

Alberta University of the Arts Indigenous Pathways:

Soksipaitapiinwahsin
(Good Living Ways)



**Alberta
University
of the
Arts**



Alberta University of the Arts (AUArts) is situated on the ancestral land of the Siksikaitsitapi – Blackfoot Confederacy which includes the Siksika, Kainai, Piikani Nations and the shared territories of the Tsuut’ina Nation as well as the Iyarhe Nakoda-Stoney which includes Bearspaw, Chiniki, Good Stoney Nations and also the home of the Métis Nation of District 5 and 6. The City of Calgary has long been called Moh’kins’tsis by the Siksikaitsitapi, Guts’ists’i by the Tsuut’ina, and Wichîspa by the Nakoda.

To better live the work of truth, justice, responsibility and reconciliation, the University respectfully acknowledges the territories, languages and the way of life, including the visual and oral practices of each of these groups.

By virtue of the Blackfoot Treaty #7 1877, the University recognizes that we are all treaty people. Together we share this land and work to learn, walk and grow together in respectful ways.

Acknowledgement of the Writing Committee

This five-year plan is AUArts' first formally endorsed Alberta University of the Arts Indigenous Pathways: Soksipaitapiiwahsin (AUArts Indigenous Pathways) and responds to the themes that emerged in dialogue by articulating specific goals, strategies, and timelines.

The development and writing of AUArts Indigenous Pathways involved the hard work and dedication of faculty, students, and staff from across the University. Over several months, and in close consultation with the Indigenous Elder Council, the Writing Committee met and prepared numerous drafts. The University acknowledges the contributions of:

Darryl "Mistatay" Brass Sr., Peepeekisis Cree Nation
Darryl Brass Jr., Anishnaabek
Linda Brass, Anishnaabek
Edmee Comstock, Métis Nation
Paul Daniels, Stoney Nakoda Nation
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Mary Ann Forbes, Student Coordinator, Inuk, Nunavummiuq
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Jillian Dolan / *Mistahimaskwa* (left), *Poundmaker* (right)
Digital Illustration

Our Journey Towards the Pathways

The 94 Calls to Action following the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has created a sense of urgency for universities to act, particularly after the discoveries of unmarked graves at Indian Residential School sites across Canada.

Developing institutional Indigenous education strategies is work that will take considerable time and resources from across campus and will require the type of cross-cultural collaboration that Treaty 7 was intended to produce almost a century and a half ago.

AUArts Indigenous Pathways: Soksipaitapiiwahsin, therefore, represents not an endpoint but a beginning, the first step in a long journey of transformative change. AUArts is committed to addressing the barriers that Indigenous Peoples have faced in accessing and participating in post-secondary education and to work towards reconciliation by taking “Action”; we strive to build and strengthen respectful relationships with First Nations, Inuit, Métis peoples, communities, and lands.

As of January 1, 2023, 79 self-identified Indigenous students were enrolled at AUArts (approximately 7% of the total student population).

AUArts recognizes that artistic practices have long been used by many non-Indigenous people in this place to erase Indigenous presence, oppress and devalue their cultures, and create conditions for the dispossession of their lands. We want to change this situation and help future artists to not repeat these harmful ideas and practices. We are still learning the paths in this journey, and we commit to taking this responsibility seriously. AUArts Indigenous Pathways is the result of collective efforts involving Indigenous and non-Indigenous AUArts community members over three years. While the document was finalized in the summer of 2023, it is important to acknowledge the substantial contributions made by those who created space for dialogue. Although the original draft was not formally adopted, the expertise, insight and aspirations shared during those early years were not forgotten.

These insights helped to build a foundation upon which Indigenous Pathways was created. The development of the plan comprised four phases: (1) An internal review of existing AUArts literature and the Strategic

and Academic Plans; (2) Engagement of the AUArts community that included students, Elders, faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners; (3) A review of all collected feedback, quantitative and qualitative data, and the expertise of Indigenous consultants and Knowledge Keepers; and (4) A final draft review by Elders and Indigenous students. AUArts Indigenous Pathways is designed to reflect and serve the best interests of Indigenous students, Elders, staff, and faculty at AUArts.

