
SUMA Position Statement

Municipal governments have been called to take action in promoting reconciliation. SUMA encourages urban governments to engage in reconciliation, and calls on the federal and provincial governments to commit to work, in conjunction with Indigenous organizations, to:

- create new tools to encourage regional cooperation between urban municipalities, rural municipalities, and First Nations;
- develop materials on fostering economic development between urban municipalities, rural municipalities, and First Nations; and
- work on information to provide guidance on creating urban reserves, and best practices.

Key Messages

- Urban municipalities are home to nearly 80 per cent of the people in Saskatchewan. Our hometowns are the government closest to the people, and work with other groups, communities, and on a regional basis.
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission revealed the scope and legacy of the residential school system, and made recommendations to federal, provincial, and municipal governments.
- Urban municipalities are uniquely placed to not just respond to these recommendations, but create partnership and build relations with residents and First Nations and tribal councils.
- SUMA can support this by providing information and resources, and fostering the spirit of reconciliation.

Current Status

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its final report on December 15, 2015.
- SUMA adopted the Truth and Reconciliation Policy on December 1, 2017.

Background

Indian Residential Schools in Canada began in the 1870s, with the last closing in 1996. Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) children were required to attend these church-run and government-funded boarding schools, forbidden to speak their language and practice their culture. About 150,000 Indigenous children attended 130 schools located across the country. At least 6,000 died while attending the schools and 80,000 former students are still living.

In June 2015, the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released a report that contained 94 calls to action. Nine of these calls apply directly and indirectly to municipal governments (recommendations 17, 23, 43, 47, 57, 75, 77, 87, and 88). These include reconciliation, Indigenous history and awareness education, identifying and commemorating burial sites of residential school children, and locating copies of records relevant to the residential school system.

Municipal governments can play an important role in reconciliation. Not only have they been asked to take action on specific TRC recommendations, they can also have an important role in building relationships. Municipalities are the government closest to the people, delivering services that directly affect day-to-day life. All municipalities in Saskatchewan are located on treaty land, and many are near First Nations reserves or have urban reserve land within or adjacent to their boundaries. Many urban

municipalities are home to a significant number of Indigenous people, and some SUMA member municipalities have a majority Indigenous population.

In June 2016, the SUMA Board of Directors approved of working to create a reconciliation policy. Since then, SUMA has taken several actions researching or supporting reconciliation:

- Taking part in the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce Northern Tour in September 2016, which stopped in Buffalo Narrows, Stony Rapids, Black Lake, Wollaston Lake, Hatchet Lake, and La Ronge.
- Providing information to members.
 - *Urban Voice* articles
 - Winter 2016: “Municipalities Finding their Call to Action for Reconciliation” from the Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC)
 - Spring 2017: “Saskatoon’s Journey for Inclusion and Reconciliation” from the City of Saskatoon
 - Education session at Convention 2017: “Creating Business Links with First Nations”
- Having President Gordon Barnhart and North Regional Director Bobby Woods attend the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) Prosperity From Partnerships Conference in March 2017.
- Gathering input from members at the Town and Village Sector Meeting and City Mayors’ Caucus in May 2017, and Regional Meetings in September and October 2017.

Hometowns have also taken action:

- Taking part in creating 54 urban reserves
- Passing a resolution in support of a federal inquiry into murdered and missing Indigenous women (2015, City of North Battleford)
- Declaring a Year of Reconciliation, working with partners, including the OTC, for a year-long series of events, including the now-annual “Rock Your Roots” event. (2015, City of Saskatoon)
- Approving heritage status for an abandoned cemetery near the site of the old Regina Indian Industrial School (2016, City of Regina)
- Signing a memorandum of understanding committing to eliminating racism with FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron (April 2017, Village of Elbow; June 2017, City of Regina)
- Creating a guide, titled “ayisinowak” (“peoples” in Cree), giving a basic outline of Aboriginal governance models and protocols (2017, City of Saskatoon and partners)
- Signing a friendship agreement aimed at promoting a positive working relationship between Beardy’s and Okemasis’ Cree Nation and the Twin Rivers District Planning Commission (towns of Rosthern, Duck Lake, Hague, Waldheim, and Hepburn, Village of Laird, and the Rural Municipalities of Rosthern and Duck Lake) (2017)

Strategic Context

This policy is to act as a foundation for action and a starting point for initiatives. It emphasizes **partnership** and **relationship building** as the fundamental guiding principles, and **ongoing, continual process** rather than a set of specific steps with an end goal of completion. That said, while researching this policy and engaging members, certain pillars emerged that informed this policy.

Engagement with First Nations and Métis

Connecting with Indigenous organizations and communities encourages creating partnerships at the provincial level and the community-to-community level.

Learn and Build

Accessing information and training to build capacity and promote the goals of reconciliation. This can include exploring anti-racism and Indigenous awareness training, participating in events such as National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21) and Orange Shirt Day (September 30) and accessing community-based resources such as libraries and archives.

Acknowledge and Honour

Acknowledge the land and the Treaties, as well as Indigenous history. This can include commemoration opportunities, with protocols and consultation, such as land acknowledgments recognizing the Treaty land and Homeland of Métis at major events, flag raisings, or naming streets, buildings, parks.

Support SUMA members

SUMA can give our members the tools to create new relationships with mutual benefit and engage with federal and provincial governments to support our members. This involves highlighting work by members to engage First Nations and Métis in reconciliation and connect them to resources, including:

- Federation of Canadian Municipalities resources, including [Pathways to Reconciliation](#), [the First Nations-Municipal Community Economic Development Initiative](#), and [The Stronger Together Toolkit](#);
- City of Saskatoon information on [Aboriginal Relations](#) and [Urban Reserves](#);
- OTC resources on [reconciliation](#);
- the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan [Welcoming and Inclusive Communities Toolkit](#); and
- First Nations-municipal government initiatives, such as [the Friendship Agreement](#) between Beardy's & Okemasis' Cree Nation and Twin Rivers District Planning Commission.

Contacts

Staff Contact: Steven Dribnenki sdribnenki@suma.org 306-525-4389