

Town signs memorandum of understanding with MCFN, unveils orange crosswalk

Mayor says signing strengthens relationship with Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation

By Zachary Roman

The Town of Caledon and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) have taken a big step towards strengthening the bond between them.

On October 28, Mayor Allan Thompson, MCFN Chief Stacey LaForme, senior leadership from the Town of Caledon, Caledon Council (both current Councillors and Councillor-elects), and MCFN representatives attended the Caledon Centre for Recreation and Wellness for a special ceremony.

At the ceremony, the Town and MCFN signed a memorandum of understanding that Thompson said was historic and will further strengthen the bond between Caledon and MCFN. Thompson said the lead up to the memorandum signing was years in the making.

Also at the ceremony, an orange crosswalk was unveiled. It was created to honour Indigenous children of the residential school system and acknowledge the strength and resilience of residential school survivors and their descendants.

The crosswalk was also created to be a permanent reminder of the need for all Caledon residents to play a role in reconciliation with Indigenous people.

The ceremony began with a smudging, which Chief LaForme explained is done so everyone enters the ceremony with a clear mind and pure heart.

"Let us set aside small differences, let us concentrate on real issues," said LaForme. "Most importantly, let us remember we are not adversaries nor are we enemies. We share a similar past, a kindred spirit, and a common heritage. We must always remember the real reason we gather, to do the right thing for our people, our children and our future."

Mayor Thompson thanked everyone in attendance at the ceremony for showing up on an important day in Caledon, before reading a land acknowledgement. He continued and said all good things have a beginning and the memorandum signing is just that.

Thompson recalled how the Town and MCFN renewed an agreement with a Wampum Belt in 2018, and encouraged the new Caledon Council to continue the tradition of renewing it every year, since COVID interrupted and delayed the annual practice of renewing it.

Chief LaForme said it was very meaningful when the Wampum Belt was presented back then, and a great promise to move forward together. He explained it was meaningful because it was presented in a Caledon way, meaning Caledon didn't pretend it knew everything about MCFN already. It was presented in a way that was meant to be the beginning of a relationship.

"They understood they had more to learn," said LaForme, and Thompson noted that Caledon has much to learn yet.

"Chief LaForme, thank you for being so open; we've had a lot of great conversations," said Thompson. "It's great to do the talk but we need to do the walk and that's what we've really tried to do? Chief LaForme has been fantastic (helping us) make that happen in Caledon."

Chief LaForme said moving forward means that people need to start understanding and learning about each other. "When we get past that we can be friends, and when we get past that we can be allies," said LaForme. "We're friends, and our next step is allyship."

LaForme said everyone has a responsibility to make the world a little bit better today than it was yesterday, and that building relationships like the one the Town and MCFN are building is key in that process. He added that he was very happy to see the MCFN flag at the Caledon Centre for Recreation and Wellness; the flag was raised at the ceremony.

Caledon's Peel District School Board Trustee Stan Cameron also spoke at the ceremony and explained exciting news that the old Credit View Public School in Caledon, which has been out of use for a few years, is being reconstructed to become a Centre for Indigenous Excellence and Land-Based Learning.

Near the end of the ceremony, Thompson explained he hopes other municipalities will see what the Town of Caledon and MCFN are doing and also choose to renew their relationship with MCFN.