

Summary of Indigenous Governance Best Practices

The Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee (CAUAC) governance review acknowledged the ongoing evolution of the Indigenous relations work within The City, recommending The City review and identify an Indigenous governance model that would support the advisory committee and the evolution of Indigenous Relations Office (Calgary IRO). An Indigenous governance best practices review was undertaken to inform the development of a new Indigenous relations governance model for The City of Calgary. Data was gathered from three sources: academic literature, Calgary IRO engagements and CAUAC governance review engagement and report. These data sources were chosen because Indigenous governance best practices can be found both in academic literature and in the knowledge held by Indigenous Elders and leaders and disseminated orally.

What follows is a summary of key learnings from this review.

1. The City's Challenge

Indigenous governance is diverse and there is no single model. While anthropological research found there were two main styles of traditional Indigenous political organization (highly structured, hierarchal and moderately structured, egalitarian), standard Indigenous governance models do not exist in either style.

Nor is Indigenous governance simple. It extends beyond opening meetings with prayer, adhering to cultural protocols and deciding by consensus. "The complexities of history, the divergent experiences with colonialism, and the fact that all nations have different political traditions and political systems makes any conversation about Indigenous government – past, present, and future – extremely difficult and extremely complex."¹

Given the diversity of Indigenous people in the Calgary area and the complexity of Indigenous governance systems, The City's challenge will be to foster an Indigenous relations governance model that is considered legitimate by Treaty 7 Nations, the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3 and the urban Indigenous community. Additionally, historical and contemporary political dynamics will make the development of an inclusive governance model a challenging task that the Corporation will need to take the time to get right.

2. Specific Findings

i. Literature Review – Indigenous Governance Best Practices

Indigenous governance is typically grounded in traditional governance principles and processes and indicative of Indigenous governance best practices. Furthermore, "Political alliances among Michif and First Nations people were established long ago: what we might do is remember them and learn from them."² Literature was reviewed to determine traditional governance principles and practices of prairie First Nations, like those of Treaty 7, and the Métis in anticipation that commonalities could inform an

¹ Ladner, K. (September 2006). *Indigenous governance: Questioning the status and the possibilities for reconciliation with Canada's commitment to aboriginal and treaty rights*, p.2.

² Chartrand, P. (2007). *Miw_hk_m_kanak (All My Relations): Métis-First Nations relations*, p.14.

inclusive Indigenous relations governance model for The City. The findings are summarized in the following table:

Themes from the Literature: Traditional Governance Practices and Principles

Traditional Governance Principles & Practices	Prairie First Nations³ (Treaty 7)	Métis Nation⁴
Traditional political organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderately structured, egalitarian 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly structured, centralized. Emerged from Rules of Buffalo Hunt.
*Extended family was the foundation of governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councils appointed by extended families & consist of clan chiefs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kinship central to traditional Métis governance. Involves taking care of families
*Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct democracy Direct consultation & involvement of the people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representative democracy but also direct Decisions ratified by whole community before official
Leadership selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appointment based on circumstance, skills & knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elections One vote, one person ideal of western democracy
*Separation of power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional checks & balances on exercise of power Leadership temporary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional checks & balances on the exercise of power Leadership rotated between groups & settlements
*Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaders accountable to Creator and people through participatory governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representation carries the obligation of accountability
*Decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consensus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two-thirds majority & consensus
*Elders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision-makers or advisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advisors, Elders' Senate

Asterisk (*) denotes governance principles and practices that were similar or somewhat similar

³ First Nations Governance Sources:

Alfred, T. (1995). Peace, power and righteousness: An Indigenous manifesto.
 Borrows, J. (2008). Seven generations, seven teachings: Ending the Indian Act.
 Canada. (1996). Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.
 Helin, C. (2006). Dances with dependency: Out of poverty through self-reliance.
 Hildebrant, W., Carter, S., & First Rider, D. (1996). The true spirit and intent of Treaty 7.
 Long, A. (1990). Political revitalization in Canadian native Indian societies.
 Snow, J. (2005). These mountains are our sacred places.

⁴ Métis Governance Sources:

Chartrand, L. (2008). We rise again: Métis traditional governance and the claim to Métis self-government.
 Chartrand, P. (2007). Miw_hk_m_kanak (All My Relations): Métis-First Nations relations.
 Ferliano, C. (2008). Métis perspectives on governance.
 Dubois, J. (2013). Just do it: Carving out a space for the Métis in Canadian federalism.
 Saunders, K., & Dubois, J. (2019). Métis politics and governance in Canada.

