

# Connectedness, Reconciliation and Self Determination

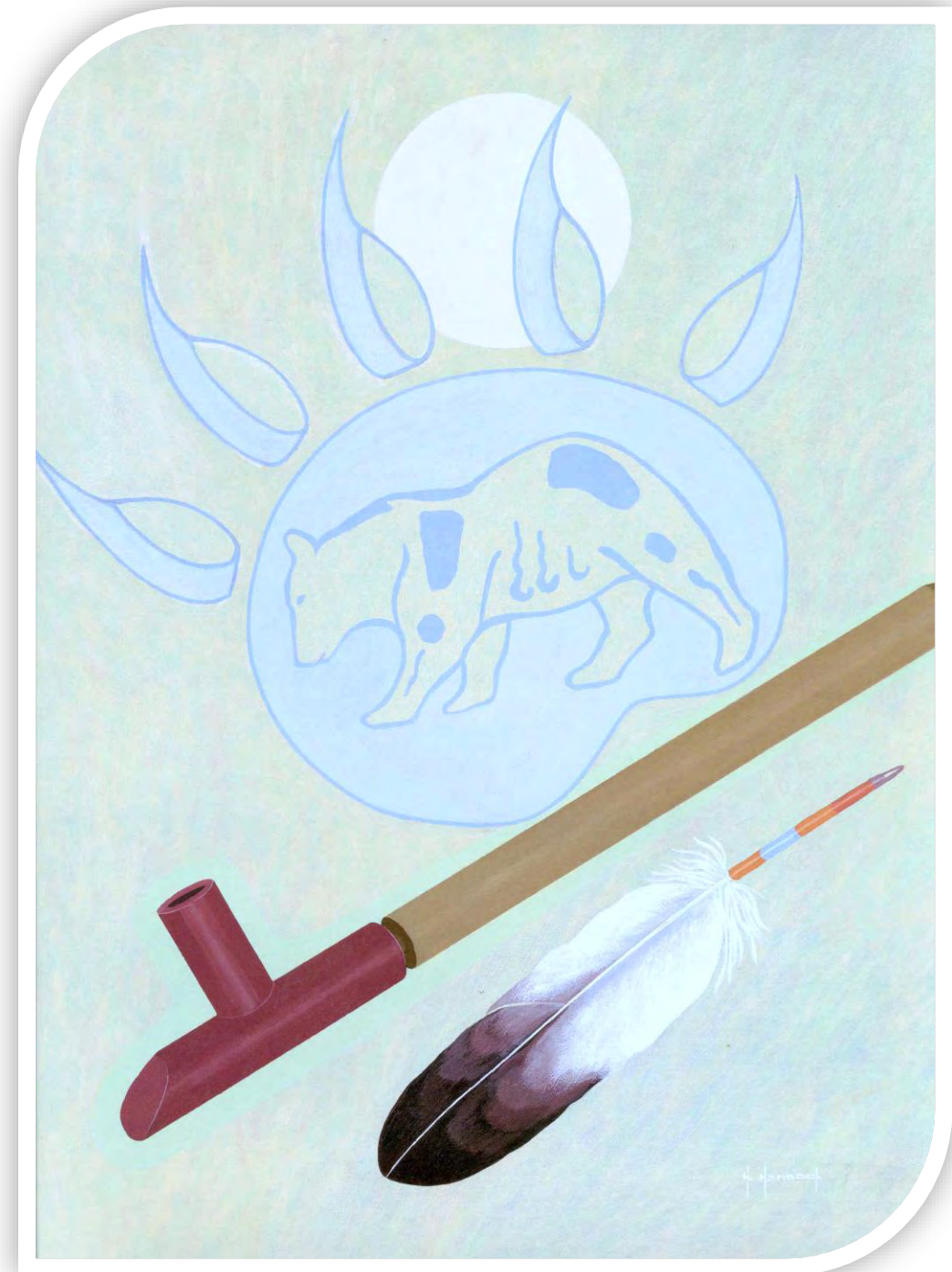
**Dr. Allen Benson, LLD**

**Native Counselling Services of Alberta**

Local Decision Making: Partnership and  
Collaboration Conference

November 15, 2016

Hunter Valley, New South Whales

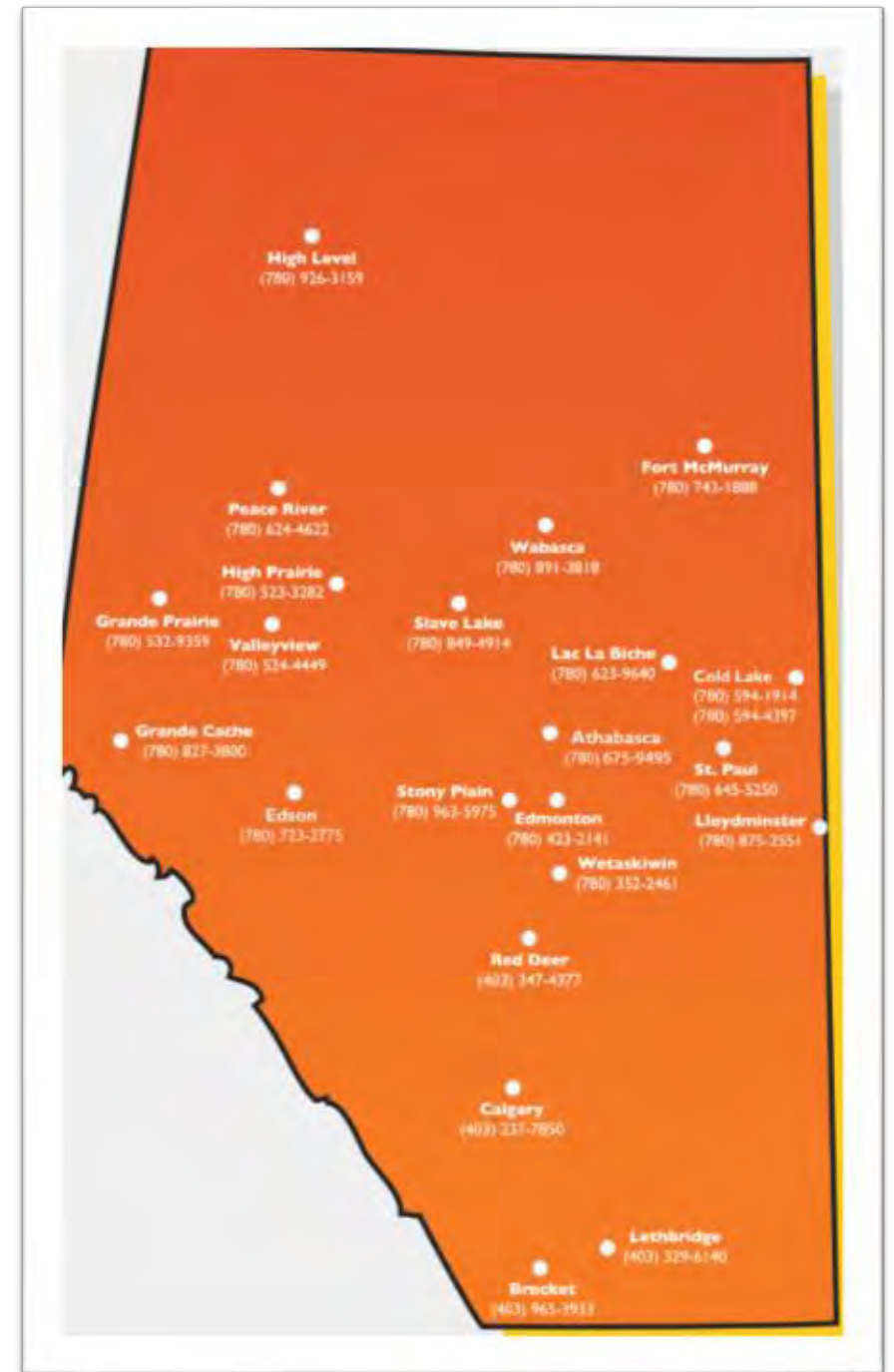




# Native Counselling Services of Alberta

- Established in 1970
- Began as a **Courtworker Program** and Expanded in the areas of:
  - Restorative Justice
  - Child Welfare
  - Corrections (Section 81 Facilities)
  - Public Legal Education
  - Research-Based Video Production
  - Research-Based Training

