

VERSION  
2010

Equity and Inclusion Lens

# Diversity Snapshot

## ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

First Nations,  
Inuit, Métis



**A City For Everyone**  
**Une ville pour tous**



Ottawa

# Diversity Snapshot

## **ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

### **First Nations, Inuit, Métis**

*We are a culturally rich community of First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples. Some of us have had ancestors living in the area for thousands of years. Many of us are new to Ottawa, which has the third fastest growing urban Aboriginal population in Canada. Cultural-based programs and services are key to the health of our community*

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This document is one of 11 Diversity Snapshots that serve as background information to aid the City of Ottawa and its partners in implementing the Equity and Inclusion Lens. To access, visit Ozone or contact us at [EIens@ottawa.ca](mailto:EIens@ottawa.ca).

## 1. Who we are

We are a culturally rich community of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Some of us have had ancestors living in the area for thousands of years. Many of us are new to Ottawa, which has the third-fastest growing urban Aboriginal populations in Canada. We often have strong ties to traditional territories, northern communities or Métis settlements from which we came.

We are young and have a population growth that is faster than the non-Aboriginal population. With the accelerated rate of urbanization of Aboriginal peoples, a whole generation of us is growing up only knowing the urban environment.

As First Nations, Inuit and Métis, we have distinct cultures and histories; and within these three Aboriginal groups there is diversity. (**See Definitions**)

**First Nations:** We are both Status and non-Status Indians as defined by Canada’s Indian Act. We have more than 50 language groups and belong to more than 630 nations throughout Canada. In Ottawa, we are mostly Algonquin, Ojibway, Mohawk and Cree.

**Inuit:** We are from the Canadian Arctic and have a common Inuit language. In 1999, Canada and the Inuit created the jurisdiction of Nunavut in recognition of the traditional territories of our people. Aboriginal service providers estimate there are 1,800 Inuit living in Ottawa, which is the largest Inuit community outside the North.

**Métis:** We, the Metis Nation, are a distinct Nation among Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Our paternal ancestors were the former employees of the Hudson Bay and Northwest Fur Companies and our maternal ancestors were Indian women of the various tribes. Seven out of 10 of us live in urban areas; 19 per cent in Ontario (Census Data, 2006).

As Aboriginal peoples in Canadian cities, we do not simply comprise another ethnic group. Other ethnic minority groups moved to Canada with an understanding they would have to accommodate a certain degree of cultural change. However, we were living here in self-determining societies with distinct cultures prior to the Canadian idea.

### IN CANADA

The Aboriginal population is the fastest growing and youngest demographic group in Canada.

More than 50 per cent of Aboriginal people are under the age of 24.

54 per cent of the Aboriginal population live in urban areas, up from 49 per cent in 2001.

### IN OTTAWA

Federal census data report 20,590 Aboriginal people live in the National Capital Region (2 per cent of the population). However, local Aboriginal service providers estimate the population at 35,000.

Census data is consistently low due to hesitancy to self-identify, homelessness and mobility of many Aboriginal people.

From 2001 to 2006, the Aboriginal population increased by 67 per cent, nearly six times faster than the non-Aboriginal population.

The Aboriginal population is:  
56.3 per cent First Nations,  
38.5 per cent Métis,  
5 per cent Inuit.

(Census Data, 2006)

## 2. Contributions we make

We bring professional skills and high levels of education to the city since many of us work in the federal government, in non-governmental organizations, and in the head offices of national Aboriginal organizations that have headquarters located in Ottawa. Others come to study at the three post-secondary institutions that offer diverse studies including law, medicine, education and social work to name just a few disciplines.

We contribute to the economy of the city. A community survey concluded that First Nations, Métis and Inuit organizations contributed \$219,952,012 annually to the Ottawa economy. (Chansonneuve, 2002) Contrary to a common stereotype, Aboriginal peoples pay both personal and income taxes. A growing number of Aboriginal professionals and entrepreneurs are establishing partnerships with non-Aboriginal peoples that are benefiting the local economy and city alike.

