

Commentary

Charting the Statistical Distinctiveness of Edmonton's Aboriginal Community

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aboriginal policy studies Vol. 2, no. 1, 2012, pp.98-124

This article can be found at:

<http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/aps/article/view/17710>

ISSN: 1923-3299

Article DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5663/aps.v2i1.17710>

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF NATIVE STUDIES



Aboriginal Affairs and
Northern Development Canada

Affaires autochtones et
Développement du Nord Canada

Charting the Statistical Distinctiveness of Edmonton's Aboriginal Community¹

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1. Introduction

1.1. *The Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative*

According to the *Your City, Your Voice* report, in 2003 the City of Edmonton, in partnership with the Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee (EAUAC), began discussions about the role the City could play in enhancing the lives of Aboriginal people in Edmonton. In 2004, the City of Edmonton, acting upon recommendations of EAUAC and senior staff, established the *Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative*. The Initiative is supported by the federal and provincial governments and other partners. Its primary objectives are to:

- improve the relationship between the City of Edmonton and Aboriginal people living in Edmonton;
- explore interest in the development of a principle-based agreement—an “Accord”—establishing a renewed relationship based on trust and mutual respect between the City of Edmonton and First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and Non-Status people living in Edmonton; hear directly from Aboriginal people about their perspectives, concerns, and priorities and share this information with willing resource holders prepared to work with Urban Aboriginal people and others on community-identified priorities; and
- support an inclusive process for the Aboriginal communities’ and partners’ action on community identified priorities;
- improve its hiring and retention of Aboriginal staff; and
- improve City-mandated programs and services so that they better serve Aboriginal residents in Edmonton.

In 2005, the Elders Circle and Aboriginal community leaders and City Council passed a Declaration, *Strengthening Relationships between the City of Edmonton and Urban Aboriginal People*. This is the City’s commitment to Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton. It is a living document that recognizes the vitality and increasing importance of the Aboriginal community as they continue their journey into the future. It affirms the proud history and honoured traditions of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton, and their contributions to the social, cultural, and economic life of the city.

1.2 Project Background²

As part of the Wicihitowin process of building space for Edmonton's urban Aboriginal community to speak to issues that concerned them, a massive consultation process was conducted and published in the *Your City, Your Voice* report. From July 2005 to early December 2005, the dialogue process engaged over 1800 people from across the city of Edmonton's various Aboriginal communities. The purpose of the dialogue process was to create opportunities for participants to share their perspectives on the key issues facing urban Aboriginal people, while also sparking their imaginations around "what could be" in terms of new ways of working together. An important outcome of this initiative was the publication of the *Your City, Your Voice* report results.

This project builds on step two of a project entitled "Charting the Statistical Distinctiveness of Edmonton's Urban Aboriginal Community," which provided a comparison between the data generated from the Environics Institute's Urban Aboriginal People Study (UAPS) to the results of the *Your City, Your Voice* report (YCYV). The results of this report served as a guiding tool in developing the framework for the present statistical analysis, the main objective of which is to synthesize the UAPS and YCYV results, and incorporate additional UAPS data that is specific to the distinctive realities and perspectives of Edmonton's urban Aboriginal community, relating it to the different circles of Wicihitowin.

For purposes of analysis, this study defines the concept of "Aboriginal" as being the self-identification of an individual as belonging to a First Nations, Métis, and/or an Inuit group, in order to provide a brief statistical snapshot of the socio-demographic characteristics, views, and opinions of the urban Aboriginal population in the city of Edmonton. To accomplish this objective, this report first provides a statistical snapshot of the urban Aboriginal population residing in the city using findings from the 2009 report "Urban Aboriginal Population: A Statistical Profile of Aboriginal People Living in the City of Edmonton in 2006," and then synthesizes the research findings from two additional studies that focused on the urban Aboriginal population in the city of Edmonton including. The following three studies used for this report include:

1. "Urban Aboriginal Population: A Statistical Profile of Aboriginal People Living in the City of Edmonton 2006" (USP), commissioned by the Office of the Deputy City Manager and Aboriginal Relations Office;
2. the *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study* (UAPS), a City of Edmonton report conducted by the Environics Institute;
3. the *Your City, Your Voice* report (YCYV) initiated by the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative.

1.3 DPRA

Jacqueline Quinless, a Senior Associate at DPRA Canada, was commissioned to prepare this report based on her statistical expertise and previous involvement in authoring the report *Urban Aboriginal Population: A Statistical Profile of Aboriginal People Living in the City of Edmonton, in 2006* (Quinless 2009). This report has served as an important tool for

understanding the social, economic, and demographic make-up of the city of Edmonton's Aboriginal population. Founded in 1971, DPRA is a Canadian consultancy group with a history of successfully working with Aboriginal people and First Nation communities; managing and hosting multi-stakeholder forums; and in undertaking socio-economic development, program evaluation, and capacity building exercises. Our team consists of highly trained professionals with a broad range of experience in Aboriginal communities both north and south of 60. DPRA maintains offices in Whitehorse, Yellowknife, Victoria, Ottawa, and Toronto. Within the past year, our staff has been in over 120 First Nations and Aboriginal communities undertaking a variety of projects. DPRA staff has extensive experience and knowledge of Aboriginal issues as they relate to social, economic, health, community, and environmental issues. DPRA has a solid reputation in the Aboriginal community. Our approach is to work in direct partnership with Aboriginal groups to develop the skills and expertise that are required for successfully implementing objectives and meeting project outcomes. Because DPRA has worked actively with Aboriginal groups and has had a wide exposure to Aboriginal community organizations, our staff has a locally based understanding of the internal challenges and issues facing Aboriginal communities

1.4 Report Organization

The report is organized as follows:

- Section 1: Introduction—project background and report methodology, including data sources and interpreting the results;
- Section 2: Aboriginal Edmonton—a snapshot, which includes a socio-economic profile of the urban Aboriginal population based on Census of Population data;
- Section 3: New Ways of Working Together;
- Section 4: Life in Edmonton—a sense of belonging, satisfaction with city life, and main issues facing Aboriginal people living in Edmonton;
- Section 5: Talking and Action Circles and the Art of Listening, incorporating UAPS data;
- Section 6: Summary Remarks—provides data limitation and areas of further research.
- 1.5 Defining the Aboriginal Population

Defining the Aboriginal population of Canada can be somewhat problematic and can result in different estimates of its size. There is no single or “correct” definition of the Aboriginal population, and the choice of a definition depends on the purpose for which it is to be used. For example, not everyone who reports having an Aboriginal ancestor will necessarily self-identify as an Aboriginal person; that is, as a North American Indian, Métis, or Inuit; which makes the concept of “Aboriginal Ancestry” somewhat difficult to interpret and analyze. The Census of Population provides data that are based on the definitions of ethnic origin (ancestry), Aboriginal Identity, Registered Indian, and Band membership.³ For purposes of analysis, this study uses the concept of Aboriginal Identity which includes First Nation, Métis, and Inuit to provide a statistical snapshot of the socio-demographic characteristics and views and opinions of the urban Aboriginal population in the City of Edmonton.

1.6 Data Sources

This report is based on a “synthesis” of three separate reports that provide valuable insight into the socio-demographic characteristics, views, and opinions of urban Aboriginal people living in the City of Edmonton. The first report, “Urban Aboriginal Population: A Statistical Profile of Aboriginal People Living in the City of Edmonton 2006” (USP), is based on data prepared using 2001 and 2006 semi-customized Census target group profile tabulations provided by the Office of the Deputy City Manager and Aboriginal Relations Office. The second report is the *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study* (UAPS)—a City of Edmonton Report conducted by the Environics Institute, which involved in-person interviews, of one to two hours in length, with 250 Métis, Inuit, and First Nations people living in the City of Edmonton. The SPSS data file for the city was also kindly provided by the Environics Institute for further analysis directly related to the Talking and Action Circles section of this report. The third report is the *Your City, Your Voice* report (YCYV),⁴ initiated by the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative, which was conducted from July to December 2005. This particular study collected data through various stages of the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Dialogue process, engaging 1800 people from a cross-section of the Aboriginal community through the use of talking circle discussions, open house information sessions, and a large gathering of executive and community leaders, who discussed and provided their input on issues, concerns, and opportunities. During the Dialogue process, one primary tool was used to gather information and spark discussions—the *Your City, Your Voice* workbook/survey was designed to gather information and to identify common issues and concerns in order to set the beginning place for discussions in the second part of the Dialogue process. Community members also participated in the formation and design of the Dialogue process.

