

Report

Date August 17, 2022
Subject National Day for Truth and Reconciliation 2022

File:

PURPOSE

To seek Council support for a \$3,000 grant-in-aid to the M'akola Housing Society in support of the 2022 Every Child Matters March to commemorate the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30, 2022. Audrey George, Assisted Living Manager at M'akola Housing Society, is the event organizer and she will be providing a presentation to Council.

BACKGROUND

At the July 20, 2022 meeting, Council endorsed the June 16, 2022 First Nations Relations Committee recommendation that Council direct staff to research municipal contributions to National Day for Truth and Reconciliation events and return to Council for direction. Staff have since been in contact with Audrey George, Assisted Living Manager at M'akola Housing Society and the event organizer of the first-ever Every Child Matters March which occurred on September 30, 2021 the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Ms. George identifies as a Cowichan Tribes member, and is the daughter of two residential school Survivors.

The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation honours the lost children and survivors of residential schools, their families and communities. Public commemoration of the tragic and painful history and ongoing impacts of residential schools is a vital component of the reconciliation process. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission called on the federal government to establish the holiday as one of its 94 calls to action. National Day for Truth and Reconciliation coincides with Orange Shirt Day, an Indigenous-led grassroots commemorative day that honours the children who survived residential schools and remembers those who did not.

The 2021 Every Child Matters March was open to the public and was a significant regional event hosted by the M'akola Housing Society. It drew thousands of participants to the streets of North Cowichan and the City of Duncan, including countless spectators. Most participants wore orange shirts, and mementos like children's shoes and teddy bears were left at Duncan City Hall to commemorate the children who did not make it home from residential school. The event included traditional drumming and singing while the march was underway, and, at its conclusion, a performance by the Cowichan Tzinquaw Dancers and words by Cowichan Elder Tousilum (Ron George), a residential school Survivor, sharing some of his traumatic experiences, as well as his hopes for the future.

North Cowichan contributed \$2,000 to the 2021 Every Child Matters March.

DISCUSSION

Much of the funding for the 2021 Every Child Matters March was provided by the First Nations Health Authority, however, Ms. George has advised that this was a one-time contribution and that funding will not be made available to the M'akola Housing Society to host subsequent events. As a result, Ms. George is seeking greater contributions from North Cowichan, City of Duncan and Cowichan Tribes for the 2022 event. Ms. George has requested a grant-in-aid of \$3,000 to host another March for Children.

While contributing financially to this event is a significant and impactful way for North Cowichan to contribute to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in the Cowichan Valley, North Cowichan has also previously reached out to local First Nations to see how it might support any events they have planned. In preparing for National Indigenous Peoples Day 2022 (June 21), staff had conversations with staff at Lyackson, Penelakut, Halalt and Cowichan Tribes to offer support for any planned National Indigenous Peoples Day events, as well as to offer support for other events, including the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Staff have not received a response from the Stz'minus First Nation to-date on this matter, and the Lyackson, on account of their small size, requested that we get in touch with the M'akola Housing Society. Penelakut, Halalt and Cowichan Tribes confirmed they were hosting National Indigenous Peoples Day Events, and formal letters offering North Cowichan's support for that, and other similar events, including the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation were sent in May and June. In response to one of those letters, staff received communication from the Penelakut First Nation on August 4, 2022 that they will be taking our offer of support for the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, to an Elders meeting on August 9, 2022. To-date, no other local First Nations have followed-up on the offer to support any events planned for the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Staff will report back to Council for direction in the event requests for support are received from the Penelakut, or other local First Nations.

OPTIONS

1. **(Recommended Option)** Provide a \$3,000 grant-in-aid to the M'akola Housing Society.
2. Provide a [Council to insert alternate amount] grant-in-aid to the M'akola Housing Society.
3. Decline to provide a grant-in-aid to the M'akola Housing Society.

IMPLICATIONS

- There is \$3,100 dollars remaining in the First Nations Initiatives budget for 2022 to support a grant-in-aid to the M'akola Housing Society for the 2022 March for Children to commemorate the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.
- Should Council receive subsequent requests for support from local First Nations in response to North Cowichan's earlier inquiry regarding the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, there is \$16,500 remaining in the general grant-in-aid budget from which such requests could be funded. Supporting the March for Children does not preclude supporting other First Nation-specific events, should North Cowichan be asked to support.
- Providing funding in any amount to the M'akola Housing Society toward the March for Children is consistent with Council's strategic priority of building strong relationships with Indigenous

Peoples, and Council's 2021 resolution to locally implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council approve a \$3,000 grant-in-aid to the M'akola Housing Society to support the 2022 Every Child Matters March to commemorate the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30, 2022.

Report prepared by:



Sarah Nixon
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

Report reviewed by:



Ted Swabey
Chief Administrative Officer

Approved to be forwarded to Council:



Ted Swabey
Chief Administrative Officer