

Re-Settling Dawson Park: An Expanded Idea of the Friendship Centre in  
Edmonton, Alberta

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis intends to expand on the idea of the friendship centre, embodying its original and current purpose - a middle ground between the city and indigenous culture. This middle ground will acknowledge damaging history, begin to heal and support current and arriving indigenous people, and make space for a resilient community to grow in the future. This design is based on a holistic idea of program organization, and draws from indigenous cultural beliefs and values to set up a new dialog with the city of Edmonton. The intent is that this community will grow larger over time, strengthening cultural pride, and threading indigenous spatial and cultural values further into the existing urban fabric of Edmonton.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you Nelson Mayor, Executive Director of the Alberta Friendship Centre Association, for your in depth knowledge, willingness to share, and enthusiastic support for my endeavors.

Thank you to the ladies on the board of the Edmonton Friendship Centre association for your direction towards great resources, your validation of design ideas, and most of all for inviting me with open arms into your community.

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Thanks little Nora for your cute phone calls, and to my mom and dad for EVERYTHING!

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This thesis addresses the need for immediate support and lasting community pride for new and existing First Nations people in the city of Edmonton. A reserve community is organized differently from an urban neighbourhood with different rules, expectations, and world views. People moving from a reserve in Alberta into the city of Edmonton often experience culture shock and initial disorientation. While orientating oneself in the city, the experience has often been a confusing and unfriendly. A large percentage of First Nations that presently live in the city are suffering in many social and health issues, in part perhaps because of a difficult transition to urban life in their past. Greater infrastructural support and a more appropriate architecture could supplement in strengthening the cohesiveness of the indigenous community.

This thesis critiques the current scope and organization of resources available to the First Nations people in Edmonton, and responds by exploring an expanded idea of a friendship centre. This new expanded concept of a friendship centre is located in the historically charged Dawson park. It is meant to be a place of immediate refuge and a resource for newcomers. Concurrently it is a place of support and growth of daily community by celebrating and strengthening indigenous cultural pride. The building program provides the opportunity for existing indigenous community members to take part in helping newcomers become acquainted with the city in a positive way, as well as providing a feeling of indigenous cultural presence in Edmonton.

The program for immediate support includes a temporary place to sleep, eat, and visit a doctor while engaged with services connecting people with urban necessities such as employment and housing. Program over the long term includes a childcare centre, which is a passive com-

munity generator as children need to be dropped off and picked up daily. This will allow young children to grow up with positive feelings, knowledge, and connections with the urban indigenous community.

A 24 hour centre will provide space to be a part of a community any time of the day or night. This 24 hour area is partnered with the Aboriginal Multi-Media Society of Alberta, representing a modern indigenous voice. Other public program includes an internet and study space, a communal eating area, where one can either buy or make food, and an auditorium for political and educational lectures.

A large ceremonial space is located in a separate building at the bottom of the valley near the river; to provide an opportunity for the building to open up onto the expansive park to accommodate vast numbers of people. This cultural event space will hold the many Indigenous cultural events that already take place within the city but currently have no dedicated space.

The architectural response is inspired by the diversity and abundance created in the intermediary space between two systems. Prairie and river systems create the abundant ribbon of river valley. This is a metaphor for two cultural frameworks - Colonial based city structure and indigenous community - linked by a positive and abundant intermediary space: the friendship centre.

An interplay of stereotomic and tectonic materials work as metaphor. Heavy rammed earth walls carved out of the land represent past layers of history being uncovered and therefore hopefully acknowledged, emphasizing the importance of place. The light reciprocal wood roof and wall structures add a new conversation to the Edmonton architectural dialog, emphasizing the positive future direction of urban indigenous com-

munity development. The innate qualities of these building systems allow the entire community to take part in the construction of the building, reinforcing indigenous community pride and sense of place in Edmonton.

By seeding a novel and prominent form of indigenous architecture within the prairie city, the hope is that a resilient community will begin to grow around the building over time. This building type could be applied to other cities that have an influx of indigenous people experiencing disorientation and loss of community identity.

## Context

### Formation of a Divide

Too many Canadians know little or nothing about the deep historical roots of [colonized Aboriginal] conflicts. This lack of historical knowledge has serious consequences for First Nation, Inuit, and Metis people, and for Canada as a whole. In government circles, it makes for poor public policy decisions. In the public realm, it reinforces racist attitudes and fuels civic distrust between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians.<sup>1</sup>

In the mid seventeenth century, after millennia of indigenous settlement, two vastly different cultures collided in the Edmonton area with the arrival of colonial explorer Anthony Henday. Two cultural frameworks, or different ways of seeing and organizing the world met each other. The colonial framework is based on linear thinking, causing aspects of life to be related through hierarchy and compartmentalization. The Indigenous cultural framework is based on cyclic thinking, causing aspects of life to be related by intrinsic connection to one another, with an awareness that every aspect of life affects each of the other aspects. The resulting power dynamic between these cultures follows their overall frameworks - The Indigenous culture understood the relationship with this new population would affect every aspect of their way of life, therefore they had an opportunity to learn from each other and coexist as sovereign nations. Unfortunately colonial thinking by comparison understood that relationships between cultures must be hierarchal, and therefore they must 'civilize' the other culture to their standard of life. This aim to 'civilize' was based on the belief of racial and cultural superiority.<sup>2</sup>

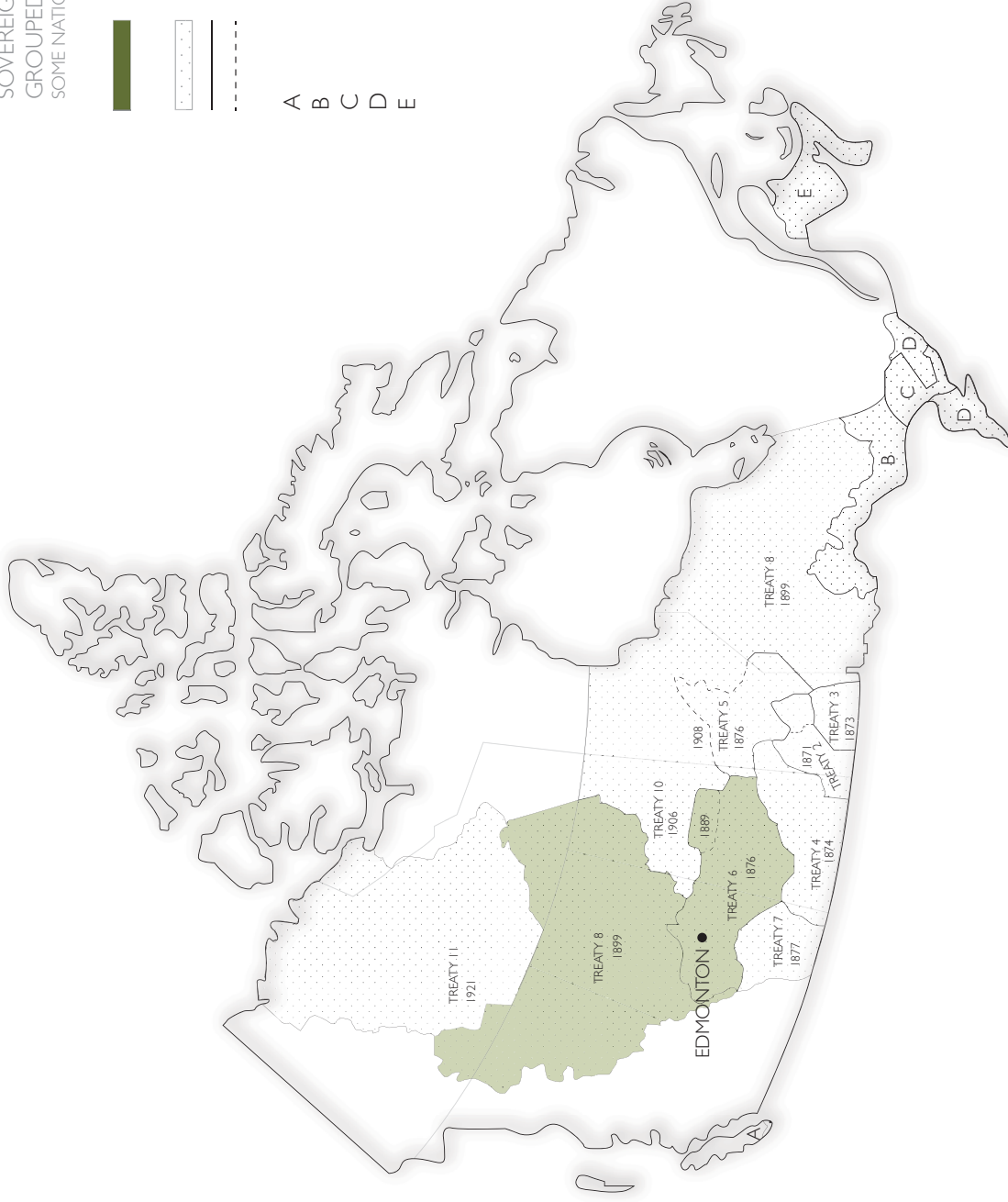
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- 1 J. R. Miller, *Lethal Legacy: Current Native Controversies in Canada* (Toronto: M & S, 2004), vi.
  - 2 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Lorimer & Company Ltd., 2015), 49.



SOVEREIGN NATIONS  
 GROUPED INTO CONFEDERACIES (BY TREATY)  
 SOME NATIONS HAVE MORE THAN ONE RESERVE

- Main Treaty Confederacies based in Edmonton
- ▨ Treaties
- Treaty Boundaries
- - - Treaty Adhesions

- A Douglas Treaties
- B Robinson Treaties
- C Williams Treaties
- D Upper Canada Land Surrenders
- E Peace + Friendship Treaties



Canadian treaties map; data from Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations, *Historical Treaties of Canada*

Colonization from Europe to the West began as a quest for new lands to be exploited economically, gaining power and political control over other settlements in the process. The idea of exploiting land is by compartmentalizing “city” and “wilderness”, into separate entities as if the land being exploited will continually provide without consequence.

In 1763, the British crown put forth a royal proclamation essentially stating that “any future transfer of ‘Indian’ land would take the form of a treaty between sovereigns.”<sup>3</sup> Because of this policy, the government was forced to either follow this rule or wage war. The government budget was so small at the time, war was not an option. Therefore the Canadian Government slowly formed each of the existing treaties across the Nation. In other words, the western colonial Canadian government never intended to honor treaties, but only created them as a legal means to an end. In contrast, the Indigenous people believed the treaties to be a truthful and positive development:

Through the treaties, Aboriginal peoples were seeking agricultural supplies and training as well as relief during periods of epidemic or famine in a time of social and economic transition. They saw the treaty process as a reciprocal relationship that would be lasting. The goal was to gain the skills that would allow them to continue to control their own destinies and retain their cultural identity as Aboriginal people.<sup>4</sup>

Indigenous groups had generally accepted that times were changing. They were interested in adapting to a different way of life, co-existing with the new European culture. As time went on, treaties were increasingly ignored and abused, and destructive legislation and programs were carried out. The federal Indian Act in 1876 quietly began with the intention of integration, and resulted in a complex web of oppressive policy and general racism. Judge Alfred Scow describes the damage of this legislation:

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3 Stuart Banner, *How the Indians Lost Their Land: Law and Power on the Frontier* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 85.

4 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Summary of the Final Report*, 53.

What [the Indian act] did was it prevented the passing down of our oral history. It prevented the passing down of our values. It meant an interruption of the respected forms of government that we used to have, and we did have forms of government be they oral and not in writing before any of the Europeans came to this country. We had a system that worked for us. We respected each other.<sup>5</sup>

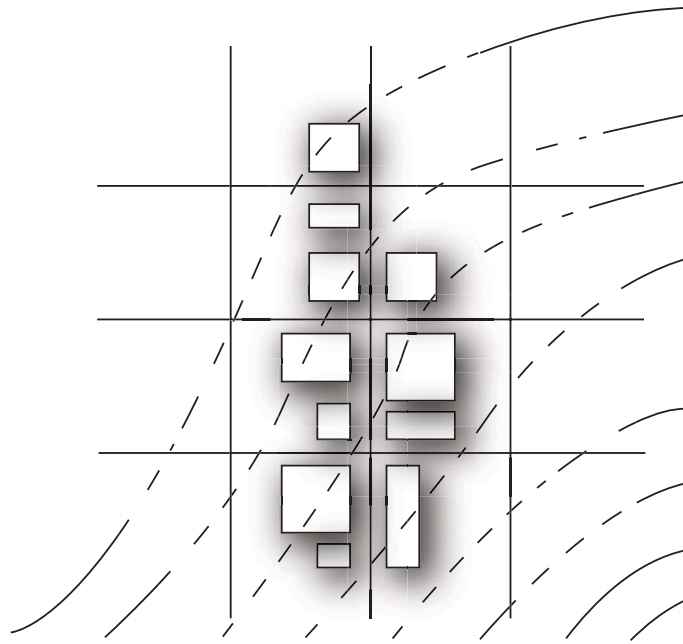
These indigenous systems were broken down in many ways, but most significantly by the residential school system. The residential school system began as an aggressive form of integration, although because of an underestimate of budgetary needs the programs were grossly underfunded resulting in a number of serious human rights issues. The residential schools became “at best institutionalized child neglect”<sup>6</sup> and child labour. Colonial systems caused Indigenous cultures to lose their sense of community, feel cultural shame, and harbour serious distrust of colonial leadership across the country in less than a century.

The modern Canadian city remains to be an iteration of the colonial settlement. Currently over half of the self identified indigenous people in Alberta have moved to cities from a reserve community. Because of this significant cultural population, it would be beneficial to both indigenous and non-indigenous people to weave First Nations environmental intelligence and cultural expression into the architecture and city planning of Alberta’s cities in a fundamental way. Furthermore, it should be necessary to have a strong network of permanent leadership and cultural expression built into the city to ensure the First Nations people have the opportunity to feel rooted in an urban setting.

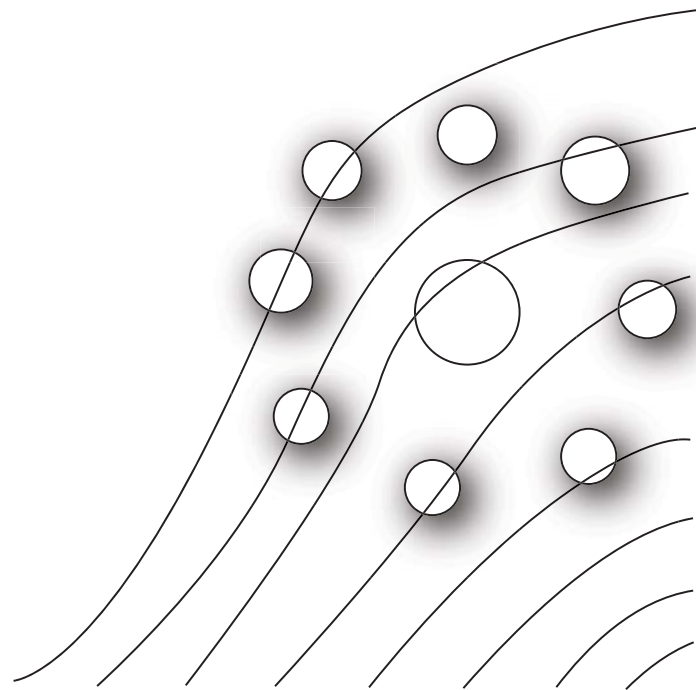
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5 Alfred Scow, *Transcriptions of Public Hearings and Round Table Discussions, 1992-1993 Thursday, November 26* (Ottawa, Ontario: Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples, 1992), 344-5.

