



# Aboriginal Homelessness Intergenerational Trauma

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## Paradigms

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- Liberal
- Conservative
- Structural
- Intergenerational Trauma

## Bloor and Yonge



(CityTVNews, 2006)

## A Homeless Native man lying on a ventilation shaft at C-train station in downtown



Calgary, Alberta, 2007



## Population

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- 1, 172,790 million identified some Aboriginal ancestry in 2006 Census – 3.8% of the Canadian population compared to 3.3% (976,305) in 2001 & 2.8% (799,010) in 1996
- Population growth by 45% between 1996 – 2006, nearly six times faster than the 8% rate of increase for the non-Aboriginal population
- By 2017 between 1.39 million and 1.43 million persons could belong to one of the three Aboriginal groups: North American Indian population, Métis and Inuit
- The Aboriginal population is growing much faster than the total population, and is much younger than the total Canadian population

(Statistics Canada, 2006)



## Median age

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The median age – the age at which exactly half the population is younger and half is older – is 27 for Aboriginals, compared to 40 for non-Natives. Almost half of the Aboriginal population is under the age of 25

(Statistics Canada, 2006)



## Projection

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- Children and youth aged 24 and under made up almost one-half (48%) of all Aboriginal people, compared with 31% of the non-Aboriginal population
- About 9% of the Aboriginal population was aged 4 and under, nearly twice the proportion of 5% of the non-Aboriginal population
- 10% of the Aboriginal population was aged 5 to 9, compared with only 6% of the non-Aboriginal population
- According to population projections released by Statistics Canada in 2005, Aboriginal people could account for a growing share of the young adult population over the next decade. By 2017, Aboriginal people aged 20 to 29 could make up 30% of those in their 20s in Saskatchewan; 24% in Manitoba; 40% in the Yukon Territory; and 58% in the Northwest Territories.
- Already, more than 80% of Nunavut's population aged 20 to 29 is Aboriginal, and the proportion is expected to grow.

(Statistics Canada, 2006)



## Ontario

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- In Ontario there were 242,495 (21%) Aboriginals enumerated, compared to 131,560 in 2001
- 185 First Nations with treaties with the Federal Government
- British Columbia has 17% (196,075), Manitoba 15% (175,395), Alberta 16% (188,365), Saskatchewan 12% (141,890), and Quebec 9% (108,430)

(Statistics Canada, 2006)



## Residency

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- In 2006, 54% lived in an urban centre, an increase from 50% in 1996
- The majority live (59%) metropolitan areas, while 41% live in smaller urban centres

(Statistics Canada, 2006)



## Exodus from Reserves

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- Post WWII



## Aboriginal People in Major Census Metropolitan Areas 1951- 2006

### Aboriginal People in Major Census Metropolitan Areas 1951-2006

CMA	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	1996	2001	2006
Halifax					1,185	2,115		5,320
Montreal	296	507	3,215	14,450	6,775	9,965	11,085	17,865
Ottawa-Hull				4,370	6,915	11,605	13,485	20,555
Toronto	805	1,196	2,990	13,495	14,205	16,095	20,300	26,575
Winnipeg	210	1,082	4,940	16,575	35,150	45,750	55,755	68,380
Regina	160	539	2,860	6,575	11,020	13,605	15,685	17,105
Saskatoon	48	207	1,070	4,350	11,920	16,160	20,275	21,535
Calgary	62	335	2,265	7,310	14,075	15,195	21,915	26,575
Edmonton	616	995	4,260	13,750	29,235	32,825	40,930	52,100
Vancouver	239	530	3,000	16,080	25,030	31,140	36,860	40,310

(Statistics Canada 1981,1993, 1998, 2001, 2006; Information Canada, 1974; Long, D. & Dickason, O.P., 1996; Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2002)



## Migration

- Toronto Aboriginal population estimates are:
  - 20,300 (Statistics Canada, 2001)
  - 40,000 to 60,000 (Canadian Indian Friendship Centre of Toronto 2002)
  - 60,000 to 80,000 (DIAND, 2002)
  
