

# HALIFAX

P.O. Box 1749  
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**Item No. 14.1.14**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**December 12, 2017**

**TO:** Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed by 

**SUBMITTED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** November 30, 2017

**SUBJECT:** The Downie Wenjack Legacy Room Project

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## **ORIGIN**

July 18, 2017 Regional Council Motion:

MOVED by Mayor Savage, seconded by Councillor Outhit, that Regional Council request a staff report to:

1. Evaluate the municipality's potential participation in the Downie Wenjack Legacy Room Project, including through an annual \$5,000 contribution for 5 years to the Downie Wenjack Fund; and
2. Evaluate the viability of establishing a Legacy Room within City Hall as a dedicated space for the display of aboriginal art. **MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

## **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

*Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39, section 79*

(1) The Council may expend money required by the Municipality for

...

(av) a grant or contribution to

...

(vii) a registered Canadian charitable organization;

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Approve a one-time contribution in the amount of \$25,000 from Account M311- Grants and Tax Concession to the Tides Canada Foundation to support cross-cultural reconciliation projects funded under the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund;

**...RECOMMENDATION CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

2. Establish a Downie Wenjack Legacy Room in the Main Floor Boardroom at City Hall as per the terms of the Downie Wenjack Fund;
3. Authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to negotiate and execute an agreement to participate in the Downie Wenjack Legacy Room Project with the Tides Canada Initiatives Society;
4. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer, through the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, to conduct engagement and partnership with the Mi'kmaw Community specifically in the development of and in the ceremonial opening of the Room; and
5. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer, through the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, to collaborate with Indigenous visual artists, artisans, curators and cultural centers to display Indigenous Art in the proposed Downie Wenjack Room in City Hall.

## **BACKGROUND**

In December 2015, Halifax Regional Council adopted a Statement of Reconciliation that commits the municipality to learning from the lessons of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Subsequently, in October 2017, Regional Council adopted Administrative Order Number 2017-012-GOV, Respecting the Commemoration of Edward Cornwallis and the Recognition and Commemoration of Indigenous History Special Advisory Committee. Administrative Order Number 2017-012-GOV states that the Council of Halifax Regional Municipality acknowledges the importance of working together with indigenous communities to appropriately commemorate and reflect the history of the Municipality.

The 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report includes 94 Calls to Action, *'In order to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation'*. Several Calls to Action encompass a municipal response. Specifically, Call to Action #57, states:

*We call upon federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights and anti-racism.*

### **The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund**

Chanie 'Charlie' Wenjack was an Anishinaabe boy living at Ogoki Post on the Marten Falls First Nation in Ontario. He was born in 1954 and died in 1966 at the age of twelve. Chanie was a student at the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School in Kenora, Ontario, where his name was changed to Charlie. He died of hunger and exposure along the railway tracks near Farlane, Ontario, in his attempt to run away from the school and return to his home, nearly 600 km away. Chanie's death compelled officials to conduct the first-ever coroner's inquest into the treatment of Indigenous children at Canada's Residential Schools.

The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund was established in 2016 by the late musician Gord Downie, in memory of Chanie Wenjack. His graphic novel, "The Secret Path", and accompanying album tell the story of Chanie Wenjack through song and text. The Legacy Room project was first conceived by Chief Morley Googoo, Waycobah, and Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund defines the intent of the Legacy Room as *'any space - be it in a business, school, office, restaurant, hotel... where people who use the room will have the opportunity to learn the story of Chanie Wenjack, the history he represents, and be inspired to act in the name of Reconciliation.'*

To date, there are five Downie Wenjack Legacy Rooms in Halifax Regional Municipality that are open, or

in the process of being opened. They are located at the Barrington Steak House and Oyster Bar; Dalhousie Killam Library; Waterfront Development Corporation; Armbrae Academy; and Deloitte Atlantic. There are also Legacy Rooms in Ontario and Manitoba. On July 18, 2017, Regional Council requested a staff report to consider potential municipal participation in the Downie Wenjack Legacy Room Project.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund**

The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund (“the Fund”) was established in 2016 to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons. The Fund is administered by the Tides Canada Foundation, a registered Canadian charity established in 1990 with offices in Vancouver, Yellowknife and Toronto<sup>1</sup>. A fixed percentage (10%) of revenue from the Fund is allocated to overhead costs such as governance, foundation staff, financial and grants management. The Fund does not guarantee that the monies donated will be spent in the donor community but based on three national programming streams:

- educational programming;
- cross-cultural, Indigenous-led reconciliation project funding; and
- supporting the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation in the search for missing children who escaped from residential schools.

The Fund accepts grant applications to support community-based reconciliation projects, typically in the range of \$5,000 to \$10,000, throughout the year. Submissions are reviewed by Tides Canada staff and members of a Steering Committee. In reviewing applications, the Committee looks for projects that: bring together Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities; have the potential to create an on-going, positive impact on Indigenous communities and individuals; and inspire others to “do something”.

