

Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative: Background

“Building the Capital City: Edmonton City Council’s Special Initiatives 2005-2007” was developed by Edmonton City Council at the beginning of its current term. The initiatives outlined in the document transcend a wide range of Council priorities designed to improve and enhance quality of life for Edmontonians. City Council has indicated that if Edmonton is to continue to prosper, it needs a new deal, new partners and a new image. One new partner that Council has identified in its roster of special initiatives is the Aboriginal community. Council seeks for Edmonton to be known “as a community that welcomes, supports and embraces Aboriginal contributions toward Edmonton’s culture and economy”.

In early 2003 the City Administration in partnership with the Council appointed Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee (EAUAC) began discussions about the role the City could play in fostering a brighter future with Aboriginal people in Edmonton. The leadership of EAUAC through informal consultations with Aboriginal leaders, Elders and organizations determined that there was a strong desire to establish improved relations with the City of Edmonton.

In 2004 the Administration, acting upon the recommendations of senior staff and EAUAC, approved the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative. The Initiative has as its objectives: (1) improved relationships between the City and the urban Aboriginal communities (currently discussed as a relationship agreement or “an Accord” between the City Administration and the urban Aboriginal communities); (2) improved hiring and retention of Aboriginal staff by the City; (3) improved City-mandated services for Aboriginal people; and (4) facilitation of an inclusive process for action planning and stakeholder investment based on priorities identified by the urban Aboriginal communities. The Federal and Provincial governments became partners in the Initiative with a particular interest in seeing the fourth objective achieved through an inclusive community process that aims at community capacity building.

A Steering Committee includes 4 Executive members of EAUAC, 2 senior City managers (the General Manager of Community Services and the Manager of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion), 1 senior manager from Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, 1 senior manager

from Western Economic Diversification Canada and the Strategic Planning Coordinator from the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund.

In 2004, as part of the Initiative, the City established its first Aboriginal office intended to serve as a welcoming place for members of the Aboriginal communities and a primary point of contact with the City on Aboriginal matters. The City's Aboriginal Community Development Coordinator, who also provides administrative support to EAUAC, is located at this office as is the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Project Team. In addition to City-funded positions, the Project Team includes Aboriginal Relations Consultant positions funded by the Western Economic Diversification Canada. The Team has undertaken numerous activities instrumental to fulfilling the four objectives of the Initiative. The office and staff activities also serve to demonstrate the City's commitment to establishing a new era in municipal Aboriginal relations.

In spring of 2005, a Circle of Elders - which includes Inuit, First Nations and Metis Elders with multi-sectoral experience and extensive community relationships - was convened to impart wisdom and advice to the Initiative on an ongoing basis. The Elders have played a very important and respected role in progress that is being made on Initiative objectives.

In spring of 2005 City Council approved a 2005-2006 operating budget for the Initiative. And through the leadership and extensive work by Councilor Hayter, consultations were held with EAUAC, the Elders Circle and leaders in the urban Aboriginal communities that resulted in Edmonton City Council's August 30, 2005 Declaration "***Strengthening Relationships Between the City of Edmonton and Urban Aboriginal People***". The Declaration demonstrates the City's commitment to the Aboriginal communities and reaffirms the important place of Aboriginal people – past, present and future – in Edmonton.

Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Dialogue: "*Your City, Your Voice*"

In fall of 2005 a broad-based consultation with the Urban Aboriginal communities was facilitated by the Aboriginal Relations Consultants supported by the broader Accord Initiative Project Team, an Aboriginal consulting firm, Aboriginal staff of the partner organizations and EAUAC volunteers. The primary goals of the Urban Aboriginal Dialogue are to facilitate Aboriginal residents' identification and prioritization of the issues

that matter most to them, and to facilitate open dialogue about new ways to work together on those community priorities, consistent with Objective 4 of the Initiative.

The first part of the Dialogue process is documented in the “*Your City, Your Voice Report*” and “*Your City, Your Voice Appendices*” released at a public event at City Hall March 6, 2006. It involved Aboriginal-specific Open Houses (5) and Talking Circles (4), as well as an Executive Forum and survey. More than 1800 people participated in this process. Developing an understanding of Urban Aboriginal needs, issues and priorities – from an Aboriginal perspective – has been a fundamental objective of this part of the Dialogue process. The Dialogue also established a high level of Aboriginal community interest in the establishment of a principle-based relationship agreement (an “Accord”) between the City of Edmonton and the Urban Aboriginal communities, consistent with Objective 1 of the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative.

This first part of the Dialogue and the understanding that it generated is serving to support the City’s objectives of improving its hiring and retention of Aboriginal staff as well as improving the quality of its mandated services to Aboriginal Peoples in Edmonton (consistent with Objectives 3 and 4 of the Accord Initiative).

The needs, issues and priorities – and opportunities – that the Urban Aboriginal communities have identified fall within the mandates or interests of the three orders of government, local authorities, Aboriginal governments and numerous other organizations. All information arising from the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Dialogue is being shared with this broad range of stakeholders.

In summer and fall 2006, the second part of the Dialogue process will see willing resource holders join with self-identified Urban Aboriginal community leaders to develop coordinated action planning and stakeholder investment, based on priorities identified by the Urban Aboriginal communities and communicated in the “*Your City, Your Voice Report*”.

The second part of the Dialogue Process is guided by the principles of inclusiveness, openness and transparency and will continue to be Aboriginal community-driven, Aboriginal community-led.

For an overview of the current Urban Aboriginal Community Dialogue Process, please use this link: [Urban Aboriginal Community Dialogue Process](#).

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