

Community Safety and Well-Being

2023
Annual Report

— City of —
PICKERING



Improve Community Vitality

Strengthen Learning, Education, Partnerships
and Creative Communities

Create Safe & Welcoming Neighbourhoods

Increase Physical Health and Mental Wellness

Improve Living Standards

Support Basic Needs

Promote Equity, Diversity, Inclusion,
Accessibility & Reconciliation

Land Acknowledgement

The City of Pickering resides on land within the Treaty and traditional territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation and Williams Treaties signatories of the Mississauga and Chippewa Nations.

Pickering is also home to many Indigenous persons and communities who represent other diverse, distinct, and autonomous Indigenous nations.

This acknowledgement reminds us of our responsibilities to our relationships with the First Peoples of Canada, and to the ancestral lands on which we learn, share, work, and live.



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Introduction

Each year, the city organizes, plans, and implements programs and services that support community safety and well-being. 2023 achievements included the creation of the City's inaugural Community Safety & Well-Being (CSWB) Plan and highlighted the programs and services provided to the community throughout the year.

In January 2023, Council directed staff to initiate the creation of a Community Safety and Well-Being Advisory Committee (CSWBAC) comprising diverse community representatives and establish a Homelessness Subcommittee to address the needs of the housing-insecure population in collaboration with Durham Region. The Terms of Reference received approval in March 2023. By June, the CSWB Advisor was hired, and an internal working group was formed to support the development of the City's first CSWB Plan.

The development of the CSWB Plan included four phases:

Phase 1: Research, Needs Assessment & Community Consultation Survey

This phase involved 14 outreach sessions at various community locations, encouraging residents to provide feedback through a digital survey, resulting in 332 responses.

Phase 3: Key Stakeholder Engagement & Community Consultation on the Draft Plan

This phase involved extensive consultation with over 300 participants through advisory committees, task forces, open houses, pop-up outreach events, and 8 key stakeholder engagement sessions.

Phase 2: Draft Plan Analysis & Development

This phase analyzed the survey responses to construct a preliminary draft of the CSWB Plan. Key themes included community safety, clean and safe park trails, access to health services and nutritious food, safe playgrounds, and safe driving conditions. The draft plan went to Council in November 2023, and staff received direction to undertake further community consultation.

Phase 4: Finalization of the CSWB Plan

The finalization of the CSWB Plan occurred in the first and second quarters of 2024.

Pickering's CSWB Priorities

Pickering's CSWB Plan includes 7 priority areas and 60 action items. This Annual Report has been sub-categorized by Pickering's Community Safety Well-being (CSWB) Plan Priorities.

1. Improve Community Vitality

Objective: Create a sense of belonging with residents through targeted initiatives like volunteering, programs targeting social isolation, or programs and events that support socialization and community pride.



Volunteer at 2023 Fall Fling

Volunteer Opportunities

Creating a sense of belonging through volunteer opportunities was exemplified in several ways.

- July to December 2023, 58 new volunteers were recruited, demonstrating active community engagement and a welcoming environment. The contribution of volunteer hours was significant, with a total of 10,802 hours contributed by volunteers, highlighting extensive volunteer involvement.
- 6,300 hours from Assistant Counsellors, 1,015 hours from Counsellors-in-Training, and 400 hours dedicated to Sustainability.
- A total of 289 volunteers were engaged in various areas across Community Services, Animal Services, and Sustainability. This diverse range of opportunities fostered a strong sense of belonging within the community.

Community Pride

In 2023, both the City and the library hosted a series of impactful Pride events, fostering a sense of community and inclusivity. Together, they organized 13 vibrant programs that attracted a total attendance of 1,157 participants. These events included an 2SLGBTQIA+ Pride event in Millenium Square, participation in the Durham Pride parade, and educational workshops, all aimed at celebrating diversity and promoting understanding. The combined efforts of the city and the library highlighted a united front in celebrating Pride, reinforcing the dedication to creating an inclusive environment for all residents.



Community Engagement

Park Stewardship Program - The program encourages businesses and community groups to keep local parks clean. As of 2023, there were 19 groups that became Park Stewards by making a commitment to do litter cleanups and promote a positive image in their neighbourhood park.

