

Indigenous Learning Initiative

# Engagement Summary Report

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Indigenous Community

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# PROJECT OVERVIEW

## Project background

The Government of Alberta (the Government) is implementing the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) as a means to renew its relationship with Indigenous peoples in Alberta. This involves developing and implementing training for the public service about treaties, residential schools, and the historical and contemporary experiences of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in Alberta.

This direction is in line with most other Canadian jurisdictions that are delivering or are in the process of developing training for their public servants in response to the UN Declaration. Although some training regarding Indigenous peoples already exists across Government departments and public agencies, boards and commissions, there is no consistent training approach that is accessible to all employees. The Indigenous Learning Initiative will help to close this knowledge gap by providing a government-wide approach for learning about Indigenous peoples and communities.

The Indigenous Learning Initiative recognizes the need to build greater understanding and awareness of Indigenous histories, cultures, experiences, and perspectives at all levels within the Alberta Public Service. This will improve the Government's ability to recognize the unique strengths and challenges of Indigenous peoples and communities, and foster more respectful, informed relationships. A more informed public service will be better able to work with Indigenous peoples to develop programs and services that meet their needs.

## Indigenous community engagement

In the fall of 2016, the Public Service Commission and Indigenous Relations, as project co-leads, began preliminary work on the Indigenous Learning Initiative. A working group of members from across the Alberta Public Service was established to begin a collaborative discussion about the training. Meeting bi-weekly over the fall and winter of 2016 and throughout 2017, the working group developed an engagement plan and accountability framework.

In the spring and fall of 2017, the Public Service Commission and Indigenous Relations engaged extensively with individuals both internal and external to Government. The purpose of engagement was to identify the potential benefits of the training and inform the development of content. Engagement was broken into three groups: Alberta Public Service employees with representatives from public agencies, boards and commissions; Indigenous scholars; and individuals from Indigenous communities and organizations. This report provides summary results of engagement with individuals from Indigenous communities.

# OVERVIEW OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A total of 12 half-day engagement sessions were held with over 65 individuals (including Elders, youth, and women) from Indigenous communities and organizations across the province.

- Urban Indigenous and Métis (Lac la Biche, Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge).
- Inuit Community (Edmonton).
- Treaty 6 (Edmonton).
- Treaty 7 (Calgary and Lethbridge).
- Treaty 8 (Peace River and Lac La Biche).
- Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women (Edmonton).
- Alberta Native Friendship Centre Association AGM (Rocky Mountain House).

Engagement sessions were led by an Indigenous facilitator familiar with Indigenous communities throughout Alberta, to provide continuity between engagement sessions. One or more Government representatives were in attendance at each session.

To provide a starting point for discussion, while comments and conversations were welcomed, the following three questions guided the engagement conversations:

1. If you had three hours with Government staff, what would you want them to know?
2. Considering the foundational learning component needs to be immediately accessible to approximately 28,000 employees, and ultimately 400,000 throughout the province, what approaches to delivery would be appropriate?
3. The Government would like to have an Indigenous advisory group to provide ongoing input into the development, delivery, and continuous improvement of the training material. What suggestions do you have?

Feedback provided by participants was captured in summary notes for each engagement session. These notes were then sent to participants for validation. A number of participants provided clarification, additional feedback, or support materials.

Although the three-hour time allotment for each engagement session provided opportunity for an initial discussion, ideas generated by Indigenous engagement participants merit further exploration and expansion.

A number of themes arose, reflecting the diversity of the individuals who participated. These are identified in a thematic overview in the *What We Heard* section of this report and detailed in **Appendix 1**. Additional information captured during the sessions is included in **Appendix 2** and **Appendix 3**.

# WHAT WE HEARD

## Thematic overview

The following reflects a thematic overview of information provided by participants during twelve Indigenous community engagement sessions held throughout Alberta between June and October, 2017.

