

Urban Indigenous Realities: Beyond the Myths

Thursday, June 26th from 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Speakers:

Helena Mauti – Instructor, Post Secondary (OFIFC)

Falisha Nazarali– Instructor, Continuous Learning (OFIFC)



What can you expect today?

- 90 minutes (2 presenters and 2 Q and A periods).
- The webinar may contain legal information. As a reminder, this is not legal advice. The information is current as of today's date, June 26, 2025.
- Links to the recording, slides, and handout will be sent by email to all registrants within a few days.
- ASL interpretation is available today. Subtitles (closed captioning) have also been enabled.



Speaker Introduction

Helena Mauti, Instructor, Post Secondary (OFIFC)

Falisha Nazarali, Instructor, Continuous Learning (OFIFC)

Urban Indigenous Realities: Beyond the Myths

Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) for
Community Legal Education Ontario (CLEO)

June 26, 2025

Helena Mauti (hmauti@ofifc.org) – Instructor, Post Secondary

Falisha Nazarali (fnazarali@ofifc.org) – Instructor, Continuous Learning



Opening and Land Acknowledgement



Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC)

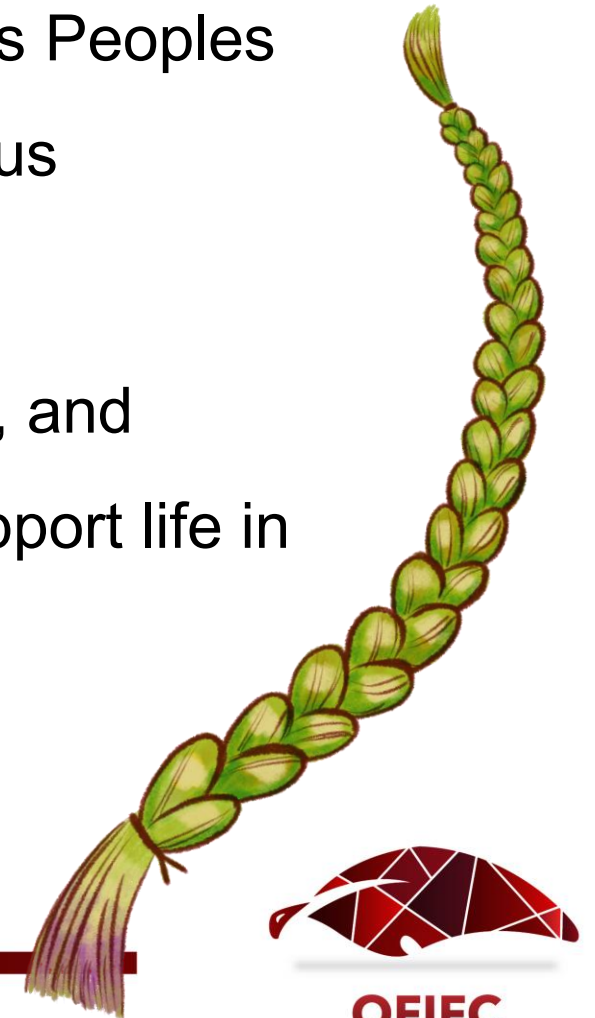


The OFIFC is an Indigenous organization representing the collective interests of member Friendship Centres located in towns and cities across Ontario.



