

County votes to acknowledge local Indigenous history at meetings

Written By PAULA BROWN

Dufferin County councillors had a brief discussion on land acknowledgment last week, after a motion was brought forward to have one at the beginning of each county council meeting.

During the council meeting on July 9, Mono Deputy Mayor John Creelman put forward the motion to have a land acknowledgment at the beginning of each council meeting to recognize the Indigenous peoples that lived in Dufferin County, and as an element of reconciliation.

Mr. Creelman was questioned by Coun. Bob Currie about what the land acknowledgement would entail.

“What it entails is coming up with an appropriate wording that identifies the Indigenous population that was here long before you and I were, and acknowledging their stewardship of the land at that time,” Mr. Creelman said in response to the question, adding that it was important to recognize Indigenous peoples' role in the history of the land and the future of it.

Both the Town of Shelburne and the Town of Orangeville read a land acknowledgement before council meetings. Orangeville Mayor Sandy Brown described Dufferin County as a nexus point for a number of Indigenous groups.

“The wording of our particular land acknowledgment was the result of some in-depth research and consultation of local elders,” said Coun. Brown.

Dufferin County Cultural Resource Circle is an Indigenous-led, not-for-profit organization that works in Dufferin and has been a resource in the curation of land acknowledgment within the county. They acknowledge the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe including the Ojibway, Potawatomi and Odawa of the Three Fires Confederacy.

Darrell Keenie, director of Planning, Economic Development and Culture said that a draft land acknowledgment was in place and, as of July 8, was being circulated to individuals and organizations for input and comments.

Coun. Currie also questioned what kind of land acknowledgment Coun. Creelman was thinking of.

“It was all bush,” said the Amaranth mayor. “Dufferin was pretty well all bush whenever the settlers came in here, so I'd just like a little more clarification as to what you are going to acknowledge.”

Warden Darren White told Mr. Currie about the Indigenous communities that lived within his municipality of Melancthon, saying there was a very significant Indigenous population.

“Whether it was bush or not is a little bit beside the point I think,” said Warden White. “We're just looking to acknowledge those who came before us, those who worked hard on the land, and those who were predecessors of us on the land.”

In the vote for the motion, Warden White said he saw none opposed and the motion was carried.