

# Indigenous Trauma-Informed Practice as ReconciliAction



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# INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVES



**TERRITORIAL  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

# Objectives of Today



- Context for our discussion
- Outline Indigenous approaches to trauma;
- Introduce Indigenous TIP and discuss concrete tools and approaches
- Discuss Indigenous TIP and ReconciliAction
- Conclusion and Discussion

# Setting the Stage



**CRITICAL CONTEXT FOR OUR  
DISCUSSION**

# What talk Indigenous TIP now?



- It's important to be explicit about why we're here talking about Indigenous trauma-informed practice.
- Canada remains deeply wounded by our shared history and contemporary context of colonization.
- This context is not unique to Canada, but is shared by Indigenous peoples globally, as articulated by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

# The Canadian Context: Problems & Solutions



We know the problems, and we have researched them again, and again for more than a century.

- Hawthorn Report, 1966
- Penner Report, 1983
- RCAP, 1996
- TRC, 2015

All of these reports set out a common path forward to working with Indigenous peoples.

# Canada post TRC



- We now find ourselves in the context of post-TRC Canada, where there is funding and the will to explore possibilities for change that acknowledge and honour Indigenous peoples.
- This is also happening within the context of a growing recognition of the impacts associated with national demographic trends.

# The Aboriginal population in Canada is young and growing

Total population in 2016:

**1,673,785**

(4.9% of Canada's total population)

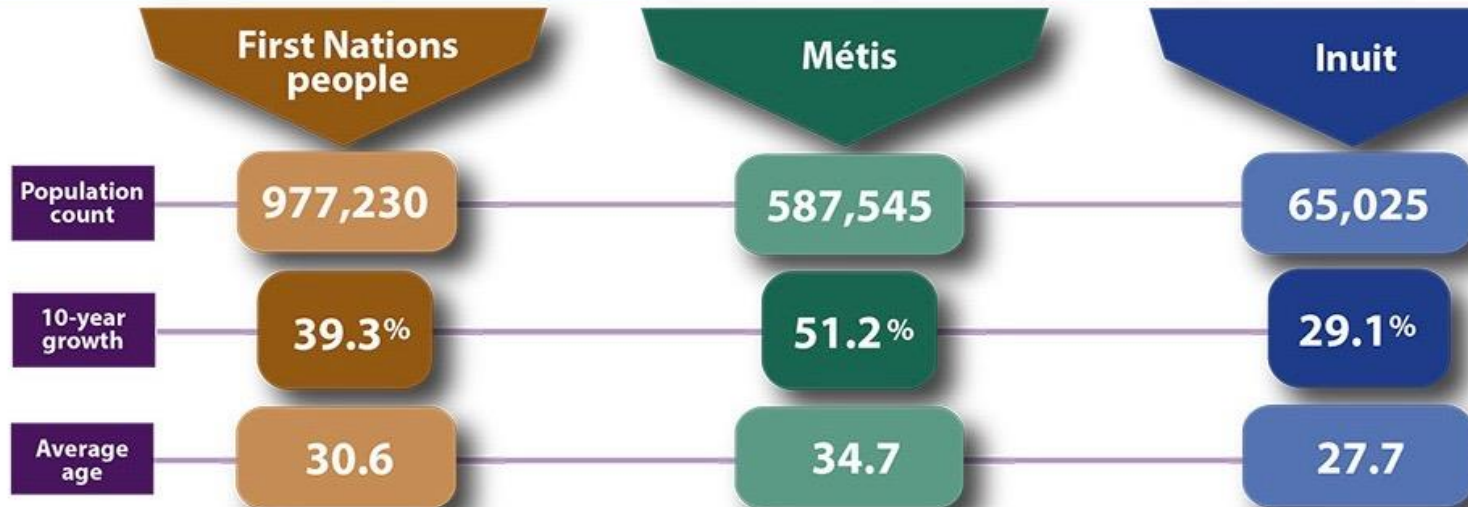
Growth (2006 to 2016):

**+42.5%**

Average age:

**32.1** years

(almost a **decade** younger than the non-Aboriginal population)



Eight CMA<sup>1</sup>s had a Métis population of more than **10,000** people...