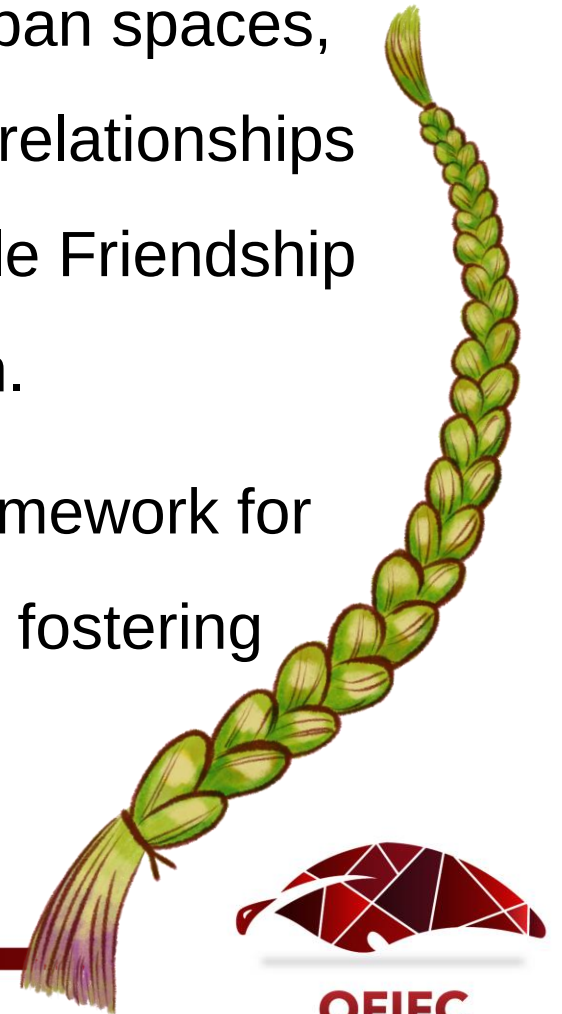
Our Intentions:

- Address common misconceptions about Urban Indigenous Peoples and highlight the diversity and strength of Urban Indigenous communities.
- Showcase the value of Indigenous knowledges, practices, and relationships and how these continue to influence and support life in today's cities across Turtle Island.



Our Intentions:

- Explore the evolving presence of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces, and share guidance on how to foster respectful, reciprocal relationships with Urban Indigenous communities—centering the vital role Friendship Centres play in connection, support, and self-determination.
- Introduce how the UNDRIP Act can serve as a practical framework for advancing engagements, strengthening accountability, and fostering meaningful solidarity with Urban Indigenous Communities.



(Pre) Reflection Questions

- What do you know about the Indigenous history of the place where you live or work?
- What is one stereotype, misconception, or myth you have heard or believed about Indigenous peoples?
- **What does Urban Indigenous mean to you?**

Myth #1:

**Urban Areas Were
Empty Before
Colonization**

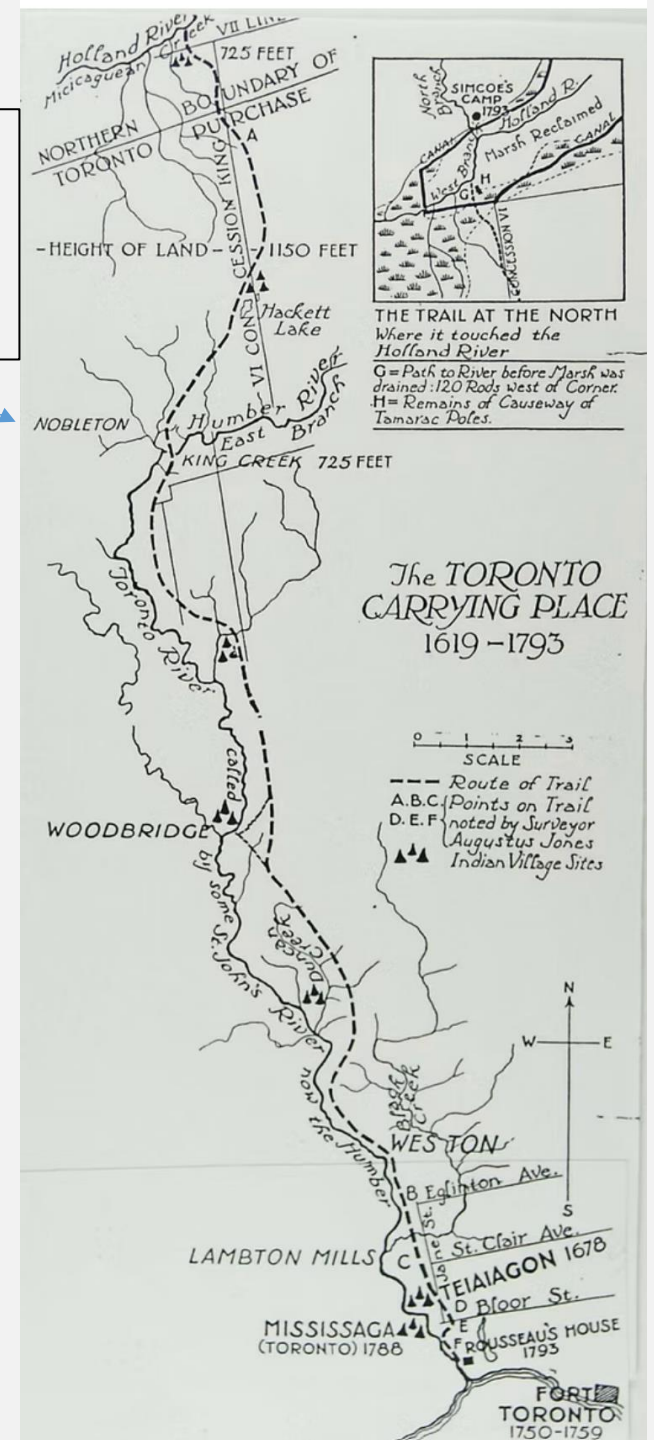
**First Nations, Inuit
and Métis peoples
have always lived in
the regions that are
now urban centres**





