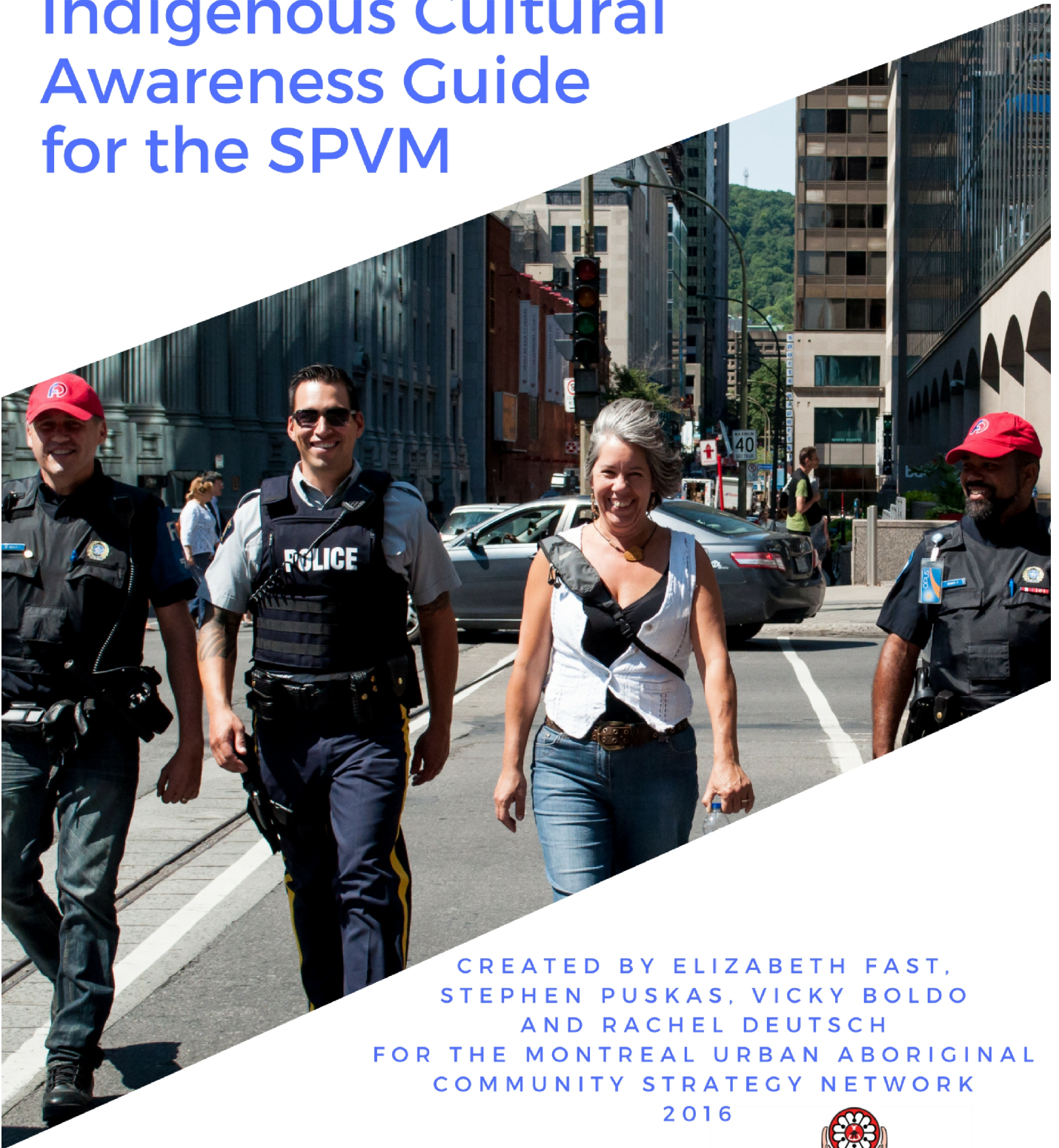


# Indigenous Cultural Awareness Guide for the SPVM



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## The objectives of this guide

This guide will help facilitators sensitize the SPVM on the realities of Canada's Indigenous people through cultural awareness and activities.

Indigenous people have a long history in Montreal and are a rapidly growing, diverse and vibrant population. Indigenous peoples in Montreal are proud of their culture and the majority of indigenous people in Montreal know their ancestry well. They hope to retain their cultural identity while becoming a significant and visible part of the urban landscape.

Despite the connection Indigenous people have to this city, a major national commission (TRC) found that there is a lack of education about Indigenous people in Canada that leads to misunderstanding and other research has shown that Montreal residents are the least aware of Indigenous people in their city compared to other major cities in Canada.

Indigenous women are facing a national crisis of violence, disappearance and murder that requires police sensitivity and response. Throughout Canada, Indigenous people are very overrepresented in correctional facilities and it is important to understand the historical context and systemic causes of incarceration, criminality and victimization, which have implications for police. Indigenous people are also very overrepresented in the homeless population and come into contact with police through the implementation of bylaws. This is why as employees of the SPVM, it is important to know about Indigenous people and how to better work together.

In June 2015, the SPVM signed an agreement with the Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy NETWORK. A big part of this agreement was for SPVM employees to receive sensitization on Indigenous realities so that they could work more effectively with the community and relationships could improve.

## Some general information

The term Indigenous peoples refers to the first peoples who lived in Canada prior to European contact, as well as their descendants. The Constitution Act of 1982 states that the Indigenous peoples of Canada includes the First Nations (Indian), Inuit and Métis peoples. Sometimes, this group is also referred to as Aboriginal.

