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# EPS Research on Aboriginal Community Needs and Composition

Edmonton Police Commission  
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# Outline

- Objectives and process
- Emerging themes:
  - Demographic profile
  - Crime and victimization
  - Vulnerability factors
- Discussion



# Objectives and process

- **Objectives:**

- Broaden understanding of needs & composition of the Aboriginal community
- Inform ongoing implementation of the Aboriginal Strategy and related initiatives

- **Scope:**

- Report summarizes results of a literature review and environmental scan
- Completed in consultation with Aboriginal Community Liaison Committee, Aboriginal Relations Unit, and CoE Aboriginal Relations Office



# Demographic profile

- **National trends**
  - Increasing urbanization:
    - 56% of Aboriginal people reside in Census Metropolitan Areas [CMAs]); most feel at home in their cities
  - Income and education levels are improving:
    - Aboriginal people are as likely as non-Aboriginals to be classified as “middle income”
- **Continued experience of elevated vulnerability:**
  - Lower socioeconomic status
  - Discrimination
  - Continuing effects of colonization, residential schools



# Demographic profile

- **Population**
  - Total Aboriginal population 41,985 (2011)
  - 50.4% identify as Métis, 44.9% as First Nations (FN)
- **Socioeconomic status**
  - Aboriginal median household income is 20.3% lower; twice as likely to have low income than non-Aboriginals
  - In Edmonton CMA, 28.6% of FN children and 20.9% of Métis children live in low-income households
  - Child maltreatment is associated with future justice system involvement



# Demographic profile

- **Housing**
  - 2014 Homeless Count: of 2,307 homeless Edmontonians, 47% were of Aboriginal descent
  - Causal drivers: low income, systemic barriers, discrimination, social disruption
- **Mental Health and Disability**
  - Alberta-wide prevalence of FASD is 1.2% (up to 10% within the justice system)
  - Nationwide, Aboriginal people have higher incidence of substance use disorders (6.3% of population, vs. 3.9% of non-Aboriginals) and mental illness
  - Severe mental illness is significantly associated with higher rates of homelessness and violent victimization



# Crime & victimization

- **Prevalence of victimization**
  - 37% of Aboriginal people report being the victim of a major offence in the past year (42% higher than non-Aboriginals)
  - Aboriginal women are three times more likely to face violent victimization
  - Between 1980 and 2012, 16% of all female homicide victims were Aboriginal women and girls



# Crime & victimization

- **Police and justice system involvement**
  - Aboriginal people make up 22.8% of federal prison population
  - Among young offenders, Aboriginal people make up 35% of those in secure custody
  - Corrections survey of Aboriginal offenders: 96% reported substance use related to their offence
  - Historical pattern of negative police interactions; mutual mistrust (Ipperwash, Stonechild Inquiry, Davies Commission)





# Vulnerability factors

- ***High rates of victimization and justice system involvement are rooted in the same vulnerability factors:***
  - Mental illness and addictions
  - Housing and homelessness
  - Child welfare
  - Youth gang involvement



# Vulnerability factors

- These vulnerability factors are linked to **Historic Trauma:**

“the *intergenerational effects of colonialism* and residential schools on Aboriginal communities and individuals *causing breakdowns in social, cultural, and familial supports*. The results of such breakdowns include increased prevalence of social dysfunction and mental illness, poverty, damaged family structures, and deep-rooted mistrust of government agencies”



# Discussion