Gete-Onigaming, which means old portage trail, is included in the Davenport Road street sign at Spadina Road

The Carrying Place Trail has been used by Indigenous Peoples for 12,000 years



Mnjikaning Fish Weirs at the narrows between Lake Simcoe and Lake Couchiching – 5,000 years old



Quartzite arrowhead around 4,000 – 6,000 years old, found at Toronto's Fort York

Myth #2:

**Indigenous Peoples
Only Live on Reserves**



88 %

**of Indigenous Peoples Live
in Urban Settings**

Numbers and Narratives

FIRST NATIONS POPULATION

- 1,048,405
- 5 YEAR GROWTH: 9.7%

MÉTIS POPULATION

- 624,220
- 5 YEAR GROWTH: 6.3%

INUIT POPULATION

- 70,545
- 5 YEAR GROWTH: 8.5%

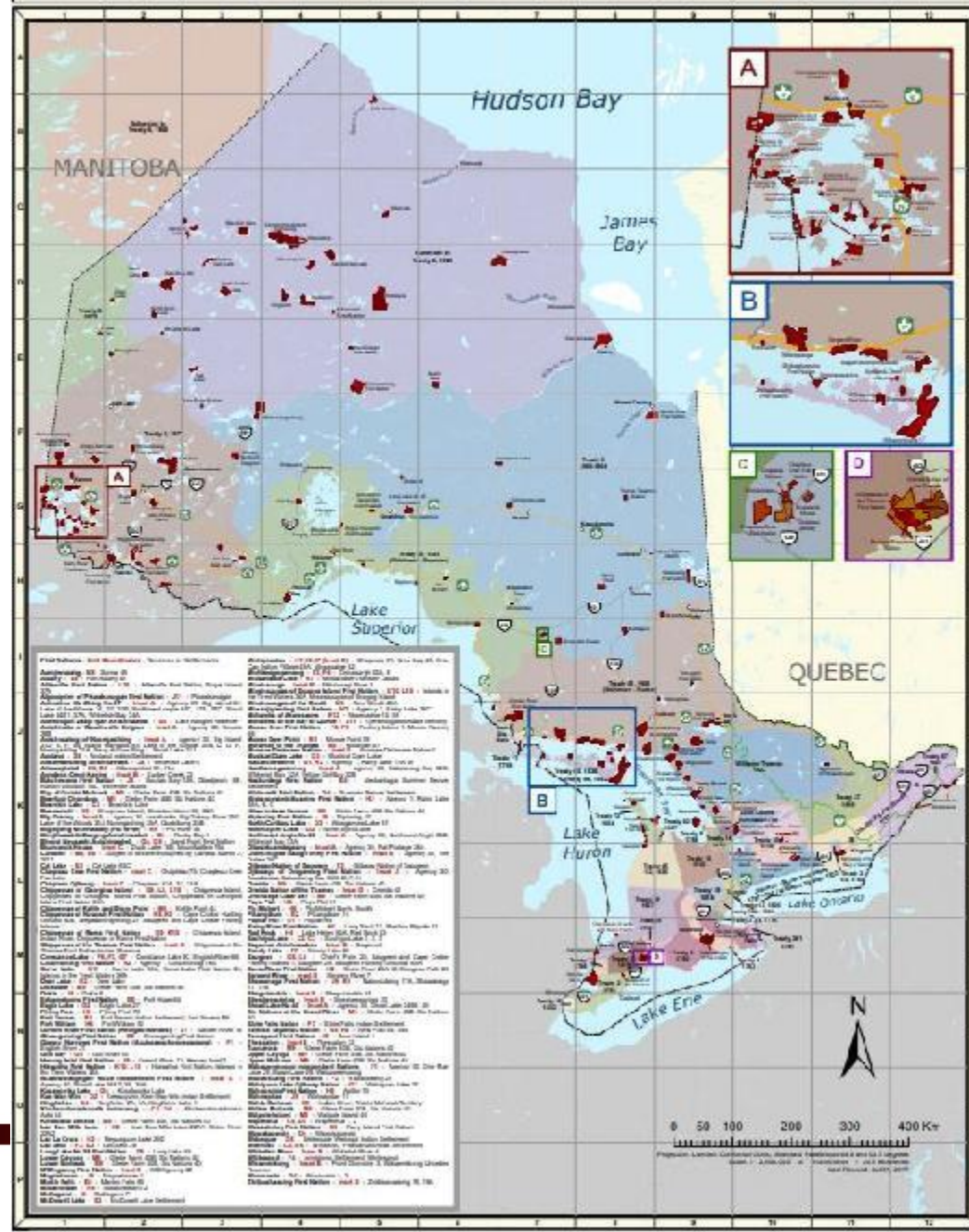
Indigenous population in Canada:
1.8 million

