



THE NEXT WAR: INDICATIONS INTELLIGENCE IN THE EARLY COLD WAR

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Four Stories

A PLACE OF CONFLUENCE

I think that Fort Calgary (now called The Confluence) as a venue for the Inner-City Dialogue was so important. There was conversation about what Fort Calgary meant and the actual location of Fort Calgary at the confluence of the Bow and Elbow Rivers and the crossroads of Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures during the height of colonization—a site traditionally known as Moh'kinstsis to the Blackfoot, Wichispa to the Stoney Nakoda, and Guts'ists'i to the Tsuut'ina. Knowing that before we went into that Inner-City Dialogue, triggered conversations about marginalization. We went into community wanting to truly listen to the stories of the people to envision how we, as a large research-intensive university, can become a better relative. We wanted to learn how the university can be of service to community. We wanted to re-imagine how to work with Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies in a better way, including organizations who are trying to address the marginalization of Indigenous peoples whether in education, employment, or social services. I think both the location and topics covered during that first community dialogue were important touchstones for the journey ahead.

Shawna Cunningham

DEEP RESPONSIBILITY

I can remember just being so exhausted after our Full-Circle Dialogue but also thinking about how much I had learned. How it was unfair that people didn't feel included on our campus or that they were experiencing overt racism. That wasn't right, and it just affirmed, for me, that we had to get the strategy right, and we needed to take our time to do it properly. I also remember meeting with former Assembly of First Nations Grand Chief Perry Bellegarde at the beginning of our journey, and he said to me "It's really great you're doing this, Dru, but don't screw it up." I mean that's how blunt he was. It was not just an obligation to develop this strategy. We felt a deep responsibility that we had to approach this strategy very differently and that we had to do our best to get it right.

Dru Marshall

AMBIGUITY

When the Working Group started its process, we first looked to our other institutional strategies, thinking that there might be ideas or processes there that we could emulate. We realized quickly that our journey would have to be different. I think that the creation of the Indigenous Strategy took much longer than we anticipated and even longer for us to fully process and really understand what the journey meant. We had no idea how different this strategy would be, nor did we have any idea how often our ideas, our process, would shift as we moved through the entire journey. I think that we had the sense that somehow we'd put a plan together, and it would move ahead. But as we worked on the strategy, it seemed to shift every few weeks or every month or two as we learned and our thinking changed. So, if there's one word that I would use to describe those early stages, it is ambiguity. When we began, we weren't sure exactly what the process would look like, but we knew that it was going to be different, and we had to just accept that and go with it.

Jackie Sieppert

SPIRAL APPROACH

“Jagged Worlds Colliding” by Leroy Little Bear (2000) speaks to the impact of colonization on Indigenous worldviews and the resulting and ongoing inter-cultural tensions. We felt those jagged edges between worldviews throughout the creation of the university’s Indigenous Strategy, and we felt the dynamic forces of change within the ethical space that we stepped into—uncertainty, chaos, creativity, adaptation, and innovation. In awakening the spirit of ii’ taa’poh’to’p, we were swept into the challenge of shapeshifting an institution by engaging non-linear processes familiar to Indigenous peoples. The journey was spiral in nature—circles upon circles. We had to address and if possible reconcile the tension caused by old and new learning, identify competing values and faulty belief systems, repeatedly loop back to impactful concepts and stories (Elders’/kēhtē-ayak/chi-anishinaabek ways of transferring knowledge and known as organizational learning), and accept that we would be leaving some things behind so that we could begin the journey on the hazy and windy road ahead of us. I knew that the Indigenous Strategy process had been anticipated by the Indigenous community for some time, and I soon learned that it was something bigger than all of us. It wouldn’t have been successful if we didn’t continually strive to be in good relations. The sense of responsibility was significant.

Jacqueline Ottmann

Introduction

The journey to create an Indigenous Strategy began, as most strategies do within postsecondary institutions, with the development of terms of reference, key committees and their members, and expected goals and timelines (University of Calgary 2017b, 40). In the Indigenous Strategy process, however, inclusivity and representation of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and worldviews were critical. Efforts were made to include our entire campus community in the process while ensuring the presence of Indigenous voices, which were included at all stages and all levels of our developmental journey. The Indigenous Strategy Task Force included Traditional Knowledge Keepers appointed to the Steering Committee. Indigenous representatives from both the campus and local community organizations were included in the Working Group. Additionally, several ceremonial Elders served as spiritual leaders and cultural advisers throughout the various stages of our journey. With advice and guidance from Traditional Knowledge Keepers, the university created space for a culturally parallel developmental journey:

The adoption of an Indigenous framework, based upon oral traditions, both acknowledged and honoured cultural parallels between Euro-centric and Indigenous ways of knowing. It also provided an ethically grounded space for community engagement and cultural validation throughout our journey. Each stage of development was validated through ceremony (University of Calgary 2017b, 41).

