



GROUNDBREAKING NEWS

Elders and officials with the federal, provincial and city governments and partner agencies joined us in January to break ground for our Indigenous Elders' Lodge.

[Story and photos inside.](#)



AFCC
WINTER
2022

NEWSLETTER

GRUNDBREAKING NEWS:

AFCC and partners celebrate groundbreaking for new Indigenous Elders' Lodge

On January 25, Elders, AFCC leaders, and community partners joined representatives from the Government of Canada and the Government of Alberta to ceremonially break ground at the site of our future Indigenous Elders' Lodge. The Highland Park complex will provide affordable housing for Indigenous seniors in Calgary while offering a safe space for social and cultural connections.

The complex will include 12 one-bedroom units; medical and social supports; and indoor and outdoor spaces for ceremony and land teachings.

"Together, we have created a legacy project that could serve as a blueprint for other jurisdictions committed to honouring and caring for Elders as they age. For our community, the Elders Lodge is a sacred, safe space for connection and healing," said Shane Gauthier, AFCC CEO.



Elders Jackie Bromley and Rose Crowshoe listen as Elder Dr. Reg Crowshoe prepares for his opening prayer at the groundbreaking event.



An artist's rendering of the future Indigenous Elders' Lodge.

Elders Dr. Reg and Rose Crowshoe had the opportunity to review blueprints as the lodge was developed. They believe Indigenous seniors will feel much more at home there compared to many other seniors' residences.

"I'm grateful for this lodge because our Elders are living in situations where they would like to make smudge to provide a safe space for themselves and their family but the facilities in the cities they live in don't allow them to make smudge," said Elder Dr. Reg Crowshoe.

The complex was made possible with the support of the Government of Canada, the Government of Alberta, the City of Calgary, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the United Way of Calgary and Area, and the Calgary Homeless Foundation (CHF).

"Supporting Indigenous-led housing projects is a key action under Alberta's Stronger Foundations affordable housing strategy. The Indigenous Elders Lodge is a great example of how collaboration and local expertise can help ensure we meet the diverse housing needs of Albertans, especially those of Indigenous seniors," said Josephine Pon, Minister of Seniors and Housing for Alberta.

Elder Rose Crowshoe says the development is a positive step in relationship-building between Indigenous communities and government.

"This is a teaching we got from our ancestors way back. They made decisions for future generations – the unborn. And I think people have forgotten about that, but now we are starting again."

DID YOU KNOW?

As many as 24 per cent of seniors are socially isolated. While racism, historic negative experiences, and poverty increase the risk of isolation for Indigenous seniors, research suggests connection with the land and traditional medicine, food and activities can protect them from it.

Source: Social isolation of seniors: A Focus on Indigenous Seniors in Canada

AISOKINAKIO'P SUCCESS



March 2022 marks one year since we launched *aisokinakio'*p - culturally-safe clinics dedicated to vaccinating members of our urban Indigenous population and other vulnerable community members. In that time, AFCC, our partners, and volunteer team have immunized more than 10,000 community members through two clinics and four mobile units. This success was achieved in collaboration with numerous partners including Siksika Health Services; OKAKI; Circle of Wisdom Elders and Seniors Centre; and Seven Brothers Circle.

Watch for an update on our permanent Indigenous-led clinic over the next few months.



SERVING UP LOVE AND NOURISHMENT

to our Elders



Brenda Twoyoungmen spends most days crunching numbers as AFCC's finance manager but, once a week, she invests her time preparing dozens of meals for Elders in our community.

"We just want to give them a meal where all they have to do is heat it up," says Twoyoungmen, who learned how to cook from her grandmother and mother. "We grew up with just traditional food and I know what Elders like to eat so it just came naturally to me."

The weekly meals are always well-balanced, offering roasted meat, vegetables, and traditional favourites like bannock. More than 55 Elders in Calgary are the recipients of the nourishing food, which gives them a break from having to grocery shop and cook for themselves.

"It makes me feel good. It's just like when you cook for your whole family, they're always like, 'Oh, that was so good, Mom!'" Twoyoungmen says. "Knowing my family is eating right and eating a good meal, it just makes you feel good."

Top Left: Brenda Twoyoungmen cooks up and packages traditional food for the meal program every week.

Top Right: Elder Shirley Baziel finds a friendly face and a homecooked meal at her door.

RECLAIMING THE SEVEN SACRED TEACHINGS

**AS A CULTURAL LEADER,
ELDER JACKIE BROMLEY LIVES
AND BREATHES THE SEVEN
SACRED TEACHINGS.**

Every day she uses at least one of the teachings of wisdom, truth, humility, courage, honesty, respect and love.

It's been a long journey for Bromley to reclaim these teachings after experiencing the Residential School system.

She first learned the traditional way of living through her grandparents on the Kainai Nation.

"My grandparents never spoke English but they showed me love, they told me the truth, they taught me how to respect."

They taught her how to use the teachings – like respect – by showing her how. She learned to never interrupt and, if she did, they held up a hand to signal for her to stop and wait for the person to finish speaking.