- Approximately 5,000 Aboriginal people in Kitchener, Hamilton, London, Oshawa, Ottawa-Hull, Sault Ste Marie, St. Catherine's, Sudbury, Timmins, Thunder Bay, Windsor
  
- Two theory for migration: "push and pull" factors (Nagler,1970 & Graham, 1998)



## Migration Theory

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### **PUSH OF LIFE**

- Depletion of resources
- Restricted size of the reserve
- Population growth
- Rising expectation of Aboriginals

### **PULL OF THE CITY**

- Potential for education
- Economic opportunities
- Political and social benefits
- Availability of other services
- Excitement
- Escape boredom
- Health
- Retirement
- Get away from family and legal problems
- Difficulty of life on reserves

(Nagler, 1970)



## Migration Theory

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### **PUSH FACTORS**

- Abuses (sexual & physical)
- Corruptions
- Family Violence
- Gossip
- Over-crowding
- Isolation
- Poverty
- Substance Abuse
- Unemployment

### **PULL FACTORS**

- Anonymity
- Dreams
- Education/Training
- Employment
- Hope
- Housing
- Services (medical)
- Transportation

(Graham, 1998)



## Urban Migration Experience

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- Perpetuation of poor living conditions
- Culture shock
- Social isolation
- Discrimination and racism rampant
- Lack of culturally congruent services



## Incidence of Aboriginal Homelessness Across Canada

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Calgary, Alberta	36% (2009)
Sioux Lookout	100% (2005)
Montreal, Quebec	43% (2005)
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan	46% (2008)
Victoria, British Columbia	27% (2004)
Winnipeg, Manitoba	70% (2006)



## Incidence of Aboriginal Homelessness - West

- Many Aboriginal people who moving to Prairie cities struggle to find affordable housing and often end up living in residential hotels, rooming houses or on the street
- Siloam Mission in Winnipeg - More than 80% of the people who use the mission's services (meals, clothing and support services) are Aboriginal

**In the north, homeless women have reportedly had to sleep with rotting garbage in order to keep warm in arctic winters.** | photo: Ed Maruyama / KlixPix





## Aboriginal Woman Experience

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- Domestic violence
- Poverty
- Culture shock
- Social and culture isolation
- Identity issues
- Unresolved traumas
- Mistrust
- Addictions and mental health issues
- Racism
- Stereotype



## Incidence of Aboriginal Homelessness - Toronto

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Toronto Street Needs Assessment – 2006

- 5,052
- 26% of the homeless street population
- Average on the street is 5.3 years, compared to 3.1 for non-Aboriginals

## Homeless, Mental health & Substance use – 2006-2007

- Sample – 55/368 Aboriginals
  - 15% - Concurrent Disorders
  - 36%

## Yonge and Dundas Street



(Ryersonian, 2006)



## Underlying Causation Factors

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- Colonization of Aboriginal Peoples:
  - Indian Act
  - Residential Schools
  - Child Welfare Policies
  - Self-Determination



## Indian Act

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- 1876 - established the federal government as the “guardian” of Aboriginal people
- Artificial definitions of who has “Status” and who does not
- 1951- jurisdiction over some services transferred to provinces
- 1986 - Bill C31 – eliminate inherently discriminatory issues



## Residential Schools

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“Marching out from the schools, the children, effectively re-socialized, imbued with the values of European culture, would be the vanguard of a magnificent metamorphosis: the ‘savage’ was to be made ‘civilized’, made fit to take up the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship.”

(Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, p335)



## Impact of Residential School Experience on Families

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“At least two subsequent generations were also “lost”. The children of these students became victims of abuse as their parents became abusers because of the residential school experience.”

(Gagne, 1998, p363)



## Child Welfare

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“Children’s Aid Societies perpetuated the same belief as residential schools: that a well-meaning white, cultural institution was better than a Native child’s family and community. Many, perhaps even most, of the child welfare workers were compassionate and well-intentioned. But, however well-meaning Children’s Aid Society intrusions may have been, they further continued the traumatization of Native people and likely compounded it.”