**We've learned that all current issues are related to historic trauma.**



# Healing and Reconciliation from an Interconnected Worldview



# Healing and Reconciliation from an Interconnected Worldview

**Spirit World**

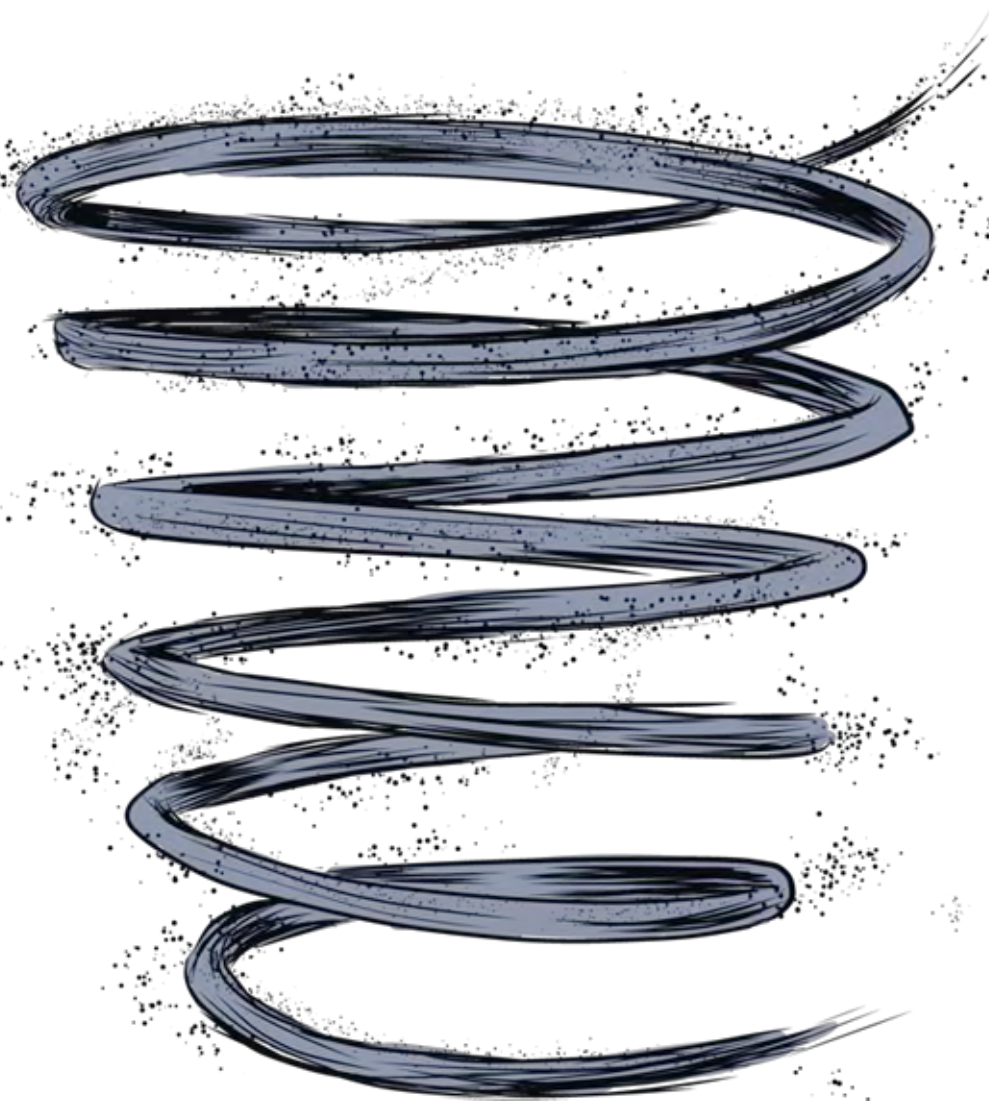
