



Indigenous Culture and Wellness Centre E-Scan Final Report

December 31, 2018

The Journey Begins

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Introduction and Context

In March 2014, a Task Force, co-chaired by Mayor Don Iveson and Bishop Jane Alexander, was formed with a vision of eliminating poverty in Edmonton within a generation. This transformative vision resulted in consultation with Edmontonians and amassed a significant body of work leading to the formation of the EndPovertyEdmonton (EPE) Strategy with 28 priorities approved by Edmonton City Council in September 2015. A five-year Implementation Road Map was then developed which had 35 starting-point actions.

The first action in the Road Map called for the design and plan of a new Aboriginal culture and wellness centre. In 2016, Edmonton City Council approved funding for three developmental phases of an Indigenous Culture and Wellness Centre (ICWC).

E-Scan Project Governance

The City of Edmonton's (CoE) project management schedule has five phases, each with its own set of deliverables which must be met before commencing the next phase. The first phase is strategy, of which an environmental scan is a critical deliverable. In February 2018, an Environmental-Scan (E-Scan) was undertaken as the first of many steps toward the development of an ICWC.

An ICWC Steering Committee (ICWC SC) was developed to oversee the E-Scan Project directly. It is composed of 15 members from the City of Edmonton staff and the Indigenous community. Many Indigenous participants indicated that a profound sense of partnership is necessary to achieve the vision of an Indigenous Culture and Wellness Centre in Edmonton and that Indigenous involvement is essential and cannot be addressed in isolation. Edmonton's Indigenous community will be involved throughout all project phases. As stated during the EndPovertyEdmonton (EPE) engagements and supported by community members during ICWC community conversations:

“Nothing about us, without us.”

E-scan Project Scope

The E-scan Project's scope includes the following:

- Identify current assets and gaps of programs and services in the urban Indigenous community to create an increased understanding of the urban landscape;

- Use a holistic framework (Indigenous and Western) to look at the evolving environment about the development of the ICWC and provide potential approaches that mitigate risks to the success of the project;
- Explore models of Indigenous-led or Indigenous-serving facilities in urban centres locally and nationally; identify best practices and gaps, and consolidate and prioritize models; and,
- Uncover and follow current local capital development planning and other initiatives and consider alignment with the needs of Indigenous Peoples and the development of the ICWC.

These tasks are out of the scope of the E-scan Project:

- ICWC Business Case, public policy, legislation;
- The exact purpose of the ICWC; and
- A funding strategy.

Key Findings

Stakeholder Analysis

The Environmental Scan Project identified an abundance of programs and services within Edmonton, making it difficult to identify missing programs and services. Findings from a mapping exercise identified that many programs and services appear to be similar, that they compete for the same funding, and that in some cases programs do not incorporate Indigenous worldviews, culture, or ceremony, which is a high priority for Edmonton's Indigenous community. Although several agencies are located centrally, others are scattered around the city thereby requiring those in need to travel distances for services.

Further, limited options exist for those wanting to converse in their own Indigenous language. Partnerships could potentially reduce program and service redundancies and lower operational costs. Future projects should perform an analysis to determine what type of programs and services could be located within an ICWC.

Comparable Models

An assessment of 49 comparable facility models was conducted by the consulting team and reviewed with the ICWC SC. After the review, key characteristics were measured across some dimensions to focus on the most relevant facilities, reducing the number to six. A summary of wise practices identified in the most successful centres includes the following eight learnings:

- Community-Led Indigenous Community Hub
- Multi-Purpose Cultural Gathering Place
- One-Stop Service Centre
- Indigenous-Owned and Operated Social Enterprise
- Governance
- Funding
- Challenges
- Unique Attributes

To a large extent, these themes align with the core themes identified in EPE’s findings during their engagements in 2014. The findings also align significantly with the input from community conversations undertaken in this environmental scan.

Similar Initiatives Currently Underway

During the project, it became evident that multiple Indigenous cultural initiatives were taking place in Edmonton, Red Deer, and Calgary; they are listed in the following table according to Indigenous leadership and regional association. Included in the findings are non-Indigenous initiatives because in many instances those organizations service a high number of Indigenous Peoples.

