

DATE: May 8, 2009

REPORT TITLE: **A GATHERING: PEEL'S ABORIGINAL CELEBRATION**

FROM: Keith Ward, Commissioner of Human Services

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this report is to provide Regional Council with information on and an invitation to *A Gathering: Peel's Aboriginal Celebration*.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- *A Gathering: Peel's Aboriginal Celebration*, is an event organized by the Early Learning Services division in partnership with the Peel Aboriginal Steering Committee through the Best Start funding.
- It will take place on Saturday, June 6, 2009, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Chinguacousy Park, 9050 Bramalea Road, Brampton with free admission.
- The purpose is two-fold: to raise awareness and educate Peel residents (including Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people) about the Aboriginal peoples' heritage and culture; and to reach out to and engage with the Aboriginal community.
- All Council Members are invited to the Opening Ceremonies at 10:00 a.m.

DISCUSSION**1. Background**

A Gathering, Peel's Aboriginal Celebration 2009 will be the second annual Aboriginal celebration in Peel. Until now, Peel's residents have either travelled to other municipalities or returned home to a First Nation community, for Aboriginal celebrations.

a) Peel Aboriginal Steering Committee (PASC)

Through its Best Start initiative, the Region of Peel, Early Learning Services division has been working with the Credit River Métis Council, Métis Nations of Ontario and the Peel Aboriginal Network to address the identified service/program gaps for Aboriginal children and their families in Peel. In June 2007, these organizations together formed the Peel Aboriginal Steering Committee (PASC) to raise awareness and educate Peel's residents about the Aboriginal people's heritage and culture. Specifically, goals were as follows:

- Identify the Aboriginal people in Peel (including their needs and contributions)
- Identify space for Aboriginal activities
- Jointly develop programs/services appropriate for Aboriginal families

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- Develop programs to increase awareness of children 0-6 and their families and caregivers about Aboriginal heritage and culture

Since its inception PASC has recruited additional community members: Social Planning Council of Peel, Sheridan College, Peel District School Board, Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, Peel Children's Aid Society and the Region of Peel Healthy Babies Healthy Children.

The 2006 census data indicates that Peel's Aboriginal ancestry population is 11,750, an increase of 25.8 per cent from 2001. It is, therefore, important that Regional staff reach out to Aboriginal families and support the engagement of planning programs and services that are age and culture appropriate.

b) Impact on Peel's Children and Their Families

Children of Aboriginal descent will learn about their own heritage and culture as well as Non-Aboriginal children will have an opportunity to learn about the Aboriginal culture. This awareness in early years not only enables our children to enjoy other cultures and learn to respect each other but also builds a foundation which, in later years, empowers them to address specific community needs.

Above all, *A Gathering* brings pride to Peel's Aboriginal residents, and the involvement of the Region of Peel demonstrates its commitment to the Aboriginal community.

2. Details of the Event

a) Last Year's Event

This is the second year of the event. 2008 was a major success with nearly 900 people in attendance. Various guests, including Dr. Ruby Dhalla, MP Bramalea-Springdale; Dr. Kuldip Kular, MPP Bramalea-Gore-Malton; Susan Fennell, Mayor of Brampton; John Sanderson, Councillor, Brampton Wards 3 & 4; and Margaret Sault, Historian, on behalf of the Chief of the Mississaugas of the New Credit attended the celebration and were involved in the opening ceremonies.

b) Organizing the 2009 Event

Mayor Susan Fennell and Councillor John Sanderson have shown continued commitment and provided support in the planning for *A Gathering: Peel's Aboriginal Celebration*. Through their efforts, PASC has successfully acquired Chinguacousy Park for the 2009 event. Councillor Sanderson is a member of this year's venue sub-committee and has been influential in the collaborative work with the City of Brampton to organize *A Gathering 2009*.

A Gathering will be held in Brampton on Saturday, June 6, 2009, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., at Chinguacousy Park, 9050 Bramalea Rd., Brampton. All Members of Council are more than welcome to attend.

c) Purpose

This free family event is organized by the Region of Peel, Early Learning Services division through Best Start funding to raise awareness and educate Peel residents (including Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people) about the Aboriginal peoples' heritage

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and culture. This provides an opportunity to reach out to and engage with the Aboriginal community and for Aboriginal residents to connect with existing Aboriginal organizations. Survey information gathered at the event will assist in the ongoing planning and development of programs/services in Peel for Aboriginal families.

d) Theme and Program

This year's theme is 'The Three Nations'. 'Aboriginal Peoples' is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. The Canadian constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people: First Nations, Inuit and Métis. These are three distinct peoples with unique histories, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs. According to the 2006 census, more than one million people in Canada identify themselves as an Aboriginal person.

Cultural entertainment will be provided by First Nations drummers and dancers, Métis fiddlers and jiggers, Inuit throat singers, storytelling and traditional teachings by Elders. In addition to Aboriginal entertainment, residents will experience cultural displays highlighting Aboriginal heritage. Also, community-based early childhood-focused agencies and organizations will exhibit information on services/programs in Peel for families with children from birth to six.

e) Opening and Closing Ceremonies

A Gathering, Peel's Aboriginal Celebration 2009 will commence with Opening Ceremonies at 10:00 am and conclude with the Closing Ceremonies at 4:30 p.m.

All Council Members are invited to attend the Opening Ceremonies. Formal invitations have been sent.

This is an alcohol and drug free event. Peel residents can obtain more information or volunteer for the event by calling 905-791-7800 or visiting www.peelregion.ca/children/agathering

f) Student Aboriginal Education Day

On Friday, June 5, 2009, from approximately 10:00 am to 2:00 pm Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board and Peel District School Board will gather a group of grade 7 to 10 students to participate in a Student Aboriginal Education Day. Students will learn about and experience Aboriginal heritage and culture through traditional teachings and performances by members of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The anticipated cost is \$33,000. The cost to the Region is projected to be \$26,000. It will be covered by the 2009 Best Start approved budget for the Aboriginal Strategy. The Division has consulted Risk Management and Legal Services regarding legal agreements and insurance requirements for the event. Councillor John Sanderson has been instrumental in securing Chinguacousy Park for this year's venue. He has also been influential in the collaborative work with the City of Brampton who have waived the rental fee and are cost sharing on a number of event logistics. The Peel District School Board and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board are contributing over \$6,000.00 towards the cost of the event.

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CONCLUSION

Peel is enriched with a diverse population. The Region is pleased to assist with this opportunity for staff and Peel residents to celebrate and learn more about the heritage and culture of our indigenous peoples. The information to be collected on the day voluntarily from the Aboriginal families, will provide ongoing information to develop and improve Aboriginal-specific programs and services.



Keith Ward
Commissioner of Human Services

Approved for Submission:



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