(Lederman, 1999, p64)



## Effects

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- Aboriginal youth are two to six times more at risk for alcohol-related problems than non-Aboriginal youth (Health Canada, 1999)
- Unemployment for Aboriginals is twice the rate of non-Aboriginals (Statistics Canada, DIAND Core Census Tabulation, 1996)
- Suicide among First Nations people is 3.1 times that of the non-Aboriginals (Health Canada, 2003)
- 27,000 Aboriginal children were in the care of Children’s Aid Societies (Assembly of First Nations, 2007)
- In First Nations, potential years of life lost from injury was more than all other causes of death combined and was almost 3.5 times that of the Canadian rate (Health Canada, 2000)



## Effects

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- One in five Aboriginal youth reported that they have used solvents. One in three solvent users are under the age of 15, with over half of these indicating use of solvents before the age of 11 (Scott, 1997)
- The 1997 First Nations smoking rate was reported to be 62%. In Canada, 24% of the population aged 15 years and older were smokers in 2000 (Health Canada, 2000)
- Evidence of high levels of depression, accompanied by failure to achieve, has been identified among children in many Aboriginal communities (Canadian Medical Association, 1994)
- Factors contributing to this high rate of addiction and mental health issues include: loss of cultural identity and community, intergenerational historical trauma, poverty, hopelessness, and social marginalization (Frideres, 1998)



## Personal Trauma

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“Insidious trauma’s effects are cumulative and directed toward a community of people... . Insidious trauma incurred by minority groups usually starts early in life before one grasps the full psychological meaning.”

(Root, 1992, p240)



## Intergenerational Trauma

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“The current state of affairs can be clearly linked to the traumatic effects of colonialism, including geographic and economic marginalization, and attempts at forced assimilation.”

(Waldram, 1997, p184)



## Intergenerational Trauma

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“Intergenerational or multi-generational trauma happens when the effects of trauma are not resolved in one generation. When trauma is ignored and there is no support for dealing with it, the trauma will be passed from one generation to the next. What we learn to see as “normal” when we are children, we pass on to our own children

(Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 1999, pA5)





## Intergenerational Trauma

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- “In the case of war, the traumatic experience itself is experienced by the first generation only. This theoretically alters the behaviour of the victim and consequently alters the behaviours of family members. In the case of First Nation citizens, several generations have been continuously exposed to the traumatic experiences of sexual abuse, family violence, child abuse, accidental death, and suicide. The trauma here is intergenerational in the sense that economic, social, and political dependence – the effects of colonialism – are intergenerational”

(Gagne, 1998, p368)



## Intergenerational Trauma

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- “If you subject one generation to that kind of parenting and they become adults and have children, those children become subjected to that treatment and then you subject a third generation to a residential school system the same as the first two generation. You have a whole society affected by isolation, sadness, anger, hopelessness and pain”

(Hodgson, 1990, p17)

## Intergenerational Trauma

“If we do not deal with our trauma, we inadvertently hand it down to the next generation. We often take out our pain and hurt on those we love the most – which is ourselves, and those closest to us – our family and friends. So, intergenerational trauma is trauma that is passed down behaviourally to the next generation.”

(Phillips, 1994, p6)



## Native Men's Residence - NaMeRes



- ✦ Established in 1986
- ✦ 61 beds for men over 18 years
- ✦ Street Outreach
- ✦ Pre-employment training and literacy programs
- ✦ Access to computer labs to upgrade technological skills
- ✦ Housing placement and referrals

## NaMeRes



- ✦ Average resident age is 37
- ✦ Average length of stay - 90 days
- ✦ Traditional counseling
- ✦ Addictions and mental health services
- ✦ Transitional aftercare and follow-up
- ✦ Workshops using art and music therapy



