



Urban Indigenous Peoples' Advisory Committee

VanRIMS No.: 08-3000-11

## MEMORANDUM

September 19, 2022

TO: Mayor and Council

CC Paul Mochrie, City Manager  
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk  
Tina Penney, Director, Legislative Operations  
Kevin Burris, Manager, Civic Agencies

FROM: Urban Indigenous Peoples' Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: Urban Indigenous Peoples' Advisory Committee Report of Activities, 2021–2022

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### PURPOSE

To provide Vancouver City Council with a report on the activities of the Urban Indigenous Peoples' Advisory Committee for the period of May 18, 2021 to November 6, 2022.

### BACKGROUND

The Urban Indigenous Peoples' Advisory Committee was established by Council to advise Council and staff on enhancing access and inclusion for Urban Indigenous Peoples to fully participate in City services and civic life.

### DISCUSSION

Please note, this Report discusses violence against Indigenous Peoples and may affect those who have experienced it or know someone who has.

#### 1. Significant Activities

Significant Urban Indigenous Peoples' Advisory Committee (UIPAC) activities in the 2021-2022 term include the following:

- Received regular updates on the City's MMIWG2S+ work in both regular meetings and dedicated working sessions, and recommended funding support for implementing

MMIWG2S+ actions be continued in 2022. Members' input was incorporated into the [MMIWG2S Response Report](#) delivered to Council July 19, 2022.

- Recommended funding in the 2022 operating budget for a Director of Indigenous Relations position within the City Manager's Office, to be filled by an Indigenous Person. This new position was filled by Michelle Bryant-Gravelle, Senior Director, Indigenous Relations, on September 6, 2022.
- Delivered recommendations to Mayor and Council ("[Keeping Our Sisters Safe,](#)" [May 19, 2022](#)) in response to incidents of human trafficking, assault, and exploitation of Indigenous peoples in the City of Vancouver, particularly the deaths of Chelsea Poorman and Noelle O'Soup.
- Engaged with the UNDRIP Task Force on developing implementation recommendations, and formally endorsed the six "early actions" outlined in the [Update Report of the UNDRIP Task Force](#) while acknowledging further engagement with the Urban Indigenous Community is needed ("[Letter of Support for UNDRIP Task Force Update Report,](#)" [June 2, 2022](#)).
- Consulted on the following City projects and initiatives:
  - Joint Park Board/City of Vancouver Commemoration Framework
  - West End Waterfront Plan
  - Skeena Terrace Planning Program
  - 2022 Municipal Election

## 2. Future Directions

This year's activities of the Urban Indigenous Peoples Advisory Committee (UIPAC) have been challenged by the resignation of multiple Committee members due to frustrations with current engagement processes, and the ongoing systemic violence perpetrated against the urban Indigenous community, all while contending with overlapping crises (COVID-19, MMIWG2S+, toxic drug deaths, IRS truth-telling, chronic underfunding of health and social services).

Further, members mourned the passing of long-time Indigenous rights activist and Committee Co-Chair Lillian Howard. Lillian helped set the tone for meetings, provided a historical lens for UIPAC, and ensured that we were able to be our whole selves at meetings. There was not an appropriate way for the Committee to handle and navigate her loss, and this should be a protocol that is developed moving forward.

The current Committee structure and civic engagement pathways are lacking in cultural safety, meaningful opportunities for inclusion, cross-departmental/organizational collaboration, and the true intention of systems change. UIPAC is tasked with supporting the City of Vancouver in its responsibilities as the purported City of Reconciliation, yet Committee members have repeatedly voiced feeling unsafe and unheard during regularly scheduled meetings with the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) and City staff.

In particular, a June 6, 2022 meeting between VPD Officers and UIPAC regarding the investigation of the death of Chelsea Poorman was traumatic for members. The VPD did not come to the meeting with a trauma-informed lens and inappropriate language was used during

the discussion. Questions were not answered and it was clear that the VPD lacked an understanding of how to work effectively with the urban Indigenous community. UIPAC members felt the impacts of this meeting for some time, and it is clear that better practices are needed to ensure members' safety.

There is tremendous concern for the continuity of UIPAC and the Reconciliation commitments made by the City of Vancouver. The purpose of the committee does not reflect a decolonized way to gather input from the urban Indigenous community, and the entire process makes it difficult for UIPAC to bring forward issues affecting the urban Indigenous community. Most of the Committee members experience harms across this City, and rather than having these heard and incorporated into improved services, policies, procedures, engagement, and planning, we are tasked to listen to presentations where ideas are fully formed and our substantive input is not sought or able to be acted upon. Until this structure changes and the lived experience we bring to the table is honoured and recognized at the beginning of processes rather than the end, it will remain difficult to feel valued and heard. We feel as though we are being used to show that the City is engaged in Reconciliation, but we do not recognize this.

The following recommendations are shared with the City to create a safer and more equitable environment to build relationships and work together towards collective aspirations. We note that these recommendations echo those provided in the letter "[Anti-Racism and Reconciliation Efforts by the City of Vancouver](#)," presented to Mayor and Council by UIPAC on July 7, 2020.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Reciprocity:** Currently, UIPAC members are not honoured for their time or contributions, with much of the work falling on the sub-committees and Chair to coordinate, complete, and move forward. It is recommended that the City of Vancouver provide honoraria to Committee members, with special consideration for the Chair position, and also offer administrative support to UIPAC, acknowledging the significance of this Committee's work plan and the collective short-and long-term objectives of UIPAC and the City of Vancouver. The days of extractive processes are long done. Indigenous people are now being paid well for their input, to continue to expect to receive this for free is upholding a colonial processes and this must change.
- 2. Respect:** Current Committee and civic processes lack respect and sensitivity for the lived experience of urban Indigenous peoples. UIPAC members and the urban Indigenous community have experienced incredible trauma and loss this year. Committee members have commented on the lack of cultural safety in engagements between UIPAC and the Vancouver Police Department and City staff. It is recommended that policy and protocol for engaging with UIPAC be reviewed, including recommendations put forward by the City Clerk's Office and the Equity Office.
- 3. Relevance:** Committee members have also voiced their concern with the number of presentations that are being brought to UIPAC as a tokenistic gesture of engagement, which include little room for meaningful feedback or inclusion. It is recommended that the City re-evaluate the mandate of UIPAC and the current Committee engagement pathways and priorities, with considerations for the important role that UIPAC plays within the City.
- 4. Responsibility:** The City of Vancouver has a responsibility to create safer and more equitable pathways for urban Indigenous community inclusion, collaboration, and

leadership. UIPAC members also have a responsibility to actively participate and be present for meetings, acknowledging the aforementioned barriers and compounding crises. It is recommended that UIPAC and the City collaboratively develop a new Terms of Reference/Mandate/Ways of Respectfully Working Together and review current Committee responsibilities, with emphasis on onboarding and retention of members.

## **CONCLUSION**

The foregoing information is presented to Vancouver City Council for information.

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