We bring Aboriginal culture and art to the city. Victoria Island, which has been a ceremonial site for over 6,000 years, is located at the heart of the city on the Ottawa River — it is here that people can experience the beauty of First Nations culture. As First Nations people, we bring humour and proudly share our crafts, singing, drumming and traditional regalia at local Pow-wows. Community festivals such as the Métis Media Festival and the Inuit Spring Equinox Festival are events where residents can participate in the resiliency of Aboriginal culture. As Métis people, we retain our music, dances, oral history, arts and crafts and the traditional Métis sash and flag. As Inuit, we share our traditions of throat singing, drum dancing, Inuit games and offer our Inuit traditional knowledge, Qaujimajatuqangit. On National Aboriginal Day, June 21, we come together for celebrations throughout Ottawa.

We bring a holistic approach to service provision as Aboriginal organizations provide culture-based services to a growing population of urban Aboriginal people. Aboriginal organizations provide an environment that promotes language, cultural teaching and traditional food, as well as school curriculums and programs grounded in traditional knowledge. Elders and traditional teachings of Aboriginal people have helped non-Aboriginal society to value the honouring of the earth, as well as the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of life.

*Founded on the traditional land of the Algonquin people, Ottawa has been home to Aboriginal peoples for thousands of years. On the Ottawa River system, diverse nations met to trade goods and knowledge.*

*Today, increasing numbers of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples are drawn to Ottawa by education and employment opportunities, health and community services, safety from abusive relationships, and the desire to be close to friends and family who have previously relocated to Ottawa.*

*(Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre, 2009; UATF, 2007)*

### 3. Barriers and inequities

#### 1) Cultural assimilation

For thousands of years, diverse nations of Aboriginal peoples practiced a sustainable way of life and their own forms of government. They were rooted in core values of interconnectedness among all things: creation, the environment, the community and the family. With the arrival of the Europeans this began to change, but it was in the 1800s that the Canadian government launched a comprehensive attack on all aspects of Indigenous (see [Definitions](#)) life including legislation banning spiritual ceremonies, theft of ancestral homelands, the abolition of traditional political systems, formal establishment of residential schools and abolition of the fundamental human right to parent and raise children.

Five generations of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children were forcibly removed from their homes and placed in 130 residential schools from 1831 to 1998. Denied contact with their families, they were institutionalized and subjected to racist denigration. This strategy of aggressive assimilation was to destroy the family in order to destroy Indigenous cultures and languages. It is this physical, emotional and mental abuse experienced by many of the children that has left an impact on hundreds of thousands of children and their families today. Unrecognized and untreated, it has carried from one generation to the next, resulting in multi-generational trauma and loss of culture. (Chansonneuve, 2005)

Today, one in four Aboriginal children is in foster care in Ottawa. Without culture-based intervention, cultural assimilation continues.

It is because of this reality that the Aboriginal community and service providers emphasize cultural holistic healing through revitalizing the wisdom of cultural teachings and language as key to strengthening the lives of individuals, families and communities. The role of traditional people, counsellors and Elders is to help individuals find their own path to restoring balance by reawakening their connection to the sacred. This is also important for Aboriginal youth growing up in Ottawa's multicultural city today who can suffer a low self-esteem and identity loss when they do not have the opportunity to be grounded in their culture (UATF, 2007).

#### WHY CULTURE-BASED SERVICES?

In an Indigenous world view, healing is a lifelong process of restoring physical, mental, emotional and spiritual balance. Community-based services run by and for Indigenous people provide a unique opportunity:

- ~ to be with others on the same healing journey
- ~ to learn the beauty, wisdom and continued relevance of traditional cultural teachings and practices
- ~ to experience cultural safety – a safe environment to speak the truth of one's experience without being misunderstood, pitied, misjudged, blamed or punished.

Culture-based services directly address the underlying causes of addictions and mental health problems unique to the historical experiences of Indigenous people.

They provide an opportunity to reconnect with and maintain culture and a pride-based vs. shame-based cultural identity. They model and foster healthy relational attachments to staff, family members, kin and community.

