

HERITAGE THROUGH THE LENS OF RECONCILIATION

Edmonton Heritage Council's TRC Implementation Plan

BACKGROUND

Edmonton hosted the seventh and final National Event of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in March 2014, beginning the closing work of the Commission's mandate to inform all Canadians about what happened in Indian Residential Schools. In June 2015, the TRC released "Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future", the executive summary of their final report, along with 94 Calls to Action.

EHC'S ROLE IN RECONCILIATION

With the release of the TRC's Final Report in 2015, the Edmonton Heritage Council began to explore how this may influence the way Edmontonians challenge the dominant narratives of our past and honour the treaty relationship. Board and staff met in circle in the fall of 2015 to begin to explore this role and opportunities to deepen our commitment to reconciliation.

Through the spring of 2016, EHC staff created a learning plan and began to examine how reconciliation may impact the foundations of our organization, our programs, and the way we lead within Edmonton's heritage community. EHC also completed an in-depth review of the TRC's Calls to Action to find specific, concrete actions we could take on related to our city's heritage community.

EHC'S COMMITMENT

EHC Staff identified eight Calls to Action that most directly related to the mandate of the organization and which EHC could have influence in moving forward in Edmonton:

- 43** Adopting the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation
- 57** Education for public servants on the history of Aboriginal Peoples
- 75** Identification, documentation, commemoration, and protection of burial sites
- 77** Continued collection of records for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation
- 79** Develop a framework for reconciliation for Canadian heritage and commemoration
- 82** Commission and install a monument to Residential Schools in each capital city
- 87** Provide public education on the national story of Aboriginal athletes in history
- 92** Adopting the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation in the corporate sector as it relates to corporate policy and core operations

*For TRC resources, including the Final Report and Calls to Action, visit www.nctr.ca/reports2.php

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Staff discussed the idea of reconciliation as a lens through which EHC should complete all work and be a leader in the heritage community. This would include recognition of colonial practices, including diverse voices in decision making, and ensuring that marginalized stories from history are given more prominence.

In working through reconciliation, there remains a tension between the implementation of the Calls to Action as direct and tangible actions of reconciliation versus other acts of learning and relationship building that also contribute to reconciliation. EHC's work on both moving the Calls to Action forward and continuing to build relationships will be crucial to the truth and reconciliation movement.

The work of reconciliation is challenging. EHC acknowledges that we are all on this learning path together—a path founded in the treaty relationship that works through the principles of reconciliation based on mutual respect and an ongoing commitment to better relations. Over the two years since beginning this journey as an organization, EHC has begun to learn about ourselves, the space we occupy in the narratives of Edmonton, and the work that lies ahead for all of us.

EHC has grown, and will continue to grow, as we explore Edmonton's heritage through a lens of reconciliation.



EHC staff and Board of Directors participating in a Blanket Exercise at an organizational retreat.