

ALIGN DIRECTORY: ALBERTA CULTURAL AWARENESS PROGRAMS FOR INDIGENOUS CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Access to culture, community and a strong sense of identity is an important part of supporting the well-being of Indigenous children and youth in foster care. To help broaden these opportunities, this directory brings together Alberta agencies and organizations that offer **Indigenous cultural activities outside of regular school hours, including after-school programs, evening or weekend activities and summer programming.**

These opportunities can provide children and youth with meaningful ways to learn about and participate in Indigenous cultures, traditions, languages, teachings, arts, land-based activities and community celebrations. By making cultural experiences available during evenings, weekends and school breaks, children and youth in care have greater flexibility to participate in programs that align with their interests, schedules and cultural connections.

This directory is intended to help foster caregivers, social workers, service providers and other professionals identify accessible cultural awareness opportunities for Indigenous children and youth. Connecting children and youth with culturally relevant activities can help strengthen their understanding of identity and belonging while creating opportunities to build relationships with Indigenous communities, knowledge keepers, Elders and peers.

This resource is also intended to complement, rather than replace, a child's individual cultural connections and planning. Whenever possible, children and youth should be supported in accessing programs that reflect their own Nation, Métis or Inuit identity, community and traditions, while also having opportunities to explore and learn about the diversity of Indigenous cultures across Alberta.

If you know of a program that would be a good addition to the directory, please email starrd@alignab.ca

CALGARY & AREA

Closer to Home Walk'n Talk Mentoring (Calgary)

Free child and youth mentoring in Airdrie for ages 8-15, providing personalized in-person sessions.

Cree8 (Calgary) Indigenous storytelling, music, drum circles, crafts and cultural teachings.

Ke Mama Nnanik Family Program (Calgary) is a free, culturally supportive parent and child development initiative rooted in an Indigenous philosophy operating "through the eyes of a child," it assists families with children up to age six.

Miskanawah Diamond Willow Youth Lodge (Calgary) is a safe, welcoming place for youth between the ages of 12 - 29 to drop-in or participate in a variety of programs and activities. Designed by young people, for young people, the lodge is a hub where Indigenous youth connect with peers, participate in their own sense of healing and well-being while accessing a variety of programs and supports. These programs combine cultural learning and self-discovery, supported with health and wellness.

Niitoyis Family Support Society Youth Mentorship Program (Calgary) is for any youth aged 13-17. Program sessions are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:30-6:30 PM.

RIEL Institute Indigenous Youth Programs (Calgary) Education, mentorship, cultural connection, employment preparation and youth-focused programming.

Trellis Society Iiyika'kimaat (Calgary) For ages 12 - 21. Leadership, traditional learning, land-based teaching, wellness, kinship and mentorship.

YMCA Calgary Indigenous Programs and Services offers drop-in and registered programs to support Indigenous children, youth and families with cultural identity, leadership, recreation and connections to Calgary's urban Indigenous communities.

EDMONTON & AREA

Aboriginal Head Start Programs (Urban & Northern Communities) strengthens and prepares the Aboriginal child with the cultural knowledge and emergent literacy skills needed to excel in school and life.

Aboriginal Counseling Services of Alberta

Providing pathways to healing for Indigenous families and communities including culturally grounded, trauma-informed programs and services, Supporting Children's Resilience (Edmonton) which provides individualized, culturally responsive support for Indigenous children and youth and Indigenous Awareness Training providing caregivers with opportunities to strengthen their understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures and lived experiences. Training explores topics such as colonization, residential schools, intergenerational trauma, reconciliation, cultural safety and respectful ways of working alongside Indigenous children, youth, families and communities. (Additional programs for adults and organizations also available)

Bent Arrow Kikosewin Family Resource Network (FRN) Youth Engagement Services (Edmonton)

Provides safe and welcoming programs for young individuals to learn, grow, and connect with others. Our emphasis is on Indigenous culture and content, alongside building positive relationships, so youth can overcome obstacles and prepare for a successful future.

Bright Star Respite (St. Albert) works extensively with Saddle Lake Cree Nation, Tsuut'ina Nation, Big Stone Cree Nation, Dene Tha' First Nation, and Mikisew Cree First Nation. Their staff support apprehension prevention & family reunification, and **facilitate cultural activities such as sweetgrass picking, pow wows, and naming ceremonies**. They work daily with Indigenous children both on-reserve and off-reserve, and are often called on to provide ongoing respite care for Indigenous children being treated at the Stollery Children's Hospital, far from their families up north. Their respite care program has also supported numerous Indigenous families of children with disabilities in accessing supports through Jordan's Principle and FSCD, and cultural connectedness is built directly into their care model for the children and youth in their lodges.