6 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Summary of the Final Report*, 43.



Colonial Cultural Framework, defined by linear thinking, relationships defined by compartmentalization and hierarchy, culture imposed onto landscape.



Indigenous Cultural Framework, defined by cyclic thinking, relationships defined by equality and respect, culture defined by the landscape.

## Consequences of the Divide

The disastrous and traumatic unfolding history of the last 200 years has caused multiple barriers for First Nations people to thrive in the city. Urban Indigenous are over represented in nearly every social wellbeing category, such as suicide rates, poverty, homelessness, incarceration, physical and mental health, as well as drug addiction. While many of these issues affect and perpetuate each other, the root of this cultural crisis lies in past historic events. The vulnerability that Indigenous people experience in the city can be described as “a legacy of inequities and injustices that continue today”.<sup>7</sup> The highly respected judge Murray Sinclair eloquently expresses the way he grew up feeling:

We have a situation in our lifetime when growing up in that kind of environment resulted in our inability to find out who we are. The great question each and every one of us had to answer was beyond our capability of answering as Aboriginal people, because who we were, was not who society wanted us to be. I was not what society wanted me to be, and what society wanted me to be, was not what I saw myself as being.<sup>8</sup>

To me, Judge Sinclair is describing how the city has left no space for an indigenous cultural framework to operate. They simply want to retain their own perspective in the urban context, and for that perspective to be functional and generally accepted in the urban systems. Considering just the volume of indigenous population, the City of Edmonton urgently needs to create space for a native perspective in the city framework. If space were provided for First Nations community members to permanently “re-settle” a place within the city by their own logic and values, I think there would be a much higher chance of fostering a continually strengthened urban community and cultural expression.

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7 Dr. Chris Andersen, “Aboriginal Edmonton; A Statistical Story 2009” (City of Edmonton: 2009), 37.

8 Murray Sinclair, “The Historical Relationship Between The Canadian Justice System and Aboriginal People” (Quebec: Elders - Policy Makers - Academics, 1997), 9.



At times Leonard would stay up for days feeding his crack and alcohol addictions. He connected with outreach workers in 2007 and with their help found housing, became sober and reconnected to his cultural roots. A highlight of that journey was a pipe ceremony to commemorate his one year of sobriety; photograph and description by Ken Armstrong, April 21, 2007, Edmonton AB



Setting national standards in Aboriginal children in care, acknowledging aboriginal language rights, and establish goals for better health are some of the recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; photograph and caption published in the Toronto Star, Tuesday June 02, 2015.



Boyle Street's Cultural Support Worker Gary Moostoos picks Rat Root during one of the many medicine picking outings that the Residential School team provides to the community. Edmonton community members are given teachings on how to properly pick, store and sure the harvested medicines.; photograph and description by Ken Armstrong. October 12, 2012, Edmonton, AB.

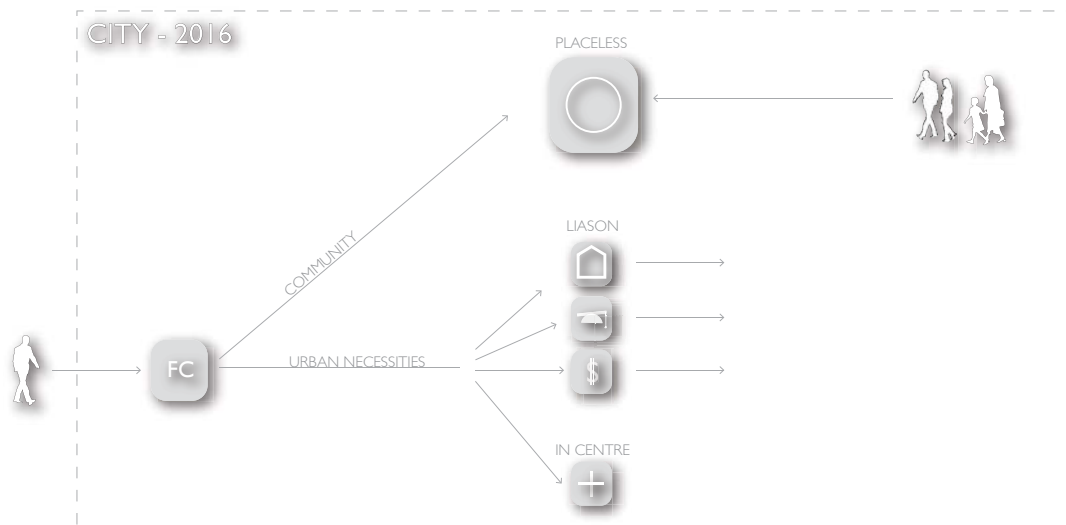
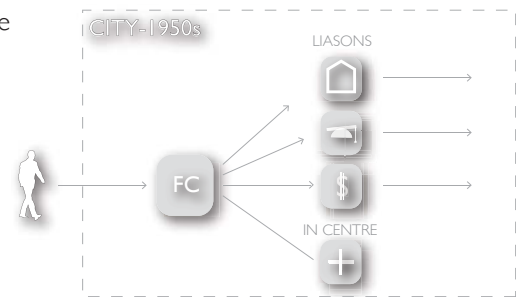


On January 13, 2012 an Idle No More rally was held at West Edmonton Mall. Idle No More calls on all people to join in a peaceful revolution, to honour Indigenous Sovereignty and to protect the land and water. Events like this are being organized more each year; photograph by Ken Armstrong. January 13, 2012, Edmonton, AB

Friendship Centre Program: A hub connecting Indigenous community with basic urban needs for both the existing community and on first arrival in the city.



Top Left: Graph showing that over half (and growing) of the indigenous population are now living in cities.  
 Top Right: Program involved in friendship centres.  
 Right: Original Program of friendship centres.  
 Bottom: Program Involved in Friendship centres today



Friendship Centre Program; adapted from the National Association of Friendship Centres, *Friendship Centre Movement Timeline*



Lack of Government funding, coinciding with differing programs based on the needs of the area, has resulted in a lack of specialized archetype for the friendship centre. The Indigenous cultural framework suggests unique spatial and programmatic relationships although current centres are generally adaptive re-use of either typical residential homes or office buildings.



The Alberta Friendship Centre, located in Edmonton. Currently Edmonton is without a friendship centre. Edmonton, 2016; photograph from Google maps street view.



The Bonnyville Friendship Centre, an example of adaptive re-use of an office building. Bonnyville, AB 2016; photograph from Alberta Friendship Centre Association website.



The Rocky Mountain House Friendship Centre, an example of adaptive re-use of a residential home. Rocky Mountain House, AB 2016; photograph from Alberta Friendship Centre Association website.

## The Friendship Centre Link

Nelson Mayor, executive director of the Alberta Friendship Centres Association, described friendship centres to me as the link between Indigenous community, and urban necessities. In the mid nineteen fifties most residential schools began to close down, and the relationship with indigenous cultures began to shift. First Nations families started to move to the city mostly in hopes of a better quality of life. Arriving in the city was a disorienting experience essentially experiencing culture shock, coupled with isolation and racist attitudes towards First Nations people. This made starting a life in the city difficult in many respects.

Concerned individuals identified this disparity, responding by starting an organization working as a liaison between the Indigenous people moving to the city and the necessary services for city life. Some of these necessities include housing, employment, health and community cohesion. This is how the first friendship centre was conceived. The service grew quickly across Canada, recognized in the First Nations community for its valuable role in the urban environment.

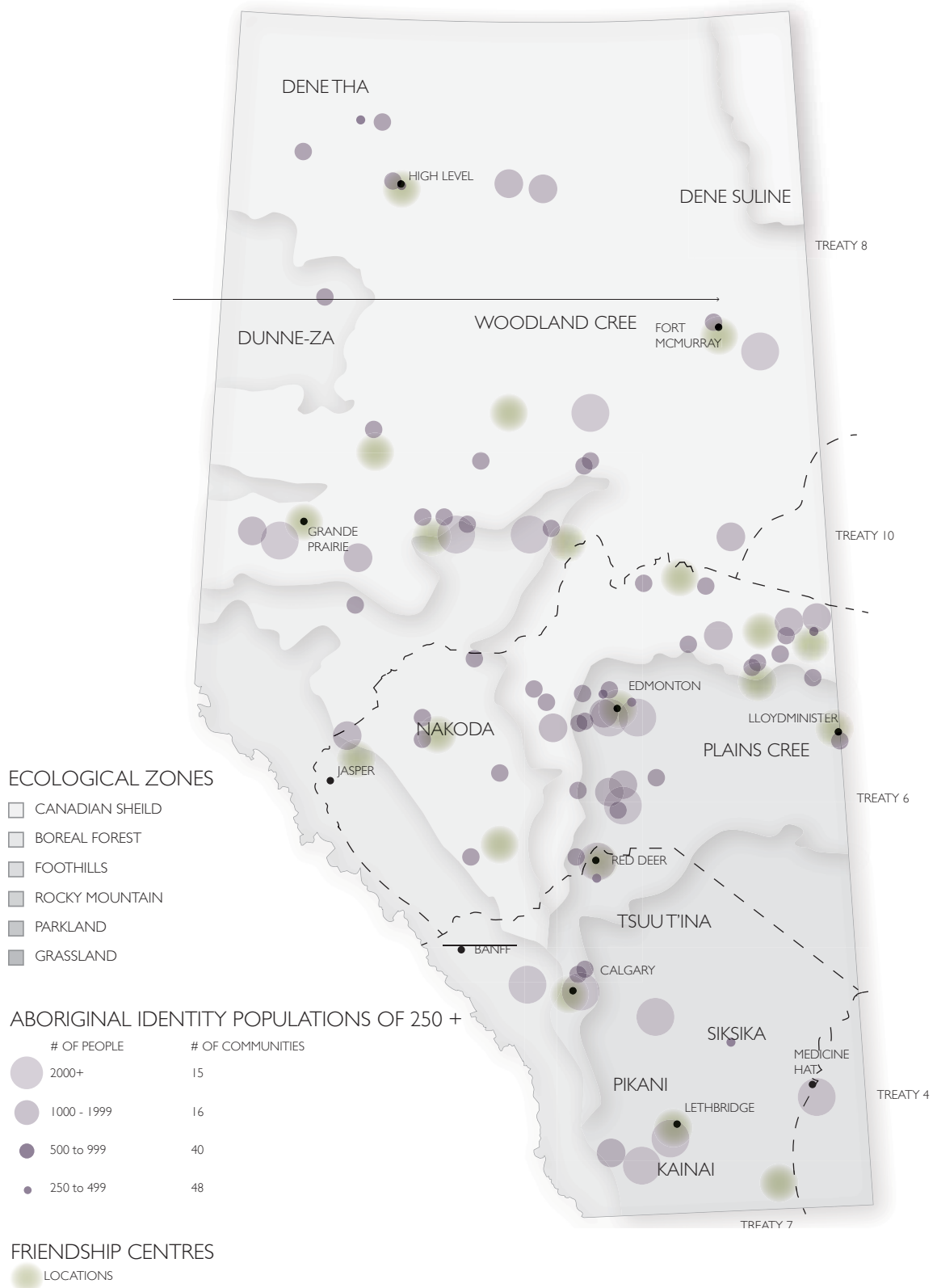
In the 1970s the Canadian Government also began to see the friendship centre as a valuable First Nations Institution. At this time the government provided funding for the first time. With increasing recognition from the government came more responsibility in terms of Indigenous programs. Not only were they the liaison for city necessities, but they were also running community programs, focus groups and organizing spiritual and political events. The last significant evolution came in the 1990s when the Canadian Government handed administrative responsibility of Local Friendship Centre funding to Canadian friendship association. This was a fundamental shift in relationship between the indigenous community and the Canadian government. It essentially asserted commit-

ment in the sustainability of the friendship centre as a lasting Canadian institution.

Today there are over 119 friendship centres in Canada. Program needs for this institution are vast, as the centres now essentially act as a holistic community hub for indigenous culture as well as the intermediary for networking between indigenous people and city necessities. Some program includes mental/physical health centres and addiction clinics, offices devoted to supporting education, employment and housing, community cohesion programs for every stage of life, as well as spiritual, political, and community celebrations.

Modern urban amenities such as education, community, spirituality and politics are compartmentalized into separate institutions such as schools, community centres, churches and city hall. In modern cities. The friendship centre institution demonstrates loyalty to the indigenous style of urbanism where every amenity is connected, mutually effecting and benefitting from one another. Therefore it is no accident that all of the described program is coordinated and hosted by the same institution.

The friendship centre is essentially attempting to create two things: first a complete micro cultural community hub, for daily activity and special gatherings, second an initial contact point and networking hub for people moving from reserves to the city. The architecture is unrepresentative of the program, and this thesis asserts that it hinders the potential effectiveness of these centers, especially in a city with such a large indigenous population.



Map of Alberta; treaty information from Indigenous and Northern Affairs, *Alberta First Nations Map*  
 Reserve community location and sizes; from City of Edmonton, *A Statistical Story, 2009*  
 Friendship centre locations; from Alberta Friendship Centre Association website

## Current Friendship Centres: Praise and Critique

Considering the small amount of funding currently available, friendship centers manage to creatively adapt to each situation, working to support and heal their First Nation population with appropriate program. Two main factors are in the way of this evolution: a more appropriate organization of program, and larger dedicated space, for intermittent large gatherings as well as daily community gatherings.

The vast numbers of First Nations People moving to the city is unmatched by the small adaptively re-used facilities that friendship centers can afford with existing funding. Many different types of spiritual, political or community events are organized through the friendship centre, but are actually held in other parts of the city. Many people who are living in the city cannot attend these events because they are usually located on the outskirts or outside of the city where cheap rental space is available. Therefore I am proposing that there should be two buildings: one that is the new friendship centre that would address every day needs, urban necessities and a daily community. The second building that would address the need for a large formal gathering space. Unconnected to the city in terms of architectural expression, it is dedicated to large events of First Nations people of all ages.

Many of the friendship centers do not have very much if any public community space, despite operating as a community hub. For example, in the Halifax Mi'kmaq friendship centre the foyer is a small four square meter area that is covered in "no loitering" and "no public bathroom" signs. This is not because the centre does not want to host community members, it is a lack of appropriate facility to accommodate all members. Often friendship centres are located near or within the most

socioeconomically suffering neighbourhoods to be accessible to the most marginalized of their populations, which is the case for the Halifax centre. This only reinforces the fact that more proper space is needed to host the indigenous population.

