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Indigenous Relations,Caledon?s Path to Reconciliation

by MAYOR ANNETTE GROVES

In this column I would like to share the significance of our Town's relationship with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nations and recognition of Indigenous lands, treaties and Peoples.

I've had the privilege recently of spending time and engaging in conversation with the Chief of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nations (MCFN) Ogimaa-Kwe Claire Sault. Each of those interactions have underscored for me the importance of better understanding Indigenous history, celebrating and honouring Indigenous traditions and culture and engaging with Indigenous communities as we move forward with an ambitious growth plan.

We are enhancing Indigenous representation in real ways across Caledon through public art displays, public events and education, partnerships with the Region and community groups, and by remembering and honouring Indigenous history and days of significance.

During a Council to Council Gathering this past May with MCFN, we learned about treaties and in particular Treaty #19 The Ajetance Treaty ? signed in October 1818 by Chief Ajetance and the Crown.

In June, we shared in a ceremony at Caledon Day with the Chief in front of thousands of people to renew our wampum belt commitment of working together in peace and friendship.

A wampum belt is a visual form of record keeping, communication and historical reference. They were used among First Nations to document agreements and peace treaties. The belt made from shell beads features two figures on either side?one to represent the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and one the citizens of Caledon?the line and predominance of white suggests a path of peace of friendship.

At many official gatherings we provide an Indigenous land acknowledgement at the beginning of the event or meeting to reflect and demonstrate recognition of Indigenous lands, treaties and Peoples.

It involves thinking about what happened in the past and what changes can be made going forward to further the reconciliation process.

Indigenous land acknowledgements mark a small and important step in the process of reconciliation and building a positive relationship with Indigenous Peoples, a reminder that we are all accountable to these relationships.

By making an Indigenous land acknowledgement we are taking part in an act of reconciliation, honouring the land and enduring Indigenous presence which, in Caledon, dates back over 13,000 years.

The last paragraph of the Town's Indigenous Land Acknowledgment is a call to action:

?We honour and respect Indigenous heritage and the long-lasting history of the land and strive to protect the land, water, plants and animals that have inhabited this land for the generations yet to come.?

In Caledon, we are doing much more than acknowledging in words and in print, we are working at building a meaningful relationship with our Indigenous partners founded on trust and respect.

Miigwech, Mayor Annette Groves