

THE EDMONTON **URBAN** **ABORIGINAL** DIALOGUE



The Your City, Your Voice Report

on the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Dialogue

February 2006

THE EDMONTON URBAN ABORIGINAL DIALOGUE PROCESS: YOUR CITY, YOUR VOICE REPORT

From July to December 2005, the first part of the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Dialogue process engaged in a broad community dialogue which saw a cross section of the Aboriginal community join in talking circle discussions, open house information sessions, and a large gathering of executive and community leaders who discussed and provided their input on issues, concerns, and opportunities.

During the Dialogue process one primary tool was used to gather information and spark discussions. The "Your City, Your Voice" workbook/survey was designed to gather information and to identify common issues and concerns in order to set the beginning place for discussions in the second part of the Dialogue process. The "Your City, Your Voice Report" contains the results of the workbook/surveys and Part A of the Dialogue process.

A separate but critically important Appendices document is also available which provides a more complete account of what was said throughout the Dialogue process.

The Appendices document is available online at www.edmonton.ca/aboriginalaccord. A copy can also be obtained by calling the Accord Initiative office at 780.944.7602.

The Elders have repeatedly said that we must take the time to carefully build relationships and actions that will have a direct effect on our future grandchildren. Taking the time we need is important to create positive outcomes and longevity. After all, this work is all about relationships. And relationships take time to build and strengthen.

**THANK YOU FOR
TAKING THE TIME TO
CAREFULLY CONSIDER
THE CONTENTS OF THE
"YOUR CITY, YOUR
VOICE REPORT".**



EXECUTIVE FORUM

November 21st, 2005

TALKING CIRCLES

Youth Circle – Oct. 6th

Women Circle – Oct. 13th

Street Issues Circle – Oct. 20th

Seniors/Disability Circle – Oct. 27th

Every Thursday in October 2005 9 am – 12 pm

Canadian Native Friendship Centre

OPEN HOUSES

Oct. 12th, 1-4 pm – Canadian Native Friendship Centre

Oct. 14th, 2-5 pm – The Business Link

Oct. 15th, 2-5 pm – Sun and Moon Visionaries

Oct. 18th, 1-4 pm – Native Seniors Centre

Oct. 19th, 4-8 pm – Sacred Heart Church

FIRST WORDS

“CITIES HAVE SPIRIT. THERE IS SACREDNESS IN PLACE.”

There is a strong spiritual connection between “people” and “place.” This connection is apparent in the rich history of names for Edmonton. These names reflect the origins and heritage of the city. Edmonton has had many names including Fort Edmonton and Fort Augustus during the fur trade and *Amiskwâciwaskahikan*, which means “Beaver Hills House” in *Nêhiyawewin* (the Cree language). Each of these names refers to the same general location at the heart of Edmonton. Today, this site is known as the Rosedale Flats, although it was once referred to as *Pehonan* which means “the gathering or waiting place” in Cree. This ancient and sacred site is Edmonton’s birthplace. For thousands of years, this area functioned as the gathering place for many Indigenous Nations including the Cree, Chipewyan, Beaver, Nakoda, and Blackfoot. In later years, the Métis along with European fur-traders came to this area on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River.

Historically, the Edmonton Pehonan was part of a larger system of meeting places that were spread across western Canada. The Pehonan served as a gathering place where many Indigenous Nations would trade and participate in cultural activities. It was a spiritual and cultural location that followed protocols of peace, friendship, and harmony. In other words, the Pehonan was a place where the people honoured and respected each other while in gathering.

While the Pehonan functioned as a location for trade, it also served as a place where Indigenous leaders and Elders would participate in ceremonies that provided spiritual as well as political direction of the day. These sites played an important role in maintaining relationships with the other Indigenous Nations, as well as with the European newcomers.

At the heart of the Pehonan is the essence of good relations: “a place where one waits for opportunities, and the good relations that foster opportunities.” Central to this is an acceptance of difference and a commitment to working in a good way for the betterment of all.

Today, Aboriginal communities are re-claiming their cultural traditions and the important role they have played in shaping Edmonton’s history. There is an Indigenous expression that says: “When you look behind you, you see the future in your footprints.” It is in the teachings of the past that we find the wisdom to shape the Edmonton of the future—as a renewed “gathering place” of peace, respect, and harmony.



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APPENDICES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY


Through the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative, the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Affairs Committee (EAUAC) and the City of Edmonton initiated the *Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Dialogue Process* in 2005. The Dialogue process is supported by the Government of Canada (Western Economic Diversification), the Province of Alberta (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development) and the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund (EHTF). It is directed by the Accord Initiative Steering Committee, guided by the Accord Initiative Elders Circle and supported by people working for the City (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal). Community members also participated in the formation and design of the Dialogue process.

From July 2005 to early December 2005, the Dialogue process engaged over 1800 people from across the Aboriginal communities. The purpose of the Dialogue process was to create opportunities for participants to share their perspectives on the key issues facing Urban Aboriginal people while also sparking their imaginations around “what could be” in terms of new ways of working together. One of the key goals was to explore interest in the development of a principle-based agreement — an “Accord” — establishing a renewed relationship based on trust and mutual respect between the City of Edmonton and First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Non-Status people living in Edmonton.

The Dialogue process was guided by the belief that strengthening relationships between the City of Edmonton and First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Non-Status People, is essential to creating long-term improvements in Aboriginal Edmonton.

Throughout the process, the Elders Circle provided guidance to not only ensure that proper cultural and spiritual protocols were followed, but also to provide needed insights into urban Aboriginal cultures. To this end, a variety of Indigenous methods were used to facilitate the listening and the building of relations in a good way. These included culturally-appropriate Open Houses, Talking Circles, Executive Forum and the “Your City, Your Voice” workbook surveys.

The workbook surveys served as an important tool for gathering information and stimulating discussions. Approximately one thousand (1000) workbooks were distributed and 501 were completed and returned to the Accord office for tabulation and analysis.



The following report summarizes the contributions of those who participated in the Open Houses, Talking Circles, the Executive Forum and the “Your City, Your Voice” workbook surveys. A separate but critically important Appendices document is also available which provides a more complete account of what was said throughout the Dialogue process. The Appendices document is available online at www.edmonton.ca/aboriginalaccord. A copy can also be obtained by calling the Accord Initiative office at (780) 944-7602.

Three main themes emerged throughout the six months of listening and sharing in the Urban Aboriginal Dialogue process. These themes were consistent across the Talking Circles, Executive Forum and the “Your City, Your Voice” workbook surveys. They include:

- **Challenges Facing Urban Aboriginal Peoples:** There was a broad consensus that the socio-economic pressures facing Aboriginal Edmonton require new ways of working together. The Talking Circles, the Executive Forum and the workbook surveys chronicled a range of socio-economic challenges that serve as the backdrop for collective actions;
- **The Importance of Working Relationships:** There was a general acknowledgement that effective collaborations already exist in Aboriginal Edmonton. At the same time, it was broadly acknowledged that further collaborations are necessary to address the challenges and seize the opportunities facing Aboriginal people in Edmonton. Participants indicated that increasing “the learning and sharing opportunities between the Urban Aboriginal communities and other willing partners” is essential to building effective relationships; and
- **Support for the Idea of a Relationship Agreement:** There was broad consensus that the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative may be one vehicle for finding new ways of working together. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the 501 workbook respondents supported the idea of a relationship agreement between the City of Edmonton and Urban Aboriginal People in Edmonton. This sentiment was shared in both the Talking Circles and the Executive Forum.

Participants in the Urban Aboriginal Dialogue process identified priorities and a will to build relationships as a basis for collective action in the forthcoming second part (Part B) of the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative.



PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

"YOUR CITY, YOUR VOICE"

*"We have got
lots to share,
we just haven't
shared it yet."*

(Elder Francis
Whiskeyjack)

In July 2005, the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Affairs Committee (EAUAC), the City of Edmonton and partners initiated a process of listening to the concerns, dreams and aspirations of Aboriginal people living in Edmonton. The process, which engaged approximately 1800 people from across the Aboriginal communities, is called the *Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Dialogue*. A description of the Dialogue process, which occurred over a six-month period, is provided on pages 9 through 12 of this report. *(Please also see Appendix 1 in the separate Appendices document.)*

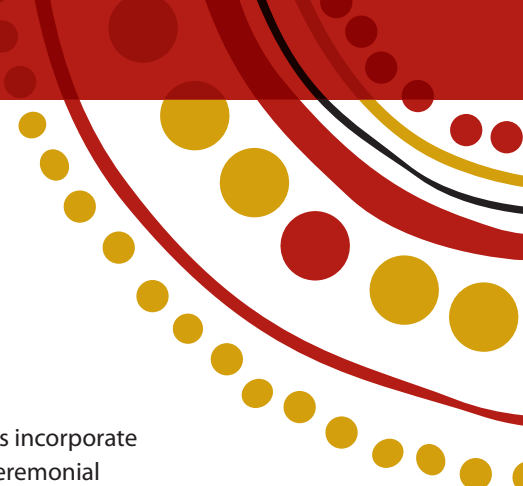
The term "dialogue" refers to an exchange of ideas between two or more people. It implies an exercise of listening, sharing and reflection. It implies a spirit of openness and goodwill. Unlike "debate", which seeks to persuade, the goal of "dialogue" is mutual understanding and respect. As one Aboriginal participant said, "We have to learn to listen and listen to learn."

At the heart of the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Dialogue is a deep awareness of the value and sacredness of oral stories and the importance of listening for meaning in a respectful way. Storytelling is a medium used by Aboriginal people to preserve ancient knowledge, wisdom and life experiences that are now being captured through words. Stories carry the words of our ancestors, portray the values of our culture and convey our relationships with the Creator, each other and the land. Aboriginal people honor these stories through the proper use of spiritual and cultural protocols. As the Aboriginal Relations Consultants who facilitated this process observed:

"The Aboriginal community leaders and respected Elders who make Edmonton their home have repeatedly cautioned us about the perils of not using Indigenous/Aboriginal ways of approaching our communities. In many previous 'community consultations' there always appeared to be a 'disconnect' which perhaps led to mistranslations of knowledge and vocal input, which then translated into a mistrust of process and intent."

Through the guidance of Elders and Aboriginal community leaders, the Dialogue process used Indigenous methods such as Talking Circles and cultural and spiritual protocols to create an Aboriginal space and way of communicating. This process of communication is symbolized by the Indigenous Circle which appears on the back page of this report. A critical element of the Dialogue process is the involvement of the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative Elders Circle. The Elders have repeatedly reminded us of the significance of using Indigenous ways of knowing and listening.

An important part of this is respecting the role of "time" in traditional Indigenous worldviews. From an Indigenous perspective, time can be seen as a "progression of events"— one event must be completed



before another can begin. There is a proper order to things. Many traditional ceremonies incorporate this concept. For example, in a smudging ceremony there is a proper sequence to the ceremonial actions. First, the ceremony leader must smudge him or herself, then smudge the sacred tools they will use during the ceremony, then smudge those who have gathered for this purpose, and then say the prayer. These events must be done in this order and in no other way. To counter these protocols is to create disharmony and disrespect.

The Elders and Aboriginal community members have incorporated this understanding into the design of the Dialogue process. The Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Dialogue is modelled on a traditional circle with four main steps for listening and renewing relations: 1) Explore Issues; 2) Discover Common Interests; 3) Create Options; and 4) Commit to Agreement. Each step needs to be completed in the proper sequence before the next can begin — hence the process of “exploring issues” leads to “discovering common interests” and then on to “creating options” and finally to “committing to agreement.” At each point in the process proper respect and attention must be given.

The Elders and community have repeatedly said that we must take the time to carefully build relationships and actions that will have a direct effect on our future grandchildren. After all, the *Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Dialogue* is all about relationships. And relationships take time to build and strengthen.

In the following report, we honour the spirit of this process by summarizing the contributions of those who participated in the Open Houses, Talking Circles, Executive Forum and the “Your City, Your Voice” workbook surveys. In doing so, we recognize the importance of these collective voices in strengthening the relationships between the City of Edmonton, other partners and Aboriginal people in Edmonton.

We also acknowledge that the richness of this dialogue cannot be adequately conveyed in a report. **During the gatherings a vast amount of information was shared. We have provided this information in the form of Appendices provided as a separate but critically important document. We encourage readers to obtain these Appendices, since they provide a more complete account of what was said throughout the Dialogue process. In addition, we encourage all organizations to review the Appendices in detail to identify specific content relevant to their work with Aboriginal communities in Edmonton.** The Appendices document is available online at www.edmonton.ca/aboriginalaccord. A copy can also be obtained by calling the Accord Initiative office at (780) 944-7602.



EDMONTON URBAN ABORIGINAL DIALOGUE

OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

“The bridge building has been very good because it has been a cohesive mix of people that have come together. The Métis, the First Nations, the Inuit... and the City Fathers... I think we want to make this work and I think it is in the spirit of cooperation.”

(Elder Don Langford)

Aboriginal Elders have often spoken about the importance of relationships. They are the foundation of any community. Good relations bring health, wellness, and harmony. Elders have encouraged us to rebuild and renew our relationships. It is through strengthening relations that we create a vibrant Aboriginal Edmonton. As Elder Don Langford said, “The bridge building has been very good because it has been a cohesive mix of people that have come together. The Métis, the First Nations, the Inuit... and the City Fathers... I think we want to make this work and I think it is in the spirit of cooperation.”


With these words of wisdom, the Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee, the City of Edmonton and other partners are taking steps to build a renewed relationship between the City of Edmonton and Aboriginal residents.

The Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative

In early 2003, the City of Edmonton in partnership with the Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee (EAUAC) began discussions about the role the City could play in enhancing the lives of Aboriginal people in Edmonton. The leadership of EAUAC through informal consultations with Aboriginal Elders, leaders, and organizations determined that there was a strong desire to establish improved relations with the City of Edmonton.

In 2004, the City of Edmonton, acting upon recommendations of EAUAC and senior staff, established the *Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative*. The Initiative is supported by the Federal and Provincial governments and other partners. Its primary objectives are to:

- improve the relationship between the City of Edmonton and Aboriginal people living in Edmonton;
- explore interest in the development of a principle-based agreement — an “Accord” — establishing a renewed relationship based on trust and mutual respect between the City of Edmonton and First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Non-Status people living in Edmonton;
- hear directly from Aboriginal people about their perspectives, concerns and priorities and share this information with willing resource holders prepared to work with Urban Aboriginal people and others on community-identified priorities; and
- support an inclusive process for the Aboriginal communities’ and partners’ action on community-identified priorities.



In addition, the City of Edmonton has specific objectives to:

- improve its hiring and retention of Aboriginal staff; and
- improve City mandated programs and services so that they better serve Aboriginal residents in Edmonton.

As part of the Accord Initiative, the City opened its first Aboriginal office. It is a welcoming place for the Aboriginal community and a primary point of contact with the City on Aboriginal matters. The office is home to the Accord Project Team and is also home to the EAUAC and its support staff. A Steering Committee provides direction for the Initiative. The Committee includes: four Executive members of EAUAC; two senior managers from the City of Edmonton; a senior manager from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development (Government of Alberta); a senior manager from Western Economic Diversification (Government of Canada); and the Executive Director from the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund (the Trust Fund is the delivery agent for the Urban Aboriginal Strategy in Edmonton).