The development of the University of Calgary Indigenous Strategy was informed, shaped, and enriched by a parallel Indigenous framework. Ceremony became a vital and reflective part of the process, marking important milestones in our journey. Ceremony, within the four-stage journey framework (University of Calgary 2017b, 41), created a safe and ethical space for difficult conversations, engaging members of the Indigenous Task Force in a culturally immersive journey while allowing time for meaningful community engagement.

Our Four-Stage Journey Framework

Early in the development of the university's Indigenous Strategy, Traditional Knowledge Keepers on the Steering Committee advised the provost (Dru Marshall) to begin the process “in a good way” by adopting a parallel framework grounded by Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. The Indigenous co-chairs, Jacqueline Ottmann and Shawna Cunningham, were then tasked to meet with Elder Reg Crowshoe to develop an Indigenous framework to help inform and guide the development of our Indigenous Strategy. The four-stage journey framework adopted for the Indigenous Strategy was based on a previous University of Calgary student-led project called the Cenovus Spo'pi Solar House.¹ This solar-powered home—designed by students in consultation with Elder Reg Crowshoe and the Treaty 7 region—was an entry in the 2011 Solar Decathlon competition held in Washington, DC. The development and design of the Spo'pi house evoked the symbolic representation of a warrior empowered by ceremony at various stages of its journey to Washington and back. Conversations with Elder Crowshoe similarly led to the creation of a four-stage journey framework for the Indigenous Strategy based on historical communal practices associated with land journeys that can involve hunting or gathering food to ensure community sustainability. The framework for the strategy followed the symbolic representation of a group of relatives embarking on a journey to seek, bring home, and partake in sustenance for the community—a journey empowered by ceremony.

STAGE 1: CALLING TOGETHER AND SETTING OUT/ DEVELOPING TERMS OF REFERENCE

The first stage of our ceremonial journey framework was aptly titled Calling Together and Setting Out. The institutional way of doing commenced with the appointment of the Indigenous Task Force, including co-chairs and members of a smaller Steering Committee and a larger Working Group. The co-chairs included pairing an institutional leader with an Indigenous leader from within the university. Dru Marshall, the provost, and Jacqueline Ottmann, a professor in education who had led

¹ For more information on the Cenovus Spo'pi Solar House, see https://www.solardecathlon.gov/past/2011/where_is_canada_now.

the development of the Indigenous Strategy in the Werklund School of Education, co-chaired the Steering Committee; Jackie Sieppert, dean of the Faculty of Social Work, and Shawna Cunningham, director of the Native Centre (now Writing Symbols Lodge), the Indigenous Student Centre, co-chaired the Working Group. The Steering Committee began to form in the fall of 2015 with traditional institutional terms of reference for the committees being developed. It quickly became apparent that these terms of reference were not going to serve the development of an institutional Indigenous Strategy.

Creation of the parallel Indigenous four-stage journey framework was envisioned after significant conversation with and guidance from Elders. Once that framework came into being, all members of the Indigenous Task Force engaged in a progressive journey of cultural immersion shaped by a regional Indigenous way of doing grounded by ceremony to protect, inform, and celebrate progress:

the ceremonial initiation of the Steering Committee was marked by a pipe ceremony, held on April 6, 2016. This was followed by the initiation of the Working Group, marked by a smudge ceremony, held on May 18, 2016. All members of the Indigenous Strategy Task Force (members of the Steering Committee and Working Group) were gifted with small Pendleton pouches, symbols of commitment to the development of the strategy. (University of Calgary 2017b, 41)

The pipe ceremony marked a coming together of the Steering Committee in which the co-chairs asked the Elders for ceremonial blessings and ongoing cultural guidance as we embarked on our parallel journey. During this initial ceremony, led by Kainai ceremonial and spiritual leader the late Andy Black Water, the institutional and Indigenous frameworks were treated as parallel documents, blessed and placed alongside one another into a pipe bag kept in the provost's office throughout the journey, awaiting completion of the strategy.

