



Heartbeat of a Nation
by Brad Crowfoot

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The City of Edmonton acknowledges the traditional land on which we reside is in Treaty 6 territory. We thank the diverse Indigenous Peoples whose ancestors' footsteps have marked this territory for centuries, such as nēhiyaw (Cree), Dene, Anishinaabe (Saulteaux), Nakota Isga (Nakota Sioux), and Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) peoples. We also acknowledge this land

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.



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KINSHIP AND PLACE

Land acknowledgements serve as a reminder to nurture and fortify relationships and understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. As City of Edmonton staff continue the journey of implementing the Indigenous Framework, we acknowledge our interconnectedness to each other and this land. In our pursuit of belonging and strong communities, it is incumbent upon us to contemplate the experiences and stories that shape our identities and define our role in revitalizing relationships with the First Peoples of this land.





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The principle of kinship has deep roots and denotes so much more than a relationship. With these relationships comes our shared responsibilities to one another and all beings.

GROUNDED IN KINSHIP

Wahigicicobi (Wah-hee-gee-chee-cho-bee), an Îethka Nakoda word, meaning "kinship relationships", is a name gifted through ceremony to the Indigenous Framework. Representing our mutual responsibilities to one another, such as honour and respect, Wahigicicobi also refers to our interconnected relationships with Mother Earth, the land, the elements and all beings.

The concept of kinship relationships has deep roots in Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Elders have shared this concept within their own languages such as WÂHKÔHTOWIN (wah-KOH-toh-win) in nêhiyawêwin and Ilagiingniq (ee-la-geeng-nuk) in Inuktun.



GUIDED BY COMMUNITY

We deeply appreciate the historic and ongoing contributions of Indigenous Peoples and communities to Edmonton.

The Indigenous Framework is a living initiative activated through kinship relationships with the community. The City of Edmonton invests in and fosters these connections with Indigenous Peoples by embodying the roles of listener, connector, partner and advocate.

Through celebrations, gatherings, engagement and dialogue we prioritize understanding and respecting the experiences, cultures and inherent rights of diverse Indigenous communities.

Guidance from Elders and Knowledge Holders is crucial, grounding us in Indigenous ideology and informing our reconciliation efforts.

We honour these kinship relations by shifting City programs, services and policies to be reflective, relevant and responsive in our approach to reconciliation. We are grateful for the time and wisdom that Indigenous Elders, partners and community members share with City staff and leadership. Their voices continue to shape and drive the actions of City staff and departments towards advancing the Indigenous Framework.

THE INDIGENOUS FRAMEWORK VISION



As City of Edmonton employees, we are encouraged and supported to demonstrate leadership in building quality relationships with Indigenous Peoples as we honour and strive to understand Indigenous experiences, histories and cultures.

In this multigenerational work, the process is just as important as the outcome.

Principles:

- RELATIONSHIPS • AGREEMENTS
- CELEBRATIONS • RENEWAL

Four Roles:

These four roles, defined by the Indigenous community, are how each City of Edmonton employee can embody the framework in their daily work.

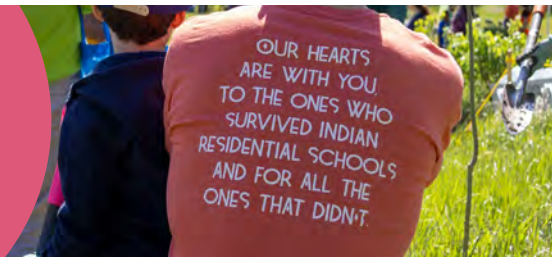
- LISTENER • CONNECTOR
- PARTNER • ADVOCATE

Seven Corporate Commitments:

These seven commitments, informed by Indigenous community, explain how the the City of Edmonton strives to honour and enact the Indigenous Framework through policies, programs and services.

Guided by the four roles, our journey in 2024 included many memorable milestones of ways the City of Edmonton is advancing the Indigenous Framework through the seven commitments.

Commitment 1: 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 the foundation for the Indigenous Framework.



