

Indigenous Framework 2023 Community Check-in Sessions

Facilitator Notes

During the November 2023 Indigenous Framework community check-in sessions, facilitators recorded notes based on questions and feedback from participating community members. Those notes have been organized according to corresponding discussion themes and included below.

Housing and Houselessness

- How is the City of Edmonton using existing facilities or infrastructure to address the houselessness crisis?
- What supports help house people experiencing houselessness?
- The situation is getting worse.
- Can we use empty buildings to house people experiencing houselessness?
- Is there a process to create safe spaces for our less fortunate neighbours?
- How does the City of Edmonton engage people experiencing houselessness?
- When developing processes and policies, we need to consider the long-term repercussions, such as houselessness and addiction, of not supporting vulnerable people.
- Downtown needs permanent public bathroom and washroom facilities.
- There is discrimination in health care, education and housing, as well as harassment from landlords.
- Neighbourhoods that don't want affordable housing need to understand that we need to have housing for all.

Connecting with Indigenous Communities

Consultation and Engagement

- What can be done to improve consultation with Indigenous communities?
- The City of Edmonton needs to clarify its engagement process with underrepresented groups.
- The City of Edmonton's current public engagement process needs to change to give power and voice back to Indigenous communities.

Wahigicobi Indigenous Framework

2023 WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

- Members of Indigenous communities need to have a seat at the table, and know what is happening in the North Saskatchewan River valley.
- It is important to listen to urban Indigenous voices.
- How does the City of Edmonton evaluate Indigenous community engagement?
- Are community engagement participants compensated for their time?
- The City of Edmonton needs to ensure compensation for community engagement participants amounts to a living wage.
- There needs to be clarity on the community engagement process for new capital projects as well as transparency around practices for engaging Indigenous communities, which includes sharing who is engaged and how they are engaged.
- The City of Edmonton needs to partner with Indigenous community groups to host consultation and engagement events.

Communicating

- There needs to be a greater effort to inform Indigenous communities about consultation and engagement events.
- What methods can be used to reach Indigenous communities and inform them of consultation and public engagement events, and who is responsible for this work?
- We need to use old and new ways to reach Indigenous communities.
- There needs to be an increase in networking, community connections and online communications to reach members of Indigenous communities.
- How can the City of Edmonton use plain language to help the public better understand municipal communications such as documents and reports.
- Sometimes I feel trapped in western ways of knowing.
- Western culture didn't understand us (Indigenous Peoples) at first. They wanted to put our knowledge into words and documents, but we have our own stories, knowledge and ways of knowing, as well as being and communicating, that need to be considered and practiced.

Gathering

- How can the City of Edmonton consider different ways of gathering with Indigenous communities?
- Gatherings should be organized at local venues throughout the city, within neighborhoods, and utilize community leagues.
- Cultural norms of individual Indigenous groups should be considered when planning community gatherings.

Resurgence

Indigenous Art

- Can art funding connected to capital projects reserve more for Indigenous art?
- How can Indigenous artists have work included in municipal projects and places?
- How does the City of Edmonton select Indigenous art in municipal spaces?

Supporting Culture

- How does the City of Edmonton create space for Indigenous culture?
 - Who is involved in this process and how is it determined?
- First Nations and Métis peoples have more influence than Inuit people.
 - Inuit people do not feel like they fit in.
- How are the voices of Indigenous Matriarchs included in city planning?
- How does the City of Edmonton ensure the voices of Indigenous women are included in decision-making processes?

Signs and Monuments

- Edmonton's welcome signs should be updated to acknowledge that the city is located on Treaty 6 territory and the homeland of Métis people.
- Monuments play a role in the reconciliation process and make an impression on newcomers to Canada.
- Local monuments reflect what matters to society and what the City of Edmonton values, such as honouring truth and reconciliation, as well as missing and murdered Indigenous Peoples.

Elder Protocol

- The City of Edmonton needs to understand that culture is not a product, and to decolonize how it interacts with Indigenous Elders.
 - For example, waive the requirement for Elders to provide social security numbers as a condition for the payment of honorariums.
 - Cash honorariums are preferred as opposed to cheque, electronic fund transfers or other forms of payment.

Wahigicobi Indigenous Framework

2023 WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

- When requesting help from an elder, the nature of the request needs to be taken into account.
 - Protocol needs to be offered and a gift should be included.
 - This gift should be reflective of the request.
 - For example, a complicated request might require something larger, such as moose or deer hide, or a Pendleton blanket.
- This relationship is reciprocal, not just a transaction.
- The City of Edmonton needs to understand how an elder is defined.

Urban Reserves

- What type of governance is needed?
- What is the minimum land size that is needed?
- Who is responsible for services, such as utilities?
- Do they involve a nation-to-nation agreement with the federal government?
- What is the City of Edmonton's role?
- What are the protocols and processes for managing archeological deposits found on building and development sites?
- Does consideration for urban reserves extend beyond First Nations to include Métis and Inuit peoples?
- How is ceremony included?

