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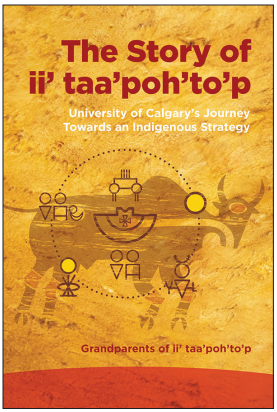

THE NEXT WAR: INDICATIONS INTELLIGENCE IN THE EARLY COLD WAR

Timothy Andrews Sayle

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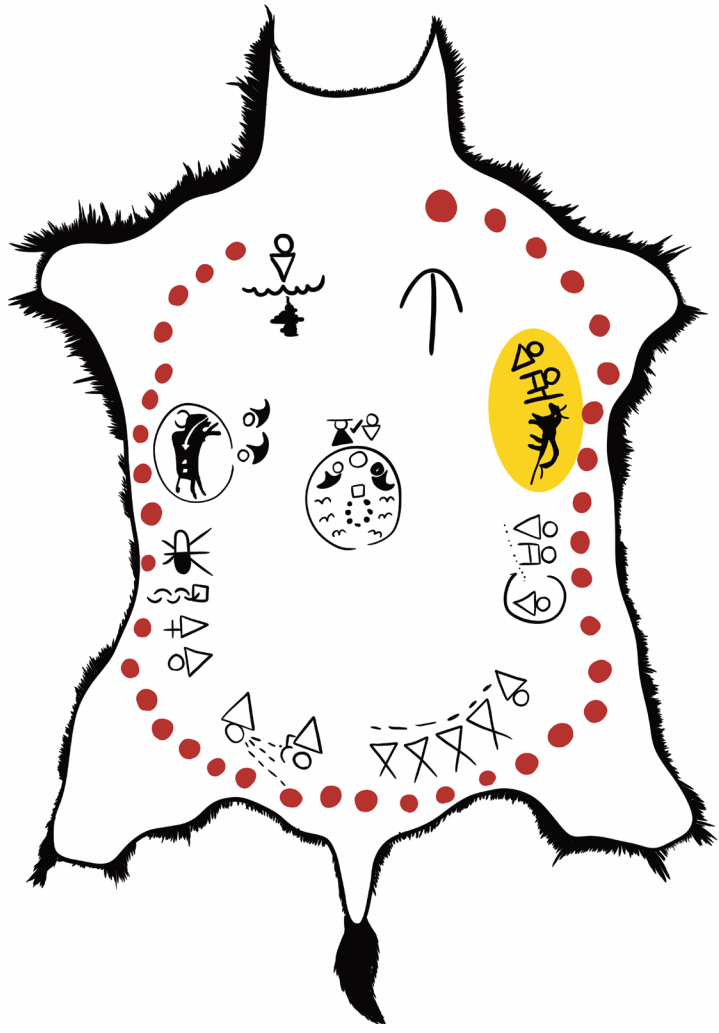
Setting Out

Dru Marshall, Reg Crowshoe, Jacqueline Ottmann



Four Stories

PARALLEL PRACTICES

If we're going to develop a strategy with a framework to transform, then we have to go back to those oral narratives that the Elders hold. And then, when we know each other, we can achieve the goals we need to achieve, especially today when we're talking about reconciliation. From that knowledge from my father, Aapohsoy'yiis [Weasel Tail],[2] in our language, the concept of parallels in practice was instilled in my mind. My father instilled parallels along with the understanding of the wampum belt. I would say we achieved this. We followed that ecosystem of that river to survive together. But the practices need to parallel each other. We can't intertwine, or we're going to get cultural confusion, and we're going to crash our boats, and we'll never survive.

Reg Crowshoe

RELATIONAL VERSUS TRANSACTIONAL

One of my main lessons from the process to develop the Indigenous Strategy is how important it is to be relational rather than transactional. If we were more relational as a university with everything that we did, then we would be better. If you start from "How can I get to know you better?" then you will have a better understanding of where people are coming from—which should lead to making better decisions together.

