

## AO's Reconciliation Roadmap: Pipelines to Prosperity

While many Canadians support the idea of reconciliation in principle, the vast majority believe that reconciliation is impossible to achieve. We define reconciliation as **healing and economic independence for Indigenous individuals**. Reconciliation must be Indigenous-led and will only be achieved through partnership for healing on both sides.

Anishnabeg Outreach (AO) is on a mission to deliver the impossible:



Our goal is to heal all Indigenous individuals in Canada, provide job readiness training, and make them employable.

Longer-term, we envision a country full of healed Indigenous who have found employment with our corporate partners or with major infrastructure projects, and have gained economic independence for a lifetime of prosperity.



This will achieve our definition of reconciliation: **Indigenous healing and economic independence**.

### Partner with us to deliver reconciliation outcomes

We are seeking strategic partners to help us deliver reconciliation (healing and employment) for all Indigenous across Canada via our **Pipelines to Prosperity** initiatives described in this document. Will your organization partner with us and provide the support we need to achieve outcomes on reserves or in urban centres? Together, we can achieve the impossible.

## Creating synergistic outcomes

We believe we can achieve unparalleled and unprecedented reconciliation outcomes through an innovative approach that starts with addressing mental health and combines the powers of:

1. **Software-based healing via our AONest™ system.** AONest is available 24x7 to help people improve their mental health, build their spirit, learn essential life skills, learn about Indigenous culture and traditions, and become job-ready.
2. **Land-based healing via ceremony and Elder teachings.** We can help Indigenous individuals become grounded and connect with cultural traditions. Land-based healing is effective but currently inefficient way to heal due to the scarcity of fully trained Elders who know how to resolve intergenerational trauma using land-based techniques; we want to ensure more Elders have these teachings.
3. **Wraparound supports via AO programs and processes.** We will help our partners implement supporting programs and processes in their communities. Depending on the needs of the community, programs could include tutoring to help deliver academic success, mentoring to support transition to employment, sports coaching to help youth make their school teams and to encourage belonging, our Spirit Bundle food program to alleviate food insecurities, and additional employment support.

To create the synergistic outcomes we envision, we will form strategic partnerships with organizations and groups that support Indigenous, e.g., Indigenous health authorities, social service agencies like Family and Children's Services, etc.



## Foundations for success

Let's explore the tools we will use to make our vision a reality.

### Software-based healing

Our AONest software system ([www.aonest.com](http://www.aonest.com)) delivers healing digitally, making reconciliation initiatives scalable. AONest helps individuals address their mental health concerns and learn essential life skills independently. The system:

- Provides thousands of hours of free resources (videos and corresponding worksheets) to help individuals work through courses on a range of mental health topics including anxiety, anger, parenting stress, relationship management, grief, intimate partner violence, trauma, etc.
- Teaches essential life skills, e.g., managing money, finding safe and secure housing, navigating public transit systems, etc.
- Delivers the social determinants of health for Indigenous individuals.
- Offers a mix of modern therapeutic techniques and traditional Indigenous healing practices.
- Empowers Indigenous individuals to manage their mental health, connect with support systems, and engage in healing practices grounded in cultural values.
- Provides job readiness training and employment support.

We will use technology to provide a scalable, culturally grounded solution to mental health challenges and address systemic gaps where traditional services fall short.

AONest uses interactive learning and culturally relevant resources to build resilience, reduce stigma, and expand access to care. Its integration of Indigenous teachings, including the Medicine Wheel and Grandfather Teachings, offers a holistic, trauma-informed approach to wellness. The digital innovation empowers individuals and families to engage in their healing journeys on their own terms and advances long-term resilience, disrupts cycles of trauma, and contributes to systemic change, making it a groundbreaking alternative in the mental health landscape. And because there is a software component, mental health outcomes are available 24/7 through internet access.

We are seeking funding that will allow us to provide free access of AONest to Indigenous individuals so we can give them unlimited mental health support, help them build their spirit, heal, learn essential life skills, and gain job readiness training so they can participate in infrastructure projects or work corporately.

