



**Council Member Motion  
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of June 19, 2025**

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**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** June 19, 2025  
**From:** Mayor Alto  
**Subject:** Support for 2025 Truth and Reconciliation Day Ceremonial Event and Tribal Journeys

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**BACKGROUND**

September 30, 2021, was the first National Day of Truth and Reconciliation recognized by federal government legislation.

On September 30, 2022, Songhees Nation hosted a cultural celebration and Pow Wow to mark that national day. More than 8,000 people from around the region, visiting Nations' members and dignitaries, attended the one day event, which took place at Royal Athletic Park.

Songhees Nation Council has advised the City of Victoria that the Nation will once again observe the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in a significant, meaningful way. This major cultural and ceremonial event will honour former Indian Residential School students and intergenerational survivors, in memory of those children who died while at these institutions. Songhees Nation has requested city support for this occasion, and in seeking additional financial contributions from other south island municipalities.

In 2022, 2023, and in 2024 Council approved up to \$50,000 in support of those years' events, and Council members and city staff helped organize, and participated in, the PowWow in both years. Council welcomed these opportunities to nurture the city's relationships with local Nations, and help facilitate learning and observation of local protocols, with other municipalities. This opportunity for collaboration continues our journeys on the paths of reconciliation.

This year, the Songhees Nation, with support from Songhees Events and Catering group, is again proposing to organize and host the 2025 September 30th cultural celebration and PowWow at Royal Athletic Park, a venue large enough to hold such a celebration safely and respectfully. It is expected that this event will once again draw substantial interest from Vancouver Island First Nations and visiting Indigenous Peoples, the general public and all orders of government.

To organize the event, the Nation has established an Indigenous coordinating committee, chaired by Songhees Nation and made up of representatives from Songhees and neighboring Nations. Once again, the Nation has honoured the city by inviting city staff to join this committee.

Songhees Nation has again requested financial and organizational assistance from the city, and help in seeking additional financial support and sponsorship from other south island municipalities to help defray costs associated with this ceremony.

The recommendations below would secure Royal Athletic Park for the use of the event, allow a financial contribution from the city of up to \$100,000 plus in-kind contributions, and request the mayor to invite contributions from other south island municipalities.

Xwsepsum Nation is collaborating with the Songhees Nation to host a stop for Tribal Journeys on July 29, 2025. Tribal Journeys is an annual event where canoe families from Nations all over the Pacific coast travel to a central location and have multiple cultural protocol days. This is a long-standing healing event, rich in tradition, that has grown significantly in the last few years. This incredibly meaningful cultural event will welcome approximately 500 paddlers, canoe crews, Elders, and guests from Indigenous Nations all along the West Coast, to Fort Rodd Hill, located within the shared traditional territories of the Xwsepsum and Songhees Nations. This site will serve as an overnight stop and gathering place as they continue their canoe journey to the final destination of Elwha, Washington. On the morning of July 30th, the crews will paddle onward to Beecher Bay, then arrive in Elwha on July 31st to begin five days of protocol and cultural celebration.

This event is a powerful expression of cultural resilience, connection, and resurgence. Xwsepsum and Songhees have conveyed their honour in playing a part in welcoming these travellers and their communities. An event of this scale is momentous, and requires significant coordination and resources. Xwsepsum Nation has requested financial assistance from the city.

Budget estimates put the cost of this event at approximately \$65,000, to cover costs including meals, facilities, cultural programming, security, transportation, and other logistics supporting the two Nations' canoe families travelling on their journey. The Nations have already raised approximately \$40,000. A financial contribution from the City of Victoria would help make this event a success, assist in covering critical costs and signal the City's continued commitment to reconciliation and partnership with Xwsepsum and Songhees Nations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Council approve up to \$100,000 to support an event to mark Truth and Reconciliation Day 2025, including in-kind support and the waiving of fees for use of the Royal Athletic Park on September 30, 2025, to be funded through remaining 2025 contingency funds and/or the Protocol budget, as needed and available.
2. That Council approve \$25,000 to support the Xwsepsum and Songhees Nations' organizing of the 2025 Tribal Journeys protocols and events, to be funded through remaining 2025 contingency funds and/or the Protocol budget, as needed and available.
3. That Council request the mayor contact mayors from other south island municipalities to invite other municipal contributions to support these events.

Respectfully submitted,



Mayor Alto