Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA

Edmonton

What We Have Heard, Corporate Alignment, and Priorities 2022

Land Acknowledgement

The City of Edmonton acknowledges the traditional land on which we reside is in Treaty Six Territory. We would like to thank the diverse Indigenous Peoples whose ancestors' footsteps have marked this territory for centuries, such as nêhiyaw (Cree), Dené, Anishinaabe (Saulteaux), Nakota Isga (Nakota Sioux), and Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) peoples. We also acknowledge this as the Métis' homeland and the home of one of the largest communities of Inuit south of the 60th parallel. It is a welcoming place for all peoples who come from around the world to share Edmonton as a home. Together we call upon all of our collective, honoured traditions and spirits to work in building a great city for today and future generations.

From the City of Edmonton's Indigenous Framework

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: Resiliency and Strength **4**

ALIGNMENT and CORPORATE APPROACH **5**

What We Have Heard So Far **8**

What We Are Doing / Going to Do **10**

SHORT TERM PRIORITIES (2021-2023) 10

MEDIUM & LONG TERM PRIORITIES (2023 & Beyond) 12

Moving Forward **14**

INTRODUCTION: Resiliency and Strength

It is because of the strength, resilience, and determination of powerful Indigenous matriarchs and community that Indigenous peoples are here today. Without the decades of fighting for recognition and justice, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and girls would not have been realized. The violence and oppression that Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people have experienced through colonization has gravely shaped the realities of Indigenous peoples in Canada. This process has been identified as genocide by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and girls, as stated in the National Inquiry:

> *The violence the National Inquiry heard about amounts to a race-based genocide of Indigenous Peoples, including First Nations, Inuit and Métis, which especially targets women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. This genocide has been empowered by colonial structures, evidenced notably by the Indian Act, the Sixties Scoop, residential schools and breaches of human and Indigenous rights, leading directly to the current increased rates of violence, death, and suicide in Indigenous populations. (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Reclaiming Power and Place, Volume 1a, p. 50)*

It is difficult, but vital to acknowledge that genocide has been committed in Canada, and has created the social, politcal, economical, and cultural frameworks of our society. The truths shared in the Inquiry process tell us of the harm done but also speaks to the resilient power of Indigenous wisdom, teachings and ways of being. The laughter, love and strength of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA communities has never left, despite over a century of oppression. It is the wisdom and guidance of these leaders that the City must seek out if it wants to address the Calls for Justice in a way that is grounded in local solutions and Indigenous understanding.

The systemic levels of discrimination that dominate political, economical and social spheres through inaction, silence and indifference generates hardship, suffering, and marginalization of Indigenous peoples at individual or group levels[1] and as such it is vital that colonization is foregrounded as the determining factor of the violence that First Nations, Métis, Inuit women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people face within Canada. The effects of legislative oppression that has been passed through the Indian Act have long standing effects such as disconnection from self, community, land and culture which have restricted voice, choice, sovereignty and safety for Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people. The overrepresentation of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people[2] in the numbers of murdered and missing peoples across Canada is in direct correlation to the systemic levels of oppression stemming from the Indian Act and systematically enforced through policy, procedures and programming instituted by colonial governing bodies. The cost of this oppression is often viewed as an

---

[1] Maaka, et al, "Mainstreaming Indigeneity by Indigenizing Policymaking: Towards an Indigenous grounded analysis framework as policy paradigm," (2009). Indigenous Policy Journal.
[2] According to Native Women's Association of Canada research, Alberta has the second highest number of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada.

Indigenous problem but these realities have been crafted and instilled through generations of systemic levels of patriarchy, racism, and capitalism that were specifically designed to ostracize and eliminate Indigenous peoples.

The cultural oppression of marginalized peoples [Indigenous] by the dominant group has been a process spanning hundreds of years through four main elements: 1) define and then label a racial or ethnic group as a problem in society; 2) embellish and stereotype the shortcomings of a group and state that they are intrinsic to the group; 3) employ misrepresentation so that negative attributes about the group are taken for granted; and 4) exclude the group from the telling of history as understood by society[3]. It has taken generations and centuries of colonial influence and narrative to get to our current state of navigating complex, intergenerational trauma in Indigenous communities.