Community Litter Cleanups - Volunteers participate in litter clean up initiatives through Pickering's 20-Minute Makeover, Pitch in Parties, Plastics & Litter Challenge, and the Provincial Day of Action on Litter. This year, 47 community cleanups took place throughout the City, representing over 2,000 participants.

Take Pride in Pickering - The City hosted a community clean-up and tree planting event in the spring. Over 200 volunteers joined the two-hour event to pick up litter and plant 150 trees and shrubs in Duffin Heights. Take Pride in Pickering initiatives were undertaken by Environmental Stewardship Pickering (ESP), which is a partnership with the City, Ontario Power Generation, and Toronto and Regional Conservation Authority (TRCA).



Farmers' Market - The City hosted another successful year at the Farmers' Market to help residents connect with local farmers, bakers, artisans, and small local businesses. Residents also enjoyed themed events, such as 55+ Day, Environment Day, Pickering Blooms Day, and more. The in-person market ran for 17 weeks, with approximately 2,500 visitors, supporting upwards of 25 vendors. Thanks to community support, the market won Diamond Winner - #1 Farm Market for Pickering/Ajax Durham Region Readers' Choice Awards. This is the 5th consecutive year that the city has been recognized in the Readers' Choice Awards 'Best Farm Market' category.





Pickering Civic Complex

2. Strengthen Learning, Education, Partnership and Creative Communities

Objective: Create opportunities for residents to learn about community safety and well-being and contribute to solutions in creative ways.



Pickering Public Library

Vulnerable Sector Training

On November 8, 2023, a vulnerable sector training session was held for 29 City staff and advisory committee members, focusing on various aspects of homelessness and support strategies. Topics included the criminalization of homelessness, mental health and trauma, substance use and harm reduction, stigma and de-escalation strategies, debunking myths about homelessness, and effective ways to open conversations with housing insecure individuals.

By the end of the training, participants gained a deeper understanding of the role of trauma and trauma-informed care, common mental health disorders within the housing insecure community, the basic cost of living, barriers to employment, and current supports and initiatives in Durham Region.

Ontario Works & Ontario Disability Support Program Partnership

Launched in 2022, an Ontario Works Outreach Worker has been available every Wednesday at the Central Library to assist residents without requiring an appointment. This Outreach Worker connects residents to a variety of social services, including financial resources, housing, food security, counseling, children's services referrals, and assistance with replacing government-issued ID. The Outreach Worker also liaises with community agencies on behalf of individuals and assists with online government application forms. In 2023, Ontario Works assisted 254 clients at the library.

Recognizing the growing success of this program and the community's demand for access to the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), the Pickering Library introduced weekly ODSP support in August 2023. ODSP staff were available to assist residents once a week, serving 52 clients from August to December 2023.

Going forward, an ODSP Caseworker from the Oshawa office will be onsite every Friday at the Central Library. No appointment is necessary, and the Caseworker will be available to discuss ODSP files and connect residents with additional resources.

Fire Safety

In 2023, Pickering Fire Services provided various programs, seminars, training, and campaigns to the Pickering community.

Adopt a School - This comprehensive and age-appropriate program for grade one students aligns with the fire safety curriculum

Learn Not to Burn - This program for grade 3 students focuses on fire safety education and provides information about fires in Pickering.

The Arson Prevention Program for Children (TAPP-C) - This program is designed for youth and provides strategies to address a child's fire play or fire setting behavior. TAPP-C aims to reduce these behaviors and keep children and their families safe from fire. The program offers fire safety education, training, and risk assessments from local mental health agencies.





Pickering Fire Services's fire truck outside Hall #5

Older & Wiser - This fire safety program is aimed at older adults. It involves shared learning through Pickering Fire Services with the support of community groups, home support workers, friends, and families of older adults.

The After the Heat - This program is implemented following residential neighborhood fires. Its objective is to educate residents on fire safety, the likelihood of fire occurrences, and the most common causes of home fires, while also addressing any community questions.

FireSafe Pickering - This fire education campaign that runs in the spring and fall each year. The goal of the campaign is to educate residents on the probability of fires happening, the most common causes of home fires, and a call to action so residents could protect their family from fire. It is a door-to-door program delivered by firefighters.

Pickering Fire Services conducts various campaigns on fire awareness and education, such as; **The Get Real Pickering** program was reformatted and rebranded as **FireSafe Pickering**, campaigns **Emergency Preparedness Week**, **Fire Prevention Week**, **Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week**, and **12 Days of Holiday Safety**.