In addition, an Elders Circle was established in Spring 2005 to provide advice and guidance to the work of the Accord Initiative. The Elders ensure that cultural traditions and protocols are followed and provide insights into urban Aboriginal cultures. Eleven Aboriginal Elders were identified and include five First Nations members, five Métis members, and an Inuit member. *(Please see Appendix 2 for a list of the members of the Elders Circle and the Accord Initiative Steering Committee)*

On August 30, 2005, after consultations with EAUAC, the Elders Circle and Aboriginal community leaders, City Council passed a Declaration "*Strengthening Relationships Between the City of Edmonton and Urban Aboriginal People.*" It is the City's commitment to Aboriginal Peoples in Edmonton. It is a living document that recognizes the vitality and increasing importance of the Aboriginal community as we continue our journey into the future. It affirms the proud history and honoured traditions of Aboriginal Peoples in Edmonton, and their contributions to the social, cultural and economic life of the city. As a member of the Elders Circle, Francis Bad Eagle says it is a "bridge of understanding, linking the past with the future." *(Please see Appendix 3 for the Declaration.)*


The Dialogue Process:

Through the Accord Initiative EAUAC, the City of Edmonton and partners undertook the *Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Dialogue Process* in 2005. The Dialogue process is supported by the Government of Canada (Western Economic Diversification), the Province of Alberta (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development) and the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund (EHTF). It is directed by the Accord Initiative Steering Committee, guided by the Accord Initiative Elders Circle and supported by people working for and with the City (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal).

From July 2005 to early December 2005, the Dialogue process engaged over 1800 people from across the Aboriginal community. The goal of the Dialogue process was to create opportunities for participants to share their perspectives on key issues facing Urban Aboriginal people while also sparking their imaginations around “what could be” in terms of new ways of working together.

The Dialogue process was guided by the belief that strengthening relationships between the City of Edmonton and First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Non-Status People, is essential to creating long-term improvements in Aboriginal Edmonton. Throughout the process, the Elders Circle provided guidance to ensure that proper cultural and spiritual protocols were followed. Community members also participated in the formation and design of the Dialogue process. To this end, a variety of Indigenous methods were used to facilitate the listening and the building of relations in a good way. These included:

- **Open Houses:** Five Open House information sessions were hosted at various Aboriginal agency locations in Edmonton throughout October 2005. The Open Houses provided information to the Urban Aboriginal general public and were attended by a total of 510 participants over five days (October 12th, 14th, 15th, 18th, 19th).
- **Talking Circles:** In October 2005, Four Talking Circle sessions were hosted at the Canadian Native Friendship Centre. The Talking Circles engaged staff members of organizations that serve urban Aboriginal people. Each Talking Circle had a specific focus: Youth (October 6th), Women (October 13th), Street Issues (October 20th), Seniors/Disability Issues (October 27th). There was a total of 162 participants.

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- **Executive Forum:** On November 21, 2005 leaders and executive-level staff from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations (non-profit, business and government) were invited to the Chateau Louis Conference Centre. Over the course of the one-day forum, one-hundred-and-nineteen (119) participants—representing seventy-eight (78) organizations (community, non-profit, and business) and three orders of government (Federal, Provincial and Municipal)—discussed opportunities for building successful working relationships.
 - **Visitations:** From July to the end of November 2005 formal presentations were made to over forty (40) Aboriginal groups, stakeholders, and partners. An estimated 880 individuals participated in these presentations.
 - **Aboriginal City Life Teas:** The Aboriginal City Life Teas provided an opportunity for Aboriginal people to learn about City processes and for City employees to learn about the Accord Initiative and Aboriginal issues. Four of these gatherings were held throughout the year with a total attendance of about 120 participants.
 - **“Your City, Your Voice” Workbook Surveys:** About 1000 “Your City, Your Voice” Workbook Surveys were distributed over the course of the Dialogue process. Over 500 were completed and returned to the Accord office for tabulation and analysis by the consulting firm *Four Winds & Associates*.
 - **The Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative Website:** The Accord Initiative website served as an important mechanism for communicating with urban Aboriginal communities throughout the Dialogue process.
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ABORIGINAL EDMONTON

NOTABLE TRENDS

The Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Dialogue was initiated against the backdrop of several trends which reveal the opportunities and challenges for Aboriginal Edmonton. For more information on the Aboriginal population in Edmonton, please see the full statistical profile from which this information was obtained. It is available online at www.edmonton.ca/aboriginalaccord.

1. Aboriginal Edmonton is the second largest Aboriginal community in Canada, with 30,365 Aboriginal residents (in 2001) living within City boundaries and double that number living within a two-hour travel radius of the city.
2. Aboriginal Edmonton reflects the rich cultural, linguistic and political diversity of Aboriginal people in Alberta, as well as the extensive Aboriginal cultural and historical ties to the site of present-day Edmonton.
3. Aboriginal people comprise 4.6% of the City's population. There are only a few Edmonton neighbourhoods in which the Aboriginal population exceeds ten percent (10%). (Statistics Canada 2001).
4. In many Edmonton neighbourhoods, over fifty percent (50%) of the Aboriginal population lives in poverty. The poverty rate among Aboriginal Edmonton is 1.4 times higher than Alberta's Aboriginal average, and 2.5 times higher than for all Edmontonians.
5. Over fifteen percent (15%) of the low income population of many Edmonton neighbourhoods is Aboriginal. Aboriginal people, and the agencies that serve them, are challenged by the inter-related problems of poverty, poor housing, lack of education, ill health and family strife.

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6. Aboriginal people earn the same proportion of their total income as the general population (78%), but their average earnings and median income are much lower, due to higher unemployment levels and lower-paying jobs.
 7. Educational attainment is a key to higher levels of income and employment, and Aboriginal Edmonton is making progress in closing the education gap.
 8. Three quarters of the Aboriginal population have lived in Edmonton for at least five years. A relatively high birth rate, plus migration into Edmonton, have caused Aboriginal Edmonton to grow at 2.5 times the rate of the City's population (1996-2001).
 9. One of the greatest strengths of Aboriginal Edmonton is the potential of its youthful population;
 10. If Aboriginal Edmonton continues to grow at recent rates, about 54,500 Aboriginal people will live in the City of Edmonton by the Year 2017.



WHAT WAS SHARED

THE OPEN HOUSES AND TALKING CIRCLES

“THE ART OF LISTENING”

“This morning’s session reflects the history of the Pehonan.”
(Talking Circle Participant)

In October 2005, the EAUAC, the City of Edmonton and partner organizations initiated Five Open House information sessions and four Talking Circles to encourage listening and relationship-building.

The Open House information sessions were hosted at various Aboriginal agency locations in Edmonton. They provided information to the Urban Aboriginal general public and were attended by a total of 510 participants over five days (October 12th, 14th, 15th, 18th, 19th).

The Talking Circles were hosted at the Canadian Native Friendship Centre. The Talking Circles engaged the staff of organizations who serve Urban Aboriginal people. Each Talking Circle had a specific focus: Youth (October 6th), Women (October 13th), Street Issues (October 20th), Seniors/Disability Issues (October 27th). In total, 162 participants attended the Circles.

The Talking Circles provided the culturally-appropriate space for the respectful sharing of stories. Sitting in a “circle” means everyone is equal and everyone’s opinion is important, as Indigenous Educator, Shannon Thunderbird says:

“The ‘Old’ People say that you are never the same person coming out of a circle as when you went in because so many new connections have been made. All things that live within the Sacred Hoop are equal and protected, because a circle cannot do otherwise, it is not logical. It is a place where people come, to come together in safety, trust and sanctity to share stories and feelings. To help each other heal through laughter and tears.”

At the Talking Circles, participants were asked to share their views on the particular area of focus. Through their sharing of experiences, Talking Circle participants provided an earnest image of the complexity of the challenges facing Aboriginal Peoples in Edmonton. In the protection of the circle they spoke of mutual struggles and new opportunities. As one participant observed, “there is lots of knowledge from this circle, lots of power.” Many participants valued the opportunity to participate in the Talking Circles and hoped that they would continue into the future. As one participant observed, “my heart feels full right now.” (For more information on what was shared at these Circles, please see Appendices 4 through 7.)