To encourage a passive participation in daily community, I'm proposing program that naturally encourages involvement because it is already a part of daily routines. Some examples of programming like this are childcare, seniors games room, public internet and work space, educational classes for university or high school credit, etc.

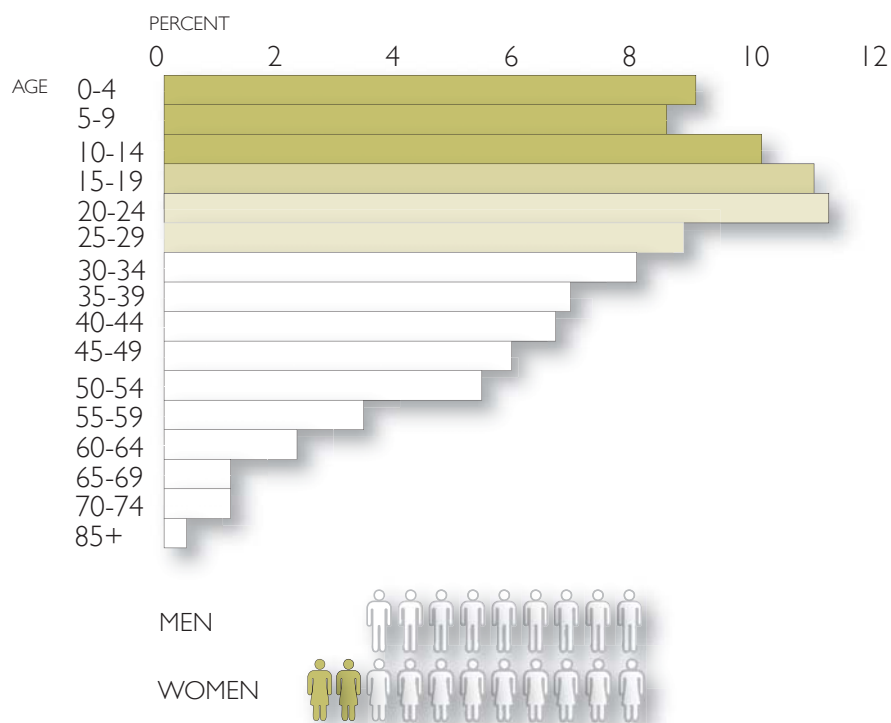
### **An Absence in the Edmonton Area**

Alberta has sixteen cities, two large urban centers, and one-hundred and forty reserve communities. There are twenty Native Friendship centres scattered across Alberta. The Edmonton area is a hot-spot for over twenty nearby reserve communities making the capital city a convenient and potentially attractive city for First Nations people to visit or move to. Additionally, Edmonton is the “gateway to the North”, an urban centre for Northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories. This is why Edmonton has the second largest Indigenous population in Canada of over sixty-one thousand people.<sup>9</sup>

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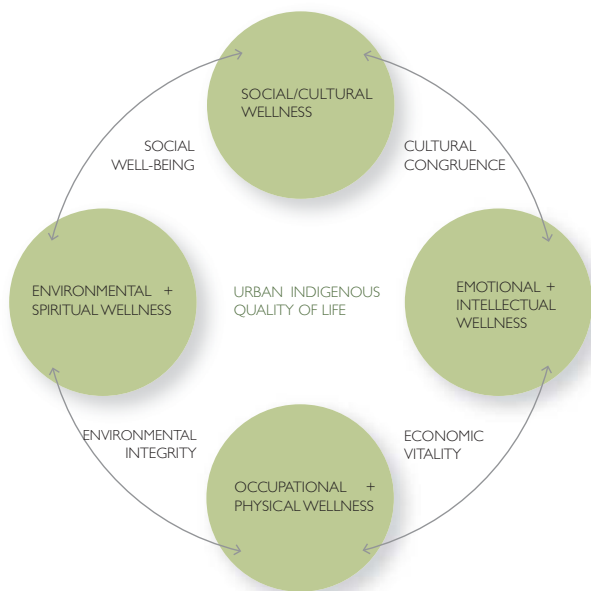
<sup>9</sup> Edmonton Community Foundation, *Vital Signs* (Edmonton: City of Edmonton, 2015), 2.

Ironically, Edmonton is one of the only cities without a local friendship centre. In 2015 the Alberta Friendship centre was facilitating a revival and renovation of a local friendship centre, unfortunately it burnt down from an electrical fire in September of 2015. The Alberta Native friendship centre is located in Edmonton, and has been facilitating local activities, doing an impressive job considering available resources. These resources could be much larger considering the size of the population. The Alberta Native Friendship Centre is located in a small residential house in Edmonton, and has responsibility of overseeing all twenty friendship centres in the Province, making a heavy workload for staff. Edmonton, being a massive hub for the Northern and Central Alberta Indigenous population, could have more space and facilities within its strongest institution.



Age of Indigenous Population in Edmonton; from City of Edmonton, *A Statistical Story*, 2009

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
SUGGESTED BY ALBERTA FRIENDSHIP CENTRE ASSOCIATION



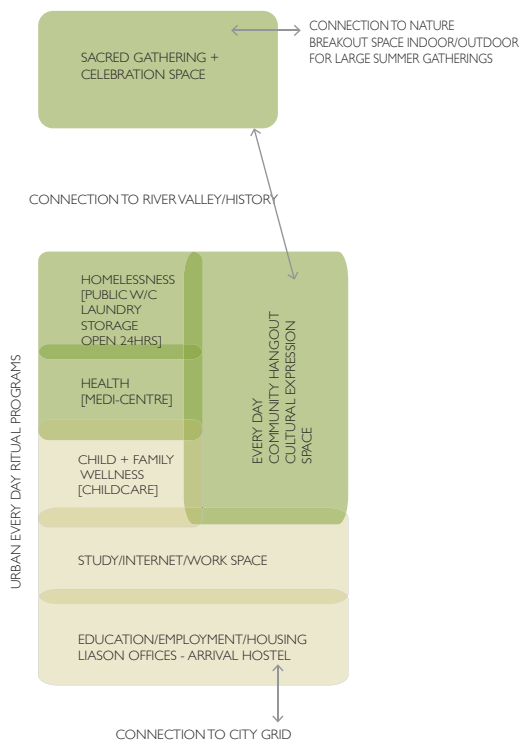
TOP TEN PRIORITIES AS IDENTIFIED BY ALBERTA  
NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CENTRES ASSOCIATION

- CULTURE** ← NUMBER ONE PRIORITY
- HEALTH
- HOUSING
- HOMELESS
- CHILD+FAMILY WELLNESS
- EDUCATION
- EMPLOYMENT
- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- JUSTICE
- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

TOP TEN PRIORITIES AS IDENTIFIED BY ALBERTA  
NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CENTRES ASSOCIATION

- CULTURE** ← NUMBER ONE PRIORITY
- HEALTH
- HOUSING
- HOMELESS
- CHILD+FAMILY WELLNESS
- EDUCATION
- EMPLOYMENT
- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- JUSTICE
- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

FRIENDSHIP CENTRE PROGRAM DERIVED FROM NEEDS



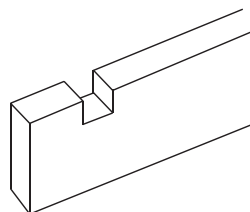
Ideas of a holistic design approach in terms of program; information from the City of Edmonton and Alberta Friendship Centre Association, *Urban Aboriginal Strategy 2015*



I see this situation as a major opportunity to rethink the architectural siting and spatial organization of the modern friendship centre. There is opportunity to make an architectural statement on the city fabric in terms of acknowledging culturally repressed and environmentally exploited history, and establishing a modern First Nations architectural identity in Edmonton, leaving space for resilient growth into the future.

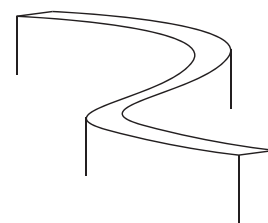


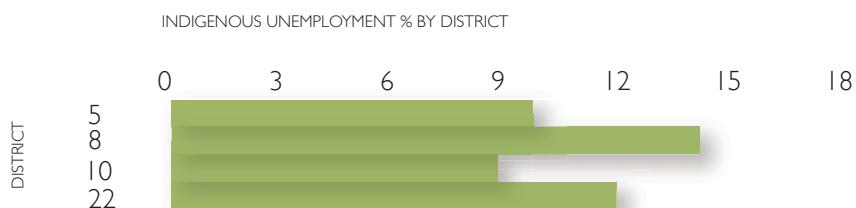
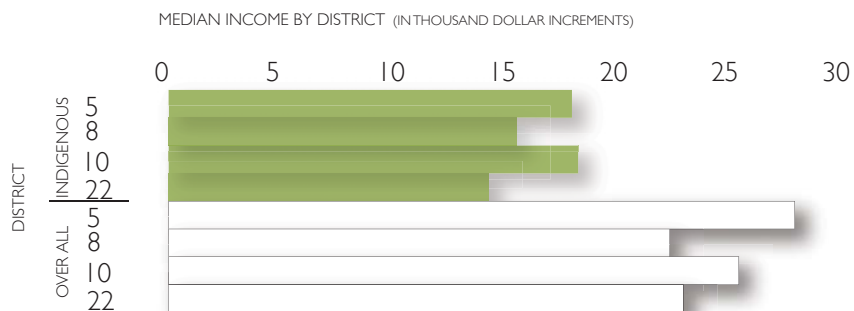
Showing the 5 densest indigenous communities and their highest categories of employment type. Employment type of Indigenous Population in Edmonton; from City of Edmonton, *A Statistical Story, 2009*



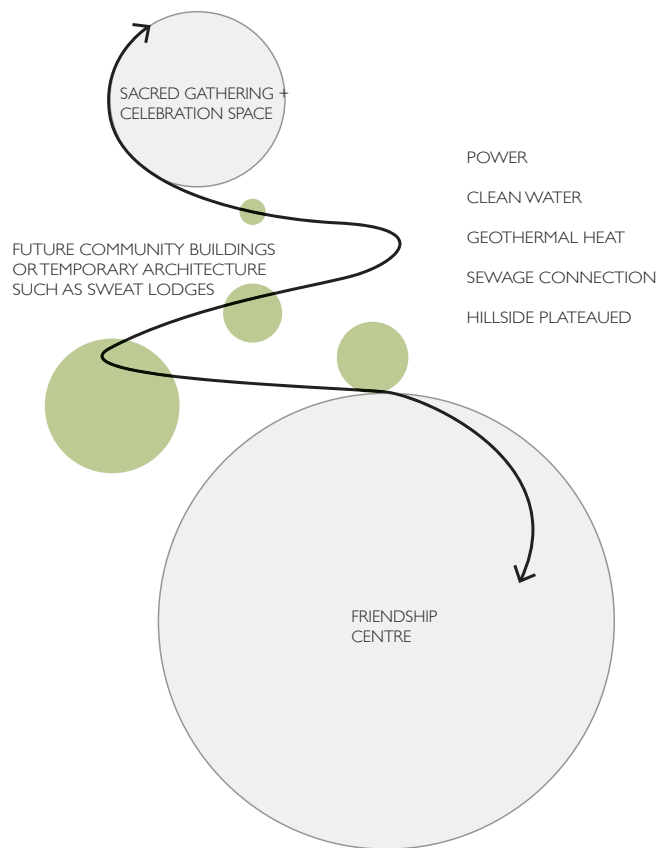
Wood Joinery is historically seen more as craft and takes more intensive hands on labour. Because of the large construction community, this could be a possible building type that will generate jobs within the indigenous community.

Earth Construction is historically built by the entire community. building things together reinforces community spirit and strengthens community pride





Low average income percentages and unemployment percentages of Indigenous Population in Edmonton; from City of Edmonton, *A Statistical Story, 2009*



Idea of how program will be connected with a spine of infrastructure

## The Edmonton Indigenous Community

The Edmonton Indigenous population has a unique and complex relationship with the City. I have identified three general situations; the first is indigenous people who were born in the city, who know nothing of their own culture, the second is people who have moved to the city from reserves in the past and have or have not successfully adapted to city life, and the third situation is people currently moving to the city from reserve communities needing immediate support. Additionally the overall indigenous population is very young, leading to a specific set of needs.

Most First Nations who were born in the city have never been immersed in their cultural roots and traditions. This is, in part, because of cultural isolation of previous generations caused by the residential school systems, sustaining a still present cultural shaming. A strong welcoming and educational cultural community is needed for this portion of the population. A lecture theatre is important to hold educational classes, cultural movies, and social/political action events. Community space will be important for this group, to have the opportunity to interact with elders and other people who have been in touch with their cultural roots.

Many people who have moved to the city from reserve communities in the past were either directly residential school survivors or descendants of a survivor. For some, this trauma resulted in poor health, addictions, crime, homelessness, and even suicide. The rates of these social issues are much higher in the Indigenous population than the general population. A mental and physical health clinic, and daily community activity are important for this group, as well as a place that is open 24 hours a day, to ensure that there is a safe community space to go to any time of the day or night.

The final group are the people currently moving to the city from reserve communities. This group is faced with an immediate need for employment, housing, and potentially education, all while facing culture shock and potential racial discrimination. In addition to the aforementioned program, this group needs a small hostel to allow newcomers to become acquainted with the city while hosted by the heart of a positive indigenous community. Education, housing and employment offices within the friendship centre are also paramount for the support of this group. Next to the offices, a large study/work space will be provided including access to computers and the internet. These programs will allow newcomers to leave their child in the childcare centre, find their bearings in the city, find housing and employment, and network with a community that they innately have a sense of belonging to.

The aspect that ties these three situations together is community cohesion. A community minded architectural design is therefore valid for the user groups I have described. There is value in including all of these varied programs in one building, overlapping program, and public space in the building for community participation and interaction. The 2015 Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Strategy<sup>10</sup> suggests that if the indigenous community is not a holistic system, it is destined to fail because of the number of barriers an Urban Indigenous person faces. An excerpt from the urban aboriginal strategy states that:

Truly more and/or better jobs is a wonderful goal to aim for; however, to attain and sustain employment, other basic needs emerge; and the detriments of keeping ones job is determined by a multitude of barriers the individual may then have to overcome. Therefore; health, childcare, transportation, employee

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<sup>10</sup> City of Edmonton. *Urban Aboriginal Strategy* (Edmonton: Alberta Friendship Association and City of Edmonton, 2015), 36.

self worth, housing etc. are all relative to the ability to succeed. This is but one example of the numerous and varied situations that arise in daily life. In essence, its all relative, and its all interrelated.<sup>11</sup>

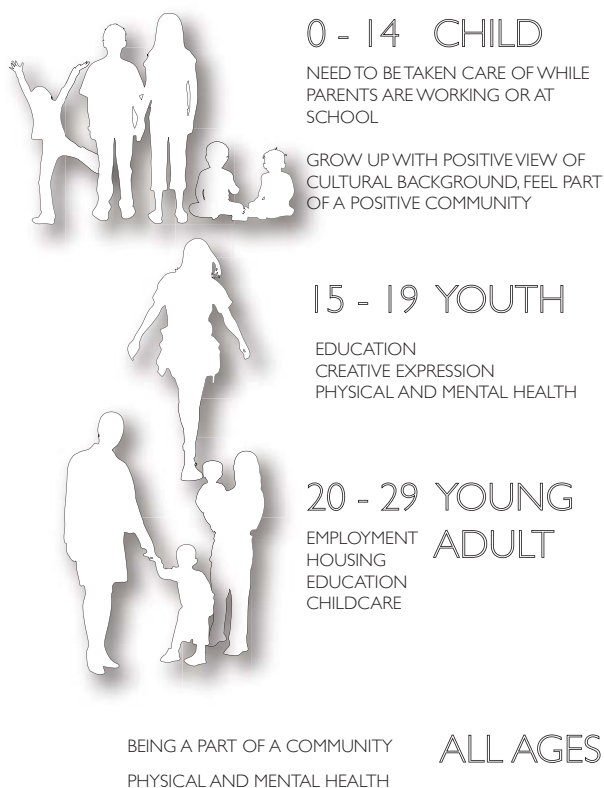
In other words the programs should not be separated into different buildings or institutions, the strength of the system is the ability of all indigenous supports and daily rituals to affect and interact with one another; strengthening each other to support the community. The author is not referring specifically to the design of a friendship centre, but a friendship centre is, in my opinion, an appropriate and successfully established cultural institution to implement this holistic model.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 37.