In Québec there are about 79,000 Indigenous peoples who account for 1.2% of the population.

There are 10 First Nations in Quebec that can be divided into two linguistic families:

- The Algonquin linguistic family, which includes the Abenaki, Algonquin, Atikamekw, Cree, Innu, Maliseet, Mik'maq and Naskapi nations
- The Iroquoian linguistic family, which includes the Wendat and Mohawk nations.

The Inuit are a distinct group separate from the First Nations and Métis whose language belongs to the Eskimo-Aleut family.

There are also thousands of First Nations, Inuit and Métis from outside of Québec that now live in the province.

In the greater Montreal area, there are at least 26, 285 people that identify as Indigenous, who come from all parts of Canada, with some having lived in Montreal for all of their lives. There are at least 14,750 First Nations in Montreal, 8,840 Métis and up to 1,500 Inuit.

According to Statistics Canada, Montreal's Indigenous population is quickly growing. It was the fastest growing in the country between 2001 and 2006, increasing by 62 percent. Indigenous adults are also over-represented in Quebec's jails and Indigenous people represent 10% of the homeless population in Montreal, but only make up 0.6% of the overall population in the city.

## Some historical and political context

### Missionaries, Christianity and First Peoples in Canada

Missionaries had the goal of ‘civilizing’ First Peoples in Canada. Through missionaries, Christianity penetrated various pockets of Indigenous societies, with the aim of replacing their local beliefs and cultures. This mainly involved attempts to ‘convert’ local Aboriginal people to Christianity, but also, as Métis scholar and activist Howard Adam points out: missionaries performed other roles in colonization, such as ‘softening up’ Indigenous communities for land speculators and railroad builders, and acting as local ‘spies’—especially during times of local resistance.

Missionaries arrived at different times and from different churches. But, in general, they all saw the spiritual and cultural practices of Indigenous communities as inferior to Europeans, symbolic of demons, or at a minimum, as an absence of faith. Local spiritual practices were often viewed as directly opposing Christian faith and the objectives of colonization—meaning that they needed to be dissolved and replaced with Christianity.

Their views were reflected in missionary biographies and literature, which became increasingly popular to international audiences who were eager to read about ‘exotic’ and ‘primitive’ cultures. Local people were depicted through the eyes of the missionary, who often used stereotypes of the ‘savage’, ‘archaic’, and ‘untamed native’ in their writings. The missionary, on the other hand, was depicted as noble, heroic, and ambitious; on a mission to ‘uplift’, and in the words of one enthusiast, “raise the less favored of the earth to the higher planes of Christian civilization!”.

### **New France and the Jesuits**

The Jesuit mission to New France in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was very well documented.

In New France, only those who accepted conversion were allowed to be integrated into newly colonized territory. Indigenous subjects who were ‘successfully’ converted were referred to as ‘children’ who were ‘adopted’ by the King. Jesuit missionaries also focused on becoming ‘adopted’ themselves— into local Indigenous communities. This was considered the best way to convert a local nation: from within. Those who were converted by the Jesuits were then considered ‘adopted children’ of God.

The Jesuits were established in Canada in 1625 and sought to preach, conquer, and instill a disciplined expression of faith in local Indigenous populations. One of the groups they sought to convert were the Montagnais of north eastern Quebec and Labrador, a mission that ended up being more difficult than expected. Local groups were reluctant to change their traditional ways of life. Their traditional ways included feasting when food was abundant and enduring famine when food was scarce; or the mingling of men, women, and dogs at night for warmth. Therefore a new model of conversion was proposed: to learn the local language, establish hospitals to attract those in need, relocate people closer to French settlements, and establish seminaries to indoctrinate children.

There were also missions further north; in the 1850s missionaries visited Inuit at posts such as Little Whale River and in 1876 a permanent missionary, Minister Peck was posted in Whale River and a mobile church was delivered. Minister Peck devised a system of syllabics for writing Inuktitut and translated portions of the Bible's New Testament into Inuktitut. By late 1880s, as fewer Inuit came to trade and the Hudson's Bay Company abandoned its post, Reverend Peck moved the church and mission to Great Whale River and later established Mission posts on Baffin Island to serve his growing numbers of baptisms.

One of the ways the Jesuits got access to Indigenous children was by approaching families who were starving, offering to feed their children, and then requiring them to send their children to boarding schools to be taught Christianity. Many families actively resisted this process, just as many First Nations resisted the entire presence of missionaries and French colonization. However children were persistently targeted and viewed by colonists and missionaries as ripe targets for religious conversion and cultural assimilation: they were seen as easier to contain in one place (through schools), and were positioned as the key to converting others in the future.

### The Indian Act and land claim agreements

The Indian Act affects First Nations only and was created in 1876 and was effectively a way of removing Indigenous peoples from the land to create more room for immigrants in the late 1800s. The first legal definition of who was an *Indian* in the Indian Act of 1876 was: 1. Any male person of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band; 2. Any child of such



person; 3. Any woman who is or was lawfully married to such person. These definitions were created without consultation with the Indigenous peoples to whom they pertained and the government wanted to ensure that as few people as possible were eligible for Indian status.

As a way of enforcing the regulations in the Indian Act, Indian agents gained the authority to control all matters of law on reserve and in 1884 another set of amendments allowed them to conduct trials whenever they wished. Some of the earliest encounters for Indigenous people with the Indian agents were bans on their governance systems and spiritual ceremonies. So, law enforcers began their interactions with Indigenous people in painful and oppressive ways.

