

Indigenous Action Plan

Calgary TELUS Convention Centre

About the artist: Keegan Starlight

Keegan Starlight is a local Indigenous artist from the Tsuut'ina Nation. He has been an artist most of his life and has been doing freelance art projects for the past several years. Keegan's work is inspired by his cultural upbringing and he has been most notably recognized as a portrait artist. He likes to experiment with his work and he specializes in portraiture and mural paintings mainly of animals in landscape. Keegan and his wife, Amanda Starlight, have shared their art with audiences around the world, and you can see their pieces throughout the City of Calgary, including the Central Library.

When we met with Keegan, we sought a piece that would embody Mohkinstis—the Blackfoot name for Calgary—and the confluence of rivers that define this place. The CTCC is a gathering space, alive with conversation, creativity, and community. Each day, we witness the convergence of ideas, the sharing of stories, and the forging of new relationships. Keegan's work will honour that spirit and deepen our understanding of the land and its history.



A continued journey towards truth and reconciliation

I was honoured in September of 2024 to be gifted a Blackfoot name by an Elder who has shared a lot of knowledge and truths about where I reside, work and call home. This being Mohkinstis, the confluence of the Bow and Elbow rivers or what most know it as, Calgary.

The name Blue Heron is by no coincidence. Along my journey of both higher education and of truth and reconciliation, the blue heron has had significant meaning. It has shown up at times of difficulty, times of reflection and times when I needed to be reminded of the lands we are on. Along the shores of the BC coast during my Royal Roads Masters program, when hearing about the Elder's choice for my name or walking in nature, the heron was there.



I share this with you because as I learned more about Indigenous ways and teachings, I have reflected on how we are all part of something larger and we must respect and cherish the lands we live on.

As the CEO of the Calgary TELUS Convention Centre (the CTCC), I take the responsibility for leading the organization's journey to the truths of our past and how the CTCC can have meaningful action to reconciliation. For the CTCC this started by reflecting on our land acknowledgement and learning the why and history of all of us as newcomers to acknowledge the lands we are on.

For me, this was the beginning of a long-lasting and meaningful relationship with Elder Sheldon First Rider (the Elder who provided myself and my colleague with our Blackfoot names).

I will never forget when asking Elder Sheldon about Elder's providing a land acknowledgement and the chuckle that came from Elder Sheldon with the following statement: "Oh Kurby, I know where I am." You see it is not those who have been living since time immemorial on these lands that provides a land acknowledgment. It is upon us as newcomers to learn about the history of the lands; to protect and cherish it.

We are all on our own journey and it is one that will continue for both the organization and myself. For those visiting, I challenge you to acknowledge these lands, work with our team on how you can add an Indigenous component to your event and encourage your guests to learn one or two truths about the history of Mohkinstis.

Kurby Court,
President and CEO,
Calgary TELUS Convention Centre

Our Inspiration



The Calgary TELUS Convention Centre (CTCC) is located in Calgary's downtown core on Treaty 7 lands, inhabited by the Blackfoot people since time immemorial and other Indigenous nations such as the Stoney Nakoda Nation, the Tsuut'ina, and the Métis people of Alberta. As such and in the spirit of Truth and Reconciliation, our organization has begun the journey of the true history of the lands in which we work and live through meaningful dialogue with elders, knowledge keepers, and Indigenous and Métis peoples in the area.

> When we start to have this kind of dialogue with the world that comes here, maybe that will help them understand their needs and their responsibilities when they go home.
>
> – Elder Sheldon First Rider, Blackfoot Confederacy



> "Creating a meaningful Indigenous action plan takes intention, commitment and hard work before a single word of the plan is written. Calgary TELUS Convention Centre has been showing their commitment to reconciliation through reciprocity, meaningful change and commitment for years, and we're thrilled to see this coming to fruition through this Action Plan. We're excited about this important step taking place."
>
> – Chelsey Quirk, CEO, Indigenous Tourism Alberta

> "The TELUS Convention Centre exemplifies what it means to be a true partner in reconciliation. Over the past four years, I've had the privilege of working with their culturally competent and dedicated team. Their commitment to welcoming guests to Calgary while honoring the traditional and contemporary stories of Indigenous communities is inspiring. By taking meaningful steps toward reconciliation, they are setting a powerful example of inclusion, respect, and shared learning in the Meetings and Convention industry."
>
> – Mackenzie Brown

Our Journey

To begin our journey, it is important for our organization to understand the meaning and history of land acknowledgments and why they matter. They are more than just words; they are a form of greeting and a recognition of the gratitude we have to those Indigenous people who have been living in and taking care of the lands here on Turtle Island.

