

EDMONTON
POLICE
SERVICE

Aboriginal Strategy



MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

I am pleased to present the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) 2014-2018 Aboriginal Strategy.

This strategy guides our efforts to better connect with our Aboriginal population.

It focuses on four specific elements: developing strategic partnerships, increased education and cultural awareness, increased recruiting efforts with the Aboriginal community and providing support to police operations.

Collaboration is the key to success. Crime prevention and public safety are most effective at the grassroots level, working side-by-side with the community.

The execution of this strategy will help to improve the EPS and its relations with the Aboriginal community.

INTRODUCTION

Edmonton is one of Canada's fastest growing municipalities and home to Canada's second largest urban Aboriginal population with people self-identifying as First Nations, Métis and Inuit. First Nations languages include Cree, Stoney, Chipewyan, Saulteaux, Dene, Beaver, Blackfoot and Sarcee.

Between 2001 and 2006, the Aboriginal population in Edmonton increased in size by more than 25% (about 8,000 residents). This growth was far greater than the non-Aboriginal growth rate of about 9%. The majority of this growth occurred within the urban Aboriginal population under the age of 25.

According to the 2011 National Household Survey, the number of people that self-identify as having an Aboriginal identity in Edmonton is 41,985.

As the urban Aboriginal population continues to grow, it is crucial to have a collaborative policing strategy in place based on open communication, understanding, and trust.

The EPS Aboriginal Strategy is the foundation for police to build community partnerships, recruit more police officers and civilian members from the Aboriginal community, and increase cultural awareness within the police service.

As EPS moves forward with strategies for a safe city, it does so with all its diverse communities with a specific focus on the Aboriginal community.

Current environment¹

Aboriginal people make up 5.1% of Edmonton's total population.

Edmontonians of Métis descent are the largest Aboriginal group in the city. They make up 55% of the total Aboriginal population of Edmonton.

First Nations residents make up the second-largest Aboriginal group in the city at 40% of the Aboriginal population.

About 60% of the Aboriginal population lives in the inner-city.

Two in five Aboriginal residents of Edmonton live below the poverty line, and median income is only two-thirds that of non-Aboriginal residents.

Aboriginal people represent 23% of the national incarcerated population while only representing 4.3% of the total Canadian population.

Aboriginal people are two times more likely than non-Aboriginal people to experience violent victimization such as assaults, sexual assaults, or robbery.

According to Statistics Canada, Aboriginal people are also much more likely to be victims of homicide than non-Aboriginal people.

A comprehensive approach

The Edmonton Police Service Aboriginal Strategy has four specific goals:

- Develop strategic community partnerships;
- Increase education and cultural awareness;
- Increase recruiting efforts with the Aboriginal community; and
- Provide support to police operations.

These goals have been developed to encompass the needs of both the police and the community it serves.

¹Aboriginal Edmonton – A Statistical story, 2009 and 2011 Canadian Census Poll

GOAL 1: DEVELOP STRATEGIC COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Through partnerships with the Aboriginal community, the EPS better understands challenges and successes facing the community.

The EPS currently has positive, productive working relationships with Aboriginal-based community groups and recognizes the value of these relationships.

It is essential to maintain the partnerships that EPS currently has and continue to build and grow new ones in order to meet the changing dynamics of the population and of the city. This will be done through the Chief's Advisory Council's Aboriginal Community Liaison Committee and with current partners.

The Aboriginal Relations Unit will also develop relationships with the RCMP Aboriginal Policing Unit, the City

of Edmonton Aboriginal Relations Office and any provincial or federal bodies that work with the Aboriginal community.

GOAL 2: INCREASE EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AWARENESS

The EPS recognizes the need to better understand the culture, history, experiences, and dynamics of the Aboriginal community.

The diversity of cultures in Edmonton contributes to the richness of the city. These differences can also lead to miscommunication, misunderstanding, and frustration. Through education, EPS members will become more culturally aware and empathetic so the organization can improve service to all populations.

Through a variety of mediums, the EPS will educate their members:

- to learn how to work more effectively with Aboriginal communities;
- to increase awareness in Aboriginal communities regarding the role of police officers; and
- to develop sustainable working relationships with the Aboriginal community.

GOAL 3: INCREASE RECRUITING IN THE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY

Building a diverse and culturally representative police agency is a way to build trust in the community.

The EPS is committed to recruiting a diverse workforce that reflects the

communities it serves. This allows the EPS to continually improve its capability to deliver effective and responsive service to meet the needs of all Edmontonians.

Diversity recruitment is challenging. Effective strategies will include recruiting competitive candidates and equipping Recruit Selection members with valuable knowledge, skills, and tools to effectively interact with the Aboriginal community.

The outcome for this goal is to include Aboriginal-specific recruiting initiatives in the overall EPS Recruitment plan.

GOAL 4: PROVIDE SUPPORT TO POLICE OPERATIONS

The EPS is committed to staying informed on challenges affecting the Aboriginal community.

There are many national, provincial, and local political and self-government issues that arise on a regular basis. Examples include Idle No More, Highway of Tears and violence against Aboriginal women.

The EPS will monitor media, sit on various community committees, and connect with related Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and federal and provincial groups.

By staying abreast of those issues, it will ensure the EPS makes informed decisions in service delivery in any situation relating to Aboriginal based protests, rallies, and major gatherings.

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