

# Indigenous WOMEN in ALBERTA

Edmonton Vital Signs is an annual checkup conducted by Edmonton Community Foundation, in partnership with Edmonton Social Planning Council, to measure how the community is doing. Vital Topics are a quick look at a single issue and are timely and important to Edmonton.

Unless otherwise stated, "Edmonton" refers to Census Metropolitan Area and not solely the City of Edmonton.

The Indigenous population in Alberta is **INCREASING 1.5X** MORE QUICKLY than the rest of the population.

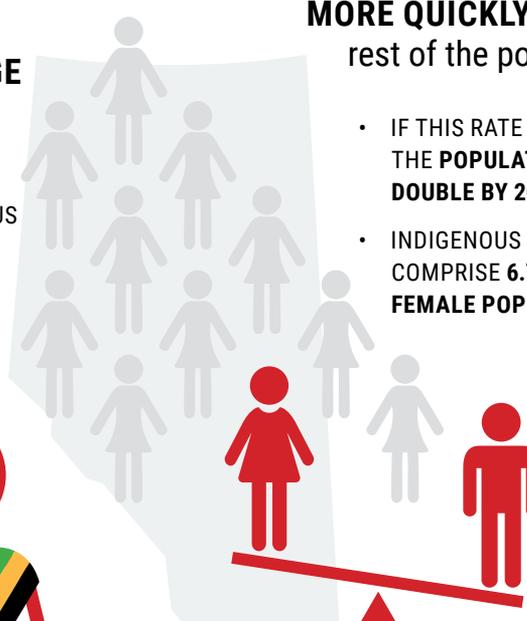
MEDIAN AGE of Women

**36.8**

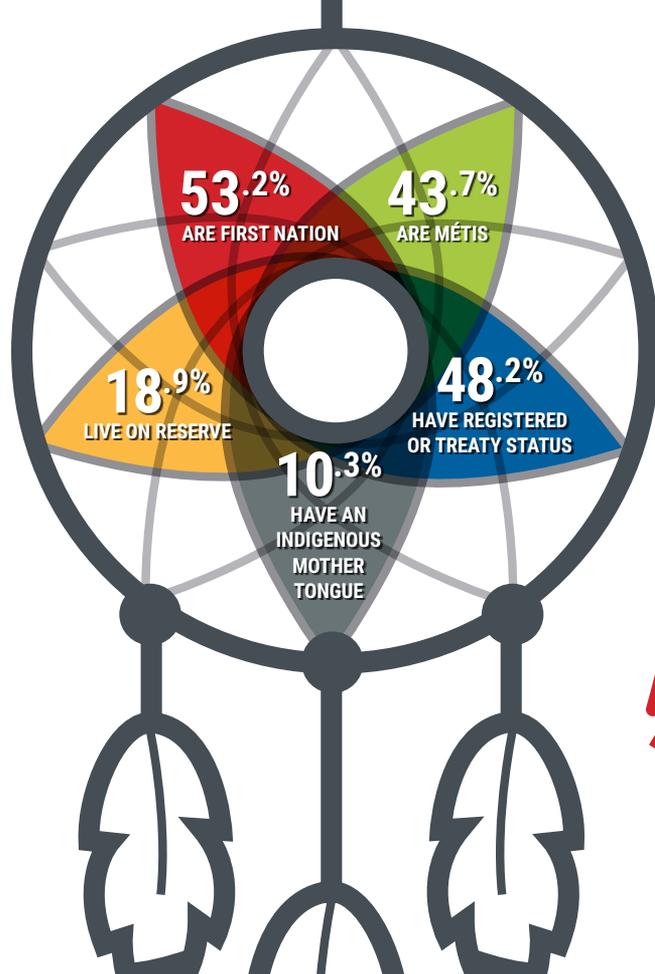
NON-INDIGENOUS

**28.0**

INDIGENOUS



- IF THIS RATE CONTINUES THE POPULATION WILL **DOUBLE BY 2038**
- INDIGENOUS WOMEN COMPRISE **6.7% OF THE FEMALE POPULATION**



## DID YOU KNOW?

Canada still discriminates on the basis of sex when it comes to the Indian Act. Early in 2019 the United Nations called on Canada to remove the sections that do not give First Nations women the same rights as First Nations men. While consultations have begun with the First Nations, the UN says there needs to be an end date.