KEY FINDINGS

YOUTH CIRCLE – OCTOBER 6, 2005

Talking Circle participants provided numerous examples of priorities they felt need to be addressed to ensure the well-being of Aboriginal youth in Edmonton. (See Appendix 4 for a more comprehensive list). These include:

- enhanced supports and services are necessary to help Aboriginal youth stay in school;
- efforts are required to increase parental involvement in the education of Aboriginal youth;
- there is a need to address the service gap that exists after youth turn eighteen years of age;
- there is a lack of a co-ordinated response to the delivery of programs and services to youth;
- there is a lack of settlement and support services for Aboriginal individuals coming to the City from rural areas;
- there is a need to provide mentorship opportunities to Aboriginal youth;
- opportunities need to be created to listen to youth and to ***“recognize the voice that is there”***; and
- supports are necessary to help deal with the socio-economic pressures on Aboriginal families including poverty and inadequate housing.

Facilitators noted that, although few youth completed the “Your City, Your Voice” workbooks, they were active participants in the Talking Circles and the Open Houses.

WOMEN’S CIRCLE – OCTOBER 13, 2005

Talking Circle participants identified several pressures impacting women in Aboriginal Edmonton (See Appendix 5 for a comprehensive list of pressures). These include:

- discrimination and marginalization— ***“Women’s voices aren’t heard”***;
- threats to personal safety— ***“Edmonton’s streets are not safe for Aboriginal women”***;
- lack of resources to meet basic needs (food, shelter and clothing);
- the high cost of childcare;
- health concerns including addictions and mental health issues;
- barriers to access of services;
- lack of culturally appropriate and accessible services— ***“We need facilities to meet as women and (a place) to be allowed to use cultural rituals”***;
- lack of transitional supports;
- poverty and unemployment; and
- lack of funding and support for education and training.

“We need to recognize the voice that is there.”

(Talking Circle Participant)

“What happens to someone who can’t advocate for themselves and has no connections?”

(Talking Circle Participant)

STREET ISSUES CIRCLE – OCTOBER 20, 2005

Talking Circle participants identified numerous socio-economic pressures that they felt needed to be addressed to deal with street issues in Edmonton. (See Appendix 6 for a more comprehensive list). These include:

- homelessness and a lack of affordable housing;
- lack of resources to meet basic needs (food, shelter and clothing);
- lack of transitional housing;
- lack of resources to treat addictions and mental health issues;
- barriers to the access of services;
- poverty and unemployment; and
- lack of skills/education.

SENIORS/DISABILITY CIRCLE – OCTOBER 27, 2005

Talking Circle participants identified several critical issues that they felt were impacting seniors and the disabled in Aboriginal Edmonton (See Appendix 7 for a more comprehensive list). These included:

- lack of appropriate placements for Aboriginal people with disabilities;
- lack of adequate housing;
- gaps in service—*“People are falling through the cracks”*;
- barriers to the access of services, including a lack of awareness—*“What happens to someone who can’t advocate for themselves and has no connections?”*;
- lack of continuity of services from the reserve to the city;
- discrimination and prejudice;
- lack of wheelchair accessibility for people with disabilities; and
- lack of culturally appropriate services.

THE EXECUTIVE FORUM

“EXPLORING NEW WAYS OF WORKING TOGETHER”

On November 21, 2005 leaders and executive-level staff from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations (non-profit, business and government) were invited to the Chateau Louis Conference Centre to explore new ways of working together. The Executive Forum was hosted by the Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee (EAUAC) and the City of Edmonton in partnership with the Government of Canada (Western Economic Diversification), the Government of Alberta (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development) and the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund.

At the heart of the Executive Forum were the small group exercises which created the space for participants from the various organizations to explore new ways of collaborating. This format was chosen in recognition that the priorities and aspirations of Aboriginal people in Edmonton are unlikely to be realized through the efforts of any one organization or sector alone. Effective collaborations—between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal organizations, businesses and community leaders and the three orders of government—are essential for progress and lasting change.

The small group exercises were broken into two parts that straddled a working lunch and networking opportunity. The hope was that the Forum would create an opportunity for relationships between the various organizations to develop and strengthen. It is through the shared experience of reflecting, talking and listening to one another that the foundations for long-standing relationships can be built.

KEY FINDINGS

The small group exercises focused the collective energies of the participants on the key components of effective working relationships. The aim was to create the conversational space for participants from a variety of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations to explore new ways of working together. To this end, the small group exercises were structured as a series of reflections that built progressively on one another (*A comprehensive report of the Executive Forum can be accessed online at www.edmonton.ca/aboriginalaccord*). Four key questions were explored in the small group exercises:

1. Share a story of a successful working relationship.
What are the essential elements of a successful working relationship?
2. What opportunities exist for us to work together?
 - As organizations?
 - At the Edmonton level?
 - At the regional level?
3. What is our responsibility to build successful relationships?
4. Can the Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative help us get there?

“It takes work. It is like a marriage. It takes lots and lots of work.”

(Forum Participant)

*"We have
to learn to
listen and
listen to learn."*

(Forum Participant)

STORIES OF SUCCESSFUL WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Forum participants identified numerous examples of successful working relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations and the three orders of government. These examples cut across a number of domains, including the private sector, the government sector (Federal, Provincial and Municipal) and the civic sector (non-profit and voluntary organizations). Collaborations have occurred in a variety of socio-economic areas including: health care, education, housing, social services and economic development. (See Appendix 8 for a comprehensive list of examples).

An important theme that emerged through these discussions is that effective collaborations are already part of the urban landscape. There was a general understanding that networks of relationship already exist in the city and that these relationships could be tapped into through a respectful process of listening.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Forum participants engaged in a candid exploration of the essential elements of successful working relationships. This discussion flowed naturally from the stories of real world collaborations. (See Appendix 9 for a comprehensive list of examples). These essential elements included:

- **Principles:** Mutual respect, recognition, and responsibility.
- **Values:** Inclusivity, reciprocity, transparency, accountability, trust, commitment and perseverance.
- **Actions:** Negotiations based on identifying shared interests (win-win) and compromise; mutual listening and learning; adapting and growing; developing a common vision and set of objectives; defining roles and responsibilities.

Participants painted a complex and nuanced picture of successful collaborations. One participant compared working relationships to a successful marriage where there is the constant requirement for honesty, communication and compromise.

In the course of discussion, participants acknowledged the challenges of building and maintaining relationships between organizations. One Elder commented that it is essential that all parties "accept that there will be criticism and that this will have to be dealt with in a good way." Another participant mirrored this by saying that it is important that "we be able to learn from our mistakes and move on." Participants acknowledged that an attitude of forgiveness is necessary to overcome the negative experiences of the past. The willingness to overcome territorialism and to enter into relationships of reciprocity rather than competitiveness was also identified as essential for working together. As one participant noted, "the history of contention is sometimes at odds with the spirit of collaboration."

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESSFUL WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Forum participants identified “working together” and “collective action” as prerequisites to realizing the full potential of Aboriginal Edmonton. To this end, they identified a number of opportunities for relationships to be formed between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations and the three orders of government. (See Appendix 10 for a comprehensive list of opportunities).

Opportunities for collaboration included:

- **Social Services:** Housing; education; children’s services; crime prevention and policing; and transitional supports for Aboriginal people moving to Edmonton.
- **Business and Economic Development:** Employment training and labour market development; human resource development; and tourism.
- **Culture and the Arts:** Promotion of Aboriginal cultural activities and development of the Aboriginal Arts community.

