



**Honouring Culture.
Restoring Connection.**

Indigenous Engagement



Together, we are creating space for Indigenous voices to lead and for identity, culture, and strength to flourish.

Where Everyone Belongs

Creating space for Indigenous strength, healing, and identity.

At Bissell Centre, we envision our community without poverty, one rooted in respect, belonging, and cultural connection.

For Indigenous peoples, poverty and homelessness are not individual failings, but the direct outcomes of colonization, systemic racism, and generations of imposed separation from land, family, and culture.

We respond to this truth through Indigenous knowledge, ceremony, and community, not through rigid systems.

Indigenous Engagement creates space for identity, healing, and reconnection. Every day, we walk alongside Indigenous community members on their own paths, honouring their strengths, their stories, and their right to define a meaningful life.

This is not just support. It's a journey home, one that creates ripples of healing across families, communities, and generations yet to come.

For many supporters, reconciliation feels incredibly important but can feel unclear on where to start. As Treaty people, we all share responsibility for the wellbeing of the land and the communities who call it home. Indigenous teachings remind us that we are all connected — to each other, to place, and to future generations. When Indigenous people are supported to heal and thrive, our whole community becomes stronger.

Led by Culture. Rooted in Community.

Supports that honour ceremony, kinship and self-determination are Indigenous designed and led.

Bissell Centre's Indigenous Engagement program is built on Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Indigenous-led and deeply relational, it meets community members where they are—with respect, ceremony, and love.

Every day, our team offers practical supports through a cultural lens:

CULTURAL SUPPORTS

- Access to Elders and Knowledge Keepers for guidance, healing, and connection.
- Opportunities for smudging, talking circles, and traditional medicines.
- Through singing, drumming, and dancing, community members are invited to take an active role in their own healing journeys.
- Community gatherings like seasonal feasts, round dances, solstice celebrations, and cultural camps.

SYSTEM SUPPORTS

- Help navigating housing, ID, health, justice, and income support.
- Referrals to culturally safe services within and beyond Bissell Centre.

Our team also works internally to support cultural safety across Bissell Centre, helping staff and systems build capacity, understanding and accountability.

This is holistic, wraparound support rooted in Indigenous knowledge, ceremony and community connection.

The Crisis Beneath the Surface

Indigenous people are overrepresented among people experiencing homelessness in Edmonton, comprising roughly 55% to 65% of the unhoused population while making up about 6% of the general population.

This isn't by chance. It is the ongoing legacy of residential schools and the Sixties Scoop, combined with current child welfare and justice systems that continue to disproportionately impact Indigenous people and perpetuate harm.

Disconnection from culture is both a cause and a consequence of poverty. Many Indigenous community members don't feel safe accessing mainstream services. Others have never had the chance to experience ceremony or connect with their roots.

Without that sense of belonging and identity, healing becomes harder. And without healing, long-term stability can feel out of reach.

At Bissell Centre, we know that reconnection with culture is where healing begins, and where lasting stability takes root.





Healing Happens in Relationship

**At Bissell Centre, we don't deliver services.
We build relationships.**

Our Indigenous Engagement team doesn't lead from the front, we journey beside each person. We honour their pace, their choices, and their desire to reconnect with culture on their own terms.

The work is intentional, rooted in trust, and guided by traditional knowledge. Some people come for a smudge. Some stay for a circle. Some return only when they're ready.

We offer trust before advice, ceremony before paperwork, and listening before acting.

Because healing isn't a transaction. It's a process— one that unfolds through connection, consistency, and care.

Indigenous teachings speak of "All My Relations" — the understanding that our lives are woven together. Healing in one life strengthens families, communities, and future generations. Our healing is interconnected.

Together with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community, we're creating spaces where people are not only supported- they are truly seen.



Healing happens when
someone sees your spirit.



“They didn’t judge me. They just helped. It changed my life.”

– Joey

| A Journey of Reconnection

When Joey first came to Bissell Centre, he was homeless, grieving, and searching for someone who would listen and journey alongside him. “They didn’t judge me,” he remembers. “They just helped.”