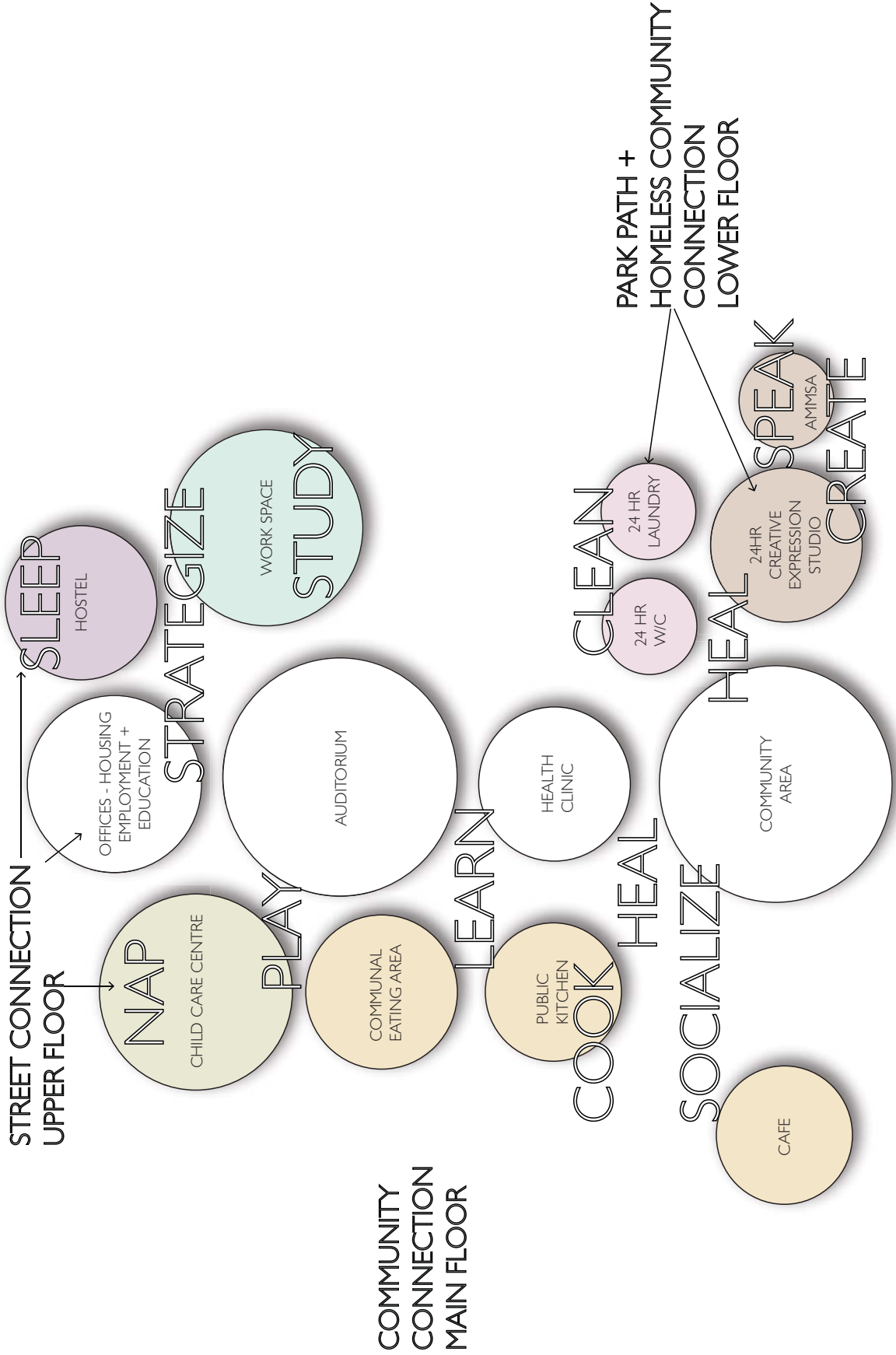


Friendship Centre Program

The overall Edmonton Indigenous population is unique because of its youthfulness with a median age of 26 years old. This makes all of the services even more crucial. Childcare will make it easier for young parents to find and retain work, and children will grow up with positive beliefs and relationships with their community and culture. The 24 hour community space could be crucial for teenagers, who are highest in suicide rates and vulnerable to lifelong addictions. The space is intended for anybody to have the opportunity to be creatively and socially expressing themselves, and to feel like they are a part of a community at any time of the day or night.



Friendship Centre highest priority program for each of the most prevalent age groups



## A Diverse Group

It is important to remember that the word “Aboriginal” or “Indigenous” refers to a number of vastly different cultures and language groups. Each of the more general cultural group such as Cree or Blackfoot is loosely formed around the Ecosystem that they live within. For example the Cree live mostly in the woodland, and Blackfoot on the great plains. Their culture is rooted in the land and how it provided for the people. The Blackfoot culture revolves around the buffalo, therefore every aspect of their culture is in relation to the buffalo. Clothing, migration patterns, community organization, shelter, and spirituality.

In the First Nations community the elders from the territory that decisions are made on are respected as the final decision making group in disputes; Edmonton land is Plains Cree territory.



Northern Cree Singers Drumming Group; photograph from Indian Country Today Media Network



The design will passively encourage Cree language by labeling all way-finding signs in both English and Cree, and allowing Cree artists to paint murals, hold traditional craft workshops or practice traditional dance. With this in mind, Edmonton is an especially diverse hub of indigenous cultural groups. Therefore my design will be aware of this diversity, working to create flexible space from concepts that are universal among indigenous groups, aiming for cultural solidarity in the city. One of the most fundamental concepts - which creates a spatial abstraction of the cultural framework is, that everything in life is circular:

The circle is a universal symbol of connection, unity, harmony, wholeness and eternity. In a circle all parts are equal. Life is circular - a person is born, grows into childhood, matures and becomes old, at which point thoughts and actions become childlike again. The seasons are cyclic. Earth moves in a circle. Everything moves in a circle, from the rising sun to the setting sun, from the East and back to the East. The day is divided into four segments of time: sunrise, noon, sunset and night. The circle also symbolizes inclusion and equality. In traditional First Nations meetings or gatherings, everyone sits in a circle in accordance with the belief that all people are equal.<sup>12</sup>

A related and equally fundamental concept is the idea of “all my relations” explained by Thomas King:

At first a reminder of who we are and of our relationship with both our family and our relatives. It also reminds us of the extended relationship we share with all human beings. But the relationships that Native people see go further; the web of kinship to animals, to the birds, to the fish, to the plants, to all the animate and inanimate forms that can be seen or imagined. More than that, “all my relations” is an encouragement for us to accept the responsibilities we have within the universal family by living our lives in a harmonious and moral manner (a common admonishment is to say of someone that they act as if they had no relations).<sup>13</sup>

The idea that life is circular is a spatial way of looking at the world that will define all aspects of your perspective on life. Without hierarchy or categorical organization of individual aspects of life, the world can therefore be seen in a holistic way. This spatial philosophical perspective manifests

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12 Leo Fox, Ed Lavallee, Liz Poitras, and Sataa Amoudla, *The Sacred Circle, excerpt from Education is Our Buffalo* (Edmonton: Alberta Teachers Association, 2006).

13 Thomas King, *All My Relations: An Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Fiction* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990), 4.

architecturally in every aspect, such as: siting, form, structural connections, circulation, material choices and spatial organization.

With this cultural perspective in mind, a very important aspect of wellness in the indigenous community is relationships and the proper balance between them. There are many publications on the validity of cultural expression, language and finding a cultural-political voice as the most effective way to begin to heal and strengthen Indigenous communities.<sup>14</sup> This is especially true in a culture that has a central focus on relationships. The friendship centre, as the community hub, should also be the cultural education hub, acting as a consistent cultural resource in the city.

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14 Laurence Kirmayer, Cori Simpson, and Margaret Cargo, "Healing Traditions: Culture, Community and Mental Health Promotion with Canadian Aboriginal Peoples" *Australasian Psychiatry* 11 (2003): S15-23.

## CHAPTER 2: SITE

### Dawson Park

I will discuss Dawson Park in terms of three different time frames, addressing periods when the Edmonton area changed perspective culturally. The first time period is the Indigenous culture before colonial settlement, the second is the colonial settlement that excluded and rejected indigenous culture, and the third is the modern city that is working towards adapting and reestablishing indigenous culture in the urban context.

There was a different rhythm to life in the Cree Amiskwaciwas-kahikan land (now present day Edmonton) for thousands of years before Europeans colonized. Culture and time revolved around natural cycles of abundance with a deep understanding of plants, animals, water and earth. The intimate connection with the land created a powerfully embedded sense of place, spiritually and physically. The cultural understanding people operated within was that relationships and mutual respect for each other and the land are at the centre of life. All elements of the land, living and non-living, affect each other equally, as an intrinsically connected whole. There was, and still is, an inherent understanding that “the land does not belong to the people, but the people belong to the land”.<sup>15</sup>

When colonial explorer Anthony Henday arrived in the area in the mid 1600s, he brought with him a completely different cultural framework on relationships to each other and the environment. Unlike indigenous views, Western Colonial thinking is based on the original Western colonization; Roman Military camps. The idea was to own more and more land, laying down the familiar Roman grid, imposing on the existing landscape and people. People own land and resources which are believed to

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<sup>15</sup> Crystal Lameman, *This Changes Everything*. Film. Directed by Avi Lewis (Copenhagen: Tribeca Film Institute, 2015).

be infinitely available for the supplementation of a 'civilized' lifestyle.

Anthony Henday arrived on Rossdale Flats, in the heart of an established Sacred Cree pehonan or "waiting place".<sup>16</sup> For thousands of years previous this pehonan was an important Cree place of gathering, ceremony, commerce, and governance.<sup>17</sup> In the river valley, up and down stream from the pehonan, there were many smaller Cree settlements. The original downtown core was established just above present day Dawson park, downstream from the sacred pehonan.

A site near but not on the pehonan for this thesis is important. The Walterdale bridge, major roadways, the Rossdale water treatment plant, residential neighbourhood and Telus baseball field were built on this land in the past century, permanently upheaving sacred burial grounds and ignoring sacred Cree history. The significance of the pehonan site is only recently being truly recognized by the general public and the City of Edmonton. The pehonan land should finally be honored for its sacredness, without imposition.

Dawson Park, which is still on Cree settlement land, is within walking distance of the pehonan, however Dawson park has the capacity for a dramatic indigenous architectural statement, re-establishing a sense of permanent belonging on the land, and leaving space for a resilient indigenous community to grow around the initial buildings over time.

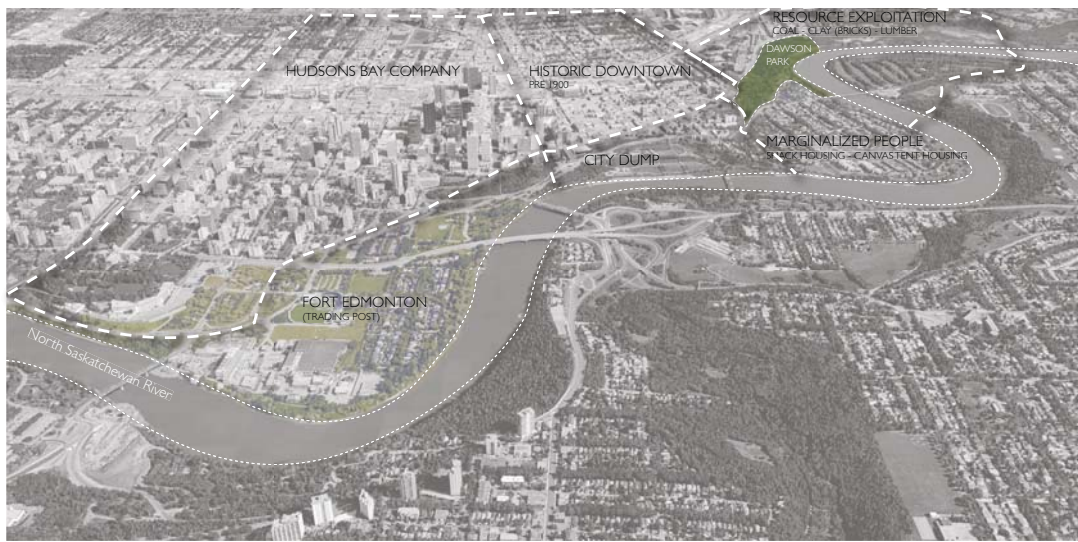
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<sup>16</sup> City of Edmonton, *Aboriginal Edmonton Welcome Guide* (Edmonton: City of Edmonton, 2012), 3.