Off-reserve population: 82%

Indigenous population in Ontario:
406,590

Off-reserve population: 88%

FIRST NATIONS AND TREATIES



Contemporary First Nation Reserves

Indigenous peoples move to Urban settings for many reasons, but also because these places have always been apart of their territory and their ancestors' homes



Myth #3:

**Indigenous Peoples
are All the Same**

Diversity of Indigenous Peoples



- Indigenous Peoples are very diverse, and this diversity extends to Urban Indigenous Communities
- Indigenous Peoples cultures, languages, knowledges, governance structures and laws, ceremonies, protocols, ethics, economies, and technologies differ across Turtle Island

Diversity Across Language: Anishinaabemowin Dialects

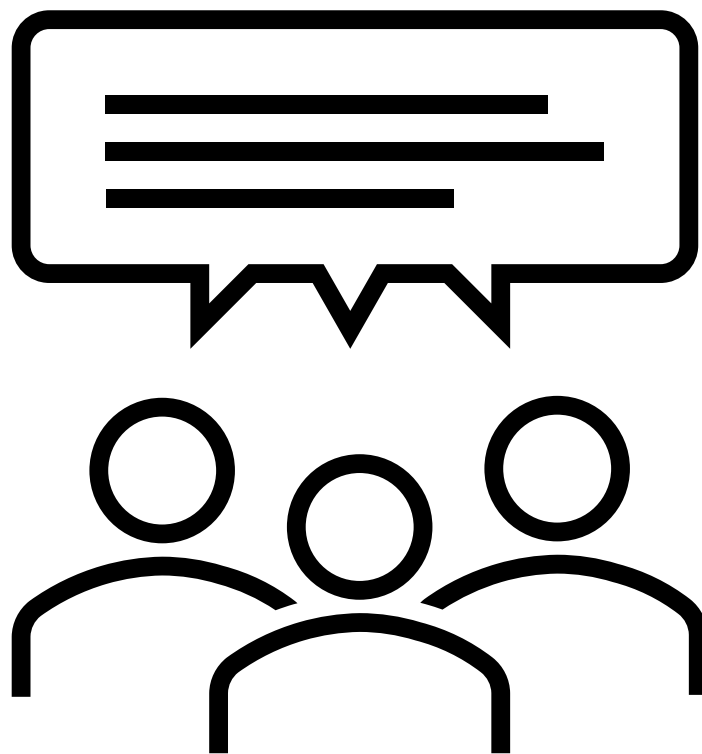
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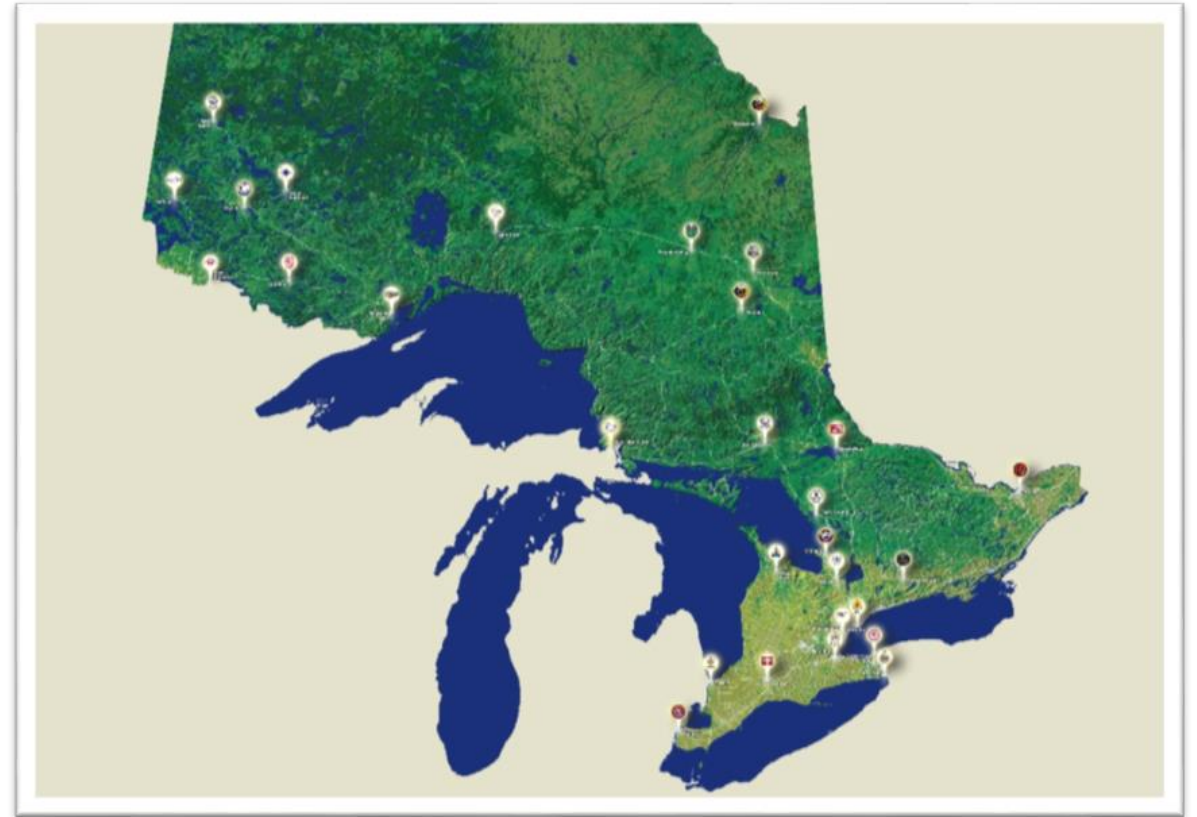