Seeds of Reclamation and Resurgence: Empowering Indigenous Leaders *Indigenous Project and Engagement Internship (MMIWG2S+) Program*

This initiative aims to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives (MMIR) and advance the City's [MMIR Action Plan](#). It strives to create safe, supportive and culturally affirming environments and strengthen the cultural resurgence of Indigenous women and Two-Spirit peoples, as guided by the MMIWG2S+ urgent calls to justice.

Through an immersive year-long experience, two interns work with both the City's Indigenous Relations Office and an Indigenous community-based organization to bridge the gap between municipal public service and Indigenous community development. This dual placement provides interns with support and space needed to meaningfully

participate in cultural revitalization efforts and to actively reclaim their cultural roles and practices. These emerging Indigenous leaders are empowered to inform systemic change efforts, ensuring that their perspectives and experiences are not just acknowledged, but centered throughout the process.

This program is a direct and intentional investment in addressing deeply ingrained systemic issues and driving transformative change through the valuable insights gained by the City and community partners. More than an internship, it's a collaborative endeavour to foster a meaningful and sustainable path towards a more equitable and reconciled future.



Commitment 2: In partnership with organizations, businesses, academic institutions, other orders of government and individual citizens, eliminate the systemic racism and discrimination that Indigenous Peoples face in Edmonton.

Investing in the Strength of Community *Operating Grant for Indigenous-Led Organizations*

In 2024, Edmonton demonstrated its commitment to reconciliation by allocating \$1,000,000 to the [Operating Grant for Indigenous-led Organizations](#).

This initiative supports the City's [Community Safety and Well-Being \(CSWB\) Strategy](#), a plan prioritizing truth and reconciliation. Developed through extensive community consultation, the CSWB Strategy aims to foster an inclusive and compassionate city. A key component is the CSWB Grants Program, which empowers organizations to advance well-being and equity.

The Operating Grant specifically addresses the Reconciliation Pillar of the CSWB Strategy. It supports Indigenous-led organizations offering initiatives that promote cultural resurgence, healing spaces and awareness of historical impacts. The grant also provides education and economic opportunities, contributing to a more equitable community.

In 2024, funding supported [20 organizations](#), leading to tangible impact and stories of resilience and hope. This allocation reflects Edmonton's dedication to walking alongside Indigenous communities on the path of reconciliation, fostering revitalization and well-being for all.

In total, the funded organizations served over 27,000 people through a variety of services and supports with over 800 volunteers contributing over 8,000 hours of time.



Commitment 3: Identify and implement ways to make City spaces and buildings welcoming and safe for Indigenous Peoples and ensure they can see themselves reflected in City spaces.

A Harmonizing Vision for Community, Culture and Economic Development *Indigenous Involvement Approach*

The City of Edmonton is leading the development of [River Crossing](#)—an iconic area in the central river valley that includes park space, heritage buildings and redevelopment land.

The Indigenous Involvement Approach seeks input from 32 Indigenous nations and representative organizations in this major cultural and economic development initiative by removing barriers, creating opportunities for inclusion and driving continued growth and learning.

Elevating Indigenous Involvement in the Implementation of River Crossing

The inclusion of Indigenous peoples in every aspect of River Crossing is a priority for the City. This has been established in the Indigenous Involvement Approach, which will support key actions in the focus areas of:

- Project Engagement
- Communications and Information Sharing
- Economic Reconciliation and Ownership
- Historic Reviews and Monitoring Operations

Next steps towards the River Crossing Park and the River Crossing Community Redevelopment Project Phase 1 will continue to be guided by the Indigenous Involvement Approach, as well as the City's Indigenous Framework and Truth and Reconciliation Commission Municipal Response Plan.



Commitment 4: 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.

Kinship & Conversation: Indigenous Voices Guiding Truth and Reconciliation *Elders and Knowledge Holders Engagement Gathering*

Reconciliation requires constructive action on addressing the ongoing legacies of colonialism. Indigenous guidance and involvement supports the shared goal of these projects to foster healing through revitalization of Indigenous culture, ceremonies and languages while supporting empathy and understanding among Edmontonians.