Youth

- When developing policy, procedure and programs, the City of Edmonton needs to acknowledge that the Indigenous population is younger than the non-Indigenous population.
- The needs of Indigenous youth require special attention, and shouldn't be lumped in with the needs of the greater Indigenous community.
- Indigenous youth should be involved in decisions that affect them.
- Transportation needs to be improved for Indigenous students traveling to Edmonton from outside the city.
- There is a systemic problem of youth not being able to afford the cost of parking when travel to Downtown Edmonton is required.
- How can the City of Edmonton support Indigenous students?

Ceremony, Land and Medicine

kihcihkaw askî-Sacred Land

- Do visitors have to pay for a sweat lodge ceremony, and can external elders visit?
- How can the City of Edmonton better inform Indigenous community members about this site, i.e. there is a need for more information, including better signage.
- How can someone book the site?
- Who provides medicines, and what options are available for people who do not have access to medicines?
- How can the City of Edmonton increase local access to medicines such as sage and sweet grass for urban Indigenous Peoples?
- Can medicines be grown in the Indigenous art park, ᐃᑦᑦᑦ (ÎNÎW) River Lot 11[∞], and other City of Edmonton park spaces?

Spaces

- How is the City of Edmonton reserving space for Indigenous community uses?
- Municipal parks need to allocate a large portion of the land to Indigenous community needs. Some of those needs include a sweat lodge for women and space to offer Indigenous teachings, such as creation stories.
- Access needs to be available throughout the year to facilitate regular teachings that cover a massive amount of Indigenous knowledge and history. The sun, moon, stars, trees and wind — they all teach us.
- Urban Indigenous communities need access to nature, which is an important part of Indigenous cultural practices.

Construction

- Ceremony is important to Indigenous communities, so how does the City of Edmonton ensure ceremony is included at the start of every construction project?
- When land is disturbed, there is a spiritual component that needs to be handled properly. How are Indigenous Peoples included to ensure these needs are met?
- Many Indigenous Peoples believe that we need to honor the Earth, so that the Earth can look after us. Part of this process involves acknowledging the earth and physically connecting with it.

Smudging at municipal facilities

- How can the City of Edmonton increase communication around the process for smudging in municipal facilities?
- Do people know the teachings of smudging, the sacredness of smudging and its purpose?
- How can the City of Edmonton support spontaneous smudging since advance notice is not always feasible.
- Could the City of Edmonton designate space outside a facility for smudging?
- Access to smudging in community league buildings is a concern. How can the City of Edmonton help?

Safety and Sensitivity

- Community members witness abuses in power from law enforcement services.
 - This abuse of power is traumatizing to the Indigenous community.
 - What is the City of Edmonton doing to stop this?
- What is the City of Edmonton doing to increase safe spaces for Indigenous Peoples?
- Dedicated Accessible Transit Service (DATS) and Edmonton Transit Service (ETS) drivers need more sensitivity training especially for working with Indigenous community members.
- How can the City of Edmonton increase Indigenous staff working with ETS?
- How has the City of Edmonton engaged Indigenous employees on the topic of anti-racism, and what does anti-racism look like for Indigenous employees?
- Can Indigenous employees access an Elder? If so, what does that access look like?

Engaging and Retaining Indigenous Employees

Application Process

- The online application platform is difficult to navigate.
- The system is created in a very western way, and needs to be changed so that it is easier for Indigenous Peoples to use.
- Indigenous candidates are not getting past automated filters when submitting applications.
- Many Indigenous Peoples are storytellers and find it easier to tell stories than to list accomplishments on a resume or cover letter.

Recruitment and Retention

- How many jobs has the City of Edmonton posted in the past year, and how many Indigenous applicants filled those positions?
- How does the City of Edmonton find Indigenous candidates?
- Indigenous recruitment is quite weak and requires a plan that is transparent.
- The City of Edmonton appears unable to retain Indigenous employees.
- Recruitment processes should involve more Indigenous human resources staff
- Does the hiring process intentionally exclude Indigenous Peoples?
- Non-Indigenous candidates are being hired on postings for Indigenous applicants.
- More employment opportunities are required specifically for Indigenous Peoples.
- Create a bridge to employment for aspiring candidates.
- There should be more internship opportunities for Indigenous youth.
- Are Indigenous graduates of post-secondary institutions getting hired?
- Why don't we work with post-secondary institutions to recruit students?
- The City of Edmonton should work with community organizations to host job fairs.

Working for the City

- How many Indigenous employees work at the City of Edmonton?
- How many Indigenous employees do not disclose their ancestry?
- First Nations and Métis peoples do not fit in and are not made to feel welcome.
- Do Indigenous employees have a voice internally?
- Do Indigenous employees receive time-off for ceremonies?

Reconciliation

- What does reconciliation mean to the City of Edmonton?
- The City of Edmonton needs a spiritual renewal more than reconciliation.
 - A spiritual renewal goes beyond the calls to action and calls for justice.
- Reconciliation is more than a checklist of the 94 calls to action.
- Are there any Indigenous employees who work on the teams that implement the Indigenous Framework and reconciliation initiatives.
- There should be more engagement with frontline service providers.
- Edmonton is multicultural, and Indigenous cultures, along with all others, need to flourish.
- We all need to be cultural ambassadors for the city.