While participants recognized that opportunities exist for future collaboration, they acknowledged the importance of enhancing the capacity (funding, human resources and training) of Aboriginal organizations (business and non-profit) so that they can participate more effectively in the economic and social life of the city. Leadership development was identified as a key component of building future capacity, especially for Aboriginal youth. As one participant said, “We need to train Aboriginal youth to be leaders and provide them with opportunities to lead.”

“We have a responsibility ...first to ourselves and then to help take care of each other... we have forgotten this.”

(Forum Participant)

*“The vision
will come
when the
time is right.”*

(Aboriginal Elder)

RESPONSIBILITY FOR BUILDING SUCCESSFUL WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Forum participants spoke openly about the fact that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations and the three orders of government have a responsibility to build and maintain good relationships. As one Elder commented, “We have a responsibility...first, to ourselves and then to help and take care of each other...and we have forgotten this.” (See Appendix 11 for a comprehensive list of responsibilities).

The view of responsibilities included:

- providing mentorship opportunities to Aboriginal youth;
- leading by example and moving collaboration and reciprocity to the centre of our values and our actions;
- developing policies that are holistic and acknowledge interdependency;
- building relationships at the grassroots level so that we can hold political leaders and administrators accountable;
- entering into an open dialogue with others to determine areas of mutual concern;
- being willing to acknowledge differences while negotiating around common interests; and
- acknowledging each other and the work we are doing. It is important to celebrate our successes.

EDMONTON URBAN ABORIGINAL ACCORD INITIATIVE — CAN IT HELP US GET THERE?

Forum participants identified the Accord Initiative as a positive step with potential for building successful working relationships in Aboriginal Edmonton, although they were mindful that the Initiative is a dynamic process. As one Elder said, “The vision will come when the time is right.” (See Appendix 12 for a comprehensive list of participant responses).

THE WORKBOOK SURVEYS

“YOUR CITY, YOUR VOICE”

Throughout the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Dialogue process, the workbook surveys served as an important tool for gathering information and stimulating discussions. Approximately one thousand (1000) workbooks were distributed and 501 were completed and returned to the Accord Initiative office for tabulation and analysis. The complete statistical analysis is provided in Appendix 14.

The “Your City, Your Voice” workbooks were designed to identify common issues and concerns in order to inform the forthcoming second part (Part B) of the Dialogue process. *(Please see Appendix 1 for a description of the entire Dialogue process.)* The workbook gathered participants’ perspectives on five items:

1. the extent to which Edmonton is a welcoming city for Aboriginal Peoples;
2. issues affecting Urban Aboriginal People in Edmonton;
3. new ways of working together;
4. the value of a relationship agreement between the City of Edmonton and Urban Aboriginal people in Edmonton—an “Accord”; and
5. guiding principles for a relationship agreement.

Of the 501 participants who completed the workbook, four-hundred-and twenty-seven (427) identified themselves as living in Edmonton. Two-hundred-and-ninety-seven (297) participants identified themselves as female; 144 identified themselves as male. Other demographic information included the following:

- 191 respondents identified themselves as being of First Nations ancestry;
- 127 respondents identified themselves as being of Métis ancestry;
- 2 respondents identified themselves as being Inuit;
- 17 respondents identified themselves as being Non-status;
- 6 respondents identified themselves as being other Aboriginal;
- 117 respondents were of non-Aboriginal descent;
- 41 respondents did not identify their ancestry; and
- 42 respondents identified themselves as working for the City of Edmonton.

It should be noted that a number of participants who completed the workbook surveys identified themselves as non-Aboriginal. Similarly a number of Dialogue process participants (in the Open Houses, Talking Circles and Executive Forum) were non-Aboriginal people who are invested in working with the Aboriginal communities in Edmonton. The workbook survey, however, was designed first and foremost to give voice to the views of Aboriginal people.

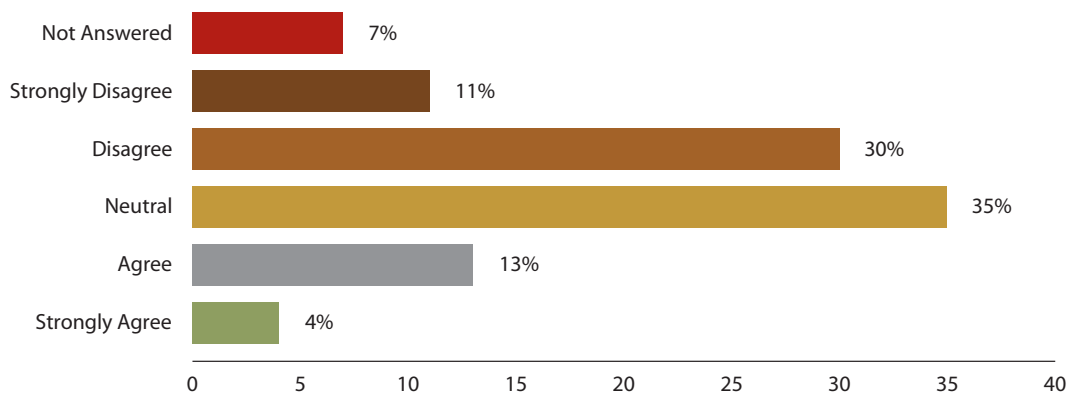
For this reason, the Steering Committee requested that the consultant group *Four Winds & Associates*—which undertook the statistical analysis of the workbooks and wrote this report—conduct separate statistical analyses for all of the workbook quantitative data to determine whether “Aboriginal-only” data is statistically different than the combined data from all 501 workbooks. When responses from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal respondents were compared, only one noticeable difference was found. This difference was found in the data set that relates to “issues affecting Urban Aboriginal Peoples in Edmonton” and appears in the table on page 24.

*“We do
not exist in
isolation.
We exist in
relationship
with everyone
and everything
around us.”*

*(Workbook
Participant)*

KEY FINDINGS

EDMONTON AS A WELCOMING CITY



“Personally, I experience discrimination on almost a daily basis. These experiences range from direct and indirect comments, inappropriate behaviours, as well as open and hidden discrimination through laws and legislation.”

(Workbook Participant)

- Of the 501 participants who completed the workbook survey, forty-one per cent (41%) were in **disagreement** with the statement that, *“I think Edmonton is a welcoming and friendly city for Urban Aboriginal people”* (30% Disagree; 11% Strongly Disagree).
- Thirty-five per cent (35%) of participants provided a **neutral** response to this statement. Seventeen (17%) of respondents were in **agreement** (13% Agree; 4% Strongly Agree). Seven per cent (7%) of survey respondents did not answer this question.
- When asked to elaborate on a personal experience that influenced their opinions, eight per cent (8%) of survey participants reported experiences of discrimination as a contributing factor. This was the most frequently identified negative experience. As one survey participant wrote:

“There is a tendency to dismiss Aboriginals as a group and to view them as less than equal to the dominant culture even as we recognize the value of other cultural groups within our city.”

- In contrast, two per cent (2%) of survey participants praised the City of Edmonton for taking action to make Edmonton a more welcoming place. This was the most frequently noted positive viewpoint. As one survey participant wrote:

“The City set up the Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee about a decade ago. The advisory role of this Committee led me to believe that City Council is willing to listen and act (as appropriate) on the suggestions of the EAUAC. This also reflects the Council’s intention to be “inclusive for the Aboriginal community.”

