



# Indigenous Advisory Council Consultation Report

October 25, 2018

Jake Miller, Librarian



## **Purpose**

The purpose of consultation was to garner feedback from the region's Indigenous communities on the formation of an Indigenous advisory body within the library. This council would advise on future Indigenous programming, events and collection development projects.

## **Methods of Consultation**

- Individual meetings
- Group meetings
- Phone

## **Perimeters of Process**

Consultations were focused on members of the region's Indigenous communities. All participants live or work within KFPL's service area. Consultation took place from mid-July to mid-October of 2018.

## **Contacts**

- Georgina Riel, Riel Consulting
- Terry Lynn Brennan, Inclusive Voices Consulting
- Paul Carl, Queen's Indigenous Education
- Laurel Claus Johnson, Community Grandmother
- Vanessa McCourt, Four Directions
- Deb St. Amant, Kingston Indigenous Language Nest
- Lindsay Morcom, Assistant Professor, Queen's Faculty of Education
- Samantha Alkenbrack, Métis Nation of Ontario
- Doreen Davis, Chief, Shabot Obaadjiwan First Nation
- Janza Giangrosso, Educator, Limestone District School Board
- Emily Coon, Programmer, Kingston Frontenac Public Library

### **Unavailable Community Contacts**

- Kathy Brant, Kingston Community Health Centre
- Pytor Hodgson, 3things Consulting
- Jillian Mundell, Indigenous Education Coordinator, LDSB
- Larry McDermott, Social Entrepreneur, Plevna and Sharbot Lake

# Feedback

## **General:**

There is a consensus supporting the formation of an Indigenous Advisory Council. Community members viewed this project as way to increase direct Indigenous participation within the library on an ongoing basis. The library has been defined as a colonized space, whereby Indigenous influence is relegated to a secondary status, and direct input through the council is a means to remedy this situation. There is more to the Anishinaabe language than Ojibway and Cree. This is Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee territory, not Ojibway and Haudenosaunee. The language offered should be Anishinaabemowin which includes Algonquin.

## **Service Population**

Questions have been raised regarding the target service population. KFPL's mandate to service the municipal region may overlap with organizations such as the City itself, or small organizations such as Four Directions. Terri Lynn Brennan and Vanessa McCourt expressed these concerns.

## **Proportional Representation**

It is crucial that programs and collections not give specific focus to the promotion of a single Indigenous culture. For example, Haudenosaunee or Métis people of Kingston over the Anishinaabe peoples of Frontenac County.

## **Membership**

There is a general agreement that membership should consist of diverse members of the community to avoid overrepresentation of one culture or organization. There should be representation from private citizens, educators, community leaders, health professionals and public officials from Kingston and Frontenac County.

It has been advised that council membership should not exceed ten individuals. A council exceeding this size would create time management and logistical challenges. Eight to ten members is ideal.

Georgina Riel and Deb St. Amant suggested a rotating membership on an annual basis to ensure that fresh perspectives are brought forward.

# Challenges

## **Commitment**

Many community members expressed tight schedules and logistical challenges of attending council meetings outside of traditional work hours. While Indigenous self-awareness was stated as developing in the region, community activism is still in a grassroots stage. Attendance may vary therefore vary from session to session.

## **Session Frequency and Length**

The suggested frequency of council sessions ranged from monthly to every four months. A compromise may rest in holding sessions at two or three month intervals. There is a general agreement that meetings should not exceed ninety minutes in length.

## **Accessibility**

Seasonal and transportation barriers may impact attendance at council meetings. Rural members may face greater barriers to attendance than those within Kingston. In addition, locations must be accessible for those with physical challenges.

## **Council Selection Process**

There was no consensus on how to vet candidates for the council. A front-led approach by KFPL risks bias, and choosing on behalf of the community would be perceived as a colonial approach to selection.

Deb St. Amant and Paul Carl of Queen's suggested that the inaugural meeting should be open to the community and centre on the goals of the council. Those interested in joining the council will be able to volunteer upon the meeting's conclusion.

# Avenues for Promotion

- Queen's CFRC: Aboriginal Voices - Native News & Music
- Kingston Aboriginal Community Information Network (KACIN)
- KFPL Social Media
- KFPL Press Release
- Limestone District School Board Calendar
- Kingston Community Health Centre Social Media

## Overall Recommendations

All community contacts expressed interest in the idea of an Indigenous Advisory Council. This project is timely as many contacts conceive it as a marker along the path to reconciliation between Indigenous communities and public institutions.

The council should function through collaborative decision making. Georgina Riel and Terri-Lynn Brennan have noted that these projects work only “when we walk alongside one another rather than following a leader”.

Apprehensions centred upon equal representation from all communities, and concerns over the level of commitment from council members. The issue of redundancy was also highlighted because of the existence of Indigenous advisory bodies within the City and the Limestone District School Board.