In 2023, Fire Services conducted fire extinguisher training, fire safety in the workplace training, station tours, school fair visits, and fire truck visits in the community. Pickering Fire Services and Ontario Power Generation participated in annual joint training and drills to be prepared for emergencies at the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station.

In 2023, Pickering Fire Services responded to 5,180 calls, a 48.9% increase from 2022 (3,478 calls). Below are the incidents by response type.

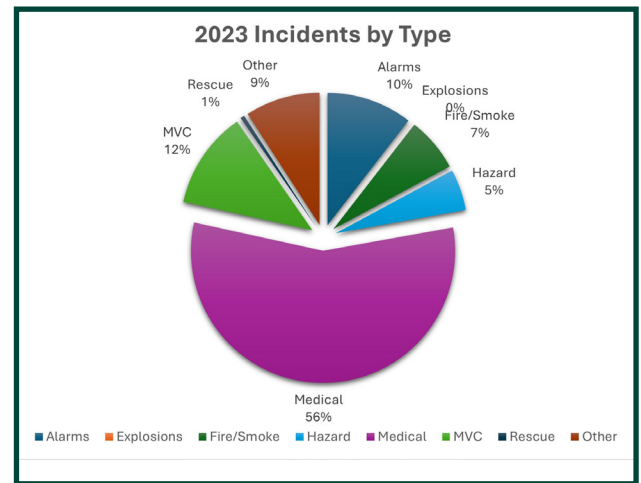


Figure 1.1 Monthly Incident Tracking
MVC Motor Vehicle Collisions



Deputy Jason Yoshida, Fire Chief Steve Boyd and Deputy Nigel Robinson

3. Create Safe and Welcoming Neighbourhoods

Objective: Creating safe, clean, attractive, and welcoming spaces. Park design, neighbourhood beautification, safe trails that promote healthy living, public art, spaces that promote healthy lifestyles (outdoor gym or hiking trails), lighting and cameras, and enhanced road safety using elements such as streetlighting and cameras.





Radar speed board in Pickering

Highway Traffic Act Amendment

The Community Safety & Well-Being Advisory Committee unanimously endorsed sending a letter to the Ontario Minister of Transportation and the Ontario Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, urging an amendment to HTA s.205.1. Council approved Report CS 36-23 to send documentation to support proposed changes that would allow municipalities to place temporary Automated Speed Enforcement (ASE) systems on any roadway under municipal jurisdiction, not just limited to community and school safety zones. The letter was also copied to relevant local authorities and organizations.

Road Safety

Automated Speed Enforcement (ASE) technology is identified as an effective means to enforce speed limits and enhance road safety for all road users. In Pickering, there are a total of three ASE systems deployed in designated Community Safety Zones to mitigate risks to pedestrians, particularly near schools.

In 2023, the City increased Radar speed boards from seven to ten. One of these is permanently fixed, whereas the other nine were rotational based on speeding trends and community concerns.

The City participated in the Road Watch program, which ran through the support of volunteers and Durham Regional Police Services. The Road Watch Program sent, on average, 400 to 500 letters to drivers that were reported by area residents for unsafe driving.

The City encouraged participation in a Slow Down Campaign, which allowed residents to post a free 'Slow Down' lawn sign on their property, available for pick up from City Hall. The program, which started in 2018, has been a success with residents picking up signs in support of community road safety. It is estimated that upwards of fifty signs were administered in 2023, making total sign distribution close to 600.

Security Cameras

In 2023, 267 cameras were in working order within the City of Pickering. New security upgrades and camera installations occurred during the year. To promote community safety and well-being, the City installed and upgraded new cameras in the following areas:

- **Don Beer Arena** - eighteen cameras upgraded
- **Bay Ridges Kinsmen Park** - one new camera
- **Beachpoint Promenade** - one new camera
- **Beverly Morgan Park** - one new camera
- **Pickering Heritage & Community Centre site** - two new cameras



Water is Medicine Public Art down at Rotary Frenchman's Bay Park

4. Increase Physical Health and Mental Wellness

Objective: To support physical and mental health through community spaces like community centres, community gardens, libraries, and programs.