### LONG-TERM OUTCOMES: WHY PARTICIPANTS FEEL THE INDIGENOUS LEARNING INITIATIVE IS IMPORTANT

Reconciliation, and strengthened relationships	Mutual understanding and shared responsibilities	Desire to learn	Change	Change	Better outcomes for Indigenous peoples and communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long-term</li> <li>• Ongoing engagement</li> <li>• Action</li> <li>• Cultural integrity</li> <li>• Working together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government - Indigenous understanding of each other</li> <li>• Together address wrongs and build constructive, hopeful future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ignite the spirit</li> <li>• Motivation to learn and apply knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Public Service employee hearts and minds</li> <li>• Government policies and legislation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government practices (decolonization, practical changes that make a difference, cultural integrity)</li> <li>• Public perspectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced number of children in care</li> <li>• Youth engagement</li> <li>• Increased numbers of Indigenous Alberta Public Service employees, including in leadership</li> </ul>

### THE WHAT: INDIGENOUS LEARNING INITIATIVE CONTENT RECOMMENDED BY PARTICIPANTS

Race relations and colonialism	Diversity of Indigenous peoples	Yesterday and today: Historical and contemporary contexts	Cultural content and Indigenous perspectives	Breaking myths and misconceptions	Changing practice: Applied learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical intention of colonialism</li> <li>• Impact of Euro-centric systems</li> <li>• Governments as colonial constructs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Nations, Métis and Inuit</li> <li>• Elders, women, youth, and urban</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journey of sorrow and resiliency</li> <li>• Truth telling: Indigenous histories and impacts</li> <li>• First Nations and Aboriginal rights</li> <li>• Government of Alberta "must know" information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple Indigenous perspectives</li> <li>• Difference between culture and spirituality</li> <li>• Traditional teachings and creation stories</li> <li>• Indigenous values</li> <li>• Cultural protocols</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dismantle myths</li> <li>• Fact-based information</li> <li>• Educate about Indigenous-Crown relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case studies</li> <li>• Identify systemic racism embedded in Government policies and practices</li> <li>• Equitable approaches to achieve equal outcomes</li> </ul>

## THE HOW: WHAT PARTICIPANTS WANT CONSIDERED FOR IMPLEMENTATION

<p><b>Why must precede what and how</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government value statement of why the Indigenous Learning Initiative is important to every employee</li> </ul>	<p><b>To mandate or not</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Varied opinions</li> <li>• Encourage spirit of engagement to build healthy relationships</li> <li>• Mandated training tied to performance agreements and aimed at systemic change</li> </ul>	<p><b>Continual improvement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long-term commitment</li> <li>• Continual improvement versus delayed perfectionism</li> <li>• Don't reinvent the wheel (build on current training)</li> <li>• Follow-up and evaluations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cultural integrity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous Learning Initiative training as ceremony, from beginning to end</li> <li>• Indigenous voices</li> <li>• Participation of Elders and knowledge keepers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Working in partnership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Equal, lateral relationship</li> <li>• Local partners</li> <li>• Government and community facilitators (Indigenous and non-Indigenous)</li> <li>• Indigenous curriculum developer</li> </ul>
<p><b>Government considerations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government commitment and leadership priority</li> <li>• Targeted, relevant training based on work roles</li> </ul>	<p><b>Learner considerations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior assessment: baseline knowledge</li> <li>• Relevant community connections</li> <li>• Inclusive, non-hierarchical participation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Training considerations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant approaches and frameworks</li> <li>• Multi-phased, multi-level training</li> <li>• Formalizing training</li> <li>• Experiential format</li> <li>• Use of technology</li> </ul>	<p><b>Relational learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face-to-face conversations and small groups</li> <li>• Safe, inclusive spaces</li> <li>• Honest, balanced and informed dialogue</li> </ul>	<p><b>Sustainability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Champions, ambassadors and mentors</li> <li>• Indigenous panel</li> <li>• Bi-lateral agreements</li> <li>• Annual conference</li> <li>• Indigenous space</li> </ul>

# CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

## Commitment to training and outcomes

Participants said that an Indigenous Learning Initiative is important to Indigenous peoples and should be reflected in a long-term commitment to the initiative by the highest levels of leadership within the Government. Once strategically implemented with local Indigenous partners, participants feel the initiative has the potential to achieve significant results, including:

- Building connections and meaningful relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.
- Breaking the myths and stereotypes of Indigenous peoples that lead to marginalization and dehumanizing experiences.
- Building increased awareness, appreciation, and understanding of Indigenous peoples, their contexts, and world views.
- Inspiring Alberta Public Service employees and public agencies, boards, and commissions to change the way they do business, bringing about tangible, practical improvements in the lives of Indigenous peoples and communities.

## Program design

Participants said training needs to be at least one to two days in length and held in a safe and inclusive space. It was recommended that training be face-to-face and in small groups of 25-30 people. Participants said the training should incorporate a multi-level approach, ranging from foundational to more in-depth training and be led by Indigenous and non-Indigenous trainers working together. It was recommended that training be built on current programs that are being delivered within the Government and by Indigenous organizations, rather than delaying implementation of the Indigenous Learning Initiative by “planning to perfection” and “reinventing the wheel.”