To advance Truth and Reconciliation projects, the City of Edmonton held a three-day gathering with 68 Elders and Knowledge Holders in July 2024. The gathering, rooted in Indigenous protocol and kinship principles, involved ceremonies, storytelling and relationship-building activities. **Elders led talking circles to provide guidance on four key projects:**

- Creating a Ceremonial Fire Space near City Hall
- Renaming Government Centre (formerly Grandin) LRT Station
- Exploring the long-term vision for Northeast River Valley Park
- Introducing an engagement process for a Residential School Monument or Commemoration in the Edmonton area

With the important guidance and ongoing involvement of Elders and Knowledge Holders, these four key project plans have continued into 2025.



Commitment 5: Host and participate in events where the City of Edmonton, including Council, senior leadership and all levels of Administration, and Indigenous Peoples, can build relationships and celebrate our journey together.

A Space for Truth and Healing *Hear Our Voices Exhibit in City Hall*

In 2024, Edmonton's City Hall transformed into a space for truth-telling and healing, hosting the **"Hear Our Voices: Michel People & Residential Schools"** exhibit. Curated by the Friends of Michel Society, this immersive and intimate experience gave voice to the lived experiences of 29 Residential School Survivors and their families from the former Michel Band #472.

The City purposefully invited all levels of staff, Administration and Council to the exhibit to encounter the truth of residential schools, understand their ongoing impacts and witness the resilience of Indigenous Peoples.

Stories have the power to change hearts and minds. City Hall became a place where Indigenous voices were not just heard, but truly listened to, fostering a shared pathway towards healing.

Hosting this exhibit symbolized the City's dedication to the TRC's Calls to Action towards education and commemoration. It was a clear demonstration that reconciliation is not just a concept but an ongoing action, a collective journey where everyone is invited to participate and learn.

"...I appreciated that survivors were able to share their stories and speak their truth. Thank you for bringing it to City Hall." – Exhibit viewer testimonial

From November 2024 to May 2025, the voices of Indigenous Peoples were heard inside City Hall where all visitors were invited to listen, learn and reflect.



Commitment 6: 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.

Wiring for Change: Economic Reconciliation in Action *City of Edmonton partners with First Nations Inspection Authority*

In a significant step towards economic reconciliation, the City of Edmonton has partnered with the [First Nations Inspection Authority \(FNIA\)](#) to provide essential electrical, plumbing, gas, building and HVAC inspections across Edmonton. FNIA is an accredited Indigenous-owned and operated company that brings technical expertise, valuable Indigenous perspective and a strong commitment to quality assurance.

By integrating FNIA into its operations, the City actively demonstrates its commitment to the Indigenous Framework and the [Indigenous Procurement Framework](#) by supporting equitable partnerships and clear pathways for Indigenous businesses to participate in and benefit from municipal contracts.

This partnership demonstrates the City of Edmonton's commitment to establishing respectful relationships with Indigenous communities and achieving economic reconciliation through collaboration and opportunities for Indigenous economic growth.



Commitment 7: 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.

Building Bridges Through Transparency *Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Dashboard*

This dashboard demonstrates the City's ongoing commitment to reconciliation by reporting on the actions taken through the [TRC Municipal Response Plan](#). The City is responding to the 94 TRC Calls to Action, with 39 calls already informing over 90 specific commitments.