Dru Marshall

2 Aapohsoy'yiis was a Peigan-Blackfoot Elder; see Crowshoe (2008).

COMMITMENT AND RISK

Setting out required a higher level of commitment for all involved. The non-Indigenous members of the Steering Committee and Working Group had to commit to learning Indigenous histories, traditions, practices, stories, and ceremonies and to surrender, to varying degrees, the comfort and familiarity of Eurocentric systems and structures to meet Indigenous peoples in the middle. This is analogous to the bridge created by the handshake between the two leaders, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, on treaty medallions. We were in this unique space. Indigenous peoples have had to code-talk, be culture brokers, conform to dominant ways to survive, but this Indigenous Strategy process had non-Indigenous people who engaged in learning; they crossed the floor so that we could co-create, co-plan, and experience reciprocal, respectful, and restorative relations through the creation of this plan. There was risk involved since we were setting out into uncertain and unknown territory. This was the first Indigenous Strategy for the university, and it was exhilarating to be a part of history in the making.

Jacqueline Ottmann

JOURNEY FRAMEWORK

Early on, we had a conversation with Elder Reg Crowshoe to develop a journey framework that reflected concepts of a group of people coming together on a quest to seek out and bring back resources to help sustain the community. The four-stage journey evolved from that concept. The Calling Together and Setting Out stage was about coming together as a group. Clearing the Path and Gathering Stories was about listening, learning, and capturing stories. Bringing the Stories Home was a process of making meaning, leading to the conceptualization of the strategy. Empowering the Spirit of Indigenization focused on ceremonial validation, institutional approval, and community celebration. A series of ceremonies guided our journey. When I reflect on our journey, I feel like we were immersed in ceremonial ways of doing. Our journey was enriched by ceremony. It was truly transformational, individually and collectively.

Shawna Cunningham

Creating Parallel Pathways

For many years, the University of Calgary benefited from established partnerships, collaborations, and education programs with Indigenous communities, organizations, and students in scholarly research and academic programming. However, none of these initiatives were developed with a specific institutional strategy in place for engaging Indigenous communities. Nor were these relationships developed from a foundation that fully acknowledged and honoured Indigenous peoples' histories, lived realities, sophisticated ways of knowing, and rich cultural practices. As a result, our relationships with Indigenous communities were scattered across the institution, taking many forms and varying in the depth and quality of the relationship. The development of an Indigenous Strategy therefore demanded the creation of new pathways for the institution and its relationships.

As one might expect, the university had well-developed frameworks—procedures and processes of approval—to develop new institutional strategies. These frameworks had been refined in the years leading up to the start of developing a new Indigenous Strategy. During an exciting time for the institution, new strategies such as the International Strategy, Mental Health Strategy, and Sustainability Strategy had been developed and approved. The first steps in developing an Indigenous Strategy followed these established processes. To begin the institutional Indigenous Strategy, leadership was identified, relevant committees were conceptualized, committee memberships started to take form, and a road map for institutional reviews and approvals was confirmed.

In creating and launching its Indigenous Strategy, the University of Calgary made a fundamental commitment. That commitment was to pursue a process of reconciliation that would genuinely honour Indigenous peoples' histories, worldviews, stories, knowledges, traditions, and lived experiences. A core aspect of this commitment was to reset, restore, and renew authentic relationships with Indigenous peoples and communities. Doing so would require the entire university community, and particularly those tasked with developing the strategy, to engage in proactive, deep learning. This journey would require cultural humility, extensive guidance by Traditional Knowledge Keepers, and trust in the new and unfamiliar process. This strategic process also demanded that Indigenous ceremonial

approaches be considered as important as dominant decision-making processes typically used within postsecondary systems.

Based on this commitment to reconciliation, it was quickly evident that the creation of an Indigenous Strategy had to be very different from previous university strategy processes. Both approaches—a well-established university-based strategy process and Indigenous ways of knowing and decision making—needed to be honoured and adopted. It was also clear that neither approach could dominate the other, for doing so would undoubtedly lead to the assimilation of concepts, ideas, and practices. Based on the history of relationships with Indigenous peoples in Canada, a strictly institutional approach ran the risk of replicating and perpetuating colonizing structures and practices. So it was decided that parallel pathways had to guide the strategy. Rather than trying to "blend" frameworks based on significantly different worldviews, dual Eurocentric and Indigenous pathways were pursued concurrently. It was essential to create an approach that uplifted and supported both frameworks. Moreover, our chosen parallel path to develop the Indigenous strategy was uncertain and demanded extensive dialogue and constant reflection to align the work.