Training can evolve organically over time through a process of continual improvement, with input from an Indigenous advisory committee and local Indigenous partners that reflect the diversity of Indigenous peoples. Follow-up and ongoing evaluation is an important mechanism for continual improvement.

## Local partners

One of the most frequently raised themes in the sessions was the suggestion to work with local partners, such as First Nations, Metis Settlements, regional Métis Nation of Alberta offices, Friendship Centres and organizations such as the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women in the development and delivery of training.

Participants suggested that working with local Indigenous partners has many benefits, including use of cost-efficient facilities located throughout the province, access to community members and Elders, and authentic and truthful perspectives. It also provides opportunities for Alberta Public Service employees

and public agencies, boards and commissions to build meaningful, strategic relationships with Indigenous peoples that evolve over time.

## Truth telling: sorrow and resiliency

The history of Indigenous peoples in Canada and Alberta is a difficult one that is not understood by most non-Indigenous peoples. Participants said that the story must be told, and that it must be told by Indigenous voices, through an Indigenous lens.

It is also important, however, to portray the resiliency of Indigenous peoples and to talk about the positive things that are happening, such as identifying and protecting traditional lands.

## Next steps

Two strategic mechanisms are appropriate in the short term to facilitate the delivery of training for Alberta Public Service employees by spring 2018. Without strategic intent and dedicated support, the full benefits of the training may not be actualized.

### Indigenous Input

Indigenous community engagement participants recommended that the Government work collaboratively with Indigenous peoples on the design and implementation of the foundational component of the Indigenous Learning Initiative, as well as continual development of the initiative over the longer term.

Participants recommended creating an Indigenous panel with representation from individuals identified through Indigenous organizations that reflect the diversity of Indigenous peoples in Alberta and determining voices.

### Champions, cultural ambassadors, and mentors

Participants suggested designating support in the form of Government champions to encourage participation. Participants also recommended cultural mediators and ambassadors to build bridges between public servants and Indigenous peoples and communities and to help Government leaders and staff to lead with Indigenous values and to apply an Indigenous lens in their day-to-day work.



# APPENDIX 1: THEMATIC DETAIL

Participants identified the need to discuss the WHY for the training, before moving to WHAT the training should look like and HOW it should be delivered.

## The why: long-term outcomes

The following thematic groupings identify the participants' "long-term vision."

### RECONCILIATION AND STRENGTHENED RELATIONSHIPS

Participants said *all* peoples, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous, must work together and that reconciliation:

- Must start from a place of truth and acknowledgement of past hurts and move beyond awareness to address major wrongs.
- Involves a long-term approach, with ongoing, consistent, engagement between the Government and Indigenous peoples, based on trust and respect.
- Allows for cultural integrity within the Government's policies and practices.

### MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES

Participants said that Government and Indigenous peoples will develop a better understanding of each other over time.

The result will be a way forward where both the Government and Indigenous peoples share responsibility for addressing major wrongs and focus on building a constructive and hopeful future for Indigenous peoples in Alberta.

### DESIRE TO LEARN

The Indigenous Learning Initiative will ignite the spirit of Alberta Public Service employees and public agencies, boards and commissions, generating motivation for continued learning, and a desire to apply what has been learned to their work.

### CHANGE

NOW is the time – change must start from a place of hope – from a belief that change is possible.

### Compassionate Understanding: change in hearts/minds

Elected Government officials, Alberta Public Service employees and public agencies, boards and commissions will develop a compassionate understanding, through the eyes of Indigenous communities, of the impacts of historical and contemporary colonial policies and practices on Indigenous peoples, motivating them to take action.

## Change in policies and legislation

Participants said compassionate understanding of Indigenous peoples should result in provincial policy and legislative changes that:

- Reflect the intent of *the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action* and align with the Premier's desire to improve the well-being of Indigenous peoples in Alberta.
- Are flexible, informed and don't "box" Indigenous peoples into policies and legislation based on western world views.
- Are founded on the understanding that Indigenous peoples are resilient and capable, rather than a "problem" to be solved.

