

## Indigenizing City Planning Processes in Saskatoon, Canada

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### *Abstract*

The article examines how the City of Saskatoon's strategies for working with Indigenous communities in high-level planning processes leading to its *Strategic Plan 2013-2023* relate to three concepts framing the academic literature on how to re-calibrate state-Indigenous society relations at the urban municipal level: Indigenization, co-production, and coexistence. We argue that indigenizing mainstream city planning processes through authentic forms of partnership will increase Indigenous density within our shared cities. Qualitative interviews with leaders from City Hall and Aboriginal communities revealed a disconnection between municipal and Indigenous participants' ideas about inclusion. The City's mechanisms of consultation engaged Indigenous communities as stakeholder interest groups, but not as autonomous political communities wanting to share control as full partners. A civic culture and institutional structures that affirm and operationalize indigeneity would have improved the outcome of Saskatoon's planning processes.

*Keywords:* Indigenous, Aboriginal, urban, planning

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*Résumé*

Cet article examine comment les stratégies de la ville de Saskatoon afin de travailler avec les communautés indigènes dans les processus d'aménagement de haut niveau menant à son Plan stratégique 2013-2023 sont reliées aux trois concepts qui encadrent la littérature académique au sujet de la re-calibration des relations entre l'État et les sociétés indigènes au niveau municipal: l'indigénisation, la co-production et la co-existence. Notre argumentation est que l'intégration d'un courant indigène dominant dans l'aménagement municipal, à travers des formes de partenariats authentiques, augmentera la densité indigène à l'intérieur de nos villes partagées. Des entrevues qualitatives avec les dirigeants de la ville de Saskatoon et les communautés autochtones ont révélé une déconnexion entre les idées d'inclusion de la municipalité et les participants indigènes. Les mécanismes de consultation de la ville de Saskatoon ont engagé les communautés indigènes comme étant des groupes aux parties prenantes, mais pas comme des communautés politiques autonomes voulant partager le contrôle et comme des partenaires entiers. Une culture civique et des structures institutionnelles qui affirment et opérationnalisent l'indigénité auraient amélioré les résultats des processus d'aménagement de Saskatoon.

*Mots clés:* indigènes, autochtone, urbain, aménagement

**Introduction**

The Prairie city of Saskatoon is located in Treaty Six and Métis Nation territory and is the largest city in Saskatchewan. Between 2009 and 2011 the City of Saskatoon carried out the largest community dialogue and visioning exercise in its history, called *Saskatoon Speaks: Shape Our Future*. The purpose of *Saskatoon Speaks* was to develop a comprehensive and shared *Community Vision* to guide civic practitioners as they prepare for the city's growth and development to 2030, including a projected doubling of the population to 500,000 (City of Saskatoon 2011a). During this time Saskatoon also developed a municipal *Culture Plan* to "guide the City's policy and decision making as it identifies priorities to harmonize cultural endeavours, strengthen cultural development, and support the arts" (City of Saskatoon 2011b, 4). Municipal administrators of *Saskatoon Speaks* and the *Culture Plan* implemented strategies for community engagement with the help of two separate consulting agencies. The resulting *Community Vision* and *Culture Plan* documents directly informed the content of Saskatoon's *Strategic Plan 2013-2023*, which is now being used as the basis for all policy, planning, and programming directives, implementation, and funding out of City Hall (City of Saskatoon 2013). Our interest in this paper is the extent to which the City of Saskatoon undertook these major citywide planning initiatives in partnership with Indigenous communities and leaders.<sup>1</sup> By examining these two large-scale planning processes, recently completed and under implementation, important insight can be gained into the state of practice in planning with Indigenous communities.

Through this case study we examine how the City of Saskatoon's strategies for working with Indigenous communities in high-level planning processes relate to three concepts framing the academic literature on how to re-calibrate state-Indigenous society relations at the urban municipal level. These concepts are indigenization, co-

production, and coexistence. We argue that indigenizing mainstream city planning processes through authentic forms of partnership will be vital to the political, cultural, social, and economic integrity of Canadian cities, Indigenous peoples, and their traditional territories. The next section develops our conceptual framework centred on indigenizing planning processes as a powerful means of strengthening Indigenous and non-Indigenous coexistence in cities. This is followed by a discussion of the research methods. The results of the research are then presented and discussed within our conceptual context before concluding.