Interestingly, this parallel process followed the vision of relationships and political agreements between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous people as intended in treaty agreements such as the first treaty between the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch in 1613. As with the Two Row Wampum—Gasweñdah,[3] creation of the Indigenous Strategy needed to engage the principles of peace, friendship, and trust as we moved through the process.

For every step of the journey, we needed to ensure that the two often competing worldviews were held in balance, not interfering with or dominating each other, but moving toward a common vision in parallel.

Indigenous Strategy Task Force

STEERING COMMITTEE

A Steering Committee was established to guide development of the Indigenous Strategy, facilitate dialogue between the University of Calgary

3 For the history of the Two Row Wampum—Gasweñdah, see Onondaga Nation (2024).

and several Indigenous communities (including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis), and ensure that the strategy was ready for approval by the appropriate bodies. The Steering Committee was led by two co-chairs, including a senior university leader (the provost and vice-president academic) and a leading Indigenous scholar and director of Indigenous Initiatives from the Werklund School of Education. Other members of the Steering Committee included academic and administrative leaders from across the campus and several Traditional Knowledge Keepers. Co-chairs of the Working Group were also included in this membership.

The thirteen members of the Steering Committee were selected for their specific knowledge and expertise and expected to participate fully in the process of creating the strategy. This included responding collectively to the initial direction set by the university, articulating principles underlying the work, developing parallel governance processes, and advocating the strategy in the university and Indigenous communities. Members of this committee also committed to gaining a better understanding of the histories, lived experiences, cultures, identities, and interests of Indigenous peoples and to acquire a wider knowledge of diverse Indigenous ways in areas related to leadership, governance, pedagogy, decision making, and ethical spaces.

WORKING GROUP

The Working Group reported to and took direction from the Steering Committee. It was tasked with planning and completing the concrete steps required for consultations in the process of developing the strategy, compiling information relevant to the strategy, and writing drafts of the strategy document. This included conducting a broad review of external and internal programs, policies, initiatives, and protocols related to Indigenous Strategies. The Working Group was led by two co-chairs, a senior academic leader (the dean of the Faculty of Social Work) and a senior Indigenous leader (the long-standing director of the Native Centre). The Working Group comprised thirty-seven individuals, including faculty members from across the university, staff members and leaders from multiple administrative units, student leaders, and Indigenous community representatives, with cultural and spiritual guidance from Traditional Knowledge Keeper and Piikani Elder Dr. Reg Crowshoe.

The Working Group's efforts were to be supported by external literature and research and by the knowledge and practices of Indigenous communities embodying traditional cultures and lifestyles. For that purpose, members of the Working Group were asked to identify the cultural and environmental factors at the University of Calgary that would contribute to an Indigenous Strategy and to summarize the Indigenous research at the university.

First Steps

From the established strategy processes of the university, a series of necessary steps was identified and implemented. As the Steering Committee and Working Group were being created, terms of reference were written to articulate the "standard" institutional process for development of the strategy, which included defined leadership and accountability assigned to the appointed Steering Committee and Working Group. These terms followed typical lines of institutional accountability and reporting. They also reinforced the multiple approvals that would be required to adopt the Indigenous Strategy once it was completed. The institutional process therefore commenced with the appointment of the Indigenous Task Force, including co-chairs and members of a smaller Steering Committee and larger Working Group.

The co-chairs of the Steering Committee and Working Group worked to identify and add members of each group, paying close attention to ensuring broad representation from across the university's constituent groups. For the Steering Committee, this included members of the university's senior leadership team representing areas such as student services, government relations, and multiple faculties.

Three Traditional Knowledge Keepers were added to the Steering Committee and served as critical advisers and cultural guides in developing the Indigenous Strategy. For the Working Group—typically made up of various representatives from across the campus—invitations were extended to several Indigenous representatives from key community organizations with specific areas of interest and expertise in the development of strategies. The inclusion of Indigenous community voices in the Working Group and Traditional Knowledge Keepers in the Steering Committee marked a departure from the typical institutional process of developing strategies, introducing and shaping a new, albeit culturally parallel,

way of doing for the university, and it was crucial to the creation of our Indigenous Strategy.