**Environment**

**Nation**

**Community**

**Family**

**Individual**



# Healing and Reconciliation from an Interconnected Worldview

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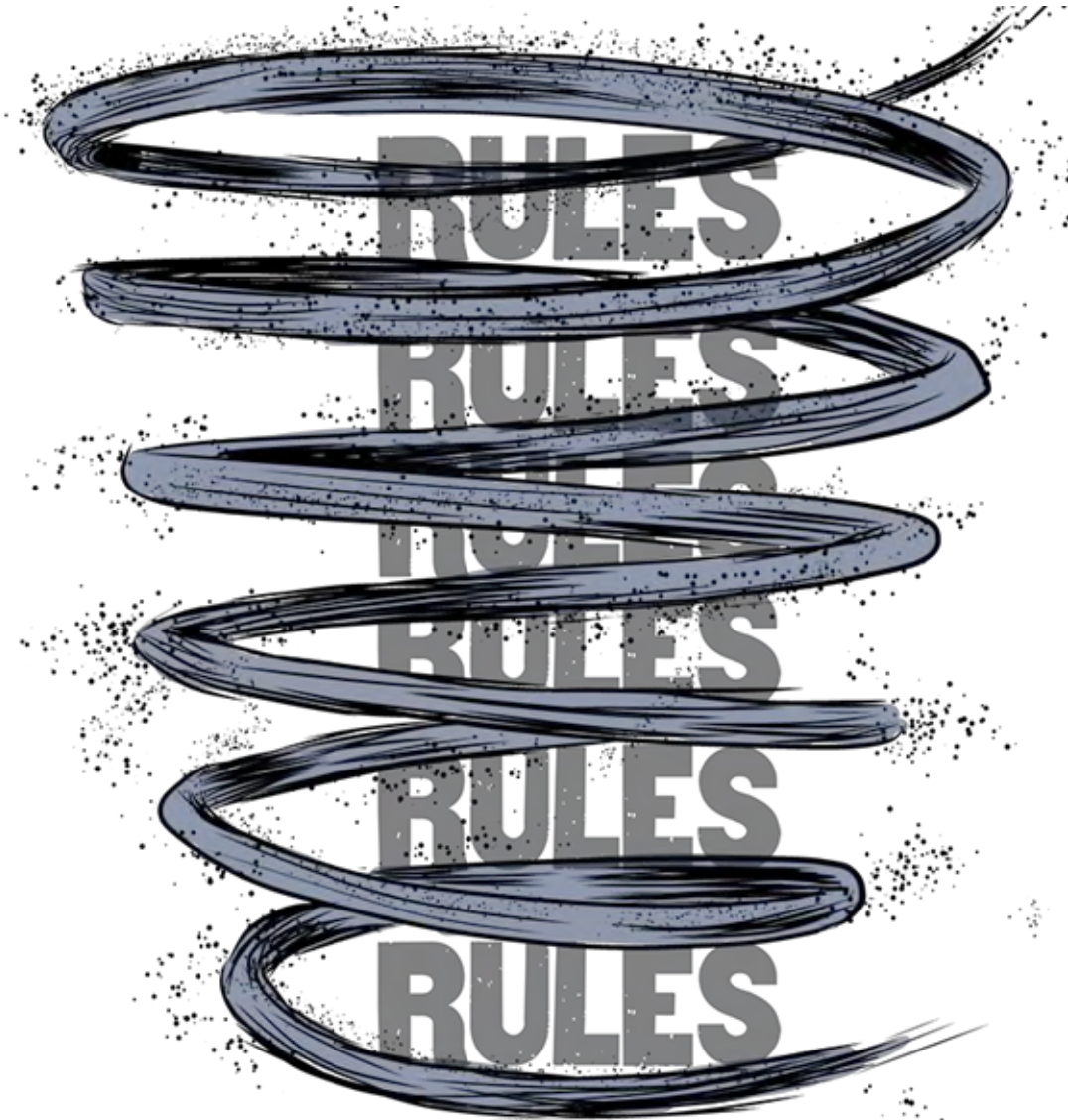
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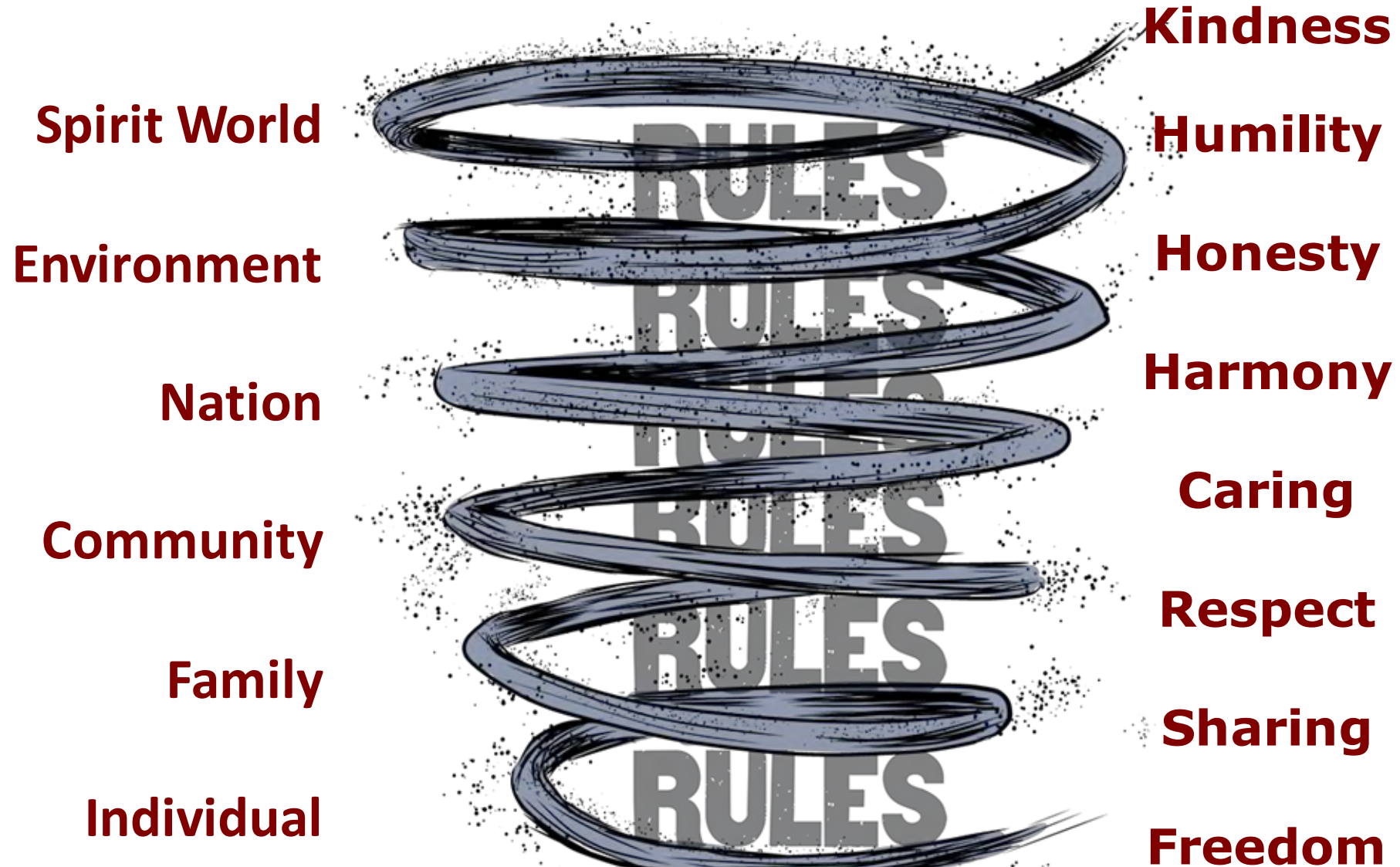
**Community**