The Indian Act had particular repercussions on how Indigenous women were identified. A status Indian woman who married a non-Indian lost her status, as did her descendants. However the opposite was not true; a non-Indian woman who married an Indian man took on his status, as did her children. All status Indian women lost their band status and became members of their husband's band upon marriage. The Act removed the real property rights of Indigenous women and gave them a lower class of citizenship in relation to both non-Indigenous peoples and First Nations men. Some of these discriminatory policies were corrected in 1985 through Bill C-31, but not before many Native women lost their status.

# Les Nations 2015

## Les Nations

- FAMILLE LINGUISTIQUE / LINGUISTIC FAMILY**
- ALGONQUIENNE / ALGONQUIAN**
    - Abénakis | Abenakis
    - Algonquins
    - Atikamekw
    - Cris | Crees
    - Innus
    - Malécites | Maliseet
    - Micmacs
    - Naskapis
  - IROQUOISIENNE / IROQUOIAN**
    - Hurons-Wendat
    - Mohawks
  - ESKIMO-ALÉOUTE / ESKIMO-ALEUT**
    - Inuits | Inuit



[aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/nations](http://aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/nations)



Affaires autochtones et  
Développement du Nord Canada

Aboriginal Affairs and  
Northern Development Canada

Canada



Treaties were agreements signed between the federal government and many First Nations. First Nations saw treaties as establishing mutually beneficial relationships between themselves and the settler governments. However Canadian government officials saw treaties as a means of extinguishing land rights. While treaties were signed with many First Nations in Canada, large territories were never covered in treaties. Contemporary land claims have been negotiated in many areas, however most others settlements have not yet been achieved. There are currently over six hundred reserves in Canada, areas set aside for First Nations communities, some as a result of treaty negotiations and others as a result of provincial or federal government policy in absence of treaties. Most reserves were established far away from urban areas.

No treaties were signed with the Inuit, who live farther north than most First Nations, and were not considered as much of an obstacle in clearing the land for new immigrants. Métis land rights were abolished by issuing scripts, or certificates, which entitled the Métis to claim money or land, which were subject to widespread fraud and rarely provided the Métis with any concrete compensation for rights to their ancestral lands. So, over the years, most Indigenous people lost much of their land and their rights.

Despite asserting sovereignty and administering residential schools, there was a lack of regular contact between the Canadian government and Inuit.

Inuit do not live on reserves since the Indian Act governs the reserve system. Inuit live in communities that are governed by land-claims and self-government agreements.

The northern region of Quebec, known as Nunavik was the District of Ungava of the Northwest Territories after the Hudson's Bay Company ceded the land to Canada. Ungava was transferred to Quebec in 1912 in the *Quebec Boundaries Extension Act*. Under the act, Quebec was responsible to settle land claims with the Inuit and Cree populations in Ungava, but the Quebec government neglected to do so for over 50 years. Quebec did not exert their authority over Nunavik until the 1960s when Renée Levesque's government wanted to explore economic development in the north.

The first land claims agreement between Inuit and non-Inuit was the *James Bay Agreement and Northern Quebec Agreement* in 1975 between the Cree, Inuit and Quebec government. The next substantial land claim for Inuit was the official recognition of Nunavut as a Canadian territory in 1999.

Of the 53 Inuit communities in Canada, there is only 1 road that connects 1 community to southern Canada: the road from Yellowknife to Inuvik. All communities are coastal communities except for Baker Lake in Nunavut. As of 2011, the Inuit population in Canada was 59,115 of which 73% live in land claim regions and 27% live outside of land claims regions.

### Residential Schools

There were two eras of residential schooling; the most recent one started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The government felt that by educating Indigenous children they could teach them to forget their cultures and help the government with their plan to eradicate Canada of Indigenous peoples. Residential schooling thus became mandatory for “registered Indians” wherever it was available and children were removed from their homes by school officials and/or police if they did not come willingly. Residential schools were also widely used in Inuit regions and many Inuit children were also removed from their homes. In June 1964, 75 percent of Inuit children and youth aged six to 15 years were enrolled in the schools. A total of 150, 000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were placed in residential schools.

Children were taught that the world was a European place within which only European values and beliefs had meaning. If this lesson was successful, an Indigenous child would see their own culture as savage superstition. Indigenous children lost their language and many lost their connection to their families and cultures during their time in the residential schools.

### Abuse and Neglect

Residential schools were chronically under-funded leading to unsanitary conditions, health epidemics, and hundreds of child deaths. In some instances inspectors found raw sewage in sleeping and eating quarters of the children and that despite being reported to the authorities, little change occurred. Reports of inadequate standards of clothing and food were also

common and demands by parents to return their children home to live in better conditions went unanswered. New historical research says aboriginal children and adults were once used as unwitting subjects in nutritional experiments by the Canadian government that included purposeful withholding of food in residential schools to study the effects of malnutrition.

Underfunding also meant poorly trained and underpaid staff that employed harsh physical discipline, often leading to physical abuse to control the children. Solitary confinement was another punishment used for children.

Widespread sexual abuse also came to public awareness in the late 1980s when adult survivors began coming forward. Surveys of some schools have found that between 48% and 70% of the children were victims of physical or sexual abuse. Furthermore, this number may be an underestimate due to some of the survivors' denial of the horrendous abuse they suffered. In some schools, children tried to escape and many died from drowning or freezing in remote or water-locked areas. In many instances, the effects of abuse on the residents started to be seen when the older children began victimizing the younger children.

Because of the lack of parental role modeling and widespread physical and sexual abuse while attending residential schools, generations of survivors need a lot of help and support to re-develop their capacity to have nurturing intimate and attached relationships with their own children. Much of the new generation of Indigenous people is looking to their cultures and communities for strength and healing and many have satisfying and healthy relationships and families showing their resilience.