## Change in Government practices

Participants said change in policies and legislation, based on an understanding of Indigenous perspectives and realities, result in:

- Decolonization of current Government processes.
- Practical changes that "make a difference."
- Ongoing, relational engagement between the Government and Indigenous peoples.
- Decreased systemic racism in Government programs and practices, supported by policies and processes within the Government to address racism.
- Approaches that are respectful of Indigenous practices, protocols and ways of knowing (for example: oral history, trauma-informed programs and payment of Elder honorariums).
- Better outcomes for Indigenous children and youth, including a decrease in the high number of Indigenous children in care.
- Increased numbers of Indigenous peoples in every department in the Government.
- Increased numbers of Indigenous peoples in more influential positions in the Government.
- Enhanced Indigenous internships and a protocol for grievances of Indigenous employees.

## Change in public perspectives

Increased knowledge of Indigenous peoples by Alberta Public Service employees and public agencies, boards and commissions will lead to greater public understanding.

Components of the Indigenous Learning Initiative will, over time, influence the general Alberta population. Participants said this can be supported in practical and fun ways, such as "map apps" with information tidbits so that Albertans can learn about Indigenous territories as they are heading there.

## The what: content

Participants were asked to identify the training content they thought important for Alberta Public Service employees and public agencies, boards and commissions. The following thematic groupings summarize these conversations.

### RACE RELATIONS AND COLONIALISM

This refers to the impact of Euro-centric systems and policies: then and now.

Participants said public servants could learn about:

- Colonialism as an intentional historical tactic, including the immigration movement and how that impacted the makeup of Alberta.
- Through a race-relations lens, how Euro-centric systems and policies contribute to elements of paternalism, racism and white privilege, in both historical and contemporary contexts.
- How governments are colonial constructs and identify ways to decolonize processes.
  - Recognize the Government as a colonial, euro-centric system with paternalism and racism embedded in departmental policies, legislation and the education system.
  - Identify how alternatives to a colonial approach can result in different and better outcomes for Indigenous peoples.

### DIVERSITY OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

#### Respect for the similarities and distinctness of Indigenous peoples

Participants said public servants could learn about:

- Diversity of Indigenous peoples in Alberta: First Nations (on/off reserve), Métis, Inuit, Elders, youth, women, urban, and rural.
- Similarities AND distinctions within and between Indigenous groups, for example:
  - Similarities that would bring someone to identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit.
  - Similarities between Metis Settlement members (e.g., through kinship).
  - Distinctions between First Nations (e.g., different language groups, histories, protocols, governments).
- The need to respect the different cultures, governments and ways of being of different Indigenous groups.
- The implications of these differences, Indigenous people don't neatly fit into government boxes (e.g., settlements are not municipalities).

## First Nations people

Participants said public servants could learn about:

- The diversity among First Nations across Alberta, including diversity of geographic locations and the nature and implications of residing on or off-reserve.
- Confusion of legal standings, including the difference between Status and non-Status individuals, and recognize that one size does not fit all.
- The role of Chief and Council (and know that this is different from administrative bodies on Settlements).

## Métis people

Participants said public servants could learn about:

- Métis people in relation to their land base, and their historical and contemporary identities.
- Individual and collective stories of Metis Settlements:
  - Grassroots approach.
  - The Accord as a living document, changing with the times.
  - Commonality within Settlements (kinship brings Settlements together).

## Inuit people

Efforts have been made to formally engage the Edmonton Inuit community (Edmontonmiut) in the training initiative. Those efforts will continue as the training initiative rolls out.

## Indigenous peoples in urban settings

Representatives from the Alberta Native Friendship Centre in Rocky Mountain House participated in engagement sessions.

## Yesterday and Today: Historical and Contemporary Contexts

### A journey of sorrow and resiliency

Participants said public servants could learn about:

- The importance of making a connection between First Nations, Métis and Inuit historical impacts and contemporary experiences, and viewing these as a journey (e.g., relationship between cultural genocide and contemporary realities).
- The journey is one of sorrow and resiliency: Indigenous peoples are impacted, but still here; both sides of the story need to be told.

## Truth telling: Indigenous histories

Participants said public servants could learn about:

- Administrative and legislative action taken by Canadians and their governments that breach treaties, human rights, and basic decency.
- Historical contexts that include: Doctrine of Discovery, Royal Proclamation, *Indian Act*, *Indian Residential Schools*.
- Treaties, Scrip (the provision of either land or money by Canada to compensate for loss of Aboriginal title) the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Honour of the Crown.
- History that includes information specific to Western Canada and Alberta – mistreatment of people:
  - Intent to get rid of “Indians.”
  - Unfair treatment – requiring permission to leave reserve ended in 1970s.
  - Indian Residential Schools as an originator of problems/issues.
  - The Government’s practices that contribute(d) to problems/issues.
- Resulting lateral violence in communities.