First Nations (regardless of status), Inuit and Métis students deserve equitable access to thrive in an educational environment that allows them to achieve their academic pursuits while also ensuring that they can strengthen their personal identity and cultural connectedness. We strive to create an environment where their voices, cultures, languages, and worldviews are respected and celebrated throughout the institution.



AUArts' Lodgepole Center opened in 2016 and is a gathering place that facilitates Elder advising, supports traditional ceremonies, programming, workshops, sharing circles, and more. The name, Lodgepole Center, was gifted by the Elder Council and represents the main lodge pole that supports a lodge, and at its core, reflects the coming together of all things and the circle of life teachings. The Lodgepole Center logo was designed by Kristy North Peigan (Alum, BDes), Piikani Nation.



Forging the Pathways through the Metaphor

AUArts Indigenous Pathways: Soksipaitapiiwahsin continues with expanding on the Lodgepole Center, Indigenous Values, and circle of life teachings by incorporating the metaphor of a lodge. Within a Lodge the transfer of knowledge never ends and continues today.

When a Lodge is set, the four largest and strongest poles set the foundational structure; these four poles are placed at the west and east doors. The meeting point of the poles at the top of a Lodge symbolizes the exchange of energy and knowledge between the cosmos and earth. A Lodge canvas encloses the structure to protect, shelter, and provide warmth. The center Lodge pole grounds and supports the canvas.

As indicated by Elders, the lodge pole supports the lodge, reflects the coming together of all things, and the teaching of the circle of life. The bottom part of a canvas represents our connection to the earth and everything on the land. The doorway symbolizes an inflow and outflow of relationships with all peoples and everything on the land. Inside the Lodge is a fire to provide warmth and nurturing. Stories, ceremonies, songs, relationships, and dreams are shared around a fire.

AUArts Indigenous Pathways: Soksipaitapiiwahsin was endorsed by AUArts President and CEO on behalf of the Board of Governors, and endorsed by the Elder Council, and was circulated and discussed amongst senior leaders from both the administrative and academic sides of the University. A plan for community engagement was developed, and it was renamed Alberta University of the Arts Indigenous Pathways: Soksipaitapiiwahsin, meaning "Good Living Ways" in the Siksika – Blackfoot language.

AUArts' Vision for the Indigenous Pathways

AUArts' vision is "to change the world through art, craft and design while enriching creative communities and economies." AUArts commits to realizing this vision by collaborating with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and artists, recognizing Treaty 7 knowledge and practices, that enhance the lived experiences of Indigenous faculty, students and staff. We envision an unbiased and resilient community where both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists and creative thinkers who work and study here succeed.

AUArts Indigenous Pathways is designed in parallel with AUArts' Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility goals and drivers with a commitment to supporting the diverse cultures, learning, and creativity of all students, faculty and staff who are a part of the AUArts community. Meaningful transformation at AUArts may require a shift in values, attitudes, belief systems, behaviors, and ongoing commitment and intention.

Foundation of the Indigenous Pathways: Indigenous Values

We acknowledge the diversity of Indigenous value systems in Treaty 7, between First Nations, Inuit and Métis, and across North and South America. The wisdom of Elders, Indigenous values and worldviews provide a foundation to guide our work.

- Respect and responsibility to care for each other, the land, animals, environment, ancestral knowledge, and future generations.
- Creating brave and ethical spaces so that students have the courage to be themselves and environments where students, Elders, staff and faculty can share their truth.
- Compassion for self and others, humbly acknowledging the equality of all life including humans, plants and animals. The land does not belong to us, we belong to the land.
- Working towards balance in family, school, work, and life (physical, spiritual, intellectual, emotional). Learning and healing are also cyclical and continuous.
- Sharing and exchange (reciprocity) of knowledge, skills and experience for mutual benefit, while respecting and honoring Indigenous ways of knowing, being, learning, and doing.
- Wise decision making through discussion and consensus.
- Fostering a sense of community and working together for a common cause. Recognizing that all students, Elders, staff and faculty contribute to building community, and good work comes from creating meaningful relationships.