## Participant Profile

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- ⊕ Median age – 40 years
- ⊕ 12 of 16 born in Ontario
- ⊕ Less than half were raised by their birth family
- ⊕ Remainder raised in foster care/boarding school
- ⊕ Most had less than grade 8 education – 2 had a post secondary degree
- ⊕ 14/16 had recent involvement with the justice system



## The Men's Voices

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### **Residential School:**

“ She [his mother] don't like talking about it. Only when she was yelling at us how rough she had it compared to what we had.... She said it [residential school] was really strict. The food, the rules, the discipline and nobody cared. She got punished – whippings and straps – and they took her away from my grandmother. She was very lonely. She wanted to go home and they wouldn't let her.”

Henry, age 52



## The Men's Voices

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### **Residential School:**

“My mother went to residential school and at that time she was, my mother was, totally scarred up from residential school. ... She did exactly what those people did to her in residential school ... she was abusive.”

Ned, age 42



## The Men's Voices

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### **Residential School:**

“My mother says because of his upbringing, he brought that with him. That's how he disciplined us.”

George, age 33



## The Men's Voices

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### Child Welfare:

"I was just there, taking up space. ... I didn't love any of these people in this family. A person from age five until about fourteen or fifteen could live with a family and not love anybody in the family. I thought that's just the way it has got to be."

Dan, age 42



## The Men's Voices

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### Child Welfare:

"I remember once this kid came running over to [me] ... I was fishing on these docks, and he dove in the water and he came up right under where I was standing, because you could breathe a little bit. ... And the police car comes flying over there... They were looking all over the docks, like under boats and stuff. ... They asked me and they asked the people hanging around the dock. ... Well, we said we haven't seen him. Meanwhile, he was under [the dock]. I could see the bottom of his feet. They were white because he was treading water and just hoping to God they didn't see him there. And they didn't. But eventually he ended up going ... he got caught ... [long silence]."

John, age 47



## The Men's Voices

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### Child Welfare:

“The support was lacking in the family. It was a little bit dysfunctional in that aspect. ... I don't know. Being adopted, I think a lot of attention went more to my younger brother and sister who were their natural kids. ... I don't know about, you know, love and being able to talk to somebody, you know, how you're feeling and whatever. There just wasn't a lot of that around.”

Adam, age 33



## The Men's Voices

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### Family Life:

“I used to watch those movies, you know, back then about the kids with their parents ... you know, “Leave it to Beaver,” or something like that, yeah. You know, I saw him hugging his mom, and I tried that once – tried to hug my mom. And when I hugged her and all that ... actually, I told her I loved her. And she didn't know how to react. She didn't know how to take it, you know. So after that, I just shut myself off from her.”

Ben, age 50



## The Men's Voices

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### Family Life:

“I thought my dad left me. I was the first-born grandchild in this family too, and I don't know where, what happened, where I went wrong. I can't figure out. Twenty years of my life, trying to figure out what did I do to make these people hate me. ... I don't know what happened, but we were just like orphans inside of a family.”

Mike, age 32



## The Men's Voices

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### Family Life:

“I barely remember him being around the house. ... He was good. He drank a lot. He died drinking, though. He fell into a creek at springtime and drowned.”

Henry, age 52





## The Men's Voices

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### **Aboriginal Identity:**

“Me and my brother and sister are the only ones that look like Indians. The rest of them are half – like, I’m still half Indian, half White but I got the characteristics of an Indian. ... We were bugged about being Indians. ... We were teased from our uncles and aunts and people around us. ... We didn’t look the same colour as them, so we were teased about it.”

Mike, age 32



## The Men's Voices

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### **Aboriginal Identity:**

“I was called "chief" in school. On TV, bad people were always the Indians. ...The movies really brought the Indian down.”

Henry, age 52



## The Men's Voices

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### Aboriginal Identity:

“Native people scared me. ... We were at Disneyland and some Native people were in front of us in a line. And it's like I could tell they were Natives, but the Native people that I always seen were on TV. So these people were standing there and kind of laughing and giggling and, it's like, it kind of scared me ... because, it's like, I was brought up White and I always thought I was White with darker skin.”