### Conceptualizing the Indigenization of City Planning

Although Indigenous peoples across Canada are reclaiming cities as part of their traditional territories (Peters 2005; Wilson and Peters 2005), and the legal duty to consult<sup>2</sup> with Aboriginal peoples may become a requirement of municipalities within the next few years as clarity occurs from legal proceedings (MacCallum Fraser and Viswanathan 2013), the denial of Indigenous rights in urban regions continues to be a problem. Self-determination is an inherent right for Indigenous peoples in Canada, including urban areas, since they comprised sovereign nations with established systems of governance before Canada existed—sovereignty that has never been relinquished (Belanger 2011; Henderson 2002; Maaka and Fleras 2005). This article examines how Indigenous communities' self-determining autonomy might coexist in a relationship with mainstream city planning processes that operate at the very highest strategic levels of a large Prairie urban municipality, Saskatoon.

Canada's responses to Indigenous claims to self-determining autonomy are mostly limited to the development of territorial-based self-government arrangements, mostly in rural areas of the country (e.g., reserves). Such frameworks are generally included in modern treaties or land-claim agreements between First Nations and senior levels of Canadian government, which exclude Métis and many urban Indigenous communities (Laliberte 2013). Much of the academic literature likewise attends to Indigenous self-government at nation-state and reserve-territorial scales, while research exploring possibilities for strengthening localized urban self-determination is limited, but growing (see, for example, Abele and Graham 2011; Andersen and Denis 2003; Newhouse and Peters 2003; Walker 2006). Indigenous urban governance requires actions and networks among local communities and institutions dedicated to meeting the needs, advancing the interests, and facilitating the self-determination of Indigenous people residing in their traditional territories within urban environments (Hanselmann 2003; Silver 2006; Tomiak 2011).

We contend that collaborative governance arrangements between municipal governments and Indigenous leaders and organizations with representative legitimacy—those that Andrews (2003) refers to as “community knowers”—could potentially benefit both urban Indigenous groups and local governments through mutual learning and shared responsibility. Scholars have argued that “co-production” of Indigenous policies and programs between Indigenous communities and City Hall is a way to honour the principle and enact the practice of Indigenous self-determination, while working within the culturally diverse and shared territory of modern cities (Belanger and Walker 2009; Ouart and the Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre

2013; Walker, Moore, and Linklater 2011). Co-production, generally, is policy or plan *formulation* where actors outside of the traditional municipal government apparatus are centrally involved in the policymaking process from issue identification and objective setting through to implementation (Belanger and Walker 2009). Co-production implicitly recognizes value in lived knowledge, experiential perspectives, and in sharing policymaking ownership with community ‘knowers’. In this research we shift our gaze away from Indigenous-specific policies and programs and toward the co-production of mainstream city planning instruments.

While good Indigenous-specific policies and programs can serve to bolster urban Indigenous people’s wellbeing, the impetus of such government directives and subsequent academic attention is often limited to and by an overemphasis on Indigenous difference (Andersen 2009) and what Indigenous communities ‘lack’ rather than what they offer or aspire for (Newhouse 2011). Co-produced city planning instruments would advance what Andersen (2009; 2013) describes as Indigenous “density”—the notion that Indigenous people in Canada have multidimensional identities and knowledge that include deeply sown insights about Western institutions and ways of knowing and should therefore be empowered to separately influence settler society’s assumptions and biases to better represent their own needs, interests and ambitions.

The creation of mechanisms and strategies that forge mainstream space for Indigenous-inclusive governance represents the “indigenization” of traditionally Western-dominated structures and processes (Borrows 2002; Green 2005). Maaka and Fleras (2009) describe indigenization in the context of colonial policymaking frameworks as a fundamental shift from top-down, ‘one size fits all’ approaches, to bottom-up analysis frameworks grounded in Indigenous models of self-determination. This transition foundationally entails:

- (1) recognition of Indigenous peoples as possessing distinctive ways of looking at the world; (2) respect for indigenous difference and distinctiveness through its incorporation into policymaking; (3) an acknowledgement that they alone possess the right to decide for themselves what is best; and (4) endorsement of their status as sovereign in their own right, yet sharing in the sovereign of society at large (Maaka and Fleras 2009, 13).