Genevieve McDonald / Sabe / 30x48 Acrylic

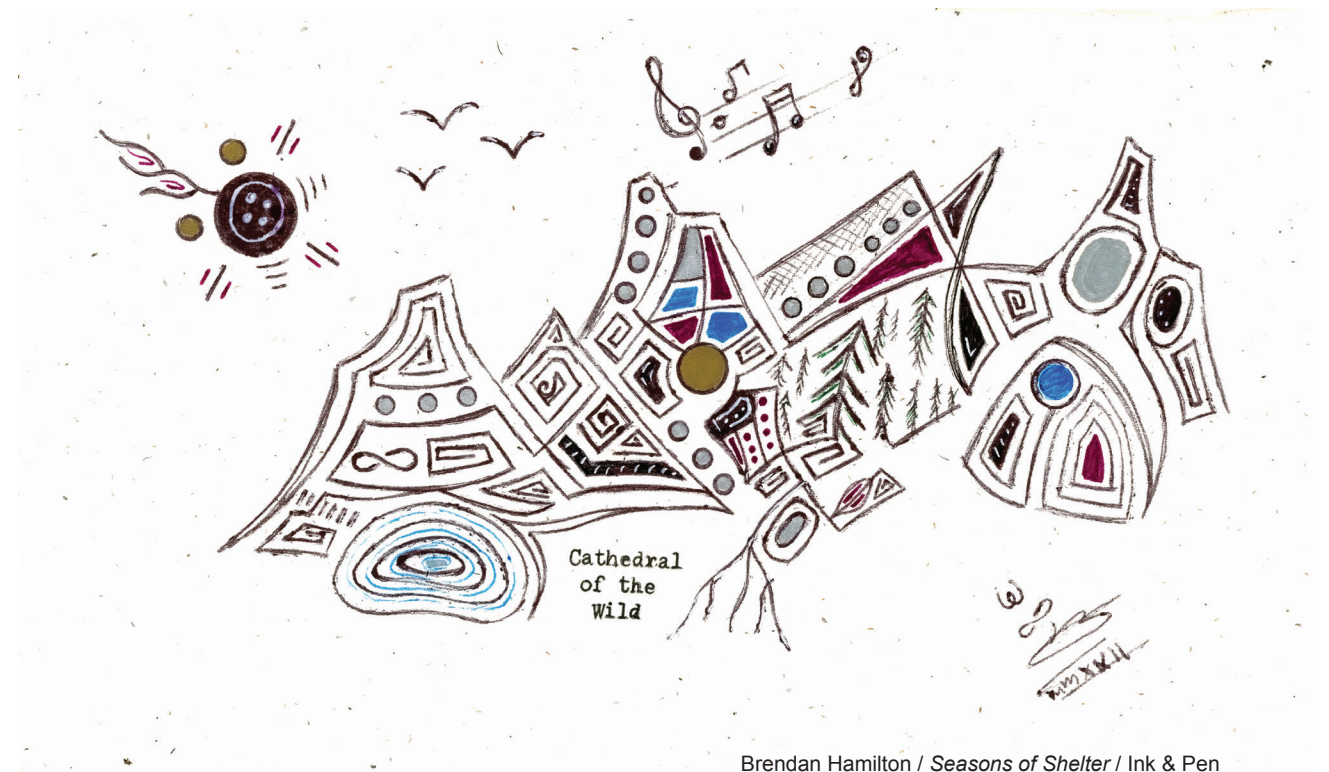
Paths to Reconciliation: Reconcili-Actions

1. Keep enhancing the role of the Elder Council

The Indigenous Elder Council was created in 2018 as a mandated body for universities that accept Indigenous funding. The Elder Council has representatives from the Treaty 7 territory or who make Treaty 7 territory their home and who are claimed from their respective communities. It is our expressed desire to decolonize AUArts' approach to working with the Elder Council and current Indigenous students, staff and alumni ensuring that the members are engaged and consulted in a purposeful and meaningful way. The Elder Council is well positioned to provide guidance to AUArts in integrating Indigenous Knowledge in programming and curricula, and in hiring Indigenous faculty and staff. The Elder Council plays a pivotal role in helping to advance AUArts' reconciliation and Indigeneity agenda; however, to do so, representation must be included in AUArts' leadership and governing bodies such as the Board of Governors.

