



Strengthening Relationships with Indigenous Communities

CALGARY FOUNDATION IMPACT REPORT



Acknowledging the land on which we gather

In the spirit of respect, reciprocity and truth, we honour and acknowledge Moh-kíns-tsis, the traditional Treaty 7 territory, oral practices of the Blackfoot confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), as well as the Iyarhe Nakoda (Bears paw, Chiniki, Wesley), and Tsuut'ina Nation.

We acknowledge this territory as home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3, within the historical Northwest Métis homeland.

We acknowledge all Nations, Indigenous and non, who live, work and play on this land and help steward, honour and celebrate this territory.

Glossary

The Circle Way

Indigenous practice of communicating in a circle, which inspires collaborative conversations and a deeper level of discussion amongst participants.

Elder

In the Indigenous language, Elder is a verb (not a noun) that signifies the importance of providing guidance, overseeing ceremonial practices, and sharing the teachings of their language, beliefs, customs, values and traditions.

Indigenous ways of knowing

Refers to cultural methods of building knowledge—such as listening, reflection, protocol, and experience.

Knowledge Keeper

From a deep understanding of Indigenous cultural traditions, Knowledge Keepers are recognized for their role in sharing valuable knowledge from generation to generation.

Land acknowledgement

An Indigenous custom used when welcoming outsiders onto their land, and into their homes, land acknowledgement shows respect for traditional Indigenous gathering places.

Moh-kíns-tsis

Blackfoot term for confluence of the Bow and Elbow Rivers.

“This land has to be acknowledged. The people that took care of this land for a long time have to be acknowledged. At least find out the truth about us.”

Siskaghee, Black Faced Woman

Beverly Hungrywolf

Kanai Nation, Blackfoot Confederacy

The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada (The Circle)

As a signatory of The Circle's Declaration of Action, Calgary Foundation considers the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 calls to action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People as our guide for adopting parallel systems thinking that respectfully incorporate Western practices and Indigenous ways of knowing.



VITAL PRIORITIES

*Community Connections Focus:
Strengthening Relationships with
Indigenous Communities.*

THROUGH MULTI-PRONGED
CONSULTATION WITH OVER
100 COMMUNITY PARTNERS,
AND EXTENSIVE ANALYSIS OF
RESEARCH, FIVE VITAL PRIORITIES
WERE IDENTIFIED:



Calgary Foundation builds a healthy and vibrant community where everyone belongs. We inspire and facilitate philanthropy, support the charitable sector and build a permanent endowment to address current and future needs of people in our community.

Calgary Foundation initiated a collaborative re-examination of issues facing our community to:

1. Ensure current and emerging needs are effectively being addressed.
2. Add strategic alignment, focus and impact to the collective work of the charitable sector.

Developed using the outcome harvest process, Strengthening Relationships with Indigenous Communities is one in a series of impact reports that provide donors, community members and charitable organizations with insights to:

- ▶ Comprehend the impact of Calgary Foundation's grantmaking.
- ▶ Measure impact and outcomes to guide strategic, targeted community investment.
- ▶ Understand the current sector landscape, areas of change, and desired outcomes.
- ▶ Increase leadership and raise the profile of organizations working for change.

In our reconciliation journey, Calgary Foundation is committed to building meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities, and incorporating strategies based on mutual respect, and traditional knowledge.



MEDICINE WHEEL CONCEPT

The message of balance within a Medicine Wheel has guided the outcome harvest process and the development of the Strengthening Relationships with Indigenous Communities impact report.



There is diversity within Indigenous communities which present variations in teachings, language, ceremony protocol, beliefs and values.

The Medicine Wheel is an interconnected system of teachings relating to the seasons, directions, elements, colours and the cycle of life. It speaks of the need for balance, harmony and respect as bringers of happiness.

It is a traditional approach to life balance for many Indigenous communities that can be incorporated as a framework in determining how Indigenous focused initiatives are supported in our community.

OUTCOME HARVEST

To measure complex outcomes (defined as behavioural changes that include actions, relationships, policies, and practices) this report used a reflective evaluation process known as outcome harvesting.

Appreciating the importance of oral tradition in Indigenous culture and protocol, the outcome harvest examined past results and gathered feedback from key community stakeholders at a workshop that was facilitated by Elder Casey Eagle Speaker and guided by The Circle Way.

“Rather than measuring progress towards predetermined goals, outcome harvesting collects evidence of what works, what’s changed, what’s in the way, and what’s ahead.”

Evaluation Process



During the harvest process, outcome statements that focused on four areas of change surfaced:

1. Indigenous Youth
2. Charitable Practices
3. Calgary Foundation
4. Community

Based on stakeholders' input, the statements were revised to present progress made in the past five years, while highlighting Calgary Foundation's contribution to the work.

