

Spotlight – Recreation and Social Programs

“The road we travel is equal in importance to the destination we seek. There are no shortcuts. When it comes to truth and reconciliation we are forced to go the distance.” Murray Sinclair

Organization/Business Unit Name: Recreation & Social Programs

Description/Purpose of the Organization/Business Unit:

The Recreation and Social Programs team seeks to provide accessible and equitable recreation and social opportunities that improve quality of life, contribute to inclusive communities, and promote social, mental, and physical well-being.

Overview of Truth and Reconciliation actions/programs/tasks of the past year:

Cultural Guidance

Recreation & Social Programs recognizes the importance of guidance from Elders, Traditional Knowledge Keepers, and Cultural Mediators. Recreation & Social Programs established an Elders Advisory Committee comprised of four local Elders to support the development of Indigenous programs, specifically Connecting to Mother Earth. Recreation & Social Programs continues to meet with the Elders Advisory Committee on an ongoing basis to support programs and coordinate teachings.

An Indigenous Program Liaison was hired in May 2023 to build community connections, train staff, enforce protocols and support the development of Indigenous programming.

In January 2024, Recreation & Social Programs identified the need to work more closely with Elders and an application to the Equity in Service Delivery Grant to pilot an Elder In-Residence was approved. The Recreation & Social Programs team worked collaboratively to establish a culturally appropriate approach to engaging with an Elder, as this was the first time the City has ever established an Elder In-Residence. Elder Pablo Russell started guiding the team as the Elder In-Residence in August 2024.

Programming

Recreation & Social Programs currently runs two Indigenous, culturally based programs for children in Calgary: Koko'sinooniks and Connecting to Mother Earth.

Koko'sinooniks (Blackfoot for “All Our Children”) is an Indigenous-based Calgary AfterSchool and Summer Camp Program that provides cultural teachings, traditional Indigenous games, and social emotional learning opportunities to children and youth ages 6-11.

Connecting to Mother Earth introduces children and youth (ages 6-11) from all backgrounds about Indigenous cultures, stories, and values. This project was developed as a pilot under the guidance of our Elders Advisory Circle and features two curriculums focusing on Land and Language. Each program begins by introducing the significance of Indigenous Elders, followed by a traditional teaching from a local Elder. Following this, Connecting to Mother Earth

celebrates and reinforces the cultural teachings through traditional Indigenous games, music, dance, and language. The Connecting to Mother Earth curriculum will be facilitated in all twenty-six Calgary AfterSchool locations.

Indigenous Working Group

The Recreation & Social Programs Indigenous Working Group is comprised of eight representatives from all sections of the Recreation & Social Programs Business Unit as well as a member of the Indigenous Relations Office. The purpose of the group is to (1) Coordinate ongoing Indigenous cultural-competency trainings for Recreation & Social Programs staff and (2) Identify and address all remaining Calls to Action outlined in the 2016 White Goose Flying Report that are relevant to the Recreation & Social Programs business unit.

Trainings

Recreation & Social Programs has provided the following trainings to staff:

- History of Turtle Island
- Working with Indigenous Peoples (Elders)
- Working with Indigenous Employees and Youth
- Mohawk Institute Indian Residential School Tour
- Path of the Buffalo Training (Elder-led)
- Sharing Circle and Smudge Teaching (Elder-led)
- Indigenous Games Training (Cultural practitioner-led)
- Land Acknowledgement Training
- Orange Shirt Beaded Pin Workshop (Cultural practitioner-led)
- Orange Shirt Day Training Video
- Understanding Reconciliation in the Workplace eLearning Course

As part of the Elder In-Residence, Recreation & Social Programs is committed to providing two in-person trainings with Elder Pablo per month, until December 2024 for staff to attend.

Why does this work matter?

Recreation & Social Programs believes in supporting all community members in Calgary, including Indigenous Peoples. Recreation & Social Programs recognizes the importance of staff building, maintaining relationships with the Indigenous community, and honouring Treaty obligations and rights under Section 25 of the Constitution Act (1982), and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (2021).

As a City, we value social cohesion and want to ensure that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals feel welcome and celebrated. As a front-facing service provider, Recreation & Social Programs acknowledges that the Business Unit is well positioned and has a great responsibility to address the Calls to Action of the White Goose Flying report by taking intentional action that impacts all staff and those we serve.

Alignment with City/Corporate/Council plans, actions, and outcomes:

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action Report (2015)
- The White Goose Flying Report (2016),
- The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (2021),
- Resilient Calgary: Council's Strategic Direction 2023-2026,
- The City of Calgary Indigenous Policy (CP2017-02),
- Indigenous Policy Framework for The City of Calgary,
- The City of Calgary Social Wellbeing Policy (CP2019-01),
- Community Anti-Racism Action Strategy: Weaving a Shared Path Forward for an Anti-Racist Calgary (2023),
- Recreation & Social Programs Business Unit Program and Service Strategy (2024),
- GamePLAN.

Alignment with the Calls to Action and Truth and Reconciliation:

Recreation & Social Programs is responsible for or has supported several Calls to Action of the *White Goose Flying Report*. They are:

- Principle of Reconciliation 7: The perspectives and understandings of Aboriginal Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers of ethics, concepts and practices of reconciliation are vital to long-term reconciliation.
- 7: Improve educational and employment gaps.
- 38: Address overrepresentation of youth in custody.
- 43: Adopting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) Act.
- 57: Public sector staff training on Indigenous issues, intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights and anti-racism is a high priority, and the most important investment The City can undertake.
- 62.i: Develop curriculum for school children.
- 87: Celebrate Indigenous athletics history.
- 88: Enhance athletic development.
- 89: Deepen policies to promote physical activity.
- 90: Establish stable funding, programs for coaches, anti-racism awareness.
- 91: Include Indigenous participation in international gaming bids.
- 92: Apply Reconciliation in corporate sector policy and core operational activities.

Planned/Expected/Future work and activities on Truth and Reconciliation:

- Programming: Develop Children's Land Acknowledgement, Indigenous Youth Program, Indigenous Dance Program and Swim to Survive Event.
- Hiring Practices: Attract and retain increased Indigenous talent for Code 86 and union level positions.
- North American Indigenous Games 2027: Support the 2027 North American Indigenous Games which will be hosted in collaboration with the City of Calgary and Tsuut'ina First Nation.