At this stage of our journey, members of the Working Group were gifted with small Pendleton pouches containing sage, sweetgrass, tobacco, cedar, and a small rock. These medicine pouches were gifted in a smudge ceremony led by Elder Reg Crowshoe and blessed multiple times as the

group moved from one stage of the journey to the next and/or sought guidance at moments of uncertainty or challenge. Reg became the ceremonial Elder for the Working Group and referred to the medicine pouches as parallel to “membership cards.” As our journey progressed, the medicine pouches took on progressive and profound meanings for the individual members of the Working Group and were brought to meetings not just as tokens but also as animated witnesses to the journey, taking on the reflective and transformational energy of lived experiences.

For members of the Indigenous Task Force, this first stage of our journey together in ceremony was a critical part of initiating the development of an Indigenous Strategy for the University of Calgary in a good and parallel way.

STAGE 2: CLEARING THE PATH AND GATHERING STORIES

The second stage of our four-stage journey, Clearing the Path and Gathering Stories, was parallel to Western processes for information gathering through literature reviews, internal and external scans, and narrative data collection, employing methods such as focus groups and community consultations. Since this stage of the journey was comprehensive and formative, we have chosen to share it in two distinct segments.

Clearing the Path

An essential starting point on the journey toward an Indigenous Strategy was to better understand the internal and external contexts for this work. Doing so required background research focused on “three key areas”: (1) “developing a sense of readiness” in regard to indigenization, (2) “learning more about what other post-secondary institutions had done with regards to the development of similar strategies,” and (3) “understanding the foundational documents that provide the context and history of Indigenous education” (University of Calgary 2017b, 40). As part of the Clearing the Path stage, the Working Group launched and completed three research-based activities to help provide clarity and shape the strategy:

1. a literature review focused on the history and background of Indigenous education in Canada; barriers to education

for Indigenous students; and relevant policies and frameworks to support Indigenous education;

2. an internal environmental scan to identify current strengths and potential gaps in Indigenous education at the University of Calgary; and
3. an external scan and benchmark study to examine other postsecondary institutions across Canada. (University of Calgary 2017b, 41)

Led by key members of the Working Group, the internal scan included a comprehensive survey to be completed by faculties and business units providing information on Indigenous academic and non-academic programs and special initiatives. Information gathered from internal consultations and scans was then compared with information gathered from an external comprehensive literature review identifying and highlighting decolonization theory and practice in postsecondary education. These processes allowed us to better understand where we were as an institution with respect to decolonization and/or indigenization of the academy and to capture wise, innovative practices that might help to inform our journey toward truth and reconciliation.

Consultation included information from an internal scan of our current programs, inclusive practices and policies, and existing community partnerships in academic and research programs. This information helped us to better understand the scope and depth of our current teaching, learning, and research environments. Pockets of excellence within the university, along with areas where significant gaps existed, were also identified. Key members of the Working Group oversaw the collection and organization of information from internal focus groups. These groups covered various sectors of the university community, with participants representing students, student support services, teaching and learning personnel, Indigenous faculty, and deans.

Gathering Stories

Gathering Stories was a fundamental part of the journey toward the development of an Indigenous Strategy for the University of Calgary, informing the content, shaping conceptualizations, and identifying



Community Stakeholder (Full Circle) Dialogue. November 4, 2016. University of Calgary.
Photo Credit: Riley Brandt, UCalgary.

recommendations. The narrative data collection was grounded in a regional Indigenous paradigm that determined our Indigenous research methodology (Kovach 2009), aligning with the premise that “research is ceremony” (Wilson 2008). Our in-person methods for gathering stories through table conversations and circle dialogues were protected in ceremony and guided by a set of open-ended questions that inspired truth telling (Little Bear 2000; Maracle 2007; Smith 2023), evoking rich narratives based on people’s storied experiences. In line with Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, ceremonial blessings became an essential part of opening, closing, and supporting participants during our Gathering Stories community engagement activities. Overall, the Indigenous Strategy Task Force, guided by Traditional Knowledge Keepers, committed to a parallel framework outlining a critical series of internal and external dialogues. A broad process of consultation was designed to be as inclusive as possible and respectful of the Indigenous community, campus community, and other key community stakeholders in both the public and the private sectors. This process was essential in guiding the development of an Indigenous Strategy unique to the University of Calgary.



Cloth bundle of river rocks from Moh'kinstsis. Community Stakeholder (Full Circle) Dialogue. November 4, 2016. University of Calgary. Photo Credit: Riley Brandt, UCalgary.