1.7 Sampling Methodology

Random Sampling:

The first report used, *Urban Aboriginal Population: A Statistical Profile of Aboriginal People Living in the City of Edmonton 2006* (USP), is based on data prepared using 2001 and 2006 semi-customized Census target group profile tabulations provided by the Office of the Deputy City Manager and Aboriginal relations Office. The multi-stage sampling method used in the collection of data for the Census of Population is based on a randomized selection processes, whereby every member of the population has a chance of being selected for inclusion in the sample. Probability sampling is a random method of selecting individuals to ensure an unbiased representation of the whole population. The results from this approach can be used in making inferences about the entire urban Aboriginal population in the City of Edmonton.

Non-Random Sampling:

The *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study* (UAPS), conducted by the Environics Institute, and the *Your City, Your Voice* report (YCYV), initiated by the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative, collected data based on a multi-stage qualitative research design. The UAPS used an overall snowball sampling approach complimented by quota sampling.

This approach was an effective way to identify urban Aboriginal respondents residing in the City of Edmonton; in this case, Environics used the 2006 Canadian Census profile of Aboriginal people in the city to design an “ideal sample,” based on such characteristics as identity group, age, educational attainment, and gender, and then searched out individuals that met this requirement to fill their sample quote of 250 urban Aboriginal Edmontonians. The YCYV used a stratified purposeful sampling approach to gather valuable information from urban Aboriginal Edmontonians through open houses and talking circles, executive forums, and workshop surveys.

1.8 Questionnaires

The questions in the *Your City, Your Voice* (YCYV) survey and the questions to the *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Survey* (UAPS) are compared by topic area below:

The UAPS questionnaire was organized into four different themes:

1. Identity: who are you?
2. Experiences: what's your everyday life like?
3. Values: what's important in your life?
4. Aspirations: what do you want for your future?

The YCYV questionnaire was organized into five different themes:

1. The extent to which Edmonton is a welcoming city for Aboriginal Peoples;
2. Issues affecting Urban Aboriginal People in Edmonton;
3. New ways of working together;
4. The value of a relationship agreement between the City of Edmonton and Urban Aboriginal people in Edmonton—an “Accord”; and
5. Guiding principles for a relationship agreement.

1.9 Interpreting the Results

The USP report is based on Census data, which can be somewhat problematic. For example, Statistics Canada applies a confidentiality procedure of random rounding to all Census data to avoid the possibility of associating statistical data with any identifiable individual. With this method, all data, including totals and margins, are randomly rounded either up or down to a multiple of “5” or, in some cases, “10.” As a result, the sum of a set of data may not add to the total, and percentages, which are calculated on rounded figures, do not necessarily add to 100 percent. The impact of this procedure is particularly noticeable on small counts. In effect, small numbers may lose their precision, and percentages calculated based on these numbers may not represent the proportion of the population indicated.

In addition, while the objective of the Census of Population is to provide a snapshot of detailed information on the social, economic, and demographic conditions of the population on Census Day, inevitably a small percentage of the population are not included. Undercoverage occurs for a variety of reasons: because a household did not receive a questionnaire; an individual has no usual place of residence; or an individual did not spend the night of Census Day in a dwelling. Undercoverage is an important issue to consider, especially when interpreting and analyzing Census data for the Aboriginal population, for two reasons:

1. It can be exceedingly difficult to delineate an accurate portrait of the urban Aboriginal population if one takes into consideration the high degree of mobility. Research studies have shown that a significant proportion of the Aboriginal population are transient and frequently move between on-reserve and off-reserve locations, as well as within census metropolitan areas.
2. One must consider the magnitude of undercounted Aboriginal people, and how this impacts the counts by Aboriginal identity group status and geographic location.

However, despite these limitations, the Census is still regarded as one of the most up-to-date and comprehensive sources of data available on Aboriginal people in Canada.

In addition, it is also important to recognize that the qualitative research designs used by the UAPS and the YCYV reports are based on a non-probability sampling technique and therefore are *not* a product of a randomized selection processes. The samples designed for these studies were based on selecting urban Aboriginal Edmontonians on the basis of their accessibility to participate in the studies or by the personal judgment of the researcher. Consequently, these samples contain an unknown sampling bias and are not considered to be representative of the entire urban Aboriginal population residing in the City of Edmonton. The results are, therefore, limited to only those respondents who participated in the studies and cannot be used in making inferences to the entire urban Aboriginal population in the City of Edmonton.

2. New Ways of Working Together

On 21 November 2005, leaders and executive-level staff from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations (non-profit, business, and government) were invited an executive forum to discuss and explore new ways of working together. The Executive Forum was hosted by the Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee (EAUAC) and the City of Edmonton, in partnership with the Government of Canada (Western Economic Diversification), the Government of Alberta (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development), and the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund. The results of the small group exercises revealed numerous examples of successful working relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations and the three orders of government. In particular, successful collaborations have occurred in a variety of socioeconomic areas, including: health care, education, housing, social services, and economic development. The essential elements of working together involve the following:

- Principles: Mutual respect, recognition, and responsibility.
- Values: Inclusivity, reciprocity, transparency, accountability, trust, commitment, and perseverance.
- Actions: Negotiations based on identifying shared interests (win-win) and compromise; mutual listening and learning; adapting and growing; developing a common vision and set of objectives; defining roles and responsibilities.

In addition, forum participants identified “working together” and “collective action” as prerequisites to realizing the full potential of Aboriginal Edmonton. Some of the key opportunities for collaboration included:

- Social Services: housing; education; children’s services; crime prevention and policing; and transitional supports for Aboriginal people moving to Edmonton;
- Business and Economic Development: employment training and labour market development; human resource development; and tourism;
- Culture and the Arts: promotion of Aboriginal cultural activities and development of the Aboriginal Arts community.

While participants recognized that opportunities exist for future collaboration, they acknowledged the importance of enhancing the capacity (funding, human resources, and training) of Aboriginal organizations (business and non-profit) so that they can participate more effectively in the economic and social life of the city. Leadership development was identified as a key component of building future capacity, especially for Aboriginal youth. The view of responsibilities included:

- providing mentorship opportunities to Aboriginal youth;
- leading by example and moving collaboration and reciprocity to the centre of our values and our actions;
- developing policies that are holistic and acknowledge interdependency;
- building relationships at the grassroots level so that we can hold political leaders and administrators accountable;
- entering into an open dialogue with others to determine areas of mutual concern;
- being willing to acknowledge differences while negotiating around common interests; and
- acknowledging each other and the work we are doing. *It is important to celebrate our successes.*

This comparative statistical overview provides a measure of how well the Executive Forum’s new ways of working together has evolved since November 2005, as seen through the eyes of the 2006 Census (which could be seen as a baseline for Aboriginal well-being in Edmonton) through to the 2009 *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Survey* conducted by the Environics Institute and the City of Edmonton.

3. Aboriginal Edmonton: A Socio-Demographic Snapshot

In 2006, the number of people who identified as Aboriginal in Canada surpassed the one-million mark, whereby Aboriginal people now account for almost 4 percent of the total population of Canada. During the period between 1996 and 2006, the Aboriginal population in Canada grew by 45 percent, which is the largest increase ever observed in the history of the Census and is nearly six times faster than the 8 percent rate increase for the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada 2009).

