



“We knew we could go further together and that would require collaboration on a whole new level.”



~Aako ka na sa pa nitsi yopa~ We have enough for all

Picture a spider web, each thread thin and fragile on its own, but when woven and connected together, the web that is formed is strong, supportive, and resilient. If part of the web weakens or breaks, vibrations ripple throughout and the spider responds - repairing and mending, bringing integrity to the whole again.

Roy Bear Chief refers to the spider web in his Blackfoot language as 'ani to pisi'. For Roy, ani to pisi is at the heart of **poverty reduction** in Calgary. Roy is a long-time Calgarian who moved to the city 36 years ago from the Blackfoot Reserve. Roy is helping to lead the Indigenous strategy within the Enough for All poverty reduction strategy at Vibrant Communities Calgary.

According to Statistics Canada, in 2011, 118,325 Calgarians were living in low-income situations with almost 27 per cent of these individuals being children. These statistics, coupled with the harsh realities of our recent economic downturn, paint a sobering picture of the prevalence of poverty in our city. However, a **strong web** is being woven within and around Calgary to bring us all into a better future.

Vibrant Communities Calgary (VCC) is the backbone organization leading a powerful network that is tackling poverty reduction in Calgary. In January 2015, The City of Calgary, United Way of Calgary & Area, VCC, and Momentum signed a four-year agreement to move the Calgary

Poverty Reduction Initiative (CPRI) and the Enough for All Strategy to the stewardship of VCC.

“We knew we could go further together and that would require **collaboration** on a whole new level,” says Janet Eremenko, Community Facilitation & Engagement Specialist with VCC. “Poverty is a complex issue and we need to be working together to address root causes at a systems level.”

Addressing the conditions that often keep people in cycles of poverty was the driver behind the creation of protective policies around payday loans. Payday loans have extremely high interest rates that allow people to access cash quickly, but often create a vicious cycle of debt. In 2015, city bylaws were changed to limit clustering of payday lenders. Momentum and First Calgary Credit Union are now partnering to offer reasonable alternatives to payday loans.

“The goal was not to remove sources of credit for individuals on low incomes, but to end practices that perpetuate cycles of poverty in our city,” says Amanda McKellar, Communications Coordinator at Momentum. “It’s one step towards creating a city where everyone can **thrive**.”

For Roy Bear Chief, ‘enough for all’ is not a goal, but an accountability statement. “When I look at it from my Blackfoot or Siksika worldview, I can simply say: Aakoo ka na sa pa nitsi yopa – we will have enough for all and then we do the work to make it happen. Our success will be defined by the people who are willing to step out of their comfort zones and work under the premise of ani to pisi – building the web together.”

Ten years ago, Calgarians put forth a **strong vision** for a city where everyone has sufficient income and resources to meet their needs and provide for healthy lives. We can see this vision becoming a reality in the collective efforts of individuals and organizations working with the knowledge that we have enough for all.

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