ISSUES AFFECTING URBAN ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN EDMONTON

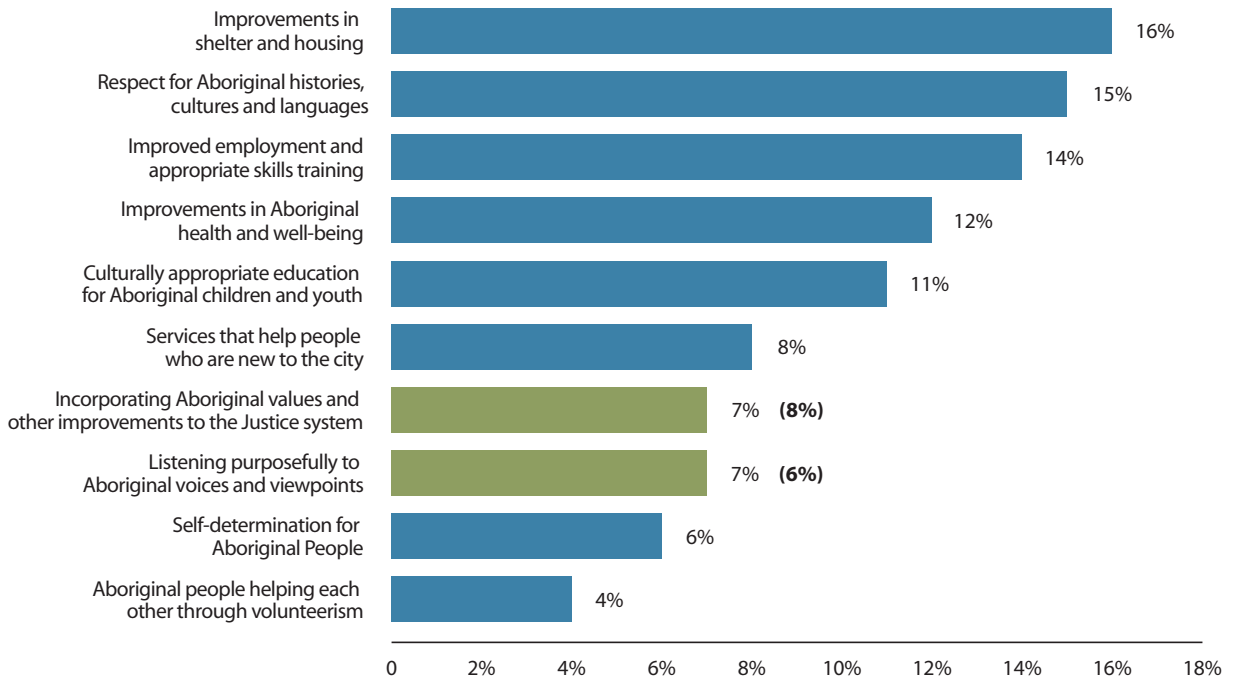
- Of the workbook respondents, forty-seven per cent (47%) were in **agreement** with the statement that, “*Urban Aboriginal people know their communities needs, issues and priorities*” (27% Agree; 20% Strongly Agree).
- Eighteen per cent (18%) of participants provided a **neutral** response to this statement. Twenty-three per cent (23%) of respondents were in **disagreement** with the statement (17% Disagree; 6% Strongly Disagree). Eleven per cent (11%) of survey respondents did not answer this question.
- When asked to identify the four most important priorities from a list of critical issues, the following needs were identified as requiring immediate action:
 - 16% improvements in shelter and housing;
 - 15% respect for Aboriginal histories, cultures and languages;
 - 14% improved employment and appropriate skills training;
 - 12% improvements in Aboriginal health and well-being;
 - 11% culturally appropriate education for Aboriginal children and youth;
 - 8% services that help people who are new to the city;
 - 7% incorporating Aboriginal values and other improvements to the Justice system;
 - 7% listening purposefully to Aboriginal voices and viewpoints;
 - 6% self-determination for Aboriginal Peoples; and
 - 4% Aboriginal people helping each other through volunteerism.
- When asked to identify priorities that needed to be added to the list, the most frequent priority identified by survey participants was education or training with ten per cent (10%) of survey participants naming this as an issue; seven per cent (7%) identified the needs of Aboriginal youth as requiring more attention; two per cent (2%) of survey participants suggested that more focus should be put on the needs of Aboriginal Elders.
- When responses from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal respondents were compared, only one noticeable difference was found. When commenting on issues affecting Aboriginal people in Edmonton, eight per cent (8%) of Aboriginal respondents indicated that “incorporating Aboriginal values and other improvements to the Justice system” was important as compared with seven per cent (7%) of all respondents. In addition, six per cent (6%) of Aboriginal respondents indicated that “listening purposely to Aboriginal voices and viewpoints” was important as compared to seven per cent (7%) of all respondents. The differences are shown in the table on the following page. The findings in **brackets (%)** indicate the areas where there is a difference and identify the Aboriginal-specific responses.

“I feel that educating the younger generations about Aboriginal people and their culture would create a better understanding and create better relationships between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals.”

(Workbook Participant)

ISSUES AFFECTING URBAN ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN EDMONTON

Statistical tests indicate a lack of “statistically significant difference” between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses to the quantitative workbook items. It is only in the following data set that a difference is apparent (although not statistically significant). The findings in brackets indicate the areas where there is a difference and identify the **Aboriginal-specific** responses.



“I think all children and youth should take part in Aboriginal Education, so that all will understand the History and Culture that was made by all who contributed.”

(Workbook Participant)

NEW WAYS OF WORKING TOGETHER

- When asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of the following ideas about working together, survey participants provided the following in terms of preference (with stronger agreement appearing higher in the list).
- Participants were asked to rate each item on a five-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree).
- It should be noted that there was a strong positive clustering of responses to the top five (5) ideas presented below—with the means being above 4.3 (Agree). The remaining two ideas also received a positive response. Please see the graph on the following page which shows this in greater detail.

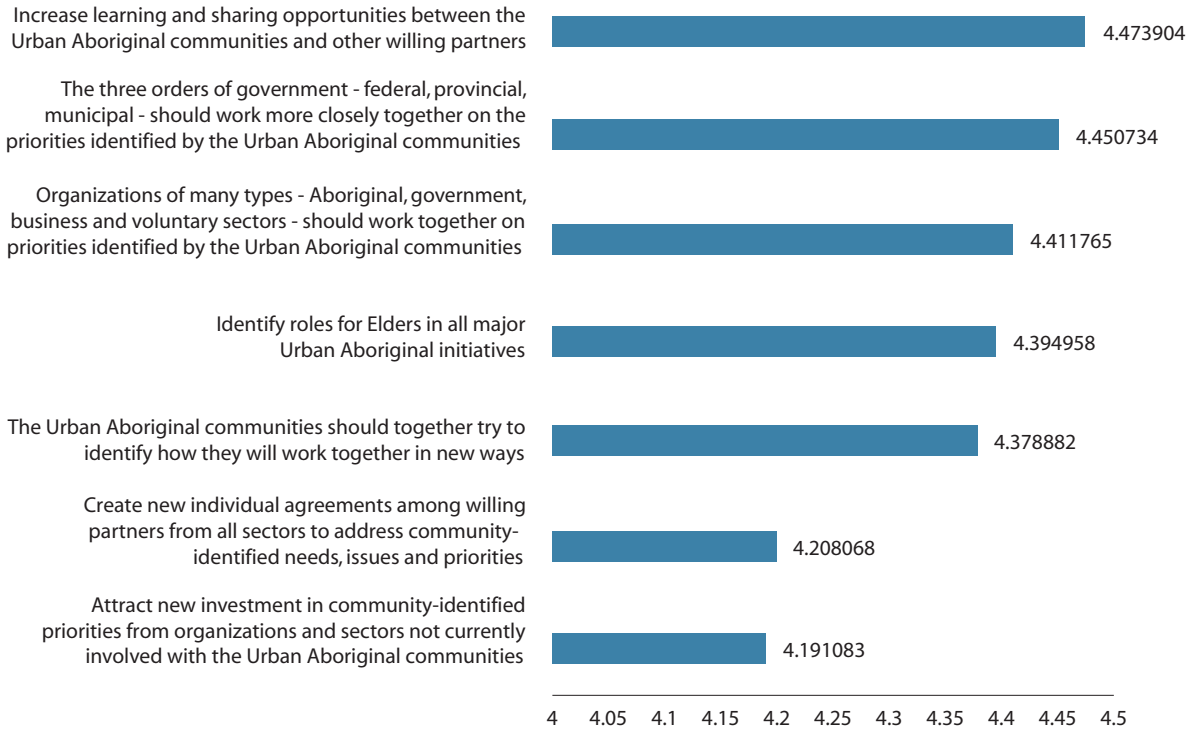
“Stronger relations are needed but words without actions are meaningless.”