- Vancouver
- Calgary
- Edmonton
- Saskatoon
- Winnipeg
- Toronto
- Ottawa-Gatineau
- Montréal



...which made up **one-third (34%)** of the Métis population

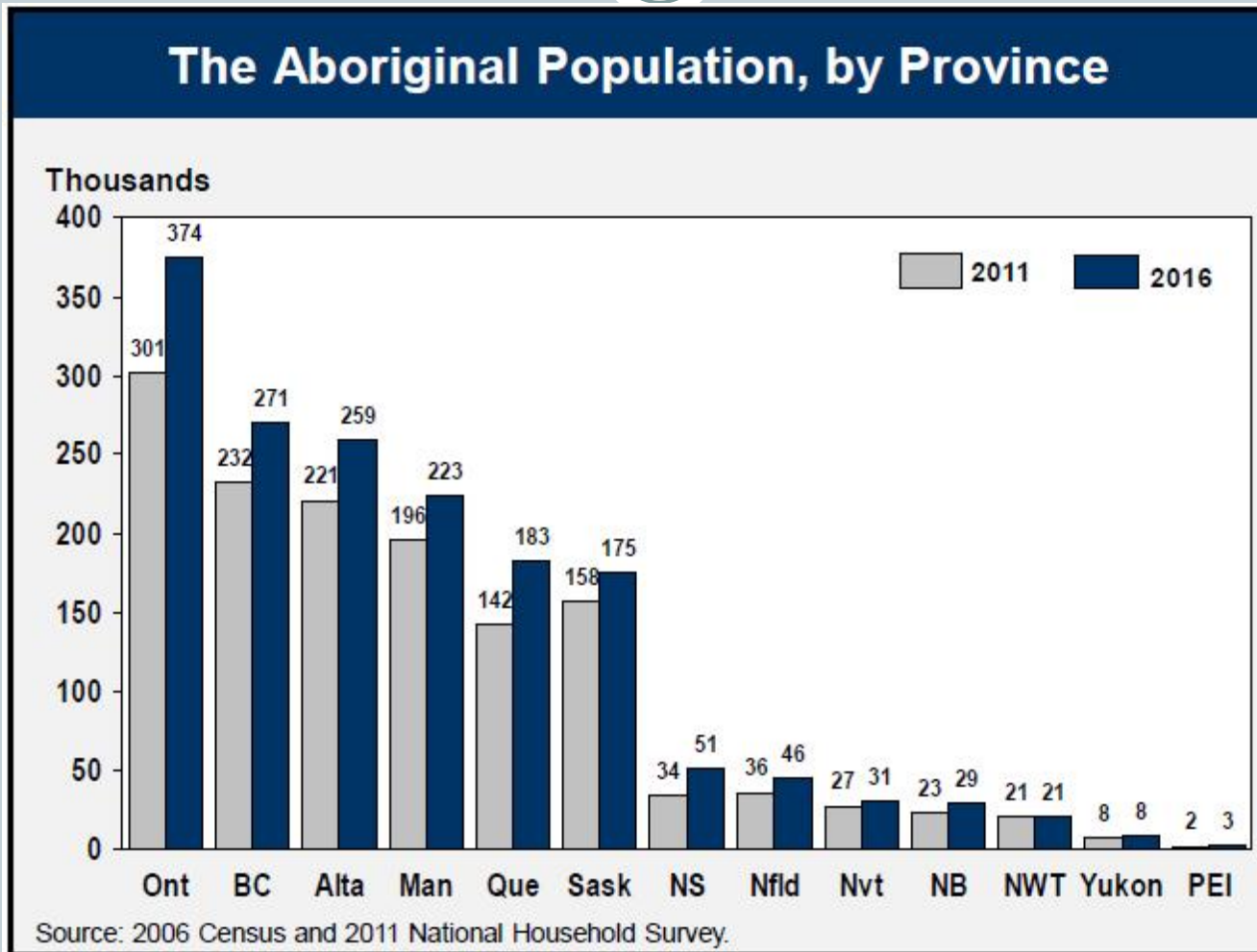
The majority of the Inuit population lived in Inuit Nunangat, the homeland of Inuit in Canada



1. CMA = Census Metropolitan Area



# Aboriginal Population by Province



# Indigenous Demographics in Toronto



- There are up to 60,000 Indigenous peoples living in Toronto, representing almost 20% of Ontario's Indigenous population.
- This means that Toronto has the largest urban Indigenous population in Ontario, and the 4th largest in Canada.