The transfer of their traditional knowledge was cut short when Bromley was forced into Residential School. She lost her Blackfoot language, which she was disciplined for speaking, along with her culture and, with it, the Seven Sacred Teachings.



Elder Jackie Bromley spends time with her grandchildren.
Top left to right: Alamea Bromley; Elder Jackie Bromley; Nash Little shields; and Rhys Little shields.
Bottom left to right: I'tsohanskii Grier and I'toominaa Grier.

"There was no love shown to the kids that were in residential school. There was no truth from the priests and the nuns. There was no humility. There was no wisdom."

That traumatic disconnection kept Bromley from embracing the Seven Sacred Teachings for decades, which affected her ability to bond with her own daughters. Fourteen years ago, a shift happened when she stepped into a role helping victims of violence at the Awo Taan Healing Lodge. By helping others heal, she began reconnecting with traditional ways and sharing the teachings.

Now, as an Elder and grandmother, she uses the teachings daily. The one she uses most is love. She shares it in hugs with her grandchildren or in the "I love you" texts she sends every day to her daughters. Her hope is to give them the opportunity she lost but reclaimed "so they can pass it on."

SPREADING HOLIDAY JOY



AFCC staff Patricia McMurray, Melissa Roy and Lori Johnstone shop for toys while Brett Barstow and Jacob van Dyke wait to purchase games and scooters for children.

This holiday season, with the support of Calgary Foundation, AFCC provided 300 families with Christmas hampers. Toys "R" Us generously offered a discount rate for our toy purchases for these hampers, which allowed us to contribute new gifts for children of all ages. Our team members had fun filling their carts for families ahead of Christmas. Thank you to all of our sponsors and partners for helping us bring a smile to children's faces over the holidays.

AFCC INNOVATORS RECOGNIZED IN TOP 40 UNDER 40

THIS FALL, OUR OWN MELISSA ROY AND SARAH SINCLAIR JOINED AN IMPRESSIVE ROSTER OF COMMUNITY BUILDERS AND LEADERS IN AVENUE CALGARY'S TOP 40 UNDER 40.

As AFCC's operations manager, Melissa was recognized for her pivotal role growing the centre's team and programming. Some of her key accomplishments include helping launch the *aisokinakio'p* urban Indigenous vaccine clinics and *iitaohkanitsini'-kotsiiyio'p*, the first Indigenous support hub of its kind in Canada. For the honour, Melissa thanks her family, friends, CEO Shane Gauthier and the AFCC team members, who inspire her with their "hard work, compassion and dedication."

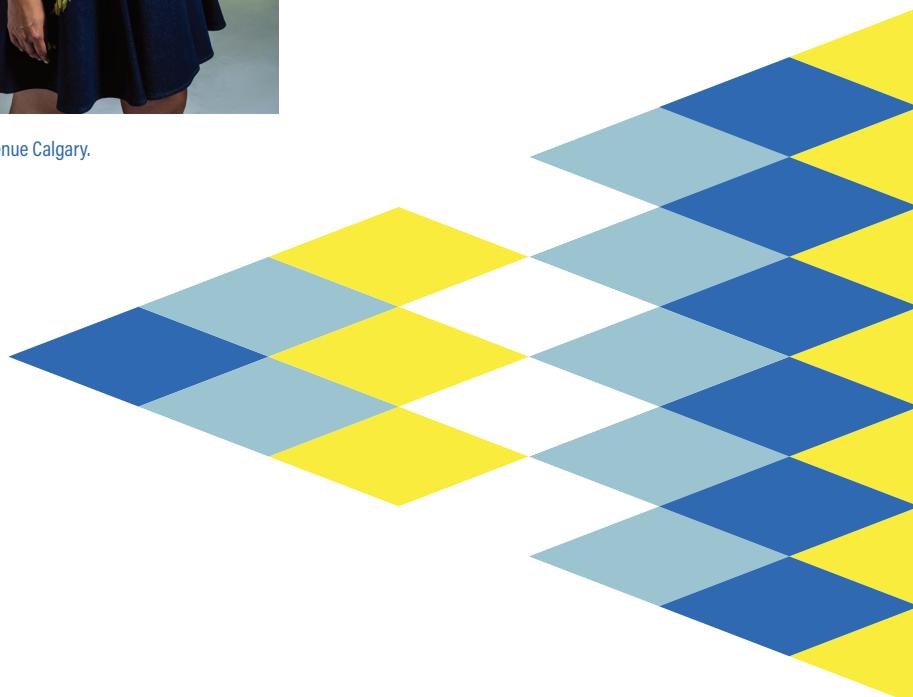
AFCC board member Sarah Sinclair was also honoured in the 2021 roster for her work as a lawyer for *Sahwoo mohkaak tsi ma taas*, Calgary Legal Guidance's Indigenous legal clinic. In that role, she helps remove barriers to justice for Indigenous community members and teaches Alberta lawyers about Indigenous legal issues, culture and intergenerational trauma. For her achievements, Elders and Knowledge Keepers honoured Sarah twice with the eagle feather – a symbol of great honour and respect.