## **The Sixties Scoop**

Over 11,000 Indigenous children, including up to one-third of the child population in some First Nations communities were adopted to non-Indigenous families between 1960 and 1990. Some adoptive families were geographically distant from their birth families. Entire generations of children was lost in some communities. Between 70% and 85% of all status First Nations children adopted between 1971 and 1981 were adopted by non-Indigenous parents, including many in the United States so many children lost their connection to their culture and communities completely.

## Current Indigenous overrepresentation in child welfare system

The current number of Indigenous children in care of the youth protection system is higher than the number of children in residential schools during the height of the schools' history. First Nations children are more than twelve times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be placed in out-of-home care in the youth protection system. On the Island of Montreal, at least one third of children in care are Indigenous.

## Historical and intergenerational trauma

Because of the history that Indigenous people in this country went through, many experience trauma passed down generationally, also known historical trauma. Historical trauma can show itself through higher rates of addictions, mental health problems and violence. Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski (2004) write that the term refers to Indigenous people in Canada experiencing a cluster of traumatic events that cause deep breakdowns in social functioning, mental health issues, loss of culture, and can last for generations. While many Indigenous people are very healthy and lead fulfilling lives, many continue to suffer psychologically and socially because of the effects of what they and their communities have gone through. Historical trauma needs to be treated with understanding and sensitivity.

## Government Apologies and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

In 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper publicly apologized for Canada's role in the "aggressive assimilation" of Indigenous children through the government-supported, church-run residential schools. The apology was an admission that the idea was not only deeply flawed, but had caused a great deal of pain and damage for generations of Indigenous families. This acknowledgement of the tragedy, while important, did not mean that government and Indigenous relations improved as cuts to programming to Indigenous communities ensued.

The *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (TRC) was a commission organized as part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. Officially established on June 2, 2008, it was completed in June, 2015 with a long list of recommendations on how to repair the effects of the schools. One major recommendation was education and awareness and that every level of society take responsibility in this.



## Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

Indigenous women and girls in Canada are disproportionately affected by all forms of violence. Although Indigenous women make up 4 per cent of Canada's female population, 16 per cent of all women murdered in Canada between 1980 and 2012 were Indigenous. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)'s 2014 report *Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: An Operational Overview* identified a total of 1,181 missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Some organizations estimate this number to be much higher. The perpetrators in many of these cases were non-Indigenous men, some cases involved serial murders, and still others were committed by people in positions of authority, including police officers and RCMP. Many Indigenous families, communities and organizations, as well as non-governmental and international organizations, have urged the Government of Canada to take action and call a national inquiry. The government of Canada is currently launching a national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

## Victimization and underreporting of crime

Indigenous Canadians are twice as likely as non-Indigenous Canadians to report being a victim of a violent offence. Previous victimization is a strong indicator of future victimization. This has important implications for Indigenous communities. If members of these communities are impacted by historical traumas, they are also more likely to be victims of multiple events over their lifetime.

Despite high rates of violence, there is not a lot of impetus for women in general to report sexual assault even though one in three women in Canada will be sexually assaulted in their lives and even less so for Indigenous women who face multiple barriers. Indigenous people are less likely to report crimes. Furthermore, distrust of the justice system, feelings of cultural shame, trauma, feelings of personal responsibility and socio-economic disadvantage all impact on Indigenous peoples' access to the justice system.

## Social Determinants of Health

Census 2006 data indicates that the First Nations unemployment rate was nearly three times the rate compared to non-Indigenous (18% vs. 6.3%) and that the median income was much lower for First Nations than for non-Indigenous. First Nations median income in 2006 was

\$14,477, while the median income for non-Indigenous was \$25,955. The situation was even worse on reserves.

On-reserve First Nations are four times more likely than non-Indigenous people to live in a home in need of major repair (28% vs. 7%). This forces families to live in unhealthy and crowded living conditions, often without basic resources such as clean drinking water, working toilets or functioning sewage systems. This exposes children and their family members to infectious molds, bacteria, accidental physical injury, emotional stress and health problems like asthma, bronchitis and tuberculosis.

Inuit have the highest rates of tuberculosis in Canada (157.5 per 100,000 compared to 0.08 per 100,000 in non-Aboriginal Canadian population).

In Nunavik, 68% of Inuit live in overcrowded houses. In a study published in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, researchers found that overcrowded living conditions cause serious negative consequences on the body's major systems: heart, lungs, nerves, immunity and metabolism.

Without a good system of coordination, projects to improve quality of life are often implemented in partial and incomplete ways. For example, the federal government is responsible for First Nations housing and infrastructure, including health care, but the provincial government is responsible for social assistance and other social services.

## Indigenous peoples in Montreal

More than half of Indigenous people in Canada now live in cities. The most urbanized Indigenous peoples are non-status First Nations (or non-status Indians) and Métis, with 74 percent and 66 percent, respectively, living in urban areas. Inuit are the least urbanized, with less than 30 percent living in an urban centre.

The unique combination of being colonized in English, while the language of the majority in the province speaks French, can contribute to the increased vulnerability of Montreal's Inuit and other non-French speaking Indigenous people.

The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study published a report on Montreal in 2011 and found that: urban Aboriginal peoples are seeking to become a significant and visible part of the urban landscape, most Aboriginal Montrealers feel discrimination of Aboriginal peoples is a pervasive problem, there is widespread agreement in Montreal that Aboriginal services are needed in addition to mainstream services, and the top life aspirations for Aboriginal peoples in Montreal include raising a family and higher education.

