

From: J. Spano
Date: Tue, Feb 26, 2019 at 10:05 AM
Subject: Indigenous Land Acknowledgment
To: Joe DiPaola
Cc: Office Mayor; Carmine Perrelli; Tom Muench; Greg Beros; Castro Liu; David West; Karen Cilevitz; Godwin Chan; Marj Andre

Hello Deputy Mayor Joe DiPaola,

I am a Richmond Hill resident currently residing in Ward 1.

After reading the article in the York Region newspaper titled, "Richmond Hill council delays decision on Indigenous land acknowledgement at meetings", I am glad that you shared your thoughts and beliefs about reciting the Indigenous land acknowledgment at meetings.

I am sure that many Richmond Hill residents and citizens across Canada share your thoughts and beliefs, however, such thoughts and beliefs illuminate that there is much work that needs to be done in educating Canadian citizens about Canada's colonial history and the impact colonialism continues to have on society today.

By not acknowledging the land we live on in Richmond Hill serves to reproduce colonial tendencies and support Eurocentric ideologies. My Italian, English and Irish ancestors were able to come to Canada and build a life here as a result of the treaties between Indigenous People and the state. Unfortunately, this "privilege" of settling in Canada has had a devastating impact on Indigenous People. The cultural genocide of Indigenous People as a result of colonialism continues to be felt today by many Indigenous People and their communities. The consequences felt by the loss of land, cultural traditions, cultural teachings, and languages generations ago is still felt today by many Indigenous People and their communities.

I encourage you to read "The Truth and Reconciliation Report" and "The Power of Social Theory: The Anti-Colonial Discursive Framework" by George Sefa Dei and Alireza Asgharzadeh in order to understand the importance of adopting an anti-colonial perspective, which will help you emphasize the saliency of colonialism and its continuing effects on marginalized communities, including the Indigenous community. This framework will broaden your understanding of the role of societal/institutional structures in producing and reproducing endemic inequalities. It will also help you to interrogate and challenge the foundations of institutionalized power and privilege and the accompanying rationale for dominance in social relations. This framework is important because it will help you recognize that individuals are not ahistorical subjects and have unique cultural histories and daily human experiences that shape current realities and that will impact our tomorrow.

The Indigenous land acknowledgement does not place an emphasis on a fraction of our society nor does it run contrary to the system of land registry title. The Indigenous land acknowledgement allows every person, from all cultural communities, to recognize that we are all enjoying the privilege of living in Richmond Hill as a result of the devastating impact settlers had on Indigenous communities. The land acknowledgment allows us to

take part in the federal government's reconciliation commitment as active Canadian citizens and to reflect on the beautiful community of Richmond Hill that we are fortunate to call home. We must pay this small tribute to Indigenous communities as it will ignite us to learn about and acknowledge the injustices that have been carried out against Indigenous communities and work towards challenging present-day colonialism within our diverse community.

I invite you to explore deeper into our colonial history and how that history is still alive and well in our communities today. Reading the below articles and books might provide a good place to start.

Elliott, David W. (2000). *Law and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada*. Canadian Legal Studies Series. Fourth Edition. Captus Press Inc.

McCarthy, E. Doyle. (1996). *Knowledge as Culture: The New Sociology of Knowledge*. Chapter Four: Self Knowledges: The American Tradition. London: Routledge

Talaga, Tanya. (2017). *Seven Fallen Feathers: Racism, Death and Hard Truths in a Northern City*. House of Anansi Press.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2012). *They came for the children: Canada, Aboriginal peoples, and the residential schools*. Winnipeg : Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Kind Regards,

Jessica Spano