Oscar, age 34



## The Men's Voices

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### On Homelessness:

“I moved around to Winnipeg to Thunder Bay, Thunder Bay to Sioux Lookout, Vancouver, back to Thunder Bay, back to [his reserve], back to Thunder Bay, Toronto, back to Thunder Bay, back to Toronto, back to Thunder Bay, back to Toronto. I think I'm tired of it. I went home this summer and just thought I don't want to live with nobody else – [not with my] family. I don't have a home back there. That's way I came back to Toronto. ... Toronto has more options.”

George, age 33



## The Men's Voices

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### **On Homelessness:**

“You know, they step out of the way and they look at you like you’re a piece of trash. ... It’s the same in each province”.

Pat, age 38



## The Men's Voices

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### **On Homelessness:**

“I used to stay on the streets at times, like, for a week or sometimes just because I just felt like hanging around with the guys on the corner. And I would drink with them and sleep with them, you know? ... I think that homeless people are mostly because of the residential school and the Children’s Aid. Like, at first I think our enemy was the White man’s diseases, then the residential schools, and then Children’s Aid, the arrogance of the Children’s Aid. That’s why I think a lot of people get homeless”.

John, age 47



## Intergenerational Trauma

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- Individual Indicators
  - Lack of a sense of “belonging”, identification or affiliation with a specific family, community, culture, or nation
  - Feeling of “abandonment” by caregivers
  - Limited or no information about one’s culture of birth including language, customs, belief systems, spirituality



## Intergenerational Trauma

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- Family Indicator
  - Chronic or episodic family violence including physical, sexual, emotional, and/or verbal abuse of children by adults in the household
  - Lack of emotional bonding between parents, siblings and extended family members
  - Denial of cultural heritage by older family members



## Intergenerational Trauma

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- Community Indicators
  - Unconcealed alcohol and drug misuse among community members
  - Lack of cultural opportunities including transmission of language skills, history, traditional values, and spirituality
  - Unwillingness to “reclaim” community members