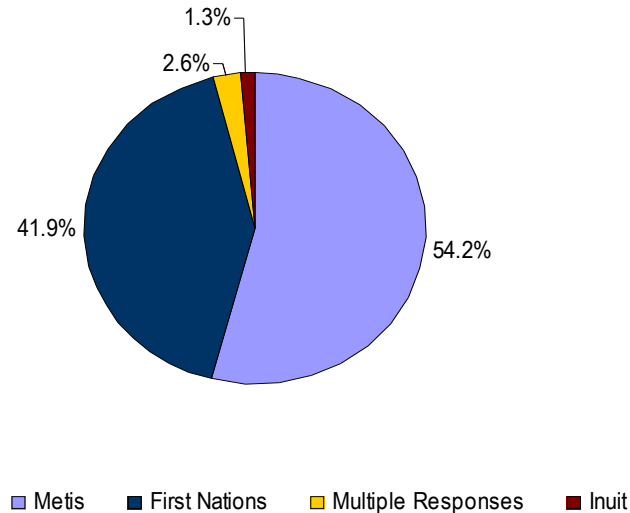
Census figures also show that there is a trend in urbanization whereby more Aboriginal people tend to be living in urban centers than on reserves. Today, the City of Edmonton, combined with surrounding census metropolitan areas, has the second largest urban Aboriginal population in Canada (Winnipeg having the largest), with an urban Aboriginal population of 52,100 accounting for 5 percent of Edmonton's total population. The population of Aboriginal people in Edmonton increased 26 percent during the 2001–2006 Census cycle, a rate that is significantly faster than that of the non-Aboriginal population, at 9 percent. It has been suggested that, if the Aboriginal population continues to grow at the same current pace, this could possibly result in an Aboriginal Identity population of approximately 66,094 living in the City of Edmonton by 2018 (Quinless, 2009).

3.1 *Population Structure: Age and Sex*

In 2006, Aboriginal peoples accounted for 5.6 percent of the total population in the City of Edmonton (CMA), with a 2001 Aboriginal Identity population of 30,365 residents in growing to 38,170 residents by 2006. The age structure of the urban Aboriginal population is much younger than the non-Aboriginal population in the City of Edmonton, with 49 percent of the Aboriginal identity population aged less than 25 years old, as compared to 32 percent of the non-Aboriginal population. Statistics Canada community profiles for the census subdivision of the City of Edmonton indicate that there is a noticeable difference in the median age between the Aboriginal identity population and the non-Aboriginal population.⁵ The median age for the Aboriginal identity population is considerably younger, at 25.7 years of age, as compared to the non-Aboriginal population, at 36.1 years of age. This information is important to understand because it is indicative of a relatively young and growing population.

Of the total Aboriginal population in the City of Edmonton, the Métis population accounted for 3.0 percent, followed by First Nations at 2.3 percent, and Inuit at 0.1 percent. The remainder of the Aboriginal population either identified with more than one group, or indicated they were members of an Indian Band. Figure 1 displays the percentage of Aboriginal people living in Edmonton by Aboriginal category based on the 2006 Census. It shows that 54.2 percent of the Aboriginal people identified as Métis, followed by First Nations at 41.9 percent, and Inuit at 1.3 percent. The remainder of the Aboriginal population (2.6%) either identified with more than one group, or indicated they were members of an Indian Band or were First Nations.

FIGURE 1: Aboriginal Groups as a Percentage of the Total Aboriginal Identity Population in the City of Edmonton, 2006.



3.2 Family, Language and Education

2006 Census figures show that a significantly higher percentage (18%) of the Aboriginal Identity population reported being in a common-law relationship in 2006, as compared to the non-Aboriginal population (8%). Approximately 6 percent of the Aboriginal Identity population reported a non-official language, predominantly Cree, Ojibway, and Siouan, as their only mother tongue (Statistics Canada, 2009).

FIGURE 2: Aboriginal Identity and non-Aboriginal Population by Highest Degree Certificate or Diploma 15 years and over, City of Edmonton 2006⁶.

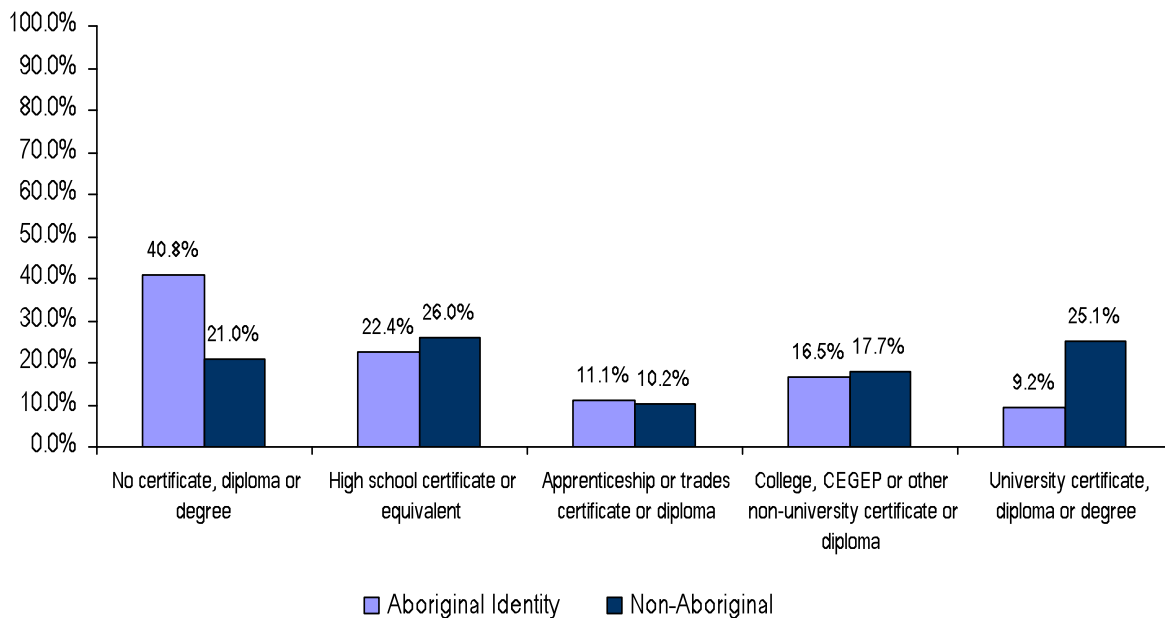


Figure 2 shows that 22 percent of the Aboriginal Identity population reported having obtained a high school diploma, compared to 26 percent of the non-Aboriginal population. The data also reveals that more Aboriginal people reported having attained a university degree in 2006 (9%), compared to 2001 (6%). However, the Aboriginal population still reported lower levels of educational attainment in 2006 than the non-Aboriginal population. The most noticeable difference in terms of educational attainment for both groups between 2001 and 2006 is that a significantly higher percentage of these populations have moved into the fields associated with apprenticeship and trades. In 2001, 3 percent of Aboriginal people indicated that they were in the trades compared to 11 percent in 2006. Similarly, we see that, in 2001, 3 percent of the non-Aboriginal population reported trades as their highest level of educational attainment, compared to 10 percent in 2006.

3.3. Labour Force and Income

In 2006, the unemployment rate (10%) for the Aboriginal Identity population in the City of Edmonton was considerably higher than the non-Aboriginal population (5%). The unemployment rate was also significantly higher for the First Nations population (14%) than the Métis population (8%) (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Populations by Labour Force Characteristics 2001 and 2006, City of Edmonton.

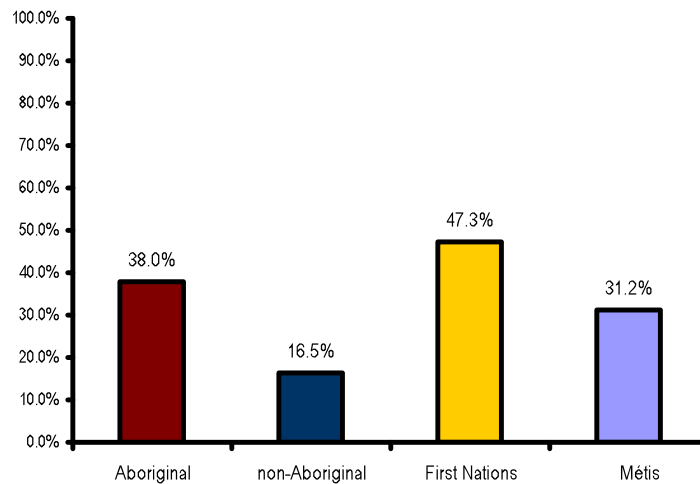
	Aboriginal Identity	Non- Aboriginal	First Nations	Métis
Labour Force Participation Rate				
2006	68.6%	72.3%	65.5%	70.5%
2001	66.3%	70.5%	64.0%	68.1%
Unemployment Rate				
2006	10.3%	4.6%	14.2%	7.8%
2001	14.0%	5.7%	16.6%	11.9%

An individual is considered to be “low income”⁷ if their income is one-half of the median income in their Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), adjusted for family composition and size. In 2005, the median income of the Aboriginal Identity population 15 years of age and over in the City of Edmonton was \$18,769 compared to \$28,233 for the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2009).

