



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Reconciliation Statement

Date: October 30, 2023

To: Toronto Public Library Board

From: City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present a new Toronto Public Library (TPL) Statement: the Reconciliation Statement, included as Attachment 1. The Statement provides principles, commitments, goals and definitions related to the work of TPL. The Reconciliation Statement will be TPL's third Statement, following the Toronto Public Library Board's (the Board) approval of the [Intellectual Freedom Statement](#) and the [Equity Statement](#) in December 2022.

Statement development was in accordance with TPL's Policy Development Framework. TPL staff reviewed similar statements published by other public libraries, library and public sector organizations and TPL partner organizations, and consulted with internal and external stakeholders, including extensive consultation with the Indigenous Advisory Council at TPL which is comprised of members from different Indigenous communities and of representatives from Indigenous service providers in Toronto.

The Statement reinforces [TPL's Vision, Mission and Values](#) and helps to expand the understanding of library values among customers and staff. The goals outlined in the Statement provide direction and accountability for work the library will continue to prioritize in consultation with Indigenous communities and partners. The goals build on and are informed by TPL's Strategies for Indigenous Initiatives [approved by the TPL Board in 2017](#). Further, the Reconciliation Statement promotes commitments to approaches that staff will implement in their work at the library and with the Indigenous communities we serve. The library will work to empower staff with tools to promote and support the principles and goals.

TPL will report to the Board annually on progress on the Reconciliation Statement goals and the related work of TPL's Strategies for Indigenous Initiatives and work in support of the [City of Toronto's Reconciliation Action Plan](#).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. approves the Reconciliation Statement as included in Attachment 1.

Implementation Points

The Statement will come into effect upon Board approval.

TPL will report to the Board annually on Reconciliation Statement goal progress, incorporating updates and work in support of TPL's Strategies for Indigenous Initiatives and the City of Toronto's Reconciliation Action Plan. This reporting will serve to meet the Board's direction to report bi-annually on TPL's Reconciliation Action Plan work during its 2022-2032 term, as requested by City Council.

Communications plans will be developed and implemented to promote and support the Statement's principles and goals and ensure appropriate tools are in place when developing annual work plan goals.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact beyond what has already been approved in the current year's budget.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and agrees with it.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

Implementation of the Reconciliation Statement will enable TPL to advance its strategic priorities by further demonstrating the Library's focus on Reconciliation. The Statement will facilitate work and progress on each of TPL's five strategic priorities and their enablers. Progress on Statement goals will be measured and integrated into business planning and reporting processes.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

TPL work towards the commitment and goals outlined in the Reconciliation Statement will have a positive impact on Indigenous Peoples. TPL has an important role to play in the Reconciliation process by bringing together Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in a culturally safe and relevant space, and helping to facilitate public education and awareness on Truth and Reconciliation, residential schools and treaty relationships. TPL also has a responsibility for ensuring that the Library is a culturally safe and relevant space for members of Indigenous communities in Toronto. Working in partnership with the City of Toronto on the implementation of the Reconciliation Action Plan will further support TPL's role in the Reconciliation process and TPL's Strategies for Indigenous Initiatives.

It is important to note that Reconciliation and justice is not the same as achieving equity. Indigenous Peoples are not seeking equity. Indigenous Peoples have distinct Aboriginal and Treaty rights recognized under the Constitution Act, 1982. Other equity-deserving groups do not have these same constitutional rights, which are born out of being the original occupants and stewards of the land. Seeking equity implies that Indigenous Peoples have the same needs as other groups, although the historical context and needs are distinctly different. Rather, Indigenous Peoples are seeking to have their distinct Aboriginal and Treaty Rights protected.

DECISION HISTORY

At its April 18, 2017 meeting, the Board approved the [Strategies for Indigenous Initiatives](#) report, endorsing TPL's planned response to the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's \(TRC\) 94 Calls to Action](#), released June 2015.