Although the establishment of a Legacy Room is not a requirement for participation in the Fund and donations can be made directly to the Fund, organizations that wish to commit to hosting a Legacy Room are required to donate a one-time contribution of \$25,000 or payment of \$5,000 per year for five years.

This proposed contribution does not fall within a current funding program established by Council, but Regional Council may consider it at its discretion.

### **Municipal Legacy Room**

To qualify as a Legacy Room participant, HRM is required to enter into an agreement with the Tides Canada Initiatives Society to commit to:

- Doing the work of Reconciliation as an organization;
- Providing information about the story of the Legacy Room, Chanie Wenjack and Reconciliation to staff and visitors;
- Providing ongoing training to employees and fostering an equitable workplace; and
- A one-time payment of \$25,000 or a \$ 5,000 donation per year for 5 years to the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund.

As outlined in the background section of this report, HRM has a number of initiatives currently underway that would meet these commitments, including a new Indigenous Community Engagement Advisor.

Staff interviewed stakeholders of three of the Halifax Legacy Room sites to determine their approach and process in establishing their Legacy Rooms. Each institution and business has established their Legacy Room through different approaches, specifically:

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<sup>1</sup> See: <https://tidescanada.org>

- In a business, the room is only accessible by staff and invited meeting guests;
- In a restaurant, the space is accessible through reservation; and
- At the more public accessible spaces, such as the University Library, there are no restrictions to the public.

What was consistent in all cases, is that an engagement and partnership with the Mi'kmaw community was conducted, specifically in the development of and in the ceremonial opening of the Legacy Room.

Conditions of establishing the Legacy Room involves the following:

- Display the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Legacy Room plaque at the entrance to the Room; and;
- Display a framed Legacy Room print featuring photographs of Gord Downie and Chanie Wenjack The Secret Path Story, Gord's Call to Action and information about where a Legacy Room visitor can learn more about creating their own act toward ReconciliACTION.

The Main Floor Boardroom is identified as the potential site for a Legacy Room in City Hall. This recently refurbished room is reserved to host external meetings with international groups, residents, organizations and businesses to meet the Mayor, members of Council and executive staff. Staff will ensure the plaque and print are installed at its entrance and the accompanying information is current and is maintained in good order.

In some institutions, the actual name of the room has been changed to the Downie Wenjack Legacy Room, however this is not a requirement of the agreement. Administrative Order 46, Respecting HRM Asset Naming Policies covers the naming of municipal assets, which include, buildings, parks, park features, streets, bridges, commercial vessels and ferries. The naming of rooms within municipal buildings is at the discretion of the asset owner for each specific building. Should Regional Council approve the Main Floor Boardroom as the Downie Wenjack Legacy Room staff will complete the required administrative actions to update all references to the room.

To provide additional information on the Municipal actions towards Reconciliation and the establishment of the Legacy Room and its formal opening it is recommended that the Office of Diversity and Inclusion would be best positioned to engage the Mi'kmaw Community to determine the appropriate process.

#### Display of Indigenous Art in Legacy Room

Halifax Regional Municipality has a collection of fine art; however, the collection does not contain fine art produced by Indigenous artists.

Currently in City Hall the display of artifacts and artworks is limited to decorative pieces which hang or are exhibited in various spaces including the Mayor's office, Regional Council Chambers, offices and meeting rooms. It is important that any display of Indigenous art be curated in conjunction with and under the guidance of Indigenous artists, curators and makers. Like all gallery displays, visual art is one form and traditional art and crafts and artifacts are also of consideration. Therefore, it is recommended that staff work with the Mi'kmaw arts community who, as subject matter experts, may develop the themes and prepare the exhibit text so that the display is a learning opportunity and elevates the artists who produce the work.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

If approved, the contribution would be funded from the balance remaining in the 2017-18 Community Grants Program budget.

Community Grants Program M311-8004	
2017 Budget	\$500,000
Less Approved Awards	(448,658)
Balance	\$41,342
Less Recommended Contribution (1)	<u>(\$25,000)</u>
<b>Balance</b>	<b>\$16,342</b>

The implementation of a rotating Indigenous Art exhibit in the Mayor's office may have financial implications that can be accommodated in the balance of Community Grants Program M311-8004.

### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations in this Report. The risks considered rate Low. To reach this conclusion, consideration was given to financial and reputational risk.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

No community engagement was completed in preparation of this report. Pending Regional Council's approval of the recommendation, staff would engage with local Mi'kmaw partners on the intent, operation and opening of the Legacy Room.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

None identified.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

- Alternative 1: Regional Council could choose not to participate in the Downie Wenjack Legacy Room Project.
- Alternative 2: Regional Council could choose to support The Fund through an annual \$5,000 contribution for 5 years, however a one-time lump sum contribution reduces administrative oversight and demonstrates a commitment to the Fund's objectives.
- Alternative 3: Regional Council could choose to not direct the Chief Administrative Officer, through the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, to conduct engagement and partnership with the Mi'kmaw community in the development of and in the ceremonial opening of the Legacy Room or potential opportunities to collaborate to display Indigenous Art in City Hall.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

None.

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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