Data from Figure 3 shows that 38 percent of Aboriginal people were living in low-income households, compared to 17 percent of non-Aboriginal people. In addition, close to half of the First Nations (47%) households were low income compared to one-third

(31%) of Métis. This implies that compared to the average household, households living in low-income conditions are spending more than 20 percent of their total income on basic necessities such as food, shelter, and clothing. The findings in this study reveal that the incidence of low income among the Aboriginal Identity population is much higher compared to the non-Aboriginal population residing in the City of Edmonton. This is especially true for the First Nations community (47%).

FIGURE 3: Aboriginal identity Groups and non-Aboriginal Populations by Prevalence of Low-Income for Total Persons in Private Households, City of Edmonton 2006.



4. Life in Edmonton: A Sense of Belonging

According to Environics, 77 percent of UAPS participants are “first generation” residents, meaning that they were born and raised in a community other than Edmonton. Meanwhile, those considered “second generation” residents, or those born and raised in Edmonton but whose parents and/or grandparents are from another place, represent 19 percent of Edmonton’s urban Aboriginal population (Table 2). There are several reasons as to why first generation UAPS participants indicated that they moved to Edmonton but the most common reasons are related to family, education, and employment opportunities. Today, Aboriginal people consider Edmonton to be “home”— however, this sentiment is less common among First Nations (61%) compared to Métis (77%). The vast majority of Aboriginal Edmontonians take pride in being both Aboriginal (77%) as well as Canadian (78%), a sentiment higher in Edmonton than other Canadian cities.

4.1 Satisfaction with City Life in Edmonton

The vast majority of Aboriginal peoples reported that in general they liked living in Edmonton. The UAPS data shows that the majority of respondents indicated that they liked living in their city a lot (65%), while 21 percent indicated they like it a little, and 12 percent did not like it very much or it at all.

The top three reasons that Aboriginal people reported as to why they like living in Edmonton are:

1. quality of life, which includes availability of resources, support, and services (38%);
2. city life, which includes recreational activities and entertainment (32%); and
3. the presence of family and friends (28%).

However, like Aboriginal residents of other large cities, Aboriginal Edmontonians also expressed concern with two important aspects of urban life: the pressure brought about by the stress of having to cope with a fast-paced lifestyle in a large city (36%), and crime and violence (30%).

TABLE 2: Factors Associated with Life in Edmonton

Edmontonian Residents	First Nations	Métis	Total Aboriginal Population	
First Generation	n/a	n/a	77%	
Second Generation	n/a	n/a	19%	
Consider Edmonton to be “Home”	First Nations	Métis	Total Aboriginal Population	
	61%	77%		
Reasons for Moving to Edmonton	Family	Education	Employment Opportunities	
	41%	34%	31%	
Pride in Being Aboriginal			Total Aboriginal Population	
	n/a	n/a	77%	
Pride in Being Canadian			Total Aboriginal Population	
	n/a	n/a	78%	
Knowledge of Aboriginal Ancestry	Very Well	Fairly Well	Not Very Well	Not at All
Total Aboriginal Population	27%	25%	30%	17%

4.2 Main Issues Affecting Aboriginal People Living in Edmonton

4.2.1 Perceptions of Aboriginal People

The results of the UAPS report indicate that, for the most part, the impressions of Aboriginal people held by the non-Aboriginal community in Edmonton have stayed the same (60%) over the past several years. For those people that suggested that their impressions had become worse, the two main reasons reported are:

1. the perception that Aboriginal peoples rely on “handouts” and make minimal societal contributions;
2. the perception that they are involved in crime.

When asked, non-Aboriginal people suggested that the top issues facing Aboriginal people in Canada today included threats to culture and identity (12%); alcohol and drug abuse (12%); discrimination (8%); lack of education (8%); and land claims and territory rights (6%). Interestingly, 40 percent of people suggested that Aboriginal people are facing these issues is because of governmental policies, while 35 percent said these are problems that Aboriginal people have brought upon themselves. Thirteen percent indicated that both parties are equally responsible, while the remaining 10 percent offered no opinion.

Edmonton residents are more likely than average to know Aboriginal people as close friends, neighbours, and co-workers. However, non-Aboriginal residents of Edmonton are among the most pessimistic about current relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, as compared to other urban cities: the majority (62%) believe that current relations are negative, while 34 percent think they are positive and the remaining 4 percent indicate that they are neither positive or negative.

4.2.2 Discrimination

One of the major findings in the UAPS report is that Edmonton residents are among the most skeptical, when compared to residents of other cities, that the current challenges faced by Aboriginal communities are tied to Aboriginal peoples' experiences with Indian residential schools, but they also clearly recognize that Aboriginal people experience discrimination—and at least as much as other groups in Canadian society. Approximately 80 percent of UAPS respondents in Edmonton believe non-Aboriginal people's impressions of Aboriginal people are generally negative—a proportion that is the highest of any of the cities included in the UAPS. In particular, First Nations peoples and Métis are equally likely to believe non-Aboriginal residents of the city take a negative view of Aboriginal peoples.

The UAPS reports that close to half (48%) of Aboriginal people think that the impression's of Aboriginal people held by non-Aboriginal people have stayed the same over the past few years. Stereotyping is of major concern among the Aboriginal population, and the most common stereotypes that Aboriginals in Edmonton feel that non-Aboriginals hold about Aboriginal people are that they: have addiction problems; are lazy and lack motivation; are unemployed and uneducated; are poor and on welfare; are criminals/ gang members; are homeless/panhandlers; have poor hygiene/dirty; and that they live off/abuse the system.

According to the UAPS, "Most Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton agree with the statement 'I think others behave in an unfair/ negative way toward Aboriginal people.' Nine in ten either strongly (41%) or somewhat (50%) agree with this statement, while just under one in ten (7%) disagree. This perception is shared by both First Nations peoples and Métis in Edmonton, and is equally strong in Edmonton as in most other UAPS cities" (UAPS-Edmonton Report 2010). In addition, most Aboriginal people in Edmonton reported that they had personally experienced insulting treatment as a result of being Aboriginal. For example, when posed with the statement "I have been teased or insulted because of my Aboriginal background (39%) strongly agreed, (31%) agree, compared to (11%) somewhat agreed and (17%) strongly disagreed" (UAPS-Edmonton Report 2010). Finally, the results of the UAPS shows that, of the 62 percent of UAPS Aboriginal respondents who answered the question "I don't feel accepted by non-Aboriginal people," 35 percent agreed, 27 percent agreed somewhat, 28 percent somewhat disagreed, and 9 percent strongly disagreed.

4.2.3 Residential Schools

The vast majority (71%) of UAPS Aboriginal respondents living in the City of Edmonton reported that they have been personally affected by Indian residential schools: 13 percent reported being affected through a family member, and 58 percent indicated that they were a student at a federal residential school or a provincial day school. In addition, among those respondents who reported that they had been affected by residential schools also report that this experience has had a significant impact (43%), or some impact (26%) in shaping their lives and who they are today.

4.2.4 A Sense of Community

Aboriginal people in Edmonton most frequently identify family (49%) and/or friends (43%) as part of their community. Some respondents elaborated on their social network and included people from other groups such as neighbourhoods, people from the same identity group, coworkers, Aboriginal people in general in the city, schoolmates, and people from other identity groups as part of their community. However, “family and friends” are among the most important for both First Nations and Métis when describing the extent of their sense of community. Interestingly, the results of the UAPS also showed that there appears to be no one type of community per se to which Aboriginal peoples feel they belong. The largest proportion of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton (39%) feel they belong to a community that is equally Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Meanwhile, smaller proportions say they belong to a non-Aboriginal community (23%). Overall, both First Nations peoples and Métis are more inclined to feel a close connection to other members of their Aboriginal identity group. For example, over half of Métis and First Nations (56 and 51%, respectively) feel either a very or fairly close connection to other Métis and First Nations in Edmonton. However, it is also important to note that many Aboriginal people also have close friends or are connected to people who are not Aboriginal (UAPS–Edmonton Report, 2010).