(Workbook Participant)

IDEA	ORDER OF PREFERENCE	MEAN
Increase learning and sharing opportunities between the Urban Aboriginal communities and other willing partners	1	4.473904
The three orders of government - federal, provincial, municipal - should work more closely together on the priorities identified by the Urban Aboriginal communities	2	4.450734
Organizations of many types - Aboriginal, government, business and voluntary sectors - should work together on priorities identified by the Urban Aboriginal communities	3	4.411765
Identify roles for Elders in all major Urban Aboriginal initiatives	4	4.394958
The Urban Aboriginal communities should together try to identify how they will work together in new ways	5	4.378882
Create new individual agreements among willing partners from all sectors to address community-identified needs, issues and priorities	6	4.208068
Attract new investment in community-identified priorities from organizations and sectors not currently involved with the Urban Aboriginal communities	7	4.191083

NEW WAYS OF WORKING TOGETHER

Level of agreement with each of the following ideas about working together



* NOTE: 4.0 = Agree

- When asked to suggest additional ways Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations in Edmonton could work together to benefit Aboriginal communities, thirty-eight per cent (38%) of survey respondents did not answer this question.
- The most frequent responses were related to the theme of bridging between cultures through learning, teaching, and education. Nine per cent (9%) of survey participants identified this as a potential strategy. These responses ranged from cultural awareness training to opportunities for learning through further dialogue. As one participant wrote:

"I think it may be helpful to host dialogues between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to talk about their histories, perceptions & views of the world to help ordinary people to learn to live together and overcome the impact of historical relationships between Aboriginal & non-Aboriginal people—a cultural dialogue."

- Other suggested ways of building relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations included:
 - creating opportunities for Aboriginal youth (2% of responses);
 - reducing discrimination and racism (2% of responses); and
 - reaching out to Aboriginal Elders (1% of responses).
- When asked to provide suggestions on how the City of Edmonton could improve its working relationships with Urban Aboriginal communities, thirty-seven per cent (37%) of survey respondents did not answer this question.
- The survey participants who answered this question provided a variety of responses. Ten per cent (10%) of these responses identified City Council in specific as having an important role to play in establishing good relations, as one survey participant wrote: "The City of Edmonton Council should have discussions with the Aboriginal leaders to see what needs to be improved." Other responses included:
 - creating opportunities for learning, training and education (7% of responses). This applies both to the education of Aboriginal people (*"Improve the school systems for Aboriginals so they can be better educated to get jobs"*) and to cultural awareness training for City of Edmonton employees (*"It would be nice to see City employees and City officials take mandatory Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training"*); and
 - increasing Aboriginal employment in Edmonton (7% of responses), as one survey participant wrote: *"Hire more Aboriginal people. Be understanding of their obstacles that might also have an impact at the workplace."*

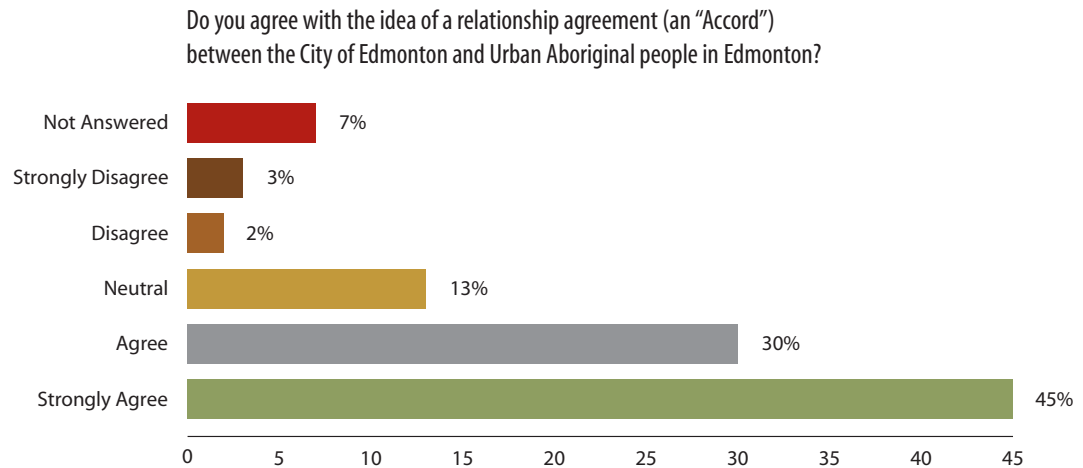
"Both parties can take the initiative to learn about each other's culture."

(Workbook Participant)

THE VALUE OF A RELATIONSHIP AGREEMENT — AN “ACCORD”

“There should be relationships with principles in place. This opens the ‘lines’ of communication”

(Workbook Participant)



- Of the survey participants, 75 per cent (75%) were in **agreement** with the idea of a relationship agreement between the City of Edmonton and Urban Aboriginal People in Edmonton (30% Agree; 45% Strongly Agree).
- Thirteen per cent (13%) of survey participants provided a **neutral** response to the question of a relationship agreement; and only 5% of respondents **disagreed** with the question (2% Disagree; 3% Strongly Disagree). Seven per cent (7%) of survey participants did not answer the question.
- When asked to elaborate on their reasons for their opinion, nine per cent (9%) of survey participants cited the importance of relationship-building as a reason for supporting an “Accord”. As one participant wrote:
“This process has been long overdue and what is unique about this process is that the Aboriginal community is a part of the dialogue, an ‘equal’ partner in working towards the goal of ‘establishing better relations’ with the City of Edmonton.”
- Four per cent (4%) of survey participants cited the need for respect as being integral to wanting an “Accord.”
- When asked to identify how the idea of a relationship agreement could be improved the most frequent response was more communication, dialogue and listening with five per cent (5%) of survey participants identifying this as a priority. Three per cent (3%) of participants cited a need for further education about the idea of a relationship agreement.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR A RELATIONSHIP AGREEMENT

- When asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of the following guiding principles to include in a relationship agreement, survey participants indicated the following in order of preference (with the stronger agreement appearing higher in the list).
- Participants were asked to rate each item on a five-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree).
- It should be noted that there was a strong positive clustering of responses to the top eleven principles presented below—with the means being above 4.5 (Strongly Agree). The twelfth principle also received a positive response with a mean of 4.3 (Agree). Please see the graph on the following page which shows this more clearly.

IDEA	ORDER OF PREFERENCE	MEAN
Listen carefully to one another	1	4.660088
Work to create positive perceptions and attitudes about Urban Aboriginal people	2	4.64693
Act respectfully towards one another	3	4.641138
Respect the diversity of Aboriginal cultures in Edmonton	4	4.623094
Build a foundation that focuses on the interests of future generations	5	4.604396
Honour the values of both the Aboriginal communities and the City of Edmonton	6	4.583878
Honour the spirit and intent of agreements	7	4.577681
Look for solutions that work for everyone	8	4.558952
Recognize and respect the knowledge and experience of Aboriginal business and community leaders	9	4.540305
Recognize responsibilities of all parties	10	4.531729
Learn from past experience	11	4.51634
Recognize and respect the processes and business requirements of the City of Edmonton	12	4.30531

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR A RELATIONSHIP AGREEMENT



- When asked what guiding principles should be added, sixty-seven per cent of (67%) survey participants did not answer the question. For those who did respond, the most frequent principle suggested was “respect.” Five per cent (5%) of all survey participants referred to this principle, which included respect for:
 - Elders and their leadership;
 - cultural diversity—values, principles and spirituality; and
 - human dignity—“*Each person, no matter where from, brings gifts to this circle formed by the people of this place.*”
- Other principles that were statistically significant included “giving attention to Elders” (1%) and focussing on youth (1%).
- When asked who should sign such an agreement on behalf of Urban Aboriginal people in Edmonton, forty-two per cent (42%) of survey participants did not complete this question.