Learnings from These Findings

All initiatives are at different stages of conceptualization and planning, and not all of them may necessarily go forward. The list of Indigenous-led/serving initiatives clearly demonstrates the community’s need to have places to gather and perform ceremony. They also highlight competitive challenges the initiatives are facing:

- Availability of suitable land and locations (limited options);
- Competition for the same pool of government funding;
- Risk of community engagement fatigue; and
- Splintered focus and identity.

Most of these initiatives in Edmonton are in preliminary stages (initial identification, strategy development, or concept phases, partial funding approval), so their full scope is currently unclear. This leads to opportunities to engage in dialogue with each initiative to determine how to mitigate the competitive challenges mentioned above. The Canadian Native Friendship Centre and Kihciy Askiy are further ahead in the planning stages than the ICWC project and appear to have a similar scope. Partnerships, sharing resources and learnings, and collaborating are reasonable possibilities which should be further explored during the Business Case.

Engagement Sessions

A communications program was developed during the initial stages of the ICWC project to ensure a wide cross-section of Edmonton’s urban Indigenous community became aware of this project. The primary aim was to ensure all interested Indigenous individuals and organizations had the opportunity to share their

voices and visions for the ICWC. Indigenous community members with lived experience were a critical demographic that the project team ensured had a voice in the E-Scan Project. Three engagement approaches were used to engage the community:

1. Community conversations and talking circles;
2. A survey (online and hardcopy); and,
3. Specialized sessions.

Each community conversation session started by acknowledging the Creator, Treaty 6 Territory, the ancestors of the four directions, and Indigenous traditional lands. In recognition that not all Indigenous Peoples follow these practices, the session lead would invite community members to participate in how, where, and when they felt comfortable.

There were approximately 1,071 participants in the community conversations, 533 surveys were completed online or via hard copy, and 10 Indigenous business leaders were involved in specialized sessions.

Summary of Engagements

During community conversations, Edmonton's Indigenous community expressed their excitement about the project stating that an ICWC is long overdue and hope that it will be built and opened soon.

Community conversations took place between May and July 2018. The project team attended two powwows in August, with specialized sessions following in September 2018. In October, Homeward Trust held Homeless Connect, which was the final engagement of the project.

Community conversations and powwows generated more survey responses than the total number of online surveys, possibly due to in-person discussion opportunities and a supportive environment in which to complete the survey.

Summary of What We Heard: What and Where

The key learnings from the community conversations reflect the Indigenous community's vision for a cultural and spiritual space where traditional teachings can take place and where individuals can share stories about their past, present, and future. The ICWC would be a welcoming place where Indigenous cultural and wellness programs and services are provided. A central location that is close to water is highly preferred with access to outside spaces large enough to hold community ceremonial events. The building's design should flow while incorporating indoor and outdoor elements, and it should align with ICWC's purpose, which may require specialized spaces (e.g. assessment rooms, smudging areas, areas for drumming or regalia making).

Summary of What We Heard: Indoor and Outdoor Spaces

Community members envisioned a very significant site and iconic building in Edmonton that would include an extensive facility encircled by a large, park-like setting. It would feature indoor and outdoor heritage monuments and interpretive areas. The ICWC would be a place where Indigenous Peoples share the land and on which their heritage and traditions are celebrated. It would be an inclusive and welcoming facility for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Summary of What We Heard: Who is Involved and Who Can Help

The primary request of conversation participants was that the ICWC must be Indigenous-led with community members involved throughout the entire project process. A common theme throughout the findings is that the ICWC be inclusive to all: Elders, youth, Allies, non-profit organizations, a mix of rural-urban Indigenous community members, and all Indigenous Peoples need to be involved.

Summary of the ICWC Survey

A very notable finding between the community conversations and the survey was that responses to questions about purpose, design, and who should be involved were similar. The community's desire is for the ICWC to be a place for ceremony and culture where all Nations are welcome. Land for powwows and ceremony located centrally and close to water are important features.

Practices in Governance

Some Elders who participated in community conversations strongly advised that governance be founded in ceremony. Ceremony is about governance. Ceremony is also about identity, culture, and leadership. Ceremony is guided by strong accountability and stewardship (counting on oral-teachings) and procedures with strong performance measures. From a traditional Indigenous governance perspective, ceremonial governance often includes many aspects of Western governance practices to meet the requirements of legislation such as the *Societies Act*.