**Family**

**Individual**



# Healing and Reconciliation from an Interconnected Worldview



Colonial policies have damaged the interconnectedness of the Aboriginal family.

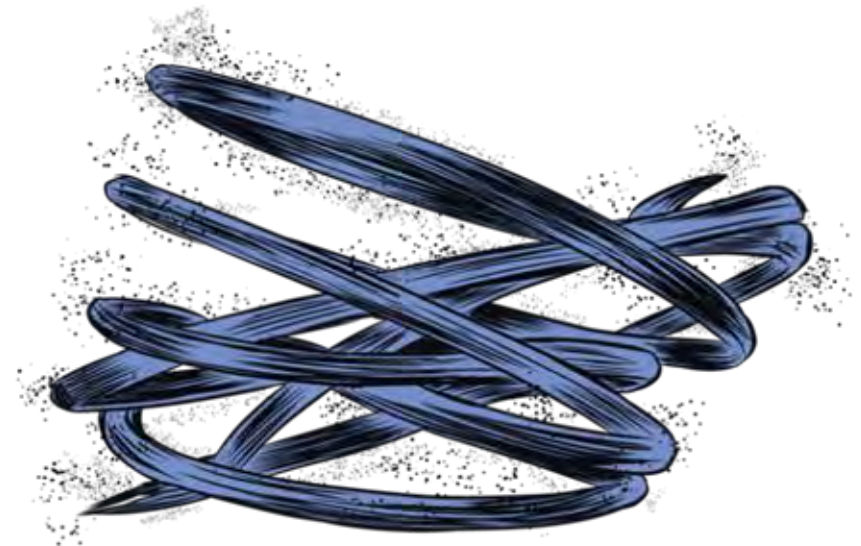
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# Colonial policies have damaged the interconnectedness of the Aboriginal family.

**Colonial Policies: have caused damage to the relationships in Aboriginal societies & deemed the Indigenous identity as inferior.**

**The transmission of the RULES was interrupted. Many Aboriginal families and communities have been left in chaos as a result.**





# Historic Trauma is:

- **Traumatic experiences that are cumulative over the lifespan of individuals and across generations.**
- Places the long-term, intergenerational impacts of residential school and other COLONIAL POLICIES into a larger context.
- **Historic Trauma informed behaviour can be demonstrated by:**
  - Residential school survivors;
  - Generations of children who survived abuse and neglect in families and the child welfare system; and
  - Aboriginal people who have carried the trauma of loss, assimilation and ethnocide.

