

Staff Report

Presented By: Jill Roote, Manager, Strategic Initiatives
Meeting Date: February 10, 2025
Subject: CEDI Program Progress and Graduation
Attachment(s): Friendship Accord
Pillars for Friendship Accord

Recommendation

That Council receive the CEDI Program Progress and Graduation Report for information.

Report Summary

This report provides a comprehensive review of the accomplishments of the Community Economic Development Initiative (CEDI) Program, a partnership between the Town of Saugeen Shores and Saugeen First Nation and commemorates the historic signing of the Friendship Accord, Wijiikiwenyidiwaad Miinwa Zgaabiignigan (Friends with one another & We are connected) on January 31, 2025.

Background/Analysis

The CEDI program, implemented in partnership with the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO) and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), is a national program that supports collaboration between municipalities and Indigenous communities to build respectful partnerships and sustainable economic growth. Through this program, Saugeen Shores and Saugeen First Nation have worked together to strengthen relationships, address shared economic opportunities, and foster mutual prosperity.

The CEDI Program has provided a framework for cooperation based on principles of trust, respect, and shared benefits.

Key objectives of the CEDI program include:

- Promoting reconciliation through meaningful collaboration and understanding.
- Developing joint economic development initiatives that reflect the needs and aspirations of both communities.
- Strengthening governance structures and communication channels to ensure long-term success.

Achievements Under the CEDI Program

Since joining the CEDI Program, the Town and Saugeen First Nation have achieved several key milestones, including:

- Establishing a strong foundation of trust and mutual respect between municipal and First Nation leadership.
- Hosting the first-ever joint Council meeting in April 2023 to begin the process of identifying shared priorities and opportunities.
- Collaborating on initiatives in tourism, small business development, and environmental stewardship.
- Sharing knowledge, resources, and ideas to enhance the region's economic and cultural vitality.

These accomplishments demonstrate the impact of the CEDI program to bring communities together in pursuit of common goals.

The Signing of the Friendship Accord

On January 31, 2025, the Town and Saugeen First Nation solidified their partnership by signing the Friendship Accord, *Wijikiwenydiwaad Miinwa Zgaabiignigan* (Friends with one another & We are connected). This historic event, held at the Governance Building on Saugeen First Nation, brought together leaders, community members, and stakeholders to celebrate the next phase of collaboration.

The Friendship Accord represents a commitment to work together on the following pillars of economic development:

1. **Tourism and Cultural Exchange:** Highlighting shared heritage and creating experiences that attract visitors to the region.
2. **Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development:** Supporting local businesses and fostering an entrepreneurial spirit.
3. **Environmental Stewardship:** Preserving and protecting the natural environment while advancing sustainable development initiatives.
4. **Youth and Workforce Development:** Empowering young people through education, skills training, and employment opportunities.

This Accord formalizes a vision for shared success and outlines specific areas where both communities will focus their collaborative efforts.

On January 31, 2025, further work was accomplished to refine the priorities under the Pillars. From this exercise, the following were identified as next steps for the Partnership to focus its attention:

1. Collaborate on a beach stewardship program and create a joint trails master plan with Ojibway trail names.
2. Develop a water-focused tourism strategy that promotes cultural education and environmental stewardship.
3. Ensure SFN's inclusion in the Town's water and sanitary sewer master planning.

4. Partner on the recruitment of healthcare professionals to address local needs.

Conclusion

The achievements of the CEDI Program and the signing of the Friendship Accord mark a significant milestone in the partnership between Saugeen First Nation and the Town. This relationship serves as a model for collaboration, reconciliation, and shared prosperity, paving the way for a vibrant future.

Linkages

- Strategic Plan Alignment: Pillar 3: Building Valued Relationships
- Business Plan Alignment: CAO Major Initiative

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding

Costs associated with this program are contained within the existing budget.

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