Check-in: Q&A



History of the Friendship Centre Movement

In the late 1950's and early 1960's, Indigenous community centres in Ontario were established in Kenora, Thunder Bay, Toronto, London, Parry Sound and Red Lake in order to serve the growing Indigenous population.



Friendship Centres Today

Friendship Centres deliver a range of wholistic, culture-based programs and initiatives, and respond to the needs of tens of thousands of urban Indigenous community members requiring culture-based services every day.

They provide programming in justice, health, family support, long-term care, healing and wellness, employment and training, education, research, and more through wraparound approaches.



Myth #4:

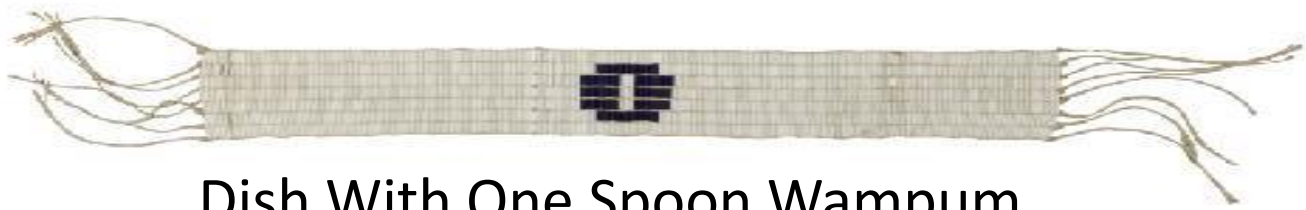
**Indigenous Peoples Have
No Legitimate
Governance or Legal
Systems**