We contend that indigenizing municipal governance requires a re-situating of urban Indigenous communities’ diverse ways of knowing from a minority position among stakeholders within supposedly value-neutral, ‘universal’ structures and processes, to a more central role that acknowledges, incorporates, and *operationalizes* their self-determining autonomy, their traditional occupancy of territories on which Canadian cities now exist, and their cultural density. In this research we examine the specific governance practice of city planning in Saskatoon that sets vision and strategic direction at the most comprehensive operational level over a long time-horizon. Put simply, we ask: is there evidence of indigenization within Saskatoon’s largest-scale (future-seeking) planning instruments?

City planning influences municipal configurations, policies, urban development, and the production of civic initiatives, services, and programs. Planning in Canadian

cities is itself a cultural practice that, despite functioning to enhance many Canadians' quality of life, has historically reinforced and reproduced Indigenous dispossession and marginalization (Porter 2010). Contemporary urban identities are created in the midst of over a century dedicated by non-Indigenous settlers to erasing much of the "materiality" (i.e., physical quality, presence, structure) and "memory" (i.e., recall of experience, or even existence) of local Indigenous communities (Matunga 2013, 8). Planning practices imbued with Western cultural assumptions inevitably reproduce paternalistic colonial mentalities when they merely include Indigenous communities as 'stakeholders' or 'voices' without a distinct right to self-determination (Porter 2013; Walker, Moore, and Linklater 2011). Denis (1997) has described state and civic processes as institutional "whitestreaming"—the structural and functional ways through which non-Indigenous perspectives are systematically privileged over Indigenous ones. Green and Peach (2007, 281) argue that:

Oppression and dispossession, and all of the bureaucratic practices that enforce them, must be recognized not as features of Canada's past that have been shaken off in a more enlightened and egalitarian present; they must instead be identified within current policy frameworks found on assumptions of Indigenous inferiority. We must recognize that oppression and dispossession are legitimated within official bureaucratic and legal language—and, more pervasively, within popular culture—rendering contemporary relations of dominance and subordination uncontroversial and causing Indigenous peoples to be blamed for their own suffering.

Conversely, planning with and by Indigenous communities has been associated with the constructive production of culture, space- and place-making, identity building, healing, and wellbeing (see Walker, Jojola, and Natcher 2013). Our conceptual framework for indigenized city planning uses Lane and Hibbard's (2005, 74) argument for transformative planning, which fundamentally involves "identifying and implementing strategies for transforming structures of oppression." Transformative planning grounded in local Indigeneity would support Indigenous community agency and, as Walker (2008, 34) concludes, "the ability of Aboriginal community members to actualize their urban aspirations based on their own assessment of needs and feelings."

What does indigenizing city planning mean in substantive terms? Primarily it requires conceptual space within mainstream planning frameworks for recognition and advancement of Indigenous planning "as a parallel tradition with its own history, focus, goals, and approach" (Matunga 2013, 31). City planning must also find ways to bridge Indigenous and mainstream traditions, allowing for significant cultural transformation and reflexive coexistence to take root (Jojola 2008; Matunga 2013; Porter 2013). Coexistence not only acknowledges that people use, attach meaning to, and move across space in complex and relational ways, but also that their claims to space and how it is constituted are "highly contested" and must be embraced as such (Porter 2013, 285). Porter (2013) argues that the "persistent footprint" of indigeneity in settler cities—the unremitting, fluid, and politicized assertion of Indigenous people's rights, values, identities, and ambitions—intrinsically challenges the dominant cultural

foundations of city planning and must ultimately give way to the transformation of mainstream frameworks to facilitate Indigenous-inclusive coexistence. This article argues that indigenizing city planning must be a comprehensive political and cultural project guided by multilayered, interconnected and context-specific procedures that are created with and controlled by local Indigenous ‘knowers’ in sustained partnership with City Hall.