4.2.5 Aboriginal Services and Organizations

The results from the UAPS show that there is an even divide between the number of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton who use and who do not use Aboriginal organizations or services. Of the 50 percent of respondents that indicated they had used an Aboriginal organization or service, 22 percent reported that they often use these services, whereas 28 percent reported only occasionally doing so. The remaining 50 percent either rarely (25%) or never (24%) use or rely on Aboriginal services or organizations. The results further show that the frequency of usage is more common among Aboriginal peoples aged 45 years and older and the less affluent, such that use of these services and organizations steadily declines as household income increases. However, use of Aboriginal services is similar among those new to their city (i.e., those who arrived in the city within the past two years) and long-time residents (i.e., those who arrived in the city twenty years ago or more). Aboriginal peoples who have used Aboriginal services and organizations in Edmonton have found that they are useful overall, and place a real sense of value on friendship centres (40%) and employment centres (36%).

Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton who are considered to be regular users of the city's Aboriginal services and organizations indicated that they “are motivated by the specific services offered and/or by the positive environments they find” (UAPS–Edmonton Report 2010). For example, 40 percent are motivated by a desire/need for specific resources such as programs and social services, health supports, and education and employment services. It is interesting to note that use of Aboriginal employment or job search services is more widespread in Edmonton than in other UAPS cities included in the study, such as Winnipeg, Vancouver, or Toronto. A similar proportion (37%) of users of Aboriginal services and organizations mention that they are drawn by the presence of positive environments, whether it be the personal relationships, supportive community and/or the

connection to Aboriginal culture, sharing circles, and Elders that they offer. Meanwhile, a small proportion of UAPS respondents in Edmonton (16%) are connected to Aboriginal services and organizations because they are either employed by them, or volunteer their time and services.

Of the 50 percent of respondents who reported rarely or never using Aboriginal services and organizations, 58 percent indicated that they have no need for these services, compared to the 16 percent who reported that they are unaware of what services and organizations available in the city, the 11 percent who reported that the services are not helpful, or the 6 percent who can't access or do not qualify for these services. In general, Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton feel that it is important for Aboriginal services to exist in addition to non-Aboriginal services in the city, regardless of whether they themselves are users of the services or not. In fact, almost all of the UAPS respondents (90%) indicated that it is very important to have Aboriginal addiction programs; 85 percent also indicated that it is also important to have child and family services; 78 percent felt Aboriginal housing services were important; 77 percent indicated the importance of having Aboriginal employment centres; 71 percent mentioned that it is very important to have Aboriginal health centres; 69 percent Aboriginal child care or daycares; 67 percent Aboriginal elementary and secondary schools; and 62 percent placed a high importance on Aboriginal colleges and universities.

The UAPS also asked Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton who have ever used or made contact with non-Aboriginal services if their experience was generally positive or generally negative. Overall, the results showed that people tended to have positive experiences, especially with banks and credit unions (88%); employment and training services (85%); the health care system (82%); and, as a parent, with elementary or secondary schools (79%). In each of these cases, relatively few (ranging between 10% and 16%) indicated that they had a negative experience.

However, this small percentage of people does not detract us from understanding the reasons why people reported having had a negative experience. The results of the UAPS show that Aboriginal people who have had negative experiences with non-Aboriginal services and organizations reported that their most common concern was that they were "treated poorly"; this treatment is often a manifestation of a myriad of interconnected factors related to racism, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. For example, over half (55%) of Aboriginal people in Edmonton reported that their experience was negative because of racism or discrimination: they were treated unfairly or disrespectfully, or encountered staff that were judgmental, mean, rude, or lacking in empathy, who didn't understand their needs or culture, or simply didn't believe them. When compared to the other UAPS cities, Edmonton was ranked among one of the top three to have expressed this concern among the Aboriginal population.

Even if Aboriginal people do not experience overt forms of discrimination when interacting with non-Aboriginal organizations or using such services, 34 percent still indicated that they had problems with "the process." This process refers to long waiting lists or wait periods; dealing with complicated paperwork, missing documents, and even expensive fees; and a general feeling that the service was not supportive or helpful, and did not achieve its goal. Other, more general negative experiences are also reported and relate to a person having an application rejected, being mistreated by staff or caregivers, or being misinformed or misdiagnosed.

5. Talking and Action Circles: The Art of Listening

The following section incorporates the UAPS–Edmonton data into the different circles that make up the Wicihitowin Circle of Shared Responsibility and Stewardship to provide a useful snapshot of information of particular relevance to each circle.⁸ Table 3 provides useful information that can help to identify the opinions, attitudes, and issues of Aboriginal Edmontonian women compared to those of men for both First Nations and Métis peoples. Meanwhile, Table 4 looks at the same questions and makes comparisons between Aboriginal youth and Elders, again for both the First Nations and Métis urban population.

5.1 Community Circles: Women and Men

The results in Table 3 provide a comparison of the attitudes, opinions, and issues of First Nations and Métis people living in the City of Edmonton by gender, based on responses to selected questions from the Urban Aboriginal People's Study (2009). Overall, we see that most men and women know about their Aboriginal ancestry: over 70 percent are "very proud" to be Aboriginal, with First Nations males taking the lead at 85 percent. Over 84 percent of male and female respondents in both groups indicated that they like living in the City of Edmonton, but there are slight differences by gender: more First Nations men (93%) admitted that they like living in the city, as compared to 84 percent of First Nations women, while the relationship is opposite for the Métis. All groups reported that they thought that formal education is a very important way to improve the lives of Aboriginal people (over 86%), and that accessibility to amenities and the close proximity to family, friends, and career/employment opportunities are among the top reasons as to why men and women belonging to both Aboriginal identity groups like living in Edmonton. Interestingly, First Nations women (24%) and Métis men (21%) were the two groups that rated employment centers at the top of their list. Meanwhile, all of them agree that crime, such as murder and vandalism, is the number one reason they do not like living in Edmonton. All groups suggested that completing their education was one of the most important aspirations in their life with the exception of Métis men, who thought travel/vacation would be their most important achievement in life (11%). A large proportion of respondents think that non-Aboriginal impressions of Aboriginal people are generally negative and the number one stereotype of Aboriginal people is that they have drug and alcohol addictions; Aboriginal women feel more strongly about this among both identity groups.

5.2 Community Circles: Youth and Elders

The results in Table 4 provide a comparison of the attitudes, opinions and issues of First Nations and Métis youth and elders living in the City of Edmonton based on responses to selected questions from the Urban Aboriginal People's Study (2009). In general, the findings reveal that over 75 percent of both First Nations and Métis youth and elders are "very proud" to be Aboriginal, and the vast majority (over 82%) like living in the city of Edmonton, but the sentiment is higher among youth. All groups reported that they thought that formal education is a very important way to improve the lives of Aboriginal people

TABLE 3: Attitudes, Opinions and Issues of First Nations and Métis Population by Gender, UAPS-Edmonton, 2009