## First Nations and Aboriginal rights

Participants said public servants could learn about:

- First Nations and Aboriginal Rights, including protected rights (e.g., treaties).
- Understand case law and how it impacts Indigenous and Aboriginal Rights (e.g., the Daniels decision).
- Understand the spirit and intention of treaties:
  - Spiritual context to Indigenous interpretation of treaties.
  - More than one interpretation of treaties.
- Recognize significance of different interpretations of rights, including treaties.

## Participants feel it is crucial that the Government “must know” this information

Participants said public servants could learn about:

- How to address what Indigenous peoples need in a practical way.
- Working with Indigenous peoples and organizations to develop a common understanding of Government approaches (e.g., implementation of the UN Declaration) and use of terminology such as reconciliation.
- The need to be current on new legislation and recent court cases.

- Legal standings and how labelling tied to federal and provincial jurisdictions/funding creates confusion.
- Treaties as government imposed; government needs to respect this.
- The nature of nation-to-nation relationships and accompanying protocols for consultation and engagement.
  - Roles and responsibilities as they relate to specific situations (i.e., strategic engagement with leadership versus administrative body).
- Effective engagement strategies that include notifying local inter-agencies of urban engagement.
- How language barriers can make it difficult to fill out forms.
- How family members don't neatly fit into categories.
- Smudging and its significance.

## Additional recommended cultural content and Indigenous perspectives

Participants said public servants could learn about:

- What culture is, and recognize there is a difference between culture and spirituality.
- Cultural appropriation and its impacts.
- Multiple Indigenous perspectives.
- Traditional First Nations teachings.
  - Four elements: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.
  - Four nations of man.
- Indigenous creation stories.
  - Offset Doctrine of Discovery with learning from the creator/creation stories – start here at the beginning.
- Indigenous values and teachings of compassion, tolerance, respect and daily appreciation.
- Common cultural protocols.

## Breaking myths and misconceptions

Participants said public servants could learn about:

- Dismantling myths about Indigenous peoples (e.g., services received).
- Fact-based information to address assumptions, miscommunications, and misunderstanding.
- The nature of fiscal and other relationships between the Crown and Indigenous peoples and communities.

## Changing practices: Applying what is learned

Participants said public servants could learn about:

- Application of “out of the box thinking” through the use of case studies, to address the diversity and realities of Indigenous peoples.
  - e.g., drunk person – what brought them to this place.
- Identification of systemic discrimination within and outside the Government.
  - e.g., impact of lack of access to transportation.
  - Ways policies can perpetuate hardship and maintain barriers.
  - Currently, the Government’s employees assert policy “by the book.”
  - The effect of policies applied evenly to Indigenous/non-Indigenous people is not equal, nor equitable.

## The how: Implementation

### THE “WHY” PRECEEDS THE “HOW”

Participants said the purpose for the Indigenous Learning Initiative, including the foundational component, must be clearly articulated and understood and should:

- Go beyond a general statement that the training is the Government’s commitment to United Nations Declaration.
- Provide a value statement of why the Indigenous Learning Initiative is important to every employee.

### TO MANDATE OR NOT TO MANDATE

Participant’s opinions were varied as to whether training should be mandatory. Diversity in opinion is captured below.

- Implications of mandatory training need to be looked at.
- Involving people without choice may not inspire interest.
  - Need spirit of engagement to build healthy relationships.
- Mandatory training may:
  - Create immediate resistance.
  - Lead to separation and create an “us” versus “them” mentality.
- Cultural competency should be something people want to attain to enhance their work; it shouldn’t be pushed on employees.
- Training should be mandated: All new hires should get an awareness component.

- Mandated training should be tied to performance agreements and progression.
- The Government should work with unions and leadership to get everyone on board for this corporate, systemic change.

## CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

### Continuous improvement versus delayed perfection

Participants said development and delivery of training should start right away, with a mechanism for continual improvement of the Indigenous Learning Initiative in collaboration with Indigenous peoples

- Delayed perfection is not a desired alternative.
- Don't reinvent the wheel.
  - Start by using what's there.
  - Let the process evolve organically over time, so it does not become "just another project."

### Follow-up and evaluation

Participants said evaluation should be conducted by, or in collaboration with, an Indigenous evaluator.

