



Feb 12, 2022

City Council
The City of Calgary
Calgary, Alberta

Dear Mayor Gondek and Council,

I am writing to express support and encouragement for Council to work with the Indigenous Gathering Place Society (IGPS) to make the Indigenous Gathering Place vision come alive for our community.

As our city's mentorship charity, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Calgary and Area (BBBS) believes that every single child is born with incredible potential, and that mentoring relationships are the key to unlocking that potential so that it can be shared with the world. In particular, for children and youth who are facing adversity, there is no better intervention than caring, consistent relationships. This takes intentional investment and resources, particularly within communities that have outsized challenges. We are proud to support urban Indigenous youth and their mentors through our model, and we believe an Indigenous Gathering Place is an exciting opportunity to deepen the cultural understanding of the youth we serve.

Currently 12% of the children and youth in developmental relationships through BBBS identify as Indigenous. We aim to increase this number and have recently partnered with Rotary Club of Calgary Downtown which has gifted the Rotary Tom Jackson Stay in School Program to us to help us fulfill this ambition. This program is designed to provide unique, culturally-appropriate mentoring relationships and supports to Indigenous youth, and a key part of the strategy is visiting meaningful sites that allow a young person to learn about, and take pride in, their Indigenous history. In that way, the Indigenous Gathering Place concept is an ideal fit for future experiences for the youth we serve.

We believe the power of the Indigenous Gathering Place goes far beyond a much-needed location for connection and ceremony, however. As an organization on our own Reconciliation journey, we would hugely value a consistent hub where we can connect with like-minded organizations, share resources, and connect directly with Indigenous people as we learn and as we grow.

Please consider this letter our unqualified support for the IGPS, its exciting vision and an invitation to the City of Calgary to support it for the good of our community.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ken Lima-Coelho".

Ken Lima-Coelho (He/Him)
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