<i>How much do you like living in Edmonton?</i>		
	First Nations	Métis
Men	93%	81%
Women	84%	87%
<i>What is the thing you like the "most" about living in Edmonton?</i>		
	First Nations	Métis
Men	29% Amenities	18% Career/Employment
Women	19% Family/Friends	17% Amenities
<i>What is the thing you like the "least" about living in Edmonton?</i>		
	First Nations	Métis
Men	17% Crime	23% Crime
Women	28% Crime	11% Crime
<i>What kinds of Aboriginal services or organizations have you found to be particularly useful?</i>		
	First Nations	Métis
Men	45% Friendship Centers 8% Employment Centers	40% Employment Centers 21% Employment Centers
Women	34% Friendship Centers 24% Employment Centers	43% Friendship Centers 13% Employment Centers
<i>Do you think non-Aboriginal people's impression of Aboriginal people is generally positive or negative?</i>		
	First Nations	Métis
Men	77% Negative	71% Negative
Women	79% Negative	89% Negative
<i>What do you believe are the most common stereotypes that non-Aboriginal people hold about Aboriginal people?</i>		
	First Nations	Métis
Men	47% Addictions	55% Addictions
Women	53% Addictions	53% Addictions
<i>How important do you believe formal education is to improving the lives of Aboriginal people?</i>		
	First Nations	Métis
Men	91% Very Important	86% Very Important
Women	96% Very Important	90% Very Important
<i>How well do you feel you know your family tree, that is, who your Aboriginal ancestors are?</i>		
	First Nations	Métis
Men	60% Well	48% Well
Women	49% Well	41% Well
<i>Would you say you are very, somewhat, not very, or not at all proud to be Aboriginal?</i>		
	First Nations	Métis
Men	85% Very Proud	70% Very Proud
Women	79% Very Proud	78% Very Proud
<i>What are the three things that you most want to achieve in your lifetime? First Mentioned:</i>		
	First Nations	Métis
Men	23% Education	11% Travel/Vacation
Women	35% Education	27% Education

TABLE 4: Attitudes, Opinions and Issues of First Nations and Métis Population by Age (Youth and Elders), UAPS–Edmonton 2009

<i>How much do you like living in Edmonton?</i>		
	First Nations	Métis
Youth (18–24 yrs)	95%	93%
Elders (44+ yrs) ⁱ	82%	88%
<i>What is the thing you like the “most” about living in Edmonton?</i>		
	First Nations	Métis
Youth (18–24 yrs)	23% Family/Friends	24% Amenities
Elders (44+ yrs)	22% Amenities	17% Career/Employment
<i>What is the thing you like the “least” about living in Edmonton?</i>		
	First Nations	Métis
Youth (18–24 yrs)	21% Too far away from home/family	14% Crime
Elders (44+ yrs)	23% Crime	14% weather/climate
<i>What kinds of Aboriginal services or organizations have you found to be particularly useful?</i>		
	First Nations	Métis
Youth (18–24 yrs)	25% Friendship Centers	29% Employment Centers
Elders (44+ yrs)	39% Friendship Centers	42% Friendship Centers
<i>Do you think non-Aboriginal people’s impression of Aboriginal people is generally positive or negative?</i>		
	First Nations	Métis
Youth (18–24 yrs)	83% Negative	78% Negative
Elders (44+ yrs)	65% Negative	80% Negative
<i>What do you believe are the most common stereotypes that non-Aboriginal people hold about Aboriginal people?</i>		
	First Nations	Métis
Youth (18–24 yrs)	56% Addictions	63% Addictions
Elders (44+ yrs)	37% Addictions	38% Addictions
<i>How important do you believe formal education is to improving the lives of Aboriginal people?</i>		
	First Nations	Métis
Youth (18–24 yrs)	100% Very Important	100% Very Important
Elders (44+ yrs)	98% Very Important	93% Very Important

(over 93%), and that Aboriginal organizations and services such as friendship centers and employment centers are useful to have in the city. Completing one’s education was identified as one of the most important life aspirations among First Nations and Métis youth, while coming to terms with past healing was more important to First Nations elders (19%) and good health to Métis elders (10%).

It appears that Aboriginal people seem to enjoy living in Edmonton and generally like what the city has to offer in terms of services and amenities. However, as one would expect, there are also certain aspects of urban living that have created many challenges for both First Nations and Métis people. Many First Nations youth (21%) don’t like living in Edmonton because it is too far away from what they consider to be their home and families, while Métis youth (14%) do not like the amount of crime that exists in the city. In addition, the vast majority (over 62%) do not feel that they know about their Aboriginal

ancestry. First Nations Elders (23%) feel the same about the crime rates and also mention that this is reason they do not like living in Edmonton, while Métis Elders (14%) just don't like the weather! What is even more important is that a strong majority (over 65%) of First Nations and Métis youth and elders think that non-Aboriginal people's impression of Aboriginal people is generally negative and that among many stereotypes and labels places on Aboriginal people, they think the most common stereotype is that Aboriginal people are addicted to drugs and alcohol.

5.3 Action Circles—Incorporating UAPS data

5.3.1 Aboriginal Education

When asked what the most important thing a respondent wanted to achieve in their lifetime “educational attainment” was deemed at the forefront of life aspirations for Aboriginal people in Edmonton. The results from the UAPS show that the most commonly mentioned life aspiration among Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton is completing their education (31%), and 23 percent hope that future generations will learn the importance of education and finishing school. In addition, of those who reported using elementary and secondary schools as a parent in the past, 79 percent indicated that they generally had a positive experience, and there is a general consensus among Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton (67%) that it is important for Aboriginal services to exist in addition to non-Aboriginal ones, especially when it comes to having Aboriginal elementary and secondary schools (67%). A similar proportion place a high importance on Aboriginal colleges and universities (62%). Aboriginal schools, both elementary/secondary and university level, were found to be even more important to First Nations peoples when compared to the Métis in Edmonton (UAPS–Edmonton Report, 2010).

5.3.2 Aboriginal Employment and Training

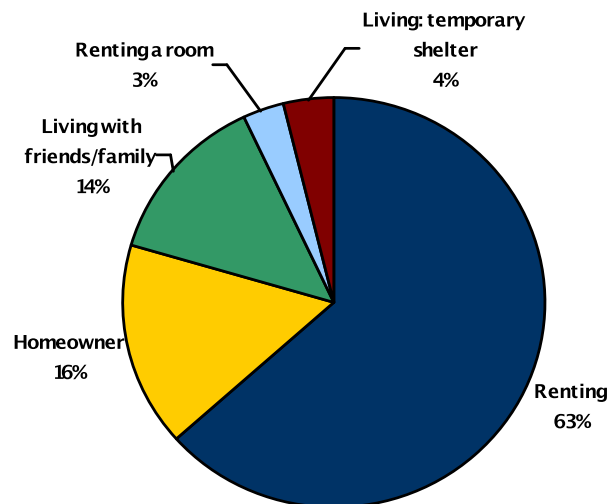
In addition to educational attainment, “having a good or enjoyable job” was deemed at the forefront of life aspirations for a reported 21 percent of Aboriginal people in Edmonton. The results from the UAPS show that that having a good job ranked fourth among the top life aspirations among Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton. In addition, the results also show that over half (54%) of the UAPS respondents indicated that they had used non-Aboriginal employment and training services, and almost all of these individuals (85%) had a generally very positive experience. In fact, reliance or use of Aboriginal employment or job search services is more common in the city of Edmonton when compared to any other UAPS city, and 78 percent of respondents indicated that it is very important to have Aboriginal employment centers in the city of Edmonton.

5.3.3 Aboriginal Health and Well Being

According to the UAPS survey results, 89 percent of Aboriginal respondents in Edmonton have used the health care system over the past twelve months, and the vast majority of respondents (85%) have had a positive experience with the health care system.