### Methods

An in-depth examination of the City of Saskatoon’s *Culture Plan* and *Saskatoon Speaks* planning processes was undertaken during 2012 and 2013. A qualitative research approach through semi-structured life world interviews was used for the research. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, 27) explain that this method “attempts to understand themes of the lived everyday world from the subjects’ own perspectives” and “is neither an open everyday conversation nor a closed questionnaire.” The semi-structured life world interviewing method was well suited to our research objectives because of its proclivity for descriptive answers; the open-endedness and flexibility of the conversation itself as a way to form and grasp meaning; and the ultimate goal of an interpersonal exchange that is mutually positive for the interviewer and participants (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews provide a necessary oral component through which participants share knowledge formed by lived experience and expressed through their stories. Stories are important in all epistemological traditions but are fundamental in Indigenous methodologies and ways of knowing (Chamberlin 2003; King 2003; Kovach 2009).

Our principal criterion for selecting participants was their direct involvement in Saskatoon’s strategic planning processes. We interviewed 11 people with first-hand perspectives on one or both of the *Saskatoon Speaks* and *Culture Plan* processes, all of whom are also key contributors to municipal and Indigenous governance and programs. This included two managers and two upper-tier employees from the City of Saskatoon’s administrative branches, the Mayor and one city councillor, one Métis government representative, an Indigenous political organization representative, the Tribal Chief of the Saskatoon Tribal Council, a member of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy Steering Committee, and one other Indigenous community leader. Six participants were men; five were women. Six participants were Aboriginal; five were non-Aboriginal. Interviews prompted each participant to thoroughly consider two broad questions: (1) Did Saskatoon’s engagement and inclusion of Indigenous citizens’ perspectives throughout the *Saskatoon Speaks* and *Culture Plan* processes represent the indigenization of mainstream planning processes? (2) By what means might Saskatoon indigenize city planning to facilitate self-determination and coexistence?

Interview guides were organized into three sections intended to gain experiential perspectives and facilitate a thematic dialogue between municipal and Indigenous leaders. The first section explored existing relationships and collaborative mechanisms—interfaces—between the City of Saskatoon and Indigenous organizations. The second section consisted of questions about each participant’s contributions to, and perceptions of, Saskatoon’s two recent citywide planning processes. This section ended by prompting each participant to explore the depth and significance of Indigenous

community engagement and contributions. The third section invited participants to think about and discuss prospective ways to indigenize planning and nurture collaborative governance in Saskatoon.

Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 2.5 hours, with an average length of 1.5 hours. The interviews were digitally recorded on a personal recording device and transcribed. Participants were provided the option to review their interview in written or auditory form. Transcripts were coded and thematically organized and analyzed in relation to the conceptual framework developed in the preceding section of this article. Participants were sent an initial written draft and were invited to provide feedback about our contextualization of their perspectives in order to preserve ongoing and informed consent (Tuhiwai Smith 1999; Wilson 2008).

### **Mechanisms for Indigenous Inclusion in Saskatoon's Planning Processes**

Saskatoon has the third highest Indigenous population per capita of Canada's Census Metropolitan Areas, accounting for 9.3 per cent of its 256,435 residents (Statistics Canada 2011). According to the 2011 National Household Survey roughly half of Saskatoon's Indigenous population identifies as First Nations and half as Métis. Saskatoon contains many Indigenous community organizations and active Indigenous governments such as the Saskatoon Tribal Council, Central Urban Métis Federation, Métis Nation-Saskatchewan, and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. These institutions have cultivated deep relational connections and representative legitimacy within the city's Indigenous communities, making them important actors in the urban affairs of Saskatoon's Indigenous citizenry. While City of Saskatoon officials expressed in interviews their dedication to strategies for Indigenous community engagement, most did not take into account that meaningful inclusion would mean Indigenous representatives controlling their own community consultations, having decision-making power at every stage of the planning process, and contributing in full partnership from agenda setting through to implementation.