Canadian Native Friendship Centre Metis Jigging (Edmonton)

Friday: 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM (will not run the Friday before a long weekend)

Edmonton Public Library (EPL) offers a range of Indigenous-focused events and learning opportunities that promote cultural awareness, connection and understanding for children, youth, families and adults. Current programming includes teachings and demonstrations of Indigenous dance, music and drumming, Métis storytelling and crafts, Indigenous hoop dancing, family storytimes, and opportunities to connect with Elders and Knowledge Keepers through EPL's Elder-in-Residence program. These accessible community programs provide valuable opportunities to learn directly from Indigenous artists, educators and Elders while encouraging cultural appreciation, relationship-building and intergenerational learning.

Indigenous Creative Corner (Edmonton) Youth programming that provides opportunities for Indigenous youth to participate in creative and cultural activities through community-based programming.

Nîkânîw Indigenous Youth Leadership Program (Edmonton) For Indigenous youth 14–22, combining teachings from Elders and Indigenous leaders with aquatic leadership, life skills, employment preparation and land/plant-based cultural learning.

Otipemisiwak Métis Government Youth Programs (Northern, Central and Southern Regions)

Offer a variety of programs for Métis Youth between the ages 12- 29 are run across the province, including [cultural enrichment programming](#), [life skills programming](#), and weekly youth groups.

YMCA of Northern Alberta Kickstand (Edmonton) Serving youth ages 11-25 can find FREE mental health support, Indigenous wellness services, peer support, life skills training and primary health care from nurse practitioners and doctors. We've assembled more than 20 service providers under one roof! Services are free, you don't need a referral and we won't turn you away.

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LETHBRIDGE/MEDICINE HAT

Miywasin Friendship Youth Development Program (Medicine Hat)

- Promotes healthy active living; cultural awareness & appreciation; and racial harmony
- Medicine Wheel Program
- Filling Our Tipis Program
- Coordinated volunteer activities
- Sports and recreational activities
- Traditional Trails Program includes Field Trips, Culture Camps, Powwows, Round Dances

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Opokaa'sin After School Program (Lethbridge) Group mentorship is provided through these after school programs that take place Monday through Thursday from 3:30 – 5:30 Pm. Children are exposed to a variety of programs that foster self-esteem, access to community programs and services and cultural teachings on various days. Elders are brought in for storytelling, cultural teachings and general sharing of talents. It is our belief that these after school programs will provide a basis for fostering self-esteem, self-confidence and resiliency, especially in the school setting. Our objective for this program is to increase social competency, thus decreasing anti-social behaviors. This program is geared towards children ages 6-12 years of age.

Sik-Ooh-Kotoki Friendship Society Youth Programs (Lethbridge) Cultural connection, community activities, family supports and Indigenous youth programming.

RED DEER

Otipemisiwak Métis Government Youth Programs (Northern, Central and Southern Regions)

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Red Deer Native Friendship Society Legacy Link (Red Deer)

Provides opportunities for youth and elders to get together for field trips, cultural learning, and mentorship.

Red Deer Indigenous Dance Troupe - The Fire Within Project: A Way of Life (Red Deer) All indigenous youth welcome. Is about working towards your passion, dreams, goals and sharing your story to create action and change for future generations. Using cultural tools of song & dance, storytelling, humor, language and personal development strategies for life changing experiences to gain an understanding of who you are, what you are passionate about and what you want to do in life.

OTHER REGIONS

The Alexis Child and Family Well-Being Program Drum Practice Community Members aged 11+ are welcome to join to learn traditional hand drum songs.

The Pitone Youth Group (Grande Prairie) is a program for all youth ages 12 to 17 years old.

The Awasis youth group is a program for youth ages 6-11 years old. These groups are open to any youth who are currently registered members of the Grande Prairie Friendship Centre.

Aboriginal Head Start Programs (Urban & Northern Communities) strengthens and prepares the Aboriginal child with the cultural knowledge and emergent literacy skills needed to excel in school and life.

Full Circle Mentoring Big Brothers, Big Sisters (Wood Buffalo) Storytelling, traditional

Indigenous Youth Services (Lac La Biche) After-school cultural activities, traditional practices, peer connection, leadership and identity development.

Awasisak & Family Development Circle Association (Lac La Biche / Kikino) Youth support incorporating Elders, cultural knowledge, wellness and Indigenous Ways of Knowing.

Spirit North (Provincial) Sport, outdoor activity, traditional games, wellness and cultural activities delivered with Indigenous communities



Cultural Awareness Resources for Children, Youth & Caregivers

Visit [ALIGN's Cultural Awareness Resources for Children, Youth & Caregivers](#) to explore a variety of engaging, accessible resources designed to support cultural learning and awareness. Discover ALIGN's monthly **CONNECTIONS newsletter**, an Indigenous directory of **cultural games and activities**, **Indigenous Christmas online advent calendar**, **online Indigenous jigsaw puzzles** for all ages, and more. These resources provide meaningful opportunities for children, youth, caregivers and families to learn, connect and explore Indigenous cultures.