CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS
TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION WORKGROUP
PRESENTATION

June 30, 2021
On Wednesday, October 14, the Minneapolis City Council unanimously adopted a resolution calling for the exploration of a truth and reconciliation process through the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

The Truth and Reconciliation Working Group would examine the experience of American Indians and Black/African descendants and draw from the narratives of each group’s historical experience nationally, within Minnesota and in Minneapolis.

In addition to making recommendations on the scope of the TRC and the role of government in the work, this working group would create the elements of a TRC process, proposing who should be involved, when/Timeline/Length of time, how will the Commission operate (framework), where the process should occur and where is the HQ for the process, what supports and resources are necessary to meet the goals of the process.
How the group came together

• Group was selected based off of knowledge of community leaders, scholars, and historians around the reconciliation, truth telling, and conflict resolution.

• From that process of discerning, 15 group members were invited to be a part of this working group including C Terrance Anderson, Atum Azzahir, Dr. Kate Beane, Former Mayor Sharon Belton, Dr. Rose Brewer, Dr. Curtiss DeYoung, Vanessa Goodthunder, Pastor Jim Bear Jacobs, Robert Lilligren, Judge LaJune Lange, Christine McCleave, Pastor Shawn Moore, Melissa Olson, Melanie Plucinski, Sandy Richardson
Over the last six months, the TR Working Group examined and engaged in dialogue about the meaning of reconciliation, identified different types of truth and reconciliation practices as well as the practices of those commissions in several parts of the world. The TR Working Group began to compare aspects of the experiences of other commissions around the world and the impact that such a process might have on the City of Minneapolis. The workgroup began the process of understanding how a Truth and Reconciliation process could bring together American Indians and Black/African descendants in a process that would address the trauma and harm of both communities, understanding that the harms are distinct and also interrelated.
Process of Working Together

December – January

We initially envisioned meeting with working group members bi-weekly over a period of 5 meetings, believing that this would be sufficient time to develop the scope and recommendations that we would present. Initially, hired an facilitator with skill in this work outside of Minnesota to help lead this process which didn’t seem to work with our particular needs.
Understanding that we would need more time than we initially envisioned, we extended our timeline through June. This would give us more time to do the necessary research around this complex work as well as foster relationships with each other, something that wasn’t easy as a result of working over zoom instead of in person.

Met nearly bi-weekly to get a better understanding of where we wanted to go with this work. Also entailed a fair amount of reading and research in between the meetings.
Components of Recommendations

IDENTITY DEFINITIONS AND FOCUS OF WORKING GROUP
VISION STATEMENTS FOR A TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION PROCESS
HOW TO IMPLEMENT AN AUTHENTIC TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION PROCESS
MEASURING PROGRESS
MEMBERSHIP
Identity definitions and focus of working group

Early on, the T&R working group established that the work would stay true to the focus outlined in the resolution by City Council. It would be explicitly:

- For American Indians who were exiled and whose land was colonized and who are returning to their homelands in Minnesota;
- For Black/African descendants who came to Minnesota historically through enslavement as well as free explorers/traders, those who escaped from enslavement and through regional migration.
Vision Statements for Truth and Reconciliation Process

- An equitable future and measurably just society for upcoming generations.

- Shared authority on City resource decision-making for and by Black/African descendants and American Indian communities.

- Substantial dedicated resources and support for the American Indian and Black/African descendant communities for mental health to address historical and persistent trauma.

- Ongoing dismantling, disinvesting, and deconstructing of harmful institutional policies, practices, and procedures across City hiring, contracting, governing, and other operations.

- Decolonizing the City's history so that it is no longer divorces Minneapolis from the history of Minnesota, including deconstructing the narrative around the built environment. Minneapolis learns and honors the history of these lands and waterways of both historic and contemporary Dakota and Anishinaabe first peoples.
Vision Statements Continued

Minneapolis supports efforts made by Dakota communities to end Dakota removal and legal displacement in the state of Minnesota, thereby rescinding the executive order made by President Lincoln in 1863.

Minneapolis learns and honors the history of Black/African descendants and how the city and its residents benefited from wealth generated through the free labor available through system of slavery, Jim Crow practices, systemically racist policies, and legislation. We want to recognize the history from the inception of the City of Minneapolis and the buildings and institutions of historic value.

Addressing, at once, the genocide of American Indian and Black/African descendants through settler colonialism and the intertwined relationship of racial capitalism.

Unpacking the impact of forced assimilation and white supremacy which is connected to hoarding power and resources, disenfranchisement, racial violence and legalized social exclusion through racial zoning, public housing, subsidies for builders and community developers.

Deconstructing the creation of ordinances that were created by the City and enforced by the police that are discriminatory and violent towards Black/African descendants and American Indians. The cessation of the policing of bodies in public spaces that dictate who can be where and who belongs, valuing people over property and profits, in order to put an end to police brutality and to advance human rights.
Implementing an authentic T&R process

- Capacity Building and Transparency: Prior and through the duration of the truth telling, the City must invest in capacity building for the residents of Minneapolis and implement a communication strategy to ensure accessibility to information and to build trust with its residents.

- Essential Practices of the Truth and Reconciliation Process include but are not limited to:
  - A platform for the American Indian and Black/African descendant communities to speak openly about traumatic harm
  - The city's public recognition of harm, a formal and public apology, and a plan with dedicated financial resources and explicitly stated performance accountability measures for the necessary leadership shifts, a public covenant by changed leadership to not repeat these harms.
  - Perpetrators of harm, institutions, and those in positions of power, must be present for the truth-telling and commit to reading and making a public statement regarding the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
  - The City of Minneapolis funding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its work by every means necessary.
Measuring Progress

The Truth and Reconciliation working group will know that progress towards the vision is taking place based on redress and reparations on account of the harm committed against American Indians and Black/African descendants, as well as the reduction of disparities and inequities that exist because of this harm. It is only when these things are in place that reconciliation can ever be possible. Evaluation and other reporting mechanisms will be needed to establish baseline data and measure the City’s progress on meeting these things over time.
Because the recommendation is that the Minneapolis Truth and Reconciliation Commission fully addresses the complexity of structural racism, it is anticipated that this work take 7+ years. It was favored by most workgroup members and advised from past TRC commissioners that the Minneapolis Truth and Reconciliation Commission consist of Black/African descendants, American Indians, and white individuals. TR working group members also strongly recommend that the workgroup and City Council members appoint the commissioners and that selected commissioners be compensated for their appointment.
City's Role in the Truth and Reconciliation Process

1. City convenes and governs TRC
2. City hires outside organization to convene and govern TRC
3. Hybrid model that brings together the two

While ideal to achieve, the Work Group was not able to reach consensus on a singular vision for the City’s role prior to the presentation back to City Council and Mayor on June 30th. Even so, the Work Group felt that it was critical to outline this process in order to aid the City in making any final decisions as it acts upon the recommendations of this body.
NEXT STEPS