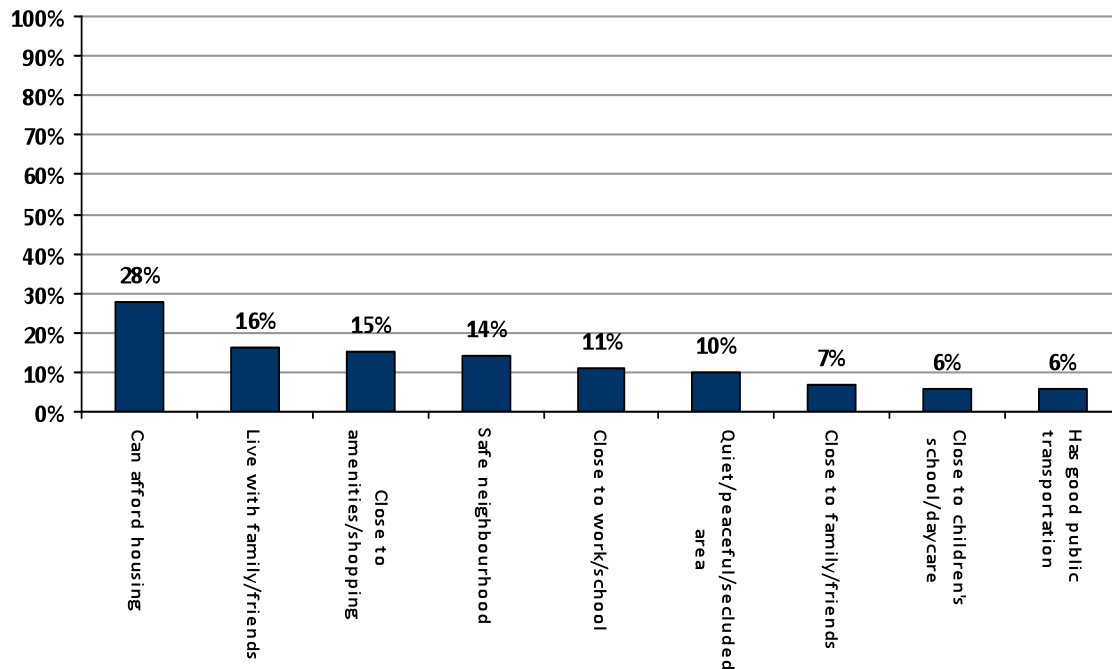
In fact, health and well being is an important aspect of urban living, whereby 10 percent of respondents listed good health and longevity as one of their life aspirations. That being said, the findings also show that Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton, for whatever reason, are less likely to mention Aboriginal health centers as being particularly valuable when compared to respondents in other UAPS cities. However, there is a strong consensus among Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton that it is important for Aboriginal services to exist in addition to non-Aboriginal ones. For example, an overwhelming majority reported that it is “very important” to have Aboriginal addiction programs (90%) and Aboriginal health centers (71%).

FIGURE 4: Living Accommodations of Urban Aboriginal People in the City of Edmonton, UAPS 2010



5.3.4 Aboriginal Housing

The UAPS results show that 70 percent of Aboriginal respondents feel they have a choice about the neighbourhood in which they live, but to varying degrees. For example, 42 percent feel they have a lot of choice, while 28 percent feel that they have some choice as to where they live in the city. Meanwhile, 20 percent reported feeling like they have little choice, and 10 percent felt they had no choice at all. Figure 4 shows the vast majority (63%) of Aboriginal people in Edmonton are renting either an apartment or a house as compared to those who are actual home owners (16%), and Figure 5 shows that the top five reasons why people live in the neighbourhood that they do are based on housing affordability (28%), living with family/friends (16%), proximity to amenities/shopping (15%), safety issues (14%), and proximity to work/school (11%).

FIGURE 5: Reasons for Living in a Particular Neighbourhood in the City of Edmonton, UAPS 2010¹⁰

5.3.5 *Respect for Aboriginal History, Culture, and Language*

The UAPS results indicate that Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are generally familiar with their family trees (i.e., who their Aboriginal ancestors are). While over 50 percent know their family tree very well, the degree of familiarity with their ancestry is greater for Métis than for First Nations peoples. For example, it was shown that Métis are twice as likely as First Nations peoples to be very familiar with their family tree. The two main impacts of knowing one's family tree is related to a greater self-identity and self-awareness (28%) and an understanding of family survival and cultural endurance (24%). The results of the UAPS further suggest that First Nations peoples in Edmonton reported a more diluted sense of connection to other Aboriginal peoples (including individuals of their own First Nation) than do those in other cities. However, this is not the case for Métis in Edmonton, perhaps due to the larger Métis population in the city.

In addition, First Nations peoples in Edmonton report less familiarity with their heritage than their counterparts in other UAPS cities, which is likely related to their widespread experience with Indian residential schools (both first-hand and second-hand through family members). While cultural awareness is strong among Aboriginal people living in Edmonton, they are less likely than those in other UAPS cities to participate in cultural events/activities. And yet, most Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are not concerned about losing their cultural identity. Perhaps this might be attributed to the sense of pride in being

“Aboriginal” that Edmontonian respondents expressed in the UAPS. More specifically, of the three aspects of identity explored in the survey, Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are most proud to be First Nations, Métis, or Inuit and 81 percent say they are very proud of their specific Aboriginal identity (i.e., First Nations, Métis, or Inuit) and most Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are also very proud (77%) to be Aboriginal. This is a consistent trend to that of urban Aboriginal peoples in the other UAPS cities (UAPS–Edmonton Report, 2009).

Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are less likely than those in other UAPS cities to say their city's Aboriginal culture is getting stronger. Views are divided about how Aboriginal culture in Edmonton has changed over the past five years. Overall, 42 percent of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton regard Aboriginal culture as becoming stronger in the past five years, 11 percent suggests the opposite, and 33 percent say it has not changed; the remaining 14 percent offered no opinion on the direction of Aboriginal culture in Edmonton. When Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton were asked what aspects of Aboriginal cultures are most important to be passed on to their children, grandchildren, or to the next generation, most identified Aboriginal customs and traditions (50%). As one might suspect, First Nations peoples were more likely to say Aboriginal languages are important (67%) compared to the Métis (38%), reflective of the fact that First Nations peoples are more likely than Métis to speak an Aboriginal language. Indeed, Census reports indicate that approximately 6.3 percent of the Aboriginal Identity population reported a non-official language as their only mother tongue (predominately Cree, Ojibway, and Siouan).

5.3.6 Wicihitowin Justice

Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton tend to lack confidence in Canada's criminal justice system. Opposition to the idea of a separate Aboriginal justice system is highest among Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton (41%) and Winnipeg (39%). The findings in the UAPS show that more than 50 percent say they have little (40%) or no confidence (15%) in the criminal justice system. Meanwhile, roughly 38 percent have some confidence in this system, but very few (6%) have a lot of confidence. Majorities of both First Nations peoples (52%) and Métis (58%) in Edmonton expressed a general lack of confidence. Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are more likely to support than to oppose the creation of an Aboriginal justice system separate from the mainstream system. However, compared to those in other cities, Aboriginal Edmontonians are among the most skeptical about the value of this idea. Almost half (49%) of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton think creating an Aboriginal justice system separate from the mainstream system is a good idea; slightly more (41%) think it is not a good idea. The remainder offered no opinion.

There are many reasons as to why respondents indicated that creating an Aboriginal justice system separate from the mainstream system was a good idea, which included, for example:

- a belief that it would provide greater rehabilitation healing and reduce recidivism (27%);
- would offer a setting that is more comfortable culturally for Aboriginal peoples (25%);

- would offset a current justice system that they perceive to be biased and that treats Aboriginal people unjustly (24%); and
- that Aboriginal peoples would be better served by a system that allows them to be judged within their own value system and by their own peers, and that respects Aboriginal history and culture (21%).

A smaller proportion (12%) thought it would offer a promising alternative for an existing system that is not working for Aboriginal peoples (UAPS–Edmonton Report, 2009). On the contrary, Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton who are opposed to creating a separate system feel Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people should be treated equally to avoid discrimination (58%). They also feel that a separate system would unnecessarily segregate and isolate Aboriginal peoples (18%), that the notion that “healing circles” are not an effective punishment or deterrent (10%), and that a separate system would cause resentment or create conflict with the broader Canadian population (9%).

The UAPS asked respondents to evaluate the potential impact of two alternate approaches to justice. The first being a system that incorporates Aboriginal police, Aboriginal judges, and an Aboriginal court system to work with Aboriginal people who come in contact with the criminal justice system. The second system incorporates Aboriginal concepts of justice, such as sentencing and healing circles, Aboriginal laws, and alternatives to punishment such as reconciliation and restoration. Overall, the vast majority of respondents reported that both approaches would be beneficial to Aboriginal people, such that 60 percent indicated that the two approaches would have at least a moderate impact on reducing Aboriginal crime rates, improving community safety and improving their confidence in the justice system.

5.3.7 Tawow Connections

Most urban Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton consider the city to be their home, a view that is more widespread among Métis (who are more likely to have been born and raised in the city). While they retain close links with their communities of origin, only a minority (and fewer than in other UAPS cities) plan to return to them permanently. The main reasons as to why Aboriginal people move to Edmonton is for family/friends, education, and employment/career opportunities. While the majority of first generation residents in Edmonton retain close links with these communities, very few plan to return to them permanently.