Mental Wellness Committee

In 2023, the City of Pickering Mental Wellness Committee hosted 27 sessions and events to help support employee well-being. Examples include Fascia Stretch Therapy, Therapeutic Paws partnership, Wellness Walks, Lunch in the Park, Volleyball Tournaments, Music Therapy & more. Upwards of 200 employees participated and benefited from these engaging events.



Financial Assistance

The City of Pickering provided a range of financial assistance initiatives to help remove obstacles to leading a healthy lifestyle.

The Recreation Program Card Program - This initiative, run in partnership with Durham Region, split the cost equally between the city and the region, with each covering 50%. Families registered for one activity each season and could choose between Winter Break Camp and March Break Camp, as well as two summer camps. In 2023, 217 families utilized this program.

Low-Income Scholarship - Exclusively for Pickering residents, this scholarship offers a 50% cost reduction on a single registered activity or membership at the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex. Eligibility for those receiving Ontario Works is determined by their Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO). In 2023, 31 individuals used this scholarship for programs, and 39 individuals used it for memberships.



The Disability Scholarship - For Pickering residents only; a 50% charge reduction on a single registered activity or membership to the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex. For people who are receiving the Disability Tax Credit or ODSP, the subsidy is automatic. In 2023, 75 individuals used this scholarship for programs and 33 individuals used this scholarship for a membership.

The Canadian Tire Jumpstart Foundation - In 2023, they provided 23 families with funding to access city recreation programs.

The Durham Region Daycare Fee Subsidy - This subsidy, determined by yearly income, helps families with childcare costs. In 2023, 83 families received assistance for the City of Pickering's March Break and summer camps.

Increase in High-Demand Programs

In response to rising demand, the organization significantly expanded its sports and arts/pottery offerings, further enhancing the community's access to creative opportunities.

- 20 new sports programs were introduced, contributing 1,500 additional hours of arts-based programs.
- A new art studio dedicated exclusively to art programs was opened at the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex.



Community Garden Program Expansion

The Community Garden Program - 10 gardeners participating in the "Plot to Plate" initiative, utilizing all ten available plots last year. In 2024, the program will expand to 25 plots, providing more space for gardeners. The program will also collaborate with the local food bank to further its community impact.

Plant Party Workshop - To help kick-off the March Break, children from ages 6 to 12 were invited to the Pickering Central Library for two Plant Party workshops. 137 attendees were able to learn about



Children's Pickleball Program funded by The Canadian Tire Jumpstart Foundation back in 2020

seeds and how they grow from Pickering Parks Operations staff. The successful event ended with each participant taking home a starter seed kit to plant in their own backyard.

Earth Month Webinars - In celebration of Earth Month, the City offered free educational workshops and webinars with expert guest speakers. Over 130 individuals participated in these events to learn about a variety of topics, including Making a Birdhouse, Invasive Species and their Environmental Impact, as well as Gardening for a Changing Climate.

Community Listening Sessions

Following the traumatic death of a 17-year-old in 2023, the City of Pickering, Victim Services of Durham Region, and Durham Regional Police Service held a community listening session with residents to discuss the incident and offer support and services to the community. These sessions exemplified unity in the community and gave opportunity to provide and present social services and supports.

Later in the year, following another traumatic incident, Durham West Hockey Girls Association requested to lead a mental health workshop at Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex. The City provided the space for this program, and offered staff support and engagement during the event. Community engagement and participation from city staff were essential to support relationship building and future support systems to enhance community safety and well-being.



Pickering Public Library's 2023 March Break Plant Party Workshop

5. Improve Living Standards

Objective: Attracting businesses to bring new jobs to Pickering, making programs and services accessible to all residents regardless of income through low cost, subsidized or free programs and services, supporting food security through targeted programs.



Kids playing hockey at the City's March Break Camp



Snow Clearing

The City of Pickering offered senior citizens and people with a permanent physical or cognitive disability a snow clearing service to assist them with their sidewalk snow clearing responsibilities, and access to their home.

In 2023, Snow Clearing services were distributed to 430 households.

- 45.8% qualified as persons with a disability
- 54.2% qualified as seniors
- 23.3% qualified under GAINS (Guaranteed Annual Income Systems) for the free program
- 60.2% qualified with income less than \$81,761, 14.9% qualified with annual income between \$83,723-\$139,674
- 1.6% qualified with annual income between \$139,674-\$199,900

For more information about the City of Pickering’s Seniors & Persons with Disabilities Snow Clearing Program, visit pickering.ca/snowclearing.

