



# Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study

EDMONTON REPORT



ENVIRONICS  
• INSTITUTE •

Published by

**Environics Institute**

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### The *UAPS* Advisory Circle

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### *UAPS* Steering Committee and staff

The *UAPS* Steering Committee has devoted considerable time, energy and expertise to the successful management and execution of the study. Michael Mendelson (The Caledon Institute), David Eaves (Independent), May Wong (Environics Institute), Amy Langstaff (Environics Institute), Doug Norris (Environics Analytics), Michael Adams (Environics Institute), Keith Neuman (Environics Research Group), Sonya Kunkel (Environics Research Group), Sarah Robertson (Environics Research Group), Jay Kaufman (KTA) and Karen Beitel (KTA) have all played an important role in bringing this study to fruition.

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- commissioning original survey research;
- funding academic studies related to polling and public opinion; and
- working with media partners to disseminate the results of its research.

Founded in 2006, the Institute has already conducted a number of groundbreaking studies, including a survey of Canadian Muslims, a survey of the people of Afghanistan, and a study (undertaken in partnership with Canada's World) of Canadians' personal engagement with people and issues around the world.

The Environics Institute sees public opinion research as a valuable lens through which Canadians can examine and better understand their own diverse and evolving society.

## About the Environics Institute

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## What is the *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study* and why now?

The *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (UAPS)* is a snapshot of the hundreds of thousands of Aboriginal people who now live in urban centres. Conducted by the Environics Institute, and guided by an Advisory Circle of recognized experts from academia and from Aboriginal communities, the study is an enquiry into the values, experiences, identities and aspirations of First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit living in Canada's major urban centres.

The urban Aboriginal population in Canada now numbers over 600,000 and is at an all time high. There are now more Aboriginal people living in urban centres across Canada than there are living in Aboriginal territories and communities on reserves, in Métis settlements and in Inuit communities. Aboriginal people now constitute a permanent presence in Canadian cities, and promise to be an important part of multicultural urban Canada.

The *UAPS* sprang from discussions with diverse stakeholders and opinion leaders across the country that recognized these trends, as well as the need for well-designed empirical research that would credibly express evolving urban Aboriginal perspectives.

## How was the research done?

The *UAPS* investigated a range of issues including (but not limited to) urban Aboriginal peoples' communities of origin, Aboriginal cultures, community belonging, education, work, health political engagement and activity, justice, relationships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, life aspirations and definitions of success, and experiences with discrimination.

The study involved *in-person* interviews, one to two hours in length, with 2,614 Métis, Inuit and First Nations (status and non-status) individuals living in 11 Canadian cities from Halifax to Vancouver. With input from the *UAPS* Advisory Circle, individual questions were organized under four overarching themes:

- *identity*: who are you?
- *experiences*: what's your everyday life like?
- *values*: what's important in your life?
- *aspirations*: what do you want for your future?

In each city, the Environics Institute engaged a small team of local Aboriginal people to construct a 250-person sample and organize the interviews. Key to the study's legitimacy was that the sample be representative of the urban Aboriginal population: that it not select solely among those living in serious poverty or those who are succeeding. The Institute used the 2006 Canadian Census profile of Aboriginal people in each city (defined as the Census Metropolitan Area, or CMA) ) to design an "ideal sample," based on such characteristics as identity group, age, educational attainment and gender. Local research teams in each city then searched out individuals that fit this sample profile.

The study also investigated how non-Aboriginal people view Aboriginal people in Canada today, through a telephone survey with 2,501 non-Aboriginal urban Canadians living in these same cities (excluding Ottawa).



## What did the study find?

Many of the UAPS findings suggest that Canadian cities are becoming sites of connection, engagement and cultural vitality for a large number of Aboriginal peoples. Although many segments of First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations in Canada face substantial challenges, the picture in cities is more diverse – and in many cases more hopeful – than public perceptions and media coverage often acknowledge.

In April 2010, the Institute released a national report of the study's findings (*Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study – Main Report*, [www.UAPS.ca](http://www.UAPS.ca)). Among the main findings described in the report:

- **For most, the city is home, but urban Aboriginal peoples stay connected to their communities of origin.** Six in ten feel a close connection to these communities – links that are integral to strong family and social ties, and to traditional and contemporary Aboriginal culture. Notwithstanding these links, majorities of First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit consider their current city of residence home (71%), including those who are the first generation of their family to live in their city.
- **Almost eight in ten participants say they are “very proud” of their specific Aboriginal identity (i.e., First Nations, Métis or Inuk).** Slightly fewer – 70 percent – say the same about being Canadian.
- **Urban Aboriginal peoples are seeking to become a significant and visible part of the urban landscape.** Six in ten feel they can make their city a better place to live, a proportion similar to non-Aboriginal urban dwellers.
- **Six in ten are not concerned about losing contact with their culture, while a minority totally (17%) or somewhat (21%) agree that they are concerned.** As well, by a wide margin (6:1), First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit think Aboriginal culture in their communities has become stronger rather than weaker in the last five years.
- **They display a higher tolerance for other cultures than their non-Aboriginal neighbours:** Seventy-seven percent of urban Aboriginal peoples believe there is room for a variety of languages and cultures in this country, in contrast to 54 percent of non-Aboriginal urbanites.
- **A majority believe they are viewed in negative ways by non-Aboriginal people.** Three in four participants perceive assumptions about addiction problems, while many feel there are negative stereotypes about laziness (30%), lack of intelligence (20%) and poverty (20%).
- **Education is their top priority, and an enduring aspiration for the next generation.** Twenty percent want the next generation to understand the importance of education, 18 percent hope younger individuals will stay connected to their cultural community and 17 percent hope the next generation will experience life without racism.



## What does the *UAPS* tell us about Aboriginal peoples who live in Edmonton?

According to the 2006 Census, Edmonton has the second largest Aboriginal population of any city in Canada (after Winnipeg). Aboriginal peoples account for five percent of the total population of Edmonton, smaller than the relative populations in some of the other Prairie cities and Thunder Bay, but considerably more than in the large urban centres of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver.

The *UAPS Edmonton Report* is the second of a series of city reports, following the release of the main report of the *UAPS* on April 6, 2010. In Edmonton, the main survey consisted of in-person interviews with 250 First Nations peoples (status and non-status), Métis and Inuit (18 years and older), between April 3 and June 25, 2009.

An analysis of the *UAPS* Edmonton data reveals the following about the identities, experiences, values and aspirations of Aboriginal residents of Edmonton:

- **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. Like other *UAPS* participants, Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton like living in their city and feel a strong sense of empowerment about their ability to make a positive impact.
- **More so than in any other *UAPS* city, Aboriginal Edmontonians believe they are viewed in negative ways by non-Aboriginal people.** Most *UAPS* participants feel discrimination of Aboriginal people to be a pervasive problem that majorities have experienced personally, but this is particularly true for Aboriginal Edmontonians. This feeling is eloquently described by one Edmonton participant, who said *"I notice the non-verbal cues the most, the ones that imply that all Aboriginal people are thieves, criminals or dangerous. Like people locking doors as I walk by, putting their wallets away, or following me in stores"*. Only a minority of Aboriginal peoples living in Edmonton believe these perceptions are changing for the better, and such optimism is less common than in other cities.
- **Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are widely aware of Aboriginal cultural activities in their community, but are less likely than those in other *UAPS* cities to participate.** There is also a more modest sense of the vitality of Aboriginal culture in Edmonton. The perception of a hostile environment may make some reluctant to overtly celebrate their Aboriginal identity. Clearly there is concern about perpetuating further discrimination, which is the stated basis for why Aboriginal Edmontonians are among the most skeptical of a separate Aboriginal justice system.
- **First Nations peoples in Edmonton report a more diluted sense of connection to other Aboriginal peoples (including individuals of their own First Nation) than do those in other cities.** This is not the case for Métis in Edmonton, perhaps due to the larger Métis population in the city. First Nations peoples in Edmonton also 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).

- **Despite these various challenges, most Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are unconcerned about losing their cultural identity.** This level of confidence is second only to Aboriginal peoples in Winnipeg, and is true for both First Nations peoples and Métis. In addition to the strong pride Aboriginal Edmontonians express in their First Nations/Métis/Inuk identities, they are also among the most likely of *UAPS* participants to express strong pride in being Canadian.
- **The top life aspiration for Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton is completing their education.** The life aspirations of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are largely consistent with those held by Aboriginal peoples living in the other *UAPS* cities. Family, friends and a balanced lifestyle are most important to Aboriginal Edmontonians' definition of success.

## How do non-Aboriginal Edmontonians perceive Aboriginal people?

As part of the *UAPS*, Environics surveyed a representative sample of Canadians to learn how they view Aboriginal peoples and what informs these views. The results of the non-Aboriginal survey are based on telephone interviews conducted from April 28 to May 15, 2009 with non-Aboriginal people in each of the same 10 urban centres in which the main survey was conducted: Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax (excluding Ottawa). In all, 2,501 non-Aboriginal urban Canadians ("NA urban Canadians") participated, including 251 in Edmonton, providing a rich picture of how NA urban Canadians see Aboriginal people in cities today.

Topics explored in the survey include non-Aboriginal urban Canadians' perceptions of Aboriginal people in Canada, their awareness of Aboriginal peoples and communities in their cities, their contact and interaction with Aboriginal people, their perspectives on how well institutions respond to the needs of Aboriginal people, their knowledge of salient Aboriginal issues (i.e., Indian residential schools, acceptance of differential systems of justice), and the importance of Aboriginal history and culture in the minds of NA urban Canadians.

A closer look at the responses of non-Aboriginal Edmontonians yielded the following insights into their attitudes towards Aboriginal people, their awareness of Aboriginal people and communities in their city, their perceptions of the top issues facing Aboriginal people today and, finally, their perceptions of future relations with Aboriginal people. Specifically:

- **Among non-Aboriginal people in Edmonton, the most common top-of-mind impression of Aboriginal peoples revolves around their history as the original inhabitants of Canada.** This perception is similar to that expressed in other *UAPS* cities. Only a minority of non-Aboriginal people in Edmonton express patently negative impressions, but these are more common in the western cities, including Edmonton.
- **Non-Aboriginal people in Edmonton are more likely to believe that Aboriginal people are just like other cultural or ethnic groups in Canadian society than to say they have unique rights and privileges as the first inhabitants of Canada.** The view that Aboriginal peoples are no different from other cultural or ethnic groups is more common here than in most other *UAPS* cities except Regina, Winnipeg and Thunder Bay.

- **Edmonton residents know Aboriginal people live in their city, but are not as aware of an Aboriginal *community* as are residents of cities with larger relative Aboriginal populations.** Indeed, while their attitudes and perceptions about Aboriginal peoples are largely aligned with those in other Prairie cities and Thunder Bay, non-Aboriginal Edmontonians are less likely than in those cities to have regular contact with Aboriginal people or to know Aboriginal people as close friends, neighbours and co-workers.
- **Negative stereotypes are evident in the types of barriers that Edmonton residents perceive to be facing Aboriginal peoples.** Compared to other cities, substance abuse is more frequently identified as the most important facing the Aboriginal population in Canada today, while substance abuse and unemployment are more commonly cited as top challenges for urban Aboriginal peoples. As well, Edmonton residents are among the most skeptical that the current challenges faced by Aboriginal communities are tied to Aboriginal peoples' experiences with Indian residential schools. At the same time, Edmonton residents clearly recognize that Aboriginal people experience discrimination – and at least as much as other groups in Canadian society.
- **Edmonton residents are divided on whether the problems faced by Aboriginal peoples in Canada have largely been caused by the attitudes of other Canadians and the policies of government or by Aboriginal people themselves.** In contrast, the balance of opinion in Vancouver, Calgary and the cities east of Winnipeg is that the problems are primarily due to the attitudes of Canadians and their governments.
- **A majority of non-Aboriginal Edmontonians believe the current state of relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada is negative.** This perception is more widespread in Edmonton than in any other city. Moreover, optimism that relations are changing for the better is lower than in most other *UAPS* cities.

## Next steps

All *UAPS* reports are freely available via the study's website, [www.uaps.ca](http://www.uaps.ca). The *UAPS Edmonton Report* and other city reports will all be posted on this site as they are available.

Environics Institute is also committed to making the study data accessible to the public. The results of all the *UAPS* survey questions can be freely accessed through data tables on the website, or by contacting the Institute directly (see the Acknowledgements section of this report for contact details).

In addition, the recent release of the *UAPS* main report offers a unique window into establishing new meaningful dialogue with Aboriginal Peoples in Canada's major cities. More than ever, a public forum in Canadian cities across the country is required that brings people from all sectors, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, together to take action on the needs of and opportunities for urban Aboriginal communities in this country

To that end, the *UAPS Public Engagement Strategy* has been designed using the study as a platform for community dialogue and discussion. The broad goal of this strategy is to promote collaborative engagement of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in determining the implications of *UAPS* research findings for urban Aboriginal communities. The Institute hopes to organize forums in each *UAPS* city that bring together Aboriginal organizations, policy-makers and *UAPS* participants to build a deeper collective understanding of the values and experiences of urban Aboriginal peoples, and identify the next steps for supporting the urban Aboriginal community in a given city.

For more information on *UAPS* public engagement, please contact Ginger Gosnell-Myers, *UAPS* Public Engagement Director, at [ginger.gosnell-myers@environics.ca](mailto:ginger.gosnell-myers@environics.ca).

## About the Research

**BACKGROUND.** The urban Aboriginal population in Canada now numbers over 600,000 and is at an all time high. The largest Aboriginal community is no longer a reserve, but a diverse Aboriginal population in a major city that exceeds 60,000 people (Winnipeg). Edmonton itself is home to over 52,000 Aboriginal peoples. Urban Aboriginal populations are permanent populations, and promise to be an important part of multicultural urban Canada.

The *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study* sprang from discussions with diverse stakeholders and opinion leaders across the country that recognized these trends, as well as the need for well-designed empirical research that would credibly express evolving urban Aboriginal perspectives. Throughout 2009, the Environics Institute, a not-for-profit foundation established by Environics Research co-founder Michael Adams that supports original research on important issues of public policy and social change, oversaw with its Advisory Circle community-based research in 11 Canadian cities: Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Thunder Bay, Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver.

The objectives of the *UAPS* are to better understand the perspectives of urban Aboriginal peoples as complex individuals and communities, and provide new insights that stimulate dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal urban communities across Canada. Designed to be an enquiry about the values, experiences, identities and aspirations of Aboriginal peoples living in cities, the study investigated a range of issues including (but not limited to) urban Aboriginal peoples' communities of origin, Aboriginal cultures, community belonging, education, work, health political engagement and activity, justice, relationships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, life aspirations and definitions of success, and experiences with discrimination.

**UAPS IN EDMONTON.** The *UAPS Edmonton Report* constitutes the second of a series of city reports, following the release of the main report of the *UAPS* on April 6, 2010. In Edmonton, the main survey consisted of in-person interviews with 250 First Nations peoples (status and non-status), Métis and Inuit (18 years and older) between April 3 and June 25, 2009.

Key to the study's legitimacy was that the sample be representative of the urban Aboriginal population in Edmonton: that it not select solely among those living in serious poverty or those who are succeeding. The Institute used the 2006 Canadian Census profile of Aboriginal people in Edmonton to design an "ideal sample," based on such characteristics as identity group, age, educational attainment and gender. The Edmonton research team then searched out individuals that fit this sample profile.

The research team consisted of a Project Co-ordinator (Dr. Maisie Cardinal) and a team of interviewers. The research team worked with local Aboriginal agencies and other organizations, to build community awareness and support for the study, and to identify survey participants.

The table on the next page presents a profile of the final sample of participants, by such characteristics as identity, gender, age and education. At the analysis stage, data were weighted so that the final sample accurately reflects the distribution of the population according to the 2006 Census. The table presents the actual number of participants (unweighted) within each subgroup, as well as the weighted proportion each subgroup represents within the total sample.

The results contained in this report are based on the total sample, and are reported separately in some cases for First Nations peoples and Métis, but the sample size is not sufficiently large to allow for analysis by characteristics such as age and education.

In addition to the main survey, a telephone survey was conducted with 250 non-Aboriginal residents of Edmonton (18 years and older) between April 28 and May 15, 2009. This is an important component of the *UAPS* because it reveals how the non-Aboriginal population views the experiences of Aborigi-

nal peoples, reflecting some of the barriers and opportunities facing the Aboriginal community. The margin of error for a probability sample of 250 is plus or minus 6.2 percentage points, 19 times in 20.<sup>1</sup>

Further details on the methodology of both *UAPS* surveys can be found in the main report on the *UAPS*, available at [www.uaps.ca](http://www.uaps.ca).

**IN THIS REPORT.** *The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study – Edmonton Report* is organized into eight chapters.

**Chapter 1, the Urban Context**, provides a demographic snapshot of the Aboriginal population in Edmonton, and information on where study participants are from, how long they have lived in Edmonton and how they felt about Edmonton (i.e., did they consider it or another community to be home?).

**Chapter 2** delivers main findings from the *UAPS* on Aboriginal Edmontonians’ expressions of Aboriginal **Identity and Culture** in the city.

**Chapter 3, Experiences with Non-Aboriginal People**, summarizes how Aboriginal peoples living in Edmonton feel perceived by the non-Aboriginal population-at-large.

**Chapter 4, Experiences with Aboriginal Services and Organizations**, explores study participants’ perceptions of and interactions with Aboriginal services and organizations in Edmonton.

**Chapter 5** captures how Aboriginal peoples feel about living in Edmonton in **Urban Experiences**.

**Chapter 6, Urban Aspirations**, delves further into contemporary Aboriginal urban experience and explores Aboriginal Edmontonians’ life aspirations and definitions of success.

**Chapter 7** is a Special Theme in the Edmonton report: **Confidence in the Criminal Justice System**.

**Chapter 8, Non-Aboriginal Perspectives**, the final chapter of the report, captures non-Aboriginal Edmontonians’ perceptions of Aboriginal peoples, including their awareness of and level of contact with Aboriginal people, their knowledge of salient Aboriginal issues, and the importance of Aboriginal history and culture in the minds of non-Aboriginal Edmontonians.

An overview at the beginning of each chapter summarizes the main *UAPS* findings.

*Unless otherwise noted, all of the numbers of the graphs are percentages.*

## *UAPS* participant profile in Edmonton

|  | #<br>(Unweighted) | %<br>(Weighted) |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|
| <b>IDENTITY</b>                          |                   |                 |
| First Nations                            | 130               | 40              |
| Status                                   | 128               | 39              |
| Non-status                               | 2                 | 1               |
| Métis                                    | 106               | 59              |
| Inuit                                    | 14                | *               |
| <b>GENDER</b>                            |                   |                 |
| Men                                      | 94                | 44              |
| Women                                    | 156               | 56              |
| <b>AGE</b>                               |                   |                 |
| 18-24                                    | 60                | 21              |
| 25-44                                    | 111               | 47              |
| 45+                                      | 79                | 32              |
| <b>EDUCATION</b>                         |                   |                 |
| No diploma                               | 72                | 34              |
| High school diploma                      | 71                | 25              |
| College degree                           | 66                | 35              |
| University degree                        | 41                | 6               |
| <b>HOUSEHOLD INCOME</b>                  |                   |                 |
| <\$10,000                                | 36                | 13              |
| \$10,000 - \$30,000                      | 65                | 27              |
| \$30,000 - \$60,000                      | 67                | 31              |
| \$60,000+                                | 52                | 19              |
| Refused                                  | 30                | 10              |
| <b>LIVING SITUATION</b>                  |                   |                 |
| Renting an apartment or house            | 158               | 66              |
| Homeowner                                | 40                | 14              |
| Living with friends or family            | 34                | 14              |
| Renting a room in a rooming house/hostel | 7                 | 2               |
| Living in a temporary shelter            | 10                | 4               |
| <b>ELDER</b>                             |                   |                 |
| Yes                                      | 24                | 12              |
| No                                       | 226               | 88              |

\* Less than 0.5%

1 Because the sample for the main survey is based on individuals who initially “self-selected” for participation, no estimate of sampling error can be calculated for the main survey. It should be noted that all surveys, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error, including but not limited to sampling error, coverage error and measurement error.

# I.0 The Urban Context

The urban Aboriginal population in Canada now numbers over 600,000 and is at an all time high. There are now more Aboriginal people living in urban centres across Canada than there are living in Aboriginal territories and communities on reserves, in Métis settlements and in Inuit communities. Aboriginal people now constitute a permanent presence in Canadian cities, and promise to be an important part of multicultural urban Canada.