Our approach was to fully engage the community by embarking on a full-circle reflective journey to gather and listen to stories about indigenizing postsecondary education and the University of Calgary. In addition to the on-campus focus groups, the university hosted three in-person community dialogues: an Inner-City Dialogue, a large Community Stakeholder Dialogue, and a Traditional Knowledge Keepers Dialogue. We also launched an online survey accessible to the university community and the general public. Conversational questions focused on broad topics categorized under the headings “People,” “Places,” “Programs,” and “Practices.” Community consultations took place throughout the fall 2016. In total, the university connected with and received input from more than 2,200 people.

The framing of dialogues and the thematic questions on these topics were grounded in the *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (TRC 2015) and the compelling call for reconciliation through education, with mindful preparation and consideration for sharing information through an “ethical space of engagement” (Ermine 2007). To create a culturally safe space for sharing stories, the venues for the community dialogues were smudged by an Elder in advance of the

gatherings. Once people were gathered, Elders were invited to offer a traditional prayer and ceremonial smudge to open and close each community dialogue in a good way. Cultural hallmarks became important parts of the conversational space, creating a way for participants to listen, pause, reflect, and support one another during the table conversations. These items included beading materials for bracelets and small rocks gathered in a good and reciprocal way from the banks of the Bow River or Moh'kinstsis.

As guests arrived at our storytelling spaces, the tables were adorned with the river rocks wrapped in cloth bundles. The rocks had been cleansed, smudged, and blessed by Elders before being wrapped and placed at the centre of each table. After the opening prayer, individuals were invited to open the cloth bundles to select and hold a rock while listening to and sharing stories. The rocks carried the energy of the individuals who participated in the table conversations, sharing their own stories and listening to those of others. The following explanation, mentioned at the beginning of each community dialogue, was also included on a place card at the centre of each table:

The rocks situated in the centre of the table come from the Bow River. We ask that you choose a rock for the day and hold on to that rock during our table conversations. The rocks are our grandfathers and will capture the energy of our stories. They connect us to the land and this place we call Moh'kinstsis. At the end of our event, we ask you to take your rock home with you, offer it back to the earth or to the banks of the Bow River, or place it in the cedar basket at the reception table, and we will carefully place it on the grounds of the university as an act of reciprocity.

Beading supplies were also provided at each table, offering an opportunity for individuals to quietly bead colourful bracelets while listening. At the end of the day, many of the individuals offered their bracelets as gifts to others at their table in honour of the stories shared. The exchange of bracelets between individuals, both listeners and storytellers, was relational and heartfelt, serving as a meaningful act of gratitude and reciprocity.

Additionally, we acquired a Pendleton blanket to be used as a ceremonial blanket. This special edition blanket was titled the *Way of Life*,



Bracelet Beading. Community Stakeholder (Full Circle) Dialogue. November 4, 2016. University of Calgary. Photo Credit: Riley Brandt, UCalgary.

which resonated with our journey and parallel paths. The blanket accompanied us to each event and became a witness to our in-person dialogues and ceremonial milestones. It accrued meaning. It was placed on podiums, reception tables, and the head table for the Full-Circle Dialogue. Since the launch of the strategy, this blanket has become our ceremonial blanket, reminding us of our transformational journey—where we were, where we are, and where we are going. It serves as a reminder of our past and our present commitment to the journey of *ii' taa'poh'to'p*.

The dialogues that took place during our table conversations required us to create a culturally safe space for sharing stories and lived experiences. To gain insight into the current and historical relationship between community members and the university, we made a conscious decision to take the role of listener rather than presenter throughout our community consultations. What we heard from our respective community members was invaluable in informing the strategy and envisioning our path forward. To create a culturally safe, ethical space for dialogue, a ceremonial Elder arrived early to each location to cleanse the venue with a smudge.

Additionally, to ground the conversation and open our events in a good way, an Elder offered an opening prayer and a ceremonial smudge at the beginning of each gathering.

Conversations covered a breadth of topics including but not limited to the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge systems and Knowledge Keepers in research, teaching, and learning; the need for meaningful representation of Indigenous peoples in academia (students, staff, and faculty); systemic barriers and challenges associated with postsecondary education in general and the University of Calgary in particular; explorations of new ideas and opportunities for community-informed programs and research partnerships; and the lack of societal and institutional (student, staff, and faculty) knowledge of Indigenous peoples' histories, cultures, diversity, and lived experiences. Each day was closed in a good way, with reflective remarks and a closing prayer.

