

Background:

The EndPovertyEdmonton (EPE) Indigenous Circle is fluid, open and inclusive of all Indigenous peoples and communities and includes Elder(s), knowledge keepers, cultural resource people, Indigenous youth, and strongly encourage of those essential voices who have firsthand experience with the barriers and challenges of living in poverty in our City.

Purpose:

It is integral to EPE to create a reconciliatory environment through true engagement and authentic relationship with Indigenous peoples and ensure those First Voices; and/or Indigenous Circle members with financial limitations have an equal opportunity to share their wisdom to guide the collective work to end poverty.

Organizations that use first voice people in an advisory role, often do so without regard for the time taken by the individual and provide no compensation for the time involved or, too little compensation. The Lived Experience Advisory Council (LEAC)¹ strongly advised in 2016 that if those who are seeking lived experience consultation are receiving payment for their time, then those sharing their expertise (lived experience) should be compensated equally.

The Indigenous Circle First Voice Inclusion and Equity Protocol provides EndPovertyEdmonton direction to support equitable participation of members to take part in the Indigenous Circle in a respectful way.

- It acknowledges that all contributions of those who come into the circle are of value.
- It recognizes that each person will be impacted by different barriers in different ways.
- It empowers the circle to treat each situation and person as unique.

The Concept of First Voice:

The concept of First Voice was an inclusion methodology first used in the development of UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2001. It was based on finding the balance between the old and new practices with respect for cultural diversity. The definition was adapted in the development of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) which called for the leadership and participation of indigenous peoples in all endeavours through their own First Voice. Internationally and nationally, community organizations and various government sectors² have embraced the use of this term in community engagement sessions to actively listen to the voices of Indigenous and non-

¹ Lived Experience Advisory Council. (2016). *Nothing about us without us: Seven principles for leadership and inclusion of people with lived experience of homelessness*. Toronto: The Homeless Hub Press. www.homelesshub.ca/NothingAboutUsWithoutUs

² The term is also being increasingly used in wider contexts on behalf of other groups that are seen as being ignored or undervalued, as with the West London charity First Voice, which provides an advocacy service and centre for vulnerable elderly in community care <http://www.firstvoice.org.uk>

Indigenous community members and/or clientele in which they serve to better understand and address their needs and strengthen community cohesiveness.

Giving and Gifting from the Sharing Ethos of Indigenous People:

It is vital to frame 'compensation' or 'honoraria' from an Indigenous lens and with Indigenous values around giving or gifting. The Indigenous practice of giving or gifting has unique significance. The tradition shows respect to the receiver of the gift, as well as to their family and ancestors, it is a way to show appreciation of the knowledge that is exchanged particularly when seeking guidance, advice, or for assistance from those with distinct abilities such as Elder(s), knowledge keepers, cultural resource people, and acknowledges the value of lived experiences.

Indigenous Gifting/Giving is about the sharing of resources to benefit and support others. EPE views the stories and shared experiences by our First Voice participants as gifts, gifts that will provide real insight to decision making processes, research, and all endeavours, which creates a balanced approach. Gifts are an intrinsic part of the sharing ethos of Indigenous people and sharing has always been a necessary aspect of survival. Indigenous peoples have historically been motivated by the joy of taking care of one another and trust that when in need, each individual will be supported by the community. Implementing this traditional methodology of giving not only strengthens our relationships, but also wraps the purpose in an Indigenous principle of reciprocity and the act of giving shows EndPovertyEdmonton's commitment to the city's Indigenous community.

Indigenous Circle Participation Equity:

The Indigenous Circle recognizes the value of First Voice and commits to creating equity and inclusion for those participating, guiding, and providing voices of experience. This creates an authentic relationship which simply means that each individual is treated equally and those providing a First Voice are not 'tokenized' members but are equal partners in our goal to end poverty.

The principle of creating participation equity is that no individual should neither bear an unfair burden of participation nor should they be unfairly excluded from the potential benefits of participation. The goal is to create a truly trauma informed approach in which the stigmatization of financial barriers is eliminated by ensuring that:

- a EPE Indigenous Circle First Voice participant experiencing poverty will not have to justify their level of need;
- a EPE Indigenous Circle member will not have to disclose personal vulnerabilities nor justify their need;

- First Voice participants will not be considered ‘volunteers’ as per standard research and community engagement practices, and will be respected for their expertise and have a measure of equal membership of the EPE Indigenous Circle.

Guidelines:

The approach and administration for supporting First Voice Inclusion and Participation Equity implemented by EPE for Indigenous Circle members of the EndPovertyEdmonton Indigenous Circle meetings is decolonized and protects an individual’s sense of self and dignity using trauma informed principles.

Indigenous Circle (IC) First Voice Inclusion and Participation Equity Eligibility Criteria:

Any pre-existing Indigenous Circle member as of March 2018 or individual invited by an existing member to sit as an Indigenous Circle member (*Membership criteria will be defined by the Indigenous Circle terms of reference*) and;

- Are providing a First Voice from experience and knowledge of the barriers and challenges of living in poverty in the City of Edmonton; **or**
- Are a participant experiencing financial barriers to EndPovertyEdmonton Indigenous Circle meeting participation and are **not** being compensated by an employer or agency to attend EndPovertyEdmonton Indigenous Circle meetings;
- Other circumstances may be considered

First Voice Inclusion and Participation Equity Support Model:

The following form of gifting will be used in providing First Voice Inclusion and Participation Equity support:

- A financial gift in the form of a Credit gift card, using the livable wage³ as a benchmark and the standard length of an EndPovertyEdmonton Indigenous Circle meeting, will be provided to those who meet the above inclusion criteria which will also include the total of any activation fees.
- A traditional gift may be requested in lieu of a financial gift. (i.e. traditional medicines, foods, etc.)

First Voice Inclusion and Participation Equity Support Procedure:

1. An Indigenous Circle member that meets the above criteria and requires First Voice Inclusion and Participation Equity support will make a verbal request to the Indigenous

³ *The living wage benchmark used will be determined as per research by the Edmonton Social Planning Council*

Circle co-chairs or they may request an EPE staff member to make the request on their behalf.

2. The co-chairs will inform the EPE secretariat of Indigenous Circle members requiring support to ensure to appropriate number of gifts are readily available for each Indigenous Circle meeting.
3. A form to track the serial numbers of gifts, date given and signature of the recipient of gift will be maintained by the EPE secretariat.

Indigenous Circle First Voice Inclusion and Equity Protocol Review:

- The First Voice Inclusion and Participation Equity Protocol will be reviewed annually by the Indigenous Circle.
- An annual limit will be set and sufficient funds to support the protocol will be budgeted and assessed each quarter.
- The process and criteria will be reviewed after an initial 3 month trial period.
- Once established the protocol will be reassessed annually.

Appendix A Note to be included in envelope with gift cards

As with any source of income, receiving a gift card from EndPovertyEdmonton may have implications if you receive monthly benefits or when you file your taxes.

For a list of tax preparation clinics in Edmonton please call 211 or visit www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/ndvdl/vlntr/clncs/edmonton-ab-eng.html