## 2) Lack of culture-based services

Aboriginal community agencies enable urban Aboriginal people to access services that honour and celebrate culture as key for having a sense of community and well-being. Mainstream organizations cannot provide this same healing and community building; however, some non-Aboriginal agencies have sought to increase their cultural awareness and provide specific programming. Working in partnership with the Aboriginal agencies and community, it is more possible to develop policies and services that are culturally sensitive and contribute to this healing process.

In urban environments, it can be difficult to maintain cultural practices and to find cultural teachings and culture-based support services. Federal dollars invested in Aboriginal programming are spread out across 22 departments and 80 programs, resulting in a patchwork of individual programs and initiatives that lead to competition for funding and gaps in services. Of particular note is the shortage of Aboriginal-specific services in health care, education, child care, employment, youth services, recreation and Inuit-specific services; as well as a shortage of diversity in housing options, transportation that facilitates access to services, services to address violence against women, services to address needs of sex-trade workers, safe services for two-spirited people (**see Definitions**) and services to support entrepreneurs (UATF, 2007).

## 3) Employment and education

One characteristic of the Aboriginal population in Ottawa is the large percentage with a university education and knowledge of both official languages (37 per cent). This reflects the fact that national Aboriginal organizations and federal government Aboriginal offices have their headquarters in Ottawa. However, a significant portion of the younger population, 15 to 25 years, does not have a certificate, diploma or degree. As a consequence, Aboriginal youth are challenged with high levels of unemployment.

An Aboriginal Peoples Survey (UATF, 2007) revealed that male youth left school as they were “bored”, while young women reported pregnancy or taking care of children as the reason for leaving school. This is, in part, due to kids from reserves, rural communities or the Canadian Arctic finding it disorienting when they move to the city. In other

### EDUCATION IN OTTAWA

18 per cent of Aboriginal people age 15 to 24 and 45 per cent of those ages 25 to 34 have university education.

### EMPLOYMENT IN OTTAWA

#### 15 years and older

Unemployment rate:  
 ~ Aboriginal: 9.2 per cent  
 ~ Total population: 5.9 per cent

Unemployment rate:  
 ~ Aboriginal men: 9.8 per cent  
 ~ Aboriginal women: 8.7 per cent  
 ~ Total population men: 5.7 per cent  
 ~ Total population women:  
 6.1 per cent

Aboriginal median income: \$26,157:  
 ~ Men \$29,465  
 ~ Women \$24,379

(2006 Census: SPC, 2008)

cases, students leave school to provide financial support to their families. Another barrier is the lack of Aboriginal cultural content and cultural sensitivity in mainstream schools (UATF, 2007).

Economic exclusion continues to affect the Aboriginal population. Aboriginal peoples have higher rates of unemployment and lower median income than the non-Aboriginal population (SPC, 2008).

#### 4) Poverty

There is a well-established group of economically successful Aboriginal people in Ottawa working as professionals in the local and national agencies, and federal government. This is in contrast to the high incidence of low-income levels. In 2000, a study by the Ontario Federation of Independent Friendship Centres noted 52 per cent of Aboriginal children lived in poverty (UATF, 2007).

“ In the Aboriginal community, either you are rich or poor. There is a big gap between. It is really hard to pull oneself out of poverty, but people do it. ”

Key informant, UATF, 2007

Aboriginal families tend to be larger than non-Aboriginal families and often headed by single mothers. In 2001, one in four Aboriginal families in Ottawa were headed by a single parent, most of them women. (UATF, 2007) The current social assistance allowance is inadequate to meet the shelter and primary needs of these families. Young single mothers find it difficult to maintain care for their children and are unable, due to poor social and employment skills, to find employment that will allow them to escape the poverty cycle (Wabano, 2008).

#### 5) Stereotypes and racism

Stereotypes affect Métis, Inuit and First Nations peoples in demeaning and disrespectful ways. When it is assumed that all Aboriginal people are a certain way, it has a negative effect on each Aboriginal individual, who is already faced with challenges of defining his or her identity in society. Assumptions about Aboriginal people can lead to degrading comments and remarks, and an attack on cultural values and practices by the general public, service agency personnel and government employees.