Employment Workshops

In 2023, both the City and the Library hosted several employment and skill-building workshops. Together, they organized 11 programs that attracted a total attendance of 152 participants. These events included a 5-Minute Film Festival, Career Path Series, programs highlighting entrepreneurship, Job attraction programs, Cover Letter and Resume Building, Interview Preparation, Job Fairs, and Networking for Newcomers, all aimed at advancing career progression and financial literacy.

AUG 29 2024 TUE **Pathway to Newcomer Success: Job Searching in Canada with Pickering Welcome Centre**
9:30am - 11:00am
Central Library



Filmmakers Corner #1: Greg Jeffs



MacBook Pro

6. Support Basic Needs

Objective: Access to nutritious food, shelter and personal care/hygiene products and services through programs and services.



Overnight Warming Shelter

The Overnight Emergency Warming Shelter, a program funded by Durham Region, was facilitated at Peace Lutheran Church by Dedicated Advocacy Resource Support (DARS). The shelter operated from Friday, December 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024. It opened when temperatures reached -12 degrees Celsius or colder and/or a wind chill of -15 degrees Celsius or colder, which is warmer than typical cold alerts, to ensure better access for Pickering residents. Additional weather conditions warranted opening, such as freezing rain, high winds, and snowstorms. The shelter was open, when cold weather conditions were present, from 8:00 pm to 8:00 am, seven days a week. A blue flag flying at half-mast indicated that it was too cold or wet to be outside at night and that the warming center would open at 8:00 pm, while a full mast meant the center was already open.

This overnight shelter was a low-barrier, easy access centre that accepted animals and provided meals, snacks, clothing, and non-perishables to go. Having this service offered off-site and facilitated by an engaged community organization, proved to be effective in bridging necessary services to housing insecure individuals. In 2023, DARS provided safe overnight refuge on twenty-nine different dates, assisting 468 individuals from extreme cold weather.



In 2022, the overnight shelter was offered by the City in partnership with DARS at the O'Brien meeting rooms. This number marked an increase of over 1500% from 2022.

Extreme Heat

The City of Pickering provided designated public facilities when an extreme heat warning was issued. During the operating hours of the facilities, residents were able to seek shelter to ensure public safety and wellbeing. Facilities have included the Pickering Public Library, Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex, and East Shore Community Centre.

Shower Access

In 2023, the City of Pickering, in partnership with DARS, provided shower facilities in Pickering for those that are experiencing homelessness. Shower facilities were made available at the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex (CHDRC) in the arena dressing rooms of the O'Brien Rink. Staff from DARS provided towel and hygiene packages and oversaw the use of the facilities. They also assisted with providing additional information on services and resources available in the community to the patrons. In 2023, DARS assisted 75 individuals to have access to shower facilities.

Partnerships

DARS is a community outreach organization that provides meal services, clothing and non-perishable foods, and partners with community organizations to enhance access to services. In 2023, DARS provided over 120 meals to housing insecure residents in Pickering.



Wellness Checks

The City of Pickering collaborated with local organizations and departments to address the surge in housing insecurity in 2023. Wellness checks were supported by Customer Care, Operations, Bylaw, and Community Services, and conducted in partnership with various external organizations and outreach teams. These partners included Dedicated Advocacy Resource Support (DARS), Durham Region's 24hr Street Outreach Team, Mental Health Outreach Program (MHOP), Primary Care Outreach Program (PCOP), Christian Faith Outreach Centre (CFOC), Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), and John Howard Society (JHS) of Durham Region.



Valley Plentiful Community Garden at Diana Princess of Wales Park

Together, they assisted with wellness checks and municipal encampment strategies. By the end of the year, there were an estimated twenty-five housing-insecure individuals, marking a 25% increase from 2022.

Access to Wi-Fi

Pickering Public Library offered access to free Wi-Fi Hotspots for Pickering residents. This service supported low-barrier access to the internet, enabling residents to access information pertinent to education, health care, food, housing, and income. The hotspots circulated 147 times in 2023, a 24.6% increase from 2022. Due to waitlists and high demand, eight hotspots were added for 2023.