This is the first time that Calgary Foundation has been evaluated using the outcome harvest process.

DESIGN

Determine scope of work, identify partners and areas of impact, shape evaluation questions, and convene key stakeholders to discuss areas of change within the sector.

HARVEST

Review relevant data (ie. grant reports, annual reports, emails, and websites) to uncover any changes in community in connection with Calgary Foundation's support and formulate preliminary outcome statements for key stakeholder review.

CHECK WITH OTHERS

Substantiate and revise outcome statements based on input from key stakeholders that incorporated Indigenous ways of learning.

INTERPRET

Final revisions to outcome statements and development of next-step recommendations.

USE LEARNINGS

Incorporate the findings of the outcome harvest into our collective work.

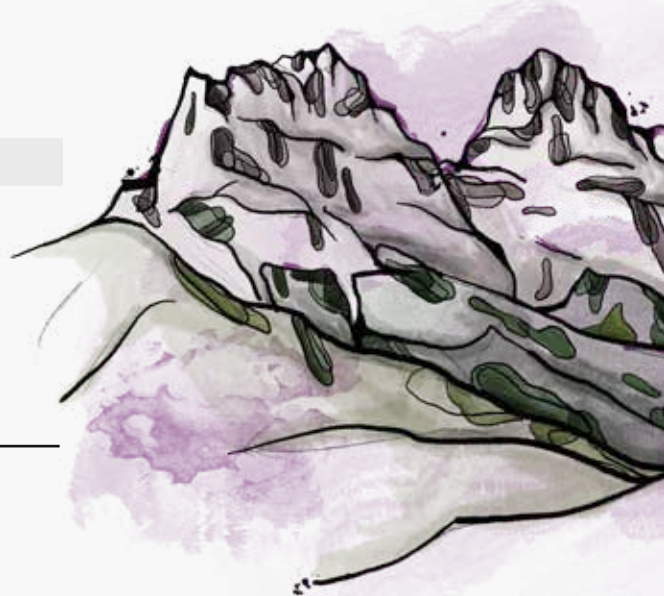


INDIGENOUS YOUTH

In the last five years, what has changed for Indigenous Youth in the Calgary and area community?

Outcome Statement

There has been an increase in local programming for improving youth engagement and empowering youth to make independent life decisions.



/// The collective efforts of Elders, community and the charitable sector has led to improved high school completion rates and an increase in the number of youths who self-identify as Indigenous.

Since the completion of the harvest, further community discussions revealed the important role allies have when mentoring Indigenous youth.

Strong, confident mentors that advocate on their behalf help develop a sense of trust that empowers Indigenous youth to address the racial discrimination and systemic barriers they often face.

THE HARVEST ATTRIBUTED THESE POSITIVE OUTCOMES TO SEVERAL KEY FACTORS:

IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

The role of Indigenous mentors is an important factor in achieving successful outcomes for Indigenous youth. Organizations reported strong results following the launch of mentorship programs. Many organizations noted that Indigenous youth mentorship required a larger support system of family, peers, Elders, and service providers. The holistic mentorship approach helps youth in being comfortable with their identity as an Indigenous person.

ROLE OF ELDERS OR KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS

Guidance from Elders is key in the development of Indigenous youth. Elders serve as a conduit for youth to learn traditional teachings and land protocols. However, without a culturally appropriate space to facilitate discussions, Elders note a disconnect in terms of delivery of services. Youth want access, but often face barriers in connecting with Elders. As a potential solution, Knowledge Keepers and Elders are increasingly attending less structured events to informally address questions from youth in a comfortable setting.

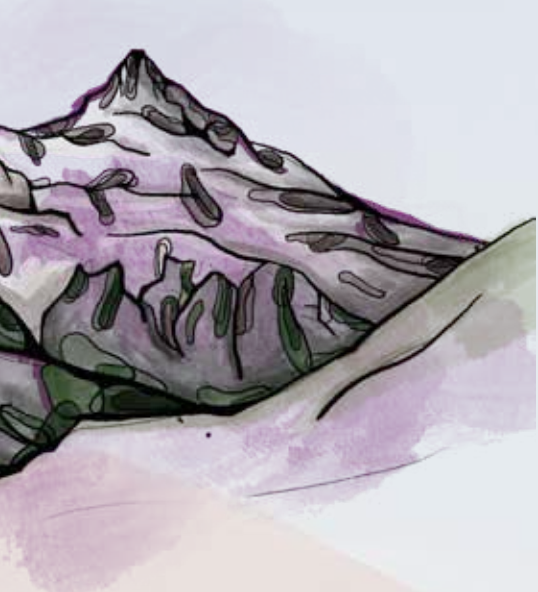
Calgary Foundation Impact

IMPROVED INDIGENOUS YOUTH PROGRAMMING

While past programming addressed singular goals, there is now a shift towards a more “human-centered” approach that holistically supports youth’s needs, on reserve and in urban settings. Calgary Foundation understands the importance of emergent programming and supporting best practices. While Indigenous engagement is still relatively new, there are funders in the early stages of working with service providers to understand the evolving landscape.