Indigenous citizens were first involved in *Saskatoon Speaks* through a stakeholder interview process. This practice collected perspectives about the City's strengths, weaknesses, and future directions from 72 diverse individuals and groups (City of Saskatoon 2011a). Several Indigenous professionals, political figures, and community leaders were invited to participate in this process, which culminated in the production of *Saskatoon Speaks* working themes for broader community consultation. City employees who devised these interviews indicated that attendance by Indigenous invitees was lower than they had hoped. The City's demographic analysis of attendees at subsequent *Saskatoon Speaks* community consultation events showed that Indigenous participation was comparatively low there as well. To try and remedy the situation, two additional consultation gatherings were planned specifically targeting Indigenous community involvement. One event was held at Saskatoon's Indian and Métis Friendship Centre and a follow up "Aboriginal Gathering" event was held at a local hotel, the Saskatoon Inn.

Community input for the municipal *Culture Plan* was also gathered through stakeholder interviews, focus groups and consultation events. Additionally the culture planning process assembled a 22-person Community Advisory Committee (CAC), of

which three members identified as Indigenous. The primary responsibilities of CAC members were to provide feedback on drafts of the *Culture Plan*, to participate in community consultation events, and to fill leadership roles championing community participation.

City employees and officials maintained that their strategies for stakeholder engagement and targeted events for Indigenous community consultation symbolized a dedication to achieving inclusive participation from Saskatoon's Indigenous citizenry:

Some key things to think about were how and when and where you advertise meetings...what the facility looks like, is it accessible? ...How do we...make sure we're being as comprehensive as we can and engaging the broadest numbers in the community? [A conventional approach to engaging] Aboriginal organizations doesn't always work so well if it's an environment where they don't feel valued, don't feel that they'll have an opportunity to be heard... (City of Saskatoon employee #1)

The strategy of recruiting some Indigenous leaders as 'project champions' to spread the word and encourage participation among the broader Indigenous communities was a key aspect of the City's approach to fostering collaboration, believed by city officials to make the process of consultation a "joint effort between the City and... some of the leaders in the Aboriginal community" (Manager of Strategic and Business Planning, City of Saskatoon). A joint effort between the City and Aboriginal leaders, if implemented fully and effectively, however, would require considerably more than the recruitment of a few Aboriginal community champions and advisory committee members for the City's processes.

The City seemed to acknowledge that Indigenous leaders and institutions have representative agency within their urban communities, and that they also retain particular knowledge about those communities beyond the scope of the municipal government. Measures were not taken, however, to provide community 'champions' autonomous control or influence over the planning processes. While municipal respondents contended that inclusion necessitates alternative strategies for engaging Saskatoon's Indigenous leaders and communities, the quality of this engagement was anchored to advertising the public planning forums and aiming to increase participation in them. The *form* of collaboration itself was not a focus:

We met with the Aboriginal communities just like we met with other groups, so I think first of all it signifies that we consider them to be a very important part of the community, that in fact they were asked to participate; they were asked what were their needs, what their concerns were, where they saw the city going into the future. And I think they were addressed in that sense... (Mayor, City of Saskatoon)

Viewed simply as another stakeholder, or voice, among a diverse Saskatoon public demonstrates a shallow recognition by City Hall of the place and authority of Indigenous communities within their traditional and treaty territories (Walker, Moore,

and Linklater 2011). It falls far short of the two dimensions of recognition which could support good forms of collaboration between the municipality and Indigenous communities, namely, the “territorially based recognition of Indigenous places” and “the recognition of Indigenous political authority” (Porter and Barry 2015, 22).

In terms of the actual structure of the event, many elements were very similar to any of the other events... We went through all the themes... We had sticky notes... ‘Here’s what we’ve heard so far so please add to it or change something however you want to, make your voice heard.’ (Manager of Strategic and Business Planning, City of Saskatoon)

The City controlled all consultative functions, including their format and the subsequent analysis and consolidation of data into its official planning documents. Co-production and the principle of self-determination at the very least require thorough Indigenous community input *at every stage* of the planning process. Recognizing that there are legitimate ‘champions’ in Saskatoon’s Indigenous communities must amount to more than simply using their influence to increase participation; co-production requires actually engaging in consultative exercises as a *joint effort*, mutually actualizing local state and Indigenous autonomies.