In a recent survey of Aboriginal people, 74 per cent of respondents felt that racism against Aboriginal people in Ottawa is a problem. They noted experiencing it in restaurants, malls, schools, workplaces and housing. Significantly, 71 per cent of respondents felt it was either a constant or on the rise. The experience of racism remained fairly constant across age and income (UATF, 2007).

Racism is about power and the different and unequal treatment of one group of people by another, more dominant group on the basis of supposed biological or cultural characteristics. Respondents in the survey showed a consensus that the best way to address this racism or racialization (see Definitions) is with education, awareness and understanding through cross-cultural training and community cooperation.

## 6) Violence against women

Nationally and locally, missing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women is a growing concern. Aboriginal women are targeted by the sex trade and human traffickers. In other cases, they are found murdered or go missing without a trace. Members of the Aboriginal community are deeply concerned that the cases of missing Aboriginal women and girls do not get the same attention and action as when a non-Aboriginal woman goes missing (Ottawa Citizen, October 24-26, 2009).

Aboriginal women 25 to 44 years are five times more likely to die from violence than non-Aboriginal women. In 2008-2009, the local Aboriginal women's shelter, Oshki Kizis Lodge, housed 427 women and children.

At-risk Aboriginal women in Ottawa require coordinated services that are geared toward providing safe and culture-based support that respond to both immediate and longer term needs. For those women and girls working in the sex trade in Ottawa, basic mobile services are key to ensure healthier choices and possible transition into alternate lifestyles. In transitioning out of abusive relationships, extreme poverty and violence, Aboriginal women require an array of counselling services including addictions, mental health, relationships, life skills and legal services, that are offered in a culture-based manner.

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) founded the Sisters in Spirit Initiative to raise awareness about violence against Aboriginal women in Canada. As of March 31, 2009, NWAC has documented 520 cases of missing or murdered Aboriginal women and girls. The initiative aims to better understand racialized, sexualized violence against Aboriginal women and girls (NWAC, 2009).

## 7) Housing

A secure and stable home environment is central to Aboriginal people's ability to live healthy and meaningful lives. However, the ability to find adequate and affordable accommodations in Ottawa is particularly acute for Aboriginal families. Landlords are reluctant to rent accommodations to Aboriginal people and even more so if they are youth. The situation lends itself to multiple families living in crowded and sparse living conditions (Wabano, 2008).

The high mobility between urban areas and reserves is one example of where urban housing needs will differ from those of the mainstream. Many tenants are new to urban living and may need assistance in adapting to an urban setting. (Walker, 2003). "Home" may still be

*Twenty-seven per cent of homeless people in Ottawa are Aboriginal and, of these people, mental health issues – depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, addictions and cultural isolation – affect 82 per cent. (Silent Crisis, 2004)*

*The Odawa Native Friendship Centre estimates that 15 per cent of their homeless clients are youth. (UATF, 2007)*

*A 2005 City of Ottawa study on homelessness found that the majority of homeless Aboriginal people were men, ranging from 17 to 48 years old (Aboriginal Homeless in Ottawa).*

“ *Can't get a lease because I am native, that is what they tell me. On the phone it is OK, but after I get there they say no longer available.* ”

*Focus group participant, UATF, 2007*

on the reserve or “up North”. They may periodically board friends and relatives who are in the city for medical services. Time in the city can be interrupted by periods spent up in the Canadian Arctic related to employment or care-giving (Walker, 2003).

There are many factors that contribute to Aboriginal people becoming homeless: mental and physical illness, women fleeing abusive domestic situations, and racial stereotyping are some examples. Some people living with trauma do not qualify to go into assisted housing, as they have drug or alcohol addictions, or they are unable to budget their money. In order to heal, they need a stable home. To achieve positive results, housing programs must work in tandem with a variety of professions to provide a range of services required to create a stable and positive environment (UATF, 2007).