“Youth are interested in knowing their roots, finding their origins, accepting the teachings of Knowledge Keepers, and creating a place to learn.”

Elder Casey Eagle Speaker



CHARITABLE PRACTICES

In the last five years, how have charitable practices changed in regard to Indigenous initiatives?

Outcome Statement

There has been an increase in the development of strategies that improve and increase engagement with Indigenous communities and individuals.

Due to a growing demand to engage Elders, many organizations have shifted their programmatic engagement to a deeper level by building meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities.

To embed the Indigenous perspective in the workplace, new Indigenous leadership roles and programs have been developed.

TO IMPROVE ENGAGEMENT, THE OUTCOME HARVEST IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING KEY FACTORS:

ROLE OF ELDERS OR KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS

Although progress has been made, in order to enhance the understanding of parallel systems thinking, a more inclusive approach should be taken that includes both Western and Indigenous ways of knowing. The request for Elders to provide guidance in the charitable sector has increased, but the significant leadership role an Elder could provide is often overlooked due to a lack of understanding of the knowledge and skills they have to share.

IMPROVEMENTS TO APPLICATION PROCESS

The Western approach of applying for charitable funding and reporting on impact does not consider traditional Indigenous oral storytelling practices. To remove barriers, Indigenous communities should be allowed to submit oral reports and applications. Funders should also review the questions asked of the applicants to ensure equity for all those seeking charitable funding.

Calgary Foundation Impact

Many organizations currently engage with Indigenous communities but there are many more who hesitate due to a lack of knowledge of proper protocols in approaching Indigenous communities.

The Foundation is creating opportunities for organizations working in the charitable sector to learn from each other, as a lack of collaboration often leads to longer project timelines and larger budgets.

A recent Calgary Foundation grant that promoted collaboration is the *litaohkanitsini'kotsiyio'p* ("place of conversation" in Blackfoot) – an Indigenous hub developed through the Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary.



CALGARY FOUNDATION

In the last five years, how has Calgary Foundation changed its' organizational practices?

Outcome Statement

In 2015, following a multi-pronged consultation process with community, the need to strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities was identified as one of five vital priorities.

/// To advance our work, Calgary Foundation convened a committee of Indigenous leaders to develop a mandate for a new position: Director, Indigenous Relations.

This new role is a first within the movement of 191 community foundations across Canada and supports our collective reconciliation journey by:

- ▶ Building Indigenous protocols into the internal culture of Calgary Foundation.
- ▶ Providing awareness exercises, and context-setting internally and externally.
- ▶ Offering capacity-building services for community partners.
- ▶ Developing land acknowledgement resources for internal/external use.
- ▶ Offering guidance to community partners from the Director, Indigenous Relations.
- ▶ Leveraging additional support by sharing successes with peer funders.

To truly mobilize reconciliation and raise awareness of our shared history, we need to move beyond developing transactional relationships, towards building authentic relationships that are based on mutual respect, and a deep understanding and desire to address needs.

There exists a belief that donors only support needs that affect them on an emotional level, which leads to the question; "How can Calgary Foundation increase awareness of the need to foster systems change and prioritize reconciliation work for non-Indigenous communities?"

Over the last few years, there has been an increased number of funding requests from across the charitable sector for projects focused on strengthening relationships with Indigenous communities.

The increased focus has:

- ▶ Mobilized the Foundation's reconciliation journey.
- ▶ Increased our understanding of the needs, challenges, and opportunities.
- ▶ Improved our role as stewards for our volunteers and the broader community.

Deepening Our Understanding

Internally, Calgary Foundation is shifting our behaviors and attitudes through a systems change approach that includes context-setting discussions, exploratory exercises and a real time focus on issues that emerge within and beyond our sector.

Within this change process, board and volunteers have also been engaged to support our efforts in identifying various leverage points and models of philanthropy that enhance a cultural shift.



COMMUNITY

In the last five years, how has the Calgary community changed in regard to the Indigenous perspective?

Outcome Statement

In the Calgary community, the municipal government and charitable sector have invested in the planning stages of action towards reconciliation.

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There is a growing awareness and noticeable push toward reconciliation at an institutional level, most noticeably in the growing number of organizations opening public events with a land acknowledgement. For most organizations, actions for real reconciliation are still in the preliminary planning stage.

There is a desire for Indigenous voices to be amplified, but a lack of knowledge on how to properly engage with Indigenous communities still exists. There is a shift to decolonize approaches to programming and interactions with Indigenous communities, which is in turn developing more inclusive and diverse communities.