SETTING OUT

Led and facilitated by the Steering Committee and Working Group, the University of Calgary implemented a work plan that included a consultation framework to help guide the path, inform the content, and shape the creation of the Indigenous Strategy. Although the established terms of reference outlined a typical process for developing strategies at the institution, discussion in the Steering Committee quickly made it clear that another process would be required to honour Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. Based on this, the development of an Indigenous Strategy for the University of Calgary undoubtedly required the development of two parallel frameworks:

1. an institutional framework governed by the university's "Terms of Reference" document; and

2. an Indigenous framework guided by a parallel Indigenous document titled *Journey towards an Indigenous Strategy*, outlining a four-stage journey framework.

The university viewed working within the context of the two distinct yet parallel frameworks as a valuable and necessary developmental process for the Indigenous Strategy. For the Steering Committee and Working Group members, understanding of and commitment to the parallel framework were imperative. In one of the early Steering Committee meetings, one of the members voiced that the Indigenous Strategy needed a drastically different process, one that relied on Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. This realization progressed to the recognition of two parallel pathways by Elders in the group, especially Elders Reg Crowshoe [Áwákaasiina] from Piikani, Evelyn Goodstriker from Standing Buffalo, and Roy Weasel Fat from Kainai, and ceremonial leader Andy Black Water [Aa tso towa], also from Kainai. In addition, with a broadly defined vested stakeholder group that included internal and external communities, community engagement throughout the developmental process was deemed an essential part of the journey.

The initial timeline proposed for development and completion of the Indigenous Strategy was set between March and December 2016. Within weeks of this determination, however, members of the Working Group realized that the process demanded a longer timeline to ensure that mutual understanding of worldviews and processes was respected and accommodated. This was emphasized by the Traditional Knowledge Keepers and Indigenous leaders within the group. There was significant learning to be achieved, and creating the strategy required building authentic relationships based on trust, particularly with Indigenous communities. Adopting a parallel Indigenous framework also recognized the importance of ceremony and Indigenous decision-making processes. As a result, our timeline for completion of the strategy was extended from an initial six months to two years. The public launch of the University of Calgary's Indigenous Strategy occurred in November 2017.

PARALLEL STRATEGY FRAMEWORKS

Whereas the terms of reference for the provost's Task Force laid out a standard institutional process for development of the strategy, a parallel Indigenous framework did not exist. We knew that it had to be unique to the University of Calgary, and the resulting framework was designed through extensive consultation and reflection with Traditional Knowledge Keepers. It articulated the path to an inaugural Indigenous Strategy within the context of a four-stage evolutionary journey. These stages focused on the wisdom and collection of stories from Indigenous worldviews. The four stages, listed below and described extensively in later chapters, were validated by the Steering Committee and through ceremony conducted by Traditional Knowledge Keepers.

It is important to note that the Indigenous framework, titled *Journey towards the Indigenous Strategy*, was designed to follow essential Indigenous processes. It was seen as a journey in which challenges and tensions encountered along the way would be brought into the circle to have dialogue, seek advice, and in many cases request and receive ceremonial guidance from the Elders. It was also a framework in which progress and milestones were celebrated and validated through ceremony.

The Indigenous journey framework comprised the following four stages: (1) Calling Together and Setting Out, (2) Gathering Stories and

Clearing the Path, (3) Bringing the Stories Home, and (4) Empowering the Spirit of Indigenization. Each stage paralleled a stage conceptualized through the Eurocentric, institutional framework (University of Calgary 2017b, 40).

Table 1
Journey toward an Indigenous Strategy: Two Parallel Frameworks

	Institutional Framework (Written Terms of Reference)	Indigenous Framework (Oral Collection of Stories)
Stage 1	Developing Terms of Reference Setting Goals Confirming Committee Membership	Calling Together and Setting Out: Defining a Common Purpose
Stage 2	Information Gathering Data Collection	Clearing the Path and Gathering Stories
Stage 3	Data Compilation and Analysis	Bringing the Stories Home
Stage 4	Strategy Writing Approvals and Launch	Empowering the Spirit of Indigenization

The creation of these parallel pathways became both a defining element of the Indigenous Strategy and a deeply felt responsibility among members of the Working Group and Steering Committee. There were several points in the journey where the committees paused to reflect on our progress, consider key challenges, and imagine next steps. Throughout the process, members of these groups found that aligning these parallel pathways created a vibrant and rewarding experience, one that consistently added energy, direction, and purpose to the process.