In working with a local Indigenous leader and Blackfoot Elder, members of our team took part in a walking land acknowledgement tour and workshop. Taking in the truths of Calgary's history at Mohkinstsis (the confluence of the Bow and the Elbow Rivers), we all left the day with further knowledge, humility, and eagerness to learn more.

The Calgary TELUS Convention Centre's land acknowledgement was written together as a team and shared with all our employees; it was also shared with local Elders, knowledge keepers, and others from the Indigenous community for feedback. This land acknowledgment is not meant to be static, but reflective of what is learned by one's own journey through truth and reconciliation. As a gathering place for delegates near and far, it is our intention to build a truly inviting and inclusive space where authentic stories and the convergence of ideas can be shared and created.

We are pleased to share with you the Calgary TELUS Convention Centre's Land Acknowledgement. Please know that we encourage you to open your meetings and events with a land acknowledgement to spark true and authentic dialogue; advance your journey to make it your own – reflective and from the heart.





Land Acknowledgement:

The Calgary TELUS Convention Centre hosts live events facilitating connections; promoting the convergence of ideas that may have never existed, – taking inspiration from “Wicispa (Win-Cheese-Pah), Guts’ists’I (Goo-tist-see) and Mohkinstsis (Moh-gihn-s-tis),” the confluence of the Bow and the Elbow Rivers.

Today we gather on Blackfoot Territory. These ancestral Treaty Seven lands of the Blackfoot Confederacy consist of the Siksika (Six-ih-gah) Nation, Piikani (Bee-gun-nee) Nation, and the Kainai (Gaa-nah) Nation; we also acknowledge the connection of the Iethka (ee-iith-kah) Stoney Nakoda Nation, consisting of the Chiniki (Chin-ih-key), Bearspaw (Bears-paw), and Good Stoney Bands, the people of the Tsuut’ina (Sue-tin-ah), and the Otipemisiwak (Oti-pe-misi-wak) Metis Government. These lands and connections make up an entire ecosystem, which they share with all of us as newcomers.

As we commence our journey here today, we do so by acknowledging these lands are more than just spaces; they are gathering places, deeply interwoven in the traditional Indigenous stories, songs, languages, ceremonies, and lifeways that must be honoured and protected.

By respecting these cherished lands where we work and live, we continue to encourage meaningful relationships – like those that have been unfolding here for thousands of years. It is our responsibility to be present, aware, and reflect every day, as we continue our journey towards truth and reconciliation – All our relations.

CTCC Indigenous Action Plan

Building our P.A.T.H. forward

Partner and collaborate with Indigenous leaders and knowledge keepers in order to understand the history, practices and stories of the lands; learn how we can increase awareness and understanding of Indigenous cultures and build long-lasting relationships to set forth a path towards reconciliation.

Acknowledge our role within the Mohkinstsis (Calgary) region in bringing together people from far and wide to the ancestorial lands of Treaty 7. Acknowledge Canada's history in Indigenous relations and accept the Truth and Reconciliation Report recommendations in ways to bridge the gap between the Indigenous and newcomer communities.

Teach employees through cultural awareness training by eliminating misconceptions, while providing opportunities for engagement, reflection and participation within the Indigenous community. Teach clients about the opportunities for Indigenous cultural additions to their program to give back to guests on the lands and provide lasting respect and legacy. Respectfully celebrate the Indigenous cultures and lands by observing cultural protocols within internal and external opportunities.

Heighten our commitment towards empowering Indigenous people through employment and supplier opportunities. Through diversity and inclusion, we will foster all opportunities to deliver upon our continued responsibility towards Truth and Reconciliation.





Partner

Establish mutually beneficial relationships with Indigenous leaders of the Treaty 7 signatories, including the Blackfoot Confederacy

- Build relationships by supporting and celebrating National Indigenous History Month and recognizing the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
- Ensure Indigenous action is a part of the larger mandate of an All Abilities internal Committee
- Gain trust in the Indigenous community through our continued commitment towards inclusion and advocacy

Pursue a shared vision of success and an understanding of why reconciliation is important

- Be open to new perspectives, and ways of doing business
- Share our P.A.T.H. Forward Action Plan progress with the Indigenous community and the community at large
- Commit to a policy of regular consultation with Indigenous leaders
- Invite feedback from the Indigenous community about our P.A.T.H. Forward Plan and its implementation

Learn the history through the voices and stories of Indigenous peoples

- Engage with the Indigenous community to stay informed on issues and celebrate wins within the community
- Support Indigenous programs / teachings