**Historic Trauma is the intergenerational transmission of hopeless, helpless and powerless.**



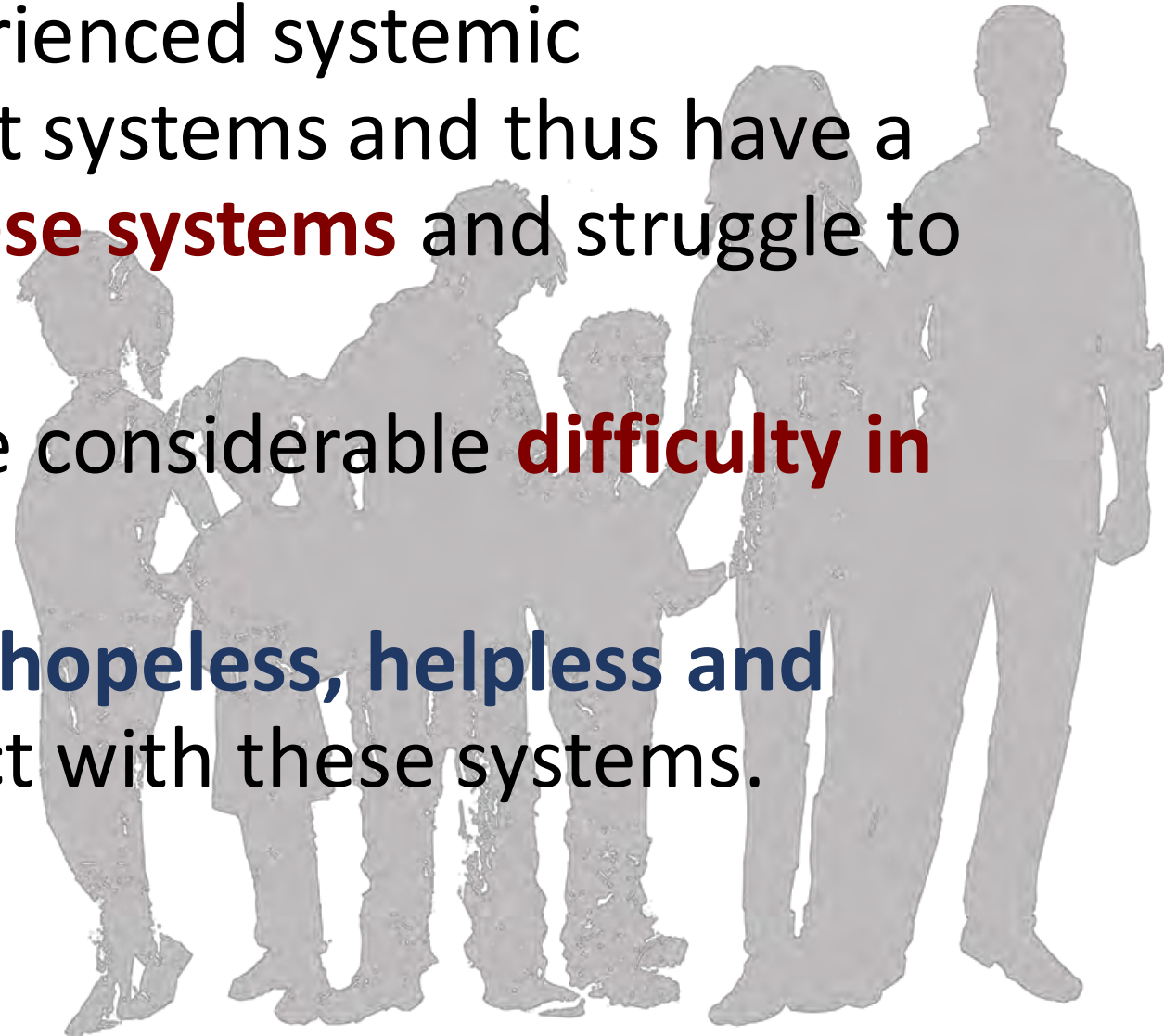
# We believe that Indigenous individuals, families and communities are affected in these ways:

1. Legislation has eroded the capacity of Aboriginal individuals, families and communities to be **in control of their own lives** and **determine their own identity**.
2. This legislation is also directly related to the **breakdown of family relationships** and the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the family justice and child welfare systems.
3. Some Aboriginal people carry a **deep sense of shame of their Aboriginal identity** and the lack of meaningful connection to Canadian society and law.



We believe that Indigenous individuals, families and communities are affected in these ways:

4. Aboriginal people have experienced systemic discrimination in government systems and thus have a **long-standing distrust of these systems** and struggle to understand their complexity.
5. Aboriginal people experience considerable **difficulty in navigating** these systems.
6. Many Aboriginal people feel **hopeless, helpless and powerless** when they interact with these systems.



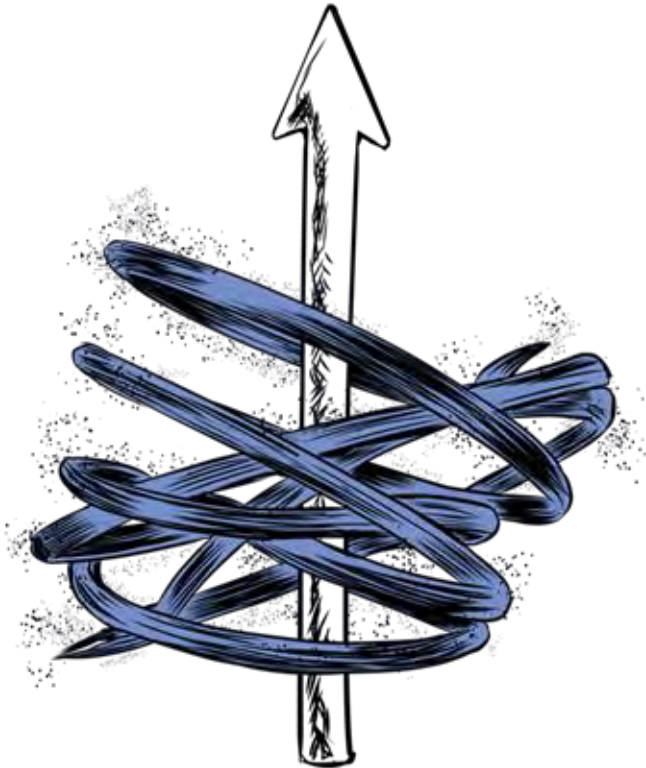
# The Cost of Over-Representation is Significant

- 43% of all ABORIGINAL men incarcerated across Canada have an **average of 2.8 children in government care.**
- The cost per child to the government is \$136,000 per year.
- The cost of keeping the Aboriginal man in jail is \$118,000 per year.
- The average time those MEN will spend in jail is 3.5 years.
- The total cost to our society is **\$1.4 million dollars.**

It must be a **priority concern for all departments and organizations** that have a shared responsibility in addressing this issue.