Indigenous people are overrepresented in the homeless population in Montreal. Also, although Inuit form 10% of population of Indigenous in Montreal, they represent 45% of homeless Indigenous.

The experience of homelessness is different for Indigenous women. There are more women among the Indigenous homeless population than are found in the non-Indigenous population. However, the availability of emergency beds and other services for Indigenous women are limited even in the largest cities. Indigenous women who are homeless may have experienced family violence that led them to abandon their home, or they may have experienced the end of a marriage or common law relationship that has resulted in their being required to leave the family home.

## What brings Indigenous people to Montreal?

Some of the most frequent reasons people move to Montreal are to be closer to family, to go to school, and to have more employment opportunities.

Although reasons are similar for Inuit and First Nations, it was found that specifically among Inuit that come to Montreal, “pull factors” were to:

- Accompany (or live with) a family member, partner, sick person, a friend
- Seek employment
- Receive medical services
- Seek education opportunities

And “push factors” were:

- Lack of housing: 68% of Nunavik Inuit live in overcrowded houses.
- Steady increase of hidden homelessness in Nunavik communities; they are often called couch surfers.
- Family problems: drugs and alcohol abuse, divorce, suicide
- Physical abuse, sexual abuse
- High cost of living
- Lack of employment
- Relocation of Inuit to federal and provincial detention centres
- Food insecurity (6 Inuit out of 10 do not have enough to eat)

## History of Indigenous peoples in Montreal

First Nations have been in the area of Montreal for at least 4, 000 years. Montreal is currently located on the iroquoien village of Tiohtià:ke. The Mohawk nation or Kanien'kehá:ka have long been near the island of Montreal.

Geoffrey York, in his book *People of the Pines* wrote about the impactful Oka Crisis that helped to shape current relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Montrealers. “For 78 days in the summer of 1990, Canadians were transfixed by the dramatic images of Mohawk warriors in an armed standoff with the Quebec police and the Canadian army. It was a crisis that paralyzed an entire province, gripped the nation's imagination, and forever transformed the politics of aboriginal people in Canada.”

Inuit in Quebec started to move to communities established by missionaries and the federal government in the 1950s where minimal healthcare and education services were provided. Inuit have had to fly south since to access more advanced healthcare and post-secondary education. One large migration was in the 1950s and 60s when one seventh of the Inuit population was brought south for tuberculosis treatment. The hundreds who died were often buried in pauper's graves and their family was not informed of their loved ones for decades.



Inuit presence through the arts scene in Montreal dated earlier than the 50s. The Canadian Handicrafts Guild held their first Inuit art exhibition in Montreal in 1930 at the McCord Museum. Inuit art has been present in Montreal since

Many Inuit have also been forced to migrate to penitentiaries in the south of the province. For various reasons, many Inuit who have been incarcerated in the south often do not return north and end up in Montreal.

Once in Montreal, there are language barriers to finding employment, housing, and services since the second language in Nunavik was English for over 50 years prior to Quebec's presence in the north. The language barrier for Inuit from Nunavut and Labrador is stronger because English is the second language in these regions.

### Difficult relationships

Montreal has the largest demographic of people who are unaware of an Indigenous community within their own city and are the least aware of residential schools compared to 10 other major cities in Canada (excluding Quebec City). The majority of non-Indigenous Montrealers do not see any change in their relationship with Indigenous people over time.

*Discrimination* is considered the top challenge for urban Indigenous peoples across the country. Understanding terms like oppression, privilege, and power is key to getting to the bottom of why discrimination happens.

*Oppression* is defined as allowing certain groups of people to assume a dominant position over other groups and this dominance is maintained and continued at an institutional level. This means oppression is built into institutions like government and education systems. Systems of oppression run through our language and shape the way we act.

It is often easier to focus on how people are oppressed, disadvantaged and discriminated against than it is to address how we as individuals may have privileges and as a result are able to exercise our power at the expense of others.

One definition of power is “the ability to get what you want.” Some people have more of this ability than others. *Power-over* is power that is used in a discriminatory and oppressive way: It means having power over others and therefore domination and control over others (e.g. through coercion and violence). *Power-with* is power that is shared with other people who are struggling. In other words, it means using or exercising one’s power to work with others equitably.

Privilege is an unearned, special advantage or right that a person is born into or acquires during their lifetime.

Indigenous people experience everyday *microaggressions*, which are non-physical acts of violence and oppression. Frequently non-verbal, microaggressions are simply the small ways that people with power intentionally or unintentionally make it clear that they belong to the “normal” group. They may sound like a compliment when they are not. For example, “colour blindness” (“I don’t see you as Indigenous, you’re just a person”) or denial of bias (“I’m not racist, I have a Native friend”). It can also be simply a look. For example, when an Indigenous person enters a store and the clerk watches them until they leave.

## Cultural Safety

Cultural safety means addressing the power imbalances, including between service user and service provider. It requires:

- 1) that the service user’s way of knowing and being is valid
- 2) that the service user is a partner in decision making process
- 3) that the service user determines whether or not the care they have received is culturally safe or not

Not everyone has the same relationship to those in positions of authority and power. Communication may also be hampered by traumatic pasts and by experiences of assault and discrimination by non-Indigenous Canadians.

Some of the best strategies to communicate inter-culturally are to show respect, be aware of

differences, be flexible in your approach whenever possible, recognize the complexity of intercultural communication, avoid stereotyping, and recognizing that everyone comes with their own unique experiences.

### **Intercultural communication, cultural values and respect**

Each Indigenous group has its own unique culture; yet some Indigenous groups are related and share similar guiding thoughts and traditional values.

