

City of Edmonton Indigenous Framework

Recommendation

That the February 17, 2021, Citizen Services report CS00278, be received for information.

Executive Summary

The City of Edmonton recognizes that it needs to honour and respect the foundational relationship with the First Peoples in Treaty Six territory, the homelands of the Métis people, and in one of the largest urban populations of Inuit outside of northern Canada. The Indigenous Framework has been built on the significant work that the City of Edmonton and Indigenous Peoples have undertaken over the last two decades to build good relations. What makes the framework distinct is the process of co-creation with members of Indigenous communities in Treaty Six Territory, organizational partners, youth, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and City staff. The roles and commitments flowing out of this initiative came directly from Indigenous Peoples. Through implementation, it will change how the City and staff provide service and do business every day. It is not meant to be prescriptive; instead, it is a guide for how to strengthen the City's relationship between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples.

Report

Since the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions 94 Calls to Action in 2015 and, more recently, the Calls for Justice of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls National Inquiry, governments have been challenged to do more to understand and respond to historic trauma, to challenge the ongoing systemic racism Indigenous people face, and to enter into renewed relationships based on respect.

In response to this need, Administration developed the Indigenous Framework. The framework has been built through formal and informal relationships with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Indigenous youth, as well as our memorandum of understanding partners, institutional and agency partners. The framework was also informed by information shared from research and discussions with municipal and community leaders, community members, service providers, and academic professionals. It is intended to answer the question: "how can the City of Edmonton best support and build strong relationships with Indigenous Peoples in Edmonton?" It has been designed to be a living initiative that will change and adapt as our relationships grow and mature, and as the community identifies needs and priorities.

This City initiative intends to help City staff on their journeys of reconciliation by building positive and respectful relationships with Indigenous Peoples. Through the adoption of the framework, it is the responsibility of every City of Edmonton employee to open themselves to learning and forging stronger relationships with the descendants of the original inhabitants of this land and recognize that we all have roles to play in our reconciliation journey.

Kinship

At the inaugural Elders and Knowledge Keepers gathering in March 2019, the Elders identified the need to have a ceremony to begin this work together with good intention and to ask for guidance. From this ceremony came a guiding concept for the framework and a core element of Indigenous knowledge that underpins the relationships Indigenous Peoples have: Wahigicobi (wah-hee-gee-chee-cho-bee), a lethka Nakoda word, meaning “kinship relationships.”

Elders also shared the nêhiyaw (Cree) concept of wâhkôhtowin (Wah-KOH-toh-win), also referring to kinship and all of our interconnected relationships and responsibilities. Attendees learned that kinship is about our interconnections and all individuals’ responsibilities in this mutual relationship, including respect, understanding, seven generation thinking, and the role of matriarchs as examples. Understanding the teachings of wahigicobi and wâhkôhtowin shows how all individuals are connected to Indigenous Peoples, and thus all beings, and will require a shift in the way that the City manages its relationships.

Responsibilities of the City of Edmonton

There are two distinct levels of responsibility within the framework: those for individual City staff and those for the entire corporation.

The framework identifies four roles explaining how each employee can embody the framework within their everyday work, which can be applied as they build relationships with Indigenous Peoples.

- *Listener*: We listen, with open hearts and minds, when Indigenous Peoples share their stories and experiences.
- *Connector*: We connect Indigenous Peoples to the programs, services, people, and resources that enrich the community and foster relationships to create positive change.
- *Advocate*: We stand with Indigenous Peoples to create a safe and inclusive city where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.
- *Partner*: We work in partnership with Indigenous Peoples on initiatives to improve the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional well-being of Indigenous Peoples in Edmonton.

The framework also identifies seven commitments for how the corporation may strive to honour and enact the framework through its policies, programs, and services.

- 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.
- Eliminate the systemic racism and discrimination that Indigenous Peoples face in Edmonton in partnership with organizations, businesses, academic institutions, other orders of government, and individual citizens.
- Identify and implement ways to make City spaces and buildings welcoming and safe for Indigenous Peoples and ensure they can see themselves reflected in the City's spaces and places.
- Support all City staff to build relationships that honour the framework's four roles within their interactions with Indigenous Peoples and increase staff's knowledge of Indigenous cultures, traditions, and worldviews through education and learning opportunities.
- Host and participate in events where the City of Edmonton, including City Council, senior leadership and all levels of Administration, and Indigenous Peoples can build relationships and celebrate our journey together.
- Identify and remove the systemic barriers that exist for Indigenous people in gaining employment with the City of Edmonton and create career development opportunities for Indigenous employees.
- Ensure Indigenous Peoples and City staff are informed and engaged, when appropriate, on actions the City of Edmonton takes in relation to the Indigenous Framework.

How the Framework will be implemented

Department-level teams will bring the framework to life within their respective departments through the creation and implementation of department-specific action plans and change management plans. The corporate steering committee will work with the project sponsors to coordinate the corporate-wide implementation of the framework and to align knowledge, resources, and actions accordingly. The committee will ensure there is alignment, integration and overall coordination among department teams. The Executive Leadership Team is also currently building a working relationship with Indigenous Elders, who have guided the development of the framework.

To facilitate one of many opportunities for ongoing dialogue between City staff and Indigenous Peoples, the City will host a bi-annual gathering with community partners, Indigenous youth, and Elders. This will be an opportunity to check in with Indigenous community members to talk about our collective successes and where improvements in the relationship can be made.

Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

Corporate Outcome(s): Edmontonians are connected to the city in which they live, work and play

Outcome(s)	Measure(s)	Result(s)	Target(s)
Each department demonstrates shared responsibility in implementing the framework and building good relations with Indigenous Peoples	Number of corporate-wide and department-specific actions completed	N/A	TBD
Administration has increased awareness of and understanding of the Indigenous Framework	Number of events, initiatives, or programs related to the framework	N/A	TBD

Attachments

1. City of Edmonton Indigenous Framework

Others Reviewing this Report

- K. Armstrong, Deputy City Manager, Employee Services
- G. Cebryk, Deputy City Manager, City Operations
- M. Persson, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy City Manager, Financial and Corporate Services
- A. Laughlin, Deputy City Manager, Integrated Infrastructure Services
- S. McCabe, Deputy City Manager, Urban Form and Corporate Strategic Development
- C. Owen, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- B. Andriachuk, City Solicitor, Office of the City Manager