

Sept. 23, 2021

New community network forms to advance reconciliation in Oak Bay

A new network of community organizations has come together to advance the process of Truth and Reconciliation in Oak Bay.

ReconciliACTION Oak Bay is a collaboration of Oak Bay-based organizations committed to building community to community relationships with the Songhees and Esquimalt peoples and taking concrete action to build a just future together.

Founding members are the Community Association of Oak Bay, Oak Bay United Church and St. Mary's Anglican Church, with other organizations expected to come on board in the near future in a growing network of collaborators.

ReconciliACTION OB is animated by the spirit of the Sno'uyutth Welcome Pole which was raised on the grounds of Oak Bay High School to "spread good energy" and symbolize the beginning of a new relationship between the Oak Bay community and the Songhees and Esquimalt peoples in whose traditional territory Oak Bay is situated.

ReconciliACTION OB supports public engagement and action around Truth-telling and Reconciliation to foster awareness of the importance and potential elements of Reconciliation.

It will also work to encourage Oak Bay Council to honour the commitment it made in March to explore "more meaningful and collaborative ongoing working relationships with the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations" and "advance local initiatives and projects that achieve the goals and principles of Reconciliation and ultimately bring our communities closer together."

Among ReconciliACTION OB's potential activities in the coming year are:

- establishing respectful relationships with the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations;
- creating Oak Bay's own calls to action;
- developing a public engagement and action strategy between the Lək'wəḡən Nations and the Oak Bay settler community;
- partnering with Council and other community groups/organizations on activities and initiatives, where these are welcomed and determined to be of value to the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations;
- supporting the Songhees Indigenous Marine Trail and participation in the Oak Bay marina lease/Spewhung redevelopment.

ReconciliACTION OB meetings will be held monthly to share information among member organizations, coordinate activities and identify opportunities for collaboration.

The first two ReconciliACTION OB events are

- **National Day for Truth and Reconciliation observance, Sept. 30 at 10 am** at the Sno'uyutth Welcome Pole, in front of Oak Bay High School 2121 Cadboro Bay Rd. to honour residential school survivors, their families and especially the children who never came home;

- **Screening of *Picking Up the Pieces: The Making of the Witness Blanket* documentary film Oct 1 at 7 pm** at the Canadian College of Performing Arts, 1701 Elgin Rd. The Witness Blanket by Indigenous artist Carey Newman stands as a national monument to recognize the atrocities of the Indian residential school era.

Organizations wanting to join the ReconciliACTION OB network or residents looking for information about ReconciliACTION OB events, plans or activities can visit reconciliatioonoakbay.ca or contact:

Rev. Michelle Slater, Oak Bay United Church, minister@oakbayunitedchurch.ca or 250-598-5021, ext. 204

Rev. Canon Craig Hiebert, St Mary's Anglican Church, incumbent@stmarysoakbay.ca or 250-598-2212

Bruce Kilpatrick, Community Association of Oak Bay, abkilpatrick@gmail.com or 250-920-6413

Quotes:

"This reconciliation is the work of the whole community of human beings living on these lands, not just the formal institutions that we have created over time. It can be argued that healing and change will never happen at the institutional level unless it first happens among us—all of us, together. This is why we are honoured to be part of this coalition." **Rev. Canon Craig Hiebert, St Mary's Anglican Church**

"We have joined this coalition because as a church, we repent of our ancestors' inability to see and value the gifts of Indigenous peoples. We know that reconciliation requires truth to be told and lamented, before we can act toward reconciliation, and we want to be part of that healing and justice-seeking work." **Rev. Michelle Slater, Oak Bay United Church**

"Our community, pulling together, can play a fundamental role in the important work of truth and reconciliation. We need to listen and learn with respect and humility and be prepared to act. ReconciliACTION Oak Bay is a way for us to take that journey together." **Bruce Kilpatrick, Community Association of Oak Bay**

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