This chapter begins with a demographic snapshot of the Aboriginal population in Edmonton based on the 2006 Census. It then presents Aboriginal peoples' responses to a series of questions included in the *UAPS* survey designed to establish where members of the city's Aboriginal population come from, how long they have lived in Edmonton, and how they feel about Edmonton (i.e., do they consider it or another community to be home).

## Key findings

- ***UAPS* participants in Edmonton are largely first generation residents, and even more so than in other *UAPS* cities.** Although most were born and raised in a community, town, city or reserve other than Edmonton, they are also typically long-term urban residents: a majority have lived in Edmonton for 10 years or more.
- **Aboriginal peoples move to Edmonton for family, education and for the employment opportunities, reasons that are largely common to Aboriginal peoples in all 11 *UAPS* cities.**
- **For most Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton, the city is *home*.** This does not preclude a sense of connection to their community of origin, as a majority of first generation residents in Edmonton retain close links with these communities. However, few plan to return to them permanently, particularly by comparison to residents of other *UAPS* cities.

## 1.1 The Aboriginal population in Edmonton

Edmonton has the second largest Aboriginal population of any city in Canada (after Winnipeg). According to the 2006 Census, a total of 52,105 people in Edmonton identified themselves as Aboriginal, that is, First Nations, Métis or Inuit. Aboriginal peoples account for five percent of the total population of Edmonton, smaller than the relative populations in some of the other Prairie cities and Thunder Bay, but considerably more than the large urban centres of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Within the province of Alberta, the Aboriginal population in Edmonton is twice the relative proportion in Calgary (2.5%), but less than in smaller centres (e.g., 12% of the populations of both Wood Buffalo and Wetaskiwin are Aboriginal).

Métis are the largest Aboriginal group in Edmonton, accounting for just over half (53%) of the city's Aboriginal population. First Nations peoples account for 43 percent of the Aboriginal population, while just one percent identified themselves as Inuit, and three percent offered other or multiple responses.



As well, according to Census data, Edmonton has a relatively young and growing urban Aboriginal population.

- From 2001 to 2006, the Aboriginal population in Edmonton grew by 27 percent, which is an average growth rate compared to the other 10 cities included in the *UAPS*. During the same time period, the total population of Edmonton grew by nine percent.
- The Aboriginal population living in Edmonton is much younger than the non-Aboriginal population (with a median age of 25 years, compared to 37 years for the non-Aboriginal population), which is consistent with the pattern observed Canada-wide.<sup>2</sup>
- Compared to non-Aboriginal residents, the Aboriginal population, in addition to being younger, is less likely to have completed a post-secondary education, has lower incomes and higher unemployment rates. The city's Aboriginal youth are also more likely than non-Aboriginal children to be living in a single-parent household.

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<sup>2</sup> The median age is the point where exactly one-half of the population is older and the other half is younger.

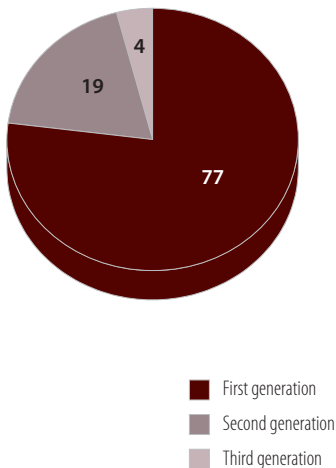
## 1.2 Residency in the city

**Most UAPS participants in Edmonton are first generation residents, who are nonetheless typically long-term residents having lived in the city for 10 years or more.**

In 2006, half of the Aboriginal population in Canada lived in urban centres (including large cities or census metropolitan areas and smaller urban centres), up from 47 percent in 1996. In turn, the proportion of the Aboriginal population that lives on-reserve or in rural (off-reserve) locations has declined. The movement of Aboriginal people to Canadian urban areas has been occurring for several decades, with Aboriginal populations in some cities constituting the largest Aboriginal communities in Canada.

Exploring the movement of Aboriginal people over time to Edmonton is beyond the scope of the UAPS. Nonetheless, the survey did provide the opportunity to document one distinction considered particularly relevant to the urban Aboriginal experience: Are you originally from the city (i.e., born and raised in Edmonton) or are you from somewhere else?

First, second and third generation Edmonton residents

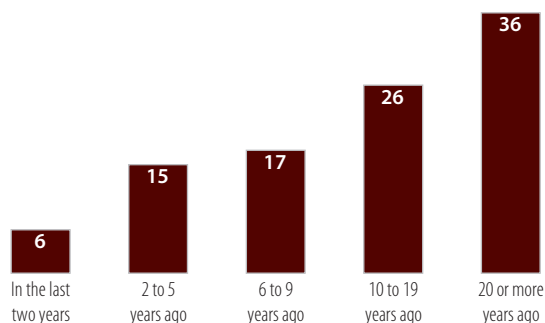


The data revealed two main groups of people: those who were born and raised somewhere other than Edmonton (“first generation”); and those who were born and raised in Edmonton but whose family is from another place (“second generation”). A third, smaller group is comprised of Aboriginal peoples born and raised in Edmonton whose parents and/or grandparents are also from Edmonton (“third generation”).

In Edmonton, three-quarters (77%) of UAPS participants are “first generation” residents born and raised in a community, town, city or reserve other than Edmonton, and this is more typical of First Nations peoples than Métis. “Second generation” residents born and raised in Edmonton whose parents and/or grandparents are from another place represent one-fifth (19%) of Edmonton’s urban Aboriginal population. Just four percent are “third generation” residents of the city (i.e., Aboriginal peoples born and raised in Edmonton whose parents/grandparents are also from Edmonton). Notably, the proportion of first generation residents among Edmonton’s Aboriginal population is higher than the average of all 11 UAPS cities.

Time of arrival\*

When did you first come to Edmonton?



\* Subsample: Among those who were not born or raised in Edmonton.

Among first generation residents, a majority are long-term residents of Edmonton. Six in ten (62%) first came to Edmonton at least 10 years ago, including just under four in ten (36%) who arrived 20 or more years ago. Four in ten (38%) have arrived in the past 10 years, including fewer than one in ten (6%) who first came in the past two years. To look at it another way, the average year of arrival in Edmonton among first generation UAPS participants was 1991.

Length of time in Edmonton is generally consistent with the average arrival time for first generation UAPS participants in other cities. The UAPS found that urban Aboriginal peoples’ length of time in their city does not vary substantially across the 11 cities included in the study, but where such differences exist it reflects the characteristics of the city’s Aboriginal population. For example, Winnipeg, by far, has the longest term residents as a result of its large Métis population, reflecting the fact that Métis are the most urbanized of Aboriginal groups in Canada.

## 1.3 Reason for moving to Edmonton

**Three main reasons fuel the move to Edmonton: family, education and employment opportunities.**

Why do Aboriginal peoples move to Edmonton?

While first generation *UAPS* participants cite a wide variety of reasons for why they first moved, family, education and employment are, by far, their most common reasons.

When asked (unprompted, without response options offered) why they first moved to Edmonton, the most common reason is the opportunity to be closer to family (41%), followed closely by the pursuit of education (34%) and for employment opportunities (31%). Smaller proportions say they moved to the city because it offered better amenities (13%), a chance for a new beginning (12%) or because they thought Edmonton would be a better place in which to raise their children (9%).

Smaller groups of *UAPS* participants (7% or fewer each) mention other reasons for moving to Edmonton, such as escaping a bad family situation, a chance for career advancement, the need for a change, friends, better access to social services or health care, and for training to upgrade their skills.

Overall, Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton express similar reasons for moving to their city as do first generation Aboriginal residents of other cities. Although only a small proportion say they moved to the city for a new beginning, this reason is more commonly expressed by *UAPS* participants in Edmonton than by those in most other cities.

## 1.4 Connection to Edmonton

**For most Aboriginal peoples in the city, Edmonton is “home.”**

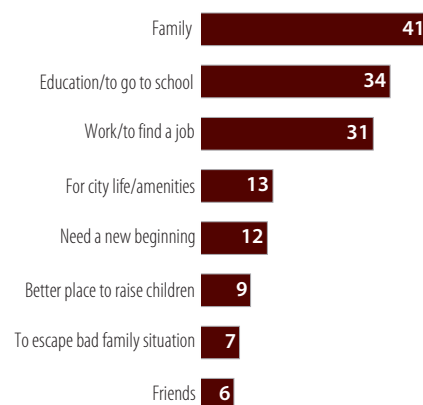
Most of those who have lived in Edmonton all their lives, not surprisingly, consider the city to be their home (87% of second generation residents). Two-thirds (66%) of first generation residents (i.e., those not born or raised in the city) also consider Edmonton their home, although this feeling is not as widespread as those born and raised there.

Overall, when asked “Where is home for you?” seven in ten (70%) *UAPS* participants say it is Edmonton.<sup>3</sup> Significantly fewer say it is their community of origin (17%), while the remainder (11%) indicates that a community other than Edmonton or their community of origin is home to them. These views are consistent with the national average of all 11 *UAPS* cities.

Although majorities of both First Nations peoples and Métis in the city consider Edmonton to be “home,” this sentiment is less pronounced among First Nations peoples (61% compared to 77% of Métis). This reflects, at least in part, the fact that First Nations peoples are more likely to be first generation residents of Edmonton; they may come from a reserve and retain the option of living there.

Top reasons for moving to Edmonton\*

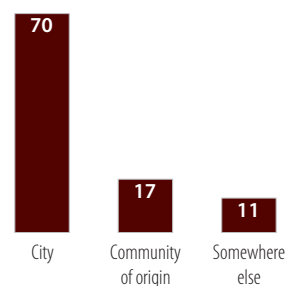
What is the most important reason why you first moved to your city?



\*Subsample: Among those who were not born or raised in Edmonton.

Where is home for you?\*

Where is *home* for you? Is it your city of residence, your home community, or somewhere else?



\* Subsample: Those who were not born or raised in Edmonton; those who have lived in Toronto all their life and whose parents/grandparents are from another place.

<sup>3</sup> The question “Where is home for you?” was not asked of third generation *UAPS* participants (4% of *UAPS* participants in Edmonton).

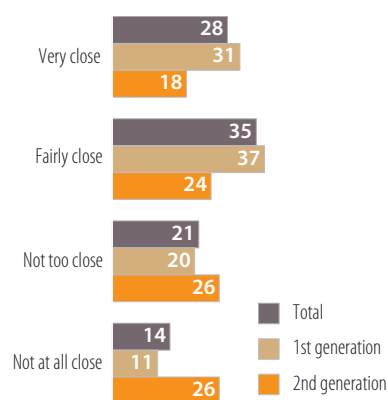
Although *UAPS* participants reported an important connection to the city in which they are living, their sense that Edmonton is home does not preclude a relationship with their community of origin. The following section (1.5 Connection to Community of Origin) explores this relationship.

## 1.5 Connection to community of origin

***A majority of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton retain links with their community of origin, whether it be their own or that of their parents/grandparents. At the same time, only a minority (and fewer than in other UAPS cities) are currently planning to return one day.***

### Connection to community of origin\*

How close a connection do you feel to your home community?/  
How close a connection do you feel to the place where your parents and grandparents are from?



\* Subsample: Those who were not born or raised in Edmonton; those who have lived in Edmonton all their life and whose parents/grandparents are from another place.

Previous research has found that many urban Aboriginal peoples have maintained links with their community of origin (i.e., one's home community or the home community of parents/grandparents) because of the proximity of First Nations and Métis communities to cities, the history of mobility of Aboriginal people, the fact that the land is such a fundamental source of traditional and contemporary culture, and the continuance of strong family and social ties to the communities.<sup>4</sup>

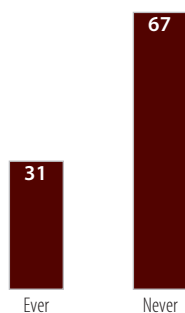
Such connections are evident among *UAPS* participants in Edmonton, although much more so among first generation individuals than among second generation residents.

Overall, six in ten say they feel a very (28%) or fairly close (35%) connection to their community of origin. Fewer urban Aboriginal peoples say they feel not too close (21%) to these communities, while a small group feel not at all close (14%) to their community of origin.

As would be expected, first generation urban residents (who are more likely to be First Nations) express a much stronger connection to their community of origin than do second generation residents (68% and 42%, respectively, say they have at least a fairly strong connection). It is notable, however, that second generation residents of Edmonton are among the least likely of any *UAPS* city to feel a close connection to their home community (the sense of connection among first generation residents of Edmonton is similar to the national average of all *UAPS* cities).

### Have you moved back to your home community?\*

Since you first moved to Edmonton, have you ever moved back to your home community?



Note: 2% said dk/na

\* Subsample: Those who were not born or raised in Edmonton.

It is clear from the data that the majority of first generation residents of Edmonton maintain strong links to their communities of origin, even though they have long tenure within the city. A minority of three in ten (31%) have moved back to their home community at least once since they first moved to Edmonton (representing 24% of *UAPS* participants in Edmonton overall). Most (67%) say they have never moved back to their home community since coming to Edmonton. This pattern is similar to that of first generation *UAPS* participants in other cities.

Furthermore, most Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton do not intend to return to their communities of origin to live permanently in the future, although some (first and second generation) either plan to return or remain undecided.

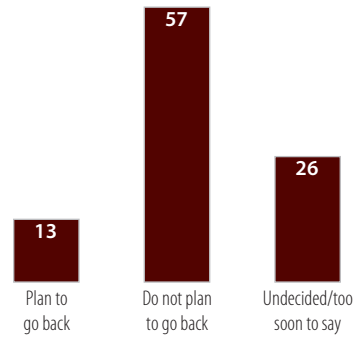
4 Urban Aboriginal Task Force, 2007, p.65.

When asked if they plan to go back and live in their communities of origin permanently one day (whether it be another community, town, city or reserve),<sup>5</sup> one in ten (13%) say they plan to return. Almost six in ten (57%) say they do *not* plan to return, and one-quarter (26%) say they are undecided or that it is too soon to say; four percent are unable or unwilling to offer information about their future plans.

Those planning to return are a small minority among both first and second generation residents. Notably, *UAPS* participants in Edmonton are among the least likely to say they plan to return permanently to their communities of origin, and this is the case for both first and second generation residents.

### Plans to go back to live in community of origin\*

Do you plan to go back to live in your home community/place where your parents/grandparents are from permanently one day, or not?



\* Subsample: Those who were not born or raised in Edmonton; those who have lived in their city of residence all their life and whose parents/grandparents are from another place.

5 The question "Do you plan to go back to live in your home community (either your own or that of your parents/grandparents) permanently one day?" was not asked of third generation *UAPS* participants (4% of *UAPS* participants in Edmonton).

## 2.0 Identity and Culture

One of the reasons cited in existing research for the increased tendency of people to identify as Aboriginal (a major factor in the substantial increases in urban Aboriginal populations between 1981 and 2006<sup>6</sup>) is that contemporary urban Aboriginal peoples, in particular, are more positive about their Aboriginal identity than at any time in the recent past.<sup>7</sup>

Key aspects of Aboriginal identity considered in this chapter include knowledge of family history, pride in Aboriginal and Canadian identities, community belonging, and the continuing intergenerational effects of “colonial projects” upon the identities of Aboriginal peoples in Canadian cities, namely Indian residential schools, mission and day schools, and other policies of assimilation. This chapter also examines other critical aspects of identity, such as participation in urban Aboriginal cultures.

Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton have a less evident connection to their Aboriginal identity than other *UAPS* participants, evidenced in their lower familiarity with their ancestry and lower participation in cultural activities in the city. Yet, despite limits to these outward expressions of identity, Aboriginal Edmontonians are among the most confident that they can protect against the loss of their unique cultural identity.

### Key findings

- **There is strong Indigenous pride among Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton, and pride in one’s Aboriginal roots does not preclude pride in being a Canadian.** Most Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are proud of both their Aboriginal identities and of being Canadian. In fact, they are among the most likely of all *UAPS* participants to express strong pride in their Canadian identity.
- **Aboriginal Edmontonians are less familiar with their ancestry than Aboriginal peoples in most other *UAPS* cities.** Half say they know their family tree well, although awareness is greater among Métis than among First Nations peoples. Moreover, they are more likely than other *UAPS* participants (along with those in Saskatoon and Vancouver) to believe lack of opportunity, not lack of interest, is the main reason why they do not know their family tree very well.
- **Most Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton say they have been affected by Indian residential schools, either personally or through a family member.** In fact, study participants in Edmonton, together with those living in Vancouver, Toronto and Saskatoon, are among the most likely to have a family member who was a student at an Indian residential school. Most Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton with first- or second-hand Indian residential schools experience say it has had at least some impact in shaping their life and who they are today.
- **There is widespread awareness of Aboriginal cultural activities in Edmonton, but reported participation is lower than in other *UAPS* cities.** Six in ten Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton who are aware of cultural activities in their city participate at least occasionally, which is lower than average. Moreover, they have a more modest sense of cultural vitality, being among the least convinced that local Aboriginal culture has become stronger in the past five years.

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6 Statistics Canada

7 Craig Proulx, “Aboriginal Identification in North America Cities,” *the Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 2006:26:2, p.405.

- **At the same time, there is an evident confidence in their ability to retain their cultural identity in the city.** Two-thirds of Aboriginal people are unconcerned about losing their cultural identity, a level of confidence that is second only to Aboriginal peoples in Winnipeg.
- **Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton feel a sense of belonging to communities ranging from mostly Aboriginal to mostly non-Aboriginal to somewhere in between.** A plurality of four in ten Aboriginal people describe their community as *equally* Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community and another four in ten are divided as to whether their community is mostly Aboriginal or mostly non-Aboriginal; virtually no one sees their community as *exclusively* Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. Moreover, many *UAPS* participants in Edmonton report strong social connections to their own identity group in the city, to members of other Aboriginal groups, and to the non-Aboriginal population.

## 2.1 Pride in Aboriginal and Canadian identity

***There is strong Indigenous pride among both Métis and First Nations peoples in Edmonton. Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are also more likely than average to take pride in being “Canadian.”***

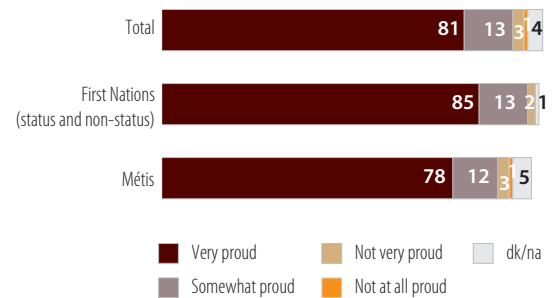
An important part of the *UAPS* was to understand how proud urban Aboriginal peoples are of their identity and, specifically, to what extent their pride is tied to three distinct aspects of identity: being *First Nations/Métis/Inuk, Aboriginal* and *Canadian*.

The results show that pride in each of these aspects of their identity is generally high among Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton, and is largely shared by First Nations peoples and Métis.

**PRIDE IN BEING *FIRST NATIONS/MÉTIS/INUK.*** Of the three aspects of identity explored in the survey, Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are most proud to be *First Nations, Métis* or *Inuk*. Eight in ten (81%) say they are very proud of their specific Aboriginal identity (i.e., *First Nations, Métis* or *Inuk*). Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton express a similar degree of pride in their specific identities as Aboriginal residents of the other *UAPS* cities.

### Pride in being *First Nations/Métis/Inuk*

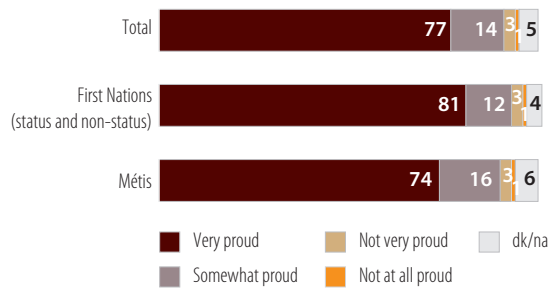
Would you say you are very, somewhat, not very, or not at all proud to be *First Nations/Métis/Inuk*?



Note: Total data include Inuit (n=14)

## Pride in being *Aboriginal*

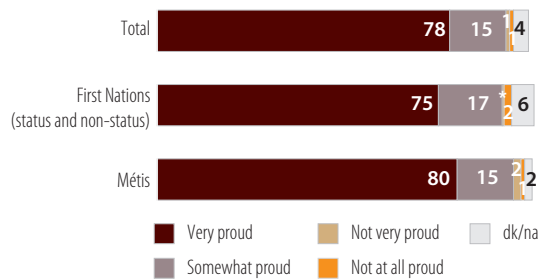
Would you say you are very, somewhat, not very, or not at all proud to be *Aboriginal*?