**CONTEXTUAL TERMS** For the purpose of this report, references to "Indigenous" people should be understood as including First Nations, Métis and Inuit, non-status and status, on and off-reserve, recognizing that the term refers to distinct people, cultures and each with their own histories. In some cases where the research uses the word "Aboriginal," we have chosen to substitute "Indigenous."

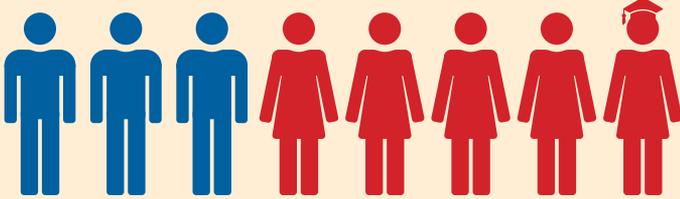
**Resilience** is a dynamic process of social/psychological adaptation and transformation that occurs in individuals, families, communities or larger social groups. Resilience can be considered to be as any positive outcome in the face of historical and current stressors. Aboriginal Peoples in Canada have diverse narratives of resilience based on their various unique histories and cultures/languages.

**Intergenerational trauma** is the transmission of historical oppression and its negative consequences across generations. There is evidence of the impact of intergenerational trauma on the health and well-being and on the health and social disparities facing Indigenous peoples in Canada and other countries.

# Education

Enrolment of Indigenous students in post-secondary education is on the rise:

Increasing by 1,176 students in 2016/17 to 1,261 in 2017/18 at the University of Alberta and from 624 to 733 students at the University of Calgary.



2,027 Indigenous individuals completed their program in the Alberta post-secondary education system.

IN THE SCHOOL YEAR 2017-2018:

**752** MALE **1,275** FEMALE

## ECF@WORK

Elizabeth Fry Society of Edmonton (EFS) received \$40,000 per year for 3 years for healthy housing supports for Indigenous Women to help them reintegrate after a period of incarceration. These housing options provide Indigenous cultural supports, opportunities for the women to live with their children, and connections to the wider host of programming available through Elizabeth Fry Society, reducing recidivism.

# Income & Employment

19% of Indigenous women are low income, compared to 9% of all women.

## MEDIAN INCOME FOR ALBERTA WOMEN IN 2015:

First Nations	Métis	All Women
<b>\$43,781</b>	<b>\$48,929</b>	<b>\$54,276</b>

Indigenous women are more likely than Indigenous men to hold jobs in **business, finance and administration, sales and services occupations.**

**23.5%** v.s. **5.4%**

A larger proportion of Indigenous women hold jobs in **education, law and social, community and government services** compared to the total female population.

**16.6%** v.s. **14.8%**

Indigenous women are likelier to hold **jobs in the trades** compared to all women.

**5.3%** v.s. **2.9%**

In 2016 there were **58,720 female Indigenous workers** in Alberta.

## THE TOP 3 AREAS OF EMPLOYMENT IN 2016 WERE:

Health care and social assistance	Retail trade	Educational services
<b>10,720</b>	<b>7,350</b>	<b>6,115</b>

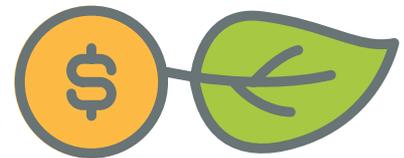
## DID YOU KNOW?

The **Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women (IAAW)** is a non-profit organization that recognizes the role, value, and achievement of Indigenous women in society and raises awareness about the challenges and obstacles faced by Indigenous women. IAAW is based in Edmonton and operates in chapters across Alberta. Their programs include:

- **IAAW ESQUAO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM** for Indigenous women to become more involved in their communities.
- **ESQUAO YOUTH LEADERSHIP** focusing on safety, healthy relationships, current events and public speaking.
- **ESQUAO AWARDS** that honour the significant role women play in healing and development of their communities.

*Esquao* is the stylized version of the Cree word for *woman*.

