



October 19, 2022

**Open letter to Treaty One Nation, Southern Chiefs Organization,  
and Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs**

As you know, I am currently a candidate for Mayor of Winnipeg – a city located within Treaty One Territory, which are the traditional lands of the Anishinabe (Ojibway), Ininew (Cree), Oji-Cree, Dene, and Dakota, and is the birthplace of the Métis Nation and the Heart of the Métis Nation Homeland.

Last night I was happy to participate in the Treaty One Nation debate on Indigenous issues. Throughout this election, and in recent years while I have served as a city councillor, it has been impressed upon me by advisors from all backgrounds that the City of Winnipeg can be more effective in reconciliation efforts if it works harder to take a government-to-government approach with First Nations in this region. Tens of thousands of First Nations and Metis residents of Winnipeg are also rightly entitled to vote in Winnipeg as individuals - and through their vote, help to shape the future of our city.

Since all residents have a right to know how the next mayor will build relations with the Indigenous community, I am sending this as an open letter to share my intentions as directly as possible.

As a City Councillor, it was my honour to work with many regional Indigenous leaders through the TLE process. I also worked directly with First Nations leaders on urban reserve development projects both in my ward, and in the negotiations to launch the Naawi-Oodena project. I was especially honoured on the first day of my candidacy to receive the endorsement of former Long Plains First Nation Chief Dennis Meeches because of our shared work on the Long Plains urban reserve where the AMC's permanent headquarters is now located.

I was proud to support the development of the City's Indigenous Accord and provide funding for Freedom Road at Shoal Lake 40, the 24/7 Safe Space for Indigenous women at Velma's House, a new home for WASAC, and the Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgoohn project. As a member of the Winnipeg Metro Region Board, I participated in the Collaborative Leadership Initiative that brought together elected leaders from 11 Indigenous governments and 16 municipalities to tackle shared social, economic and environmental issues.

Those experiences inform my commitments to Indigenous voters. However, if I am elected on October 26th, please expect that I will be reaching out to you and other Indigenous leaders in the region as soon as practically possible to seek further feedback on other outstanding issues and concerns. As Mayor, my own priorities for expanding and building on relations with Winnipeg's Indigenous community will include:

### **1. Treaty Land Entitlements, and Potential Municipal Action**

Treaty One and other Manitoba-area treaties are agreements made in good faith by the Crown - and through it, various Canadian governments - to Indigenous people. Canadian courts confirmed that large land reserve entitlements are still owed to Indigenous people through those treaties. Canada's honour and word is at stake, as is the economic and cultural future of Treaty First Nations. The most recent update that I have seen in March suggests that just over half of entitlements in Manitoba have been delivered since the process of reconciling these claims began in 1997.

Honouring those commitments must be among the most urgent tasks of any reconciliation agenda – especially since access to land for investment is critical to successful economic development. Municipalities have not traditionally seen themselves as participants in these efforts. We are “creatures of the provinces” in Canadian jurisprudence, and prone to wait for provincial or federal direction on Indigenous issues. However, one of the themes of my mayoral campaign is that the City can and should act to facilitate progress in areas where more local activity can trigger more federal or provincial cooperation. As the Naawi-Oodena process and other urban reserve agreements show, both Winnipeg and any Manitoba First Nation seeking urban space for investment will benefit jointly from these efforts. Meanwhile, the City of Winnipeg is a major public landowner in the region.

As Mayor, I will proactively work with provincial and federal governments to identify opportunities to assist in resolving outstanding TLE claims.

### **2. Naawi-Oodena and the Master Development Service Agreement for Urban Reserves**

As Mayor, I will continue to show strong support for the Treaty One Nations' Naawi-Oodena development as a flagship project for urban economic opportunity – as I have while on City Council. I have also committed to integrate the Treaty One development site into Winnipeg's economy with renewal work on Route 90 / Kenaston Boulevard. Looking to the future, I have already publicly pledged to use the Naawi-Oodena Master Development Services Agreement (MDSA) as a template, where possible, to reduce red tape for any future urban reserve proposals, expediting future negotiations. If elected, I will be extending a government-to-government offer to Manitoba First Nations to use the MDSA for that purpose for any future urban reserve projects.

### **3. Opportunities for Social, Economic and Cultural Cooperation**

As a City Councillor, in 2021-22, I assisted in efforts to deliver two rounds of federal Rapid Housing Program funding to housing projects in Winnipeg. By way of example, note that one of the partner-proponents for this new housing in the 2022 round is the Manitoba Metis Federation. The City of Winnipeg has no experience and little capacity to operate social and supportive housing, but non-profits do – and many of them are Indigenous-led. My commitment to prepare six housing sites for modular supportive housing will need partners, and Indigenous organizations may be interested in

cooperating in that effort. Any assistance your organizations can provide to identify potential project partners will help people who may be living in unsafe conditions on our city streets.

I have committed that as Mayor I will work aggressively with our public service and City Council to ensure that our boards, commissions and our workforce better reflects the diversity of our city. If elected, I will be grateful for any advice or help that Indigenous leaders can offer to accelerate recruitment of interested First Nations leaders and employees.

Finally, the outgoing Mayor and Council did significant work with respect to the new Winnipeg Indigenous Accord. Through the Accord, the City of Winnipeg, Indigenous people and community partners are delivering on several cultural and heritage Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

While I believe a new focus on delivering solid economic and social outcomes for reconciliation is now urgent, efforts to promote cultural awareness and respect through the Accord must continue, and those joint efforts will make Winnipeg a better, stronger city as they proceed. As a next step in these efforts, I am curious to learn if you or other Indigenous leaders in the region would see any opportunity or value in efforts by the City to do more to curate, host or otherwise make available more records and materials to assist in the local protection and promotion of Indigenous languages through our public library system and/or the City Archives.

Thank you in advance for considering these proposals. I would be grateful if you could communicate them to your colleagues. Further, I have spoken frequently as Co-Chair of the Winnipeg Metro Region of the reality that “we sink or swim together,” and in that light, I would be pleased to learn of any proposals that you or your colleagues may have to further advance our shared growth, progress and success in Winnipeg and beyond.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Gillingham', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Scott Gillingham  
Mayoral candidate, City of Winnipeg