Note: Total data include Inuit (n=14)

## Pride in being *Canadian*

Would you say you are very, somewhat, not very, or not at all proud to be *Canadian*?



Note: Total data include Inuit (n=14)

\* Less than one percent

**PRIDE IN BEING ABORIGINAL.** Most Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are also very proud (77%) to be *Aboriginal*. Their high level of pride in being Aboriginal is largely consistent with that of urban Aboriginal peoples in the other *UAPS* cities.

**PRIDE IN BEING CANADIAN.** Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are equally proud of their *Canadian* identity as they are of their *Aboriginal* identity: eight in ten (78%) say they are very proud to be Canadian. Notably, in Edmonton, strong pride in being *Canadian* is higher than the average of the *UAPS* cities.

What else shapes urban Aboriginal peoples' pride in their *First Nations/Métis/Inuk*, *Aboriginal* and *Canadian* identities? The sample size for Edmonton alone (250 survey participants) is too small to allow for a detailed analysis by socio-demographic factors. However, the national *UAPS* survey data (across all 11 cities) indicate that pride in these aspects of identity vary by age, sense of community and knowledge of their family tree. For instance, majorities in all socio-demographic groups are very proud of their *First Nations/Métis/Inuk* identity, but strong pride is most evident among older urban Aboriginal peoples (aged 45 years or older), those who feel they belong to a mostly or exclusively Aboriginal community, and those who know their family tree very well.



## 2.2 Knowledge of Aboriginal ancestry

**Half of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton know their Aboriginal ancestry at least fairly well. First Nations peoples are less familiar with their family tree, particularly in comparison to their counterparts in other UAPS cities.**

The legacy of policies of assimilation in Canada and their outcomes have contributed to multiple, ongoing challenges experienced by Aboriginal peoples, not least of which is the disconnection from their heritage and culture that many have experienced, and the resulting struggle to reclaim and reconstruct their Aboriginal identity.

The *UAPS* results indicate that Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are generally familiar with their family trees (i.e., who their Aboriginal ancestors are). Half know their family tree very (27%) or fairly (25%) well, while the other half say they know their family tree not very (30%) or not at all (17%) well.

However, the degree of familiarity with their ancestry is greater for Métis than for First Nations peoples. Métis (35%) are twice as likely as First Nations peoples (16%) to be very familiar with their family tree. As well, First Nations peoples in Edmonton are less familiar than their counterparts in any other *UAPS* city. In contrast, Métis in Edmonton are as likely as Métis across all the *UAPS* cities to feel informed about their ancestry.

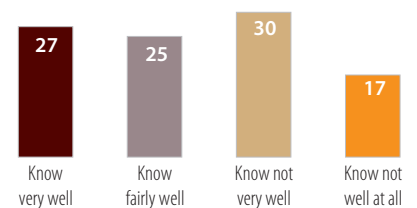
By far, parents are key sources of this information. When asked from where or from whom they have learned what they know about their Aboriginal ancestry (asked unprompted, without offering response choices), six in ten (62%) Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton identify their parents as their main source of learning. Smaller groups of Aboriginal peoples say they have learned what they know about their family tree from other family members such as grandparents (26%), immediate family relatives such as aunts, uncles (23%), extended family (18%) and/or siblings (11%).

A range of non-family sources is also mentioned, such as Elders, home communities and community members, archives and historical records, genealogy courses, and the Internet or social networking sites, but none by more than seven percent of the population.

These sources of learning about one's family tree are generally similar to those reported by *UAPS* participants in other cities. They are also largely similar for both First Nations peoples and Métis, although Métis are somewhat less likely to have learned this information from their parents, and more likely to have done their own research, or consulted archives and historical records.

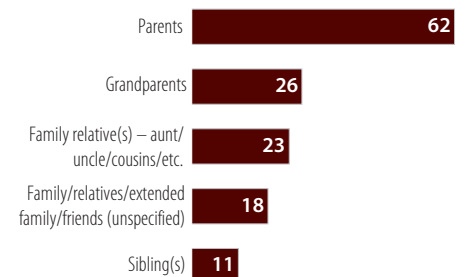
### Extent of knowledge of family tree

How well do you know your family tree, that is, who your Aboriginal ancestors are?



### Sources of learning about family tree/ Aboriginal ancestry

From where or from whom have you learned what you do know about your family tree?



**The importance to Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton of knowing one’s family tree:**

*It’s had a profound effect. Just realizing where and who I came from. It’s provided me with identity, it’s provided me with roots. Ancestral roots. And my connection to this land.*

*Huge impact. Once I understood where I really come from, it all started to make sense.*

*I’m proud of my heritage, my history, and I will tell it to everyone I meet and anyone who will listen. We pass our stories on through our voices.*

*I like the feeling of knowing my roots and being a part of something larger.*

*Means a lot that my family has recorded so much information relating to our ancestors. Having a well-prepared family tree has helped me get Métis status.*

*It has meant a lot. I take a lot of pride in where I come from, learning about my ancestors and what impact they had on people around them.*

*It really means that you have a place, that I have a place for me. It’s something I carry around, that I know who I am and I know who I come from.*

*Where my hard work ethic comes from. Our grandparents were hard workers.*

**Impact of knowing one’s family tree**

***A stronger sense of self and a sense of family heritage, survival and tradition are the top ways knowledge of their family tree has made a difference for Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton.***

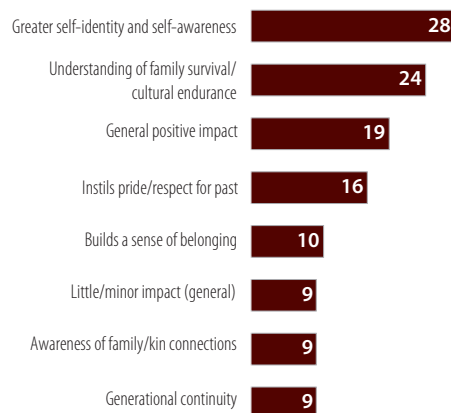
Beyond how well they know and learn about their family tree, what does this knowledge mean to urban Aboriginal peoples’ sense of themselves?

Both First Nations peoples and Métis in Edmonton believe that knowledge of their family tree has a significant personal impact on their lives and how they see themselves, particularly a greater sense of self-awareness and cultural continuity. *UAPS* participants cite five main ways in which knowing their family tree has contributed to their lives:

- **Greater self-identity and self-awareness.** Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton most frequently mention that they have derived a greater sense of self-identity and self-awareness (28%) from knowing about their Aboriginal ancestry.
- **Understanding of family survival and cultural endurance.** One-quarter (24%) of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton also say that, through knowing their family tree, they have learned stories of family survival, endurance and long-held cultural traditions that have deeply affected them.
- **A positive impact.** Two in ten (19%) Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton emphasize the positive impact that knowledge of their Aboriginal ancestry has had on their lives. Clearly, this has great personal meaning for them.
- **Instils pride.** Just under two in ten (16%) Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton indicate that knowing their family tree makes them proud of their Aboriginal “roots” and instils a greater respect for their families’ past.
- **Builds a sense of belonging.** One in ten (10%) *UAPS* participants in Edmonton highlight their greater sense of belonging to a community.

**Impact of family tree**

What has it meant for you personally, or what impact has is made on your life, to learn what you do know about your family tree?



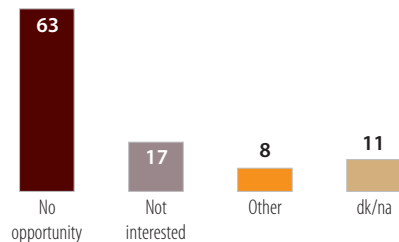
Smaller proportions of *UAPS* participants (9% or fewer, each) mention other ways in which knowing their family tree has had a meaningful impact on their lives, including awareness of family connections, generational continuity, strength to move on from the past, and a better understanding of Aboriginal history. A total of two in ten say knowing their family tree has little (9%) or no impact (12%) on their lives, but none say that knowing their family tree has had a negative impact on their lives.

Why do some Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton know their family tree and others do not? There are many reasons why urban Aboriginal peoples may or may not know their family tree that are not possible to capture in this study. The *UAPS* survey simply asked those who do not feel they know their family tree very well to identify if this was due to lack of interest or opportunity. Lack of opportunity, not lack of interest, is the main reason why Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton say they do not know their family tree very well. Moreover, they are among the most likely of all *UAPS* participants (after residents of Saskatoon and Vancouver) to believe lack of opportunity has been a barrier.

Just over six in ten (63%) Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton say they have had no opportunity to learn more about their family tree. In contrast, fewer than one in two Aboriginal peoples say they are either not interested (17%), or cite other reasons (a total of 8%) why they do not know their family tree very well (such as information lost when relatives or Elders pass away, family secrecy and lack of connection to Aboriginal culture). One in ten (11%) Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are unable or unwilling to say why they have not learned more about their family tree.

### Reason for lack of knowledge of family tree\*

Is the main reason you have not learned more about your family tree because you have not had the opportunity, or because you are not particularly interested?



\* Subsample: Those who do not feel they know their family tree "very well."

### The importance to Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton of knowing one's family tree (continued):

*Meant [a] great deal to know who my family is. I have a huge family, so it helps to know who you are related to and how.*

*It's guided me to try to achieve an occupation that appeases my soul. I came here to help Aboriginal people.*

*Personal security, identification with those around me, ability to teach my children about family history.*

*Will be important later on in life.*

*I know who I am and where I came from, which gives me the strength to know where I'm going.*

## 2.3 Indian residential schools

### Experience with residential schools

**Seven in ten Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton say they have been affected by Indian residential schools, either personally or through a family member. Both personal and second-hand experience is most common among First Nations peoples.**

On June 11, 2008 the Government of Canada issued a formal apology to the former Aboriginal students of residential schools, affirming the disruptive impact of historical policies and legislation. The apology formally recognized that “this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in [this] country.”<sup>8</sup>

The Indian residential school system predates Confederation and grew out of the missionary experience in Canada’s early history. Indian residential schools existed, at one time or another, in all Canadian provinces and territories except Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

The residential school system left in its wake a tragic legacy. It is estimated that as many as 150,000 Aboriginal children attended these institutions. Many former students have reported undergoing hardship, forcible confinement, and physical and sexual abuse while attending the schools. In addition, these students were also not allowed to speak their language or practice their culture. While most residential schools were closed by the mid-1970s, the last school did not close until 1996.<sup>9</sup>

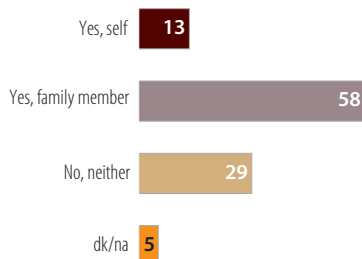
First Nations, Métis and Inuit children had varied residential school experiences, both in intensity and duration. Regardless, the residential school had a direct impact on survivors and has spilled over to their descendants, creating challenges pertaining to identity, culture and parenting.<sup>10</sup>

A majority of *UAPS* participants in Edmonton say they have been affected by Indian residential schools, either personally or through a family member. Seven in ten (71%) say either they themselves (13%) or a family member (58%) were a student at a federal residential school or a provincial day school.

In Edmonton, First Nations peoples are more likely than Métis to say that they themselves (21% versus 7%) or a family member (71% versus 48%) were students at these schools. Across cities, Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton, together with those living in Vancouver (67%), Toronto (62%) and Saskatoon (62%), are among the most likely to have a family member who was a student at an Indian residential school.

#### Indian residential schools

Were you, or any member of your family, ever a student at a federal residential school or a provincial day school?



8 Canada, Office of the Prime Minister, “Prime Minister Harper offers full apology on behalf of Canadians for the Indian Residential Schools system,” *Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada* [website], [www.pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=2149](http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=2149) (accessed December 2009).

9 Environics Research Group, report prepared for the Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *2008 National Benchmark Survey*, May 2008., p.9.

10 Although status Indians formed the majority of attendees at any given time, many Métis children were accepted, often to boost school enrolment figures. Meanwhile, the number of Inuit children grew quickly in the 1950s when a network of schools was built across the North. Roughly 10% of the Aboriginal population in Canada self-identify as Survivors of the residential school system. *Aboriginal People, Resilience and the Residential School Legacy*, Aboriginal Healing Foundation Series, 2003.

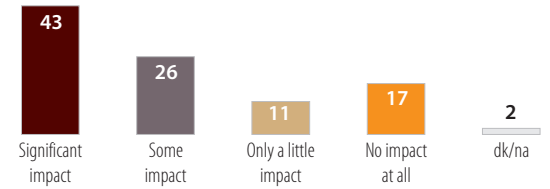
## Impact of residential schools

***Most Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton with first- or second-hand experience of Indian residential schools say this has had at least some impact in shaping their life and who they are today.***

The Indian residential schools experience continues to shape the lives of urban Aboriginal peoples today. Among those Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton who say they or a family member were a student in one of these schools,<sup>11</sup> seven in ten say this experience, or the experience of their family member, has had either a significant impact (43%) or some impact (26%) in shaping their life and who they are today. This represents close to half (46%) of all *UAPS* participants in Edmonton, and is on par with the sense of impact expressed by study participants in the other *UAPS* cities.

### Impact of Indian residential schools\*

To what extent has [this experience/or the experience of your family member] shaped your life and who you are today?



\* Subsample: Those who were, or whose family member was, a student at a federal residential school or a provincial day school.

<sup>11</sup> The sample size of Métis in Edmonton who say they or a family member attended an Indian residential school (n=57) is too small to look at the findings of this question separately for this group.

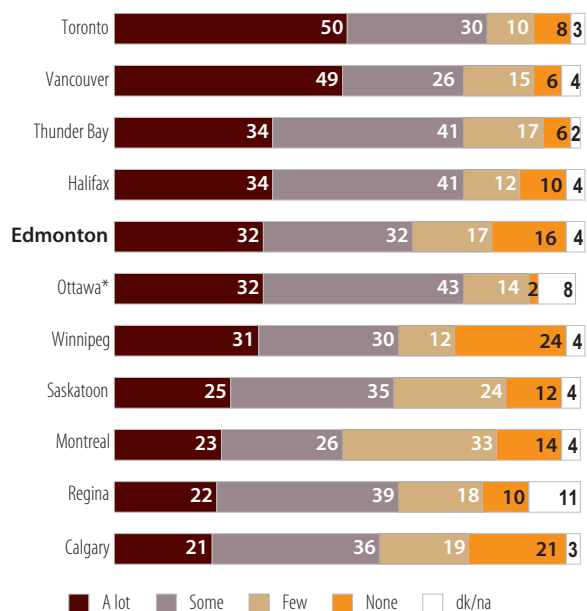
## 2.4 Aboriginal cultural activity in the city

### Perceived availability of Aboriginal activities

*Two-thirds of Aboriginal peoples say that Aboriginal cultural activities are available in Edmonton, similar to other Prairie cities, but less than in Toronto and Vancouver.*

#### Aboriginal cultural activities available in your community, by city

Are there any, a lot, some, a few or no Aboriginal cultural activities available in your community?



\* Inuit only

Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to those who said they don't know, or chose not to answer the question

To what degree are Aboriginal cultural activities seen to be available to Aboriginal peoples living in Edmonton?

Aboriginal cultural activities are perceived to be widely available in Edmonton, among both First Nations peoples and Métis. Two-thirds of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton say there are either a lot (32%) or some (32%) Aboriginal cultural activities available in the city; one-third say there are only a few (17%) or no (16%) such activities available to them. Of all the *UAPS* participants, Aboriginal peoples living in Toronto (50%) and Vancouver (49%) are, by far, the most likely to believe there are a lot of Aboriginal cultural activities where they live.

## Frequency of participation in cultural activities

**Six in ten Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton aware of cultural activities in their city participate at least occasionally, a rate of participation that is lower than the average for urban Aboriginal peoples generally.**

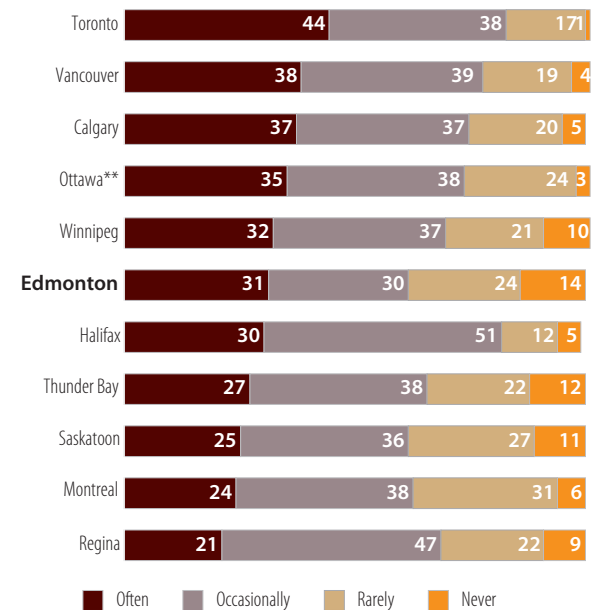
While UAPS data do not permit investigation of the specific types of Aboriginal cultural activities that urban Aboriginal peoples participate in, the survey did ask participants *how often* they participate in these activities.

Among those Aboriginal peoples who say Aboriginal cultural activities are available in Edmonton, six in ten say they often (31%) or occasionally (30%) participate in these activities; four in ten indicate they rarely (24%) or never (14%) do. First Nations peoples and Métis in Edmonton who are aware of such activities participate in them with similar frequency.

Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton who are aware of any Aboriginal cultural activities in the city are less likely than average to participate in them at least occasionally, and particularly by comparison to Toronto, Halifax, Vancouver and Calgary.

## Frequency of participation in cultural activities,\* by city

How often do you personally participate in these Aboriginal cultural activities?



\* Subsample: Those who have Aboriginal cultural activities available in their community.  
 \*\* Inuit only

## Strength of Aboriginal culture

**Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are less likely than those in other UAPS cities to say their city's Aboriginal culture is getting stronger.**

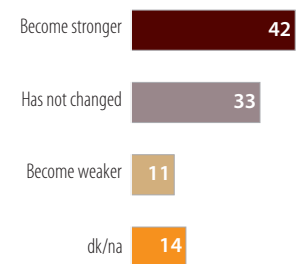
Views are divided about how Aboriginal culture in Edmonton has changed over the past five years.

Overall, four in ten (42%) Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton think that Aboriginal culture in the city has become stronger in the past five years, while just one in ten (11%) say it has become weaker. Another third (33%) say it has not changed and 14 percent offer no opinion on the direction of Aboriginal culture in Edmonton. The views are shared by First Nations peoples and Métis in Edmonton.

Of all UAPS participants, Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are among the least convinced that local Aboriginal culture has become stronger in the past five years (together with residents of Calgary), and among those more likely to say there has been no change.

## Strength of Aboriginal culture

In the last five years, do you think that Aboriginal culture in your community has become stronger, become weaker or has not changed?



## 2.5 Maintaining Aboriginal cultural identity

### Most valued aspects of Aboriginal culture

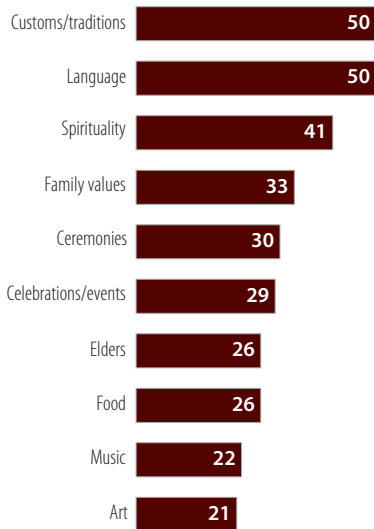
**Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton identify language, and customs and traditions as the most important aspects of Aboriginal culture to be passed on to future generations.**

Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton believe there are numerous aspects of Aboriginal culture that should be passed on to future generations, but consider Aboriginal traditions and languages the most important.

#### Most important aspects of Aboriginal culture to pass to next generation

In your opinion, what aspects of Aboriginal culture are most important to be passed on to your children or grandchildren, or to the next generation?

##### Top mentions



When Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton were asked what aspects of Aboriginal cultures are most important to be passed on to their children or grandchildren, or to the next generation (unprompted, without response options offered), they are most likely to identify Aboriginal customs and traditions (50%), and language (50%). Spirituality (41%) is the next most commonly mentioned aspect that should be imparted to future generations, followed by family values (33%), Aboriginal ceremonies (30%), Aboriginal celebrations and events (29%), food (26%), Elders (26%), music (22%) and art (21%). Smaller groups mention Aboriginal ethics (16%), leadership (12%), connection to the land (11%) and history (11%).