6. Summary Remarks

Since 1996, the Aboriginal population in Canada has grown by 45 percent, which is nearly six times faster than the 8 percent rate increase for the non-Aboriginal population. As a relatively young and growing group, a substantial proportion of Aboriginal people today now reside in major urban centers across Canada. The city of Edmonton, combined with surrounding census metropolitan areas is the second highest centre (next to Winnipeg) with an urban Aboriginal population which accounts for 5 percent of its total population. There has been a population increase of 26 percent during the 2001 to 2006 year Census cycle,

which is significantly faster than the non-Aboriginal population (9%). Clearly, the urban Aboriginal population in Edmonton is growing fast and the need for understanding the social and economic circumstances of both First Nations and Métis peoples is important to ensure that everyone is offered the opportunity to achieving and maintaining a good quality of life.

As part of the Wicihitowin process of building space for Edmonton's urban Aboriginal community to speak to issues that concerned them, a massive consultation process was conducted and published in the *Your City, Your Voice* report. The purpose of the Dialogue process was to create opportunities for participants to share their perspectives on the key issues facing urban Aboriginal people while also sparking their imaginations around "what could be" in terms of new ways of working together. An important outcome of this initiative was the publication of the *Your City, Your Voice* report results. This report is based on a "synthesis" of three separate data sources that provide valuable insight into the socio-demographic characteristics, views and opinions of urban Aboriginal people living in the City of Edmonton. More specifically, it incorporates additional UAPS data that is relevant to the distinctive realities and perspectives of Edmonton's urban Aboriginal community, and in doing so relates the data to the different circles of Wicihitowin.

6.1 Data Limitations and Possibilities

While the objective of the Census of Population is to provide a snapshot of detailed information on the social, economic, and demographic conditions of the population on Census Day, inevitably a small percentage of the population are not included. Undercoverage occurs for a variety of reasons including for example because a household did not receive a questionnaire, an individual has no usual place of residence or did not spend the night of Census Day in a dwelling. Undercoverage is an important issue to consider especially when interpreting and analyzing Census data for the Aboriginal population for two reasons. First, it can be exceedingly difficult to delineate an accurate portrait of the urban Aboriginal population if one takes into consideration the high degree of mobility. Research studies have shown that a significant proportion of the Aboriginal population are transient and frequently move between on-reserve and off-reserve locations, as well as within Census metropolitan areas. Second, one must consider the magnitude of undercounted Aboriginal people and how this impacts the counts by Aboriginal identity group status and geographic location. However, despite these limitations, the Census is still regarded as one of the most up-to-date and comprehensive sources of data available on Aboriginal people in Canada.

The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (UAPS) conducted by the Environics Institute and the *Your City, Your Voice* report (YCYV) initiated by the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative collected data based on a multi-stage qualitative research design. The UAPS used an overall snowball sampling approach complimented by quota sampling. This approach was an effective way to identify urban Aboriginal respondents residing in the City of Edmonton; in this case Environics used the 2006 Canadian Census profile of Aboriginal people in the city to design an "ideal sample," based on such characteristics as identity group, age, educational attainment and gender and then searched out individuals that met this requirement to fill their sample quote of 250 urban Aboriginal Edmontonians. The YCYV used a stratified purposeful sampling approach to gather valuable information from

urban Aboriginal Edmontonians through open houses and talking circles, executive forums and workshop surveys. It is important to understand that non-probability sampling is a non-random method of selecting individuals and does not ensure that there is an unbiased sample representation of the whole population. What this essentially means is that the results from this approach, and therefore the UAPS and YCYV studies, *cannot* be used in making inferences to the entire Urban Aboriginal population in the city of Edmonton. This provides limitations when apply the results because they cannot be used to make generalizations to all Aboriginal people (whether that be First Nations or Métis) living in the city of Edmonton but rather are only applicable to the people who were actually part of the study.

6.2 Further Research Areas

The 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) is a postcensal survey, which means that the APS sample was selected from reported answers to the Census questionnaire. It is conducted by Statistics Canada to collect data on the lifestyles and living conditions of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. The survey was designed and implemented in partnership with national Aboriginal organizations and its primary objective is to provide data on the social and economic conditions of off-reserve Aboriginal people in Canada. More specifically, it focuses on issues such as health, language, employment, income, schooling, housing, and mobility. It is the author's recommendation to consult the 2006 APS as it provides a wealth of information directly related to urban Aboriginal Edmontonians ranging from housing affordability and adequacy, education and employment opportunities, and even child-care issues. Using data from this source would provide a more in depth understanding of the day-to-day social and economic realities of the city's Aboriginal population, which could then be applied to all First Nations and Métis residents. In turn, this could provide a substantial and powerful knowledge base to lay the groundwork for social policy considerations in the context of adequate program and service delivery intended to be of benefit to all urban Aboriginal people.

Notes

1. I would like to acknowledge the Wichihitowin Circle of Shared Responsibility and Stewardship for supporting this research study. A special thanks to Dr. Chris Andersen, Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta for his insights and recommendations. I would also like to acknowledge Shalene Jobin for the research work she conducted during stage one of this project which involved a comparative analysis of the Environics UAPS data to the results of the Your City, Your Voice report, her report served as a guiding tool in developing the framework for the present statistical analysis.
2. Wichihitowin is a Cree word which means “they help each other.” Wichihitowin fosters new relationships for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to work together to meet the diverse needs of Edmonton's urban Aboriginal population. See <http://wicihitowin.ca/>.
3. 1. Aboriginal Ancestry/Origin refers to those persons who reported at least one Aboriginal origin (North American Indian, Métis, or Inuit) on the ethnic origin question in the Census. The question asks about the ethnic or cultural group(s) to which the respondent's ancestors belong. 2. Aboriginal Identity refers to those persons who reported identifying with at least one Aboriginal group (i.e. North American Indian, Métis, or Inuit). Also included are individuals who did not report an Aboriginal identity, but did report themselves as a Registered or Treaty Indian, and/or Band or First Nation membership. 3. Registered, status, or treaty Indian refers to those who reported they were registered under the Indian Act of Canada. Treaty Indians are persons who are registered under the Indian Act of Canada and can prove descent from a Band that signed a treaty. The term “treaty Indian” is more widely used in the prairie provinces. 4. Member of an Indian Band or First Nation refers to those persons who reported being a member of an Indian band or a First Nation of Canada.
4. The Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Affairs Committee (EAUAC) and the City of Edmonton initiated the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Dialogue Process in 2005. The dialogue process is supported by the Government of Canada (Western Economic Diversification), the Province of Alberta (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development), and the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund (EHTF). It is directed by the Accord Initiative Steering Committee, guided by the Accord Initiative Elders Circle, and supported by people working for the City (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal).
5. The median age is the point at which exactly one half of the population is older and the other half is younger.
6. The categories for the variable “highest level of schooling” changed from the 2001 to the 2006 Census, and therefore direct comparisons between the five-year Census cycle for this variable are not possible. In addition, some of the age categories for highest level of schooling in 2006 were collapsed in order to produce an overall trend for the population aged 15 years and older. Since this data is subjected to random rounding procedures, it is important to recognize that some of the categories are slightly inflated and should therefore be interpreted with caution. However, overall trends are still apparent for both the non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal populations with respect to educational attainment.

7. Statistics Canada's "low income-rate" measures the percentage of persons who live in a family with an income below the low income cutoff (LICO). The LICO is a statistical measure of the income threshold by which Canadian likely devote a larger share of income than average to the necessities of food, shelter and clothing
8. The analysis for this section is based on the weighted data from the UAPS. In addition, questions were selected based on the amount of data available for analysis. If population counts were too small such questions were not included in the analysis (i.e., n=5).
9. The age variable in the UAPS is structured by three categories: 18–24 years; 25–44 years; and 45+ years, which provided the breakdown for Youth and Elder in the analysis.
10. These percentages are based on unweighted UAPS survey data and, therefore, will not add to 100 percent.

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