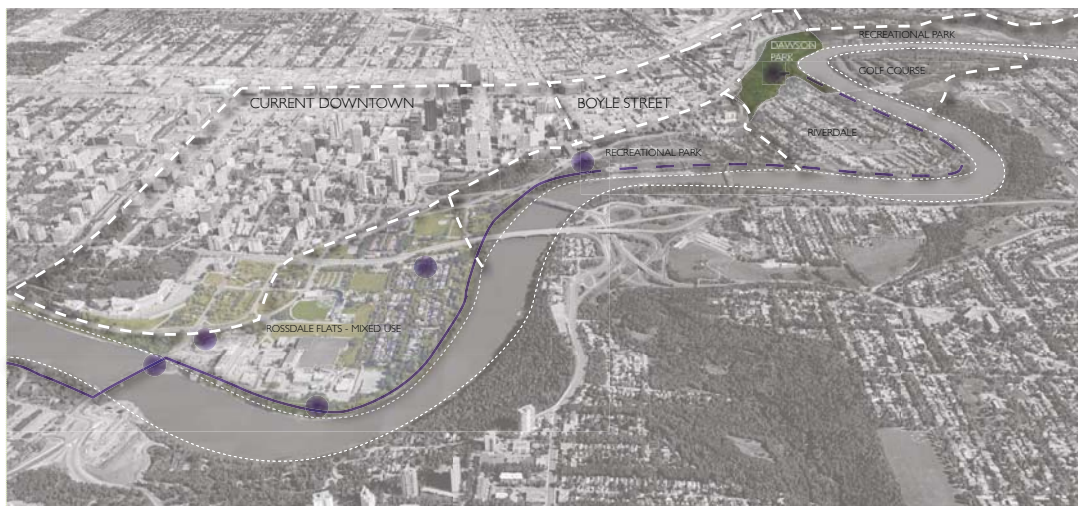
<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 3



Plains Cree Settlement ~2500bc - 1650ad; Background Image from Google Earth



Colonial Settlement ~1650 - 1950; Background Image from Google Earth



Modern Edmonton ~1950 - Present; Background Image from Google Earth



Dawson Park Pre 1650 was a Cree settlement similar to this near by one; photograph from Enoch Cree Nation



Dawson Park Today - A refuge for the most marginalized Edmontonians, still seeking independence; photograph by Ken Armstrong, taken June 27, 2007. Edmonton Alberta.

The colonial and present day circumstances of Dawson Park support the argument for it as a thesis site to reclaim, acknowledge, and address trauma caused during colonization.

Once colonial development began in the Edmonton area, it grew exponentially pushing Indigenous people off of their sacred lands piece by piece. By the 1990s, Indian Affairs promised that “at all times [they] endeavored to keep the Indians away from towns and cities. Occasionally some of them camped around Edmonton without [their] knowledge, but action was always taken immediately to get them back to their reserve.”<sup>18</sup> Also, the new settlement’s lack of understanding of and respect for the land caused serious environmental problems in a very short amount of time. Dawson park was the epicentre of damaged landscape in Edmonton, as it was one of the most abundant areas for lumber, coal and clay. This area provided the city with much of their residential heating needs, and building materials.

Dawson Park was quickly exploited to the point of collapse. The industrial exploitation and can be seen as a microcosm example of the environmental damage colonization caused the Nation. This is a very important aspect of Dawson Park history that needs to be acknowledged from an indigenous perspective. The indigenous value for relationships are equally referring to respect for humankind and for the environment. In the truth and Reconciliation commission it was stated that if every human trauma is reconciled, but people are still damaging the land, reconciliation is not complete.<sup>19</sup>

Currently the adjacent Boyle street neighbourhood is in a critical

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18 City of Edmonton Archives, Letter to Indian Agencies, accessed October 13, 2015, [http://www.edmonton.ca/city\\_government/documents/EHC\\_LetterChristianson1937.pdf](http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/documents/EHC_LetterChristianson1937.pdf)

19 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Summary of the Final Report*, 18.

state of poverty, hosting illicit drug use, prostitution, social programming, and abandoned buildings. This activity spills into Dawson Park, in the informal homeless community living discretely and illegally in the woods. The indigenous population is as over-represented in this community as they are in the overall homeless community.

The city grid was created through circulation and built structure that stands as artifact of perspectives changing over time. One could say that the river and the river valley is the structure of “urbanity” for the Cree settlement. The original colonial city grid is perpendicular to the river, and the modern city grid is north/south orientation. Dawson park is within the grid between these structures - the intermediary space - just as the friendship centre acts as the intermediary space between urban life and indigenous culture.

Dawson park is now legally a reserved parkland, recreational picnic site, off-leash dog park, and river access point for canoes, kayaks, and the river ecology boat tours. Despite rich history and current activity Dawson Park is lacking an identity or sense of place. You will read in the following section about the indigenous cultural events that are currently placeless. This section of the river valley will be formally returned to indigenous culture in this thesis, to recreate a sense of place that is a prominent hub of arrival, support and cultural expression in Edmonton.





- 1. EAST BOYLE STREET
- 2. DAWSON PARK
- 3. WEST BOYLE STREET
- 4. DOWNTOWN
- 5. MCKINNEY PARK
- 6. ROSSDALE FLATS
- 7. RIVERDALE

- STREET GRID RHYTHM CHANGES
- RIVERVALLEY TRAILS  
— PROPOSED EXTENSION TO CULTURAL TRAIL  
— EXISTING CULTURAL TRAIL
- PATH BETWEEN THE TWO DESIGNED BUILDINGS
- EVENTS ALONG CULTURAL TRAIL - LAST EVENT IS DESIGNED CULTURAL COMMUNITY EVENT SPACE
- NEW DESIGN FOR FRIENDSHIP CENTRE

Map of Dawson Park and Surrounding Neighbourhoods; original shape file from Open Street Maps.

## Urban + Cultural Networks Around the Park

The expanded idea of the friendship centre for this design is intended to be the city's indigenous hub. For this reason it is essential for Dawson Park to be connected to larger systems in the city. Indigenous cultural networks in Edmonton include the existing First Nations businesses, and cultural events, both of which have no dedicated space. The "Spirit of Edmonton Trail" is regarded as a positive development in the indigenous community network. The number one concern of the self identified indigenous community in Edmonton is to address and strengthen culture in the city.<sup>20</sup>

Urban networks are relating to accessibility: city circulation to this community hub is very important. City circulation includes public bus and LRT transit, pedestrian and vehicle transportation for accessibility to the Friendship Centre. Park Circulation includes existing recreational trails, river access points, and homeless inhabitation areas.

### ***Placeless Events***

There are existing cultural, political and community events that happen within the city that do not currently have a dedicated space. For example, treaty 6 and 8 confederacy have meetings once a month, this is the chief of every band in that confederacy coming together to discuss relevant issues. Each of these meetings has approximately 50 people, comprised of chiefs, a councilor and sometimes elders. Because their office is too small to hold meetings a hotel meeting room is rented every month. Chief and council meetings for various bands often happen in Edmonton as well, they will also rent out space in different parts of the city. The Confederacy 6 Bilateral treaty coordinator Ron Lameman stressed

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<sup>20</sup> City of Edmonton, *Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Dialogue: The Your City, Your Voice Report* (Edmonton: City of Edmonton, February 2006)



Sacred Ceremonies are often held outside of the city. Many First Nations people who have lived in Edmonton for their whole life have never attended one of these sacred events.

A Sundance Ceremony; photograph from National Geographic



Treaty 6 and 8 meetings are currently held in Edmonton. Premier Rachel Knotley and Treaty 6 Chiefs Meet, October 2015; photograph from O'Chiese First Nation



A display of Cree dance at the Edmonton Heritage days; photograph from Edmonton Sun August 1, 2015

Examples of Placeless First Nations events in Edmonton are shown above.

that absolutely anyone is welcome at almost any of the meetings, although community members rarely come because the rental space is often on the edge of the city, and the location is always changing.

### ***Spirit of Edmonton Trail***

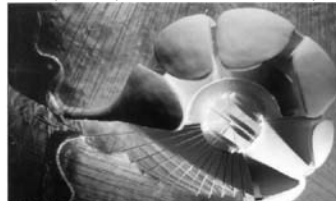
In November of 2011 the Spirit of Edmonton River Valley Trail was announced, proposing to be finished by 2017. The trail is nine kilometres of river valley trails with 6 indigenous events along the way. Everything from re-naming of the two major bridges, a cultural centre designed by Douglas Cardinal, and lands set aside for sacred ceremony and prayer. This proposal has received a welcoming response from the indigenous communities. The trail ends only a 20 minute walk from Dawson Park. I propose to extend the existing cultural trail 20 minutes, to reach the design site; Dawson park. A building that is dedicated to holding large events such as ceremonies, celebrations and political gatherings will be designed for this part of the site.



Start trail: Fort Edmonton Park, Indigenous Peoples Experience



Kihciy Askiy: Sacred Earth, A place to pray



Indigenous Centre for Art + Knowledge, Schematic Design



Sun and Moon Visionaries - Indigenous Art Gallery



Showcase: Sacred Fire, Shaw Conference Centre Expansion



River valley trails.



Bridge Renaming: High Level Bridge and Walterdale bridge

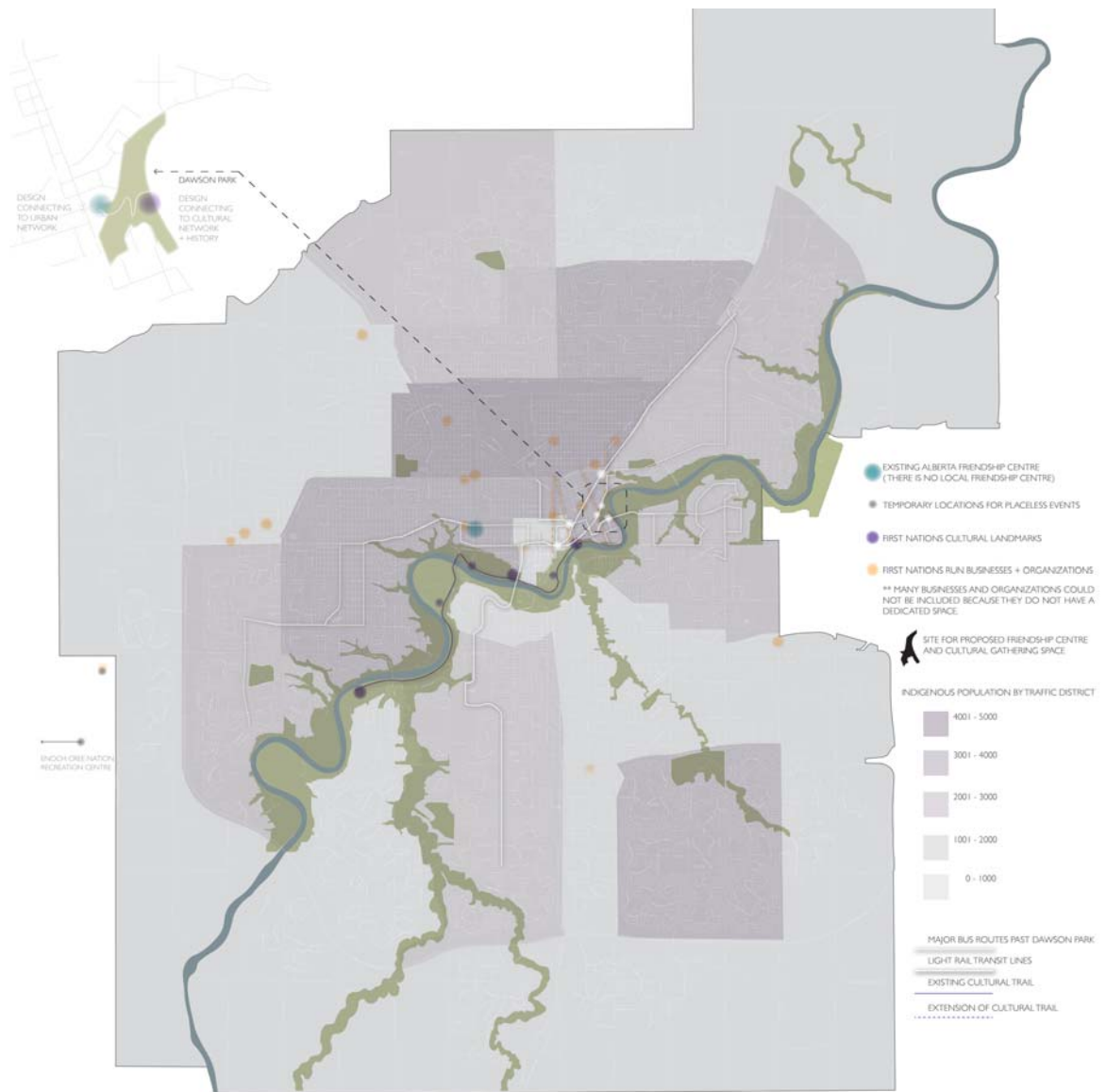
Events along the Spirit of Edmonton Trail, Starting South and moving towards downtown; photographs from the Spirit of Edmonton Trail Proposal Report.

### ***Accessibility***

It is important for this cultural community hub to be highly accessible to all of the indigenous community in Edmonton. Other than being in a generally central location in the city, the building is sited in the centre of the four districts that have the highest population of self identified indigenous people. It is a ten minute walk from the main downtown LRT station, and is adjacent to multiple major bus routes. The building will also be easily accessible for vehicle traffic. The near by Boyle street provides plenty of parking which is important for chief and council or confederacy meetings, as everyone is driving in from their reserve communities.

### ***Homeless community in the park***

The sheltering qualities of Dawson park has allowed for an informal community of homeless people living on the hillside. They are greatly over-represented by First Nations people. Many of the First Nations homeless population are residential school survivors or children of residential school survivors. Incomprehensible trauma compounded by years of public stigmatization, malnourishment, stress, and substance abuse, this group is the most marginalized of the indigenous population. My building will be connecting to this community network, by providing 24 hour services in the lowest level of the friendship centre which is closest to the park. These services include bathrooms, showers, laundry and warming space. The community space, outdoor firepit and medical clinic will also be there to service this population, in hopes of regaining trust over time. The space between the buildings will hold infrastructure, allowing the homeless community to retain clean water, and heat respecting their dignity and independence while ensuring the community has basic human needs met. The cultural event building at the bottom of the hill will be easily accessible and welcoming for this community to take part in community events.



Edmonton urban and cultural networks surrounding Dawson Park; original shape file from open source maps

## CHAPTER 3: DESIGN

### The Threshold

The North Saskatchewan river cuts a path through the prairies, creating a mediation space between two systems. The reciprocity between two systems can create abundance along the threshold, a ribbon of ecological diversity. The river is where every layer of Edmonton history exists. My building design intends to take inspiration from the idea of abundance on the threshold, a middle ground between the city; an iteration of colonial culture and a permanently re-established sense of place for indigenous urban community culture.



North Saskatchewan River from an airplane, October 2015.



## Overview of Design

The design includes two buildings with a path connecting them. A friendship centre will be at the top of Dawson park, nestled in the city grid. The friendship centre represents the city connection to indigenous culture, and the indigenous support for city life. This building will hold program relating to daily community and urban necessity. A large cultural event centre is at the bottom of the hill in the a natural setting near the North Saskatchewan river or *kisiskāciwani-sīpiy* meaning swift flowing river in Cree. This building is the indigenous space that the friendship centre is linking to the city. It will have the capacity to hold large community, spiritual and political gatherings that are currently placeless. A dramatic wall carves a path through the steep slope, reminding all Edmontonians of the deeply embedded past, and functionally navigating the space between the two buildings.



Site model showing digrammatic representation of buildings in wood roof structure, wall/path represented in white, and platforms created represented in lighter brown.

## Materiality

The buildings are constructed of heavy stereotomic walls and light tectonic wall and roof elements.

Stereotomic: A heavy earthen wall supports the roof structure of both buildings, as well as carving a path down the hill between the two buildings. This material metaphorically represents the deeply embedded history of the land, the strata of the earthen wall metaphorically representing shining light on layers of past history.