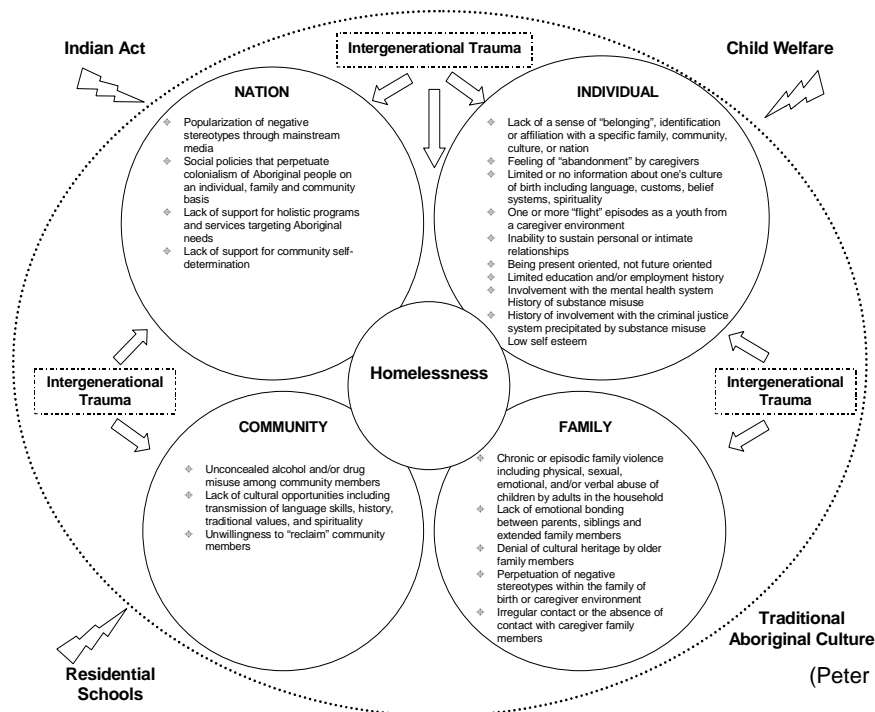


## Intergenerational Trauma

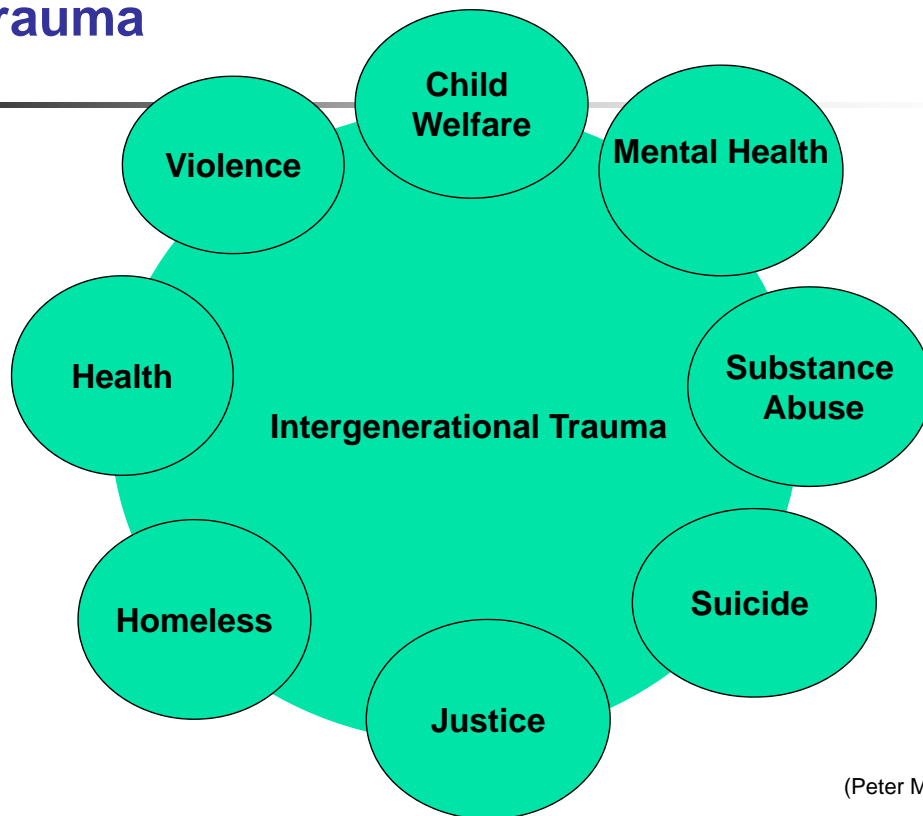
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- National Indicators
  - Popularization of negative stereotypes through mainstream media
  - Social policies that perpetuate colonialism of Aboriginal people on an individual, family and community basis
  - Lack of support for community self-determination

# Intergenerational Trauma



# Intergenerational Trauma





## Public Policy Response

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- Native Friendship Centres
  - Reduce culture shock
  - Increase social support
- Urban Native Housing Programs
  - Dedicated housing stock
  - No social support until late 1980s
- Development of Aboriginal programs and services in urban centres



## Other Considerations

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- The solution is not necessarily the construction of housing
- It is a holistic approach that reconstructs the links between the individual, family, community, Nation and Canada
- Self-government – Territory and urban centres

## Paradigms

- Liberal
- Conservative
- Structural
- Intergenerational Trauma

Paradigms

Families  
Men  
Women  
Children  
Youth/Young Women  
Mental Health  
Offenders  
Immigrants  
Aboriginal

## Iglooboxes



“We have a huge aboriginal homeless problem in Toronto; how appropriate for them to live in iglooboxes. We could fill City Hall Square with them.” From [georgidjongski from bulgaria](#).