ALIGNMENT and CORPORATE APPROACH

Addressing the Calls for Justice is aligned to the City's Strategic Planning Framework, including the City of Edmonton Indigenous Framework. The City of Edmonton Indigenous Framework Corporate Action 1 calls on the City of Edmonton to:

> **Support the journey of Reconciliation by applying the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a foundation for the Indigenous Framework.**

The Indigenous Framework was informed and inspired by these national and international efforts, and sets the local context or frame that will support and align the City's responses to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Framework guides the City in making the delivery of municipal services more inclusive and responsive to the needs of Indigenous peoples including women, girls, 2SLGBTQQIA communities. The Framework calls for the City of Edmonton to take action, to review and change policies, procedures, programs, and ways of doing business that impact Indigenous peoples.

Through this journey of building and nurturing the Indigenous Framework, Elders and Knowledge Keepers advised the City of the importance of Ceremony to ground and guide this work. By entering into Ceremony with the Elders and Knowledge Keepers during the development of the Framework, the City committed to continuing to move this work forward and continue building stronger relationships with Indigenous Peoples.

From this Ceremony came a name and guiding concept to guide the City's service to, and relationship with, Indigenous Peoples on this land:

---

[3] Allen, Kenneth, (2012) "Explorations in Classical Sociological Theory: Seeing the Social World.2nd ed. California: Pine Forge Press.

Wahigicicobi (Wah-hee-gee-chee-cho-bee), a Iethka Nakoda word, meaning kinship relationships. Nehiyaw (Cree) Elders also shared with the City the concept of **Wâhkôhtowin**. These guiding words and concepts get to the heart of what the City is trying to do with the Indigenous Framework - to build and nurture connections between the City and Indigenous Peoples in Edmonton, to see each other as kin, to develop an understanding of Indigenous worldviews, and to understand that relationships include reciprocity and responsibilities to one another.

Following the guidance of Indigenous Elders, Community, and the values of Wahigicicobi / Wahkohtowin upheld by the Indigenous Framework, the City of can be an integral Connector, Advocate, Partner and most importantly, Listener alongside Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people in Edmonton.

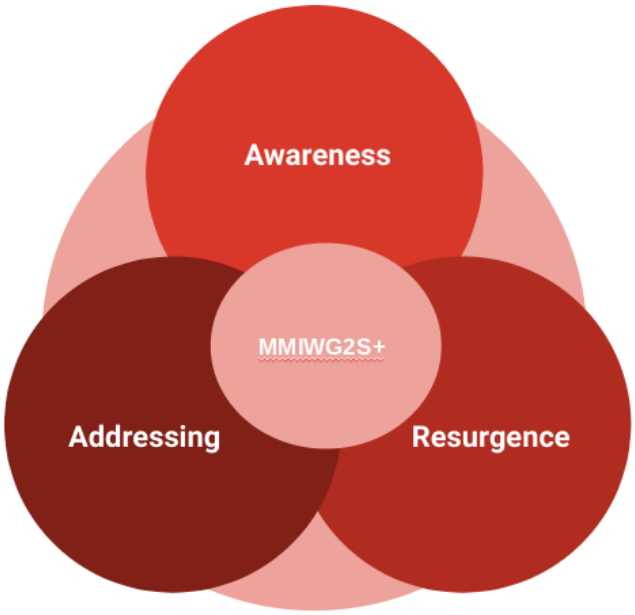
Ongoing Response to the Calls for Justice - Local Solutions

Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people continue to face the repercussions of cultural oppression and colonization. In Canada, Indigenous women and girls are nearly three times more likely to experience physical or sexual violence than non-Indigenous women and girls[4] and Alberta is second only to British Columbia in the number of murdered and missing Indigneous women and girls. The impact of this can be seen in the overrepresentation of Indigenous women within the criminal justice system as both victim and offender, their children being overrepresented in the provincial child welfare system, and being at higher risk for human trafficking.

Local solutions and responses to the repercussions of violence in the lives of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people need to be grounded in collaboration and leadership from Indigenous communities in Edmonton and area. It is evident that there are already strong relationships and connection points throughout the community and the City in addressing these issues, which need to be bolstered.

Administration compiled a list of some of the City's current and future activities that support the City's response to the Calls for Justice. These activities have been grouped into three themes to tailor the corporate approach to one that is locally centered and culturally responsive:
1) Awareness; 2) Addressing; and 3) Resurgence.