# Economic Resilience



According to a report from University nuhelot'jine thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills, economic well-being of women is holistic when **it is not tied just to income but participation in living off the land and subsistence activities.**

In 2012,



- 11.9%** of Indigenous women made clothing or footwear that year.
- 33.6%** made arts or crafts.
- 20.0%** of Indigenous women were interested, but cited a lack of time or resources to do so.

According to a report by IAAW and Status of Women Canada 2016, **the impact of intergenerational trauma creates barriers that affect income.**

- Saving and planning are **traditional values that have been lost.**
- The knowledge of **how to run a household, to parent, and to be parented** have been lost.
- These impacts have led to **ill health (mental, physical, spiritual) among Indigenous people**, as they were severed from knowledge of self-care and health-giving lifestyles.
- These factors make Indigenous people **less ready to become employed and to stay employed.**
- **Reduced economic prosperity** results in fewer Indigenous people who can qualify for home-ownership.
- We have an over-representation of Indigenous people in **sub-par housing situations.**

## Lone Parents

- Indigenous women AND men are about **twice as likely to be single parents** compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts.
- **12% of Indigenous women are single mothers** while 6.2% of non-Indigenous women are single mothers.

## Children in Care

Of the 10,647 children in care in June, 2018, **70% of children and youth in care are Indigenous**. This is a 1% increase compared to June, 2017.

Some **225 young Albertans have died** in foster care since 2008. Of these, **131 were Indigenous**.

## Health

Across Canada, a significantly higher percentage of **female First Nations adults (46.5%) compared to male First Nations adults (36.4%), reported co-morbidity** (the presence of two or more chronic health conditions).

This indicates that Indigenous women require health care and community-based supports to prevent and treat chronic illness, over and above what is currently available to them.

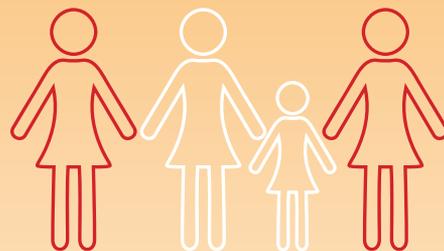
# VIOLENCE 3X

In Canada, Indigenous women and girls are nearly **more likely to experience physical or sexual violence** than non-Indigenous women and girls.

## MMIWG

- **16% OF ALL MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS CASES ARE FROM ALBERTA**; SECOND ONLY TO B.C. (28%).
- **84% OF ALBERTA CASES ARE FOR MURDER; 14% ARE MISSING CASES.**

**42% of cases in Alberta are still unsolved.**



## ACCORDING TO THE 2019 NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS:

- **No one knows the exact number** of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA people in Canada.
- Statistics show that rates of violence against Métis, Inuit, and First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people are **much higher than for non-Indigenous women** in Canada.
- This violence amounts to a **race-based genocide** that has been empowered by colonial structures, evidenced notably by the Indian Act, the Sixties Scoop, residential schools, and breaches of human rights.

## SPOUSAL ABUSE

- **Approximately 15% of Indigenous women reported spousal violence** by a current or former marital or common-law partner in the past five years, compared to 6% of non-Indigenous women.
- **Indigenous women were also two times more likely (34%) to report having experienced emotional or financial abuse** than non-Indigenous women (17%).
- Indigenous women experience **more serious forms of spousal violence** than their non-Indigenous counterparts.
- But, Indigenous women are **less likely to be murdered by a spouse** than a non-Indigenous woman (29% compared to 41%).

## DID YOU KNOW?

The "*I am a Kind Man*" program with the Canadian Native Friendship Centre engages men within Indigenous communities to speak out against all forms of abuse toward Indigenous women.

## HOMICIDE RATES

- The **rate of homicide** for female Indigenous victims (3.30/100,000) was **five times that of female non-Indigenous victims** (0.69/100,000) in Canada.
- Indigenous homicide rate compared to the population:  
**CALGARY 3% 14.77/100,000**  
**EDMONTON 5% 9.87/100,000**

## Incarceration

Colonization, residential schools, intergenerational trauma, poverty and addictions have led to an over-representation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system both as offenders and as victims.

- Indigenous women now make up more than **35% of the female prison population** and the numbers are growing.

