What We Heard

Uniquely Stony Plain Indigenous Focus Group

October 2026



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Land Acknowledgement

The Town of Stony Plain acknowledges that we are located on the traditional territories of the Tssuut'ina, Michif Piyii (Métis), ᓀᐦᐃᔨᐤ ᐊᖏᔪ Nêhiyaw-Askiy (Plains Cree), Îyãĥé Nakón Mąkóce (Stoney), and Cree peoples among others whose footsteps have marked these lands since time immemorial. We undertake this work with respect and knowledge that the Town and all its activities occur on Treaty 6 territory and exist in a sacred agreement with the First Peoples of this land. We are honored to enter discussion and partnership with the Nations who have called these lands home for millennia as we plan for the future of our Treaty 6 communities through our collaborative work on the Municipal Development Plan Project.

Executive Summary

This document serves as a summary of learnings and knowledge gained from the Uniquely Stony Plain Municipal Development Plan (MDP) Update Indigenous Focus Group. It brought together individuals from a variety of Indigenous Nations and organizations from around the Stony Plain region and beyond to discuss the MDP and how the Indigenous perspective can be integrated within the update. More broadly, the event was about relationship building and initiating a dialogue with interested parties from the Indigenous community.

The discussion explored a variety of different topics including:

- cultivating and maintaining productive relationships between Indigenous Peoples and the Town of Stony Plain;
- the acknowledgement of a complex, shared history and existing Treaty agreements;
- greater stewardship of the land and recognition of the impact of planning decisions on future generations;
- differences as well as areas of common ground between Indigenous and settler perspectives; and
- building foundations of institutional memory to ensure relationships are maintained.

It was emphasized that, while the event opened a dialogue, it should not be viewed as a checked box. This should serve as the beginning of a more integrated and holistic relationship between the Town as an organization, Indigenous Peoples, neighbours, and the broader community.

Focus Group at a Glance

Introduction

On October 6, 2026, the Town of Stony Plain hosted an Indigenous-focused engagement session as part of the Uniquely Stony Plain Municipal Development Plan Update. The session brought together representatives from Indigenous organizations and communities from across Central Alberta, including Samson Cree Nation, Ermineskin Nation, Skydancer Indigenous Cultural Centre and Native Counselling Services of Alberta. Invitations were extended to several First Nations, Métis organizations and Indigenous-serving groups.

The purpose of the discussion was not consultation, but relationship-building and information sharing. Participants were invited to share perspectives, experiences and aspirations for the future of Stony Plain in an space grounded in mutual learning, trust and understanding.

Structure

The Indigenous Focus Group was held as a round table discussion. For each question, participants were asked one by one to share their interpretation and thoughts, which allowed the conversation to shift organically between ideas and gave all participants equal opportunity to share their perspectives.

In attendance were seven members of the Town of Stony Plain Uniquely Stony Plain project team, the Town Chief Administrative Officer, two members of SevGen Consulting to facilitate the discussion, and seven members from various Indigenous Nations and organizations. In addition to digital note taking, a flip board was used to track key concepts that arose throughout the discussion which allowed for callbacks and recognition of how the conversation evolved throughout the evening. After the core questions were asked, time was allotted at the end for an open discussion period and to address any lingering thoughts.

Core Questions

1. What do you love about Stony Plain?
2. What are your hopes and dreams for Stony Plain?
3. How do you want to be in relationship with Stony Plain?
4. If your community or organization has an existing relationship with the Town of Stony Plain, what do you value about the relationship? How can the relationship be strengthened?
5. What should the Town be aware of as it plans for growth and development?

These questions are a union of the core project engagement questions 'What do you love about Stony Plain?' and 'What are your hopes and dreams for Stony Plain?', along with others that dive deeper into participants' perspectives and their relationship with the Town of Stony Plain.

Results

Summary Results of Each Question

What do you love about Stony Plain?

Throughout the discussion, attendees spoke positively about the qualities that make the community unique. A strong sense of safety, accessibility, and belonging emerged. Many described Stony Plain as a welcoming community that continues to maintain its small-town atmosphere despite ongoing growth and development. There was a strong sense of appreciation for the accessibility of local services, community events, and opportunities to connect with local leadership.

For some, Stony Plain is the "first place that made sense" to raise their families, as they felt they were welcomed with open arms regardless of their identity. They feel their aging family members have a place here and see their children holding generational roots in the right conditions.