Small proportions of UAPS participants in Edmonton (7% or fewer each) mention other aspects that are important to be passed on, such as Aboriginal medicines and healing practices, stories, and teachings, beliefs or values.

First Nations peoples and Métis in Edmonton hold mostly similar views about what should be passed on to future generations, with a few exceptions. Most notably, First Nations peoples are much more likely than Métis to say Aboriginal languages are an important aspect (67% versus 38%), a finding that reflects the fact that First Nations peoples are more likely than Métis to speak an Aboriginal language.<sup>12</sup> First Nations peoples are also more likely than Métis to place importance on Aboriginal ceremonies (38% versus 25%) and art (28% versus 16%).

12 Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations, 2006 Census, Statistics Canada.



## Concern over losing cultural identity

**Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are not especially concerned about losing their cultural identity, and their confidence is second only to Aboriginal peoples in Winnipeg.**

As the previous results demonstrate, urban Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton perceive less cultural growth in their city and are less involved in the activities that do exist, than Aboriginal residents of other *UAPS* cities. At the same time, they are among the most confident in their ability to protect against a loss of cultural identity, second only to Aboriginal peoples in Winnipeg.

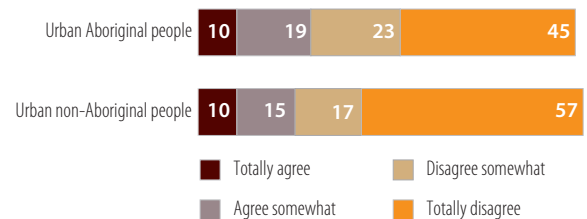
When posed with the statement “I am concerned about losing my cultural identity,” urban Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are more than twice as likely to disagree as to agree. Two-thirds (68%) disagree at least somewhat that this is a possibility, while three in ten (29%) agree at least somewhat (2% do not give an opinion). Moreover, strong confidence (45% totally disagree) outweighs strong concern about this issue (10% totally agree). Confidence in the ability to protect their cultural identity is evident among both First Nations peoples and Métis in Edmonton.

**ABORIGINAL VERSUS NON-ABORIGINAL PERCEPTIONS.** As part of the *UAPS*, a separate survey was conducted with non-Aboriginal residents of the same 10 cities (excluding Ottawa). Some questions were asked in both the main and the non-Aboriginal surveys, to allow for direct comparisons between the two groups.

Majorities of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are generally unconcerned about losing their cultural identity, although strong confidence is higher among non-Aboriginal residents (57% totally disagree with the statement “I am concerned about losing my cultural identity” vs. 45% of Aboriginal residents). Among non-Aboriginal Canadians, only Montrealers express a significant degree of concern about the loss of cultural identity.

### Concern over losing cultural identity

Do you totally agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat or totally disagree with the following statement: “I am concerned about losing my cultural identity.”



## 2.6 Community and connections

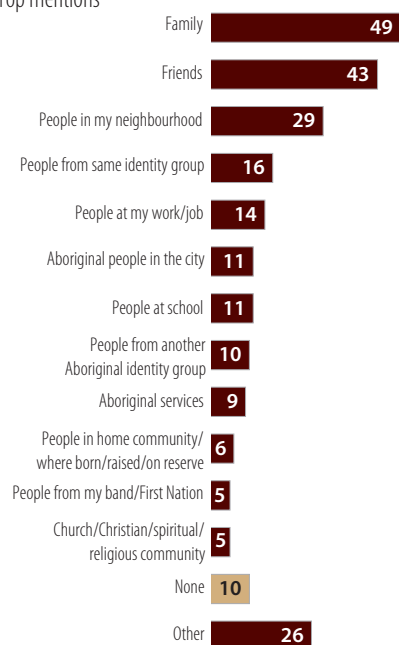
**Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton define their community in a variety of ways, but family and friends are top-of-mind, followed by people in their neighbourhood.**

Communities play a pivotal role in shaping individual identities. Parents, family, friends, neighbours, members of one's own Aboriginal group, other Aboriginal persons and non-Aboriginal persons transmit social values and understandings that influence Aboriginal identity in cities.

In order to better understand what community ties are important, and determine what community means in the lives and identities of Aboriginal peoples living in Canadian cities, the *UAPS* survey explored how participants define their community, along with their sense of belonging and connection to various groups and entities.

### Who or what do you consider to be a part of your community?

Top mentions



Who or what do urban Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton consider to be a part of their community? *UAPS* data show that attachment to family and friends is top-of-mind for urban First Nations, Métis and Inuk residents in Edmonton, which is consistent with those living in other *UAPS* cities.

When asked (unprompted, without response options offered), Aboriginal people in Edmonton most frequently identify family (49%) and/or friends (43%) as part of their community. Others mention the people in their neighbourhoods (29%), people from the same identity group (16%), people they work with (14%), Aboriginal people in general in the city (11%), people from school (11%) and people from other identity groups (10%) as part of their community.

Family and friends are top-of-mind for both First Nations and Métis, although they are more likely to be part of the definition of community for First Nations peoples, while Métis are more likely to mention neighbours as part of their community.

Nine percent or fewer, each, consider a variety of other people and organizations a part of their communities, including Aboriginal services (friendship centres, healing centres, counselling centres, etc.), people in their home community (i.e., where they were born and raised), people from their band/First Nation, and/or people from their faith group to be a part of their community.

Although the proportion is small, Edmonton Aboriginal participants are more likely than urban Aboriginal participants in general to say they have no community (10% versus 3%).

## Belonging to Aboriginal versus non-Aboriginal communities

**Urban Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton feel a sense of belonging to communities ranging from mostly Aboriginal to mostly non-Aboriginal to somewhere in between.**

To what extent do Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton feel they belong to an Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal community?

In fact, there is no one type of community to which Aboriginal peoples feel they belong. The largest proportion (39%) of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton feel they belong to a community that is equally Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Smaller proportions say they belong to a mostly non-Aboriginal community (23%) or a mostly Aboriginal community (21%). Very few describe their community as exclusively non-Aboriginal (4%) or exclusively Aboriginal (3%).

The views of Edmonton Aboriginal participants are similar to those of urban Aboriginal participants in general. Within Edmonton, First Nations peoples and Métis hold similar views on the extent to which their community is Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal.

### Belonging to Aboriginal versus non-Aboriginal community

Do you feel that the community you belong to is...?



## Connection to Aboriginal peoples in the city

**Urban Aboriginal peoples generally feel connected to their own Aboriginal group in Edmonton. However, compared to other UAPS cities, First Nations peoples are less likely to feel a close connection to other First Nations and to Métis and Inuit.**

Small majorities of First Nations peoples and Métis feel a close connection to members of their own Aboriginal group in Edmonton. However, Métis feel a closer connection to Aboriginal groups *other* than their own than do First Nations peoples.

### CONNECTION TO OWN ABORIGINAL GROUP. How close a connection do

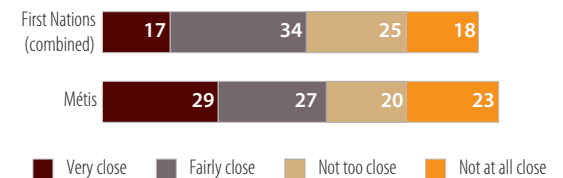
Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton have to members of their own Aboriginal group? Overall, both First Nations peoples and Métis are more likely than not to feel a close connection to other members of their Aboriginal group. More than half (56%) of Métis feel either a very or fairly close connection to other Métis in Edmonton, similar to the sense of connection felt by Métis in other UAPS cities. Half (51%) of First Nations peoples feel a close connection to other members of their First Nations group, although they are among the least likely of all UAPS participants to feel such a connection.

First Nations peoples are slightly less likely to feel a close connection to members of *other* First Nations in Edmonton (41% very or fairly close) than to members of their own First Nation (51%). In fact, First Nations peoples in Edmonton are the least likely among all UAPS participants to feel a close connection to members of *other* First Nations (the most likely are residents of the largest urban centres: Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver).

**CONNECTION TO OTHER ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN THE CITY.** How strong a connection do First Nations peoples and Métis feel to members of *other* Aboriginal groups in Edmonton? Métis (50%) tend to feel more connected to other Aboriginal peoples in the city (i.e., First Nations and Inuit) than is the case for First Nations peoples (35%). First Nations peoples in Edmonton are less likely than those in other UAPS cities to feel a sense of connection to other Aboriginal peoples (i.e., Métis and Inuit).

### Connection to Aboriginal group, by identity group

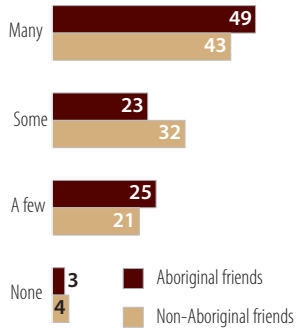
How close a connection do you feel [to members of your own Aboriginal group]?



Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% due to those who said they don't know, or chose not to answer this question.

## Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal friends

Do you have many, some, a few, or no close friends in Edmonton who are Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal?



## Friendships in the city

### ***Three-quarters of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton report having close non-Aboriginal friends.***

Beyond their sense of connection to members of their own or other Aboriginal groups, the *UAPS* survey asked First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit living in Edmonton about how many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal friends they have.

**FRIENDSHIPS WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLE.** Overall, seven in ten Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton say they have many (49%) or some (23%) close friends in the city who are Aboriginal, which is similar to urban Aboriginal peoples in other cities. In Edmonton, First Nations peoples are more likely than Métis to say they have close Aboriginal friends.

**FRIENDSHIPS WITH NON-ABORIGINAL PEOPLE.** Just as *UAPS* participants in Edmonton have close Aboriginal friends in the city, equal proportions have some or many close non-Aboriginal friends where they live. Three-quarters say they have many (43%) or some (32%) close friends who are non-Aboriginal, which is consistent with the national average of all 11 *UAPS* cities. In Edmonton, First Nations peoples and Métis are equally likely to have close non-Aboriginal friends.

## 3.0 Experiences with Non-Aboriginal People

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996 report devoted a chapter, *Urban Perspectives*, to the experiences of Aboriginal peoples living in urban centres. The chapter begins with cultural identity and then proceeds to a section on racism. The segue is intentional, as the consequences of racism and discrimination on identity can be profound – generations of Aboriginal people have struggled to assert their identity amidst a pervasive sense that they are perceived negatively by the non-Aboriginal population-at-large.

Most *UAPS* participants (across all cities) feel discrimination of Aboriginal people is a pervasive problem, and that stereotypical attitudes are frequently expressed through negative behaviours, such as insults and unfair treatment, that the majority have personally experienced. In Edmonton, the belief that they are viewed negatively by non-Aboriginal peoples is more widespread than in any other *UAPS* city, and the sense is that these negative attitudes have changed little over the past few years.

This chapter also explores encounters and experiences with non-Aboriginal services in the city such as schools, banks, the health care system, and government programs such as social assistance programs, and employment and training programs.

### Key findings

- **Non-Aboriginal people are widely believed to have negative impressions of Aboriginal people, a perception that is more pronounced in Edmonton than in any of the 11 cities included in the study.** Although some believe that these attitudes may be changing for the better, the balance of opinion is that they remain unchanged. Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton feel that non-Aboriginal people hold a wide range of negative stereotypes about Aboriginal peoples, the most common of which is that all Aboriginal peoples suffer from alcoholism and drug abuse.
- **Almost all urban Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton agree that others behave in an unfair or negative way towards Aboriginal people.** A majority say they have personally been teased or insulted because of their Aboriginal background, on par with the experiences of Aboriginal peoples in other *UAPS* cities. Most say they have responded to their experiences with non-Aboriginal people by becoming stronger and more motivated to succeed, more accepting and tolerant, or more aware of their identity as an Aboriginal person.
- **Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton report a substantial amount of contact with non-Aboriginal services, particularly banks and the health care system.** They are generally positive about their experiences, with the exception of the child welfare system, where (as in other cities) negative experiences outweigh positive ones.

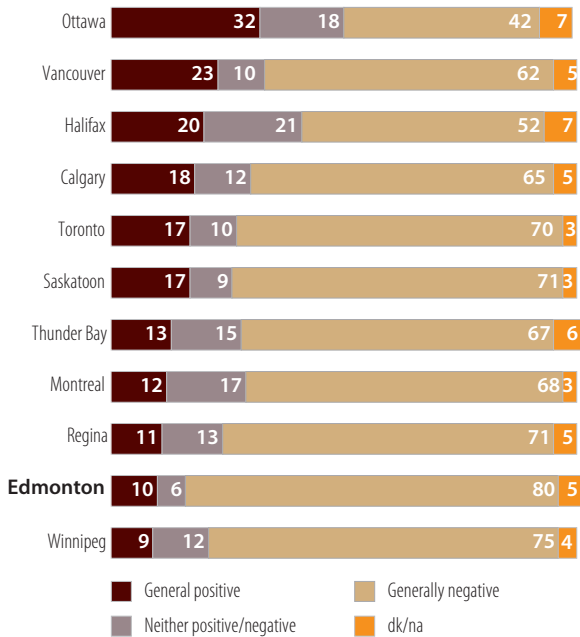
### 3.1 How Aboriginal peoples feel they are perceived by non-Aboriginal people

*More so than in any other UAPS city, Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton believe that they are seen in a negative light by non-Aboriginal people.*

The large majority of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton believe that non-Aboriginal people view them negatively.

#### Perceptions of non-Aboriginal people's impressions of Aboriginal people

Do you think non-Aboriginal people's impression of Aboriginal people is generally positive or negative?



Eight in ten (80%) UAPS participants in Edmonton believe non-Aboriginal people's impression of Aboriginal people is generally negative; this proportion is the highest of any of the cities included in the UAPS. Just one in ten (10%) Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton think non-Aboriginal people's impressions are generally positive, while six percent think they are neither positive nor negative. First Nations peoples and Métis are equally likely to believe non-Aboriginal residents of the city take a negative view of Aboriginal peoples.

## Perceptions of non-Aboriginal stereotypes of Aboriginal people

**Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton believe that non-Aboriginal people hold a wide range of negative and distorting stereotypes of Aboriginal people, with addiction problems dominating the list.**

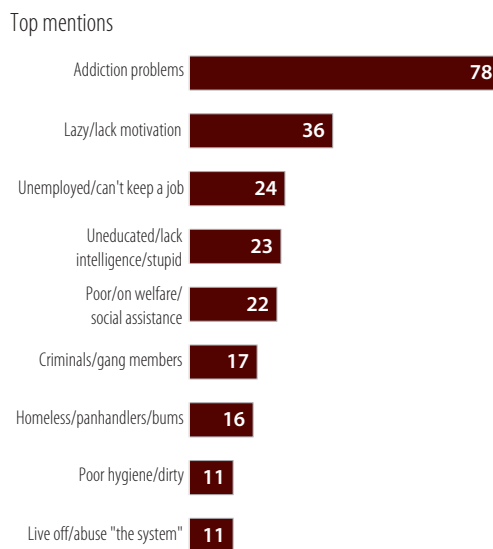
Overwhelmingly, Inuit, Métis and First Nations peoples in Edmonton believe non-Aboriginal people hold a wide range of stereotypes of Aboriginal people, and that these most commonly relate to addiction problems (alcohol and drug abuse). Perceptions among Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton about these stereotypes are similar to those expressed by urban Aboriginal peoples in general. Some of the stereotypes they believe non-Aboriginal people hold are presented in participants' own words in the sidebar on the following page.

Specifically, when asked (unprompted, without response options offered), what they believe are the most common stereotypes that non-Aboriginal people hold about Aboriginal people, five main stereotypes emerged:

- Addiction problems.** This is, by far, the stereotype most frequently mentioned by UAPS participants in Edmonton: eight in ten (78%) believe non-Aboriginal people associate them with drug and alcohol abuse. This view is equally held by First Nations peoples and Métis in Edmonton.
- Lazy and lack motivation.** About a third of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton (36%) believe non-Aboriginal people assume they are lazy and unwilling to work hard to get what they want and need.
- Unemployed.** One-quarter (24%) of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton believe a common stereotype of Aboriginal people is that they are perennially unemployed and unable to keep a job, and as a result do not contribute to society.
- Lack intelligence and education.** One-quarter (23%) think non-Aboriginal people see Aboriginal people as lacking in intelligence and education.
- Poor and on welfare.** Two in ten (22%) Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton believe non-Aboriginal people think Aboriginal people are always poor and on welfare.

### Common stereotypes of Aboriginal people

What do you believe are the most common stereotypes that non-Aboriginal people hold about Aboriginal people, if any?



Smaller proportions of UAPS participants in Edmonton (17% or fewer each) believe non-Aboriginal people hold several other common stereotypes of Aboriginal people, including that Aboriginal people engage in criminal activity, are homeless or panhandlers, take advantage of government assistance, neglect or abuse their children, have poor hygiene, and get a "free ride" for everything while not paying taxes.

Common stereotypes of Aboriginal people, in the words of urban Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton:

*Drunks, addicts, unemployed, live off welfare.*

*That Indians are all drunk... that everything is paid for Indians... that everything is handed down on a silver platter.*

*Aboriginal people are lazy and functionally useless. Not capable of critical thinking.*

*I notice the non-verbal cues the most, the ones that imply that all Aboriginal people are thieves, criminals or dangerous. Like people locking doors as I walk by, putting their wallets away, or following me in stores.*

*They assume we're co-dependent or that we expect hand-outs like free housing, free education, that we are lazy and have addictions.*

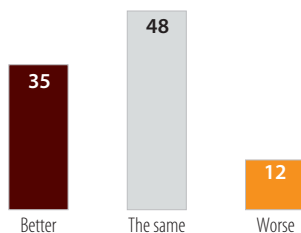
*Either drunk/lazy or holding the peace pipe and wearing the headdress. There's no in-between.*

## Do Aboriginal peoples believe non-Aboriginal impressions are changing?

**The balance of opinion is that there has been little change in non-Aboriginal people's impressions of Aboriginal people over the past few years, although one-third are optimistic that attitudes are improving.**

### Change in impressions

Over the past few years, do you think that non-Aboriginal people's impression of Aboriginal people has gotten better, or worse or stayed the same?



In Edmonton, the view that perceptions of Aboriginal people have not changed in recent years outweighs the belief that they are improving, while only a small minority think perceptions have deteriorated.

When asked about the change in non-Aboriginal people's impression of Aboriginal people over the past few years, half (48%) of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton think impressions have stayed the same. One-third (35%) think impressions have become better. Only 12 percent believe non-Aboriginal people's impression of Aboriginal people has gotten worse over the past few years.

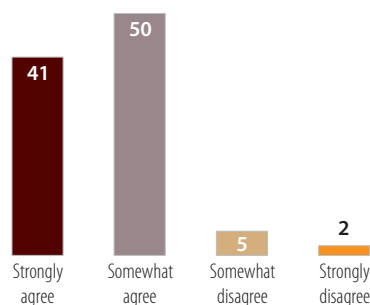
Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are more likely than average to perceive no change in non-Aboriginal people's impressions; by comparison, optimism that attitudes are improving is strongest in Vancouver (53%) and Toronto (48%). In Edmonton, Métis are more hopeful that perceptions are changing for the better than are First Nations peoples.

## 3.2 Experiences of discrimination

### Group and personal experiences

#### Negative behaviour

"I think others behave in an unfair/negative way toward Aboriginal people."



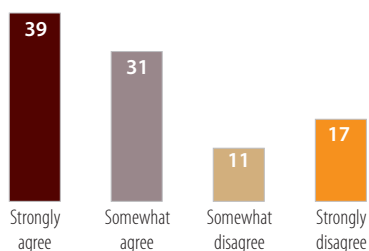
**Almost all Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton agree that others behave in an unfair or negative way toward Aboriginal people. A majority say they have been teased or insulted because of their Aboriginal background.**

Not only do Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton feel that they are viewed negatively by their non-Aboriginal neighbours, but they also report widespread experience (personally and as a group) with negative or unfair treatment because of who they are.

**NEGATIVE AND UNFAIR BEHAVIOUR TOWARD ABORIGINAL PEOPLES IN GENERAL.** 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.

#### Unfair treatment

"I have been teased or insulted because of my Aboriginal background."



**PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH INSULTS AND TEASING BY NON-ABORIGINAL PEOPLES.** Most Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton also say they have personally experienced insulting treatment because of who they are. When posed with the statement "I have been teased or insulted because of my Aboriginal background," seven in ten strongly (39%) or somewhat (31%) agree, compared to three in ten who somewhat (11%) or strongly (17%) disagree.