Urban Agriculture Initiatives

In February 2023, Pickering Council requested staff to explore ways to enhance urban agricultural initiatives. Through Let's Talk Pickering, an online survey was conducted to better understand the needs of the community, and 530 respondents shared their insights. The City also engaged with schools, places of worship, and members of the development community to explore incorporating urban agriculture features into their lands.

Here are some of the initiatives:

- Working with community partners is a great way to move forward. For example, in 2023, 'We Grow Food' collaborated with residents of a Durham Community Housing site to construct raised garden plots using funds from the City's Community Grant program.
- The city's Environmental School Grant Program was used by local area schools to build raised garden beds and purchase indoor vegetable growing towers.
- Currently, Pickering operates two gardens: one at Valley Plentiful Community Garden (VPCG) in Diana Princess of Wales Park, and another at the George Ashe Library & Community Centre (GALCC), part of the '55+ Plot to Plate' program. Both sites include donation plots that support the local food bank.
- In 2023, the city began planning enhancements to the VPCG site, including accessible parking and raised beds, with a projected completion in fall 2024. The Pickering Public Library also launched its first Seed Library program to encourage healthy food and sustainable practices while protecting plant and crop biodiversity. In 2024, the library will offer free programs on food literacy, seeds, and gardening. This project is divided into three phases, with Phase 1 complete and Phases 2 and 3 set for completion by the end of 2024.

Pickering Prom Boutique

To support high school students with formal clothing for their prom and graduation, the city, in partnership with the Pickering Public Library, hosted its first-ever Prom Boutique. The event encouraged residents to donate their gently used dresses, suits, and formal wear at the Pickering Public Library, so that students could shop for free. Thanks to the community's generosity, the two-day event supported 175 students to dress for their upcoming special events.



7. Promote EDI (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion), Accessibility & Reconciliation

Objective: Create opportunities for engagement and relationship building through safer community spaces, programs, events, and community expression. This priority spans across each priority area and is a non-exhaustive list that will reflect current context.



2023 Culture Fusion

Durham Regional Police Children's Games

The Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee supported the 39th Annual Durham Regional Police Children's Games for approximately 90 disabled youth aged 5 to 18 held November 5, 2023. The City of Pickering has partnered with Durham Regional Police, Grandview Children's Centre, and other community organizations to offer the Children's Games annually since 1985.



Supporting Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

In 2023, Pickering Public Library facilitated 15 programs on Indigenous teachings, learning, and partnership-led events, with an overall attendance of 515 residents and staff.

In 2023, the Office of the CAO planned and delivered various training and learning sessions for city staff and advisory committees. The three sessions below were organized by the City's Senior Advisor, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion:

Two-Spirit Champions: There are No Closets in Tipis

Facilitator: Jack Saddleback

This training session delved into the colonial roots of transphobia and homophobia, exploring how these issues have historically impacted Indigenous communities. It emphasized Indigenous perspectives on Two-Spirit individuals, highlighting the unique roles and recognition they hold within their cultures. Participants learned about the potential for transformation and healing within communities that embrace diversity and support Two-Spirit Champions.

Black History in Canada and Anti-Black Racism

Facilitator: Educator, Channon Oyeniran

This session provided an in-depth look at the intertwined histories of Black and Indigenous peoples in Canada, focusing on their enslavement and the subsequent impacts. It covered the historical significance of Emancipation Day and the International Decade for People of African Descent, shedding light on ongoing

legacies of enslavement. The training also addressed anti-Black racism, including the prevalence of racial microaggressions.

Treaty Relations & Indigenous Ways of Knowing

Facilitator: Grandmother Kim Wheatley

Grandmother Kim Wheatley guided participants through an exploration of Indigenous history and its contemporary impacts. The session covered critical topics such as land acknowledgements, nation naming, and the importance of treaty territories. Discussions also included the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Report, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW), and the Indian Act. Wheatley, an Anishinaabe Grandmother and Ancestral Knowledge Keeper, shared her experience and knowledge, fostering a deeper understanding of Indigenous perspectives and the importance of reconciliation.



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion promotions



Orange Shirt Day 2023



Artwork provided by Pickering Resident and Artist, Daniel Davis

"Through my passion of photography, I deliver compelling and comprehensive collections of imagery geared to those seeking visual storytelling as part of their creative projects."



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