Literature was also examined to identify contemporary Indigenous governance best practices. Through its case studies, the National Centre for First Nations Governance concluded there were five pillars of effective Indigenous governance, each with best practices.

Pillars of Effective Indigenous Governance	Indigenous Governance Best Practices
1. The People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic vision • Meaningful information sharing • Participation in decision-making
2. The Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Territorial integrity • Economic realization • Respect for the Spirit of the Land
3. Laws & Jurisdiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of jurisdiction • Rule of law
4. Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency and fairness • Results based organizations • Cultural alignment of institutions • Effective inter-governmental relations
5. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human resource capacity • Financial management capacity • Performance evaluation • Accountability and reporting

While best practices are beneficial, Indigenous cultures are diverse and not all the same. It cannot be assumed that all Indigenous governance best practices will be applicable to all Indigenous communities. The City will need to directly engage with Treaty 7 Nations, the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3 and the urban Indigenous community to assess Indigenous governance best practices most relevant to The City.

ii. Calgary IRO and CAUAC Engagements

Calgary IRO and CAUAC engagement data were examined to capture feedback related to Indigenous governance principles, practices and concepts that may help inform an Indigenous governance model. The findings are summarized in the table below.

Indigenous Governance Principles, Practices, Concepts	IRO Engagement	CAUAC Engagement
Involve Elders in IRO governance Elder Inclusivity Work with authentic Elders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRO to be led by and accountable to Elders • Include T7, Métis, Urban Elders • Rotate Elder leadership to ensure inclusive perspective • Risks of City working with “European” Elders not validated by Indigenous community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have Elders’ Advisory Group

A non-colonial governance structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City not default to western structure (Robert's Rules) • Explore/adopt Indigenous governance structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural processes limited because CAUAC defined within The City's corporate structure. Challenges incorporation of Indigenous concepts
An Indigenous-western governance model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance Indigenous-western models • Create parallels so both can co-exist & not take over the other • Paralleling creates culturally valid sister approach to governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Indigenous governance in parallel western approach • Balance expectations of Corporation with Indigenous ways of knowing
A representative governance structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include elected officials from T7, MNAR3 as members • Non-Indigenous co-chairs can be champions. Higher-up decision makers need to have a role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership to reflect T7, MNAR3, Urban Indigenous. • Council representative to provide support, advocacy, connection
Guided by Indigenous natural law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous natural law is about relationality • Laws for how we handle situations & challenges in our work together • Need to add relational aspect missing in western philosophy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared values, Indigenous natural law and relationships (ways of working together) should be incorporated into governance
Ethics & Ethical Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop ethics & base on Indigenous natural law • Ethical space transforms relations • Develop understanding of cultural policies • Understand the oral way & accept oral practice as valid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an ethical space & ensure traditional teaching are understood & incorporated in CAUAC's work
Incorporates Indigenous governance principles & practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt traditional values in modern context • Consider collective needs of Indigenous community • 7 Sacred Teachings fundamental • Commit to Indigenous values • Take a holistic approach to knowledge & relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve decision making utilizing consensus & traditional ways of knowing • Collaboration, resolution • Shared knowledge & values • Inclusionary practices including oral traditions
Adheres to Indigenous protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Western policies are used to conform - need to transform into All My Relations protocols • Protocol refers to interacting in manner that respects traditional ways of being. Not just rules & manners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate more Indigenous protocols & approaches into governance structure

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IRO must follow Indigenous protocols• For The City to be a good relative, must acknowledge Indigenous way, not just City protocols	
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3. Conclusion

The outcomes of this best practices review indicate that a non-colonial Indigenous relations governance model that is representative of Treaty 7 Nations, Metis and urban Indigenous community, includes validated Elders and is guided by Indigenous natural law and Indigenous governance principles, practices, ethics and protocols, be developed.

The review also illustrates that Indigenous governance is complex. Developing an Indigenous governance model for The City that reflects the diversity and is acceptable by Treaty 7 Nations, the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3, and the urban Indigenous community will be a challenging endeavour. To be legitimate, an Indigenous governance model must be co-created by The City and the Indigenous communities in the Calgary area.

This will require engagements with the Indigenous community (Treaty 7 Nations, Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3 and the urban Indigenous community), CAUAC and The City. Engagement activities are planned to occur between Q4 2020 – Q2 2021, with a progress report back to Council no later than Q4 2021.