Changing a deeply ingrained mindset is part of the process of decolonization that involves a shift in the status quo, which currently continues to prioritize Western values. This creates barriers for those communities made vulnerable by the environments and sectors around them.

Awareness is not an end goal. Awareness should lead to action. A community compelled to genuine action is better than the token feeling of awareness.

“There is a difference between knowing something in your head and taking it into your heart.”

Elder Casey Eagle Speaker

Calgary Foundation Impact

Recognizing that more can be done to create, collaborate and strengthen intentional relationship building with Elders to guide our reconciliation journey, Calgary Foundation has embraced reconciliation practices for itself and the broader community by:

- ▶ Engaging in intentional learning, and change processes.
- ▶ Building relationships with Indigenous communities.
- ▶ Educating staff, board, volunteers and stakeholders in parallel ways of knowing.
- ▶ Supporting community partners with knowledge sharing via Director, Indigenous Relations.

Calgary Foundation will continue to embrace its important role in moving the Calgary community forward in their respective journeys. As our work of systems change and cultural shift evolves, the Foundation will continue connecting to the urban Indigenous community, colleagues, organizations and Elders through:

- ▶ Formal quarterly Indigenous network gathering circles.
- ▶ The Foundation’s informal Indigenous advisory group.
- ▶ The incorporation of traditional knowledge at various stages of development.

REPORT SUMMARY

The outcome harvest was undertaken to understand changes in the priority area of Strengthening Relationships with Indigenous Communities and define Calgary Foundation's contribution to that change. The harvest surfaced four domains of change:

1 **INDIGENOUS YOUTH**

In the first stage of research, the original outcome statement suggested that over the last five years Indigenous youth have experienced an increase in programming related to mentorship and the transition to adulthood (including young adults moving from a First Nation Reserve to Calgary). While this was partly true, the substantiation discussion uncovered that there is much more to a youth's transition process than mentorship in its traditional sense. This journey for Indigenous youth includes creating a strong, proud, and healthy sense of identity and belonging.

2 **CHARITABLE PRACTICES**

In the last five years, many charitable organizations have shifted their approaches to engage Indigenous communities in a wide range of programs and initiatives. After reviewing planning documents and final reports, local research suggests that there is a need for programming specific to reconciliation. More could be done to pull away from a Western-centred approach, to a more inclusive, holistic model that also values Indigenous paradigms of thought and practice.

3 **CALGARY FOUNDATION**

The evaluation reviewed the organizational practices of Calgary Foundation. The harvest elicited interesting results as the internal evaluation and external substantiation yielded different comments towards a common theme, that Calgary Foundation is on the right path and should continue to use its influence to provide examples of systems change in the sector.

4 **CALGARY COMMUNITY**

The evaluation looked at the broader Calgary community, the trends in Indigenous engagement, and how the landscape in the city is shifting. Similar to the findings of the charitable sector, the harvest outcome uncovered many plans in place, but it is too soon to understand the changes in behaviour and attitude of the community.



STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation highlighted several areas that Calgary Foundation can focus on to improve program outcomes. These areas align with Calgary Foundation's strategies that build awareness and support Indigenous cultural training throughout the charitable sector.

While each of the outcome statements featured in this report include their own important learnings, during the early stages of the harvest the importance of implementing the Medicine Wheel paradigm into Calgary Foundation's grant application and evaluation process was identified.

Moving forward, an opportunity exists to engage Knowledge Keepers in developing a Medicine Wheel framework that could provide direction for our work, practice and culture.

As one of Calgary Foundation's five vital priorities, work in the area of Strengthening Relationships with Indigenous Communities is still in the early phases but the outcome harvest helped to identify:

- ▶ Areas of positive change, such as youth and community mentorship.
- ▶ Areas that require additional efforts, such as raising awareness amongst donors.

CALGARY FOUNDATION STRATEGIES

1. Utilize the Medicine Wheel approach to better align grantmaking and community needs.
2. Promote alternative methods of applying for grants and reporting on funding.
3. Engage donors by increasing their awareness of Indigenous programming.
4. Increase sector capacity through facilitating connections with Indigenous leaders.
5. Identify opportunities to convene organizations working in the sector to share best practices.

Calgary Foundation has embraced this work and continues to engage in intentional learning, change processes and relationship building with the Indigenous community, as well as reaching out to staff, board and volunteers as a way to fully impact a cultural shift for the Foundation and all stakeholders.

Next steps for the Foundation include developing tools and resources to provide additional confidence and knowledge for community to become better stewards of our collective reconciliation work.

"...To some people, reconciliation is the re-establishment of a conciliatory state. However, this is a state that many Aboriginal people assert never has existed between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people...to the Commission, reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country.

For that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgment of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour."

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada



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Spring, 2019



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