Because consultation was not a shared practice, Indigenous participants expressed apprehension about the City’s handling of their contributions; concern that their perspectives would be regarded as those of a single person among a multitude of others and thus lacking consequential influence, or that they would be seen to represent the collective views of an extremely diverse Indigenous population in Saskatoon:

We were invited to some of the sessions but it was just with everybody else and we felt like we were just a small minority or voice... I never went because...we have...an obligation to represent the...First Nations people in Saskatoon... Do we represent a certain percentage of the population or are we just representing one person at these consultation sessions? (Tribal Chief, Saskatoon Tribal Council)

There are so many dynamics of what it means to be First Nation, Métis, Inuit, Cree... there are so many perspectives so... I don’t want to be seen as...being that voice. (Member of Urban Aboriginal Strategy Steering Committee)

Indigenous participants also sought explicit channels to facilitate collective ownership and account for community diversity. One interviewee observed the CAC’s limited capacity for incorporating Métis perspectives, which suggests a misunderstanding about community representation:

I’m representing Métis, you know? At least I should have an opportunity to go and speak to some of the organizations and get their input... Maybe if the process was a little better, things could have been drawn up and

presented at our general meetings or where we could have taken it more to our membership. (Métis participant #2)

While the City directly engaged Indigenous leaders and experts in stakeholder consultations, as project champions, and marginally through membership on the CAC, no mechanisms were established to facilitate direct and sustained communication between these Indigenous representatives and their broader communities.

The organizers of Indigenous consultation events for *Saskatoon Speaks* did not reflect sufficiently upon the factors that may have led to more meaningful participation by Indigenous communities. As one informant explained:

Gathering information from Aboriginal people happens at different levels. So... first the ask...at the political level, 'can we be in your community?' and going through the steps required to get that support... At the administrative level... 'what's a respectful way for us to come into your community and gather this information? This is the process we'd like to use, how can we modify this process so it works good in your community?' ...and for *Saskatoon Speaks*...I didn't quite see that full engagement. (Member of Urban Aboriginal Strategy Steering Committee)

Full collaboration with First Nations and Métis representatives may have garnered increased participation, deeper community attachment to the planning process, and therefore more textured and accurate results. Indigenous participants stressed that their community and political organizations should share control or ownership over their own consultations. This, as the Tribal Chief asserted, would bolster comfort with, and connectivity to, the planning process:

[First Nations citizens] know if it's [hosted by] a First Nation organization that they're...not putting themselves out there too far, so...we have to get the City to be comfortable with...letting go of the pen, letting someone else drive the agenda or at least have a different opinion. (Tribal Chief, Saskatoon Tribal Council)

To indigenize strategies for inclusion the City must not only identify Indigenous leaders and experts to help shape high-level planning practices, but also provide space and mechanisms for those individuals to work with their communities in parallel fashion, aimed ultimately at bridging mainstream and Indigenous processes to reach shared goals for civic future-seeking.

### **Towards Indigenization – Cultural Recognition and Structural Transformation**

While shared Indigenous-municipal control and decision-making authority at each stage of *Saskatoon Speaks* and the *Culture Plan* would have been meaningful approaches to inclusion, indigenizing planning processes in the future will also require ancillary institutional changes that actively transform civic apparatuses that marginalize and oppress. Indigenous interview participants recommended that

municipal leaders and officials make a general commitment to symbolic actions that promote cultural recognition of urban indigeneity in Saskatoon's public sphere, and establish specific collaborative governance mechanisms to institutionalize Indigenous community influence over a variety of municipal processes. Such cultural and structural transformation would be the groundwork for embedding and advancing Indigenous density and self-determination across mainstream civic governance, in support of Indigenous-inclusive coexistence (Andersen 2009; Porter 2013; Silver 2006; Tomiak 2011).

Many Indigenous and some non-Indigenous respondents observed that Indigenous Saskatonians' diverse worldviews, identities, and urban aspirations are not substantively represented in mainstream municipal governance. Indigenous participants perceived a dominant and at times obstinate civic culture within the City of Saskatoon's decision-making apparatuses:

I still think we're fighting an uphill battle because...in the last I guess three years we've had some major sporting events and some major cultural events in Saskatoon...and we've asked the City...for grants and things like that... They said 'we're giving too much to the Indians... grants to bring these events in.' Yeah but you've only been doing it for three years, what about the first hundred years? So we still have to get through that mindset. (Tribal Chief, Saskatoon Tribal Council)