Indigenous Nations across Turtle Island have distinct legal orders developed over millennia that predate and continue alongside Canadian law



Indigenous Governance & Treaties

- Indigenous legal orders are not subordinate to Canadian law – they represent parallel, legitimate sources of law
- Treaty making is part of Indigenous governance and existed as a method of Nation-to-Nation diplomacy in Turtle Island before Treaties with the Crown were made



Dish With One Spoon Wampum

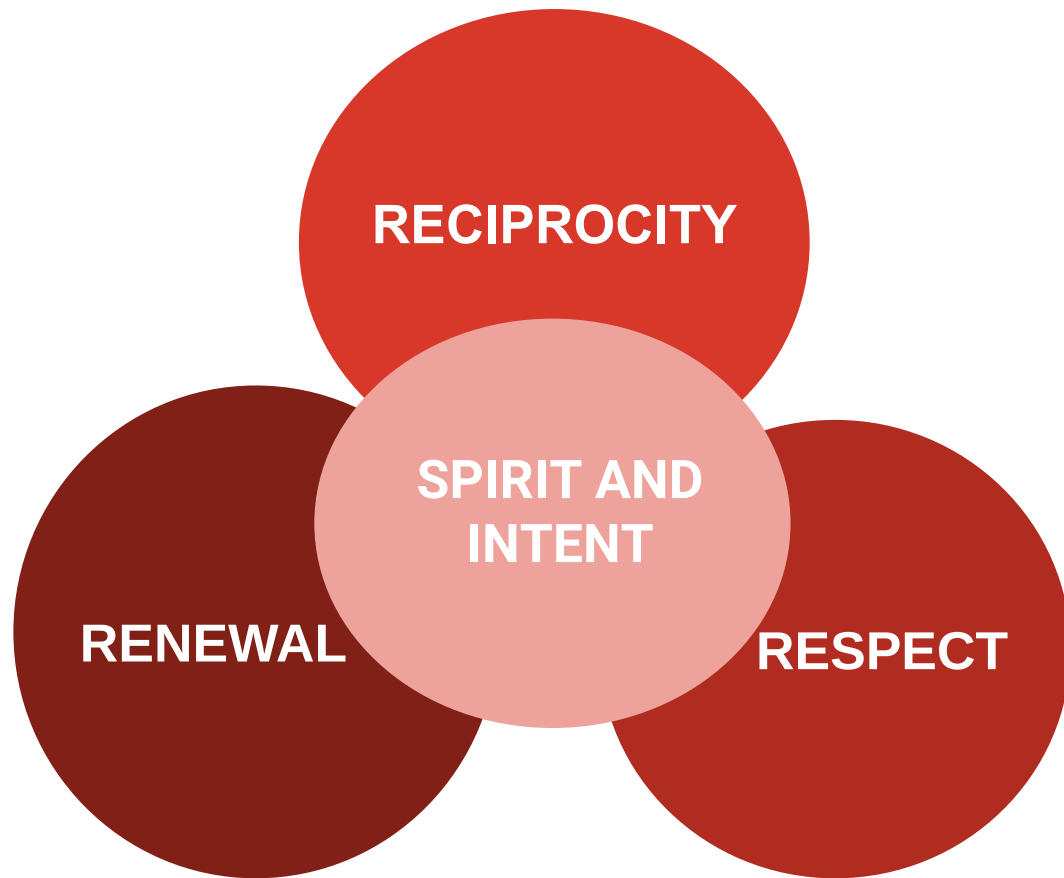


Kaswentha – Two Row Wampum



Anishinaabe
7 Clan System

Spirit and Intent of the Treaties



“When Indigenous peoples talk about the land and the making of treaty, we are talking about our life and the life of future generations. Land is central to that process. We have a relationship with our Creation based on a legal system designed to protect and honour the land.”