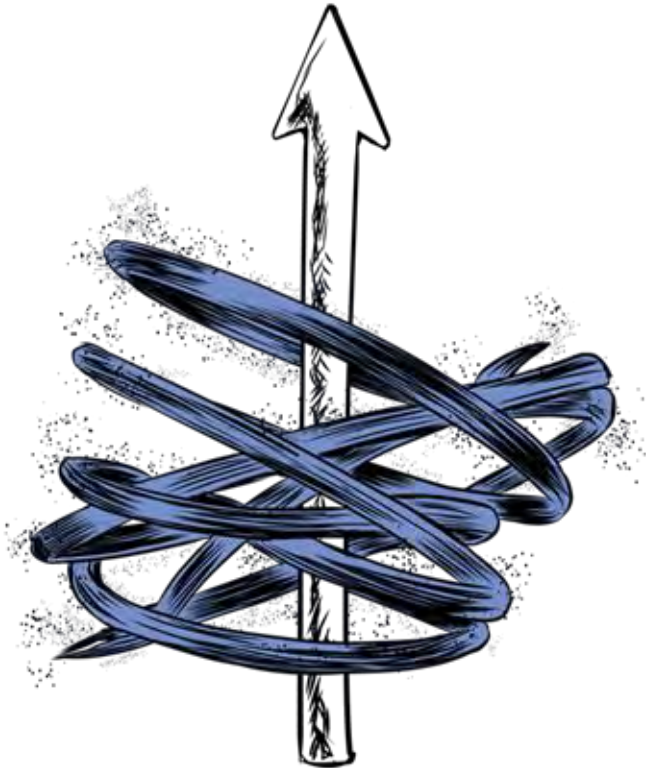
Building family resilience, reconciliation, public safety,  
and healing from historic trauma  
*ARE ALL* the same process.

**Reclaim our**  
*Interconnectedness*

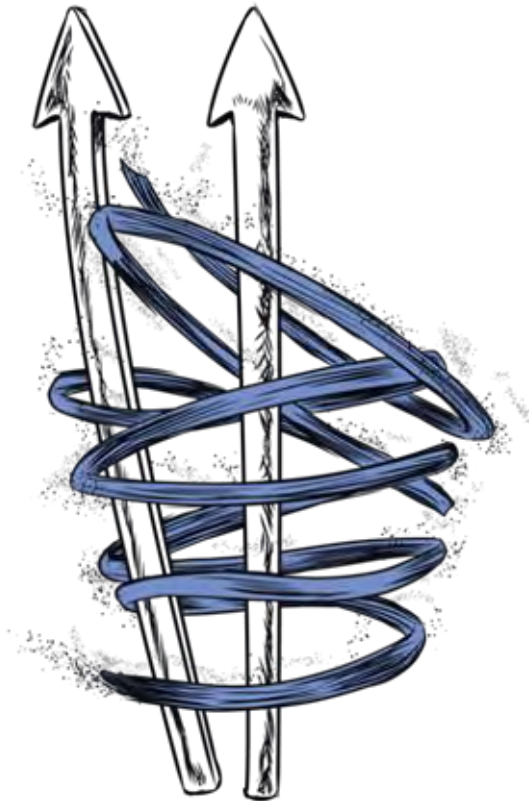


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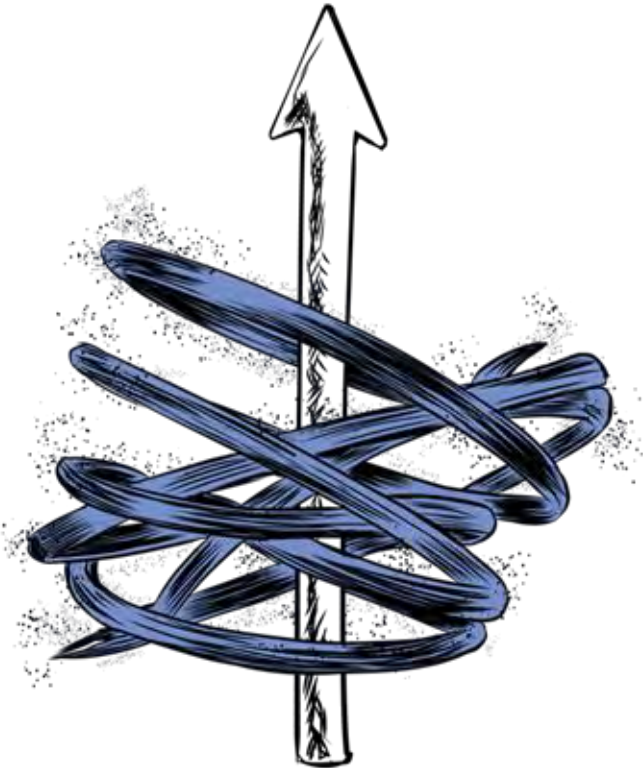