[4] 2019 Vital Topic: Indigenous Women in Alberta, Edmonton Community Foundation



Awareness

The majority of Canadians have been intentionally misinformed about the realities of colonization and the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Crown. As discussed previously, an essential aspect of cultural oppression is directing the narrative of the 'other' which is often steeped in stereotypes that negatively impact the ways in which the dominant society interacts and ultimately views Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. These false narratives are extremely damaging, and if people are uninformed of the truth, then they are unlikely to act or respond in helpful or positive ways. To begin the long journey of addressing the Calls for Justice, the corporation will need to learn the truth of our shared histories that have created the reality of violence that Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.

This is a journey of connecting our hearts, minds and spirits as city staff and Edmontonians. The City is currently working with the Moose Hide Campaign to create awareness throughout the corporation. This campaign works to build understanding of the complexity of colonial violence against women and children and uses their platform as an opportunity for others to take a pledge to stand up and denounce violence against Indigenous women and children. The moose hide pin is a public symbol of this pledge. At the same time, the City must also be present and engaged in community-led efforts to raise awareness of the issue. To have meaningful local impact requires relationships and solidarity.

Addressing

The City has been an active participant in addressing the symptoms and effects of colonial violence that is experienced by Indigenous peoples such as poverty, houselessness, gender-based violence, and racism. The City has many strategies and programs that are intended to address the issues that are a result of this violence. Often there is the idea that if initiatives are not

specifically named for a specific group of people, that it is not impacting them. This understanding should be challenged as the work moves forward in a collective, collaborative effort to make meaningful progress towards reconciliation and responding to the Calls for Justice. Addressing Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA encompasses and crosses City initiatives such as Edmonton: Safe City, Gender Based Violence Prevention, Anti-Racism Strategy development, Indigenous Housing Strategy development, Community Safety and Wellbeing, and Poverty Reduction. This work should continue to be supported and strengthened.

Indigenous-led programs and services that address the underlying issues that lead to missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people should be supported and bolstered with City as a Listener, Connector, Partner, and Advocate. Although there has been considerable effort to address the consequences of violence and oppression experienced by Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people, the City needs to demonstrate solidarity with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and 2SLGBTQQIA groups and individuals.

Resurgence

The displacement of Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people from culture, community, and ultimately land was a targeted attack on the pedagogy of Indigenous worldviews. This displacement controlled the movement of Indigenous women and girls within social, economic, and political spheres for generations and continues to do so - ultimately attacking Indigenous women and girls' sense of self, purpose and control. The resurgence of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit teachings, languages and culture are essential to the journey of reconciliation. It is the role of the City to embody the intention of Wahigicicobi / Wahkohtowin and to work with the guidance of Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community leaders in addressing systemic change to support the resurgence of Indigenous ways of being and knowing.

Supporting Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA in reclaiming their roles, languages, and ceremonies requires the City to live out the roles and commitments of the Indigenous Framework. Developing and supporting programming that allows Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA to share their voices, mentor and support one another, and access Elders and Knowledge Keepers within the city is key.

What We Have Heard So Far

Administration reached out to 27 specific organizational partners, grassroots and community leaders, and government stakeholders to have one-to-one virtual meetings between December 2021 and February 2022 to discuss: 1) their involvement and/or response to the Calls for Justice, 2) where their organization or initiative might need City support, and 3) to share some of the City's responses to the Calls for Justice.

Indigenous women centered organizations, Indigenous community leaders and Indigenous organizations (including representation from all distinction based groups) in the Edmonton area, as well as all levels of government,

were identified through a stakeholder mapping process. Administration sought out the guidance and support of Indigenous Matriarchal Elders and Knowledge Keepers guiding the City's Indigenous Framework on their experiences and understanding of this issue.

The way in which the City's response to the Calls for Justice was crafted was affirmed by these community conversations with community leaders, Indigenous organizations, and levels of government across Treaty 6 Territory and Homelands of the Métis Nation who have experience and understanding of the local needs and priorities of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people within Edmonton.

Local Community Responses

Community voices affirmed that the City should augment the efforts of Indigenous organizations and groups to ensure the safety and security of Indigenous peoples, especially women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.

