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January 22, 2021

Mayor Doug McCallum
Surrey City Hall
13450 104 Avenue
Surrey, BC V3T 1V8

Dear Mayor McCallum:

Re: Request to Acknowledge Indigenous Lands for City of Surrey Council Meetings

The Surrey Board of Trade requests that Mayor and Council respectfully acknowledge the Indigenous lands on which they gather at all meetings and at all public City events.

It is not that the City of Surrey is being forced to do this by way of a motion, but the fact that in the advent and commitment to truth and reconciliation, it is the right thing to do.

1. The significance of acknowledging the Indigenous land we stand on marks a small but essential step toward reconciliation. A territorial or land acknowledgement is an act of reconciliation that involves making a statement recognizing the traditional territory of the Indigenous People who called the land home before the arrival of settlers, and in many cases still do call it home, as it is in Surrey.
2. We must accept and reconcile uncomfortable truths about the history of Canada and how Indigenous Peoples have been treated. Whether or not we believe we have done our part is of no consequence. It is the opinion of those who have been mistreated for hundreds of years under systemic racism and abuse that matters. It is the fact that Surrey has the largest population of urban Indigenous Peoples in all of BC and that we create inclusive communities and workplaces, continuing to make Surrey a leader. The economic importance of this is obvious as it relates to Indigenous relations. Consistently improving this relationship requires meaningful, respectful, mutual dialogue with the First Nations, Metis, and Inuit communities.
3. It is important to see the territorial acknowledgement as an activation of Indigenous culture. To think about land activation and land acknowledgement is to remember that there are these rich Indigenous governances that still exist, that are ongoing and that will go into the future. This is important as we make Surrey an opportunity city. Its purpose is to recognize that we, as settlers and as people who are not part of First Nations or Indigenous groups, are here on their land. It's about consistently thinking about what happened in the past and what changes can be made going forward in order to further the reconciliation process. Territorial acknowledgements are not new. Acknowledging relationships to space and place is an ancient Indigenous practice that flows into the future.



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4. For Indigenous People and communities, acknowledgements remind us that we are accountable to these relationships and to remind us every day, of the accountability that everybody has to listen to the concerns of the community and how we can align to the Indigenous community.
5. Acknowledgements are part of an ongoing learning process. The acknowledgement should lead to more questions about who the people listed in the acknowledgement are and how their land came to be possessed by settlers.

We hope that for these reasons that the City of Surrey will consider our request for action and leadership to acknowledge the Indigenous lands on which they gather at all meetings and for all public City events.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 604-634-0342 or at email: anita@businessinsurrey.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Huberman', with a long, sweeping underline.

H. Captain (Navy) Anita Huberman
CEO, Surrey Board of Trade

cc: City of Surrey Councillors: Steven Pettigrew, Linda Annis, Doug Elford, Laurie Guerra, Brenda Locke, Jack Singh Hundial, Mandeep Nagra, Allison Patton