**Reconciliation of**  
**Relationships**

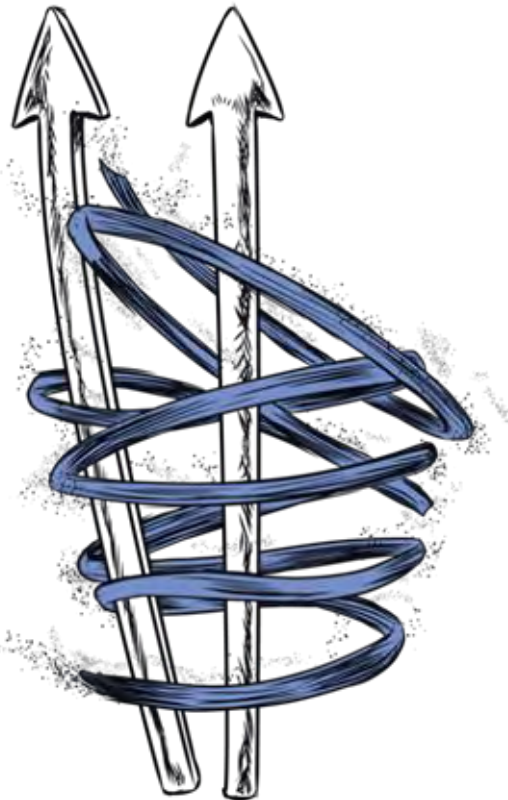


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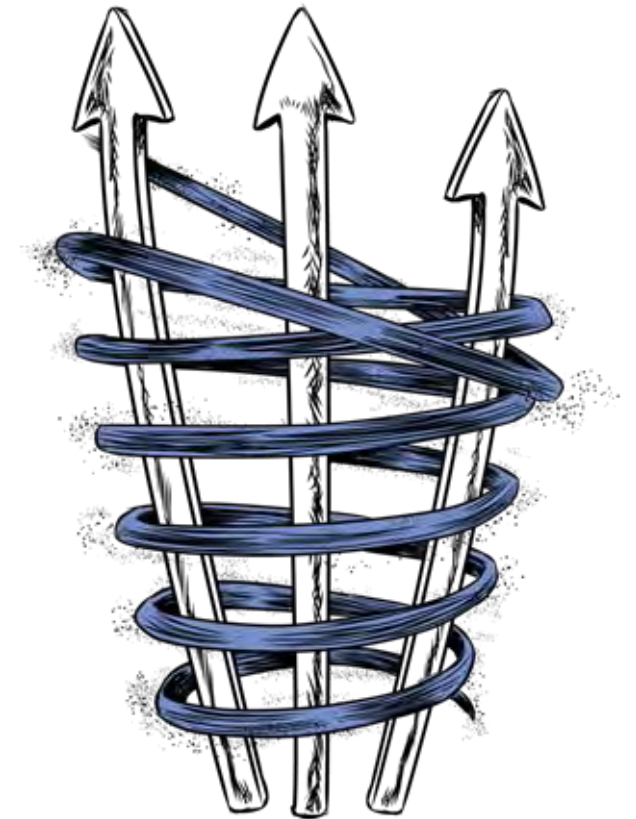
**Reclaim our  
*Interconnectedness***



**Reconciliation of  
Relationships**



**Self-Determined  
Solutions**



# CASE STUDY 1: The Buffalo Sage Wellness House

## NCSA opened Canada's first (and only) Section 81 Facility for Aboriginal Women Offenders.

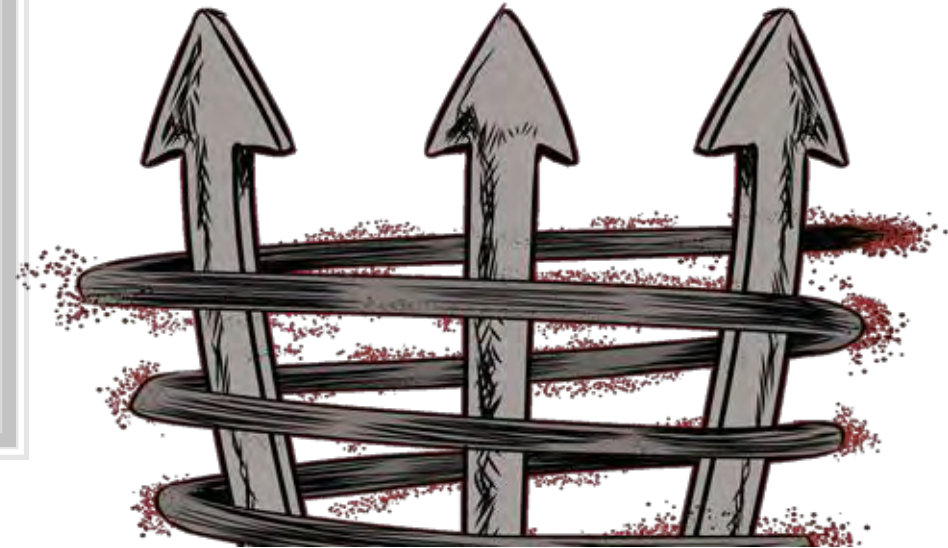
- Reclaiming our **interconnectedness** means we had to work in **transparent** ways with each other.
- **Reconciliation** of the **respectful relationship** between the Correctional Service of Canada (government) and NCSA (Indigenous People).
- While NCSA follows and is **accountable** to the laws of Canada, we **self-determine** our own policies that are accountable to our model of resilience.



RECONCILIATION

INTERCONNECTEDNESS

SELF-DETERMINATION





# CASE STUDY 2: Water: The Sacred Relationship

NCSA partnered with the Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Agency (AEMERA).