These common threads running through many Indigenous cultures are sometimes referred to as foundational worldviews. Traditional Indigenous worldviews see health and wellbeing, for example, as holistic and that they span spiritual, physical, emotional and mental dimensions. Relationships and experiences of the past, present and future are interconnected.

Over the centuries, Indigenous lifestyles have remained closely connected to the environment and the land. Indigenous values are often described as eco-centric, valuing the land, whereas European values are ego-centric, valuing the self.

First Nations nurture a spiritual connection with the four vital elements – earth, water, air and fire –, each one associated with a different stage of life – childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age – and with the four seasons – spring, summer, fall and winter. Those elements are part of their social and spiritual universe, which is made up of four dimensions: human, animal, vegetable and mineral.

One of the fundamental teachings of First Nations cultures is that the circle of life involves both giving and receiving.

When many First Nations hunters prepare for a hunt, they offer prayers and gifts to the Creator and to the spirit of the animal they are hunting. If these offerings are made in a respectful way, the hunters believe that the animals would accept the gifts and present themselves to the people. In some First Nations cultures, small bits of food, tobacco and sweetgrass are often presented as gifts in exchange for what the land or the environment has provided.

Patience is very important for Inuit when it came to traditional hunting; a hunter would sit in front of a small part of open ice for hours, waiting to hunt a seal that would come up to breath. However, it is also important to let go of things beyond one's control, which may seem contradictory to their value of patience. Letting go is an acceptable response, which may happen when dealing with public servants and medical specialists. It's prioritizing basic needs like securing food than dealing with what is deemed non-essential. Inuit may feel like they have no right to say what they think to officials when they feel that their opinions are unwanted or not relevant and practice the value of letting go.

Traditionally, Inuit value independence, innovation and patience. These traits ensure survival in the arctic environment and are valuable contributions when living in groups. Inuit are known as masterful toolmakers: able to make tools and clothes out of what materials they have on hand.

Sharing is also an important virtue. The tradition of sharing food is very strong and is still practiced here in Montreal at Inuit community feasts. The introduction of money and things that money buys has created some confusion with the value of sharing.

Non-interference is a part of independence. Inuit feel uncomfortable responding to questions regarding other people. Speaking about others when they are not around is considered a violation of privacy. There is no obligation to explain behaviour or plans when they do not directly affect or involve others. This can create conflict in non-Inuit environments where employers and officials require this type of information.

Because of independence and non-interference, many Inuit do not feel comfortable exerting authority over others. Many Inuit do not like the idea of being in a leadership role. Some Inuit do not like recognizing another in a leadership role.

Displaying emotions is a private matter; strangers may see a smiling Inuk in public, but they may feel very differently and show their true emotions in smaller, more intimate settings. Emotions are often expressed very subtly, using the tone of the voice or simply raising the eyebrows or nodding their head.

Inuit often withdraw from and decide to observe unfamiliar social or professional situations.



Inuit may often be non-communicative in new situations as well. They often find non-Inuit more aggressive, nosey, and more open with giving their opinions. They may subtly express the disapproval of another's behavior and will want to withdraw from constant contact with non-Inuit.

Saying "yes" is often done by raising the eyebrows and "no" is expressed by wrinkling the nose.

## Traditional healing

Some Indigenous people are very firmly entrenched in Indigenous cultural experiences; others, however, have had extensive experience with the non-Indigenous influences. One legacy of the residential school and substitute care systems for Indigenous people has been the lack of Indigenous cultural experiences for many. These individuals are not culture-less, rather, they simply have had little or no experience in an Indigenous cultural milieu, especially during initial developmental stages.

First Nations traditional healing is holistic and focuses on different areas of health means. The physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of the human being are all interrelated; weakness in any of these areas causes a person to become unbalanced. Healers may use certain traditional medicines and/or ceremonies in their work to keep away illnesses and/or improve physical, mental or spiritual health. For example, the sweat lodge ceremony used by many First Nations can be helpful for people who have experienced trauma.

## Strengths and resilience

There are many Indigenous people and communities that are thriving despite the ways that colonization and current structural inequalities impact Indigenous peoples. A growing number of studies have shown that attempts made to re-gain control over Indigenous identities, sometimes referred to as *decolonizing*, reduce disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Communities that have made attempts to gain greater control of land and their own services have been found to have lower suicide rates, and reduced reliance on social assistance and

unemployment. They also have found an emergence of diverse and viable economic enterprises on their own land, more effective management of social services and programs, including language and cultural components, as well as improved management of natural resources. One form of decolonization is a return to traditional culture and spirituality. Most on-reserve and urban First Nations communities have retained or returned to traditional ways of healing, or integrated these with western ways. Two studies of First Nations living on-reserve found that greater levels of interest in culture and spirituality were associated with better mental health outcomes, particularly among youth.

Language revitalization and preservation are major concerns to all nations. Today, in Quebec, there are five nations where most people still speak their Native language: the Algonquins (Algonquin), the Atikamekw (Atikamekw), the Crees (Cree), the Innus (Innu-Aimun) and the Naskapis (Naskapi). Some communities such as Kahnawake and Kanesatake are making considerable efforts to revitalize their language. Inuit in Nunavik speak their language, Inuktitut.

## Glossary (Inuktitut/French)

Greetings: Ai/ Aa

Good-bye: takulaarivugut

Until next time: Atsunai

Have a good day: Ulluhatsiarit

Good morning: Ullaakut

Goodnight: Unnukut

Welcome: Tungasugit

Do you speak English: Halunatitut suunguviit?

What is your name: Kinauvit?

My name is Jean: Jeanvunga

What about you?: Ipvili?