## AVERAGE DAILY ADULT FEMALE CUSTODY POPULATION BY INDIGENOUS STATUS

- From 2001-02 to 2017-18, the female Indigenous inmate population has nearly tripled (196% increase) with an annual growth rate of 7.0%.

- In Canada, during the 2017/2018 year, **52% of female youth** admitted to correctional services were Indigenous.

- More than half (53%) of the female custody population in 2017-18 was Indigenous.

## WHAT IS A GLADUE REPORT?

A 1999 Supreme Court of Canada decision in *R v.s. Gladue* led to a recommendation that sentencing judges examine all possible alternatives to incarceration, with a special consideration to be made in the cases of Indigenous offenders. The decision aimed to address over-representation of Indigenous people in prisons. It stated that in order to determine an appropriate sentence, the judge must consider the background of the accused, as this can often be a mitigating factor.

# 12 Indigenous Women from Alberta you should know about...

## Pearl Calahasen

*Métis, born in Grouard, Alberta*

**FAMOUS FOR:** being the first Métis woman elected to public office in Alberta in 1989 as an MLA for the Lesser Slave Lake riding. She served for more than 26 years.

## Ashley Callingbull

*Member of the Enoch Cree First Nation*

**FAMOUS FOR:** being the first Canadian and first Indigenous woman to win Mrs. Universe in 2015. She is an actor for the Canadian television series *Blackstone* which is currently available on Netflix.

## Tantoo Cardinal

*Métis, born in Fort McMurray, Alberta*

**FAMOUS FOR:** achieving the Order of Canada in 2009 for "her contributions to the growth and development of Indigenous performing arts in Canada, as a screen and stage actor, and as a founding member of the Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company". In 2017, she won the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television's Earle Grey Award for lifetime achievement.

## Nellie Carlson

*Member of the Saddle Lake Cree Nation*

**FAMOUS FOR:** helping to organize the Indian Rights for Indian Women movement in the 1960s. Carlson fought tirelessly for 18 years to be recognized under the Indian Act after losing her status when she married a non-Indigenous man. This overturned oppressive laws that have harmed thousands of First Nations women and their descendants.

## Thelma Chalifoux

*Métis, born in Calgary, Alberta*

**FAMOUS FOR:** co-founding the Slave Lake Friendship Centre, being the first woman to receive the National Aboriginal Achievement Award, and became the first Indigenous, female Senator in 1997.

## Karen Crowshoe

*Blackfoot from the Piikani Reserve*

**FAMOUS FOR:** being the first Blackfoot woman to be sworn in to the Alberta Bar. In 2018, she became the first female First Nations provincial judge.

## Melina Laboucan-Massimo

*Member of the Lubicon Cree First Nation*

**FAMOUS FOR:** establishing the Pitâpan Solar Project for her community of Little Buffalo in 2015. She is the owner and founder of Lubicon Solar, a company looking to build energy alternatives in Alberta and she is the host of the television series *Power to the People*, airing on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network.

## Georgina Lightning

*Member of the Samson Cree Nation*

**FAMOUS FOR:** being the first North American Indigenous Woman to direct a major feature film in 2008 (*Older Than America*). In 2010 she received the White House Project Epic Award for Emerging Artist. She was the first Treaty First Nations Woman to be initiated into the Directors Guild of Canada - through the Calgary Division, 2019.

## Leona Makokis

*Member of the Saddle Lake Cree Nation*

**FAMOUS FOR:** transforming the University nuhelot'jne thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills from being only a host campus for other institutions to becoming the first independently accredited Indigenous institution to offer its own degrees during her tenure as Executive Director (1982-1988), and then again as President (1992-2010).

## Audrey Poitras

*Métis, born near Elk Point, Alberta*

**FAMOUS FOR:** becoming the first female president of the Métis Nation of Alberta in 1996 and in 2018, was re-elected for her eighth term.

## Marlene Poitras

*Member of the Mikisew Cree First Nation*

**FAMOUS FOR:** becoming the first woman to be elected as the Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief of Alberta in 2018.

## Muriel Stanley Venne

*Métis, born in Lamont, Alberta*

**FAMOUS FOR:** being appointed one of the first seven commissioners of the Alberta Human Rights Commission in 1973. She is a member of the Order of Canada (2005) and recipient of the Alberta Order of Excellence (2019).