

To: Fraser Valley Aboriginal Relations Committee
From: Jessica Morrison, Policy Analyst – Indigenous Relations

Date: 2018-04-11

File No: 3400-01

Subject: Committee Name Change

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Fraser Valley Regional District Board support the amendment of the Fraser Valley Aboriginal Relations Committee (FVARC) Terms of Reference to reflect a change to the name of the committee to the Regional Indigenous Relations Committee (RIRC).

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Support Environmental Stewardship
Foster a Strong & Diverse Economy
Support Healthy & Sustainable Community
Provide Responsive & Effective Public Services

BACKGROUND

FVARC was founded as a Committee in 2012, following on the work of the previous Fraser Valley Treaty Advisory Committee (FVTAC, 1995-2012), and the FVRD's participation in the Lower Mainland Treaty Advisory Committee (LMTAC, 1995-2012).

The name of the committee was contemplated in an October 2017 FVRD Board visioning session for the committee. Board members asked staff to present a number of options for consideration, including retaining the existing name, which were provided through an anonymous survey. The highest ranked option was Regional Indigenous Relations Committee (RIRC).

DISCUSSION

Language and terminology are constantly in flux. This is true in any context, including the field of Indigenous Relations.

The term 'Aboriginal' arose in use in Canada as a collective noun in the 1970s. The use of the term signified an inclusion of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. It was enshrined in the language on the Constitution Act (1982), specifically in Section 35, which recognizes and affirms Aboriginal rights. The term then came into even broader use.

Since that time, Canada has joined 147 other states of the United Nations in becoming a signatory to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The shift toward using the internationally recognized collective term in Canada has followed the implementation of UNDRIP, signifying a recognition of the declaration and its terms.

While the term 'Aboriginal' remains in the Canadian Constitution, it has increasingly become limited to use that legal context. The waning usage of the term 'Aboriginal' aside from the constitutional context is not dissimilar to the use of the term 'Indian'. 'Indian' remains a legal definition in the Indian Act (1985), but is no longer in use in popular language, aside from the pejorative.

A name change for FVARC is recommended to ensure that the FVRD:

1. Is using common, contemporary language;
2. Recognizes that the use of the term Aboriginal may have fit with functions of previous committees regarding legal considerations of Aboriginal Rights and Title, but is no longer relevant to the work of the committee, which is shifting toward a collaborative space;
3. Signals a recognition and respect for the principles of relationships provided in guidance documents such as UNDRIP, the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and the 10 principles respecting the Government of Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples;
4. Lays a welcoming groundwork for invitations to new membership as the committee evolves and encourages Indigenous governance participation; and
5. Demonstrates leadership and direction to our staff, member municipalities, and to the broader public.

Other government organizations have recently updated their names to reflect the contemporary terminology for the reasons similar to those noted above:

Canada

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) updated its name to Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)¹ in 2015

BC

Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR) updated its name to Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR) in 2017

¹ In 2017 INAC was split into two new ministries, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs (CIRNA) and Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

UBCM

First Nations Relations Committee (FNRC) updated its name to Indigenous Relations Committee (IRC) in 2017

As noted, there are compelling reasons to make the change to Regional Indigenous Relations Committee. The consideration is not proposed as a matter of simply 'follow along' with trends, but to make an adjustment that makes sense for the FVRD as an organization.

BC Treaty Commission Chief Commissioner, Celeste Haldane, was a guest at the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Relations Committee in January 2019. She was asked by committee members to provide her perspective on the names of such committees, and shift toward using the term 'Indigenous'. She communicated that it is always a good idea to keep up with evolving language. She cautioned though, that this should not be a matter for lengthy debate or focus. She feels that there are certainly more critical matters of policy to spend time debating.

COST

N/A

CONCLUSION

Staff recommend that the name of the committee be updated to Regional Indigenous Relations Committee, and that the FVRD Board directs staff to update the FVARC Terms of Reference to reflect the change.

COMMENTS BY:

Jennifer Kinneman, Director of Corporate Affairs:	Reviewed and supported.
Mike Veenbaas, Director of Financial Services:	No further financial comments.
Paul Gipps, Chief Administrative Officer	Reviewed and supported

Attachments:

1. FVARC Terms of Reference (2013)