- 1.1 Include Indigenous representation into committees, advisories, and leadership circles.
- 1.2 Apply appropriate on-boarding and culturally relevant transition supports for new faculty and staff including mentoring and access to Elders.
- 1.3 Enhance the Elder-in Residence Program and Elder Council, by ensuring access to all Knowledge Keepers.
- 1.4 Governance: AUArts administration will review how to better incorporate the Indigenous voice and worldviews in areas such as Cabinet, the Board of Governors, and General Faculties Council.
- 1.5 Inclusion of three student Peer Mentors as representatives on the Elder Council: A male, female and 2SLGBTQ+ identifying student from the Peer Mentorship Program will be invited to be the Indigenous student voices to participate in Elder Council meetings and advocate on student issues and concerns.

Stephanie One Spot / *Indian Days* / Ink & Pen



Brendan Hamilton / *Seasons of Shelter* / Ink & Pen

2. Establish spaces for Indigenous cultures and community within AUArts while the Lodgepole Center stands as the primary and autonomous space for Indigenous cultures and community to gather, seek knowledge, guidance, and supports

Space in this context refers to both physical and linguistic spaces, and spaces within existing ceremonies, such as convocation, where Indigenous life at AUArts can flourish. The Lodgepole Center and the proposal for specific practices and ceremonies for Indigenous students are examples of how this commitment can be (and has been) put into action at AUArts.

- 2.1 Ensure the Lodgepole Center is visible within the institution, presenting permanent and rotational physical markers, art, images, and languages that relate to Indigenous Peoples.
- 2.2 Lodgepole Center programming continues to address the needs of Indigenous students. Special consideration will be provided to the areas of artistic and career guidance, Elder and Knowledge Keeper integration and teachings, and mutual support among students.
- 2.3 Information pertaining to the Lodgepole Center, Indigenous supports, programming and resources will be regularly updated on all communication channels. In addition to electronic resources and communication, physical print resources, such as a student guidebook/handbook, will be created and available through the Lodgepole Center.
- 2.4 Increase indoor and outdoor spaces for Indigenous people to gather and conduct Land-based and Culture-based education, cultural practices, and ceremonies.
- 2.5 Create a professional development program that trains faculty and staff who are seeking to foster safe and inclusive classrooms and workplaces.
- 2.6 Co-host meaningful Indigenous cultural events and traditional ceremonies to heighten awareness of Indigenous history, culture and tradition, Indigenous Nations and communities, and to promote dialogue, partnerships, and public initiatives with Indigenous Nations and members of Indigenous communities to foster reconciliation.
- 2.7 The Lodgepole Center will provide clear and timely communications with Indigenous students regarding programming updates, events, and overall Lodgepole Center activities.

3. Enhance recruitment and academic success of Indigenous students

Programs should focus on proactive recruitment of Indigenous students, the admissions process, financial accessibility, academic supports, and wellness of Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students. Recruitment and retention strategies should be developed in collaboration with the Lodgepole Center, the Academic Programs division, other offices, and Indigenous political, territorial and treaty organizations.