# Indigenous TIP presents a pathway for reconciliation



Today there is growing recognition that Indigenous tools and approaches can benefit all Canadians. This lens allows us to:

- Work in ways that acknowledge and respect the contemporary impacts of intergenerational trauma;
- Acknowledges that much of the trauma in Canada today is a result of our colonial history;
- Utilize Indigenous practices to achieve better outcomes for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples

# Indigenous Approaches to Trauma



**LIVED, VICARIOUS AND  
INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA**

# Lived Trauma



- Lived trauma is the trauma we experience most directly.
- Examples might include bullying, poverty, family abuse or violence, addiction, removal by the child welfare system, racism, etc.

# Vicarious Trauma



- Vicarious trauma is the trauma that we "pick up" from those around us on a daily basis;
- Neuroscience can now explain how this happens physiologically through the Mirror Neuron System (social and emotional contagion, for example).
- From an Indigenous perspective, we are deeply and intimately connected to "All Our Relations." This is not limited to the people around us, but also includes plants, animals, land, and spirit.

# Intergenerational Trauma



- We also know that trauma spills across generations: Holocaust and Residential School survivors; Slavery;
- Western science tends to focus on the physiological intergenerational impacts of trauma (epigenetic inheritance);
- Indigenous approaches to intergenerational trauma query holistic impacts, with a paired emphasis on intergenerational knowledge.

# Trauma at the Intersection of Indigenous Knowledge and Neuroscience



- Trauma is a collective, adaptive, land-based source of experiential knowledge that connects us to All Our Relations.
- Trauma is not seen as an individual condition or experience.
- At the intersection of Indigenous and Western approaches we can see that addressing trauma, through both clinical and non-clinical means, requires trauma-informed systems level thinking.



# Indigenous Trauma-Informed Practice (TIP)



**DEVELOPING AN INDIGENOUS TRAUMA-  
INFORMED LENS**

# An Indigenous Trauma-Informed Lens



- Acknowledging that there is lived, vicarious and intergenerational trauma in our work spaces;
- Recognizing trauma as an opportunity as much as a challenge. Remembering that trauma is collective, adaptive, land-based, experiential and connects us to all our relations;
- Decolonizing and indigenizing our tools and approaches to create space for Indigenous trauma-informed practice.

# Trauma Knowledge



Indigenous approaches to trauma query holistic impacts, with a paired emphasis on trauma as an important source of experiential knowledge.

- Resilience;
- Strategies for survival and success;
- Intergenerational knowledge.

# Indigenous Trauma-Informed Practice: Applying Indigenous trauma knowledge



- An Indigenous trauma-informed lens can inform and enrich both clinical and non-clinical practice.
- This can achieve better outcomes for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and organizations.
- I will share two programs I am involved with that are supporting this work across Canada and the U.S.

# Indigenous Focusing Oriented Therapy Program



- This program has been developed by Shirley Turcotte over the last 30 years, and is currently accredited by the Justice Institute of British Columbia.
- This is a clinical program that consists of seven 3-day modules. It certifies clinicians in Indigenous psychotherapy.
- Teams have developed in cities across Canada and the U.S.
- <http://jeffrey-schiffer.squarespace.com/aboriginal-focusing-oriented-therapy-afot>

# Indigenous Tools for Living



- A 3-Day non-clinical program focusing specifically on the development of concrete tools and approaches for working with and sitting beside complex trauma.
- Over the last 6 years we have developed a teaching team of IFOT certified instructors who deliver this training to social workers, justice and public safety professionals, educators, healthcare workers and other who work directly with people and communities impacted by complex trauma.
- <http://jeffrey-schiffer.squarespace.com/indigenizing-urban-aboriginal-child-welfare>

# Indigenous Trauma-Informed Practice and Systems Thinking



- Indigenous trauma-informed systems thinking challenges us to be critical of how effectively we manage the impacts and costs associated with complex trauma within and across systems and sectors.
- Indigenous TIP demonstrates the interconnected nature of trauma. It provides a model for innovation in system navigation and integration across sectors.

# Indigenous TIP as ReconciliAction



**A TRAUMA-INFORMED SYSTEMS THINKING  
APPROACH**





- Indigenous TIP is reconciliAction because the lens requires us to acknowledge a wider historical and contemporary context.
- It requires acknowledging Indigenous ways of knowing and being (and the All My Relations world view) and recognizing their value in contributing to better outcomes.
- Indigenous tools and approaches to TIP benefit everyone

# Questions and Discussion



**Miigwetch/Thank You!**

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