Community Dialogues

We determined that it was critical to engage in comprehensive consultations with the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities on and off campus. We embarked on this journey with no preconceived ideas of what our strategy might look like. The ambiguity created space for creativity and voices to be heard during table conversations. Our intent was to listen in order to respond appropriately to the call to create more respectful and meaningful inclusion of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous knowledge systems in postsecondary education. Going to the community before drafting an Indigenous Strategy felt like the right thing to do. Our approach was to ensure that our strategy was not only about the university but also about Indigenous histories, education (including residential school experiences), the impact of colonization, societal and systemic Indigenous racism, as well as shared hope for a better future.

For the larger gatherings, members of the Working Group facilitated table conversations, students were recruited to take notes, and Indigenous scholars and community members were appointed as reflective listeners, moving from one table to another to capture highlights and report back at the end of the day. To better understand the significance of our conversations with the community, which formed the basis of our Indigenous Strategy, we provide a summary of community consultations and dialogues below.

The Inner-City Dialogue

The Inner-City Dialogue, held at Fort Calgary on October 17, 2016, was the first of three important circle dialogues hosted by the university as part of our Gathering Stories phase of development. Fort Calgary is an important place both culturally and historically, a natural place to begin the Indigenous Strategy dialogues.

The purpose of this gathering was to connect with inner-city agencies to gain a better understanding of what the university means to the community and how we could be of service in creating a more welcoming, accepting, and inclusive space. We wanted to know how to further the educational aspirations of Indigenous students and close the gap in the marginalization of Indigenous peoples and communities. Below is a high-level summary of the Inner-City Dialogue:

This community dialogue focused on the university as a service provider to the community and table conversations addressed marginalization, access to education, and community-based research. Approximately 75 people representing 35 agencies, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit representatives from the City of Calgary and surrounding area attended this event. The table conversations provided insight into the educational barriers, the importance of community partnership, and the overall perception of the University of Calgary from an urban orientation. (University of Calgary 2017b, 42)

We thought that it was critical to start with inner-city voices and stories to disrupt the extractive and presumptuous ways in which many of these conversations started in the past.

The following questions were posed during the table conversations.

Table Conversation 1: People

1. What is the first thing you think about when you look back on your school experience?
2. Did you attend postsecondary? Why/why not?

Table Conversation 2: Programs

- 3. What challenges or barriers do Indigenous learners face when trying to enter higher levels of education?
- 4. What can the University of Calgary do to alleviate some of these challenges or barriers?

Table Conversation 3: Practices

- 5. What can the university do to create a more welcome and inclusive campus for Indigenous learners and community members?
- 6. What kinds of partnerships with community members, agencies, or organizations should the university pursue to enhance inclusivity for Indigenous learners on campus?

Table Conversation 4: Places/Spaces

- 7. What kinds of educational programs might the university provide to better serve Indigenous students/communities?
- 8. How can the university be of service to Indigenous agencies and communities when it comes to research?

These open-ended questions served as conversational guides, and individuals shared rich, diverse perspectives and personal experiences throughout the day. Each table included a host and scribe responsible for moderating the conversation and capturing the essence of the topics addressed. The enthusiastic and emotional conversations were inspiring and challenging, providing insights into how education has failed Indigenous peoples and how the university can reposition itself to be of service to the community in the future by becoming more inclusive of, respectful of, and accessible to Indigenous peoples.

The Community Stakeholder (Full-Circle) Dialogue

The Community Stakeholder Dialogue on November 4, 2016, also referred to as our full-circle gathering, included select agencies, community representatives, community leaders, and First Nations colleges, students, faculty, and staff. Below is a summary of the gathering:

The full-day event included keynote addresses by Dr. Shauneen Pete, Dr. Willie Littlechild, and Kainai Elder Wilton Goodstriker. The event included conversational questions organized into four topics: people, programs, practices, and places. Table conversations were rich, engaging, and informative. Each table included a facilitator and scribe. Findings and summaries of the table conversations were transcribed and included in the *University of Calgary Indigenous Strategy Data Analysis Report* (March 2017) for the full *Gathering Stories* community engagement series. Approximately 225 stakeholders from 59 agencies, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit representatives from across Alberta, attended this event. (University of Calgary 2017b, 42)

The table conversations were guided by the following questions.

Table Conversation 1: People

1. How can we ensure the University of Calgary is more accessible to and inclusive of Indigenous peoples?
2. How can the University of Calgary become more culturally competent in relation to Indigenous peoples?