What We Heard - Key Themes:

1. Public education / training and awareness on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA
2. Action on racism / hate crimes in Edmonton including the development of an Indigenous Ombudsperson to investigate experiences of racism and discrimination in Edmonton
3. Core Funding for Indigenous non-profit organizations (infrastructure, housing, shelters, safe houses, wrap-around/hub support services and program delivery)
4. Reclaim Indigenous culture, language, ceremonies, and knowledge

Government Responses

Since the release of the National Inquiry's Final Report and Recommendations, Administration has participated in ongoing discussions on national, provincial, and municipal levels. The majority of Calls for Justice identified require an intergovernmental response to address specific issues. There are numerous opportunities for the City to support Indigenous communities in the Edmonton area while addressing the imperatives identified in these Calls and co-create an Edmonton solution.

Federal Government

On June 3, 2021, the 2021 National Action Plan: Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, And 2SLGBTQQIA People was released.

Provincial Government

On January 5, 2022, the Alberta joint working group submitted 100 recommendations to the province on actions (divided into short term, medium term and long term) the Government of Alberta should implement to address the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA. Implementation of actions is expected to begin by June 2022.

Opportunity exists to align the City's response to the provincial Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA Report and Recommendations, as well as the federal National Action Plan. This alignment could be used as a lever to advance projects related to Indigenous-led housing and shelters, family supports, mental health, commemorations, naming and art, anti-racism, community safety, and cultural spaces and supports. These efforts could help address concerns about the barriers that have impacted the Indigenous community over jurisdictional responsibility.

What We Are Doing / Going to Do

The following are highlighted priorities based on community and stakeholder conversations and review of the Calls for Justice. Attachment 3 of the March 21, 2022, Community Services report CS00434, provides a more comprehensive accounting of current city efforts that align with the Calls for Justice directed towards governments and how those can be bolstered in the medium and longer term. Ongoing community engagement will be needed throughout.

SHORT TERM PRIORITIES (2021-2023)

Awareness

Uplift grassroots work and voices of Indigenous activists and advocates

- Support and bolster work already in place that helps address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people
- Amplify and support local public awareness and education campaigns that challenge the acceptance and normalization of violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people.
    - Red Dress Day, Sisters in Spirit Day, Walk a Mile in a Ribbon Skirt, Okîsikow/Angel Way, etc.
- Resource local public park and space development/installations to honour Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people, gather and heal, and bring national attention to this human rights crisis.
    - Alberta Avenue Park, Kinsmen park space, etc.

Edmonton Safe City - Bystander awareness social marketing campaigns and initiatives partners

- Educational materials and training on how to respond to acts of violence, hate, and racism in City and public spaces with a focus on the lived experiences of Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQQIA people
- Support the Moosehide Campaign

Addressing
Safety and Security

- Support and bolster work already in place that helps address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- Focus on human trafficking and sexual exploitation prevention
    - Stabilize funding for Community Safety / Harm Reduction & Transition Programs
        - STREET (formerly SNUG) - Creating Hope Society
        - Community Outreach Transit Team (COTT) - Bent Arrow Traditional healing society “new in town” program
        - Body Rub and Adult Entertainment Support Team - harm reduction and physical safety within licensed body rub centres - (two Municipal Enforcement Officers and a Community Safety Liaison) - City of Edmonton
        - NET Neighbourhood empowerment team - City of Edmonton
- Support and bolster resources for support groups for survivors of violence and their families and children
    - SACE - created Wîwîp'son Healing - Sexual Trauma Circle
    - IAAW - has a Building Our Bundle program led by an Elder and facilitator
    - IAAW - Healthy Relationships
    - IAAW - received funds for a Justice Systems Navigator to help Indigenous women navigate the justice system.
    - Creating Hope Society - Inner City Victims of Homicide group for families that have lost loved ones
- Fund and support more Indigenous-led housing projects
- Edmonton Safe City - Safety on Public Transportation
    - TRANSIT WATCH text message service
- Edmonton Safe City - Safety Audits of City Infrastructure from an Indigenous Lens
- Develop an Indigenous Housing Strategy
- Develop an Anti Racism Strategy