- 3.1 Ensure that Indigenous pathways for admission, such as dual credit opportunities and transfer agreements with Indigenous community high schools, colleges and institutions, are revised regularly and/or established.
- 3.2 Ensure Indigenous language courses, such as Blackfoot, Dene, Stoney, Cree, Michif, etc. are acceptable admission requirements, along with the other requirements.
- 3.3 Expand Indigenous student access to needs-based financial aid for tuition, living expenses, emergency travel, child-care, housing, and cultural/ceremonial development.
- 3.4 Develop marketing materials that highlight the experience of Indigenous students and showcase alumni.
- 3.5 To support incoming students, the Lodgepole Center will provide an annual New Indigenous Student Orientation. This orientation will cover important information regarding Indigenous programming and services provided by the Lodgepole Center and the larger institution. This orientation will also provide socialization opportunities wherein Indigenous students can build safe community.
- 3.6 Offer First-Year Foundations peer mentorship program that positions Indigenous students to meet or exceed their learning goals.
- 3.7 Offer Indigenous learners a robust mental health, wellbeing, advising and spiritual support infrastructure that acknowledges inter-generational trauma, socio-economic marginalization, and Indigenous ways of knowing and doing.
- 3.8 Increase data collection and assessment of key indicators of student mental health and wellness.
- 3.9 Build a culturally responsive academic and career advising model that increases personal capacity while addressing the diverse needs of Indigenous students and alumni.
- 3.10 Provide targeted support for Indigenous learners transitioning to employment and work with those seeking employment in their respective Indigenous communities.
- 3.11 Expand participation of Indigenous students in career planning, advising, and work-integrated learning opportunities.
- 3.12 Ensure all employees are equipped with the skills and knowledge to attend to the holistic needs of Indigenous learners.
- 3.13 Strengthen the Aahwaatkamooksi Peer Mentorship Program to ensure it aligns with Indigenous ways of doing. Mentorship programming will focus on Indigenous cultural learnings and mutual support, artistic expression, leadership development, and career advancement.



4. Increase the number of Indigenous faculty and staff

Increasing the number of Indigenous faculty and staff is important from an equity perspective; it will help create welcoming conditions for Indigenous students and transform educational institutions for all students. Indigenous faculty and staff members bring culture, community, and knowledge to the University; moreover, they strengthen curricular objectives and learning outcomes by offering advice in curriculum planning and implementation that non-Indigenous faculty members rely on. Indigenous staff members bring diverse ways of knowing and practices.

- 4.1 Implement a robust strategy supporting the recruitment, retention and advancement of Indigenous employees with ongoing appointments, including staff, faculty, and senior administrative positions.
- 4.2 Ensure all job postings are welcoming of Indigenous candidates using inclusive language and promoted heavily within Indigenous community circles, venues and publications.
- 4.3 Continue to prioritize providing culturally responsive and timely financial compensation for external Indigenous vendors and guests.
- 4.4 Provide introductory Truth and Reconciliation training, and Elder, Knowledge Keeper, Visiting Guests and Artists Protocol training within the first year of employment.

5. Expand Indigenous programming and curricular offerings which explore Indigenous art, life, cultures, and traditions

Most Schools at AUArts have integrated Indigenous Knowledge into their programming, some are more developed than others and, in some instances, Indigenous content does not exist. As a priority, AUArts should conduct an in-depth review to identify and address gaps in existing programs and opportunities to implement Indigenous pedagogy into new programs with an Indigenous focus. Indigenous languages have been systematically eradicated, as such; AUArts should intensify its efforts to provide access to Indigenous languages and align with the goals of Reconciliation.

- 5.1 Undertake Schools-level curriculum reviews to map Indigenous curriculum content and pedagogical practice, faculty/student experience, best practices, and actionable recommendations moving forward.
- 5.2 AUArts curricula will focus on ensuring Indigenous content, including accurate Indigenous history, ways of knowing, art, community best practices, and in consultation with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, artists, students, and community members are a key component of the Global model and approaches to curriculum that exist.
- 5.3 Land-based and Culture-based curriculum and connection: AUArts will collaborate with local Indigenous leaders, Elders and Knowledge Keepers, and community members to provide Land-based and Culture-based learning opportunities for Indigenous students to reconnect with the land and culture.
- 5.4 Expand community-based partnerships that promote cultural sustainability and support existing and new language revitalization initiatives.