At its April 25, 2022 meeting, the Board approved the [Toronto Public Library Policy Development Framework](#). The framework outlines the legislative framework and requirements underpinning TPL's policies, and the relationship between different policy documents, including Statements. Statements codify, define, and explain the values that guide the delivery of public library service and the advocacy efforts of the public library sector and the library profession. Statements are reviewed in the context of the Library's strategic plan and are reviewed every four years. Statements also enhance transparency and accountability by making a public statement for which the TPL Board can be held accountable.

At its May 24, 2022 meeting, the Board endorsed the City of Toronto's [Reconciliation Action Plan 2022-2032](#) and agreed that TPL partner with the City on the implementation of the plan and committed to reconciliation efforts guided by the values and principles set out in the Plan.

At its December 5, 2022 meeting, the Board approved TPL's first two Statements: the [Intellectual Freedom and Equity Statements](#).

COMMENTS

The Reconciliation Statement recognizes TPL's commitment to an ongoing and long-term response to Reconciliation and includes pursuit of the following goals:

- Improving relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities to better understand TPL's obligations and responsibilities, and to take active steps towards Reconciliation;
- Eliminating organizational barriers for Indigenous Peoples by reviewing and revising library services, policies, and human resource practices that are barriers to Reconciliation;
- Facilitating Indigenous-led public education of Indigenous history and culture, including Truth and Reconciliation, and the legacy of the residential school system;
- Amplifying Indigenous voices and celebrating Indigenous culture and work to increase cross-cultural understanding and tolerance through programming, collections, exhibits, and digital content;
- Indigenizing public spaces by incorporating elements that support Indigenous place-making and place-keeping within TPL's physical and digital spaces; and
- Enhancing learning opportunities for TPL leaders and staff, specifically those that focus on Truth and Reconciliation, including the impact of colonization on Indigenous peoples, the history and legacy of residential and day schools, and anti-Indigenous racism and how to address it in the workplace.

In addition to the strategic plan, statements are to become a foundation to policies, practices, principles, goals and strategies for staff, community engagement and services.

Tools and training will be developed for staff to help champion the Reconciliation Statement, to help build initiatives into annual work plans, and to help support this work with the communities we serve. The Reconciliation Statement further codifies TPL's commitment to the important role TPL plays in

Reconciliation as first initiated in TPL's Strategies for Indigenous Initiatives approved at the Board's April 18, 2017 meeting.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Reconciliation Statement

Reconciliation Statement

Land Acknowledgment

Toronto Public Library (TPL) is situated on Indigenous land and Dish with One Spoon territory. This is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Wendat, and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Toronto Public Library gratefully acknowledges these Indigenous Nations for their guardianship of this land.

Toronto Public Library's Commitment

TPL is committed to an ongoing and long-term response to Reconciliation. This statement establishes our responsibilities, including a commitment to furthering public and staff education, improving relationships with Indigenous Peoples and developing library programs and services aimed at meeting the needs of Indigenous communities.

TPL acknowledges that the practice of colonialism instigated and perpetuated serious harms through attempts to forcefully assimilate, displace, and systemically erase Indigenous cultures, languages, and Peoples. TPL also acknowledges that the consequences of these atrocities continue to negatively impact Indigenous Peoples, including those living in Toronto.

We acknowledge that TPL has responsibility to ensure that the Library is a culturally safe and relevant space for Indigenous communities in Toronto. We will do this by making our spaces, collections, and services reach, engage and reflect Indigenous communities and help them express and amplify their voices. TPL will facilitate public and staff education and awareness on Truth and Reconciliation, residential schools and treaty relationships.

TPL also acknowledges its role in contributing to the inequities experienced by Indigenous Peoples living in Toronto and is committed to reviewing TPL's policies, procedures and structures to eliminate barriers to access for Indigenous Peoples.

TPL's work to further Reconciliation is guided by consultation with Indigenous Peoples, including the [Indigenous Advisory Council](#), and by the City of Toronto's

[Reconciliation Action Plan \(2022-2032\)](#); the principles detailed in the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (2007); and the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission \(TRC\) of Canada: Calls to Action](#) (2015). TPL's commitment to Reconciliation was initiated in 2017 with its [Strategies for Indigenous Initiatives](#), developed for consultation with Indigenous Peoples and communities in response to the TRC Calls to Action.