Melissa Roy in Avenue Calgary.



Sarah Sinclair in Avenue Calgary.



DID YOU KNOW?

As Indigenous Peoples moved from reserves and Métis settlements into urban areas in the mid-1950s, Friendship Centres were created in local areas to represent their interests. Today, there are more than 20 Friendship Centres in Alberta.

Source: Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association

WHEN FRIENDSHIP COMES FULL CIRCLE



Above: Lawrence Gervais with the Alberta Ballet School in 1994.
Right: Lawrence Gervais in his current role as President of the Métis Nation of Alberta -Region 3.

In 1997, when Lawrence Gervais returned home to Lloydminster after years dancing and teaching classical ballet, the community of Elders he grew up with presented him with a challenge: "What are you going to do for us now?"

They were holding him accountable for the support they, and the friendship centre they belonged to, provided years before when Gervais was an aspiring dancer.

"When I decided to embark on a career that was out of the norm of the Métis Nation...they always supported me," Gervais said. "What always stood out for me was getting a bus ticket, and having to work a bingo as a young person, and sitting with the Elders and telling them where I'm going and where I'm at and getting their full support when I came back."

That accountability encouraged him to give back by working for or alongside friendship centres in Vancouver, Lloydminster, Penticton,

and Calgary between 1999 and 2014. During that time, he supported and oversaw outreach, youth programming, home supports, while supporting community members through difficult circumstances such as sexual exploitation and alternative measures programs.

Now the president of Métis Nation of Alberta - Region 3, Gervais believes the future will require friendship centres to collaborate more, advocate for more core funding, and have a stronger voice.

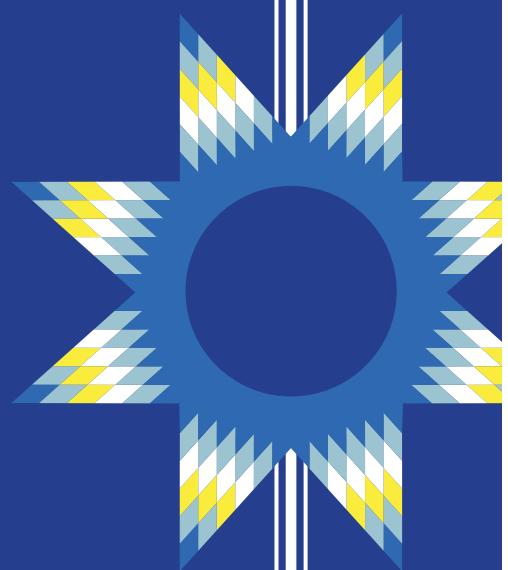
"I think they'll always have a role representing the voices of urban Indigenous people."





HELPING HAMPERS

IN 2021, AFCC SUPPORTED VULNERABLE COMMUNITY MEMBERS WITH 3,186 FOOD HAMPERS AND 295 CHRISTMAS HAMPERS.



AFCC RESOURCES

Reception (General Inquiries)

(403) 270-7379 or info@afccalgary.org

Cultural Reconnection and Community Development

Elders Meals, Traditions Arts and Crafts, Referrals and LifeSkills)

Contact Alanna Manybears at (587) 572-3376 or amanybears@afccalgary.org

Blackfoot Language, Culture Reconnection Programming, Pageant

Contact Krista White at (403) 325-5720 or kjwhite@afccalgary.org

Indigenous COVID-19 Task Force

Contact Lori Johnstone at (403) 370-6422 or Ljohnstone@afccalgary.org

Elders Line (Task Force)

Contact Dakota Eaglewoman at (403) 801-7482 or Degalwoman@afccalgary.org

Immunization Booking

Contact Michelle Bromley at (403) 890-9172 or mbromley@afccalgary.org

Honouring Life Youth Programming

Contact Brett Bairstow at (403) 370-9447 or bbairstow@afccalgary.org

Honouring the Bonds (parenting program)

Contact Jena Johnston at (587) 575-2028 or jjohnston@afccalgary.org

Smudge Vow

Contact Freda Laliberte at (587) 573-3503 or fLaliberte@afccalgary.org

Outreach Elder

Contact Earnie Poundmaker at (587) 572-2550 or epoundmaker@afccalgary.org

Basic Housing Information

Contact Cynthia Leechuy at (403) 519-0846 or Cleechuy@afccalgary.org

On the Cover from left to right: Ron Poon, architect; George Mylonas, president and CEO, Landstar Development Corporation; John Mar, former Calgary alderman; Shane Gauthier, CEO, Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary; Andre Chabot, Deputy Mayor and Ward 10 city councillor, City of Calgary; Elder Jackie Bromley; Patricia Jones, CEO, Calgary Homeless Foundation; George Chahal, MP for Calgary Skyview; Kirk Poitras, board president, Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary; Antoine Goulet, Drummer; Rose Crowshoe, Elder; Reg Crowshoe, Elder; Adrian Goulet, Drummer.