6. Facilitate research that is relevant to Indigenous life, and respects Indigenous approaches to knowledge and learning

Focus should be placed on policy, economic and legal areas that shape Indigenous experience. Collaboration is needed in exploring Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches in these areas, as well as making room for Indigenous research and/or Indigenous forms of disseminating research. Research should include a commitment to listening to and learning from Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, ecology, spiritual practice and experience. All schools, divisions and organized research units can play a role in this.

- 6.1 Decolonizing approach to working with Elders and Knowledge Keepers.
- 6.2 Increase Indigenous representation in staff and new hires.
- 6.3 Intersectionality: AUArts will work to inform staff, faculty, non-Indigenous students, and community members of the intersectional nature of the contemporary Indigenous identity. Faculty will be trained to recognize that the artistic expression of Indigenous students as being valuable independent of the preconceptions of Indigenous art.
- 6.4 Co-develop and implement a strategy that will mobilize research that is co-developed with and led by Indigenous communities in support of priorities identified locally, nationally, and globally.
- 6.5 Co-develop Indigenous research protocols and community-specific ethical research guidelines to ensure research is being conducted in a respectful, culturally responsive, and formalized manner.

7. Engage with Indigenous communities to enrich the learning process

University courses should incorporate Indigenous content into the curriculum; this can open opportunities for experiential and Work Integrated Learning (WIL). An excellent example of such educational learning experiences is Land-based education by engaging Indigenous Alumni, Artists, Knowledge Keepers and/or Community Leaders. Other schools are exploring similar programs that are relevant to their disciplines, either within or outside their formal degree programs.

- 7.1 AUArts will provide cross-cultural Land-based learning opportunities to all AUArts students, bolstering cross-cultural understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples.
- 7.2 Identify and make visible the longstanding connections of Indigenous peoples to culturally significant places across the Calgary region and beyond.
- 7.3 Develop new partnerships with local, regional and international Indigenous communities to offer mutually beneficial community-based experiential and WIL opportunities (e.g. international experiences, community-engaged learning courses, internships, field experiences in Indigenous communities, etc.).

8. Ensure that the perceptions and experiences of Indigenous community members are reflected in the classroom, on campus and in university life.

There should be University-wide educational and professional development opportunities for students, faculty, and staff, about Indigenous world views to help foster a culture of inclusion. This will help to combat discrimination and stereotypes. Protocols should be established to acknowledge traditional Indigenous territories and to invite Indigenous community members to participate in University life at AUArts; this includes recruitment and retention of University staff from Indigenous communities.

- 8.1 Support faculty/departmental units to identify and socialize the principles set out in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG2S+), United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Indigenous Education Protocol as specific strategic areas of focus and commitment.
- 8.2 Develop special events and programming that highlights the diversity of Indigenous cultures and cultural practices, including powwows, Land-based and Culture-based activities, and gallery exhibits highlighting Indigenous artistic expression and experience.

9. Develop and expand educational opportunities for Indigenous communities

There should be consultation with Indigenous communities to develop and expand educational opportunities; this could include the development and/or expansion of bridging programs to and from university studies, and lifelong learning and professional development programs intended to engage and support Indigenous communities. AUArts' Indigenous alumni should be included and engaged as part of the strategic imperative.