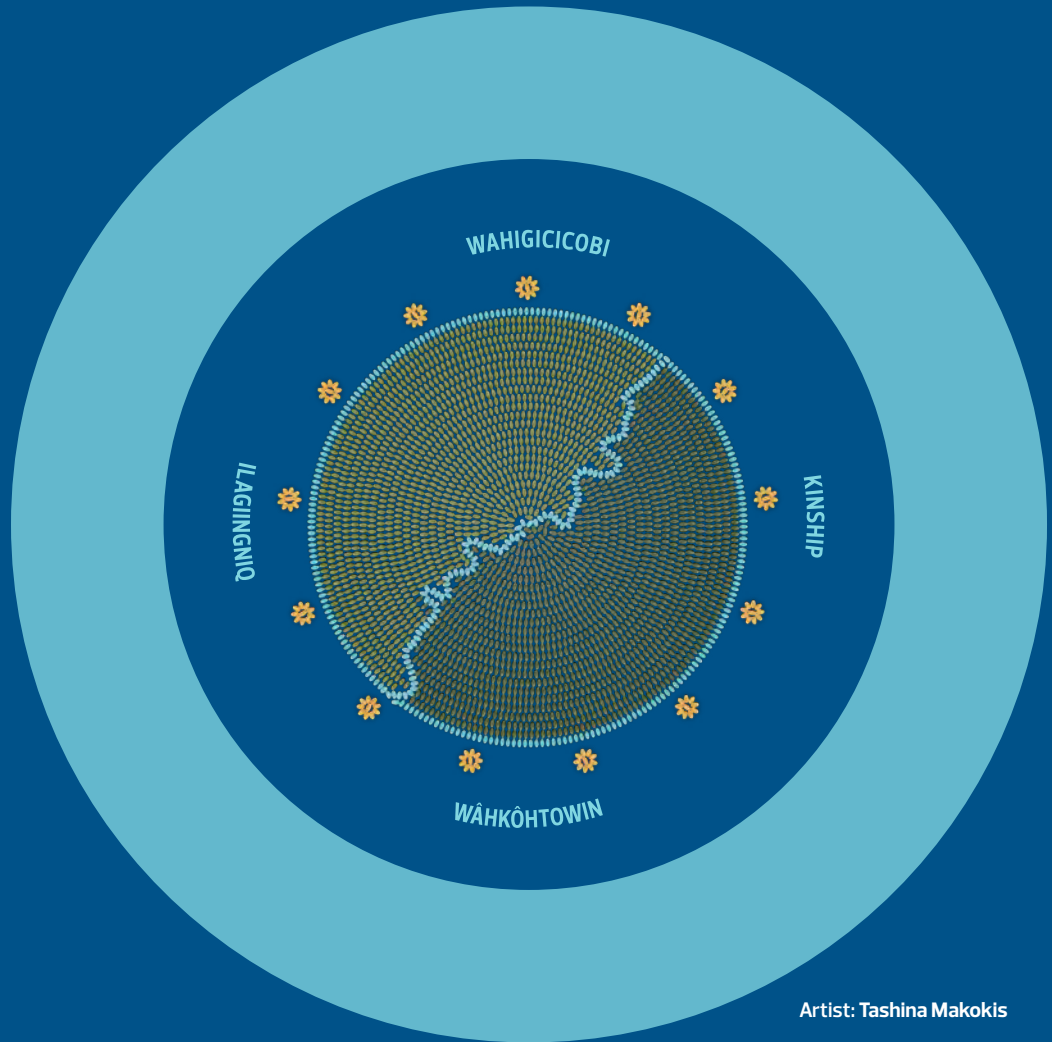
Guided by four key pillars—Awareness, Addressing, Resurgence and Advocacy—the dashboard serves as a crucial tool to keep the public informed about the City's TRC response efforts, activities and progress.

The TRC Dashboard is more than just information. It is a dynamic reflection of the City's dedication to achieving tangible progress and actively involving the Indigenous community in the ongoing reconciliation journey.

Birds: Amiskwaciw
Waskayhkan Ihtawin
by **Destiny Swiderski**



To honour the 10th anniversary of the TRC Alberta National Event, Edmonton launched an interactive [TRC Dashboard \(edmonton.ca/TRC\)](https://edmonton.ca/TRC) on **March 27, 2024**.



Artist: Tashina Makokis

OUR COMMITMENT



The Indigenous Framework will continue to develop as these relationships grow, and with a deeper understanding of Indigenous Peoples' truths, experiences, identities, rights and distinct cultures. This work is not a “checkbox” exercise, but an ongoing demonstration of active participation in advancing the Calls to Action, Calls for Justice and the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The framework empowers City of Edmonton staff to build strong and supportive relationships with Indigenous Peoples. Guided by Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Holders and driven by the values of Indigenous community members, this initiative helps us walk alongside them as listeners, partners, connectors and advocates in our reconciliation journey.



The full Indigenous Framework 2024
Annual Report is available at:
edmonton.ca/IndigenousFramework