Resurgence
Leadership Development

- Support and bolster work already in place that helps address missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people
- Support the Reclamation of traditional roles of Indigenous Elders/Matriarchs, women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people as leaders in the community - uplift voices and access to spaces
- Indigenous leaders, women and youth need to be included, heard, and their perspectives reflected in government decision-making
    - Indigenous Framework Circle of Women Elders and Knowledge Keepers
    - Support Indigenous Knowledge and participation in Oliver Community League Renaming, Government Centre LRT Station Renaming, etc.
    - Support and build relationships with the Edmonton 2 Spirit Society
- Fund education, training, work experience, and mentorship for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people
    - Financial empowerment and literacy programs and initiatives
        - EMPOWERU program

Indigenous Knowledge and Worldviews

- Continue implementation of the City of Edmonton's Indigenous Framework
    - Create a safe space for Indigenous Elders/Knowledge Keepers to provide the transfer of knowledge and worldviews to Indigenous people.
    - Facilitate opportunities for Indigenous knowledge and worldviews transfer between Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Youth, and the City of Edmonton

MEDIUM & LONG TERM PRIORITIES (2023 & Beyond)

Awareness

Develop a strategic plan for Trauma-informed Indigenous awareness / anti-racism training

- Specifically on the topics of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people
    - Processes and experiences of colonization and colonial violence past & present
- Support alignments with the Anti-Racism Strategy

Addressing

Safety and Security / Culture / Health and Wellness

- Capital funding for Indigenous hubs/cultural centres - Indigenous Culture and Wellness Centre and Kihciy Askiy initiatives
- Implement the Indigeous Housing Strategy
- Fund and support Indigenous led and informed community safety / harm and transition reduction programs
    - Fund safety training for women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender diverse peoples:
        - Self-defense training
        - Smartphone location tracking app safety training
        - Lateral violence
- Indigenous-led housing / shelters / safe houses
    - Capital and core operational funding for Indigenous organizations to lead the development and delivery of infrastructure and housing projects that provide culturally safe wrap-around programs and services.
        - "... access to safe, dedicated 2SLGBTQQIA shelters and housing, dedicated beds in shelters for trans and non-binary individuals, and 2SLGBTQQIA-specific support services for 2SLGBTQQIA individuals in housing and shelter spaces".

Justice

- Create an Indigenous Ombudsperson to represent the interests of Indigenous families, survivors, and communities by investigating and addressing complaints of racism, discrimination, maladministration or violation of rights.
- Create an Indigenous-led Justice Response Model when responding to sexual violence against Indigenous women and girls, implement Indigenous-led justice response models that are Indigenous lead in order to provide culturally appropriate supports, as identified as priority through the Safe City recommendations.

Resurgence

Systemic Change

- Develop Indigenous intersectional analysis tools for the City to use when designing programs and policy (mainstreaming Indigeneity)
- Develop an Indigenous evaluation matrix and process development for city delivered programs and policies that impact Indigenous peoples

Indigenous Knowledge

- Research (gathered through academic and Indigenous based channels) Indigenous epistemologies/ways of knowing for policies, programs and services review and evaluation, analytical processes and tools
- GBA+ - Indigenous specific gender based analysis - ensure programs and policies are more inclusive of transgender, non-binary and two-spirit people)
    - Culturally relevant distinctions based GBA+ framework needs to include historical, political, cultural and current realities for Indigenous populations
    - The National Inquiry Final Report emphasizes a need for disaggregated data; this was reiterated by various Indigenous organizations and the distinctions-based groups with and subsequent to the release of the National Action Plan on June 3, 2021. The City and Edmonton's Indigenous community would benefit from disaggregated data; however the City does not currently have the tools or capacity to collect data as it relates to the unique and distinct needs of Indigenous communities in Edmonton.

Moving Forward

This work is complex, generational, and will take considerable time, patience and commitment to tackle. The systemic processes and barriers the City faces will take courage to address and overcome but with the values embodied in the Indigeous Framework, that speak to the importance of relationships, it can be done in a way that is culturally responsive, safe, and collaborative. Administration would like to thank the many members of the community that were engaged in the process of this report so far. It is with the guidance and heart of these individuals and organizations that have provided the understanding and intention behind this report. It is the knowledge and expertise of lived experience that needs to be centered in the path forward, and that would not be possible without the commitment to the principles of Wahigicicobi and Wahkohtowin. Moving forward, the Administration will need to commit to working together in an integrated way that honors the intersectional needs and experiences of Indigenous peoples within the City of Edmonton.