Perhaps it is due to this institutional 'mindset' that Saskatoon's Indigenous population is perceived as just another 'interest group' with its own 'champions' to be engaged. Perspectives offered by the Mayor seem to reflect a cultural viewpoint predicated upon Western liberal values of multicultural equality, which can be counter-conducive to the public recognition of distinct Indigenous rights, traditional territories, political autonomy, and the need for mutually respectful coexistence between Indigenous and settler society in the shared urban sphere:

We wanted to be inclusive of everyone, not exclusive... I look at...our cultural diversity and race relations department and quite frankly I think it should only be called cultural diversity because we all belong to one race and that's the human race. I didn't know we had different races. I think we have different cultures is what it's all about... and [Aboriginal citizens] participate in that. (Mayor, City of Saskatoon)

To reject the social construct of 'race' in this manner is to deny the existence of systemic racism and the profound injustices that colonial government policies have inflicted upon Canada's Indigenous population. Ignoring Canada's ongoing legacy of racial stratification reinforces oppression by standardizing dominant ways of knowing in public institutions at the expense of Indigenous ones—processes otherwise known as 'whitestreaming' (Denis 1997).

Most Indigenous participants insisted on symbolic and visible actions that meaningfully acknowledge and promote indigeneity in the public realm of civic affairs.

For example, a participant suggested that the City must play a role instilling cultural pride within Saskatoon's Métis community by visibly celebrating local Métis presence and influence:

When you have pride in your culture it affects everybody... When you have pride in yourself you have pride in your home, pride in your community, pride in your country. It just all falls into place if you've got pride in yourself... The best I could hope for... is that the City recognizes the history and the contributions of the Métis to this city. (Métis participant #2)

A mechanism that has been used by other municipal governments as a demonstration of commitment to working with local Indigenous communities is a municipal Aboriginal declaration or accord which, in broad terms, outlines mutual goals and responsibilities between the City and its Indigenous citizenry (e.g., *Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord* 2006, *Thompson Aboriginal Accord* 2009, and Toronto's *Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal Communities* 2010). However, most municipal respondents expressed that Saskatoon is able to carry out meaningful work with Indigenous communities and organizations without such a mechanism:

There's some mixed feedback from Winnipeg and Edmonton who've done the formalized accords. An accord is as good as the paper you write it on if your actions don't follow... At the end of the day if...you've built relationships and you've built trust and you are actively recruiting and hiring Aboriginal employees and retaining them, then decide whether you need that piece of paper to say we've signed onto this. (City of Saskatoon employee #1)

Certainly, symbolic gestures without effective action would be disappointing. Rather than emphasizing one instead of the other, Indigenous participants underscored the importance of both. Finding ways to centrally embed indigeneity in the culture and operations of City Hall (e.g., Council declarations, accords, Indigenous human resource strategies) would add legitimacy to municipal planning and other processes.

All Indigenous participants noted that creating an Indigenous advisory council<sup>3</sup> to inform a range of municipal discussions and actively collaborate with City Council and civic departments would be a useful and appropriate mechanism for indigenizing civic affairs. An Indigenous advisory council could work toward building a framework for indigenizing planning practices and collectively account for a meaningful degree of Indigenous representation and participation in municipal governance:

I think it would be a very grand gesture for the City to have an Aboriginal advisory council at the political level that had space for Chief and Councils from various communities or at the Tribal Council level to have representation...attention to what are the top issues? What is the city experiencing? What are the top First Nation issues and...how could that political force put some energy behind it so it's a better outcome for First

Nation people living in the city? (Member of Urban Aboriginal Strategy Steering Committee)

I've often thought, I wonder if they set up an...Aboriginal city council table...and have representation on there to talk about the city of Saskatoon. And if you had Aboriginal leaders on there who had a place to go and make recommendations, I think that would make a difference. (Representative of Indigenous political organization)

A City Councillor pondered the potential opportunities that alternative Indigenous planning mechanisms could offer Saskatoon:

