

Jordan Pezzo, City of Toronto



Project Overview and Role:

The City of Toronto has been focused on finding reconciliation actions with Indigenous communities, and chose to create a grant funding program to help support Indigenous-led climate action. My role in the City as the Urban Indigenous Climate Action Fellow was to find ways for the City to continue supporting Indigenous peoples in climate action, whether through ongoing funding or offering other resources.

What did you learn from the project?

This project gave me some insight to the multitude of processes that happen within the City during decision-making along with implementation of different actions. I was surprised to learn how sometimes the process seems super simple and at other times incredibly tedious. I had assumptions before but now feel more comfortable in my knowledge about how information gets passed along City channels, and how things actually come to fruition. I also have learned how important relation-building is. This was a 14 week position and during this time I was able to connect with other City employees within the Environment and Energy Division and the Indigenous Affairs Office, other contract and summer students employed by the City, as well as some of the other USDN fellows virtually. Overall I feel my involvement in this project gave me the opportunity to meet a wide range of people and learn from a variety of different perspectives.

What was the impact of your work?

The insights I gained during my time here will be offered to the City staff creating the grant program. I was sure to include recommendations for the City going forward with consulting Indigenous peoples, such as ensuring mutual gain and allowing time for genuine connections, rather than simply rushing through procedures in a formal setting. Oftentimes that type of

setting does not allow for any type of genuine connection to form as it feels so impersonal and forced, so having events where the focus is understanding each other will prove beneficial. The City held a feast event the week of September 12th which went very well, it was a time for City and Indigenous workers to meet each other face to face and share stories about who they are and why they do what they do, which is essential to relationship building.

Any links to project deliverables?

The grant program is not yet finalized, but once published will be available to view on the City of Toronto's website at the following link:

<https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/grants-incentives-rebates/>

Other programs, grants, incentives and resources to address climate change:

<https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/water-environment/live-green-to-ronto/>