As included in TPL's [Equity Statement](#), TPL recognizes in our work and approaches that Reconciliation and justice are not the same as achieving equity, and that Indigenous Peoples are not seeking equity but rather seeking to have their distinct Aboriginal and Treaty Rights recognized and protected.

To fulfil this commitment to Reconciliation, TPL will actively pursue the following goals:

- Improve relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities to better understand TPL's obligations and responsibilities, and to take active steps towards Reconciliation;
- Eliminate organizational barriers for Indigenous Peoples by reviewing and revising library services, policies, and human resource practices that are barriers to Reconciliation;
- Facilitate Indigenous-led public education of Indigenous history and culture, including Truth and Reconciliation, and the legacy of the residential school system;
- Amplify Indigenous voices and celebrate Indigenous culture and work to increase cross-cultural understanding and tolerance through programming, collections, exhibits, and digital content;
- Indigenize public spaces by incorporating elements that support Indigenous place-making and place-keeping within TPL's physical and digital spaces; and
- Enhance learning opportunities for TPL leaders and staff, specifically those that focus on Truth and Reconciliation, including the impact of colonization on Indigenous peoples, the history and legacy of residential and day schools, and anti-Indigenous racism and how to address it in the workplace.

TPL acknowledges that Reconciliation is an ongoing process. TPL's response will evolve as it continues its own education and engagement with the diverse Indigenous communities in Toronto.

The name Toronto is derived from the word Tkaronto. Tkaronto means "[*the place in the water where the trees are standing*](#)" in the Mohawk language ([*Kanien'kéha*](#), [*Kanyen'kéha*](#)). This is one of many Indigenous names that have been used in reference to these lands. For example, Adobigok, (Anishinaabemowin, meaning "[*place of the alders*](#)" or "[*where the alders grow*](#)") refers to Etobicoke Creek and the surrounding area. Another term, Ishpaadinaa (Anishinaabemowin, meaning "[*sudden rise in the land*](#)"), refers to a natural bluff that runs east to west at the northern terminus of Spadina and [*overlooks a natural footpath*](#) used by Indigenous Peoples for millennia. The area we now know as Toronto has been lived on by various Indigenous communities since time immemorial.

Glossary

(Excerpted from the [*City of Toronto Reconciliation Action Plan*](#) 2022-2032)

Aboriginal – This dated term is used in the Constitution Act (1982) to collectively refer to First Nations, Inuit and Métis, and should now be used precisely, with caution and care.

Colonization – The establishment, exploitation, maintenance, acquisition and expansion of colonies in one territory by people from another territory. It is a set of unequal relationships between the colonial power and the colony, and between the colonists and the Indigenous population.

First Nations – A term which began to become adopted in the early 1980s, this collective term refers to the original nations, whose members and descendants existed across the territory for thousands of years, and were colonially referred to as "status and non-status Indians" as described by the Indian Act, 1876.

Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples – A term used internationally to collectively represent the original inhabitants or those naturally existing in a particular place. In this context, "Indigenous" is used to refer to the First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

Indigenous communities – A term used to collectively refer to the multiple differing communities comprised of diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples within Toronto.

Inuit – The Inuit are Indigenous Peoples whose territories lay within the circumpolar arctic regions of the world. This includes Canada's far north regions of Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and northern parts of Labrador and Québec. The word Inuit means "people" in the Inuit language, Inuktitut.

Métis – The Métis are distinct Indigenous Peoples with unique histories, cultures, languages, principles of governance, and territories that include the waterways of Ontario, that surround the Great Lakes, and that span what is known as the historic Northwest.

Place-making and Place-keeping – The collective re-imagining of public spaces to strengthen the connection between place, community, values, culture, past, present and future.

Reconciliation – Reconciliation requires mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous People, awareness of the past, acknowledgement of and atonement for the harms that have been caused, and actions to change behaviour. The actions taken for reconciliation must be taken in partnership with Indigenous Peoples, and directly respond to the self-identified needs and directives as set out by Indigenous community members, organizations and leaders.

Last revised: October 30, 2023