TOUCHSTONES FOR OUR JOURNEY

With parallel frameworks developed to guide the Indigenous Strategy, members of the Steering Committee and Working Group engaged with Knowledge Keepers to better understand the touchstones of the process ahead. There were many conversations about the nature of this strategy, the journey itself, and how to ensure the meaningful inclusion of Indigenous voices. Particularly in the early stages, members of both groups expressed

uncertainty and some anxiety about the profound responsibility that they felt to "get this right." Some non-Indigenous members felt inadequately prepared for the task and indicated that they did not know enough about Indigenous histories, lived experiences, and ways of knowing to help lead the effort. Other members said that they were not sure how an Indigenous Strategy would relate to their own areas of university life. Some were simply nervous about how they would be engaged in Indigenous ceremony. Although we all agreed that Indigenous voices needed to be central to the journey, many of us were unsure about how to best ensure that this was accomplished.

We found a critical driver to get past these initial concerns, and weeks of early inertia, was to engage in ongoing open and reflective dialogue in the scheduled meetings, gatherings, and ceremonies held for both groups. These dialogues identified some core epistemological and educational touchstones to be understood and revisited throughout our journey to continually ground and direct the strategy. According to Dr. Crowshoe, the idea of wayfinding draws from a Blackfoot/Piikani concept called *ii'yika'kimin*, which describes being guided by a spirit to choose a good direction and trying hard to follow this new path. Through such a spirit, these touchstones not only guided our journey but also distinguished this strategy from other institutional approaches to strategic development.

The first touchstone was rooted in inherent Indigenous governance, acknowledging the histories of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Colonial legislation, historical and current acts of racism, the genocide enacted by residential schools, and other efforts to assimilate or eradicate Indigenous Nations have shaped the relationships of Eurocentric institutions with Indigenous peoples. According to the *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (TRC 2015), there remains a general lack of knowledge and understanding of Indigenous peoples' histories, rich and diverse cultures, complex belief systems, and practices among Canada's universities and the general population. This lack of knowledge and/or awareness—alongside a general lack of Indigenous representation in higher education overall—was confirmed during our consultations with our own campus community. Indigenous students are generally under-represented in postsecondary institutions across Canada, and historically universities have not been welcome learning environments for Indigenous students. Likewise, institutional research programs—most often founded

upon Western principles and practices—typically have minimized and discounted Indigenous philosophies, pedagogies, and methodologies. In this context, Indigenous voices have been silenced, marginalized, and disregarded within the academy (Kuokkanen 2008). In the case of the University of Calgary, we needed to ensure that our Indigenous Strategy authentically recognized and served Indigenous peoples in both education and research.

Education has played a fundamental role in systemic racism, and the University of Calgary Indigenous Strategy Task Force quickly acknowledged that postsecondary institutions have a distinct responsibility to initiate and sustain reconciliation. Indeed, we felt a moral, ethical, and legal obligation to reset the university's relationship with Indigenous peoples. The institution needed to become genuinely inclusive and humble as we reimagined our processes of teaching, learning, and researching. This touchstone could be realized only through meaningful and reciprocal relationship building. It would also demand renewed "ways of being" for the university, deeply embedding "transformative reconciliation" (Burrows and Tully 2018) in the heart of the strategy.

A second touchstone was closely connected to the importance of including Indigenous people in the strategy as equal partners. Like most postsecondary institutions, the University of Calgary's historical connections to Indigenous communities were primarily transactional. These relationships were based on activities such as recruiting Indigenous students, providing basic supports as they experienced Eurocentric programs, and undertaking research driven by academic researchers' questions and methods. The Indigenous Strategy had to move beyond these transactional approaches, focusing instead on building deeper and more mutually beneficial relationships. The Indigenous Strategy Task Force recognized that this would be a long-term process, extending the timeline required for developing the strategy. Even as the process unfolded, members of the Steering Committee and Working Group spent considerable time with Elders and Knowledge Keepers, building the relationships required to understand the worldviews and practices necessary to make the strategy genuine.