How are you?: Hanuippiit?

I am fine: Hanuingitunga

Are you ok? Hanuingilatii?

Can you hear me? Tusaavignaa?

Do you need help? Iqaayut tauviit?

Can I help you? Iqaayut lagiit?

Do you know who I am? Ginau gni mama hauri maviit?

I don't know: Aatsuuk

Me too: Uvangalu

Yes: Aa

No: Auka

Let's go: Atii

Where are you going: Namungasivit?

My family: Ilakka

Home: Anirak

Are you hungry: Kaappiit?

I am hungry: Kaappunga

## Case study and reflection

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Anita moved with her children Samantha (7 years) and Sabrina (4 years) to Montreal from Kuujuaq, the largest northern Inuit city in Nunavik. The family moved to Montreal because they were living in a house with Anita's father, six other adults and seven other children. There was not enough housing in the community. Anita also wanted to get away from what she felt were too many drugs and alcohol in the north. When they got to Montreal, Anita found an apartment she could afford, but when she met the landlord, he told her it was already rented out. She ended up staying in a friend of a friends' house with her children.

Most of Anita's older relatives attended federal schools for Inuit and were separated from their parents, extended families and communities for most of their childhoods. Anita's father was sexually abused and her mother was physically abused for speaking her language. Anita's parents do not often talk about their experiences at federal schools, but she has heard of them from other relatives. Anita's mother did not like alcohol, but when she became depressed and anxious thinking about her childhood, she turned to alcohol as a way to forget the past.

Anita had never finished high school but she previously worked at an airport in Kuujuaq. When she arrived in Montreal she had a hard time finding work because she did not speak French. Anita had never wanted to drink, because she saw all of the damage that alcohol did to others in her community that were dealing with emotional pain. However, Anita started feeling depressed, isolated, and stressed after moving to Montreal because she was running out of her small savings. Anita started drinking occasionally in the evenings after her children were asleep. One day Samantha mentioned to her teacher that mom didn't have a job or an apartment and had been drinking the night before. The teacher called the Department Youth Protection (DYP) and told them that she thought Samantha lived on the streets, but she didn't know anything else about the family situation.

The DYP decided to investigate and concluded that the children were at risk. Anita was not good at communicating with DYP and was very nervous and upset everytime she had to do

so. The children were placed in a foster home in Montreal. Anita became extremely depressed once her children were placed and started drinking every day. After 30 days, the DYP went back to court, but Anita was so scared of losing her children permanently and so depressed that she became too intoxicated to attend court. The social worker recommended that the children be placed in foster care for a year while their mother seeks treatment for alcohol abuse. Anita lost touch with the social worker and lost all hope that she would ever get her children back as she had seen too many people in her community lose their children. Eventually, Samantha and Sabrina were adopted by two different families.

Instead of getting better, Anita sunk further into depression after losing her children. She began sleeping in parks. She was eventually ticketed by police several times for drinking and sleeping in parks. Anita was the victim of a sexual assault while she was sleeping in a park. Because of her previous run-ins with police, and the fact that she was still drinking, she did not want to go to the police.

### **Reflection questions:**

1. How has Anita been affected by her family's past?
  2. How has Anita been affected by a lack of resources (i.e. housing)?
  3. Were there any occasions since moving to Montreal that Anita experienced explicit racism?
  4. How was Anita particularly vulnerable as a woman?
  5. What could police intervention do to better support Anita?
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### **Some tips from other police about working with Indigenous people**

- Because Indigenous offending is related to both poverty and underlying trauma, the Indigenous Liaison officers of the SPVM and the Vancouver Police Department say that they are more effective when using a psycho-social and holistic approach that responds to things like addiction and mental health.
- Be very sincere and build relationships before something goes wrong or before your help is needed. Take the time needed to understand why the person is in difficulty and

then figure out how you could best intervene. Once you build the relationship and build trust, you can have a healthy relationship, exchange knowledge, and better serve and protect.

- Sharing where you are from and a bit about your own story can help build trust.
- In the end, real trust is built by actions.
- It helps to be known by name in the community. Involve yourself in the community.
- Try to go to community events if you are welcome, learn about protocols like how to approach elders or enter Indigenous spaces. If you don't know what to do, ask!
- Host events for the community if possible. Community dinners or Inuit feasts help build relationships. Share information openly with the community on how you work.
- When someone has a symptom, there is a reason behind it. If you can understand why someone is suffering, it can help you intervene. It is very important to be patient and understand that the pain is deep and might be going on for generations. Realize that there is a historical aspect to current behaviours.
- Go from the bottom up, not from the top down. Figure out what is really going on underneath.

## Activities

### Activity on residential schools:

The facilitator should give a background about residential schools and why is it important for police to learn about residential schools and how this experience has affected generations of Indigenous, even today.

1. Ask participants to imagine how they would feel if they were taken away from their homes and forced to attend a boarding school far away from their home at a young age (it was mandatory for children aged 7-15 as of 1920).
2. Tell participants that according to the Indigenous Healing Foundation, "assimilation" is described as "the social process of absorbing one cultural group into another." The process of assimilation was marked out in three clear stages: separation, socialization and assimilation
3. How do you think if your grandparents, great-grandparents and/or great-great-grandparents attended residential schools, that their experiences would have an impact on your life today?
4. Ask participants to create a short skit in which a family is adjusting to having their children return from Indian Residential School after a three-year absence. Students will need at least two characters (a residential school student and a parent), but they may have more: one or more students, a mother, a father, a grandparent, brothers and sisters. Encourage students to put themselves in the shoes of the character they are portraying. What were some of the problems experienced by the children and their



parents when the students arrived home? What effect did the Indian Residential Schools have on the way Indigenous members felt about themselves as students and parents?