The importance of connection was ever present. Community events such as Farmers' Days, Blueberry Bluegrass Festival and Truth and Reconciliation Day are widely appreciated among the community. The opportunity to serve on the Culture and Tourism Roundtable is a meaningful space for advocating cultural gathering and actioning relationships between organizations.

Receptiveness of the Town to relationships and communications with indigenous community groups was highlighted, along with Stony Plain and the Tri-Region's efforts to recognize the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

What are your hopes and dreams for Stony Plain?

While there was acknowledgement of access to services and amenities, there were concerns raised about reliability or delivery of these services for vulnerable residents, with the example of a lack of snow clearing for elderly relatives being an issue.

Participants highlighted a need for diverse housing options, as they had expressed the desire to move to Stony Plain, but could not as there was limited availability of housing that would suit their needs.

Participants aspired to ensure Stony Plain remains a welcoming and inclusive community for future generations and acknowledged the importance of creating opportunities for youth and families to remain in the community. This was desired while maintaining the characteristics that make Stony Plain unique. An example discussed was offering cultural spaces that allow Indigenous people to reconnect with their cultural heritage.

Indigenous culture should be visible in the community through avenues such as murals, public art, cultural gathering spaces, Indigenous-focused park amenities, storytelling areas, medicine gardens and other representations of Indigenous presence and partnership. Engraining Indigenous cultural representation throughout the town is an important step to ensuring lasting recognition of it as a celebrated part of Stony Plain's identity.

There is an overarching desire for relationships to be living practice, not just on paper but with visible action, including:

- more collaboration and bridge building with Indigenous communities and residents;
- providing space to harvest certain plants, such as through the Multicultural Heritage Centre's Master Gardening Program; and
- creating opportunities to collaborate on tourism and attractions.

Transparency in regard to the Town's efforts towards Truth and Reconciliation is increasingly important, attendees want to have more clarity on actions the Town is taking to respond to the UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples) and how it is being incorporated into the Town's plans and goals.

How do you want to be in relationship with Stony Plain?

Attendees mentioned that they find it easy to connect with the Town and get in touch with the right person. However, it was highlighted that commitment to an ongoing dialogue was desired. Expanded engagement opportunities could include seasonal round-table discussions, collaboration on tourism and economic initiatives, and participation in each other's community events and celebrations.

Understanding each other's histories and getting to know communities together through connecting in person, getting to know elders, sharing

resources, and collaborating on meaningful projects is an important step in building relationships.

Invitations make a big difference to Indigenous groups as they show a level of effort to ensure they are included. These can be opportunities for Indigenous people to attend community events and spaces where they feel safe. For example, invitations to participate in markets, highlighting Indigenous talent, helping make everyone feel welcomed into a space.

These relationships should not be limited to an institutional capacity. Opportunities which allow residents, business owners and other community members to engage and interact encourage broader cross-cultural connections.

Building cross generational connections was emphasized as an important way to enhance cultural understanding for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. This could include creating opportunities for youth and Elders to connect.

Some highlighted the benefits of formal relationship agreement through a Memorandum of Understanding to support, respect, and engage with each other. This relationship could be utilized as a catalyst for cultural exchange to educate Indigenous youth to understand municipalities, and how they differ from First Nations and vice versa. The relationship would be used to enhance an understanding and respect for the land and our shared place on it, including the animals and plants, not as a one-sided agreement but to mutually benefit each other.

Municipalities and First Nations differ significantly in how they function and how they operate. However, they hold similar roles within their communities and can learn from one another in a variety of ways. Understanding one another better can lead to strengthened relationships and knowledge sharing.

If your community or organization has an existing relationship with the Town of Stony Plain, what do you value about the relationship? How can the relationship be strengthened?

Participants admire the work of other municipalities such as St. Albert, appreciating the care the City has put into acknowledging the dark past of Residential Schools in the area, and how Indigenous Peoples are now represented through heritage sites and street naming.

It was revealed by multiple attendees that Stony Plain could do more to increase the visibility of Indigenous people and culture. Improving this allows Indigenous people to feel supported, celebrated, and represented at a deeper level in the community.

A Tri-Region accord could be considered to ensure that actions and processes are embedded in the Town's governance. Building upon these networks helps to grow inclusion and widen the circle of understanding.

Exercises such as joint planning and mapping with Elders and Indigenous community members to identify sacred and important places in Stony Plain could also improve representation for Indigenous peoples in the community.