A reconsideration of time represented another touchstone for the Steering Committee and Working Group. Most university strategies have limited time horizons, often about five years. It is expected that a

strategy will be assessed and altered or renewed before the end of this time frame. Upon renewal, some strategies are replaced with new priorities. In developing the Indigenous Strategy, however, we realized that its inclusive and relational nature would demand commitments that extend far beyond typical institutional timelines. We came to consider the strategy as a generational document, a living entity that would continue to evolve for years and decades. This seemed to be both necessary and appropriate since the commitments made to long-term, authentic relationships with Indigenous communities could not have "end dates." We also realized that this principle mirrored the seventh-generation philosophy found in many Indigenous communities, where decision-making processes have stewardship at their core. Decisions made in the present must consider past learnings and ensure a sustainable environment seven generations into the future. In essence, we were planning not only for today but also for those children not yet born. We developed and implemented the University of Calgary Indigenous Strategy with these intentions at its core.

A final touchstone, the creation of ethical space, was also vital to the Indigenous Strategy. Ermine (2007, 193) describes a "space in between" Indigenous and Eurocentric worlds. The boundaries of this space are defined by distinct and vastly different worldviews, perspectives, cultures, and ways of being. Both Indigenous and Eurocentric worlds have undeniable rights and standing, meaning that they should relate with equal authority, status, and power. The colonization of Indigenous nations over recent centuries attempted to eliminate that standing, so developing genuine relationships demands restoration of that inherent equality.

Bridging worlds is a highly challenging task because the very assumptions and ways of communicating about the world are so distinct from one another. For example, Eurocentric ways of making decisions are founded upon written processes, formal organizational hierarchies, and procedures such as minuting and voting. In contrast, Indigenous decision-making processes are based on oral ways of knowing: ceremony, circular processes, responsibility that extends to ancestors and future generations, forms of consensus, and authorities based on tradition, responsibility, and transfer of rights. Historical processes of colonization imposed by dominant Eurocentric settlers, such as enforced assimilation and genocidal legislation, attempted to erase and silence Indigenous peoples' cultures, languages, practices, ceremonies, wisdom, and beliefs (TRC, 2015).

Eurocentric dominance, systemic racism, and the lingering colonial mindset is ever present. Cultural differences exist perpetually in the overlapping space between worldviews and cultures, characterizing the complexity, threatening the assimilation, and underscoring the fragility of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations. As noted, this space in between two disparate cultures can be fraught with "jagged edges" (Henderson 2009, 65). The collision of "jagged worldviews" (Little Bear 2000) can cause tension, conflict, or confusion. Between these edges is also the potential to build an "ethical space of engagement" (Ermine 2007) through dialogue and cultural parallels, creating a dynamic opportunity for meaningful communication and sincere acknowledgement of the inherent sacredness of distinct worldviews. This "in between" space is full of uncertainty and creativity and contains an innovative force; it is a place where the courageous move past the familiar, untenable, and unworkable to build something new. Addressing the colonial mindset and engaging Indigenous communities in a more ethical and relational manner that acknowledges and honors Indigenous knowledge systems, lived experiences and relational connection to land, calls for a framework of "ethical relationality" (Donald 2016).

The creation of ethical space became a touchstone for our journey because developing an ethical relationship with Indigenous communities demanded that the university fully acknowledge the devastating history of colonization and its impacts on Indigenous peoples. We also needed to recognize the role universities and other education systems played in enforced assimilation practices of the Crown. Through legislated acts of enfranchisement up to 1961, First Nations individuals who chose to better themselves through higher education were forcefully enfranchised under the Indian Act.[4] They lost their Indian Status, were stripped of their inherent Indigenous rights, and were forbidden to live in their First Nations communities (Crey 2009). Once enfranchised, a First Nations person was no longer recognized as an Indigenous person (Indian) under the Indian Act and, by extension, the Canadian Constitution. We recognized the

4 Information about enfranchisement, the Gradual Enfranchisement Act, 1869, the Gradual Civilization Act, 1857, and the Indian Act can be found at https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/enfranchisement/.

historical context that would require us to address the history and aggressive acts of assimilation through education.