Participants said the Indigenous Learning Initiative should result in a mutually acceptable relationship between the Government and Indigenous communities. The only way to know this is by maintaining an avenue of communication and feedback, which can be built into the training process.

- Evaluation of training is important, and leadership must "push" to know the results, which should include degree of implementation.
- Over time, participants want evaluation to extend to monitoring change in Government practices, where infractions to an Indigenous awareness and inclusion policy is deemed a breach of core values and integrity of the Alberta Public Service.

## ELDERS AND KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS

Participants said Elders and knowledge keepers need to be a key part of the Indigenous Learning Initiative, with involvement in both development and delivery of training and in the transfer of knowledge.

- Indigenous values/teachings often address, for example, such elements as compassion, tolerance, respect and giving appreciation for everything in one's life on a daily basis.

Participants said it is important for the Government to work with respected Elders and knowledge keepers, identified by Indigenous communities.

- Elder knowledge must be protected and respected.
  - The Grandmothers say that the surface of things can be shared; it must be respected, however, that Elders may be unable to share deeper cultural or spiritual knowledge.

Participants said that through Elder participation in training, public servants will have opportunities to develop relationships where they can, for example, share with Elders, have tea, go for a walk and so on.



## WORKING IN PARTNERSHIIP

### Transparency

Participants said the process for on-going development and delivery of the Indigenous Learning Initiative should be transparent where Indigenous peoples are part of the decision making.

Participants said knowledge from scholar and community engagements should be integrated and brought back to Indigenous peoples to provide ideas on how to proceed.

- This could be done through a video-conferencing process.

### Equal, lateral relationship

Participants said training needs to work for both Indigenous peoples and the Government:

- Training should be developed in a lateral relationship between equal partners (Indigenous peoples and the Government) and not be dictated by the Government.
- A central value statement should be that the Indigenous Learning Initiative be conducted “with” the Indigenous community, rather than “for” or “in consideration of.”
- Indigenous peoples should take the lead in providing Indigenous perspectives.

### Local partners

Participants said the capacity of an Indigenous community to tell an authentic story is theirs alone.

- A story-telling tradition cannot be duplicated through paper or digital media; these can only serve as supplements.
- Local Indigenous experience is essential to understanding the great variation in Indigenous cultures and languages.
- The Government should invite participation from knowledgeable Indigenous peoples, such as Elders, scholars, grassroots members and Grand Chief Dr. Wilton Littlechild (who was instrumental in development of the *UN Declaration* and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process).
- There is value in partnering with Indigenous organizations (e.g., Alberta Friendship Centres, First Nations, Metis Settlements, Métis Nation of Alberta regional offices, and the Institute for Advancement of Aboriginal Women). These organizations can provide:
  - Cost-efficient facility and staffing.
  - Strategic relationship building.
  - An authentic, truthful perspective.
  - Capacity to help overcome language and cultural barriers.
  - Ongoing feedback regarding the content and process of the training.

## Indigenous and non-Indigenous, Government and community trainers

Participants said the Government and Indigenous communities should co-facilitate training:

- Having Indigenous peoples as trainers/facilitators is critical. Facilitators could include:
  - Youth, including university/college students.
  - Women, as keepers of knowledge.
  - Indigenous representatives trained from each community.
- Trainers should not have a “helping mentality”; that is, not view Indigenous peoples and communities as “needing to be fixed” by outsiders.
- The group of trainer/facilitators should have a designated role outside of any department they might work in, so that they are not assimilated/drawn back into their work.

## GOVERNMENT CONTEXT

### Government of Alberta leadership priority

Participants said the Indigenous Learning Initiative should be delivered through a “top down” approach from the highest levels within the Government.

- Targeted, relevant training based on work roles.

Participants said different training is required for different levels within the Government and for different roles; front-line workers require different training than decision makers.

- Training should be targeted to different audiences, for example, for Government departments, teachers and RCMP; e.g., some people will require more training than others.
- Training should consider diversity of work roles and provide relevant Indigenous connections; e.g., the Aboriginal Consultation Office will require a connection to the land, while working with inner city people will require an urban Indigenous connection.

## LEARNER CONSIDERATIONS

### Learner interests and baseline knowledge

Participants said learning should be relevant and address learner interests, for example, by asking learners, “What three things would you like to know about Indigenous peoples?”

Participants said learning should provide time for learners to reflect on what self-reconciliation means to them.

- Feedback was mixed as to whether training should:
  - Begin with the assumption that people know nothing, and start from there.
  - Assess prior knowledge of learners to provide effective delivery.