The reported experiences of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton generally mirror those of Aboriginal peoples in the other UAPS cities. Moreover, First Nations peoples and Métis in Edmonton are equally likely to report having been insulted because of who they are.



## Sense of acceptance

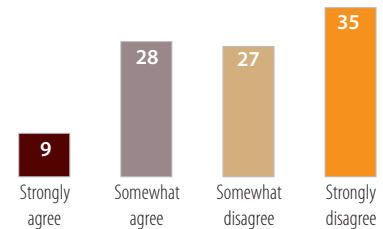
***A majority of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton feel accepted by non-Aboriginal people, although a significant minority do not.***

Despite the fact that most Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton believe Aboriginal people are subject to unfair treatment, teasing and insults because of their Aboriginal identity, they are more likely than not to feel accepted by non-Aboriginal people.

Six in ten (62%) UAPS participants in Edmonton strongly (35%) or somewhat (27%) disagree with the statement “I don’t feel accepted by non-Aboriginal people.” However, there is a substantial minority of almost four in ten who strongly (9%) or somewhat (28%) agree that they do not feel accepted. These sentiments are similar among Métis and First Nations peoples in Edmonton.

The degree of acceptance felt by Aboriginal people in Edmonton is similar to that expressed by UAPS participants in general.

Sense of acceptance by non-Aboriginal people  
“I don’t feel accepted by non-Aboriginal people.”



## Impact of experiences with non-Aboriginal people

***Most Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton say they have responded to their experiences with non-Aboriginal people by becoming stronger and more motivated to succeed, more accepting and tolerant, and more aware of their identity as an Aboriginal person.***

For the most part, Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton indicate that their experiences with non-Aboriginal people have, ultimately, compelled them to become stronger, better individuals. This is equally true for Métis and First Nations peoples in the city.

When asked in what ways, if any, their experience with non-Aboriginal people has shaped their life and who they are today (unprompted, without response options offered), Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are most likely to frame the impact in a positive light. Summarized, their responses fall into the following four main categories:

- **Greater motivation.** A greater sense of motivation and desire to achieve (43% of mentions) is the top way in which Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton feel their experiences with non-Aboriginal people have had an impact. They express this greater sense of motivation in multiple ways, including the belief that their experiences with non-Aboriginal people made them put more emphasis on their education, drove them to work harder, made them more ambitious, gave them needed encouragement and support, gave them a greater sense of responsibility, and made them want to disprove Aboriginal stereotypes.
- **More tolerant and accepting.** Two in ten (20%) Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton believe they developed more tolerance and acceptance of other people through their experiences with non-Aboriginal people. Specifically, they feel these experiences made them less prejudiced and judgmental, gave them a perspective on other cultures, and taught them more adaptability in a non-Aboriginal society.

- **Mentoring and a sense of direction.** One in ten (13%) Aboriginal people in Edmonton report that a non-Aboriginal teacher, professor or other individual gave them guidance about “how to stay out of trouble,” pursue a career, and mentored them at a critical point in their life.
- **Greater sense of Aboriginal self.** One in ten (8%) Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton feel they have gained a greater sense of themselves as an Aboriginal person through their experiences with non-Aboriginal people. These experiences either gave them a perspective on their own Aboriginal culture, reinforced their pride in being Aboriginal, or made them appreciate and want to learn more about Aboriginal peoples generally.

Two in ten (22%) Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton also cite ways in which their experiences with non-Aboriginal peoples have had a *negative* impact on their lives. These individuals cite such negative experiences as exposure to/becoming more aware of racism and discrimination, losing their connection to their Aboriginal identity and language, and feeling ashamed.

A total of fewer than two in ten Aboriginal peoples either say their experiences with non-Aboriginal people have had no impact at all on them (10%) or are uncertain as to how their experience with non-Aboriginal people has shaped their life (5%).

### 3.3 Experiences with non-Aboriginal services and organizations

#### Extent of contact with specific services

**Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton report a substantial amount of contact with non-Aboriginal banks and with the health care system, but much less contact with other services offered.**

As a final dimension to better understanding urban Aboriginal peoples' perceptions of and experiences with non-Aboriginal people, the UAPS survey asked participants about their experiences with non-Aboriginal services and organizations. Specifically, the survey explored how much contact they have with these services and organizations, and the nature of their experience.

To what extent do Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton have contact with non-Aboriginal services or organizations? Of the seven non-Aboriginal service types included in the survey, **banks or credit unions** (96%) and the **health care system** (89%) have been the most widely used within the past year.

There is a substantial gap between these two non-Aboriginal services and others in degree of contact reported. About one-quarter (each) report using **elementary and secondary schools** as a parent (28%), non-Aboriginal **social assistance programs** (27%), and non-Aboriginal **employment and training services** (26%) within the past year.

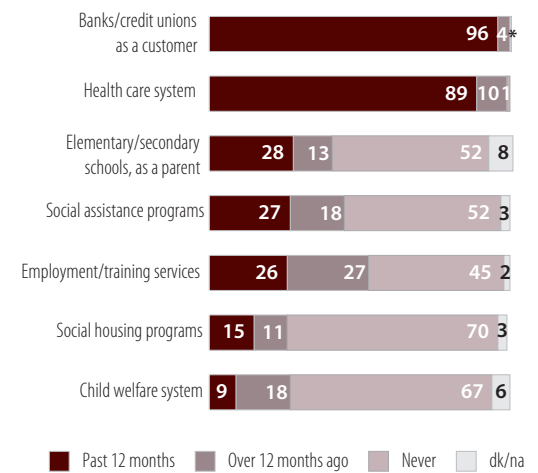
Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are least likely to report recent experience with the child welfare system and social housing programs. Very small proportions report using **social housing programs** (15%) or the **child welfare system** (9%) within the past year; in both cases, majorities have never used them (70% and 67%, respectively).

Reported contact with these non-Aboriginal services and organizations is largely similar for First Nations peoples and Métis in Edmonton.

The UAPS found some variation in contact with these non-Aboriginal services across the 11 cities, perhaps due to the specific needs of the community and/or the varying availability of *Aboriginal* services in these areas. Compared to those in other cities, urban Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are among the most likely to have recently used banks and the health care system.

#### Contact with non-Aboriginal services and organizations

Have you made use of or been in contact with the following non-Aboriginal services in Edmonton in the past 12 months, over 12 months ago or never?



\* Less than one percent

Note: Percentages don't add up to 100% due to those who said they don't know, or chose not to answer this question.

## Have experiences with non-Aboriginal services been positive or negative?

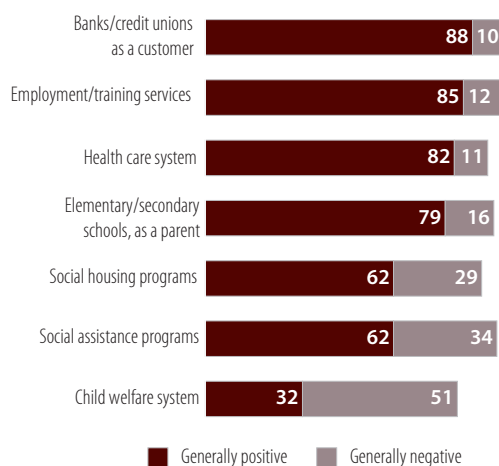
**Those who have been in contact with non-Aboriginal services in Edmonton are generally positive about the experience, with the exception of the child welfare system, where negative experiences outweigh positive ones.**

Positive experiences with non-Aboriginal services in Edmonton far outweigh negative ones, with the exception of experiences with the child welfare system.

Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton who have ever used or made contact with these non-Aboriginal services<sup>13</sup> were asked if the experience was generally positive or generally negative. They are most likely to report positive experiences with banks and credit unions (88%), employment and training services (85%), the health care system (82%), and elementary or secondary schools, as a parent (79%). In each of these cases, relatively few (ranging between 10% and 16%) say they have had a negative experience.

### Experience with non-Aboriginal services\*

Was your experience with this service generally positive or generally negative?



\*Subsample: Those who have used the services

Note: Percentages don't add up to 100% due to those who said they don't know, or chose not to answer this question.

Positive experiences are the case for slightly fewer, but still a majority, of those who have accessed social assistance programs (62%) and social housing programs (62%). However, among Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton who have had contact with the child welfare system, negative perceptions of this experience (51%) outweigh positive ones (32%).

Perceptions of these services among Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are largely shared with Aboriginal peoples living in other UAPS cities.

<sup>13</sup> In most cases, the sample size of those who have used or accessed the service is too small to compare perceptions for First Nations peoples and Métis in Edmonton.

**NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES.** Aboriginal peoples who have had negative experiences with non-Aboriginal services were asked to describe the experience (unprompted, in their own words). Some of these experiences are presented in the sidebar on this page.

The most common concern is being treated poorly. Just over half (55%) Aboriginal people in Edmonton say their experience was negative because of racism or discrimination; they were treated unfairly or disrespectfully; or they encountered staff that were judgmental, mean or rude, or lacked empathy, didn't understand their needs or culture, or simply didn't believe them. This is a more common concern in Edmonton, Toronto (59%) and Regina (54%) than in other UAPS cities.

One-third (34%) had problems with process, particularly long waiting lists or wait periods, but also complicated paperwork, missing documents, or expensive fees. Two in ten question the effectiveness of the service (21%), saying it was not supportive, unhelpful and didn't actually achieve its goal. Seven percent have concerns that the services lack resources, such as qualified staff or funding, and therefore provide poor or disorganized service.

Other negative experiences relate to having an application rejected (5%), being mistreated by staff or caregivers (5%), or being misinformed or misdiagnosed (4%).

### What Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton say about their negative experiences with non-Aboriginal services:

*[At the] doctor's office, I was not treated the same as every other patient. I was made to feel stupid, and they just assumed I had little or no education at all.*

*I feel like they see colour of my skin and I do not get the help I feel I should because of it. I do not feel respected.*

*My son got in a fight because another student called him a racial slur. He was suspended and the other child, who was white, was not suspended.*

*The child welfare system. The way they came in my house and searched it, they made me feel scared.*

*They assumed I was a street person who was drug-seeking when I broke my back when sledding and was taken to hospital. I'm drug-tested by my general practitioner at least six times a year. It feels like passive-aggressive behaviour and he doesn't really want to treat me. It took so long to find a general practitioner so I cannot afford to complain about service.*

*Because I'm a young mother and don't have a nice car or house, I felt like the teachers and other parents looked down on me.*

## 4.0 Experiences with Aboriginal Services and Organizations

As part of understanding urban Aboriginal peoples' experiences in Canadian cities today, the *UAPS* survey explored study participants' perceptions of and interactions with Aboriginal services and organizations. Growing out of the friendship centre movement, a large network of institutions has emerged within urban Aboriginal communities that provide a range of services such as, but not limited to, education, training, employment, economic development, child care, health, housing, cultural support and corrections. Of note, over the last two decades in particular, urban Aboriginal organizations are assuming key roles in the delivery of health services. Many aspects of urban Aboriginal life are mediated through a vast array of Aboriginal cultural, artistic, heritage, educational, economic, community development and political institutions.

There is widespread reliance on Aboriginal services and organizations in Edmonton, and *UAPS* participants in this city are clearly convinced of the importance of these services to the well-being of their community.

### Key findings

- **Half of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton use and rely at least occasionally on Aboriginal services and organizations in the city, similar to the proportion in other *UAPS* cities.** Aboriginal services and organizations are used for both specific services and because they give people a sense of community. Friendship centres and employment centres in Edmonton are considered of greatest use.
- **Regardless of how much interaction they have with non-Aboriginal services, there is broad agreement among Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton that it is very important to also have *Aboriginal services*.** This is considered to be most important in the case of addiction programs, and child and family services.

## 4.1 Use of urban Aboriginal services and organizations

### Extent of use of services

**Five in ten Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton use Aboriginal services and organizations in the city at least occasionally, on par with reported use in other UAPS cities.**

Many Aboriginal services and organizations promote culture and identity for urban Aboriginal peoples through their types of services, the events they sponsor and simply through their existence as Aboriginal organizations in Edmonton. The *UAPS* survey asked participants how often, and why, they use these services and organizations, and which they find most useful.

Half of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton often (22%) or occasionally (28%) use or rely on Aboriginal services or organizations, while half do so either rarely (25%) or never (24%). This level of use is consistent with that reported by Aboriginal peoples in other *UAPS* cities. Reported use (often or occasional) is also similar among First Nations peoples and Métis in Edmonton.

What else explains the use of Aboriginal services and organizations in cities? The sample size for Edmonton alone (250 survey participants) is too small to allow for a detailed analysis by socio-demographic factors. However, the national *UAPS* survey data (across all 11 cities) indicate that use varies by age and income, but not by length of time in the city. Frequent use of Aboriginal services and organizations is more common among Aboriginal peoples aged 45 years and older, and the less affluent (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 their city within the last two years) and long-time residents (i.e., those who arrived in their city 20 or more years ago).

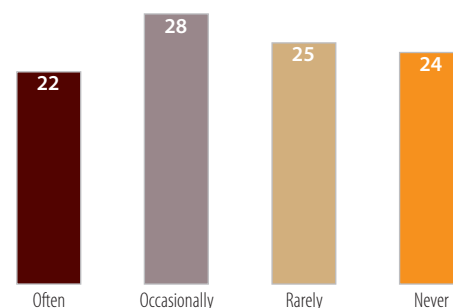
### Reasons for use

**As in other cities, Aboriginal services and organizations in Edmonton are used both for specific services, and for their sense of community and belonging.**

Beyond asking Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton how often they use and rely on Aboriginal services and organizations, the *UAPS* survey also explored why some use these services more regularly than others (unprompted, without response options offered).

Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton who use Aboriginal services and organizations regularly emphasize the positive environment, along with the value of the health, employment and educational resources they offer. These are largely consistent with the main reasons for use mentioned in other *UAPS* cities, and are also similar for both First Nations peoples and Métis in Edmonton.

Use of Aboriginal services or organizations  
How often do you use or rely on Aboriginal services or organizations in Edmonton?



## Why urban Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton use and rely on Aboriginal services and organizations

*Because I feel they understand my point of view, they have the resources I need for myself and my child, and they have [a] better understanding of natives.*

*The Métis Nation provides funding for education, employment and training. I have had a positive experience with them.*

*I am part of the Aboriginal Student Council on campus. I rely on the Aboriginal Student Services Office on campus. Mostly I use Aboriginal services on campus as a student.*

*Because I find them useful. Nice to be around other native people, more comfortable.*

*I have to get a certain type of medication, so they pay for it and I go there.*

*Because I'm starting my own business and they are very helpful.*

*Because that is where I find all programs offered to our people. When I connect with Aboriginal people in these resources, I feel at home.*

*I just use these services because they are there and my friends use these services.*

*Because my clientele is mainly First Nations women.*

**WHY THEY USE.** Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton who are regular users<sup>14</sup> of the city's Aboriginal services and organizations say they are motivated by the specific services offered and/or by the positive environments they find. Some of these reasons are illustrated in verbatim comments in the sidebar on this page.

- **Specific resources.** Four in ten (40%) regular users of Aboriginal services and organizations are motivated by a desire/need for specific resources. Programs and social services, health supports, and education and employment services are the most typical resources they describe using. In particular, reliance on Aboriginal employment or job search services is more widely mentioned in Edmonton than in other UAPS cities.
- **Positive environment.** A similar proportion (37%) of users of Aboriginal services and organizations say 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.
- **Employee/volunteer.** A small group of UAPS participants in Edmonton (16%) are connected to Aboriginal services and organizations because they are either employed by them, or volunteer their time and services.

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14 Those who report using services often or occasionally (50% of UAPS participants in Edmonton overall).



**WHY THEY DON'T USE.** Those who rarely or never use Aboriginal services and organizations (49% of UAPS participants in Edmonton overall) are much more likely to indicate they have no need for these services (58%) than to say that they are unaware of what services and organizations are available in their city (16%), the services aren't helpful (11%), or that they can't access or don't qualify for these services (6%). Some of the reasons why Aboriginal services are not used more often are illustrated in verbatim comments in the sidebar on this page.

## Most useful Aboriginal services and organizations

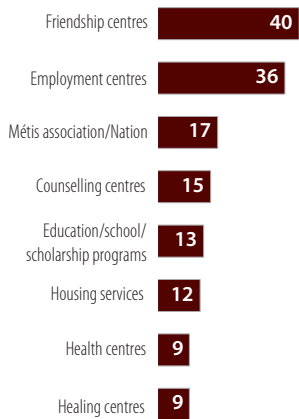
**Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton identify friendship centres and Aboriginal employment centres as most useful to them; Métis have also found Métis associations to be of great use.**

Aboriginal peoples who have used Aboriginal services and organizations in Edmonton have found a wide range of these to be useful, but first and foremost value friendship centres (40%) and employment centres (36%). Between one and two in ten, each, have received useful services from Métis associations (17% overall, but 28% of Métis participants), counselling centres (15%), Aboriginal educational and scholarship programs (13%), housing services (12%), health centres (9%) and healing centres (9%).

### Most useful Aboriginal services and organizations\*

What kinds of Aboriginal services or organizations have you found to be particularly useful?

Top mentions



\*Subsample: Those who have used Aboriginal services in their city.

Fewer than one in ten each name a range of other services, including child and family services, Aboriginal legal services, sports organizations, and Aboriginal youth centres. Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are less likely than those in other UAPS cities to mention Aboriginal health centres as being particularly valuable to them.

### Why urban Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton do not use or rely on Aboriginal services and organizations

*Don't really rely on Aboriginal services and Aboriginal people. I rely on myself.*

*Because I already have a job that is set up and my job does not involve Aboriginal Services in Edmonton.*

*Just because I'm independent. I feel that there are too many handouts. I feel like everyone can help. I just don't feel that it has to be Aboriginal-based.*

*I've always strived to be emotionally, intellectually and financially able to do it on my own, like non-Aboriginal people. Métis are taught to do that because they weren't a part of the Aboriginal groups until 1985.*

*I am always working so I don't have time. But, in the past when I needed the service they were very helpful.*

*I don't know what is available.*

*Anytime I have tried to use these services I was denied because I am off reserve.*

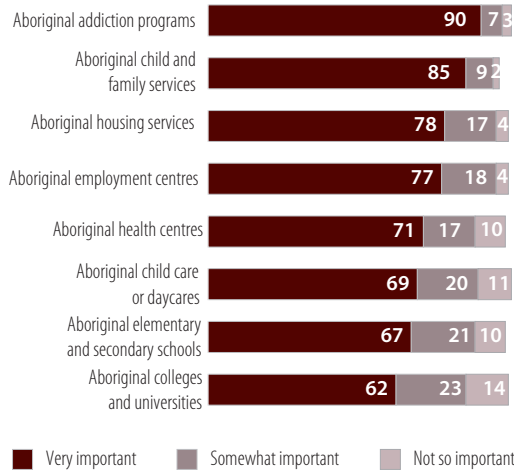
## 4.2 Importance of Aboriginal services

**Large majorities of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton believe it is very important to also have Aboriginal services in addition to the non-Aboriginal ones available.**

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.

### Importance of Aboriginal services

How important do you think it is that the following Aboriginal services exist in addition to non-Aboriginal ones?



Note: Percentages don't add up to 100% due to those who said they don't know, or chose not to answer this question.

Overwhelming majorities say it is *very* important to have Aboriginal addiction programs (90%), and child and family services (85%), and eight in ten say the same about Aboriginal housing services (78%) and Aboriginal employment centres (77%). Seven in ten, each, say it is *very* important to have Aboriginal health centres (71%), Aboriginal child care or daycares (69%), and Aboriginal elementary and secondary schools (67%), while six in ten place a high importance on Aboriginal colleges and universities (62%). Aboriginal schools, both elementary/secondary and university level, are more important to First Nations peoples than to Métis in Edmonton. In all cases, most of the remaining participants say having Aboriginal services is somewhat important, and 14 percent or fewer say these services are not so important.

The perceived importance of these Aboriginal services among Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton is similar to that expressed by urban Aboriginal peoples in the other *UAPS* cities.

## 5.0 Urban Experiences

In general, how do Aboriginal people feel about the city they live in? Beyond the themes discussed so far in this report, the *UAPS* survey also explored how much participants like living in Edmonton, their reasons for choosing their neighbourhood (and whether they feel they have a choice), and the extent to which they believe they can make Edmonton a better place to live.

Most urban Aboriginal peoples (across all cities) like living in their cities, and this is also true for Aboriginal peoples living in Edmonton. But while there are many features of Edmonton that they enjoy, a telling finding is what they don't say: Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are among the least likely to say they find social acceptance in the city, in sharp contrast to those living in the large urban centres of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. This is in part the product of a less diverse, more homogeneous population, but is notable in light of their widespread belief that non-Aboriginal people hold negative impressions of them.