ICWC Recommendations

During community conversations, ***almost all community participants*** understood the need for an ICWC in Edmonton, and they were excited about this initiative. This type of singular agreement is rare. However, there were a number of participants that were concerned this centre would not be built based on similar initiatives that have not succeeded. The ICWC SC *and* Edmonton's Indigenous community has a great responsibility to ensure that seven generations from now, Indigenous Peoples can look back and acknowledge current efforts as the reason the ICWC exists.

The following recommendations are offered for consideration:

Project Continuity

- The ICWC SC will ensure this project continues and moves forward at a consistent pace;

- The ICWC SC will involve members with specific subject matter expertise as required, particularly those with skills that align with future phases of the ICWC project;
- The ICWC SC will identify Allies interested in seeing change and action toward the achievement of a developed ICWC;
- The ICWC SC will finalize Vision and Mission statements. The process to develop these statements might generate robust conversations and consolidate views on the ICWC's purpose; and,
- Where possible, consider reducing or combining future phases of the ICWC project development schedule in the CoE construction framework to expedite progress toward completion of the ICWC. The ICWC SC will explore and encourage opportunities to expedite progress toward completion of the ICWC.

Purpose of the ICWC

- The community resoundingly wants Edmonton's ICWC to be a ceremonial space where traditional and contemporary Indigenous cultural activities, programs and services can take place; and,
- It must be inclusive of all Indigenous peoples, be Indigenous-led, and involve Edmonton's Indigenous community.

Design

- The building is envisioned as a very significant site and an iconic building;
- The space must reflect both indoor and outdoor elements;
- It must be on a sizeable piece of land which is centrally-located and near water; and,
- It should be designed by an Indigenous architect who recognizes Edmonton's urban Indigenous community's diversity.

Comparable Models Research

- The section of this report entitled, "Lessons Drawn from the Comparable Models Research" lists eight learnings that should be considered during future steps or phases of this project;
- Funding should be considered once more detailed information is approved; and,
- Environmental Scan and Capital Development/High-Level Costing, which this report has detailed, offers high-level costing estimates based on comparable models. Further, the Compendium to this report identifies funding sources for consideration during future phases.

Evolve a Unique Indigenous Governance Approach for ICWC

Based on many of the 'voices' heard throughout the project, the consulting team suggests:

- A significant effort should be made to explore a transformational “governance through ceremony” approach for the ICWC going forward; and,
- A number of local Indigenous leaders, Knowledge Keepers, Elders, expert advisors and experienced governors of Indigenous organizations be invited to sit together in a governance circle and evolve a specific governance approach for ICWC that fully aligns with the values and traditions of Indigenous Peoples.

An Interim Approach

- Such an approach would take the ICWC forward in a timely fashion by combining the best of Western and Indigenous traditions;
- Once the governing organization of the ICWC is established, it should incorporate Indigenous and Western traditions. The Western traditional model should be used to meet the requirements of legislation (e.g. Societies Act) and will help the organization address basic financial and governance requirements; and,
- The Indigenous model should be created specifically for the ICWC and incorporate the best of Governance through Ceremony as described in the Governance Section of this report.

ICWC Programs and Services

- Consideration should be given to programs and services ranked highest during this project with a sincere effort to incorporate Indigenous culture including ceremony and cultural teachings, healing, trauma, social service referrals, Indigenous music, dancing, drumming and crafts;
- All of this should be considered from the perspective of the Indigenous community’s needs, both in the present and the future;
- Future analysis should assess the willingness of organizations to partner with one another. Such partnerships could potentially reduce program redundancies and lower operational costs; and,
- There is a need to determine what type of programs and services should be located within an ICWC.

Other Local Initiatives

- As some local projects are still in early stages, opportunities exist to engage with them in partnership discussions. Two key examples, the Canadian Native Friendship Centre and Kihciy Askiy, are further ahead than the ICWC project and appear to have similar scope; and,
- Partnerships, sharing resources, learnings, and collaboration are possibilities which can be further explored during the Business Case phase.