Table Conversation 2: Programs

3. How can we respectfully bridge Indigenous knowledge(s) and practices with the University of Calgary's teaching and learning?
4. What kinds of academic programs will create authentic cultural learning opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students at the University of Calgary?

Table Conversation 3: Practices

- 5. How can the University of Calgary best serve Indigenous peoples, communities, and organizations through research?
- 6. How should the University of Calgary engage community stakeholders in measuring the success of an Indigenous Strategy as we move forward?

Table Conversation 4: Places/Spaces

- 7. What kinds of places and spaces can the University of Calgary create to enhance its connection with Indigenous peoples and identity in the traditional landscape?

We invited Dr. Shauneen Pete (formerly from the University of Regina) and Dr. Willie Littlechild (commissioner, Truth and Reconciliation Commission) to set the tone and provide context for the table conversations. Each speaker provided a distinct tone, context, and meaning to the work of reconciliation: one focused on the importance of reconciliation and the other on truthing.

Pete, who spoke in the morning, shared a powerful vision of Indigenous peoples’ thriving economy and education throughout North America prior to colonization through story, and then she called for the audience members to act, to help right wrongs, and to make our future better, all the while focusing on the role of settler-colonial society. Her essential message was that Indigenous peoples have done their work coping with oppression; systemic, covert, and overt racism; and historical and current impacts of colonization. She called on settlers to increase their understanding of Indigenous experiences in Canada and to acknowledge their role in systemic oppression. Her message was straightforward and simple: to achieve reconciliation, settlers should determine individual and collective actions that will enable them to become part of the solution. This was a bold, important, yet uncomfortable message for many, compelling some individuals to walk out of the room and others to take immediate responsibility and action.

Littlechild spoke in the afternoon. He shared his experiences in the residential school system through first-hand accounts accompanied by poignant images of residential school settings and experiences. His story touched the hearts of many listeners and brought to life the tragic experiences of Indigenous children who attended residential schools—those who survived, those who did not, and those whose lives were forever affected and changed by the scars of deep personal and intergenerational trauma. His message emphasized the importance of truthing as the forerunner to reconciliation, compelling us to take immediate and meaningful action to transform the education system. His message amplified the gravity and significance of the work before the Indigenous Task Force.

To summarize the conversation that took place throughout the day, four Indigenous attendees served as reflective listeners, moving from one table to the next. This group came together as a panel to highlight what they heard based on what resonated for each of them. To close the day in a good way, Kainai Elder Wilton Goodstriker offered grounding remarks and a closing prayer. In later reflective conversations, Jacqueline Ottmann noted that:

It was a powerful day. It was also a demonstration of ethical space. The format was very intentional. We organized the tables in a way in which university representatives like students, faculty, staff, and administrators could sit together with Indigenous community members and community partners to engage in conversations where they were sharing, listening, and truly hearing each other. So it wasn't a table of deans; it wasn't a table of students; it was a coming together of people not roles. Individuals taking part in the table conversations were hearing various perspectives and hopefully valuing those perspectives.

The venue for this gathering, like the others, was carefully prepared through the smudge, the presence of grandfather rocks, the making and gifting of beaded bracelets, and the opening and closing prayers from Traditional Knowledge Keepers. This ceremonial preparation created a culturally safe, protected space for sharing stories. As Reg Crowshoe reminded us throughout the journey, which included our community gatherings, ceremonies, and meetings, “be sure to bring your *true self*.”

The Traditional Knowledge Keepers Dialogue

The intention behind this gathering on November 18, 2016, was to gain insight into and wisdom from respected Traditional Knowledge Keepers in three areas: Indigenous land, language, and Traditional Knowledge. The gathering included fifteen Indigenous Traditional Knowledge Keepers from the Alberta region and the Calgary community. The dialogue was co-chaired by Dru Marshall and Jacqueline Ottmann, and the conversation was moderated by Phil Fontaine. Below is a brief summary of this gathering:

This very important session was facilitated by former Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief, Dr. Phil Fontaine, and included participation from 15 Traditional Knowledge Keepers, including First Nations and Métis representatives. The session also included 25 witnesses/listeners. The dialogue focused on Indigenous knowledge in relation to land, language, history, and education. The information shared throughout the day was rich and enlightening and will help to envision the role of the university with respect to Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Knowledge Keepers. (University of Calgary 2017b, 42–43)

In response to key questions posed, the Elders shared individual stories, reflections, and lived experience in circular conversational storytelling format.

The conversational guideline for this day included the following topical questions.

Indigenous Land

1. What does the university community need to understand, and learn about, in terms of our (people's) relationship to land from an Indigenous perspective?