**Here is an activity to help understand how historical trauma might affect people you come across in your job.**

Most of the quotes from the activities in this guide come from the Indigenous Healing Foundation series which funded evaluations of programs that were aimed at healing Indigenous individuals and communities impacted by residential schools.

Here is a quote from a woman who was sexually abused as a child:

I came to understand that it wasn't because of me that these things happened. It was because this had happened to my aunt and uncle and grandfather and great-grandfather...all the way back...it was being collected from the point of European contact and being spilled out on the youngest generation each time (McEvoy & Daniluk, 1995p. 229).

Reflection questions:

- What did she feel about her childhood sexual abuse?
- What are some of the effects of shame on the way she might currently live?

Some answers: This quote demonstrates the importance in understanding trauma as a manifestation of historical wrongdoings that get passed down from one generation to the next.

Activity on privilege and oppression:

Part One

*Participants stand in a straight line in the middle of an empty room. Tell participants that some statements might be of a sensitive nature for some individuals, and that they do not have to respond to any statement that is uncomfortable. Read the statements below.*

If I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed, take a step forward.

If I turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented, take a step forward.

If when I drink of alcohol, people assume I am an alcoholic, take a step back.

If I fail at something and I don't have to worry about representing or bringing shame to all the people of my racial group, take a step forward.

If I yell at my children in public or if they run away from me and I worry that Youth Protection will be called, take a step back.

When I am told about our nation's or provinces history and founding fathers, I am shown pictures of people who look like me, take a step forward.

If my children learn about their history at school, take a step forward.

If your parents or grandparents went to residential schools or were adopted, take a step back.

If you believe that you were *denied employment* because of your race, gender, or ethnicity, take 1 step back.

If you believe that you were *paid less* because of your race, gender, or ethnicity, take one step back.

If you were embarrassed about your clothes or house while growing up, take one step back.

If you were raised in an area with crime and drug activity, take one step back.

If you have tried to change your speech or mannerisms to gain credibility, take one step back.

If you get angry and it is not attributed to your race or gender, step forward.

If you have a "foreign" accent, take one step backward.

If you can walk alone at any time of day or night in Montreal without worrying too much about safety, take one step forward.

If members of your gender or race are portrayed on TV in degrading roles, take one step backward.

If you have been a victim of violence because of your race, gender, class, or sexual orientation, take one step back.

## Part two

The facilitator must conduct this activity in a serious way. Everyone is instructed to stay where they are standing. The facilitator brings the garbage bin and puts it in the front of the room.

The facilitator announces that anyone who can throw a scrunched up paper into the can from where they are standing can go take a five minute break. No one is permitted to move from their chairs.

If people complain that they cannot see the bin or that they are too far away, the instructor

says that the game is fair and they should stop complaining.

If anyone from the back is able to throw the paper in the bin, the entire group is told that this proves there is no problem of inequality. Those who manage to throw their paper in the bin are rewarded with the five minute break. During the break, those who did not throw paper discuss how the exercise made them feel. When the rest of the participants return from the break, they listen to the reactions from the group that was not able to throw the paper in the bin. Then, the facilitator asks how it felt to be able to express their frustration to the privileged group.

Reflection:

*The small statements in this exercise have added up to divide people into different locations in this room. Similarly, small privileges in society place individuals in different places in society.*

*Interestingly, privilege tends to be invisible to those who are privileged. That is, when we receive privilege based on race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or any other factor, we tend to not recognize the boosts in position that accumulate over time from those privileges.*

*The point of this exercise is not to make any of us embarrassed about the privileges we have received, but to make all of us aware of how privilege based on gender, race, etc function. Whether we are highly privileged, moderately privileged or lack privilege, it is possible to behave in ways that level the playing field for everyone.*

Activity:

In small groups, discuss the idea that *previous victimization is a strong indicator of future victimization*.

- How does this play out in your work?
- If an Indigenous woman is apprehended for breaking a law, but she is also a victim of historic and recent violence, what is the best way to work with her?
- Knowing that there is a crisis of violence against Indigenous women across the country, what would be the best way to build trust and encourage an Indigenous woman to reach out to police when she needs help?
- How can you in your professional role help break the cycle of victimization and criminality for Indigenous people?

### Activity:

One woman who went to a residential school discusses how problems with addictions progressed into criminal activity:

So we went to a baby shower, but I knew I had a bottle at home waiting for me. So we went home after the party, but I lost my partner, my common-law...So I went back to my house and looked for that bottle. It was gone, and I got so mad that it was gone...So I went back...I met up with [my partner] walking [along] there, and I said "What did you do with the bottle? Why did you?" And then...he swung it at me, and banged my head...But I blacked out... and I guess I stabbed him. And I told on myself right away. I went to go phone. Where did I get this [knife]? And I was still carrying it...And then [my partner] fell on the ground and I started screaming for help...I almost killed him (p.149).

### Reflection questions:

- What is the connection between substance use and violence?
- Knowing that this woman went to a residential school, how do you think her past might be affecting her now?

Some answers: This quote describes the interaction between alcohol and crime and how the desperate need to feed the addiction led to an almost deadly criminal act. Trauma manifested in addictions leads to higher levels of crime and alcohol-related crimes among Indigenous peoples. Trauma can also lead to lapses in memory or flashbacks.

## Myths and realities

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### Activity:

Watch this two minute video featuring Wab Kinew who does a short comedic piece on stereotypes and Indigenous people.

Discuss your reactions to this video.

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