Stereotomic elements material tests. Stereotomic elements make up the retaining wall/path cutting into the slope between the buildings and the inset retaining walls hugging both buildings.

Tectonic: A light reciprocal wood structure creates the roof and remaining wall structures. The reciprocal nature of the structure metaphorically represents indigenous ideas of interconnected relationships, and the modern addition of these indigenous ideas in the re-settlement of the park.



Tectonic elements structural design experimentation resulting in reciprocal roof structure of both buildings.

## The Path Between

The Earthen wall from the Friendship centre will continue to wrap around the natural earthen amphitheatre, and descend the entire slope, where it will wrap around the back wall of the Ceremonial gathering space. The earthen wall is not only for an architecture that the community can be involved in building, but also represents shedding light on layers of history that have been buried or ignored in Edmonton's past.



Site diagram - showing circulation and form surrounding buildings

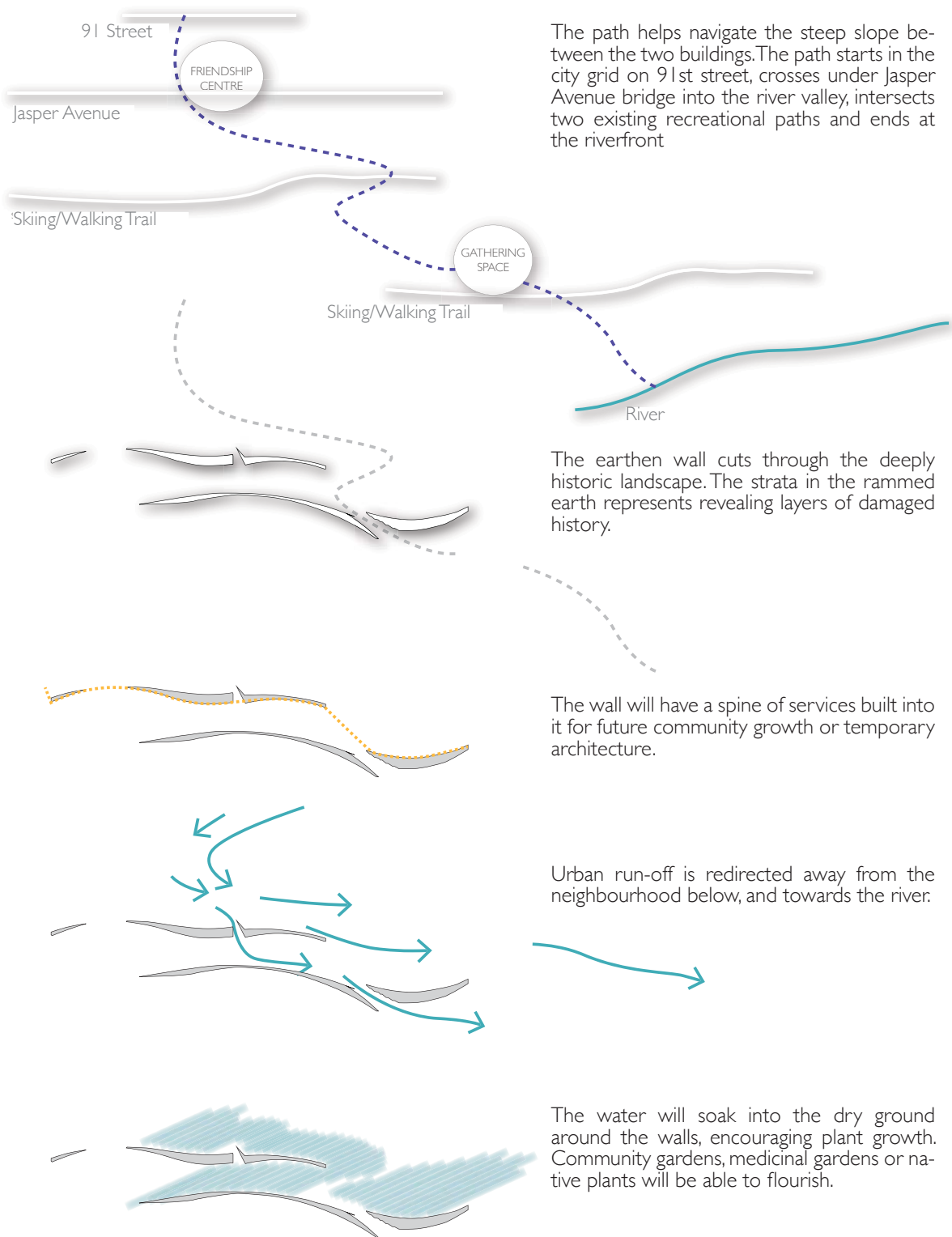


Diagram showing the use and effects of the path between the Friendship Centre and the Cultural Event Centre.

### ***Environment***

The dramatic wall cutting through the landscape will be making a statement about not only the history of human damage but the history of exploited landscape as well. Functionally the path will be redirecting, collecting, and cleaning run-off from the city above as a mediator between urban and natural systems. This channeling of water will create abundance in the dry Edmonton landscape just as the river creates the abundant river valley. Native plant species, traditional medicinal plants or community gardens can be planted along this wall path.

### ***Circulation***

The existing recreational trails navigate through and around the wall. The dramatic walls will take the recreational user out of the woods to a plateau where a stunning view can be seen, as well as a view of the two indigenous buildings to the East and West, creating a feeling of passive engagement in this community space. The flat land created above the wall will make it easier to descend the steep slope and can leave opportunities for temporary architecture such as traditionally built sweat lodges.

The wall starts South West of the Jasper Avenue Bridge, where there is an existing electrical, and water connection. This infrastructure can be built to travel through the wall creating a spine for future community growth. At the bottom of the hill one would arrive at the Spiritual + Celebratory Gathering space, which also connects to the 'Spirit of Edmonton' trail.



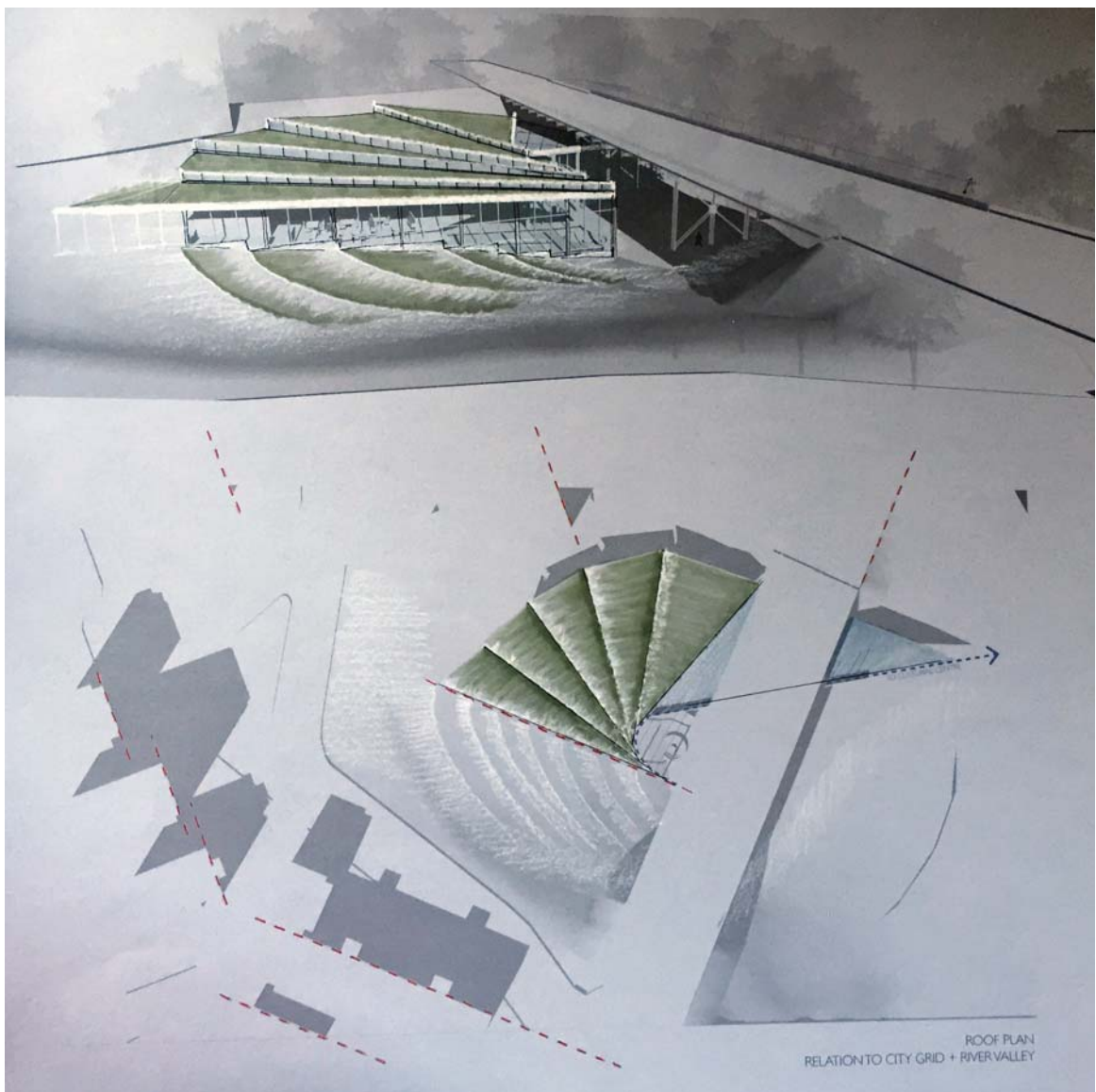
The experience of the path



Tensile greenhouse - imagined temporary architecture connecting into infrastructure in path

## Friendship Centre Building: The Link

The building's South Facade will follow in line with the grid of Jasper Avenue, tangentially hinging from the eastern point the structure will fan westward turning into a half circle. The last tangent will point out towards the river valley and the gathering space at the bottom of the hill. The front of the building will be below the datum of the bottom of the Jasper avenue bridge, allowing for a stunning river valley view.



perspective and roof plan view of friendship centre



### ***Roof***

The building catches and cleans run-off from the streets above through the extensive green roof. The water will flow down the sloping funnel roof structure. Through its stacked hinging structure the beams will be at descending heights allowing for an interpretation of sawtooth clerestory windows between each major beam. Because of the fanned out structure the clerestory windows will exaggerate the sun path across the curved back walls creating a heightened sense of natural rhythms.

### ***Walls***

The curved retaining wall at the back of the building is rammed earth construction. Excavated earth from digging out the sloped gully for the building will be re-used. The strata of the earth in the wall represents the many layers of history in the park. The sun touching these layers of strata represents shedding light on the past.

### ***Landscape***

From street level the building looks quite modest as it is inset into the hillside. To enter you descend South Eastward following the contours of the gully around to the East side of the building. The South side of the gully is a natural amphitheater exaggerated with soft curved rammed earth seating poking between the grassy slope. This natural amphitheater faces not only the river valley view but also the plaza in front of the building acting as a casual outdoor venue.

### ***Circulation***

Entry into the building is through the hinge point of the structure on the concave East Facade which also shelters a Fire pit with surrounding seating. Once inside the front entry all of the communal spaces are clos-

est to the entry, with more private spaces as you move backward. On the Eastern tip of the building on the lowest floor there is a "light box" where well lit 24 hour program will be located.

### ***Activity***

The most urban programs such as employment/housing offices, and the arrival hostel is directly on the street front of 91st Avenue. Work-space with internet access is next to this area. The lecture hall will be in the crux of the curved wall or hinge point, and the childcare centre will be on the upper floor of the building.

The main floor will hold mainly community program, the medical clinic on the south side, the cafe and hostel kitchen, eating area and community space on the North side, and the lecture auditorium in the middle.

The lowest floor holds the 24 hour program, closest to the park. This area has 24 hour bathrooms, showers and laundry as well as a creative work space and a location for the Aboriginal Multi- Media Society of Alberta.

