Council Direction:

At its August 12th, 2010 meeting, Council approved the following:

That City staff be directed to consult with the aboriginal community, respecting the feasibility of completing a public art project; to be located at Battlefield Park that would explore the theme of the aboriginal role/contribution to the Battle of Stoney Creek, and report back to the Emergency & Community Services Committee.

The purpose of this report is to report to Emergency and Community Services Committee on staff’s consultations to conclude this matter and remove the item from the Outstanding Business List.

Information:

The public consultation phase of the Battlefield Park public art project began with a focus group meeting, which took place on April 1st, 2009, at Grandview House, Battlefield Park. Facilitated by the Culture Division, the meeting was attended by nine people in total, including members of the Stoney Creek community, the aboriginal community, and City staff.
At this focus group, heritage implications and long term plans for the site were discussed. Themes, locations, and types of public art were also discussed. Four major themes emerged from this forum:

- Canadian Heroes – A defining moment in Canadian history
- Agricultural Community Heritage and Landscape of Stoney Creek
- Healing and Peace – Reconciliation
- Commemorative Period

In response to Council direction, City staff formed a separate Aboriginal-based focus group to discuss the feasibility of an aboriginal theme for this public art project. Members of this group include Buddy Martin, historian, Yvonne Maracle, artist, both are members of the Hamilton Aboriginal community; Rick Hill, artist and curator and Keith Jamieson, historian and professor, both are members of the Six Nations community. Rick Hill participated in the original focus group about this project. Their participation has helped establish both an Aboriginal historical perspective and an authentic community narrative critical for both planning and project development.

This group is supportive and committed to working with the City on a continuing basis until completion of the project. They will provide city staff with contextual research, narratives and histories to help focus the theme of the project within the broader context of healing and reconciliation.

Staff subsequently presented details of this plan and the process by which it was developed to the Hamilton Executive Directors’ Aboriginal Coalition (HEDAC), where it was received positively. HEDAC has previously provided advisory services to the City of Hamilton regarding aboriginal matters.

There is a $250,000 allocation in the 2010 Battlefield Park Master Plan capital budget for this project. Any additional funds required will be drawn from Public Art Block funding.

In line with the principles of the City’s public art process, and the Culture Division’s Strategy 2012, the Battlefield Park public art project exemplifies the numerous benefits that public art achieves within the City of Hamilton. More broadly, the implications for focusing on an Aboriginal-based theme in the development of public art at Battlefield Park are significant.

In organizing the parameters of this project, the meanings and outcomes of the Battle of Stoney Creek 1813, can be positively interpreted in a peaceful and celebratory way by focusing on healing, reconciliation and community. An Aboriginal-based public art project will help nurture and grow this significant aspect of Hamilton’s heritage.
Culture division staff will be creating a formal advisory group, comprised of members of the Aboriginal community, to work with the city on the design, research and implementation phases of the project. Staff will report back to members of the community who attended the focus groups, to ensure all interested parties are aligned, and to keep communication open. Culture division staff will work with members of the Battlefield Park Master planning team to participate fully in finalizing a design for the scope of the project. An artist will be selected through a competitive process, in keeping with the City’s established public art process, with an anticipated installation date in 2012.