### Key findings

- **First Nations, Métis and Inuit like living in Edmonton for the quality of life, the city life available to them, and the presence of family and friends.** Only four percent mention the social acceptance they find in the city, well below the levels in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. As with urban Aboriginal peoples in other cities, they also feel the stresses of living in a busy fast-paced city, and are concerned about crime and violence.
- **Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are confident – indeed, as confident as are their non-Aboriginal neighbours – that they can make a positive difference in their city.**

### 5.1 Satisfaction with city life

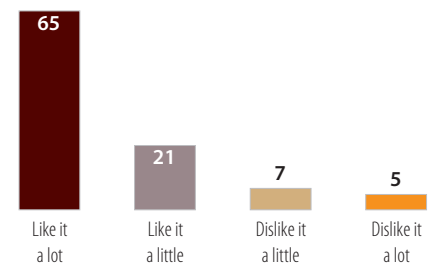
***Most urban Aboriginal people like living in Edmonton because of the general quality of life, the city life available to them, and the presence of family and friends.***

The large majority of Aboriginal peoples like living in Edmonton. When asked, two-thirds say they like living in their city a lot (65%), while another two in ten (21%) indicate they like it a little. Only one in ten dislike living in their cities a little (7%) or a lot (5%). These sentiments are similar to those expressed by *UAPS* participants in general. Satisfaction with living in Edmonton is also similar for Métis and First Nations peoples.

What do *UAPS* participants like most and least about living in Edmonton? General quality of life and city life, along with the presence of family and friends, are among those features most prominently mentioned, while certain city conditions (i.e., pollution, overcrowding, etc.) and crime are what they like least about their city. Métis and First Nations peoples tend to express similar views about what they like and dislike about Edmonton, although First Nations peoples are more likely to mention that they like the education and training opportunities.

#### Like living in Edmonton

How much do you like living in your city? Would you say you like it or dislike it?



**LIKE MOST.** When asked what they like most about living in Edmonton (unprompted, without response options offered), Aboriginal peoples are most likely to cite three main features:

- **Quality of life.** The most common reason Aboriginal peoples like living in Edmonton is the quality of life it offers. A total of four in ten (38%) indicate this is what they most like about living in the city. They cite the variety and convenience of amenities that are available (25%), and are among the most likely of *UAPS* participants (along with those in Toronto) to cite the availability of resources, support and services (15%).
- **City life.** A total of three in ten (32%) Aboriginal peoples say they enjoy the city life available to them in Edmonton. They are among the most likely of all *UAPS* participants to mention enjoying the recreation and entertainment offered in their city (22%), together with residents of Toronto (21%) and Montreal (20%).
- **Presence of family and friends.** The third most common feature Aboriginal peoples like about living in Edmonton is the presence of family and friends (28%).

Smaller proportions of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton say they like the career and employment opportunities (19%), the education and training available to them (12%), the perception of greater freedom and opportunity (12%), and living in a friendly community (11%).

Urban Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are among the least likely to say they like living in Edmonton for the social acceptance (4%), similar to other smaller urban centres and in sharp contrast to the large urban centres of Montreal (34%), Toronto (33%) and Vancouver (19%).

**LIKE LEAST.** As in other *UAPS* cities, Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton also indicate that they are disturbed by two main facets of urban life: the pressure brought about by the stress of having to cope with a fast-paced lifestyle in a large city, and crime and violence.

- **Urban pressures.** When Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are asked what they like least about living in the city, a total of 36 percent mention a variety of issues related to the typical stresses of urban existence, including a stressful pace of life, the high cost of living, and having to cope with bad traffic, pollution and noise.
- **Crime.** A total of 30 percent of *UAPS* participants in Edmonton mention issues related to crime, particularly violent crime and vandalism (29%). Relatively few mention gang violence (just 2%), particularly in comparison to some other cities such as Saskatoon (26%) and Regina (22%).

Although only a small proportion, *UAPS* participants in Edmonton are more likely than average to say that what they dislike the most about living in the city is the presence of and drugs and alcohol (9%). Seven percent or fewer, each, mention other concerns or irritants about city life in Edmonton, including the presence of racism/discrimination, having to be far from family and friends, poverty/homelessness, the weather and a poor transit system.

## 5.2 Reasons for choice of neighbourhood

**The availability of affordable housing is the most common reason for Aboriginal peoples' choice of neighbourhoods in Edmonton. Nonetheless, they generally feel they have a choice in where they live.**

Although *UAPS* participants in Edmonton choose their neighbourhoods for a range of reasons, they are most likely to have been influenced by the availability of affordable housing, a desire to live with family or friends, and proximity to amenities.

When asked why they live in their neighbourhood (unprompted, without response options offered), Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are most likely to say it is because they can afford the housing (28%). Fewer say their choice of neighbourhood was influenced by the chance to live with (16%) or close to (7%) family and friends, the proximity to city amenities and shopping (15%), the perception that it offered a safe environment for themselves and their families (14%), proximity to work and/or school (11%), or the desire to live in a peaceful and quiet neighbourhood (10%). Although a small proportion overall, *UAPS* participants in Edmonton are the most likely to mention peace and quiet as a deciding factor.

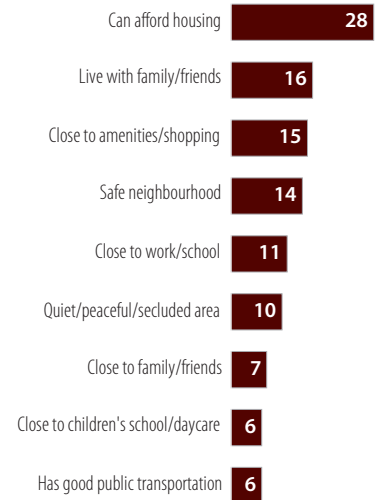
Six percent or fewer each say they live where they do to be close to good transportation, daycare and/or cultural and spiritual services, and/or because it was the first place they found.

First Nations peoples are more likely than Métis to indicate their choice of neighbourhood is influenced by safety interests (22% and 9%, respectively) or to be close to work/school (18% and 7%, respectively).

**EXTENT OF CHOICE.** To what extent do Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton feel they have a choice about the neighbourhood they live in? When asked directly, seven in ten feel they have either a lot (42%) or some (28%) choice about where they live in their city, compared to three in ten who feel they have either a little (20%) or no choice at all (10%). These sentiments are similar to those expressed by urban Aboriginal peoples in general.

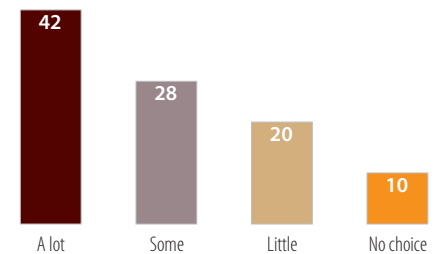
Why do you live in your neighbourhood?

Why do you live in the neighbourhood you do?



How much choice do you feel you have in where you live?

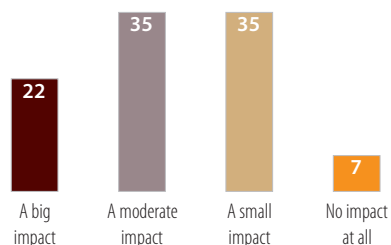
To what extent do you feel you have a choice about the neighbourhood you live in? Do you feel you have . . . ?



## 5.3 Personal ability to make an impact on city

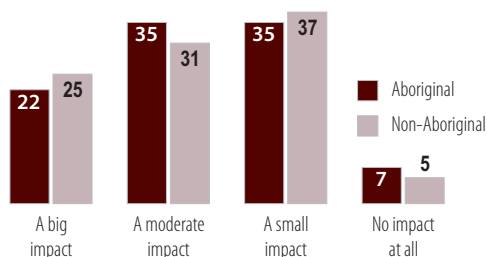
### Making Edmonton a better place to live

Overall, how much impact do you think people like you can have in making your city a better place to live?



### Making Edmonton a better place to live

Overall, how much impact do you think people like you can have in making your city a better place to live?



**More than half of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton think they can make the city a better place to live.**

Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton have a strong sense of empowerment, comparable to that of non-Aboriginal people in the city.

A majority of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton think people like themselves can have either a big (22%) or moderate (35%) impact in making the city a better place to live; four in ten believe that they can have only a small impact (35%) or no impact at all (7%) on their city. This sense of being able to make a difference is similar to that of urban Aboriginal participants in general, although it trails the sense of empowerment found in Vancouver and Toronto (35% and 37%, respectively, say they can have a big impact).

*UAPS* participants' belief in their ability to be positive agents of change in Edmonton mirrors the belief *non-Aboriginal* people have in their own ability to affect change, including similar proportions who think they can have a *big* impact on Edmonton (22% and 25%, respectively).

## 6.0 Urban Aspirations

An important goal from the outset of the *UAPS* was to learn about urban Aboriginal peoples' aspirations. The *UAPS* Advisory Circle and research team sought to include questions in the *UAPS* survey that would consider urban Aboriginal peoples, so often described in terms of "need" or "lack," from a more positive vantage point, in order to learn what they most wanted for their life and those of future generations, and how they defined success.

Pursuing higher education proved to be the leading life aspiration of urban Aboriginal peoples. Not only did they see higher education as a path to a good job or career for their own generation, many said that they hope higher levels of education will be key to how future generations of Aboriginal people distinguish themselves from their ancestors. This is also true for Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton, whose top life aspirations are largely consistent with those held by Aboriginal peoples living in other *UAPS* cities.

### Key findings

- **Most Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are happy with their lives.** Family and a balanced lifestyle are considered the most important ingredients of a successful life, and majorities also emphasize the importance of a good job, financial independence, home ownership and a strong connection to their Aboriginal heritage.
- **Completing or achieving higher education is the leading life aspiration of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton.** Learning the importance of education and completing school is also the most prominent hope for future generations of Aboriginal peoples, together with greater acceptance in society, a stronger cultural connection, and a happier, healthier and more stable life.

### 6.1 Happiness

***Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are generally happy with their lives, and a majority describe themselves as being "very happy."***

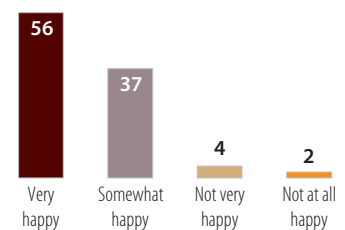
Almost all Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton describe themselves as happy, and more than half say they are very much so. Nine in ten say they are very (56%) or somewhat (37%) happy with their life, while fewer than one in ten say they are not very (4%) or not at all happy (2%).

The level of happiness expressed by Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton is similar to that for urban Aboriginal people in general. In Edmonton, First Nations peoples and Métis are equally likely to describe themselves as happy.

What contributes to urban Aboriginal peoples' sense of happiness? Although the sample size for Edmonton alone (250 survey participants) is too small to allow for a detailed analysis by socio-demographic factors, the national *UAPS* survey data (across all 11 cities) found that reported happiness is strongly influenced by socio-economic status (education and income), job status (full-time versus part-time employment) and job satisfaction, knowledge of one's family tree and quality of health. Nonetheless, fewer than two in ten in any segment of the population say they are unhappy.

#### Level of happiness

Overall, are you very, somewhat, not very or not at all happy with your life?



## 6.2 Life aspirations and definitions of “success”

### Life aspirations

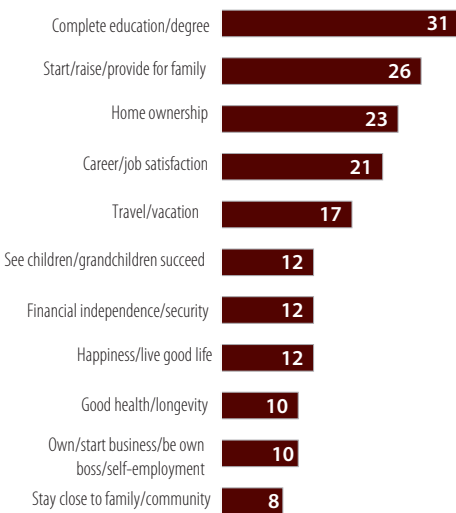
***The top life aspiration for Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton is to complete their education, which is consistent with that of urban Aboriginal peoples generally.***

In order to understand what Aboriginal peoples consider to be the factors that constitute a good life and to explore what they aspire to for their futures, *UAPS* participants were asked (unprompted, without response options offered) what three things they most want to achieve in their lifetime.

#### Life aspirations

What are three things that you most want to achieve in your lifetime?

##### Top mentions



The most commonly mentioned life aspiration among Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton is completing their education (31%). Other important goals include raising or providing for a family (26%), home ownership (23%), having a good or enjoyable job (21%), and travel (17%).

About one in ten, each, say it is important to them that they become financially independent or wealthy (12%), that they see their children/grandchildren going to school and succeeding in life (12%), that they be happy (12%), that they live a long healthy life (10%), that they own their own business (10%), and that they stay close to their family and community (8%).

A wide range of other aspirations are mentioned by fewer than one in ten, each, including giving back to their Aboriginal community, being generally successful, living in a peaceful city and owning a vehicle.

Completing their education is the top life aspiration for both First Nations peoples and Métis in Edmonton, although it is more likely to be mentioned by First Nations peoples.

The life aspirations of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are largely consistent with those held by Aboriginal peoples living in the other *UAPS* cities. However, they are among the most interested in travel (together with those living in Vancouver and Montreal).



## Definitions of “success”

### ***A balanced life, healthy children, and being close to family and friends are most important to Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton.***

The UAPS survey asked urban Aboriginal peoples to rate the importance of eight factors to their idea of a successful life: financial independence; having a strong connection to their Aboriginal identity or background; owning a home; having a good job or a successful career; being close to family and friends; living a balanced life; living in a traditional way; and raising healthy, well-adjusted children who contribute to their community.

Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are most likely to consider family and a balanced lifestyle central to a successful life. Nine in ten, each, say it is very important to have a balanced life (92%) and to raise healthy, well-adjusted children who contribute to their community (90%), while a similar proportion say it is very important to be close to family and friends (86%).

Eight in ten place the same degree of importance on having a good job or a successful career (79%), and seven in ten highly value financial independence (71%). Majorities also think it is very important to own a home (64%), and to have a strong connection to their Aboriginal identity or background (62%).

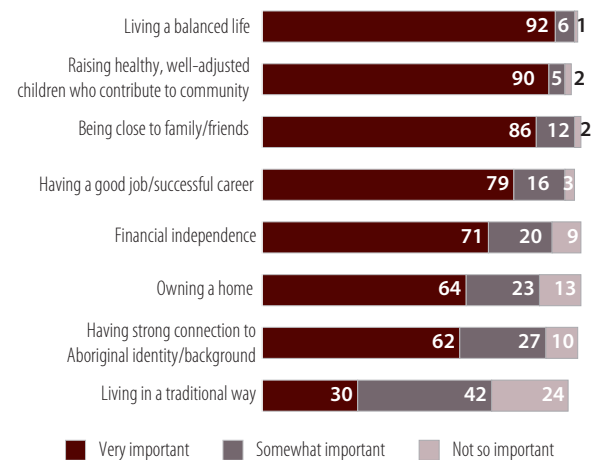
By comparison, Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton have mixed opinions about the importance of living in a traditional way: three in ten (30%) say it is very important to a successful life, while four in ten (42%) say it is only somewhat important and one-quarter (24%) believe it is not so important.

First Nations peoples and Métis in Edmonton possess similar ‘universal’ notions of a successful life (i.e., family and a balanced lifestyle).

A balanced life is more important to the concept of a successful life for Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton (92%), as well as in Vancouver (92%), Toronto (90%), Calgary (89%) and Montreal (88%), than in other UAPS cities. In turn, a traditional life is judged less important in Edmonton (as well as in Regina and Winnipeg) than elsewhere.

### Definition of a successful life

People define a successful life in a many different ways. Please tell me if the following are very important, somewhat important or not so important to your idea of a successful life.



## The hopes of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton for future generations:

*I hope they get a good education and are financially secure. Do not see [the] discrimination that I have seen in my lifetime. [I] hope they see people without prejudice.*

*Having more understanding of the culture. Having respect for themselves, and not abusing drugs or alcohol. Have more respect for mother earth. Being true to themselves.*

*I would like my grandchildren to know where they come from as Aboriginal people. I would want them to have an interest in spirituality.*

*I want them to have both parents around. I want my son to know people love him. I don't want them to grow up in foster care, for sure.*

*I hope that society will not be so violent, and that my children and grandchildren will live long, healthy lives and be happy.*

*Maybe not to feel that they have to prove themselves so much. More opportunities. Less conflict.*

*[I] hope they do not choose the wrong path as I did when younger. [I] hope they do not experience the alcoholism, drugs or gang life that I have seen.*

*I hope my children grow up to be happy, sing pow wow, dance traditional and have a good sense of where they are from.*

*I hope they will have easier life than I did, in terms of being caught in between two cultures, two different ways of life. I hope they will be treated more equally than I have.*

## 6.3 Hopes for the future

***Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are most likely to hope that future generations will be better educated, live in a world free from discrimination, and have a greater connection to their Aboriginal culture.***

When asked to think about the future and in what ways they hope their children's and grandchildren's lives (or the lives of the next generation) will be different from their own (unprompted, without providing response options), the most prominent hope is for education.

Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are most likely to hope that future generations learn the importance of education and finishing school (23%). They are also hopeful that their children and grandchildren can live in a society without racism and discrimination (19%), but also be more aware of, involved in and connected to their Aboriginal cultural community (17%), as well as living a happier, healthier and more stable life (17%).

A wide range of other hopes for future generations were expressed, including that they avoid drug or alcohol addiction (13%), be more financially secure (9%), and make better decisions than they have done themselves (9%). Some of these hopes are presented in participants' own words in the sidebar on this page.

These aspirations are largely similar to those expressed by urban Aboriginal peoples in general. In Edmonton, Métis and First Nations peoples express similar hopes for future generations.

## 7.0 Special Theme: Justice

Aboriginal peoples are over-represented as offenders in the criminal justice system. According to Statistics Canada, in 2007/2008, Aboriginal people represented only five percent of the Alberta population, but made up 35 percent of individuals sentenced to custody in the Alberta correctional system.<sup>15</sup> That is, the representation of Aboriginal adults in provincial sentenced custody in Alberta is seven times their representation in the general population, which is the widest gap of all the provinces and territories (together with Saskatchewan, where the representation is also seven times greater).

In this context, it is not surprising that Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton express limited confidence in Canada's criminal justice system. While Aboriginal Edmontonians are divided on the merits of a separate Aboriginal justice system, they do believe that something different needs to be done to address the issues and concerns facing the system.

### Key findings

- **Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton do not have great confidence in the criminal justice system in Canada.** However, this does not translate into a clear endorsement of the concept of creating a separate Aboriginal system. Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are in fact more skeptical of this idea than in most other cities, largely based on a desire for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to be treated equally to avoid discrimination.
- **Majorities of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton support the idea of a criminal justice system that incorporates alternate approaches to justice.** Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton believe alternate approaches (such as incorporating Aboriginal concepts of justice or having Aboriginal police, judges and courts) would help reduce Aboriginal crime rates, improve community safety and increase their confidence in the criminal justice system in Canada.

### 7.1 Confidence in the criminal justice system

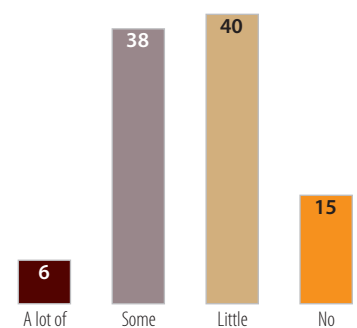
***More than half of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton have little or no confidence in the criminal justice system in Canada, a level that is among the highest of all UAPS cities.***

Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton tend to lack confidence in Canada's criminal justice system. More than half say they have little (40%) or no (15%) confidence in the criminal justice system. Four in ten (38%) have some confidence in this system, but only a very few (6%) have a lot of confidence. Majorities of both First Nations peoples (52% little or no confidence) and Métis (58%) in Edmonton express a lack of confidence.

Across the country, lack of confidence is most evident among Aboriginal peoples in Vancouver (64%), Saskatoon (63%), Winnipeg (60%), Toronto (59%) and Edmonton (55%); elsewhere, majorities say they have at least some confidence in the criminal justice system (with the exception of Montreal, where opinion is equally divided).

#### Confidence in Canada's system of justice

In general, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence in the criminal justice system in Canada?



