

A look at the history of

# RACISM

## towards Indigenous & People of Colour in EDMONTON

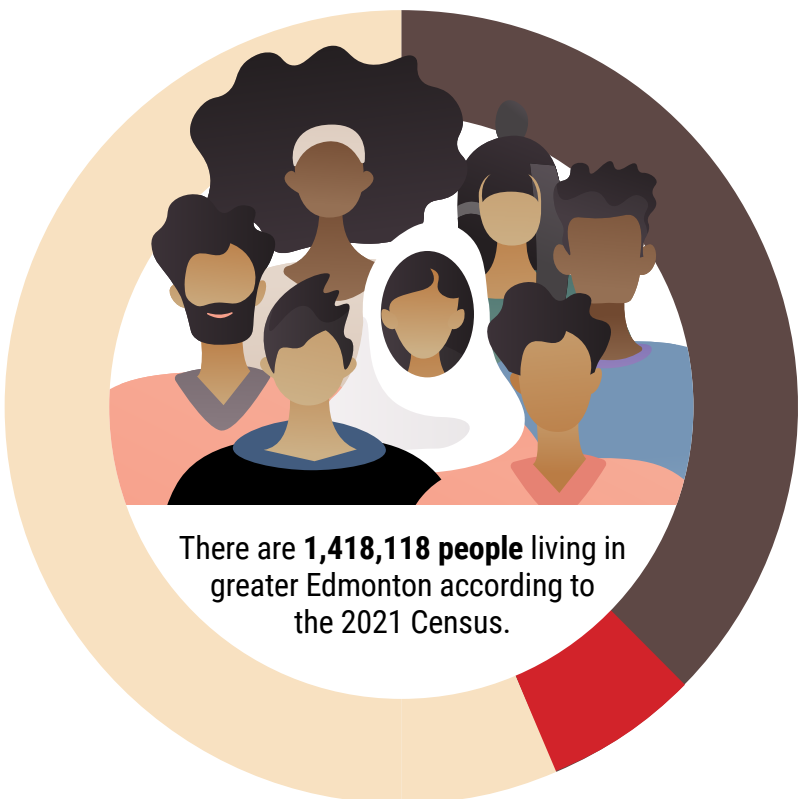
Edmonton Vital Signs is an annual checkup conducted by Edmonton Community Foundation, in partnership with Edmonton Social Planning Council, to measure how the community is doing. Vital Topics are a quick but comprehensive look at issues that are timely and important to Edmonton.

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

**Why look at history?** Systemic racism comes from ingrained beliefs that cultures different from our own are inferior and do not deserve the same rights and privileges. Canadian history tells the story of the laws and beliefs that led to the systemic racism we see in Edmonton today. Even when laws are undone, the systems and practices that came from those laws also need to be undone. To do this, we must first acknowledge it exists and then take action to eliminate discrimination.

**A note on research:** Terms used in research may not reflect how people identify themselves. Additionally, much of the data available has pooled cultures and ethnicities into categories such as 'Black' or 'South Asian.' We acknowledge the lack of desegregated data and the limits of what we can report. We recognize this does not fully represent the variety of cultures that make up Edmonton.

## Demographics of Edmonton



**33.4%** of Edmontonians were born outside of Canada.

It is anticipated that by 2050, **50% of the population will be immigrants.**

ACCORDING TO THE 2021 CENSUS:

**42.5%** of Edmonton population identified as **non-white**:

**5.5%** as Indigenous

22,840 First Nations | 25,440 Métis | 715 Inuit

**37%** said they are a person of colour

- 12,255 from Central and West Africa
- 8,729 from North Africa
- 26,255 from South and East Africa
- 36,990 from West Central and Middle East Asia
- 86,420 from South Asia
- 145,480 from East and Southeast Asia
- 13,200 from Caribbean region
- 21,365 from Central and South America
- 3,635 from islands in the Pacific Ocean

**The top 5 languages spoken in Edmonton (other than English or French) are:**

Chinese • Tagalog (Filipino) • Arabic • Punjabi • Spanish

**Racism** is the systemic oppression of a racial group through the social, economic, and political advantage of another. Privilege is often afforded to whiteness.

Alberta welcomed **26,715 refugees between 2015 and 2021.** 11,095 in Edmonton.

# Before it was 'Edmonton'

## The first people

Nomadic hunters roamed what is now Alberta beginning at least 13,300 years ago.

The Beaver Hills region was important for the Nehiyawak (Cree), Tsuut'ina, Anishinaabe (Ojibway/Saulteaux), the Nakota Sioux, the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) and the Métis.

The river valley was important for food, medicine, and materials for crafting tools.

## Arrival of the Europeans

The arrival of fur traders imposed disastrous changes, including settlements that interrupted hunting grounds, and introduced devastating diseases like smallpox.

**ENFRANCHISEMENT** began with the introduction of the Gradual Civilization Act of 1857 which granted Indian Affairs extreme control over status Indians.

The Indian Act (1876) made enfranchisement compulsory until 1961.