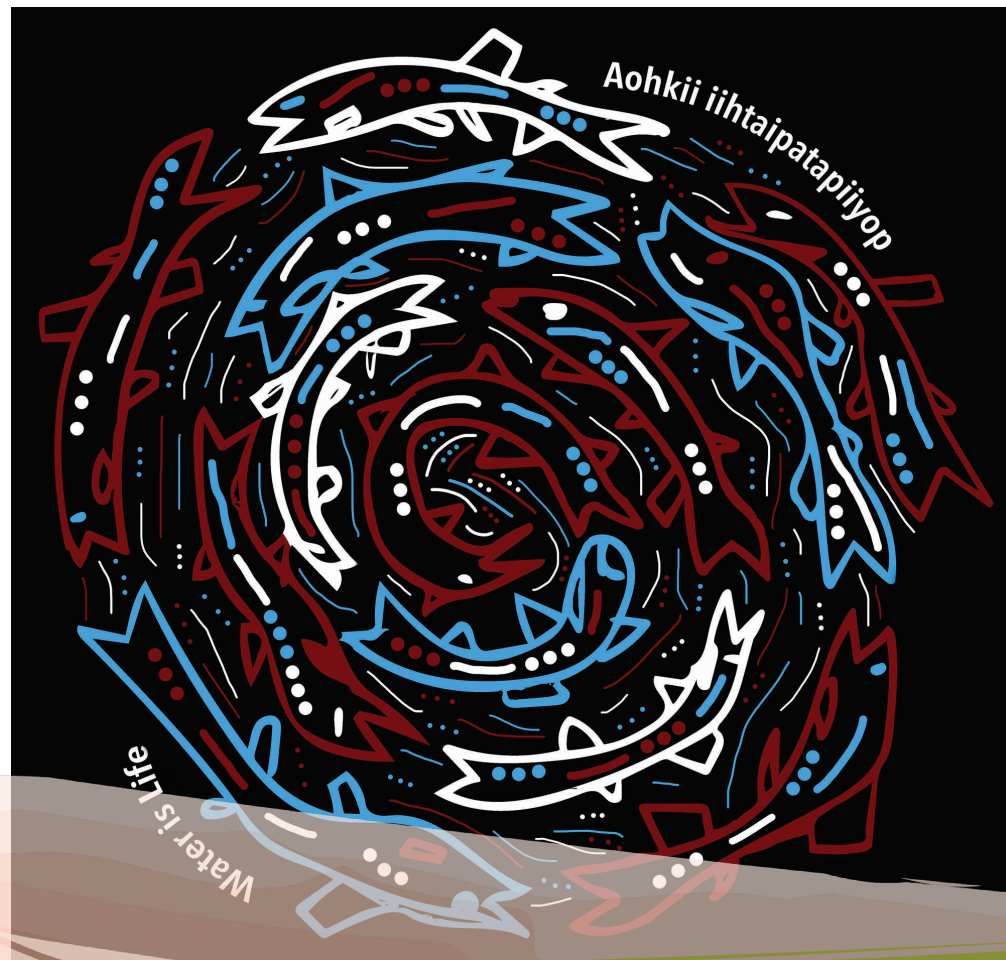
- 9.1 Alumni programming and post-graduation follow-up will be increased, focusing on strengthening Indigenous alumni hiring opportunities throughout the institution and externally.
- 9.2 In collaboration with Indigenous communities, organizations, and post-secondary institutions, develop and deliver culturally responsive academic upgrading/bridging programs that can be delivered in Indigenous communities and/or on campus through Continuing Education.
- 9.3 Increase the reach of existing outreach programs including those geared towards Indigenous youth.
- 9.4 Strengthen relationships with secondary and post-secondary institutions, urban organizations, and Indigenous communities, supporting a multi-pathway approach for transitioning Indigenous students into post-secondary studies.

10. Ensure the process for implementing, evaluating, and redeveloping these Pathways involves Indigenous community members both within and outside the university

Alberta University of the Arts Indigenous Pathways: Soksipaitapiiwahsin is a living document that will evolve, adapt, and guide AUArts. Consequently, implementation should involve key roles for the Lodgepole Center and the Elder Council, and those organizations demonstrating our accountability to broader communities and governments. Implementation should engage students, faculty, and staff and their representative organizations. Given the breadth and depth of the commitments set out in this plan, AUArts will need to establish appropriate governance and leadership over the advancement of reconciliation, which may include a dedicated Dean and support staff for these matters.

- 10.1 In addition to the Elder Council, the Lodgepole Center will create an Indigenous Advisory Council formed by leaders, influencers, and representatives from local and surrounding Indigenous communities who have a connection with the arts, business, education, community, and government.

A.J. Kluck / Aohkii iihtaipatapiiyop / *Water is Life*, 2021
Digital Drawing





A STIMSON 21

Adrian Stimson / *Mannipokaaiini & Martriarchs*, 2021
Graphite, Oil on Wood, 24" h x 36" w

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