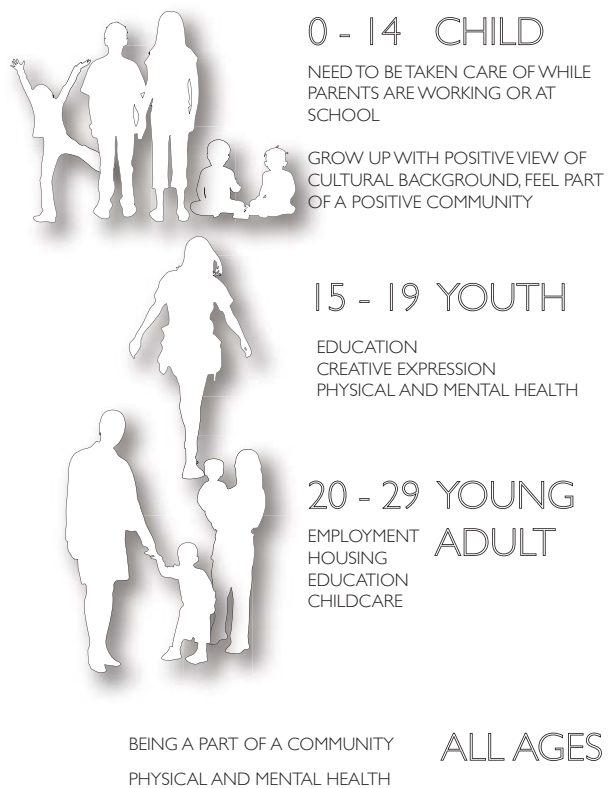
Main Program



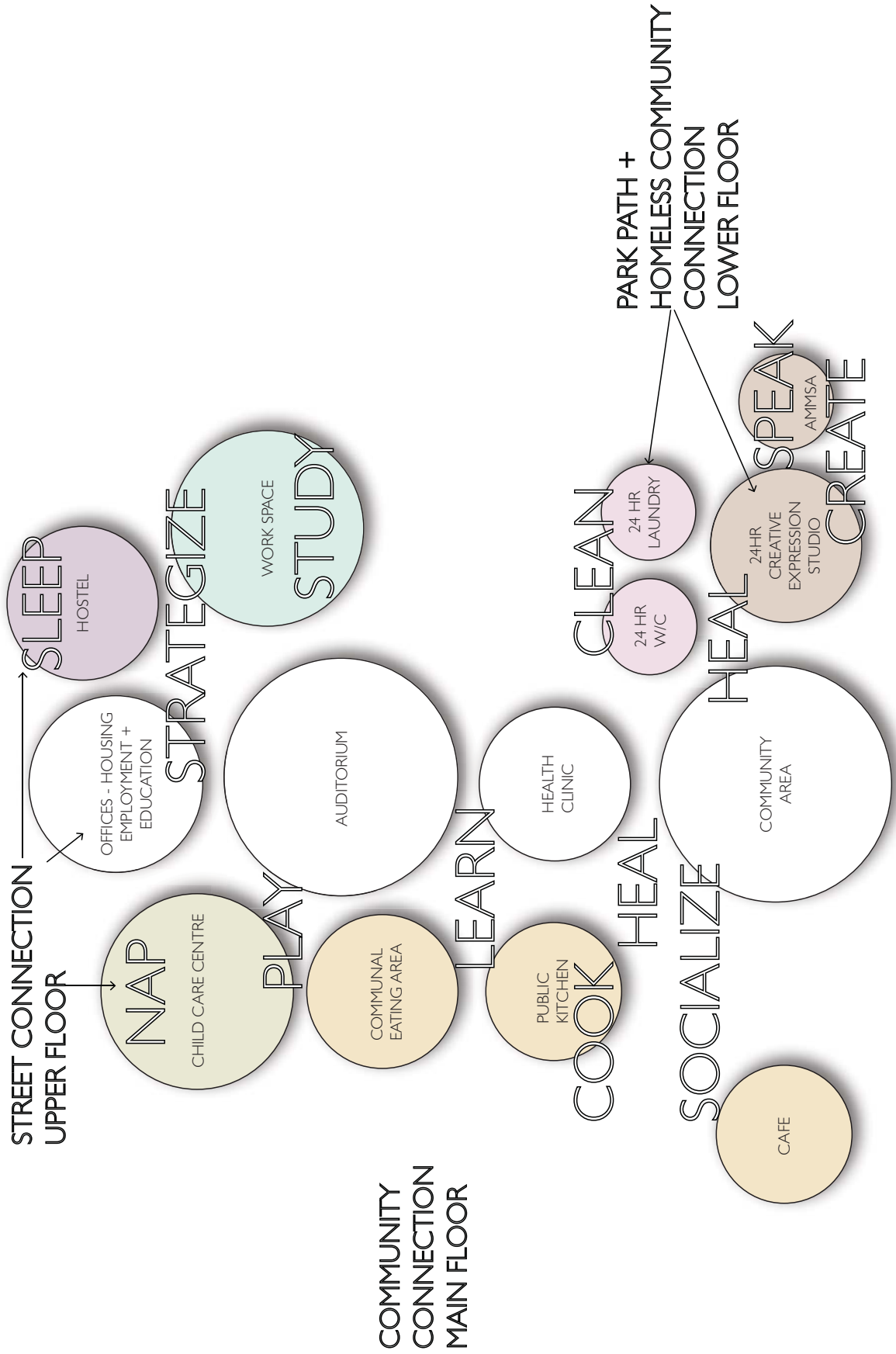
Supporting Program



Friendship Centre Program



Friendship Centre highest priority program for each of the most prevalent age groups



### ***Construction***

The “First Nations Community Plan<sup>21</sup>” used across Canada has evolved to recognize that a building being constructed, even in part, by the community is essential. This has been proven to provide a sense of ownership, pride, and resilience that non-involved buildings cannot provide. Building materials such as rammed earth and timber construction were chosen for the design of the buildings because of their workable qualities for manual labor. The Indigenous population in the districts surrounding the site happen to be exceptionally abundant in skilled construction workers, administration and business positions as well as service positions.

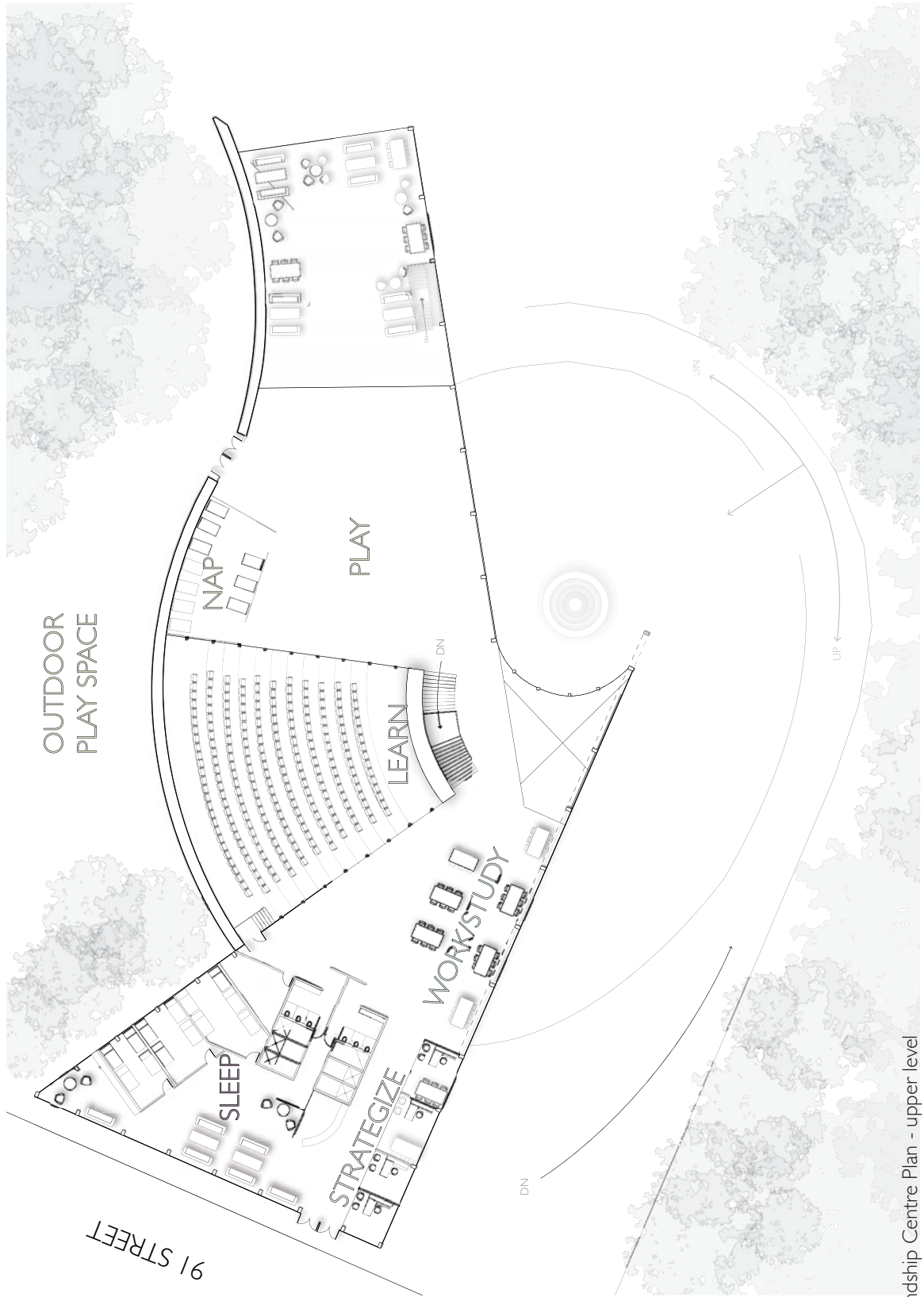
There is also a high percentage of unemployment among the indigenous population in the districts directly surrounding the site. This provides an opportunity for mutual benefit, to formally hire indigenous workers for construction. In addition there can be a less formal construction of the earthen walls by any community members, as this is a form of architecture that is heavy in labour, and is traditionally shared with the entire community. When hands from the community have literally shaped the walls, or placed the structure, the building has an embedded history and sense of ownership from the first day it is open.

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21 City of Edmonton, *Urban Aboriginal Strategy* (Edmonton: Alberta Friendship Association and City of Edmonton, 2015)



Friendship Centre upper level



Friendship Centre Plan - upper level



Friendship Centre main and lower level





Friendship Centre Plan - main level



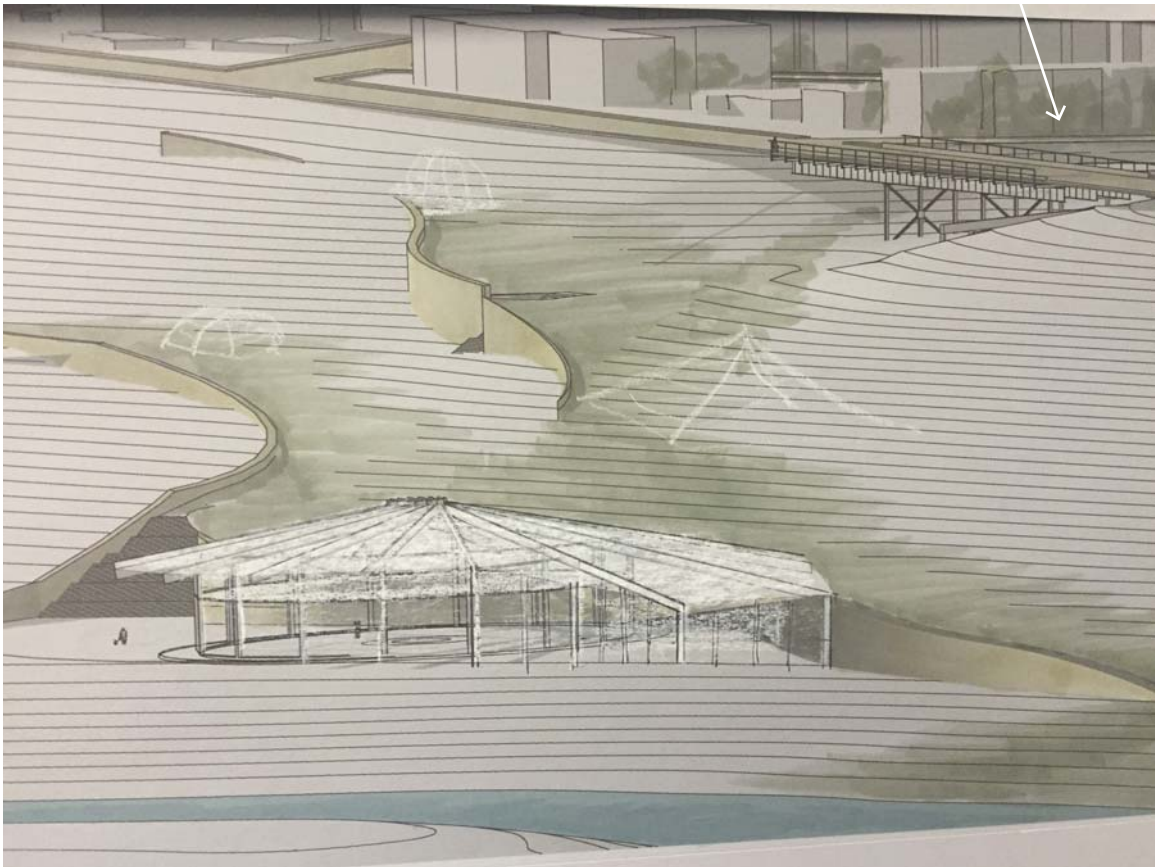
Friendship Centre Plan - lower level



Friendship Centre from plaza - top right; childcare, top left; work/study space, bottom right; cafe, bottom left; health clinic. Front; fire pit.



Friendship Centre - Indigenous link to and for the city



Large Gathering Space - Indigenous space in the city

## Spiritual+ Celebratory Gathering Building

This building will be an event space for the large gatherings that are already occurring in Edmonton, but don't have a dedicated space.

### *Structure*

The ceremony building will follow the same structural logic as the friendship centre above, although instead of only a half circle, it will be a full circle, representing not a mediation between cultures but a purely indigenous building. The structure is reciprocal, holding itself up through its mutually supporting beams weaved in a circular pattern representing indigenous ideas regarding the importance of relationships, equality, and all aspects of life being inherently connected.

### *Roof*

The roof has a large oculus in the centre where the light will reflect the time of the day and season as it moves across the walls and floor.

### *Walls*

The earthen wall that has descended the hill from the friendship centre wraps around the gathering space. This time the exterior wall of the building is 3 meters from the roof allowing for a skylight between the earth wall and the proper building roof. This space will exaggerate the sunlight hitting the wall. Plants can grow all year in this space, therefore the courtyard will draw your eye through the entire space to the back "feature" wall.



Cultural Event Centre - render of the back of the event space (west side of building)

## Circulation

The building entry will be on the South facade as it is closest to vehicle and pedestrian access. Although for summer ceremonies, all of the walls on the eastern side of the building will slide open for an expanded indoor/outdoor space. Changing rooms and a preparation kitchen will be on the North side, tucked in between the wall curving back outward. A mezzanine runs around the edges of the building, creating an upper viewing area and more intimate gathering areas.