Enhance outreach to create more Indigenous partnerships

- Maintain membership in ITA and ITAC
- Engage and collaborate with Indigenous tourism organizations
- Sponsor Indigenous events

Acknowledge

Understand our sphere of influence and establish best practices in our path to reconciliation

- Understand and eliminate any existing or perceived biases in current operations and processes
- Recognize opportunities in which we can improve our operations to support Indigenous relations
- Proudly fly an Indigenous flag, alongside a national, provincial and civic flag, within our operations

Gain knowledge of historical and modern Indigenous issues in Canada

- Recognize the diversity among the Indigenous people and understand differences
- Develop an appropriate land acknowledgement for our facility with Indigenous Elder consultation and support

Build accountability through transparency and reporting on our progress through our P.A.T.H. Forward strategy

- Develop a system of review for our strategy and continually update to achieve goals
- Research best practices in race relations and anti-discrimination
- Conduct a review of cultural concerns and potential barriers throughout our organization

Support a long-term strategy

- Include Indigenous Relations as part of the job responsibilities within the role of a current employee's position
- Amplify our Action Plan through Annual Reports and Business Plans
- Maintain a rolling 5-year P.A.T.H. Forward strategy

Champion initiatives to uphold the self-determination of Indigenous peoples and drive transformative change

- Encourage and support employees to participate in Indigenous events

Teach

Engage with employees and leaders on the importance of reconciliation

- Provide regular training opportunities for employees to understand Indigenous culture
- Develop a diversity and inclusion committee that helps support the P.A.T.H. Forward Plan
- Include Indigenous training and cultural awareness initiatives at the Board level
- Communicate our journey through internal newsletters & employee gatherings
- Encourage employee participation in Indigenous activities
- Ensure cultural learning is included in introductory training for new hires

Educate our clients in ways to incorporate Indigenous programing, knowledge and awareness within their programs

- Highlight Indigenous ingredients and menu options for our clients
- Provide opportunity for Indigenous programming during events
- Develop and maintain a list of cultural resources and contacts for client distribution
- Incorporate elements of our journey with potential and current clients (SITE Tours, Bid Documents)
- Include Indigenous gifting options for our team and clients

Share our learnings of our Indigenous journey to the public

- Report achievements, challenges and learnings of our Action Plan strategy
- Support Indigenous Programming and Activations along Stephen Avenue
- Share our journey through industry publications and events

Elevate our understanding of Indigenous culture through the amplification of our journey

- Commission a public-facing mural highlighting our journey of reconciliation

Show respect to the Indigenous culture through the following of protocols and traditions

- Follow known protocols when meeting Indigenous leaders and elders
- Invite elders to industry / corporate events where possible
- Include a land acknowledgement prior to business meetings and events
- Invite an elder to provide a blessing at significant events each year
- Increase employee understanding and importance behind cultural protocols



Heighten

Leverage our role and influence within in the Calgary economy to bring awareness to Indigenous issues

- Drive collaboration with our partners by addressing concerns brought forth within the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the White Goose Flying Report Calls to Action
- Explore opportunities to positively influence our external relations to drive reconciliation action plans
- Promote and provide education on Indigenous cultural days to celebrate the diverse cultures of Indigenous peoples.
- Integrate Indigenous artwork and cultural references within our facility to support our storytelling and commitment to P.A.T.H. Forward
- Share the stories of Indigenous peoples (amplified through social media)

Take a leading role within Canada's event industry by improving Indigenous relations in all that we do

- Take action to address historical injustices and present-day wrongs
- Host Indigenous events within our facility
- Establish and maintain governance oversight in the implementation and accountability of the P.A.T.H. Forward Plan

Advocate and encourage others to start a path to reconciliation

- Communicate our journey to reconciliation publicly
- Commit to a regular evaluation of our P.A.T.H. Forward strategy while adjusting to align with changes in community actions
- Reflect on our efforts through continual improvement and measurement

Create a culturally safe environment

- Promote inclusion through anti-discrimination policies
- Understand cultural safety and humility
- Develop cultural support programs to make the CTCC an inclusive and accepting workplace for people of all backgrounds, including Indigenous peoples.

Create systems that encourage Indigenous involvement and participation

- Create a plan to promote job vacancies among Indigenous peoples
- Remove any barriers, either real or perceived, to employment for current and future Indigenous employees
- Identify areas in which to engage with Indigenous companies for added economic prosperity
- Implement an action plan for including Indigenous individuals and businesses in RFP opportunities.
- Provide opportunities for Indigenous communities to utilize our facilities