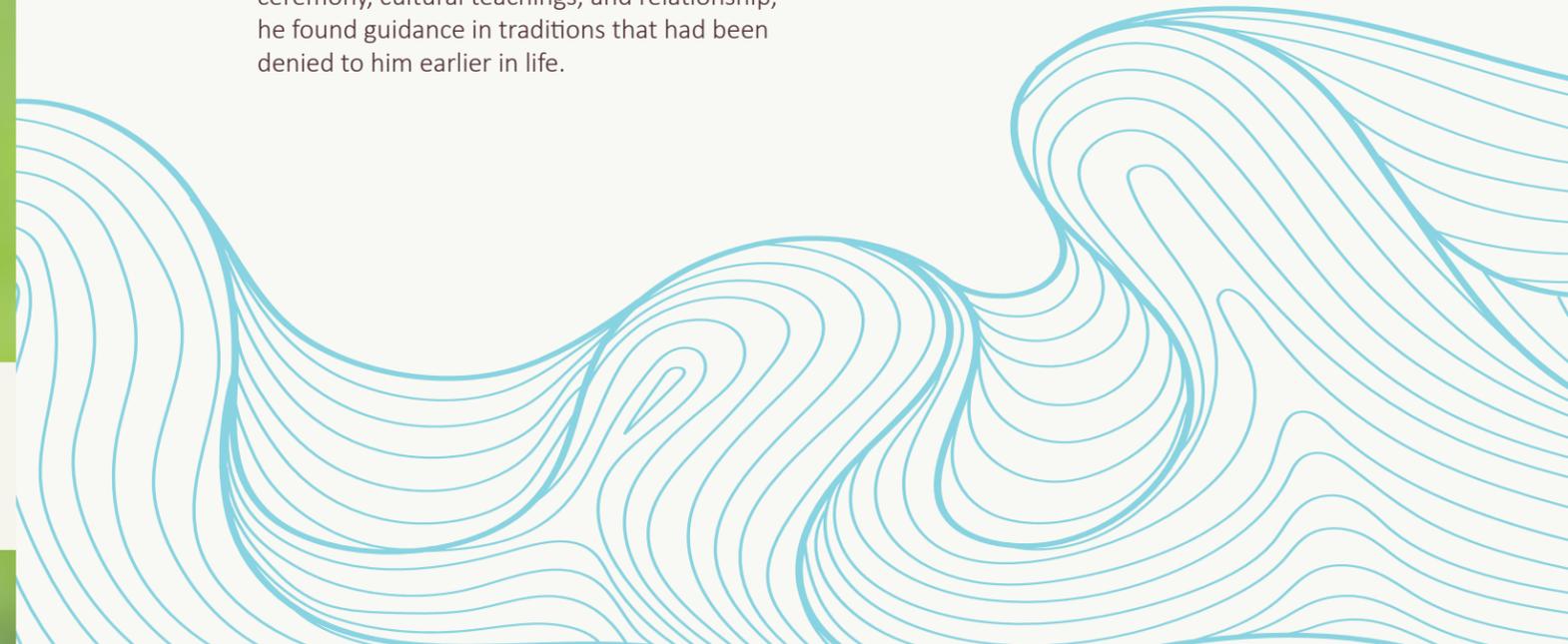
What made the difference was not a program or a checklist, but a relationship built on trust. When staff asked Joey whether he wanted support, the choice remained his. That moment marked the beginning of meaningful change.

Joey grew up in a residential school, where his connection to culture, language, and identity was profoundly disrupted. Those experiences left deep scars, but also a determination to turn his life around. With support from the Indigenous Engagement team, Joey secured housing, accessed vital supports, and began reconnecting with his cultural roots. Through ceremony, cultural teachings, and relationship, he found guidance in traditions that had been denied to him earlier in life.

“They helped me with everything—my ID, my place, and reconnecting with my kid,” he says. “There’s a big difference between someone giving you bread and you getting your own.”

This reflects Bissell Centre’s approach: offering practical support while honouring each person’s responsibility, strengths, and readiness for change.

Today, Joey continues to strengthen his cultural connections, rebuild relationships with his family, and create stability on his own terms. His journey reflects what is possible when Indigenous-led, relational support is sustained over time—opening pathways for people to move forward with dignity, purpose, and hope.



| Sustain Culture. Support Community.

We invite you to uplift Indigenous communities and help culture thrive for generations to come.

A gift to Bissell's Indigenous Engagement program fosters healing, cultural connection, and long-term empowerment. It's not just support for today, it's an investment in identity, dignity, and community that will ripple across time.

This work is slow, relational and sacred. For those who care about reconciliation but are unsure where to begin, this is a meaningful place to start. Supporting Indigenous-led healing is a practical and respectful way to contribute to reconciliation in action. And it's only possible with your support.

When you give, you join a trusted circle that honours Indigenous voices and strengthens cultural ties. Every dollar fuels programs that help people reconnect, heal, and thrive.

We invite you to walk with us, whether through a one-time gift, a multi-year commitment, or a legacy donation.

The Indigenous Engagement program requires \$325,000 annually to sustain its current impact. With increased funding, we can host even more cultural camps, deepen Elders' involvement, and expand Indigenous-led programming. Because this work is relational, consistent funding over multiple years allows trust to grow and long-term stability to take root.

Together, we'll build a community where Indigenous knowledge is honoured, culture is celebrated, and future generations are empowered to live with pride and purpose.

“At Bissell Centre, we believe real change happens when Indigenous knowledge and other lived experiences help guide the way, and we are proud to support that vision.”

– Louise Traynor, Co-Chief Executive Officer





The Power of Culture. The Strength of Community.

Your support helps sustain Indigenous connection,
ceremony, and strength – now and for future generations.

Make your gift today and be part of this journey of reconnection and resilience.

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