## Inclusive, non-hierarchical participation

Participants said people from all roles in the Government, as well as Indigenous trainers, need to “sit in the circle together,” breaking the hierarchical structure. By sitting together, senior management and front-line workers will learn from each other.

Participants said there is value in training where Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples come together; with the latter being able to educate the Indigenous side as to how learning about the histories and contemporary realities of Indigenous peoples has affected them.

## TRAINING CONSIDERATIONS

### Relevant approaches and learning frames

Participants said the Indigenous Learning Initiative should:

- Become a ceremonial approach, in every aspect, from beginning to end, with established protocols.
- Be framed within holistic Indigenous perspectives, and address the diversity and multiple dimensions of Indigenous peoples.
- Take a grassroots approach, with local training to reflect diversity, where each group speaks for itself (one group can't speak for another).

Participants said core foundational learning should come from a race relations perspective that addresses deconstruction of colonial thinking.

Participants said a rights-based approach should be incorporated to address, for example, Treaty Rights and Aboriginal Rights.

### Multi-phased, multi-leveled training

Participants said the Indigenous Learning Initiative should incorporate a multi-phased approach with different levels of curriculum:

- Training should extend beyond awareness, and include a series of flexible, ongoing learning opportunities.
- Training should use multiple approaches, including experiential learning, online learning components, social media, and apps (to address youth learning).

- Three-part foundational course could include:
  - Online course, e.g., Native Studies 101.
  - Interactive learning about the land and experiential knowledge closely linked to Indigenous knowledge.
  - Applying knowledge gained to work practices: action.

## Formalizing training

Participants were mixed in their views as to if – and to what degree – the Indigenous Learning Initiative should be formalized.

- Some participants voiced that the initiative should avoid bureaucratizing with personnel, consultants, standards and scorekeeping.
- Others cautioned that learning, not certification, is the goal.
- Still others proposed formalized training, with a strong academic focus.
  - This could be modelled after certificate and degree programs like those offered through the Banff Centre of Leadership or the Faculty of Education.

Participants said experiential training, rather than lecture/textbook format, allows for a type of learning that will reach peoples' hearts and teach WHY issues exist.

- Experiential learning allows for:
  - Hands-on, on-the-land learning, through an Aboriginal lens and worldviews.
  - Participation in ceremony, prayer, stories, games and experiencing communal eating and Indigenous foods, such as soup and bannock.

Participants said teaching a world view is complicated, and learners should have opportunities for longer versions of training, for example, participation in a two-week awareness camp.

## Incorporation of technology

Participants said technology could be used to support experiential learning. For example:

- A video-conferencing hub to provide an introduction to the community.
- Digital formats to distribute information about the community ahead of time.
- Virtual tours of a community by using drones.
- Apps could support follow-up learning.

## RELATIONAL LEARNING

### Location

Participants said that location is important to successful training.

- Foundational training should be offered in several locations, beyond the big urban centres.
- Grassroots participation will contribute to “buy-in” by Indigenous communities.

Participants said that training in Indigenous communities (e.g., First Nations or Metis Settlements), or training offered through Indigenous organizations (e.g., Métis Nation of Alberta or Alberta Friendship Centres), supports a grassroots approach that reflects the diversity of Indigenous peoples and communities.

- Foundational learning should be specific to the area so that Government employees will better understand that different Indigenous groups face different realities (geographic, political, cultural, and socio-economic).

### Face-to-face conversations and small groups

Participants said change will best happen with opportunities for face-to-face dialogue that occur with non-hierarchical, two-way, open conversations:

- Small groups of 25-30 people will provide an opportunity for Elders, trainers and participants to sit in the circle together, listen and learn from each other and make allies and lasting connections.
- Care must be taken to create a safe, inclusive, ethical space, free of guilt and shame.
  - Such an environment is necessary to support conversations about difficult topics such as cultural genocide, and so that participants are comfortable enough to ask their questions.
  - It is recommended that training occur in locations identified by Indigenous communities as safe spaces.
- Support and ways of coping for trainers and participants who will be dealing with difficult content should be provided.

### Honest, balanced, informed dialogue

Participants said foundational training requires an honest, informed presentation that includes emotionally difficult information:

- It is important for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to move forward together, getting past the uncomfortable, sometimes “head-butting” stage.
- The sadness of hard and difficult realities need to be balanced with successes of Indigenous peoples.
- There needs to be a focus on positive efforts, such as identifying, protecting and preserving traditional land use.
- The Grandfathers say – don’t make things complicated: information needs to be communicated in layman’s terms in a way that is easily understandable and doesn’t confuse people.