What should the Town be aware of as it plans for growth and development?

As discussion turned to the future growth and development of Stony Plain, attendees emphasized the importance of planning through a lens of relationships, responsibility, and long-term stewardship. Conversations highlighted:

- the importance of understanding Treaty relationships and our shared commitment as Treaty People;
- incorporating cultural awareness into municipal decision-making; and
- ensuring Indigenous perspectives are considered throughout planning and development processes.

The group spoke about balancing growth with social and cultural needs, creating space for ceremony and cultural practices, and preserving the qualities that make Stony Plain unique. Attendees also stressed the need for continued efforts to address racism, foster greater understanding of local Indigenous histories, and build meaningful partnerships rooted in respect, honesty, and shared learning.

Attendees cautioned against tokenistic actions. While the Treaty has been in place for 150 years, the relationship that has been developed over that time has created a skepticism of the intentions of governments when taking actions to highlight or involve Indigenous groups. Honesty about this historical relationship is key in building a good relationship moving forward.

Looking to the future, discussions emphasized seven-generation thinking, long-term relationship-building, and embedding Indigenous relations into

governance practices to ensure commitments continue beyond individual projects or election cycles.

Discussion Beyond the Core Questions

There was acknowledgement from the Town that the perspective on our relationship with the land has shifted over recent decades. There is more consideration put into how the town develops and how that development will impact future generations. These changes bring the Town in closer alignment with the Indigenous perspective on these issues.

There is, however, still work to do. The Indigenous perspective emphasizes a sacred relationship with land, water, and other natural resources, and for this reason land development begins with a ceremonial acknowledgement of that relationship. Further efforts to integrate these practices and ways of thinking are opportunities to strengthen the relationship between the municipality and Indigenous communities.

Differences in worldview were mentioned in several other areas, including a more experiential perspective. Highlighting storytelling and shared understandings of place and history, along with consensus building.

The Indigenous concept of seven generation thinking was identified as an area where there is significant overlap with the future oriented nature of planning and concepts of sustainability, sustainable development and placemaking. Seven generation thinking stresses the importance of conducting decision making with a horizon of seven generations into the future. Ensuring that decisions made today carefully consider impacts on the generations of tomorrow.

Key Takeaways

Insights shared during the focus group highlighted significant areas, avenues and important takeaways that the Town should be aware of, consider when planning and potentially act upon. The perspectives will be crucial to explore, understand and develop connections and relationship with Indigenous Peoples, communities and organizations that call Stony Plain and the region home.

The following takeaways have been identified:

Cultivate and maintain relationships

If the Town is going to achieve its goal of working towards reconciliation, it will need to build relationships with neighbouring communities and residents. Additionally, the Town and neighbours need to take steps to ensure those relationships are sustainable and maintained.

Promote visibility of Indigenous culture

The Town can work to visually weave Indigenous culture into its identity, through avenues such as public art, naming programs and cultural spaces. Participants highlighted how a visual presence of Indigenous culture can help foster a feeling of general acceptance.

Recognize the importance of Treaty

It is important to understand that anyone who resides on Treaty land is a Treaty person. The Town can work to build trust and understanding with First Nations of Treaty 6.

Build institutional memory

To ensure that steps taken now have an impact into the future, the importance of building institutional memory was stressed. The Town needs to find ways to continue this work towards reconciliation even as turnover occurs for decision makers on both sides of the relationship. This involves embedding Indigenous perspectives, knowledge and understandings into the processes of the Town at a governance level. It requires a long-term commitment to these principles and to ensure that they remain a priority even as changes in personnel happen.

Looking Ahead

As the Uniquely Stony Plain Municipal Development Plan update progresses, lessons learned throughout the process will be taken under careful consideration. The

Indigenous focus group and this What We Heard Report, will feed into the next phases of the project.

As validation and targeted engagement wraps up, the project will move into its third stage: conceptual alignment, which will involve building the framework that will serve as the foundation for the final production of the document. This stage is where all the information gathered in the previous two engagement stages will be distilled into the values, themes, and guiding principles that will form the vision of the community presented in the MDP. The engagement with the Indigenous community will be a critical element informing this process.

This focus group worked towards building a shared understanding of Stony Plain's future between the Town as an organization and the Indigenous People's that call the area home. This is a first step in creating an ongoing relationship where Indigenous rights, perspectives, and values are recognized and embraced by the Town in its future decisions.