## The Indian Act

Although modified several times since 1876, it hasn't changed much. It authorizes the Canadian government to regulate the lives of registered First Nations People and reserve communities. It does not directly reference non-status First Nations people, Métis, or Inuit people.

It is a part of the assimilation tactics the government forced on First Nations People that include imposing governing structures and regulating the right to practise culture and traditions.

## Women and the Indian Act

Women were treated far less favourably than men in the Act.

- **Originally, women were not allowed to vote in band elections, own or inherit property, and were 'property' of their husbands.**
- Indian status ceased for women and her children if they married a non-Indian. Men who married non-Indians did not lose their status.
- Given enough marriages outside status boundaries, 'Status Indians' could disappear completely.



**Eugenics** is the belief and practice that you can improve the human population through controlled breeding.

### ALBERTA SEXUAL STERILIZATION ACT

The legislation lasted until 1972 and was originally intended for patients in mental hospitals.

### 25% of individuals sterilized were First Nation and Métis.

1,200 additional Indigenous women were coerced into being sterilized in the three years after the law ended.

This region was known by other names: **amiskwacyi-wâskahikan**, meaning *Beaver Hill House* in Nehiyawewin (Cree); **kaghik-stak-etomo** in Niitsitapi; and **chaba hei** in Nakota.

## Métis Scrip

When the Hudson's Bay Company transferred the land it occupied to the Dominion of Canada, Métis families settled in these areas were promised land. A scrip (a document worth land or money) was issued to the Métis to be traded in.

- Redeeming land scrip was complicated, had a lengthy legal process, and government restrictions.
- Money scrip was transferable and easily redeemed. But the owner's name was not on the scrip, and could be easily stolen.
- Land scrip was non-transferable but it involved travelling great distances to get to a lands office. Families were forced to relocate on less prime land.



## Papaschase First Nation

In late 1800s the Papaschase First Nation were given a small portion of land near Edmonton (identified as Indian Reserve (IR) 136). Canada's Prime Minister, John A. Macdonald was petitioned by several prominent Edmontonians to move them from the area.

- From 1879 to 1886, the Federal Government failed to provide rations or relief to members of the Band who were suffering from starvation.
- Several members took scrip to keep from starving and lost their claim to the land even though they were told they could stay on their reserve even if they accepted it.
- After an illegal surrender of their land, the Crown quickly sold it.
- The band was dissolved, with the remaining members moving to Enoch.
- In 2002 the Papaschase filed a lawsuit saying "the government caused the dissolution of the Papaschase Band through breaches of Treaty 6 and its fiduciary duty to the band" but lost the claim in 2008.
- The Papaschase Band still exists today.

## The Sixties Scoop

Refers to the policies of child welfare authorities who removed numerous Indigenous children from their parents and placed or adopted them out to non-Indigenous families.

- The practice occurred well into the 1980s. Indigenous children are still overrepresented in the child welfare system today.
- Children lost touch with their family, culture, and language and were made to feel ashamed of who they were.
- There have been long-lasting, intergenerational effects.
- Premier Rachel Notley delivered an apology in 2018.

## First Nations near Edmonton

There are several First Nations reserves located in the Edmonton region including:

- Alexander First Nation
- Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation
- Enoch Cree Nation
- Paul First Nation



## Did you know?

"The great aim of our legislation has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the other inhabitants of the Dominion as speedily as they are fit to change."

John A. Macdonald, 1887 – Canada's First Prime Minister presided over the development of the residential school system.

# Residential Schools

- An estimated 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children attended these church-run schools.
- Abuse was common, including excessive punishment, physical, and sexual abuse.
- Schools were over-crowded and children were malnourished, leading to tuberculosis and influenza.

## An unknown number of children died at residential schools (as many as 7,000).

- Survivors received a formal apology by Prime Minister Stephen Harper in 2008.
- Alberta had as many as 29 schools, more than any other province.

## Residential schools near Edmonton

- Edmonton Indian Residential School (1924-1968) also known as *Poundmaker* or *Edmonton Industrial School* was located near St. Albert and run by the United Church.
- St. Albert Indian Residential School (1873- 1948) also known as *Youville*, was located in St. Albert and was run by the Catholic Church.



# Immigration to Canada

\* There are numerous local, provincial, and federal laws that are not captured here.

## TIMELINE

**1833**

Slavery was legal in Canada until 1833.

**1849**

Chinese immigration started with the Gold Rush.

**1877**

The first known immigrant from Japan arrived in British Columbia.

**1882**

17,000 Chinese arrive to work on the Canadian Pacific Railway.

**1885**

Chinese head tax began.

**1911**

A law proposed by the Cabinet of Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier to ban Black persons from entering Canada. It did not become law.

**1923**

Edmonton city council passed a law banning Black people from swimming in city pools. Skating rinks also refused entry.

**1923**

Chinese Immigration Act passed banning all Chinese immigrants until its repeal in 1947.

**1928**

Alberta passes a sexual Sterilization Act (not repealed until 1972).

**1938**

Canada's first mosque, Al Rashid opened in Edmonton.