## 8) Health

Aboriginal people experience poorer health outcomes than the Canadian population as a whole. First Nations men have a life expectancy that is 7.4 years less than non-Aboriginal men, while the life expectancy of First Nations women is 5.2 years less than non-Aboriginal women. Inuit men and women have a life expectancy that is 15 years less than non-Aboriginal men and women. Moreover, infant mortality rates are higher in the First Nations and Inuit populations than for other Canadians at 6.4 deaths per 1,000 live births, and 24.9 deaths per 1,000 live births respectively (CFNU, 2009).

While fewer health statistics have been generated for Métis people (Health Council of Canada, 2005), the shared history of colonialism means that Métis people experience many of the disparities in health that affect the other Aboriginal groups (MNO, 2008-2009).

Co-morbidity of illnesses is common in the Aboriginal population, and many Aboriginal people are living with more than one serious and chronic illness. What’s more, Aboriginal people have disproportionately higher incidences of cancer, HIV rates and suicide rates to name just a few examples. While TB has been practically eradicated in Canada and the industrialized world, it is still prevalent in Aboriginal communities. The main detriment to health stems from social inequities that affect the social determinants of health. For example, because Aboriginal people experience higher levels of poverty, they also tend to experience poorer health outcomes as they are unable to enjoy the benefits of the basic social determinants of health.

Furthermore, due to a long history of colonialism, “the chronic trauma of both post-traumatic stress and intergenerational effects has been identified as historical trauma. Historical trauma is defined as collective emotional and psychological injury over the individual’s lifespan and across generations. It is viewed as resulting from a history of genocide with the effects being psychological, behavioural, and medical (Mitchell, 2005)”.

## 9) Inability to access services

In a survey conducted by the City of Ottawa Aboriginal Working Committee in 2007, respondents noted that lack of knowledge of services was the largest barrier that Aboriginal people experienced in accessing city services. This is especially true for Aboriginal people who have recently arrived from a reserve or the North, for whom a big city can be disorienting.

Given the oral tradition of Inuit and First Nation cultures, talking with friends and family is one of the most common ways to learn about services.

Disseminating information through Aboriginal-specific services, creating programs targeting Aboriginal people in program design, and utilizing Aboriginal images in promotion materials will also reach more people.

It has become increasingly expensive for Aboriginal youth to access the resources and programs that would help address their needs due to the high cost of transportation. The result is a lack of access to educational, recreational and social programming. (Wabano, 2008)

Two additional barriers to service are lack of child care and distance of a service, as Aboriginal people are spread throughout the city, including rural areas (Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre, 2009).

## 10) Under-representation

Aboriginal people are under-represented in many ways. Images of Aboriginal people are seldom visible in City materials or on the streets of Ottawa. When Aboriginal people see their culture, art, history and faces, they know that they belong and are valued. When there are public statements recognizing that Ottawa is situated on the traditional land of the Algonquin people, there is acknowledgement of a people.

The right to self-government has been recognized in Canadian policy (Government of Canada, 1997). Aboriginal peoples have fought hard over past decades to achieve recognition in mainstream society of the right to determine their own affairs, including urban self-determination or self-government. In the urban context, this concretely means not only consulting with the Aboriginal community, but including them in the setting of program objectives and parameters so as to include their aspirations and culturally specific needs. This is possible through intergovernmental, multilateral agreements (Walker, 2003).

## 4. We envision – an Aboriginal-friendly city

- » City practices reflect that creation is valued; Elders are honoured; cultures and diversity are celebrated.
- » Aboriginal citizens participate fully in shaping the city.
- » Aboriginal culture and history are visible in municipal heritage, tourism and urban design.
- » Aboriginal citizens are present in all levels of the City including management and City Council.
- » When accessing services, First Nations, Inuit and Métis know that their culture is valued and understood.
- » Formal processes based on mutual respect, trust and open communication reinforce an ongoing working relationship between City Council and Aboriginal communities.
- » Solid partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service providers enhance awareness and cultural understanding.
- » Affordable, quality housing is available and welcoming to Aboriginal people.
- » All City and agency staff members are trained in cultural awareness and historical knowledge of Aboriginal peoples.
- » The City promotes a holistic approach to service delivery, in which individuals at all stages of the life cycle, the family, community and neighbourhood are part of the whole.
- » The municipality works with Aboriginal community leaders to bring pressure on other levels of government to invest in urban Aboriginal services.