## SUSTAINABILITY

### Champions, ambassadors and mentors

Participants said training requires designated support to encourage participation and to lead change throughout the province.

- Key roles participants identified include:
  - Government champions.
  - Cultural mediators and ambassadors.
  - Mentors to help leaders and other staff members to apply what was learned, for example, to help leaders within the Government lead with traditional values and staff to apply an Indigenous lens in their day-to-day work.

### Indigenous advisory panel

Participants said an Indigenous advisory panel should:

- Have determining voices beyond engagement by being included in the approval process.
- Have a meaningful role, to safeguard integrity of the foundational learning component and ensure the Indigenous Learning Initiative continues to have a life.
- Avoid the “expert” approach, and have both academic and grass roots representation.
- Provide opportunity for First Nations, Métis and Inuit representation, reflecting the diversity of Indigenous peoples.

Participants said members should have experience and knowledge in both traditional and western views:

- Should be selected by Indigenous communities or, alternatively, representatives of Treaty regions, and Métis organizations; e.g., the Government could choose members using a merit-based application process.
- It may be appropriate to continue using folks who have already invested time through engagement.
- Elders, as knowledge holders, are critical to an advisory panel as are youth.
- Should connect with other advisory groups: RCMP Elders, Health, Education, Children's Services, Alberta Friendship Centres to provide a common thread to discussion and share information.

## Bi-lateral agreements

Participants said knowledge-transfer secondments between the Government and Indigenous organizations, for example through intern placements, would help both parties get what they need.

## Indigenous space

Participants said that for true reconciliation and healing, space such as the old provincial museum building should be provided to Indigenous peoples to address UN Declaration and Truth and Reconciliation Commission considerations.

# APPENDIX 2: NAMING THE TRAINING

Participants thought it was premature to provide a name for the mandatory training component of the Indigenous Learning Initiative.

- Some participants suggested that Elders be involved in the naming, utilizing a ceremonial approach.
- Other participants suggested the name be First Nations, Métis and Inuit branded, reflecting the following qualities:
  - Strength based.
  - Inspirational.
  - Enabling.
  - Relationship building.
- Specific names suggested include the following:
  - Foundational Indigenous Teachings.
  - Igniting the Spirit.
  - Living Together.
  - Starting Over.
  - Moving to Action.
  - Voices: Able to Speak and Able to be Heard.



# APPENDIX 3: EXISTING TRAINING, COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND INDIGENOUS STRUCTURES

## Training initiatives and community resources

Participants encouraged the Government to build on and/or incorporate existing quality training initiatives and community resources into the Indigenous Learning Initiative.

- Suggestions included:
  - Elder training, currently offered by a variety of Elders throughout Alberta.
  - 7 Grandfather Teachings.
  - Enhanced KAIROS Blanket Exercise, to include Métis, Inuit and Alberta views.
  - Alberta Education's Walking Together.
  - Alberta Native Friendship Centres: Broken Journey.
  - I am a Kind Man (youth facilitators).
  - Fundamentals of OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access and Possession) online training course developed in partnership with Algonquin College.
  - Alberta Health Services training (in-person).
  - Community Truth and Reconciliation Centre Commission reconciliation plans and community materials, offered in a variety of mediums.
  - Wall story at the Rocky Native Friendship Centre (facilitated through relational learning).

## Indigenous structures and capacity

Participants suggested that there are structures in place with the capacity, knowledge and infrastructure to partner with First Nations, Métis and Women's organizations to organize and deliver training throughout the province.

Alberta Friendship Centres are present in 21 communities and reflect the local cultures, are mobile, can access organizations and individuals in neighbouring communities and deliver outreach to numerous communities.

Participants suggested the use of bi-lateral agreements between the Government and multiple Indigenous organizations to deliver training such as:

- Alberta Friendship Centres have existing structure for implementing a training initiative including:
  - Partnership with First Nations, Métis and the Institute for Advancement of Aboriginal Women.
  - Have linkages to Elders, knowledge keepers, women, youth, men, homeless, urban Indigenous peoples, and a host of programs and services.
  - Serve the bigger picture and are status neutral and non-partisan.
  - Have local expertise.
- Connect with Aboriginal success stories to address the gap: e.g., Education's parent engagement initiative.
- Use *Walking Together*, an online resource.
- Use Elders/folks who already deliver training.