Indigenous Language

2. How can the university best support the revitalization of Indigenous languages in teaching and learning?



Left to right: Elder Evelyn Goodstiker, Dr. Dru Marshall, Elder Calvin Williams. Traditional Knowledge Keepers Dialogue. November 18, 2016. University of Calgary. Photo Credit: Riley Brandt, UCalgary.

Indigenous Ways of Knowing

3. How can the university best weave Indigenous perspectives and worldviews into the practice of teaching, learning, and research?

Throughout the day, there was fluidity in the storytelling. Although the conversation was guided by questions, the dialogue was not contained by those questions. Through the questions, Elders engaged in an open table conversation sharing their lived experiences, stories, and Traditional Knowledge. The stories shared and the teachings offered were profound, highlighting the violent acts of genocide on Indigenous peoples, languages, and distinct knowledge systems, calling simultaneously for healing and cultural resurgence. We share in more detail in the next chapter a summary of the secular, epistemic, and metaphorical dialogue with Traditional Knowledge Keepers.

The Online Public Survey

To broaden the scope of consultation, the university decided to launch a public survey from November 4 to December 5, 2016. To be consistent, the survey questions mirrored the full-circle table conversations as a congruent data-gathering tool. Because the data gathered did not include in-person dialogue, which can open various conversational trajectories, the survey included an additional catch-all question: “Is there anything that has been missed or ideas you would like to add to this dialogue?”

The survey, open to constituents of the university and members of the public, provided aggregate quantitative data that captured categories of respondents and their relationships with the university, including faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members. For various reasons, this type of aggregate data was not gathered from participants who attended the in-person gatherings. This additional layer of data was informative when cross-referenced with questions related to intercultural capacity and the desire to support the university and engage in efforts at reconciliation. “Over 1,370 respondents took the time to complete the survey, with the resulting information being comprehensive and informative” (University of Calgary 2017b, 43).

The broad, open-ended questions garnered rich narrative responses and themes that helped us to understand not only our relationships with Indigenous peoples and communities but also the overall knowledge and cultural illiteracy of the campus community with respect to Indigenous peoples, defining the journey ahead and informing the overall content of our strategy. Since the survey was anonymous, we also encountered comments that reflected the deeper layers of overt and systemic racism. Although these comments were not surprising, they were disturbing and yet again compellingly informative about the undercurrents of racism in our society and the challenges that we face as we work toward reconciliation.

To summarize, our Clearing the Path and Gathering Stories stage of development, information gathered from individuals who completed the online survey, was integrated into our narrative data summary report. Information gathered from the literature review, internal and external scans, and in-person and online community consultations was carried into the next stage.

STAGE 3: BRINGING THE STORIES HOME

The third stage of our journey entailed reviewing and considering the information provided by summary reports of internal and external scans, the literature review, and summary reports from the Gathering Stories stage.

With assistance from Indigenous doctoral students and two non-Indigenous faculty members, Jacqueline Ottmann led the narrative analysis of the three in-person community engagement dialogues as well as the raw data gathered from responses to the online public survey. Additionally, other campus leaders and members of the Working Group integrated the results of the university-wide internal scan and an external scan that provided information on how other select postsecondary institutions were responding to the marginalization of Indigenous peoples. A final summary report on the narrative data was compiled and brought to the Steering Committee and Working Group for reflection. Once approved, this report was handed off to a subcommittee of the Working Group. Writing the strategy was a collective endeavour fully based on this summary report, called *What We Heard*.

STAGE 4: EMPOWERING THE SPIRIT OF INDIGENIZATION

Empowering the Spirit of Indigenization was the final stage of our four-stage journey framework. This stage—which included ceremonial validation, transfers, and cultural gifting marking the progress, milestones, and key accomplishments of our journey—ran parallel to university approval processes. Although ceremonial validation was important, there was the practical task of moving the Indigenous Strategy, a somewhat atypical document, through various levels of institutional approval, in line with traditional university processes. Cultural translation therefore played a significant and emergent role in guiding the strategy through the university approval processes and Indigenous ceremonial practices. Cultural interpretation between the university and the Indigenous community was required not only to explain the parallel paths taken to develop the strategy but also to translate and contextualize the Indigenous knowledge embedded in the strategy document itself. Cultural interpretation (cultural brokering, code-talking) was anticipated and realized throughout the

development of the Indigenous Strategy but became critical as we moved simultaneously through the university approvals and cultural validation ceremonies necessary to realize empowerment of the strategy.