### WHAT CAN I DO?

- ✓ **Inform** myself about Inuit, Métis and First Nations people.
- ✓ **Listen** so people feel free to say what is important to them.
- ✓ **Know** that silence is valued.
- ✓ **Learn** about Aboriginal organizations and services in the community.
- ✓ **Work** with Elders, traditional people and staff of Aboriginal services to build a network of support.
- ✓ **Contribute** to reclaiming of Aboriginal culture by making it visible and integrating it into policies and practices.
- ✓ **Advocate** for Aboriginal rights.
- ✓ **Provide** cultural sensitivity training for staff teams.
- ✓ **And, if I am Aboriginal**, I know that my culture and knowledge enriches the city.

## 5. Council mandates and legislation

- Aboriginal People in Ottawa – The Silent Crisis, presentation to Health and Social Services Committee, City of Ottawa, November 2004.
- City of Ottawa Equity and Diversity Policy
- Ontario Human Rights Code (Provincial)
- Employment Equity Act (EEA) (Federal)
- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Canadian Human Rights Act (CHRA) (Federal).

## 6. What's happening in Ottawa

- **Aboriginal agencies providing culture-based services in Ottawa:**
  - ~ Gignul Non-Profit Housing Corporation
  - ~ Inuit Non-Profit Housing Corporation
  - ~ Métis Nation of Ontario
  - ~ Minwaashin Lodge - Aboriginal Women's Support Center
  - ~ Odawa Native Friendship Centre
  - ~ Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre
  - ~ Tungasuvvingat Inuit (TI): Inuit Family Resource Centre
  - ~ Tewegan Transition Home
  - ~ Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health
- **Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition (OAC)** – The Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition (OAC) was formed in 2001 by a group of Aboriginal service providers to provide a unified voice around the issue of homelessness in the City of Ottawa. The OAC currently has relationships under four main pillars: the City, the United Way Ottawa, the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) and the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. An annual community forum is a centerpiece of the approach in building community. The UAS and the support of the participating levels of Government are providing valuable assistance in the planning and the implementation of actions identified to respond to community priorities.
- **City of Ottawa – Aboriginal Working Committee (AWC)** – In 2004, the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition presented a report to the City, "Silent Crisis" which highlighted gaps in services and requested a formal partnership with the City to allow for greater consideration and Aboriginal involvement in city-wide initiatives. In response, City Council endorsed the establishment of the Aboriginal Working Committee with the following mandate:
 

“To work collectively with the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition, City of Ottawa's City Operations, Ottawa Police Service, United Way Ottawa/Centraide Ottawa and the Champlain Local Health Integration Network to identify, prioritize and develop solutions to address emerging issues that impact Aboriginal people, and to maximize the effectiveness of services delivered to the Aboriginal community.”

- **Aboriginal - Inuit Best Start Planning Table** – Brings together service providers from Aboriginal centres working with Aboriginal children six and under.
- **Children’s Aid Society of Ottawa** – Information and Referral Tool: Inuit, Métis and First Nation Lifecycle Family Resources Chart.
- **Community Assisting Aboriginal Sex Trade Workers committee (CAAST)** – Taking steps to reach out to Aboriginal girls and women who are at risk of being drawn into the sex trade.
- **Homelessness Strategy** – Evaluation of and Recommendations for Service for the Aboriginal Homeless in Ottawa, 2005. The City’s Policy, Evaluation and Community Partnerships Branch as Service System Manager for homelessness administers City, Provincial and Federal funding to Aboriginal agencies. Services provided under this funding range from street outreach, drop-in services, housing search and stabilization, and mobile health services to housing loss prevention services.
- **The Love You Give** – This dynamic music video created by and for Aboriginal youth fuses traditional teachings and Pow-wow dancing with rap and hip-hop to teach youth about healthy relationships. Produced by Minwaashin Lodge.
- **Voices**, Women of Wabano CD