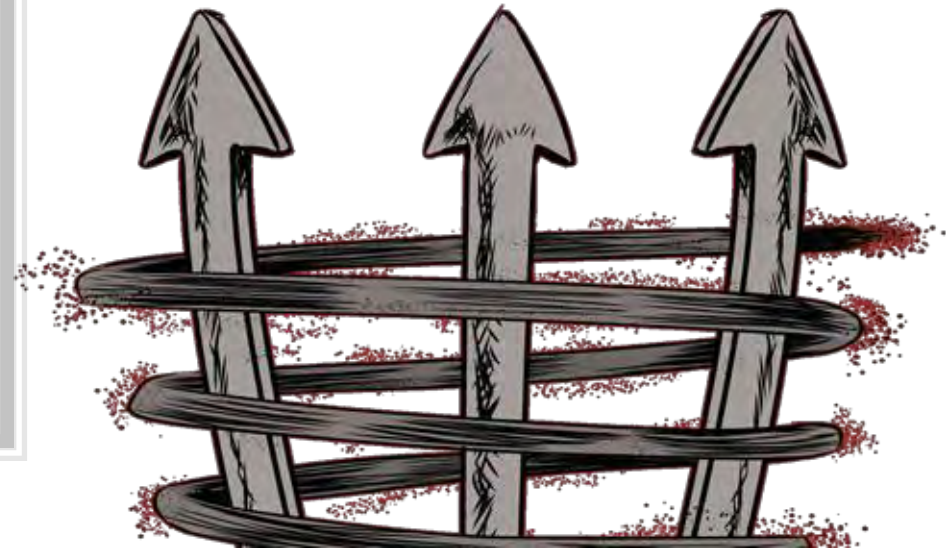
- Reclaiming our **interconnectedness** means we had to acknowledge that we could find **common ground**: to protect watersheds in Alberta.
- **Reconciliation** of the **relationship between Indigenous and Western Science**, as a way to create trust between Indigenous people and Water scientists.
- NCSA assisted with the development of an **self-determining** Indigenous Science panel, whose knowledge and expertise helped to shape the scientific research plan.



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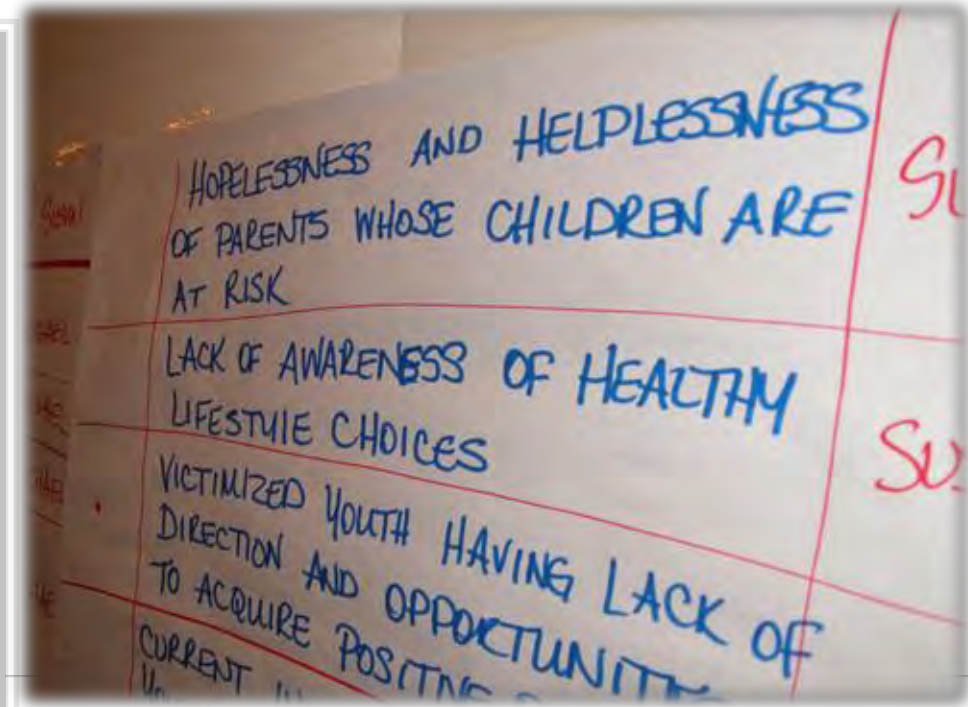


## CASE STUDY 3:

# The Community Solution to Gang Violence

NCSA led a community-based social justice strategy in Edmonton.

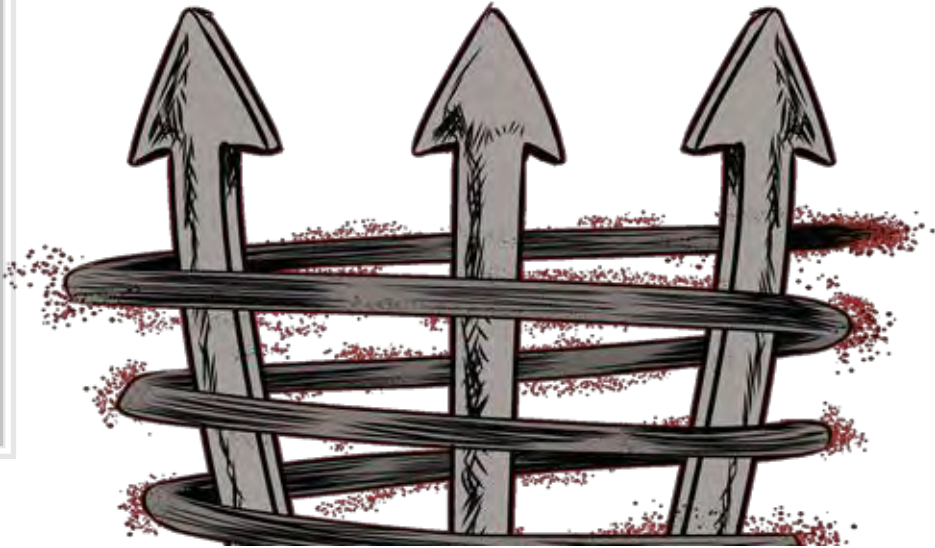
- Reclaiming our **interconnectedness** means engaging 60+ agencies and 300+ people to co-create the strategy.
- **Reconciliation** of the relationship between the Edmonton Police Service and community-based organizations, as a way to raise awareness on gang recruitment and activity.
- Every agency took what they learned and **self-determined** new strategies and partnerships to decrease the recruitment of young people into gangs.



RECONCILIATION

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# Allen Benson

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