Championing the strategy through institutional approval and Indigenous validation processes while navigating the two distinct systems (written and oral) required skilled leadership, a mindful approach, and knowledgeable expertise—in other words, the right individuals from the perspectives of both systems. From an institutional perspective, Dru Marshall, our provost at the time, took great care to update the university leadership and the campus community throughout development and at every opportunity, clearly articulating and reiterating our unique and inclusive parallel paths. From an Indigenous knowledge Keeper perspective, Elder Reg Crowshoe continually located and articulated the cultural parallels between the university written system and an Indigenous oral system. He provided ongoing guidance and ceremonial leadership about and throughout the four-stage journey. He worked alongside other ceremonial Elders and the Indigenous community to support the strategy and validate progress as we came together in ceremony to address challenges and celebrate milestones in our journey. Together, Marshall and Crowshoe took on emergent but significant roles as key cultural translators in support of the development, approval, and validation of the strategy, constantly and consistently building relationships and increasing understanding, both within and outside the university. These roles, not always easy, helped to garner and maintain much needed support for the strategy from the university campus and the local Indigenous community. In retrospect, our chosen parallel paths required compassionate and skilled cultural interpretation to articulate and navigate two disparate systems in support of the strategy and the work of the Indigenous Steering Committee and Working Group, ultimately Empowering the Spirit of Indigenization through *ii' taa'poh'to'p*.

Validating the Strategy

Breathing life into the strategy was evoked through ceremony, creating a living document to last for generations to come. June 21, 2017, was a significant date for the Indigenous Strategy. This was the day that the university received ceremonial validation for the proposed strategy, marked by traditional

gifts and transfers. These processes of validation paralleled institutional approvals. Transfers and gifts bestowed in honour of the strategy included the following.

1. The late Kainai spiritual leader Andy Black Water bestowed a traditional Blackfoot name for the strategy, *ii' taa'poh'to'p* (meaning a place to rejuvenate and re-energize during a journey). This gift was requested in the initial pipe ceremony in 2016.
2. Elder Reg Crowshoe designed and transferred symbols representing a cultural interpretation of the model.
3. Stoney Nakoda Traditional Knowledge Keeper Rod Hunter transferred an honour song to the University of Calgary.
4. A pipe bag was gifted by the Elders to serve as a journey/mandate bundle² for the cultural gifts, the strategy documents, and future gifts and documents associated with the strategy.

In line with our parallel paths, the Indigenous Strategy written document was brought forward to the General Faculties Council for approval on October 19, 2017, and the Board of Governors on October 20 as part of institutional approval. The public launch of the strategy was held on November 16. This community celebration included a transfer of the strategy in which the Indigenous and institutional frameworks, the final strategy document called *ii' taa'poh'to'p*, and the cultural symbols were bundled together in a pipe bag and transferred from the Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) to the Office of the President and Vice-Chancellor in a ceremony. Susan Mide Kiss, a member of the Working Group and co-chair of the launch event, offered the following reflection in a written submission in 2024:

² The term “journey/mandate bundle” is distinct from the sacred bundles associated with traditional sacred societies.

Together with Elder Dr. Reg Crowshoe and other university and community leaders, we co-created the strategy and co-led the launch of *ii' taa'poh'to'p*. The launch was critical to the conceptual and cultural framework, empowering the spirit of reconciliation, inclusive of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, being, and connecting. Like the co-creation of the strategy, the launch was community-led and engaged, reinforcing the power of learning and working together in parallel ways. The realization, launch, and journey of *ii' taa'poh'to'p* would not be possible without the spiritual support and guidance of Elders Reg and Rose Crowshoe and so many other Indigenous, university and community leaders.

As Elder Reg eloquently stated, “it was a good day for *ii' taa'poh'to'p*.”

Transitional Story

ENTRUSTED STORIES

Responsibility for hearing stories requires a commitment and mindfulness to do work in a good way, knowing that what we do now, how our story unfolds and is told, is witnessed by those who have gone before us, experienced by people today, and will impact those not yet born, well into the future. Many understand this way of perceiving and living in the world. We embody it. These people, and more, came to our gatherings. They demonstrated their trust by gifting their time and stories, which they shared courageously and honestly. They told their experiences and hearts' desires because, as some people said to me, they hoped that the University of Calgary will use their stories for good. Because of these gatherings and the online survey, we now have witnesses on and off campus, in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, and internationally, watching for what we, the University of Calgary, will do next.

Jacqueline Ottmann