- Twenty-four per cent (24%) of the survey participants identified that at least one Elder or community leader should be a signatory to an “Accord.” As one participant wrote:

“This is a very important question and one that is difficult to answer. I would say that Aboriginal Elders, from all the Aboriginal groups represented in Edmonton (First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all Aboriginal peoples). These Elders should be both male and female Elders, not merely people who say they are Elders because of their age. I respect Elders who have lived through tough times, have overcome hardship, surpassed their bitterness, and are able to educate without alienating the general public. I respect Elders who listen to the stories of their people, who listen to the stories of caring social workers, doctors, nurses, teachers, etc. whether these professionals are Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal.”

*“The Elders,
as our ‘wise
ones’ on
our behalf.”*

(Workbook
Participant)

SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES— THE EDMONTON URBAN ABORIGINAL DIALOGUE



Three main themes emerged throughout the six months of listening and sharing. These themes were consistent across the Talking Circles, the Executive Forum and the “Your City, Your Voice” workbook surveys. They include:

- **Challenges Facing Urban Aboriginal Peoples:** There was a broad consensus that the socio-economic pressures facing Aboriginal Edmonton require new ways of working together. The Talking Circles, the Executive Forum and the workbook surveys chronicled a range of socio-economic challenges that serve as the backdrop for collective actions;
- **The Importance of Working Relationships:** There was a general acknowledgement that effective collaborations already exist in Aboriginal Edmonton. At the same time, it was broadly acknowledged that further collaborations are necessary to address the challenges and seize the opportunities facing Aboriginal people in Edmonton. Participants identified that increasing “the learning and sharing opportunities between the Urban Aboriginal communities and other willing partners” is essential to building effective relationships; and
- **Support for the Idea of a Relationship Agreement:** There was broad consensus that the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative may be one vehicle for finding new ways of working together. Seventy-five per cent (75%) of the workbook respondents supported the idea of a relationship agreement between the City of Edmonton and Urban Aboriginal People in Edmonton. This sentiment was shared in both the Talking Circles and the Executive Forum.



CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

*"It is the
Aboriginal
people of
Edmonton that
are really the
movers and
shakers for this
Accord moving
forward. You
empower people
and lots of good
things happen."*

(Honourable
Thelma Chalifoux)

From July 2005 to early December 2005, the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Dialogue process engaged over 1800 participants from a wide cross-section of the Aboriginal Edmonton. The consultations were aimed at exploring new ways of collaborating on community priorities impacting Aboriginal people in the city.

Throughout the Dialogue process, participants identified the importance of exploring new ways of working together. This acknowledgment was made in the context of the significant socio-economic challenges facing Aboriginal Edmonton.

The Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative was seen as an important vehicle for developing collaborative relationships in the city. Of the 501 respondents to the "Your City, Your Voice" workbook, seventy-five per cent (75%) supported the idea of a relationship agreement between the City of Edmonton and urban Aboriginal people in Edmonton. This sentiment was shared in both the Talking Circles and the Executive Forum.

At the same time, participants acknowledged that the Accord Initiative was only one step in an ongoing dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations and the three orders of government. It was generally understood that further opportunities for listening and sharing are required. As one participant in the Talking Circles remarked, "We've made a great stew...the Aboriginal way is to throw it all together in a stew—it feeds more people. We've started a great stew here."

As the first part of the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Dialogue process (Part A) wraps up, it is encouraging to see that the past six months of listening — of "exploring issues" and "discovering common interests" — has established a strong foundation for the next part of the Dialogue process (Part B). As Elder Vic Letendre said, "The City has welcomed the Native people in. Now it is going to be up to them to pick up the torch and go."

The "Your City, Your Voice Report" documents what Urban Aboriginal people have identified as their priorities and desired ways of working together. In 2006, Part B of the Dialogue process is intended to facilitate "creation of options" and "commitment to agreements." The Elders Circle has indicated that a period of reflection on the Report and the Appendices will contribute to good community processes and good outcomes. There is agreement among the Steering Committee that Part B of the Dialogue process must begin with the development of a highly inclusive working group for moving to shared action based on the Aboriginal communities' identified priorities. More fundamentally, there is agreement that the next phase of the process must be strongly community-driven and must welcome all willing partners to this Pehonan, to honour the many voices of Aboriginal Edmonton.

BUILDING THE CAPITAL CITY

ESTABLISHING A NEW ERA IN MUNICIPAL ABORIGINAL RELATIONS

The City of Edmonton wants to be known as a community that acknowledges, welcomes, and supports Aboriginal contributions toward Edmonton's culture and economy. Towards this end, on August 30, 2005 the City of Edmonton adopted the Aboriginal Declaration "Strengthening Relationships Between the City of Edmonton and Urban Aboriginal People".

Aboriginal Edmonton is growing rapidly with a growth rate between 1996 and 2001 of 20.1%. Population forecasts for 2001-2008 anticipate a steady growth rate that is 1.5 times higher than that of the non-Aboriginal population. **This growth rate could mean that by 2017, Edmonton will be home to the largest municipal Aboriginal population in Canada.**



The Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Dialogue process was developed by Aboriginal people in an ongoing partnership with the City of Edmonton and other partners. The City of Edmonton continues to play a facilitative role in bringing together partners willing to support Aboriginal community leadership in action planning based on Aboriginal community identified priorities.

The first part of the Dialogue process provided opportunities for the Urban Aboriginal community to speak and the City of Edmonton and other partners to listen. The needs, issues, priorities and opportunities that the Urban Aboriginal communities identified through the Urban Aboriginal Dialogue process have been compiled into the "Your City, Your Voice Report" that is now being openly shared with all.

WE HOPE THAT EVERYONE WILL TAKE THE TIME TO READ THE "YOUR CITY, YOUR VOICE REPORT" AND THE "APPENDICES" DOCUMENT PROVIDE THOUGHTFUL RESPONSES TO THE ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED IN THE REPORT, AS WE CONTINUE TOGETHER ON A JOURNEY OF STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITIES.

THANK YOU.

GET INVOLVED AND HELP CREATE A STRONGER COMMUNITY FOR ALL OF US

Contact the Accord Initiative at:

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Edmonton Urban
Aboriginal Accord Initiative

In partnership with

THE CITY OF
Edmonton



Edmonton Aboriginal
Urban Affairs Committee

THE EDMONTON URBAN ABORIGINAL DIALOGUE PROCESS: YOUR CITY, YOUR VOICE

Aboriginal community leaders and respected Elders who make Edmonton their home have repeatedly cautioned us about the perils of not using Indigenous/Aboriginal ways of approaching Aboriginal communities.

The Accord Initiative's Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Dialogue Process: Your City, Your Voice has created an Aboriginal space and process of communication to engage Aboriginal people.

The process reflects a traditional or Indigenous Circle and remains an important factor in this process.

It was, therefore, with the guidance of the Elders and a number of Aboriginal community leaders that the Dialogue process applied Indigenous methods such as the Talking Circle, Elders wisdom, one to one visitations, and cultural and spiritual protocols in this process.

The "Your City, Your Voice Report" will function as a starting point for the next phase of the Accord Initiative's community-driven Dialogue process. The Report is meant to bring focus and a sense of priorities to the Aboriginal and stakeholder gatherings and not predetermine a direction. The direction will be determined through the highly inclusive next phase of the process.

We look forward to your involvement as we move into Part B of the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Dialogue process: 'creating options' and 'committing to agreements'.

For more information contact the Accord Initiative office at 780-944-7602 or by email at aboriginal.accord@edmonton.ca