<sup>15</sup> Statistics Canada. 2009. Incarceration of Aboriginal people in adult correctional services. *The Daily*. July 21. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 11-001-XIE.

What influences urban Aboriginal peoples' confidence in the criminal justice system? The sample size for Edmonton alone (250 survey participants) is too small to allow for a detailed analysis by socio-demographic factors. However, the national *UAPS* survey data (across all 11 cities) found that confidence was lower among urban Aboriginal peoples who have had some type of serious involvement with the justice system in Canada (i.e., they have been a victim of a crime, a witness to a crime, or arrested or charged with a crime). The proportion of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton who report serious involvement of this sort (54%) is consistent with the average for all 11 *UAPS* cities (52% average).

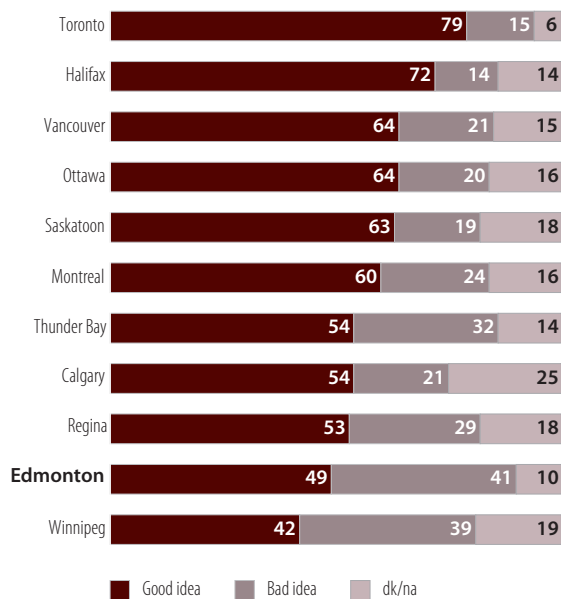
## 7.2 Support for an Aboriginal justice system

### Good idea or bad idea

***There is no consensus as to whether a separate Aboriginal justice system is a good or bad idea, but Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton are among the most skeptical of the concept.***

#### Aboriginal justice system

Do you think creating an Aboriginal justice system separate from the mainstream system is a good idea or bad idea?



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.

Half (49%) of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton think creating an Aboriginal justice system separate from the mainstream system is a good idea, just surpassing the four in ten (41%) who believe it is a bad idea. Ten percent are unable to offer an opinion. Views are largely similar between First Nations peoples and Métis in Edmonton.

Opposition to the idea of a separate Aboriginal justice system, while a minority view, is highest among Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton (41%) and Winnipeg (39%). By comparison, Aboriginal peoples in Toronto (79%) and Halifax (72%) are most likely to support the idea.

**WHY A GOOD IDEA.** When asked why they think creating an Aboriginal justice system separate from the mainstream system is a *good* idea (unprompted, without response options offered), supporters in Edmonton offer a number of reasons. They believe 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 group (12%) feel it is a promising alternative for an existing system that is not working for Aboriginal peoples.

Basing support on the idea that an alternate justice system would provide rehabilitation and healing rather than punishment is more widespread in Edmonton and Toronto than in other cities.

**WHY A BAD IDEA?** Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton who think creating a separate system is a *bad* idea were also asked the reason for their opinion (unprompted, without response options offered). Those opposed to this idea are most likely to say it is because they feel Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people should be treated equally to avoid discrimination (58%), and this reasoning is more common in Edmonton than in any other city. Some study participants believe that a separate system would unnecessarily segregate and isolate Aboriginal peoples (18%). Other reasons for opposing a separate system include the view 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%).

**Reasons why Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton think creating an Aboriginal justice system separate from the mainstream system is a good idea:**

*Too many of our people are locked up, with no treatment offered. They're not solving the problems, the real problems; they're just hiding it, and hurting more people.*

*I think Aboriginal ways of dealing with offenders would be done differently involving their families and/or the communities they are from. It can't be any worse than what we have now. Imprisoning people does not solve the problems that Aboriginal people face. You don't go to jail to heal. Jail is not the only answer. They don't come out better people.*

*The Aboriginal people have a different value system rather than the mainstream. There would be more compassion shown to the Aboriginal people.*

**...or a bad idea:**

*It is a bad idea because it segregates Aboriginal people; it will just get everybody else all worked up and create conflict.*

*Everyone is equal. Why should one race have special treatment and special laws?*

*My attitude is that people of all races who break the law should be treated the same. Our Canadian criminal justice system needs improvement but we should all face the same justice system for whatever crime.*

## Perceived impact of alternate approaches

***Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton believe that alternate approaches to justice would help reduce Aboriginal crime rates, improve their confidence in the justice system and improve community safety.***

Aside from their opinions about the value of an Aboriginal justice system, what do Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton think would make a difference in reducing Aboriginal crime rates, improving community safety and improving their own confidence in the criminal justice system? Urban Aboriginal peoples were asked to evaluate the potential impact of two alternate approaches to justice:

- 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; and
- A system that incorporates Aboriginal concepts of justice, such as sentencing circles and healing circles, Aboriginal laws, and alternatives to punishment such as reconciliation and restoration.

Overall, majorities feel both approaches would have a beneficial impact. More than six in ten Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton say that each of these 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. These views are consistent with those of urban Aboriginal peoples in general.

In Edmonton, First Nations peoples are more optimistic than Métis that both incorporating Aboriginal concepts of justice and Aboriginal police, judges and courts into the justice system would improve their confidence in the criminal justice system.

## 8.0 Non-Aboriginal Perspectives

For several years, Environics Research Group has been tracking the attitudes of non-Aboriginal Canadians toward the concerns of Aboriginal peoples through two ongoing syndicated Environics studies: *FOCUS CANADA*, a survey of 2,000 adult Canadians conducted continuously each quarter since 1976, and *North of 60° and Remote Community Monitor*, a survey of residents in the three territories, Nunavik and Labrador, conducted annually between 1999 and 2007. Over time, one evident trend in Canadians' attitudes is the growing awareness of an Aboriginal urban presence and a prioritizing of issues related to Aboriginal people in cities over others, such as the settling of native land claims.

As part of the *UAPS*, Environics surveyed a representative sample of non-Aboriginal Canadians to learn how they view Aboriginal people and what informs these views. The results of the non-Aboriginal survey are based on telephone interviews conducted from April 28 to May 15, 2009 with 250 non-Aboriginal people in 10 of the urban centres in which the main survey was conducted: Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Edmonton, Montreal and Halifax (Ottawa was excluded). In all, 2,501 non-Aboriginal urban Canadians ("NA urban Canadians") participated, including 251 residents of Edmonton.

Topics explored in the survey include non-Aboriginal urban Canadians' perceptions of Aboriginal people in Canada, their awareness of Aboriginal peoples and communities in their cities, their contact and interaction with Aboriginal people, their perspectives on how well institutions respond to the needs of Aboriginal people, their knowledge of salient Aboriginal issues (i.e., Indian residential schools, acceptance of differential systems of justice), and the importance of Aboriginal history and culture in the minds of NA urban Canadians.

### 8.1 Perceptions of Aboriginal peoples

#### Top-of-mind impression

***Among non-Aboriginal people in Edmonton, the most common top-of-mind impression of Aboriginal peoples revolves around their history as the original inhabitants of Canada. Negative associations also appear to be inflated in Edmonton and other western cities.***

What are the top-of-mind impressions of Aboriginal peoples among non-Aboriginal people in Edmonton? When asked (unprompted, without response options offered), non-Aboriginal people in Edmonton express a variety of impressions of Aboriginal peoples, but are most likely to cite the following impressions:

- **First inhabitants.** "The first people" – individuals native to Canada who possess special status by virtue of their original inhabitancy of the country – is the most common impression of Aboriginal peoples among non-Aboriginal people in Edmonton (14%), consistent with perceptions in other *UAPS* cities.
- **First Nations/Métis/Inuit.** For one in ten (11%) non-Aboriginal people in Edmonton, what comes to mind is simply First Nations, Métis or Inuit, or other terms that are sometimes used to describe Aboriginal peoples, such as Indians or natives. (There is no indication whether these are positive, neutral or negative impressions.)
- **Reserves.** One in ten (11%) first associate Aboriginal peoples with reserves, an impression that is more common in Edmonton than in any other city.

Small proportions of non-Aboriginal people in Edmonton cite negative impressions they hold of Aboriginal people, including the perception that most are on welfare or “ask for handouts” (8%), or that they are lazy and make minimal contributions to society (7%). Seven percent also say Aboriginal people are no different than any other Canadian. These perceptions, while cited by minorities, are more common in the western cities, including Edmonton, and are noteworthy in light of the widespread belief of Aboriginal Edmontonians themselves that they are viewed negatively by non-Aboriginal people.

Other impressions of Aboriginal peoples include perceptions of their cultural and artistic traditions (6%), that they are largely poor (6%), and perceptions of abuse and mistreatment experienced by Aboriginal peoples at the hands of Canadian citizens and governments (4%).

## Are non-Aboriginal impressions changing in Edmonton?

***A majority of non-Aboriginal residents of Edmonton say their impressions of Aboriginal peoples have not changed in the past few years. Worsening impressions, although they are held by a small minority, are more common in Edmonton than average.***

Non-Aboriginal Edmonton residents are more likely to say their impressions of Aboriginal peoples are unchanged in recent years than to report their views have changed for better or worse.

Six in ten (60%) non-Aboriginal people in Edmonton say their impressions of Aboriginal peoples have stayed the same over the past few years. Of the minority who report shifting impressions of Aboriginal peoples, similar proportions say their impressions have improved (21%) or worsened (16%). Although only a small minority, Edmonton residents are among those more likely to report their impressions of Aboriginal peoples has recently worsened, similar to Thunder Bay and most other western cities; in contrast, worsening impressions are least common in Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax.

**REASONS FOR IMPROVING IMPRESSIONS.** Non-Aboriginal Edmontonians who say their impressions of Aboriginal people have improved over time cite two main reasons for this:

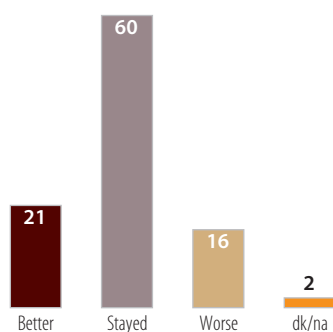
- **Personal relationships.** Four in ten (38%) cite a personal relationship with an Aboriginal person as the main reason their impression of Aboriginal peoples has improved.
- **Better understanding.** Two in ten (20%) attribute their improved impressions to a better general understanding of Aboriginal culture or issues.

Other less common reasons for improved impressions include perceived educational, social and economic gains among Aboriginal peoples in the past few years (12%); from specific knowledge gained through educational or awareness courses (10%); a more visible and positive presence in the local community and media (8%); or with their perception that more government or social assistance opportunities are now available to Aboriginal peoples (8%).

**REASONS FOR WORSENING IMPRESSIONS.** The minority of non-Aboriginal Edmontonians who report their impressions of Aboriginal peoples have worsened attribute this change to two main factors: the perception that Aboriginal peoples rely on “handouts” and make minimal societal contributions (36%, representing 6% of all non-Aboriginal Edmonton residents), or the perception that they are involved in crime (28%).

### Stable impressions

Over the past few years, has your impression of Aboriginal people gotten better or worse, or stayed the same?





## Unique rights and privileges

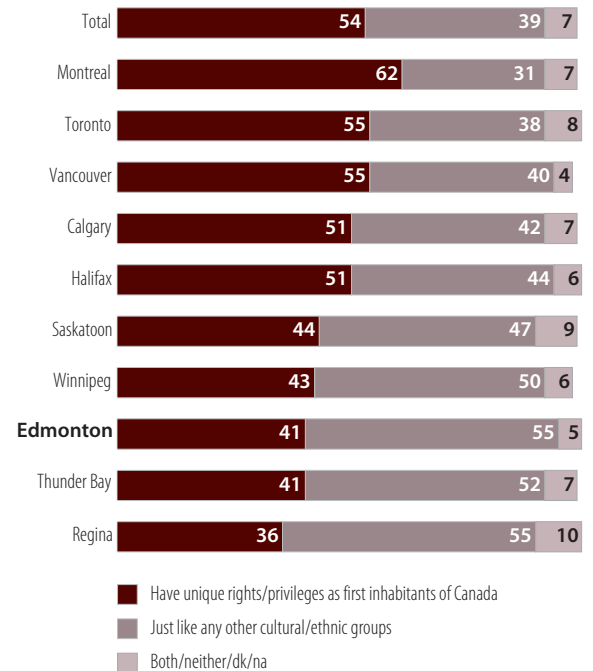
**Non-Aboriginal people in Edmonton are among the most likely to believe Aboriginal peoples are just like other cultural or ethnic groups in Canadian society. Nonetheless, there is a substantial minority who say they have unique rights and privileges as the first inhabitants of Canada.**

Non-Aboriginal residents of Edmonton are divided in their perceptions of whether Aboriginal people hold a distinct status, or whether they are just the same as other cultural or ethnic groups in Canada.

A slight majority (55%) of non-Aboriginal people in Edmonton believe Aboriginal people are just like other cultural or ethnic groups in Canada's multicultural society, whereas a substantial minority (41%) say Aboriginal people have unique rights and privileges as the first inhabitants of Canada (2% say they are both equally or neither, while 3% do not have an opinion).

Compared to non-Aboriginal people in other UAPS cities, Edmonton residents are among the most likely to say Aboriginal peoples are no different from other cultural or ethnic groups, consistent with the views held in Regina, Winnipeg and Thunder Bay.

Unique rights and privileges, or just like other groups?  
Which of the following two statements best represents how you think about Aboriginal people?

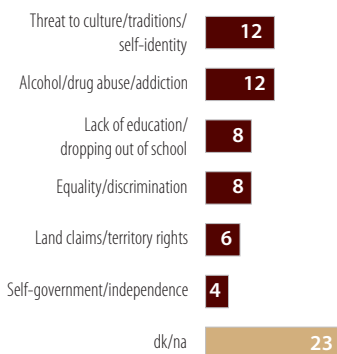


## 8.2 Perceived barriers facing Aboriginal peoples

### Most important issues facing Aboriginal people in Canada and in cities

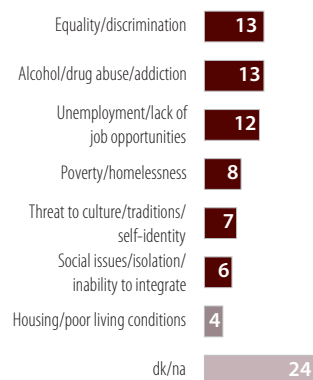
#### Most important issue in Canada (top mentions)

In your opinion, what is the most important issue facing Aboriginal people in Canada today?



#### Most important issue in cities (top mentions)

And in your opinion, what is the most important issue facing Aboriginal people living in cities across Canada today?



**Threats to culture and identity, and substance abuse are perceived to be the most important issues facing the Aboriginal population today, while discrimination and unemployment are also considered key challenges for urban Aboriginal peoples.**

**MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE FACING ABORIGINAL PEOPLES ACROSS CANADA.** When non-Aboriginal people in Edmonton are asked to identify the one issue they consider to be the most important facing Aboriginal people in Canada today (asked unprompted, without offering response choices), there is no consensus in their views. The problems most frequently identified as facing Aboriginal peoples are threats to culture and identity (12%), and alcohol and drug abuse (12%). Fewer mention discrimination (8%), lack of education (8%), and land claims and territory rights (6%). A wide range of other potential problems are mentioned, but none by more than four percent of Edmonton residents. One-quarter (23%) are unable to identify any issues facing Aboriginal people in Canada today.

Residents of Edmonton (together with those in Calgary) are more likely than non-Aboriginal residents in the other *UAPS* cities to mention alcohol and drug abuse as a leading issue for Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

**MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE FACING ABORIGINAL PEOPLES IN CITIES.** Non-Aboriginal people in Edmonton do not have any better sense of the important issues facing Aboriginal people living in Canadian cities (asked unprompted, without offering response choices). They are most likely to identify alcohol and drug abuse (13%), discrimination (13%) and unemployment (12%) as the leading concerns for the urban Aboriginal population. Edmontonians also perceive urban Aboriginal people to be dealing with poverty and homelessness (8%), threats to culture and identity (7%), and issues related to isolation and difficulties integrating into broader society (6%). A number of other issues are mentioned, but none by more than four percent, and one-quarter (24%) cannot identify any issues facing Aboriginal people in Canadian cities today.

Once again, substance abuse is more frequently identified in Edmonton (and Calgary) than in other *UAPS* cities. Edmontonians are also among those most likely to cite unemployment as a key issue facing urban Aboriginal peoples (together with residents of Saskatoon and Regina).

## Indian residential schools

**A majority of those aware of Indian residential schools believe the challenges faced by Aboriginal communities are the direct result of this experience, although this view is less common in Edmonton than in some other UAPS cities.**

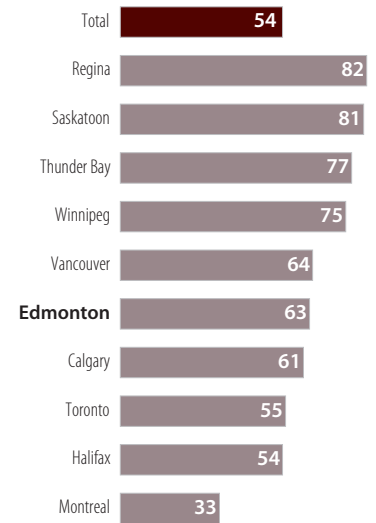
The survey examined awareness of Indian residential schools among non-Aboriginal people in Edmonton, and their views about the consequences the Indian residential schools experience has had for Aboriginal people.

**AWARENESS.** Just over six in ten (63%) non-Aboriginal residents of Edmonton report they have read or heard something about Indian residential schools. This level of awareness is higher than average for non-Aboriginal residents of the 10 cities included in the study, but is lower than in Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg and Thunder Bay. Interestingly, despite the relatively high level of awareness, no one in Edmonton identifies residential schools as the most important issue facing Aboriginal people generally, or facing Aboriginal people living in cities.

**IMPACT.** Edmonton non-Aboriginal residents may not think of residential schools when asked about the leading issues facing Aboriginal peoples, but they do recognize that these institutions have had a significant impact. Among Edmonton residents who report being aware of residential schools, two-thirds feel that the current challenges faced by Aboriginal communities are, to a great extent (22%) or to some extent (44%), the result of Aboriginal peoples' experiences in residential schools. Three in ten see little (22%) or no (8%) relationship between the two.

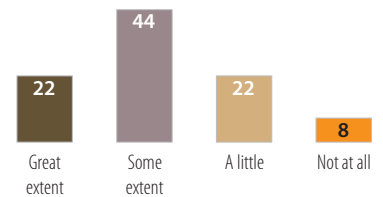
Among those aware of residential schools, Edmonton residents are among the most skeptical of their impact. They are among the most likely of all UAPS participants to believe residential schools have contributed little or nothing to the challenges facing Aboriginal communities (30%), similar to non-Aboriginal people in Saskatoon (31%) and Thunder Bay (30%).

**Aware of Indian residential schools**  
Have you read or heard anything about Indian residential schools?



**Impact of Indian residential schools\***

To what extent do you think that the challenges facing Aboriginal people communities today are a result of Aboriginal peoples' experiences in residential schools?



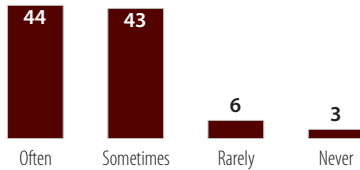
\* Subsample: Among those aware of Indian residential schools

## Perceptions of discrimination

**Almost all non-Aboriginal residents of Edmonton think Aboriginal people experience discrimination at least some of the time – and at least as much as other groups in Canadian society.**

### Discrimination

Do you think that Aboriginal people are often, sometimes, rarely or never the subject of discrimination in Canadian society today?



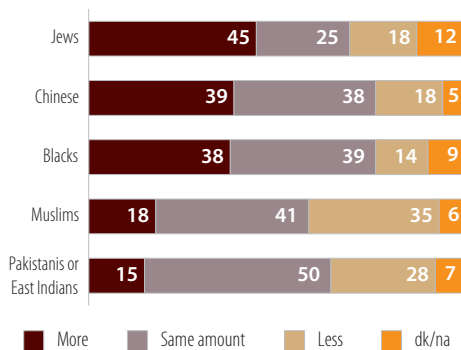
There is a widespread belief among non-Aboriginal Edmonton residents that, not only are Aboriginal peoples the subject of discrimination in Canadian society today, but that they endure at least the same, if not more, discrimination as other minority groups in our multicultural nation.