What is the opportunity here? ...If we could get this right we could really be recognizing the fact that the...history of Canada hasn't been always good but...it's a merging and a bumping of these cultures... And if we can understand, okay, so what is the next chapter going to be and how do we take [an Aboriginal advisory committee], whatever it would be to say...'this is going to help all of us to be the...best city, the best country, and overcome some of our gaps' ...What are some of the ethics of some of the traditional teachings and...what could they...provide all of us to help carve a path into the future that's more sustainable, is more hopeful, is more holistic? (City Councillor, City of Saskatoon)

Participants suggested that an Indigenous advisory council would be most effective if it enlisted community leaders and representatives from different organizations and governments that already serve and advocate for Saskatoon's Indigenous citizens. Legitimate Indigenous leaders and 'knowers' participating in effective, stable, and community-controlled collaborative governance mechanisms with significant degrees of practical autonomy could nurture cultural and structural transformation, bolster the authenticity and consistency of municipal-Indigenous interfaces, and support civic government with a culturally dense, local base of knowledge that is otherwise missing in mainstream decision-making structures.

## Conclusion

In this article we examine two large-scale citywide planning initiatives undertaken by the City of Saskatoon to determine the extent of present collaboration with Indigenous communities and how this might be improved in the future. Saskatoon's strategies for Indigenous community inclusion in *Saskatoon Speaks* and *Culture Plan* processes demonstrate efforts by the City to enhance participation, but they did not include Indigenous communities in full partnership, failing to bridge Indigenous and mainstream planning traditions. Matunga (2013, 31) explains that indigenizing planning "requires more than simply 'grafting' indigeneity to 'mainstream' planning as another 'tricky' yet worthy agenda item." It necessitates space and mechanisms for Indigenous planning traditions to coexist in parallel relationships with mainstream Western traditions, eventually finding ways to bridge these practices into reflexive and

relational frameworks. Institutional structures will need to be developed that make long-term collaborative planning possible between Indigenous and non-Indigenous urban communities atop a better balanced surface of power relations (Barry 2012).

Indigenous participants conveyed that City Hall lacks legitimacy among the Indigenous population stemming from a historic and continuing disregard for Indigenous citizens' situated history, political communities and governance. The indigenization of city planning would advance mutual learning and shared responsibility in and across myriad urban sectors and governance processes. Ultimately we argue for the cultivation of a municipal culture of coexistence and co-production between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Saskatoon and other Canadian cities, facilitated by the municipal government through institutionalized collaboration with Indigenous organizations, leaders, and communities. Indigenizing city planning processes can potentially induce or contribute to such a change due to its transformative and reconciliatory potential. Indigenization should not be thought of as a static state of affairs, but as a dynamic and multi-faceted process that shapes institutional configurations to more accurately reflect and operationalize Indigenous political and territorial rights, knowledges, cultural identities, and future-seeking ambitions in the urban mainstream. Future research that examines practices aimed at indigenizing civic processes like planning in cities across Canada and other settler states (e.g., USA, Australia, New Zealand) would be useful. In cases where these practices are occurring, it would be instructive to learn if they were initiated at the local government level, by non-Indigenous or Indigenous councils, and whether they were enabled or required by higher orders of government or the courts.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The term 'Indigenous' peoples is used in this paper to encompass descendants of the original inhabitants of settler countries around the world including Aboriginal peoples in Canada. 'Aboriginal' refers to the descendants of the original inhabitants of Canada. It is the legal term used in the Constitution Act of 1982 to refer to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

<sup>2</sup> "In 2004, the Supreme Court of Canada established that the Crown owed a duty to consult and, where appropriate, to accommodate Aboriginal rights where there is evidence that the Crown has knowledge that a development will impact these rights" (MacCallum Fraser and Viswanathan 2013, 6). Though municipalities can be required as administrative bodies of the provincial Crown to operate in certain ways through provincial statutes, court proceedings and legal scholarship continue to scope for clarity on any future legal requirement that may exist for municipalities to exercise the duty to

consult with Aboriginal peoples (see MacCallum Fraser and Viswanathan 2013 for a discussion in the context of planning practice).

<sup>3</sup> An Indigenous advisory council in the sense discussed by interview participants would be focused on municipal affairs. This is different from the steering committee which operates in Saskatoon and many other cities across Canada to administer the federal government's Urban Aboriginal Strategy.

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