Main Program



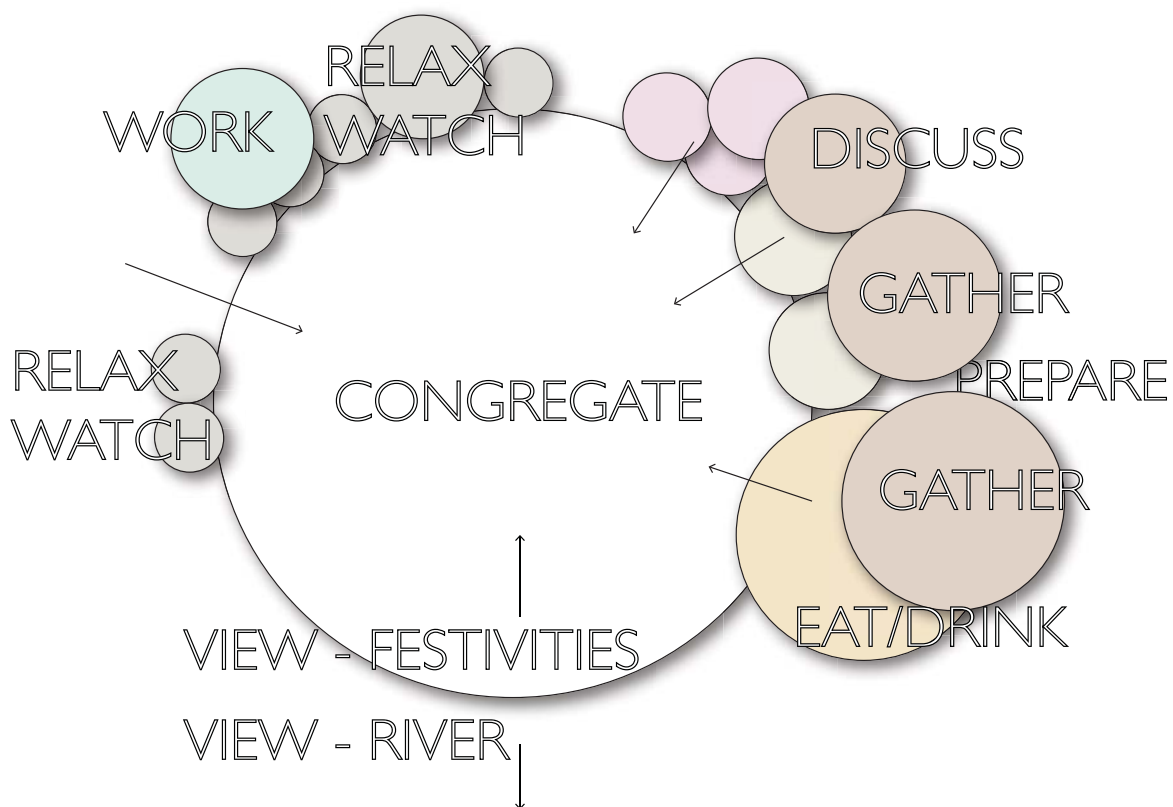
Supporting Program



### Program

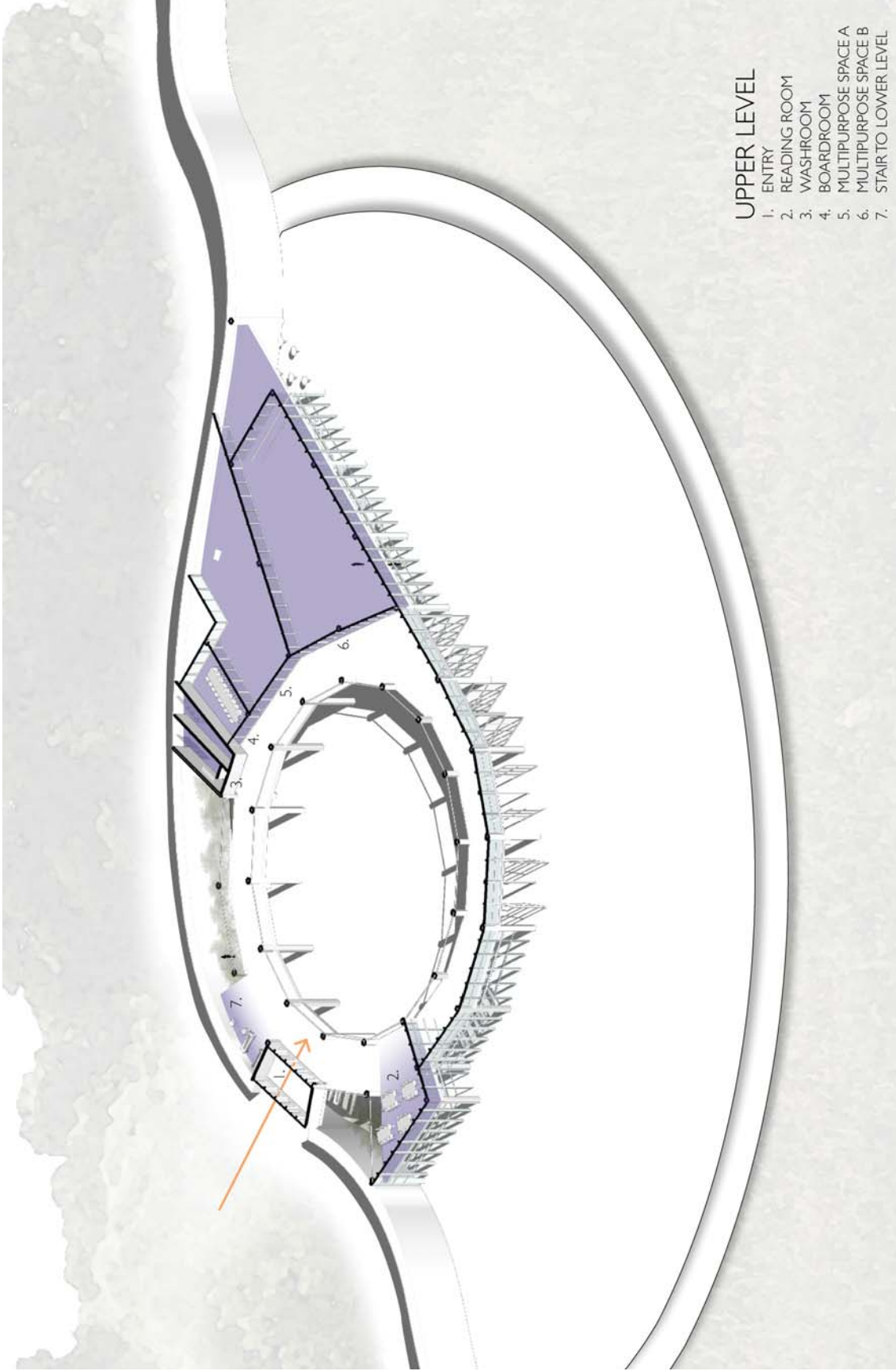
The main area in this building is the event space, which is essentially an open circular space. Everything surrounding this space is supplementary. There are areas to sit, relax and watch the festivities, change rooms, washrooms, and a restaurant/cafe with the capacity to feed large crowds. This space can be used for weddings, traditional dance groups, cultural events like pow wows, and community events like farmers markets. The cafe will be open during the week for the skiers, mountain bikers, runners, picnickers, dog walkers and boaters recreationally using the park. The upstairs has a mezzanine for extra viewing space, a computer work area for independent first nations businesses, a boardroom for chief and council meetings, and two multipurpose rooms for medium sized events or classes.

Cultural Event Centre program

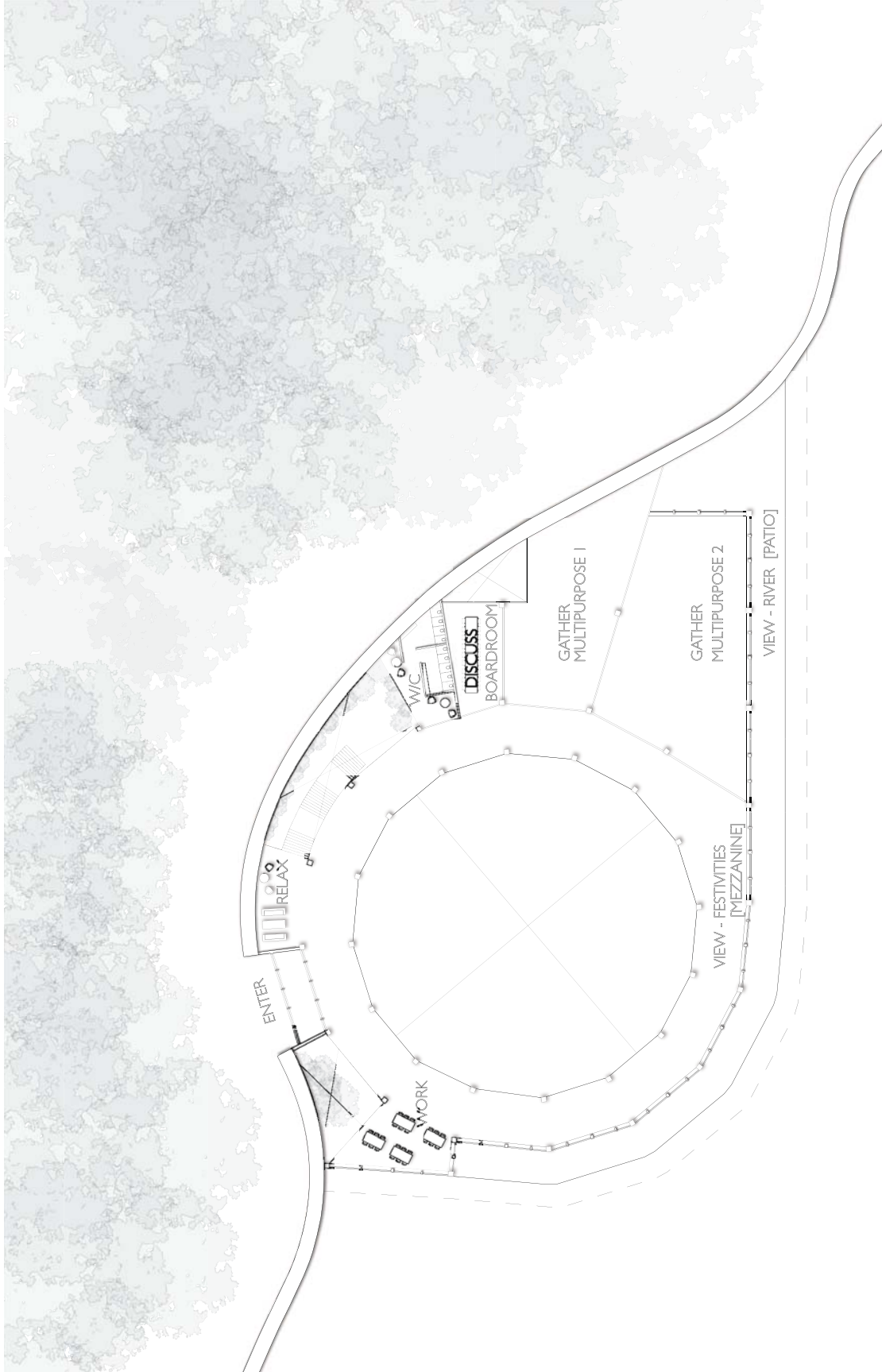


Cultural Event Centre program relationships

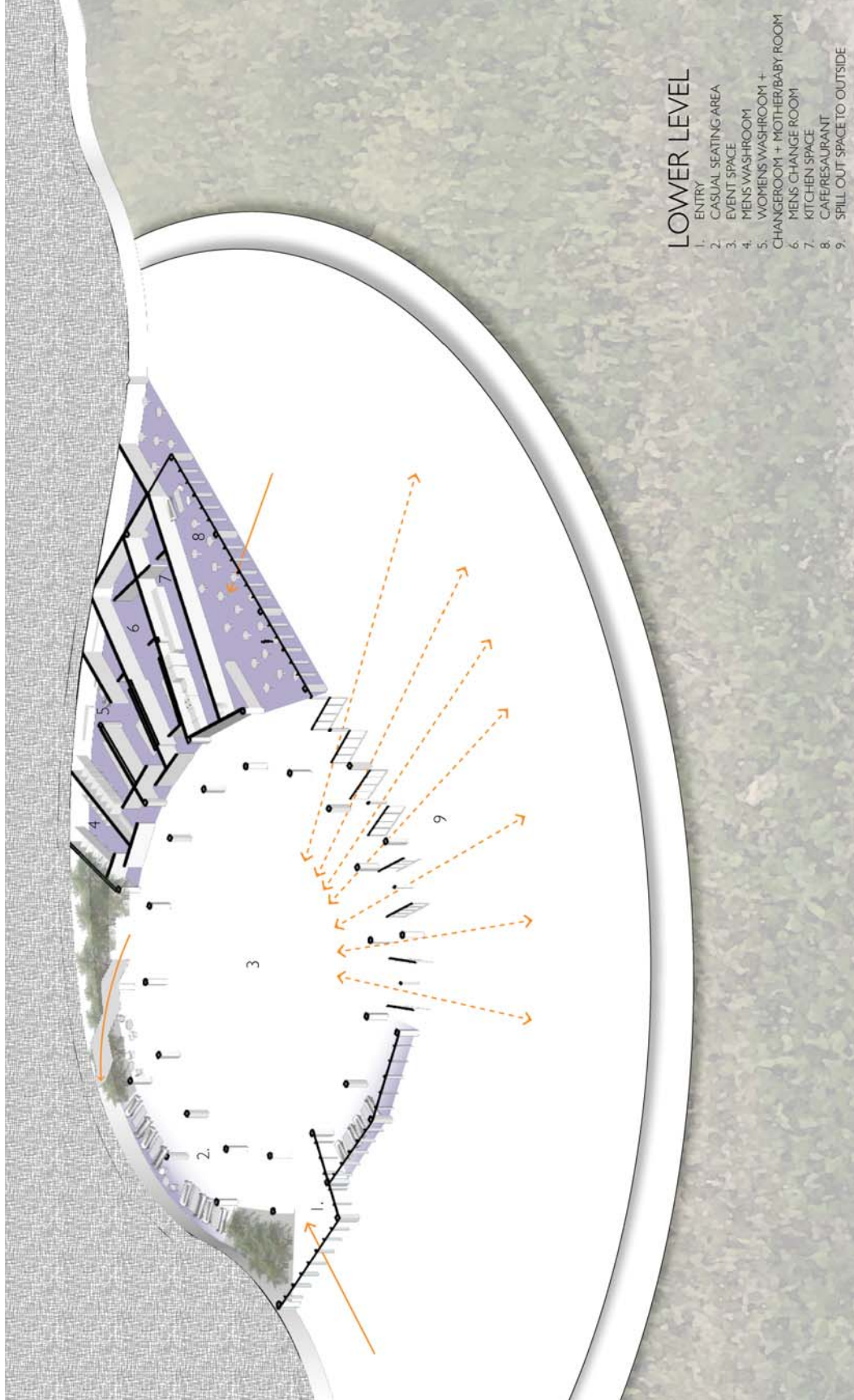




Cultural Event Centre upper level



Cultural Event Centre Plan - upper level



Cultural Event Centre lower level



Cultural Event Centre Plan - main level



CULTURAL EVENT CENTRE

## CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

This Thesis is intending to plant a seed for a permanent, growing indigenous cultural dialog in the built form, structure and values of the city. The architecture intends to test the architectural form and organization of the modern friendship centre. The project is addressing the past present and future of the indigenous community in both functional, and metaphorical terms.

The project is testing ideas of a holistic community model of architecture and what that might look like designed within indigenous beliefs and values. The hope is that this model of an expanded friendship centre creates a holistic community design and will be transferable to other Canadian cities. Most major cities across the Nation deal with these same issue to varying degrees. The aspects that are fundamental to this project will be transferable to other cities:

1. The form of the over all community design addresses historic damage in an explicit way, for every citizen to see and understand. What I mean by this is that there is something visible in a relatively monumental way so that it will be easily recognizable as a special and permanent space. For my project this is the wall/path descending the river valley, as it is creating a cliff condition of up to 3 storeys, visible from many places on the opposite side of the river valley. This acts as a constant reminder to the city of edmonton of the re-embedding of this culture into the city, as well as a potential conversation starter for indigenous related issues.

2. The form of the overall design leaves room for future growth of the community. In my design this is accomplished through the infrastructure installed in the wall.

3. The form of the friendship centre provides enough room for public community spaces, while simultaneously addressing every age and level of community member; from taking in arriving citizens, to providing a space for children to be cared for; to providing comfort to the transient and homeless community.

4. The friendship centre is in a highly accessible location.

5. There is a highly accessible large gathering space for placeless events to be grounded in a dedicated space in the city. This must be less than 5 minutes walking distance from the Friendship centre to allow for interacting activities without the need of a car.

6. There is a component of the building that is intended to be built by the community.

In conclusion I know that in this thesis I have only touched the tip of the iceberg in terms of understanding indigenous culture and political and cultural situations and history. I can only hope that my best effort has done some justice to the topic. Every Canadian citizen should take it upon themselves to learn everything they can about this beautiful culture and the Nations tragic history because there is far too much willful ignorance related to these tough topics. It was an absolute honor to study indigenous cultures for the last 8 months. Chief Perry Bellegarde from the Assembly of First Nations gives a perfect closing statement:

My belief and hope is that Canadians are starting to get it. I'm hopeful that through [The Truth and Reconciliation Commission] people are starting to open their eyes. That really the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples has to change. Because there has been a lot of suffering<sup>1</sup>.

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1 CBC Radio. *Truth and Reconciliation: Not an aboriginal problem, a Canadian one.* <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-june-2-2015-1.3096552/truth-and-reconciliation-not-an-aboriginal-problem-a-canadian-one-1.3096581>

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