## Land-based healing

Land-based healing will be made possible through a new Elder in Residence program that we are establishing on our reconciliation farm in Breslau, Ontario. We plan to work with one of the most respected Elders in Canada to:

- Help him find local housing,
- Design a healing program and protocols that use ceremony and teachings, and
- Deliver the program on the farm combining traditional land-based learnings with digital learnings via our AONest software system.

Once our Elder in Residence delivers healing outcomes through an initial pilot on our reconciliation farm, we plan to share the program, protocols, and our AONest software system with other Elders and reserve staff so they can use our resources to achieve similar outcomes with individuals in their communities.

## Wraparound supports

AO offers a number of programs to the people we support in Waterloo Region. These programs include employment services, tutoring and sports, food bundles, and so on. Through partnership, we hope to expand the support services we provide in both volume and scope. We also hope to establish a robust training program so we can share the services with other groups, with the intention of teaching those organizations how to offer the same services to the people in their communities. We believe these wraparound supports will be essential in helping all Indigenous people achieve healing and economic independence.

## Partnerships

To start the process of delivering reconciliation in Canada, we are currently focused on Ontario where we have established several strategic partnerships with Indigenous health authorities, social service agencies, and other groups that support Indigenous people. Through these partnerships, we hope to run pilot programs on First Nation reserves in Northern Ontario and in the Region of Waterloo. We are also exploring a pilot opportunity in York Region.

We hope to first heal Indigenous in these communities and make them job-ready. Then, we hope to help the healed, employable individuals find employment opportunities through other partnerships we develop, e.g., on infrastructure projects like pipelines or mines which will ultimately lead to prosperity. (Most of these infrastructure projects have a requirement of 5% Indigenous participation which provides an incredible long-term opportunity for Indigenous employment if we are first able to help Indigenous individuals become employment-ready so they can participate.)

## Tying it altogether: “Pipelines to Prosperity”

To deliver reconciliation for Indigenous individuals across Canada, we need to create strategic partnerships and run reconciliation programs on First Nation reserves, in urban centres, and in hybrid approaches that support both urban Indigenous and those living on reserves.

If we can deliver reconciliation through healing and job readiness training, all Indigenous individuals can become employable. When we can provide healing and employment, we can help prevent future mental health challenges which will reduce incarceration, addictions, and homelessness for Indigenous people. By transforming the foster care-to-prison pipeline into a care-to-employment pipeline, then all Indigenous people can live more prosperous lives.

### *Reserve pilot: Northern Ontario*

We are establishing a partnership with Sioux Lookout First Nation Health Authority (SLFNHA), a large regional organization with 600 staff in Northern Ontario. SLFNHA delivers health and well-being to 33 reserves and we want to support them with software-based healing by giving them full access to AONest as a free resource. We believe AONest will help accelerate healing on the 33 reserves SLFNHA supports. We will also support the healing journey on these reserves by sharing land-based teachings and ceremony (developed through our Elder in Residence program) with their reserve Elders, incorporating the power of land-based healing to stop the impacts of intergenerational trauma.

## Key activities

The pilot project will start small and grow over time. We will:

- **Integrate AONest and train staff and community members:** Install AONest at community health hubs (e.g., nursing stations and community centres) and host ongoing workshops for both healthcare providers and community members.
- **Augment AONest with culturally appropriate mental health resources:** Integrate additional Indigenous knowledge, languages and practices into the software system to address the unique challenges faced by Indigenous communities.
- **Establish wraparound supports:** Share AO programs and processes that we have developed and help our partners implement these programs in their communities.
- **Teach Elders land-based healing techniques:** Bring the Elders to our reconciliation farm to work with our Elder in Residence or determine a way to transfer our Elder's ceremony and teachings so they can share them in their communities to help solve intergenerational trauma through land-based means.
- **Complement land-based wellness programs with digital resources:** Provide digital content that supports participants in healing circles or land-based retreats to enhance community healing experiences.
- **Address deep-rooted impacts of trauma, grief, and systematic oppression on mental health:** Offer self-guided resources about trauma, recovery, grief, anxiety, etc. to support individuals who are processing past experiences.
- **Measure effectiveness:** Conduct mental health impact studies and surveys to monitor usage, satisfaction, and outcomes related to mental wellness.