## 7. Relevant practices in other cities

- **Western Municipalities Gathering** – Held annually, municipalities meet to make presentations on the current initiatives, services and practices offered to the City’s Aboriginal community.
- **Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Community Dialogue** – What Aboriginal people have to say about urban Aboriginal priorities, building understanding and shaping the future of Aboriginal relations in Edmonton
- **Federation of Canadian Municipalities** – Policy statement on Social-Economic Development, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Approved March 2009 Standing Committee on Social-Economic Development.
- **Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS)** – The Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) is a community-based initiative developed by the Government of Canada to improve social and economic opportunities of Aboriginal people living in urban centres.

Through the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, the Government of Canada partners with the Aboriginal community and local organizations, municipal and provincial governments and the private sector. These partnerships support projects that respond to local priorities and advance the UAS national priority areas of: improving life skills, promoting job training, skills and entrepreneurship and supporting Aboriginal women, children and families.

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## 9. Definitions

**Aboriginal:** the term created by the federal government in the Canadian constitution to identify Inuit, Métis and First Nations as one group. Many Aboriginal people prefer the term “indigenous” as it reflects the people of the land and is the term used internationally.

**Elder:** a woman or a man who is considered exceptionally wise in the ways of their culture and the teachings of the Great Spirit. The community looks to them for guidance and sound judgment. (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2001)

**First Nation:** A term that came into common use in the 1970s to replace the word “Indian,” which many people found offensive. Some Indian peoples have also adopted the term “First Nation” to replace the word “band” in the name of their community. Most individuals prefer to be referred to by their specific nation, e.g., Algonquin, Ojibway, Cree, Mohawk.

**Indigenous:** “Indigenous means “native to the area.” In this sense, Aboriginal people are indigenous to North America. As it is the term used internationally, it is being used increasingly by Aboriginal writers and scholars.

**Inuit:** is plural and means “the people;” “Inuuk” means two people and “Inuk” means one person. For more information on Inuit in Ottawa, view: Nipivut- Our Voice (2009), Ottawa Inuit Children’s Centre.

**Inuktitut:** the language of the Inuit, it is still spoken in most Inuit communities and is the language used in radio and television programs originating in the Canadian Arctic.

**Métis:** “a person who self-identifies as Métis is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historical Métis ancestry, and is accepted by the Métis Nation.”

Metis people have a unique history, culture and language that draw upon their diverse ancestral origins such as Scottish, French, Ojibway and Cree. Their traditional territory includes the waterways of Ontario, surrounds the Great Lakes and spans what is known as the historical Northwest Metis Aboriginal and Treaty Rights are recognized under Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution Act, 1982. Visit Métis National Council for more information.

**Qaujimaqatugangit:** Inuit traditional knowledge, which is contributing to the understanding of sustainable communities in the Canadian Arctic.

**Racialization:** How people perceive and label a person or certain communities as different from whiteness and impose a racial character or context. Social markers such as skin colour, cultural habits, dress, language, accents, religions, political beliefs and surnames are used to define people. If you are racialized, you are likely to receive unequal treatment in society (Lopes 2006, Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2005).

**Status Indian:** Aboriginal people who are entitled to the rights and benefits of the Indian Act and other related legislation (e.g., Bill C-31).

**Two-spirited People:** a cultural term used to describe Aboriginal people who may also identify as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning. The term ‘Two Spirit’ acknowledges the gender inclusiveness of traditional Aboriginal cultures and some describe it as a balance of male and female spirit. Prior to colonization, most Aboriginal nations understood gender beyond male or female, and those who were “Two Spirited” held special roles within their community, such as mediators, teachers and visionaries. Today, the Two Spirit movement is working towards reclaiming cultural teachings and restoring a place of honour for all Two-spirited people (Minwaashin Lodge 2009).

## 10. Acknowledgements

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City staff and community leaders contributed their knowledge and insights in the creation of this Diversity Snapshot:

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