Creating ethical space to reimagine and reset trusted relationships with Indigenous communities would require the university to interact with Indigenous communities through *their* worldviews. We needed to become a place that embraced and engaged in deep learning about unique Indigenous worldviews, cultures, and practices. Guided by the spirit and actions embodied in these touchstones, the University of Calgary made several commitments in developing its Indigenous Strategy:

1. to engage in the process of reconciliation, which entails a collective journey that honours Indigenous peoples' stories, knowledges, and traditions, and the renewal and development of authentic relationships with Indigenous peoples and communities;

2. to establish a welcoming, inclusive, and culturally competent campus community that respects, includes, and promotes Indigenous ways of knowing, teaching, learning, and researching;

3. to create and maintain shared ethical space inclusive of Indigenous people's representation within the student body, staff, faculty, leadership, and governing structures;

4. to develop a campus community that understands the histories and worldviews of Indigenous peoples and the importance of connection to the land;

5. to ensure that policies, practices, and procedures are supportive and respectful of Indigenous ways;

6. to create spaces and processes for ongoing "full circle" community engagement through dialogue with Indigenous communities and other institutional stakeholders; and

7. to ensure sustainability and renewal of the Indigenous Strategy so that it remains a current and dynamic agent of transformation for the university. (See University of Calgary 2017b, 5)

The seven statements of commitment are grounded in an Indigenous epistemic axiology captured by the phrase "in a good way." This phrase signals ways of doing and being synonymous with concepts of relationality, enacted through a value system governed by respect and kindness for all our relations.

EMBRACING CULTURAL TEACHINGS

A foundational contribution from the Traditional Knowledge Keepers dialogue session held on November 18, 2016, was the emphasis on cultural teachings shared by a diverse group of Elders from several nations within the region. These teachings, derived from the common threads of Indigenous worldviews shared with us over the course of our journey, are at the heart of the Indigenous Strategy and include kindness, reciprocity, respect, relationality, interconnectedness, and collectivism. These cultural teachings guided our journey toward the development of our strategy, inspiring sharing and kindness rooted in a profound sense of responsibility to care for all our relations. Cornerstone practices such as meaningful engagement of communities, shared decision making, and inclusion of Indigenous pedagogies such as land-based learning, and the important role of Traditional Knowledge Keepers in course delivery, are integral to the call for reconciliation through education. Extending such thinking to the values and operating principles of a university could lead to profound transformation.

Transitional Story

PIPE BAG STORY

When I think about the pipe bag or any container in our culture, a container is something that we carry things in, and we protect them from getting lost or from losing them. So those are the thoughts I have when I talk about a pipe bag or a container. When I think about an organization coming together, the organization will have no need to become a society or an organization if they don't have anything common [that they carry with them]. But if they find a need in their community, then they would come together based on that need. And coming together they would have their discussion on what the need was.

Through that discussion, they [the organization] can prioritize all the important points that they brought up. And from the prioritized list, in Western culture, they'll write them down. And once they have them on a piece of paper, then that gives them their goals and objectives. That's how we understand the written system. But when you look at the oral system—with this pipe bag understanding—we also have shared goals and ideas and practices belonging to a group of people coming together for a [common] need, and through their discussion they prioritize that need.

However, in an oral culture, we didn't write, so what we did was, once we had the priorities, those priorities were represented with cultural items from an environment that we all share within all of creation, whether it's animals, plants, rocks, and so on. Those cultural items are brought together to represent those visions and missions. And of course we have to wrap them [the cultural items] up so they don't fall all over the place. So we have a pouch or a container. In a lot of cases, we'd say a pouch bag or a pipe bag [or a bundle] that we can put them in, and that's what we bring to all our meetings, so that represents our visions and mission.

We don't have Western practices. We don't have a file that we put in a filing cabinet, but what we do have is the bundle itself that's handed over

through a ceremony, an oral practice, to somebody to be responsible for it. They'll know the knowledge. Usually the leader. Then, when the leader retires and a new leader comes in, that container is transferred to the new leader, and the old leader then becomes the keeper of our oral policies [our oral filing cabinet] to give us direction, advice, and help. That's why Elders are so important in the coming into circles of meetings.

Oral Teaching, Piikani Elder Dr. Reg Crowshoe