More than four in ten (44%) non-Aboriginal Edmonton residents believe Aboriginal people often experience discrimination, and a similar proportion (43%) believe they sometimes do. Very few (9%) believe that Aboriginal people rarely or never experience discrimination. These perceptions are similar to the average for non-Aboriginal residents of all 10 cities in the study.

Majorities of non-Aboriginal people in Edmonton think Aboriginal people are subject to the same, if not more, discrimination relative to other groups in Canadian society, such as Jews, Chinese, Blacks, Pakistanis or East Indians, and Muslims. In fact, more than four in ten (45%) Edmonton residents think Aboriginal people endure *more* discrimination than do Jews, and four in ten think they endure more discrimination than do Chinese (39%) or Blacks (38%). Two in ten or fewer think Aboriginal people endure more discrimination than groups such as Muslims (18%), and Pakistanis or East Indians (15%).

### Discrimination against Aboriginals relative to other minorities

In Canada, do you think Aboriginal people are subject to more, less or about the same amount of discrimination as each of the following groups?



Perceptions that Aboriginal people face *more* discrimination relative to Jews and Blacks are more common among non-Aboriginal people in western cities (including Edmonton) than in eastern ones. Otherwise, perceptions in Edmonton of the discrimination Aboriginal peoples face relative to the other cultural groups are similar to average.

## Main source of problems facing Aboriginal peoples

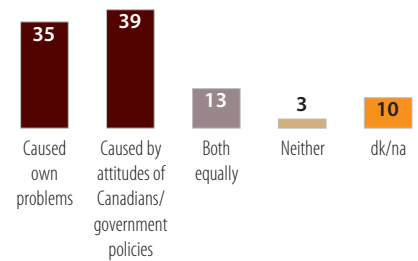
***Edmonton residents are divided on whether the attitudes of Canadians and policies of government or whether Aboriginal peoples themselves are responsible for the problems facing Aboriginal peoples, comparable to most other Prairie cities.***

Opinion in Edmonton is divided as to the main cause of the problems facing Aboriginal peoples. Four in ten (39%) attribute the problems to the attitudes of Canadians and the policies of governments, while an almost equal proportion (35%) say these are problems that Aboriginal people have brought upon themselves. Another 13 percent say both are equally responsible (10% offer no opinion on the question).

The divided views of Edmonton's non-Aboriginal residents are similar to those living in other Prairie cities (Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg); by comparison, the balance of opinion in Vancouver, Calgary and the cities east of Winnipeg is that the problems are primarily due to the attitudes of Canadians and their governments.

### Responsibility for problems

In your opinion, have Aboriginal people in Canada largely caused their own problems or have the problems been caused primarily by the attitudes of Canadians and the policies of governments?



## 8.3 Awareness and perceptions of an Aboriginal community in Edmonton

### Awareness of an Aboriginal community in Edmonton

***Virtually all non-Aboriginal residents of Edmonton are aware that there are Aboriginal peoples living in the city, and most are also aware of an Aboriginal community in the city, although to a lesser extent than in some other cities with large relative Aboriginal populations.***

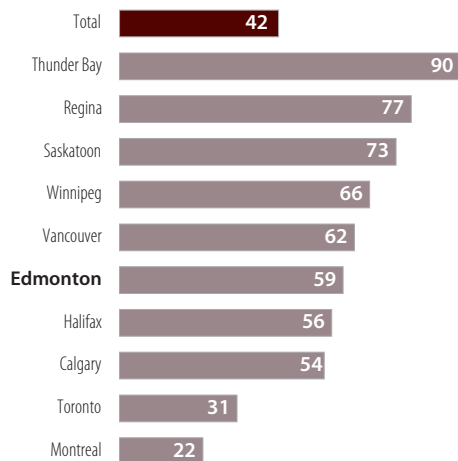
The UAPS non-Aboriginal survey asked non-Aboriginal residents of Edmonton how aware they are of Aboriginal people and communities in the city. Awareness of Aboriginal peoples in the city is almost universal, and many are also aware of an Aboriginal *community* (i.e., a physical area or neighbourhood, or a social community) in their midst.

Almost all (94%) Edmonton residents say they know there are Aboriginal people living in their city, a level of awareness similar to other western cities, as well as Thunder Bay.

#### Aware of Aboriginal community in my city

Are you aware of an Aboriginal community in your city?

By community, I mean either a physical area or neighbourhood, or a social community.



A majority (59%) of Edmonton residents are also aware of an Aboriginal *community* in their city. This is noticeably higher than the level of awareness among non-Aboriginal residents of Toronto and Montreal, but lower than in Thunder Bay (90%), Regina (77%) and Saskatoon (73%).

What explains the variation among non-Aboriginal urban Canadians in their awareness of Aboriginal people and communities in their city? The most obvious explanation is that the relative size of Aboriginal populations is higher in western cities and Thunder Bay than in Toronto and Montreal, making a distinct Aboriginal group and/or community more apparent to NA urban Canadians in the first group of cities. However, this does not entirely explain the variation in levels of awareness among cities with larger relative Aboriginal populations. Other factors that may explain this variation include how Aboriginal people are dispersed across city neighbourhoods, the existence of urban reserves in some cities, and the nature and physical location of Aboriginal organizations in these cities.<sup>16</sup> For instance, among those aware of an Aboriginal community or Aboriginal people living in their city, awareness of any Aboriginal organizations which are run by and provide services for Aboriginal people ranges from a high of 75 percent in Thunder Bay to a low of only 11 percent in Montreal.

<sup>16</sup> Katherine A.H. Graham and Evelyn Peters, *Aboriginal Communities and Urban Sustainability*, Canadian Policy Research Networks, Discussion Paper F27, December 2002.

## Positive or negative presence

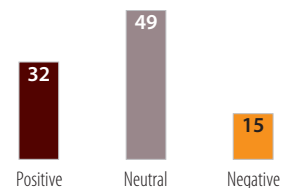
**Non-Aboriginal people are more neutral than positive regarding the presence of Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton. While few perceive any negative impact, this proportion is slightly higher than the average for the UAPS cities.**

How do Edmontonians perceive Aboriginal peoples and communities in their city? When asked, Edmonton residents aware of Aboriginal people and communities in their city have mixed views about whether their presence is positive or neutral, with a small minority who describe it as negative for Edmonton.

Half (49%) of non-Aboriginal residents aware of Aboriginal people or communities in Edmonton believe this is a neutral presence in their city. Three in ten (32%) think this presence is positive, and over one in ten (15%) describe the impact as negative. Compared to non-Aboriginal people across all the UAPS cities, Edmonton residents take a slightly more negative view than average of the impact of Aboriginal peoples and communities in their city.

### Presence of Aboriginal people and communities\*

Do you think that this Aboriginal community/ presence of Aboriginal people is positive, neutral or negative for your city?



\* Subsample: Those who are aware of either an Aboriginal community or Aboriginal people in Edmonton.

## Contributions and challenges

**Edmonton residents who regard Aboriginal people and communities in their city positively typically believe they contribute to Edmonton's artistic and cultural life.**

**REASONS FOR POSITIVE VIEWS.** Among Edmonton residents who think the presence of Aboriginal people and communities is positive for their city, in what ways do they think Aboriginal people contribute? When asked (unprompted, without response options offered), they are most likely to think Aboriginal peoples and communities contribute to Edmonton in the following main ways:

- **Enrich urban art and culture.** Four in ten (41%) believe Aboriginal people and communities make great contributions to Edmonton's artistic and cultural life.
- **Add cultural diversity.** Three in ten (32%) believe Aboriginal people and communities add to the general cultural mosaic of Edmonton.
- **Stimulate city economies.** Edmonton residents also note the economic contributions Aboriginal people and communities make to Edmonton as employees and employers of local businesses (14%), and by paying taxes (7%). However, Edmontonians are much less likely to mention this type of contribution than are residents of Saskatoon, Regina, Calgary and Winnipeg.
- **Make equal contributions.** The fourth main way Edmontonians think Aboriginal people and communities contribute to the city is that they, like anyone else regardless of ethnic or cultural group, are citizens who make an equal contribution to life in their city (13%).

Fewer individuals mention the contributions Aboriginal people and communities make by being good friends and neighbours (5%), or participating in or running Aboriginal outreach or community programs (5%).

**REASONS FOR NEGATIVE VIEWS.** Although the subsample of Edmonton residents who think the presence of Aboriginal people and communities is negative for their city (n=37) is small, the findings suggest that negative assessments are associated with perceptions of increased crime and gang violence, poverty and homelessness, and substance abuse as a result.

## Contact with Aboriginal people

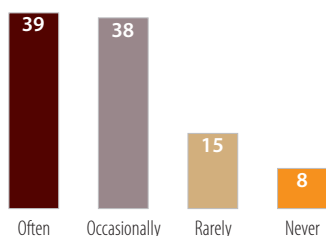
**Most non-Aboriginal residents of Edmonton have at least occasional contact with Aboriginal people, although contact is not as frequent as in cities with larger relative Aboriginal populations.**

Most non-Aboriginal people in Edmonton are in contact with Aboriginal people in their daily lives. Four in ten (39%) Edmonton residents say they often encounter Aboriginal people and another four in ten (38%) do so occasionally. Just over two in ten are rarely (15%) or never (8%) in contact with Aboriginal people.

Not surprisingly, NA urban Canadians in cities with larger relative Aboriginal populations (i.e., Thunder Bay, Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg) are the most likely to regularly encounter Aboriginal people. After these four cities, the next most frequent contact with Aboriginal people is reported in Edmonton.

### Contact with Aboriginal people

Do you personally have contact with Aboriginal people often, occasionally, rarely or never?



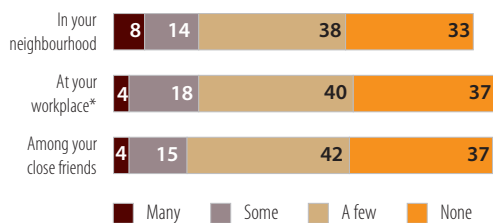
## Aboriginal friends, neighbours and co-workers

**Edmonton residents are more likely than average to know Aboriginal people as close friends, neighbours and co-workers, although not to the same extent as those living in other Prairie cities and Thunder Bay.**

Aside from casual contact, how many Edmonton residents know Aboriginal people, either as close friends, neighbours or co-workers? Among Edmontonians who are aware of Aboriginal people and communities in the city, minorities know some or many Aboriginal people as close friends (19%), co-workers (22% among those who are currently employed) or even neighbours (22%). In each case, the remainder say they know only a few or no Aboriginal people in those ways.

### Numbers of Aboriginal people

How many of your neighbours/co-workers/friends are Aboriginal? Many/some/a few, or none?



\* Excludes those who do not work

As could be expected, the proportions of NA urban Canadians who have at least some Aboriginal people as neighbours, close friends and co-workers are higher in cities with larger relative Aboriginal populations. Edmontonians are more likely than average to say they have at least some Aboriginal neighbours, co-workers or close friends, but not to the extent of residents of Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon and Thunder Bay.

When asked if they have any interest in having more Aboriginal friends, half (51%) of Edmonton residents who are aware of Aboriginal people and communities in the city say they do. Relatively few (14%) say they are not interested, and one-third say "it depends" (30%) or are uncertain (5%). The level of interest in having more Aboriginal friends in Edmonton is similar to that in other Prairie cities and Thunder Bay, but lower than in Vancouver and in the cities east of Thunder Bay.



## 8.4 Relations with Aboriginal people and the future

### Perceptions of current relations

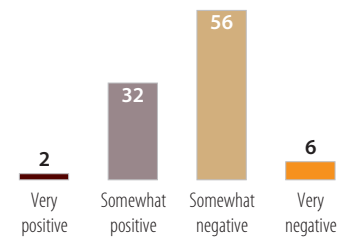
**Non-Aboriginal residents of Edmonton are among the most pessimistic about current relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, with six in ten who say they are negative.**

Communities and individuals have made much effort in the past two decades to build bridges between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Still, Edmonton residents are more pessimistic than optimistic about the state of current relations between the two groups. A majority (62%) believe current relations are negative, while one in three (34%) think they are positive; however, few have extreme perceptions of current relations (i.e., say they are very positive or negative),

The view that current relations are negative is more pronounced in Edmonton than in any other city, although this is also the majority view in Calgary (55%), Winnipeg (55%), Thunder Bay (55%) and Regina (53%). In contrast, non-Aboriginal residents of Vancouver, Halifax and Toronto are more likely to be optimistic than pessimistic about their relationship with Aboriginal people. Montrealers and residents of Saskatoon are divided between the two viewpoints.

Current relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people

Would you describe the current relations between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people in Canada today as very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative or very negative?



### Perceptions of change

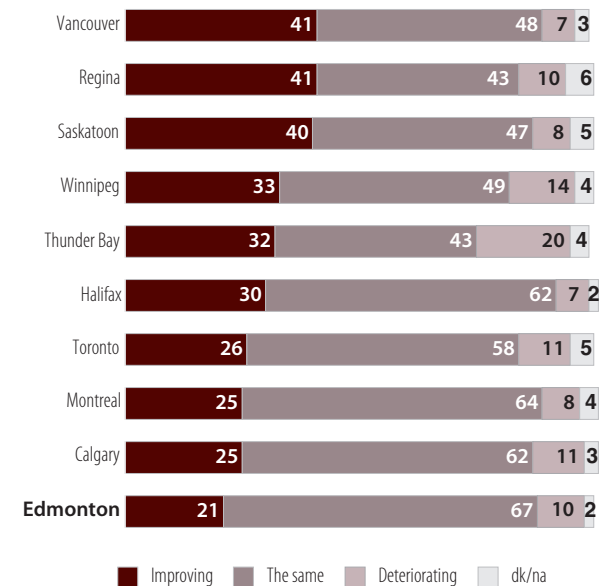
**Most non-Aboriginal residents in Edmonton believe that relations with Aboriginal peoples are not changing, and optimism that things are changing for the better is lower than in other UAPS cities.**

Most non-Aboriginal people in Edmonton perceive little change in the evolution of the Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal relationship. Two in three (67%) say relations are staying the same, while two in ten (21%) think relations are improving and one in ten (10%) say they are deteriorating.

Edmonton residents are among the most likely to perceive the status quo in relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and among the least likely to be optimistic that relations are improving, together with those living in Montreal, Halifax and Calgary. By comparison, optimism is highest in Vancouver, Regina and Saskatoon.

### Changing relations

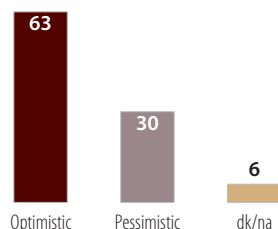
Do you think relations between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people in Canada are improving, deteriorating or staying about the same?



## Future quality of life for Aboriginal peoples

### Views of future quality of life

Looking to the future, are you optimistic or pessimistic that the quality of life for Aboriginal people in your city will improve to the same level as non-Aboriginal people in the next generation?



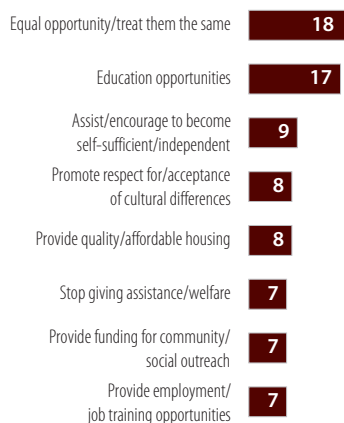
**Just over six in ten non-Aboriginal residents of Edmonton are optimistic that Aboriginal peoples' quality of life will approach the rest of the population's in the next generation, similar to views in other cities.**

Edmonton's non-Aboriginal residents may not see much in the way of change coming in *relations* between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, but they do think the lives of Aboriginal peoples will improve. Just over six in ten (63%) non-Aboriginal residents of Edmonton are optimistic that, within the next generation, the quality of life enjoyed by the city's Aboriginal peoples will rise to the same level as that available to non-Aboriginal people, while three in ten (30%) say they are pessimistic about the prospects for improvement. Notably, the degree of optimism about Aboriginal peoples' future quality of life is remarkably similar in all *UAPS* cities, including Edmonton.

How do Edmontonians think their city can help ensure a better quality of life for Aboriginal people? When asked (unprompted, without response options offered), non-Aboriginal people in Edmonton suggest a range of approaches, but the most common include treating Aboriginal people the same as non-Aboriginal people (18%) and creating greater educational opportunities (17%). Edmonton residents also suggest promoting respect for and acceptance of Aboriginal cultural differences (8%), providing affordable housing (8%), providing funding for community and social outreach (7%), and providing employment and job training opportunities (7%).

### How to ensure a better quality of life (top 8 mentions)

What do you think is the most important way Edmonton can help ensure a better quality of life for Aboriginal people?



Although they represent minority opinions, non-Aboriginal residents of Edmonton are more likely than those in other *UAPS* cities to suggest either that self-sufficiency among Aboriginal peoples should be encouraged (9%) or that social assistance benefits should be taken away (7%).

A wide range of other approaches are mentioned, but none by more than five percent of the population. One-quarter (26%) of Edmonton's non-Aboriginal residents have no suggestions for ways in which their city can help ensure a better quality of life for Aboriginal people.

## 8.5 The big picture: Views of Aboriginal people among non-Aboriginal Edmontonians

In this chapter, results of individual survey questions are reported for non-Aboriginal people in Edmonton overall. However, when there is a great deal of information available, there is always the danger of missing “the forest for the trees.” In other words, the overall picture of what is going on among Edmontonians in terms of their attitudes towards Aboriginal peoples can be somewhat elusive when there are so many individual questions and answers to consider. In order to achieve this overall picture, another level of analysis was undertaken to uncover broad viewpoints or segments among non-Aboriginal people living in the *UAPS* cities.

Specifically, this in-depth look involved determining if there are patterns of views among non-Aboriginal urban Canadians that run deeper than their answers to specific questions. To determine this, a segmentation of the data was performed. The goal of the segmentation was to find natural clusters among non-Aboriginal urban Canadians based on their overall attitudes toward Aboriginal culture, responsibility and contribution to Canadian society in order to encapsulate non-Aboriginal urban Canadians’ “world views” of Aboriginal people.

An analysis of a large number of questions posed in the *UAPS* survey revealed four distinct “world views” of Aboriginal people among non-Aboriginal urban Canadians. All four “world views” are present in each of the *UAPS* cities, but in varying degrees. The paragraphs below describe each of the four segments, the relative size of each segment in Edmonton, and how this differs from the other cities.

### Connected Advocates (18%)



- **Connected Advocates** represent one of two opposing views of Aboriginal people among non-Aboriginal urban Canadians. They are unique from other segments in their relatively high level of contact with urban Aboriginal peoples, and their belief that Aboriginal people have been marginalized and often subject to discrimination in Canadian society. In Edmonton, Connected Advocates represent the third largest group (18%) of non-Aboriginal people. This is consistent with the average across all 10 cities.

### Dismissive Naysayers (36%)



- **Dismissive Naysayers** are the polar opposite of Connected Advocates. They are the most likely among non-Aboriginal urban Canadians to possess a negative outlook towards Aboriginal peoples, namely that Aboriginal people are entitled, isolated from broader Canadian society by their own volition, and largely the cause of their own problems. Nonetheless, Dismissive Naysayers hold some views that are similar to those of Connected Advocates, such as viewing current relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people negatively. However, they arrive at these conclusions from very different perspectives. Dismissive Naysayers represent the second largest group (36%) of Edmontonians. Moreover, Edmonton has one of the largest proportions of Dismissive Naysayers of all the *UAPS* cities, after Saskatoon.

### Cultural Romantics (41%)



- **Cultural Romantics** are the most middle-of-the-road and optimistic of the four segments. They are largely distinguished from other segments in that they possess the strongest belief in the artistic and cultural contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canadian society. They have fairly high cultural and media exposure to Aboriginal people, but little personal contact. Cultural Romantics are the largest of the four segments in Edmonton (41%), although this segment is less widespread than in Toronto and Halifax.

### Inattentive Skeptics (5%)



- **Inattentive Skeptics** are least able to identify an Aboriginal community in their city, have the least amount of personal contact with Aboriginal people and are generally out-of-touch with Aboriginal issues. In general, they know little about Aboriginal people, and are inclined to think Aboriginal people have the same issues and opportunities as anyone else. Inattentive Skeptics are the smallest of the four segments in Edmonton (5%), which is similar to the other Prairie cities. Across the cities, Montreal has the largest proportion of Inattentive Skeptics, followed closely by Toronto.