**1942**

Japanese internment begins.

After WWII approximately 42,000 Arabic immigrants came to Canada.

**1951**

The Canadian government adopts a new immigration policy with a quota system for admissions to the country.

**Canada's racist immigration policies** Canadian immigration policies favoured European economies prior to WWII. After that, Canadian employers required more labour, and Canada opened its doors to other nations. However, many foreign individuals experienced a difficult time having their credentials recognized.

## Black immigration

- Black fur traders arrived in the late 1800s.
- 1905 to 1911: Black pioneers settled in Alberta from southern U.S. states to escape racist laws.
- Changes to Canada's immigration system in the 1950s brought immigrants from the Caribbean, Africa, and the Americas.
- More recently individuals from East Africa, Central, and South America come to Canada through policies like the temporary foreign worker program, as well as asylum-seekers.

## Black pioneer communities in Alberta

**In 1911, only 30% of Black residents in Alberta lived in urban centres like Calgary and Edmonton.** Most lived in rural settlements:

- Junkins (now *Wildwood*) the first to have a significant number of Black pioneers,
- Keystone (now *Breton*),
- Campsie (near Barrhead), and
- Pine Creek also known as *Amber Valley*.

**Between 1910 to 1912 more than 1,000 Black pioneers crossed the border.**

## Anti-Black racism in Edmonton

- Daughters of the Empire and the Edmonton Board of Trade campaigned to discourage Black Americans from coming to Edmonton.
- There was an active Ku Klux Klan presence in Edmonton. Cross burnings were supported by Mayor Dan Knott and some MLAs into the 1930s. The KKK held society status in Alberta until 2003.
- In 1922 Lulu Anderson sued Edmonton's Metropolitan Theatre because she was refused entry due to being Black. The court ruled against her.
- Racially-segregated schools existed in Alberta until the 1960s.



## Arabic immigration

- 1891-1911: approximately 7,000 immigrants came from modern-day Syria and Lebanon.
- Early immigrants to Alberta mostly settled in Edmonton or Lac La Biche as part of the fur trade.
- By the 1930s, several Lebanese families were established in Edmonton.
- Since 2015 Canada has welcomed 44,000 Syrian refugees.



### Arabic education in Edmonton

Two Edmonton public schools teach Arabic language thanks to the efforts of Lila Fahlman and Soraya Hafez. The Edmonton Islamic Academy teaches up to Grade 12.

## Chinese immigration

- The Chinese Exclusion Law of 1923 halted immigration until it was repealed in 1947.
- In the 1960s when immigration regulations relaxed, there was a significant increase in Chinese immigrants.

### Chinese head tax

- Between 1885 and 1923 Chinese immigrants had to pay a head tax to enter Canada. It started at \$50 but was raised to \$500.
- It was the first legislation in Canada to exclude immigration on the basis of ethnicity.

### 82,000 Chinese immigrants paid nearly \$23 million in tax.

- In 2006 the Canadian Government issued an apology to head-tax payers, and the Chinese Canadian community.



## Japanese immigration

- By 1914, 10,000 Japanese people had settled in Canada.
- The second wave of Japanese immigration did not begin until 1967 when immigration laws were amended.

### Japanese internment

In 1942 the War Measures Act was used to remove Japanese Canadians residing within 160 km of the Pacific coast for reasons of "national security."

- 20,881 people of Japanese ancestry (the majority born in Canada), were shipped to camps and farms away from the coast in B.C., Alberta, and Manitoba. Those who resisted were sent to prisoner-of-war camps in Ontario.
- The federal government sold their property and deducted any funds they received while in a detention camp.
- After WWII ended, they were forced to choose between deportation to Japan or move to a location east of the Rocky Mountains. Most chose the latter.
- In 1949, Japanese Canadians regained their freedom and restrictions were removed.
- Prime Minister Brian Mulroney apologized to Japanese Canadians in 1988.

**Did you know?**  
*The 1910 Immigration Act allowed the prohibition of immigrants "belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada, or of immigrants of any specified class, occupation or character."*

## South Asian immigration

Many diverse linguistic and cultural groups come from this region (including India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and others).

- By 1908, about 6,000 South Asians had arrived in Canada.
- The first South Asians who arrived in Alberta were Sikh railway workers. By the late 1920s, Alberta had several early farm settlements.

## Filipino immigration

- Began in 1946, but larger numbers did not emerge until the 1970s.
- Before the 1970s they were mostly female medical technicians, nurses, or teachers.
- Filipinos have made up a sizable portion of the Temporary Foreign Workers program in more recent years.

## Korean immigration in Canada

Most Korean immigration was from South Korea.

- In the early 1960s many who came to Alberta were professionals.

## Latin American immigration in Canada

- Latin Americans include people from many Central or South American nations.
- In 1973, about 2,340 Chilean refugees arrived in Alberta after the overthrow of the Allende government.

## Vietnamese immigration

- Prior to 1975, immigration from Vietnam was quite small.
- After the end of the Vietnam war, Vietnamese refugees arrived.