Sharon H. Venne, "Treaties Made in Good Faith" in *Native and Settlers—Now and Then* (2007)

Myth #5:

**Urban Indigenous
Peoples Have No
Rights**

Friendship Centres: “UNDRIP in Action”

- Self-governing urban Indigenous community hubs
- Foundational teachings, including our ‘Original Instructions,’ which frame our responsibilities around *Mino bimaadiziwin*.
- Embody Indigenous communities’ individual and collective rights to self-determination.



UNDRIP Act as an Engagement Framework

- Acknowledge Urban Indigenous Rights and Realities
- Support Self-Determined Urban Indigenous Spaces and Leadership
- Use Free, Prior, and Informed Consent in Urban Contexts
- Include Urban Indigenous Peoples in Decision-Making
- Support Cultural Competency, Continuity and Community Resurgence in Cities

Myth #6:

**Indigenous
Peoples Were
Assimilated into Canada**

Resurgence and Reclamation



Na-Me-Res Traditional
Pow Wow Fort York



Humber River Wiigiwaam



Ojibiikaan Indigenous
Food Sovereignty Toronto

Building Relationships in Urban Spaces



- What is your responsibility to resilient, resurgent Indigenous futures? To supporting inherent rights and self-determination? To building relationships with Urban Indigenous Communities?

OFIFC Member Friendship Centres and Delivery Sites



1 Red Lake Indian Friendship Centre **2** Ne-Chee Friendship Centre (Kenora) **3** Dryden Native Friendship Centre **4** Nishnawbe-Gamik Friendship Centre (Sioux Lookout) **5** United Native Friendship Centre (Fort Frances) **6** Atikokan Native Friendship Centre **7** Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre **8** Thunderbird Friendship Centre (Geraldton) **9** Timmins Native Friendship Centre Satellite Office (Moosonee) **10** Kapuskasing Indian Friendship Centre **11** Ininew Friendship Centre (Cochrane) **12** Timmins Native Friendship Centre **13** Indian Friendship Centre (Sault Ste. Marie) **14** N'Swakamok Native Friendship Centre (Sudbury) **15** North Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre **16** Odawa Native Friendship Centre (Ottawa) **17** Parry Sound Friendship Centre **18** Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre (Midland) **19** M'Wikwedong Native Cultural Resource Centre (Owen Sound) **20** Barrie Native Friendship Centre **21** Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre (Peterborough) **22** Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre **23** Peel Aboriginal Network (Mississauga) **24** Hamilton Regional Indian Centre **25** Niagara Regional Native Centre (Niagara-on-the-Lake) **26** Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre **27** N'Amerind Friendship Centre (London) **28** Sarnia-Lambton Native Friendship Centre **29** Can-Am Indian Friendship Centre of Windsor **30** Brantford Regional Indigenous Support Centre **31** Enji-maawindijiyaang (Elliot Lake) **32** Kingston Native Centre and Language Nest

<https://ofifc.org/friendship-centres/find/>



(Post) Reflection Questions

- How might you connect or work with Urban Indigenous communities in your role or organization?
- How can your organization include Urban Indigenous voices and needs in its work?
- What is one action you can take – this month – to better support Urban Indigenous communities or organizations in your area?

Questions



Closing



Indigenous Supports and Resources:

- Aboriginal Legal Services
- Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services
- Chiefs of Ontario
- Tungasuvvingat Inuit
- Métis Nation of Ontario
- Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres – OFIFC
- The Urban Indigenous Action Plan



Indigenous Supports and Resources:

- [Human Rights Legal Support Centre](#)
- [Native Women's Association of Canada - NWAC](#)
- [2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations](#)
- [Yellowhead Institute Treaty Map - Home - Yellowhead Institute Treaty Map](#)
- [Talk 4 Healing](#)
- [Implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Act](#)



CLEO Resources

Steps to Justice & Guided Pathways

- stepstojustice.ca
- stepstojustice.ca/guided-pathways-home/

CLEO Connect recorded webinars

- cleoconnect.ca/webinars



Community and legal resources

[Find your community legal clinic](#) or call 1-800-668-8258

Legal Aid Ontario: [How do I apply for Legal Aid?](#)

[Visit Pro Bono Ontario](#) or call 1-855-255-7256

[Ontario Legal Information Centre](#) offers appointments with a lawyer, in English or French.



Thank you for joining us!

Subscribe to [CLEO Connect](#) for updates on new legal information and upcoming webinars.

QUESTIONS or COMMENTS?

Contact info@cleoconnect.ca