## Expected outcomes and impact

We anticipate that this project will lead to:

- Improved mental health and emotional well-being
- Community healing and collective culturally safe care and support
- Trauma recovery and resilience
- Sustainable employment outcomes
- Proactive prevention of addictions, homelessness, suicides, and incarceration
- Scalability through partnership to deliver these outcomes to all reserves

## **Expansion plans**

SLFHNA represents almost 1% of all reserves in Canada. When we have delivered reconciliation on the 33 reserves they support in Northern Ontario and have worked alongside community leaders (e.g., at social service agencies) to ensure AONest integration with local wraparound services and land-based healing techniques, we will ensure a holistic approach to mental wellness and we will have a program we can share more widely. Then, we hope to partner with other health authorities and teach them how to do the same thing, expanding our offering to reserves across Canada.

### *Urban pilot in the Region of Waterloo*

We are establishing partnerships in the Region of Waterloo to support urban Indigenous supported by social service agencies and other groups. The local pilot will integrate:

- Trauma-informed practices in our self-guided digital platform, AONest, offering proactive, personalized mental health support and empowering users to navigate their healing journeys independently,
- Self-guided life skills, job-readiness training, and Indigenous cultural teachings in AONest,
- Land-based healing delivered by our Elder in Residence on our reconciliation farm, to accelerate healing and employment outcomes with pilot participants,
- Wraparound supports like AO's tutoring and sports program, mentoring support, and employment support / job training.

We are planning to give AONest to a select group of Indigenous people who are supported by:

- Family and Children's Services of Waterloo Region (FACSWR),
- a small homeless population to which we have ties through a partnership with the Catholic Church, and
- 2,000 Indigenous individuals we support through AO's Spirit Bundle program.

## **Anticipated activities and outcomes**

We suspect the approach will be particularly transformative in its aim at preventing the foster care-to-prison pipeline, which disproportionately impacts Indigenous individuals due to unaddressed trauma, systemic inequities, and inadequate mental health support. This program will have profound impact for Indigenous youth and families caught in the system as they will have full access to culture, language, ceremony, stories, teachings, etc.

When working with FACS, we want to help all Indigenous youth find employment before they age out of the foster care system.

To make the program successful, we anticipate the need for an Indigenous Relations Manager at AO who will:

- Run ongoing AONest training sessions (e.g., lunch and learns) to walk agency staff through AONest materials and concepts.
- Introduce AONest to end-participants (e.g., kids in care).
- Work with our Knowledge Keeper (Elder in Residence) to deliver land-based healing, ceremony, and Indigenous teachings.
- Run or enable wraparound support programs for tutoring, sports, mentoring, job-readiness, possibly job training, etc.
- Establish or leverage partnerships to provide additional wraparound supports, employment opportunities, and funding streams.
- Build partnerships with governments, funders and corporate partners.
- Identify ways to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of these programs in urban centres.

## **Expansion plans**

In addition to working within the Region of Waterloo, we have started to expand our partnership conversations to deliver reconciliation to York Region in partnership with Your Support Services Network (YSSN). Once we prove healing outcomes with the pilots we run in these two regions, we hope that more strategic partnerships will help us expand our offering to other urban centres across Canada.

When working with urban centres outside of our local region, we anticipate that our Indigenous Relations Manager will need to:

- Perform a needs analysis in the community to understand the level of Indigenous support available (e.g., are there friendship centres, Indigenous health centres, and other agencies that support Indigenous?).
- Do outreach, build partnerships, and connect with agencies to form relationships with community leaders and set up peer support networks.
- Act as a liaison between AO and the urban centre to ensure effective rollouts of all programs in that community.