bookings at the MCC be honoured for this year only as it is late in the day for cancellations. The requisite staff who work will either be paid overtime or receive a day in lieu, depending upon the specifics of their employment.

Town staff have identified a three hour educational program that can be delivered online by the First Nations University of Canada. This program consists of explanations and personal accounts of experiences in the residential school system. If the approximately \$11,000 expenditure is approved by Council, Town administration will ensure that all staff participate in the training prior to December 31, 2021. This is an important component not to be overlooked so as to ensure staff understands the intent of this holiday. In addition, providing education to public servants on the history of Indigenous peoples, including the history and legacy of Residential Schools, responds to the 57th Call to Action outlined in the TRC report.

At time of writing Town administration has ordered the requisite flags and is attempting to order orange shirts for all staff and elected officials. The unbudgeted cost of flags and shirts, estimated to be approximately \$2,500, will be borne from an administrative account in the Office of the CAO.

Financial Considerations:

If municipal buildings were to close on September 30th there would be no actual financial cost to the Town, as salaries for the year are already budgeted. Rather, it would result in a lost day of productivity. An estimate of the total financial value of salaries for one work day amounts to \$35,782. To reiterate however, no monies are specifically required to observe the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

Alternatives Reviewed:

Council can elect to keep municipal buildings either open or closed as the Town is not required to observe any federal statutory holidays. Whether or not Town Hall is open for business, the choice not to acknowledge this day in some form sends a message that Pelham is indifferent to the unique generational suffering experienced by Indigenous peoples of Canada. As such, an alternative means of demonstrating the Town's solidarity with Indigenous communities would be crucial.

As an example of alternative means to show support, the City of Brantford has dedicated spaces of reflection and healing as well as orange lighting displays in Brantford parks, which are visible every evening during the summer. Brantford has also lowered flags at all city facilities to half-mast on the first day of the month until the end of this calendar year, donated \$100,000 to the *Save the Evidence Campaign*, and is developing ongoing community education and awareness initiatives, which incorporate the voices of Indigenous peoples. The majority of these options however will have implementation costs. Should Council wish to move forward with any of the above tributes, a motion would be needed tonight along with a budget allocation in order to provide adequate time and resources.

Referring back to the suggestion made by AMO to provide training to Council and staff, in future years September 30th could be used as an education day focusing on Indigenous history and reconciliation initiatives. This option would demonstrate Pelham's acknowledgement of these horrific events and commitment to reconciliation while remaining available to residents. There is an approximately \$11,000 cost to deliver this training. Town administration is conceptually supportive of future training and education opportunities, and such could be built into the 2022 budget upon the direction of Council.

Additionally this seems like an appropriate time for Council to consider implementing a land acknowledgment at the start of important municipal meetings. Niagara College has developed an appropriate land acknowledgement which staff feels would also suit the Town's needs, showing respect to local First Nations who formerly resided in the area. Staff recommend that Council meetings, Committee of the Whole meetings and Committee of Adjustment meetings all begin with a land acknowledgement, commencing on September 20, 2021.

Strategic Plan Relationship: Strong Organization

While municipal governments are not in a position to respond to the majority of the Calls to Action as outlined in the TRC's report, municipal leaders still have the opportunity set the tone and be part of the constructive societal changes that are especially necessary during this time to support the Indigenous community. To observe the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and move forward in the spirit of healing, Pelham will play a critical role in ensuring the truth of what took place in Canada is remembered and that future generations understand the impact the Residential School system has had on Indigenous people.

Consultation:

Two resource papers distributed by AMO were referenced during the preparation of this report. Various municipal leaders across Ontario were also consulted to determine the plans of their respective municipalities and identify best practices.

Other Pertinent Reports/Attachments:

None.

Prepared and Submitted by:

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