



# **Aboriginal Communities and Alzheimer Societies in Canada: Building an awareness of existing challenges to effective service provision**

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Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

L'aide d'aujourd'hui. L'espoir de demain.

# What are our Goals?

- Build a stronger relationship with Aboriginal peoples and their communities
- Build a better understanding of community needs and federation needs
- Strengthen knowledge upon Aboriginal diversity across Canada
- Improve support currently available to Aboriginal peoples with dementia

# Improving dementia-specific support to Aboriginal peoples wherever they may live in Canada

- Alzheimer Society Mandate – To serve people with dementia and their families throughout the continuum of the disease and throughout Canada
- Recognition that the AS needs to shine light on the area of serving Aboriginal peoples if we are to fulfill our mandate.

# Getting Started

- Creating the “Aboriginal Access Advisory Group”
- Developing consensus on priority areas of work when there are so many!
- Seeking and successfully obtaining funding to hire an intern to facilitate a nation wide needs survey

# Where do we go from here?

- Summary of survey results
- Aboriginal Access Advisory Group prioritize findings for action
- Seek funding to move forward in addressing needs identified

# Why Now?

- Increase in prevalence of dementia as population ages
- Aboriginal population is aging as well
- Link between diabetes and dementia prevalence
- Lack of current services available – high regional disparity

# Who is an Aboriginal Person?

- The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America.
- The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people:  
First Nations (“Indian”), Inuit and Métis

# A Very Brief History

- Aboriginal Peoples were first inhabitants of the land we now call Canada
- European contact occurred 900 years ago for Inuit and 400 years ago for peoples of the North Atlantic Coast
- With settlement came policies rooted in discrimination, assimilation and control
- Under Indian Act, “Registered Indians” became administered people





# The Indian Act

- The first federal Indian Act built on the pre-Confederation policy of protection, assimilation and Christianization
- It defines who is and who is not recognised as an "Indian"
- It says how reserves and bands can operate
- Before changes in 1985, "Indians" could be stripped of their status for many reasons
  - Marrying a man who was not a status Indian
  - Enfranchisement (until 1960, an Indian could vote in federal elections only by renouncing Indian status)
  - Having at the age of 21 a mother and paternal grandmother who did not have status before marriage
  - Being born out of wedlock to a mother with status and a father without.



# Residential Schools

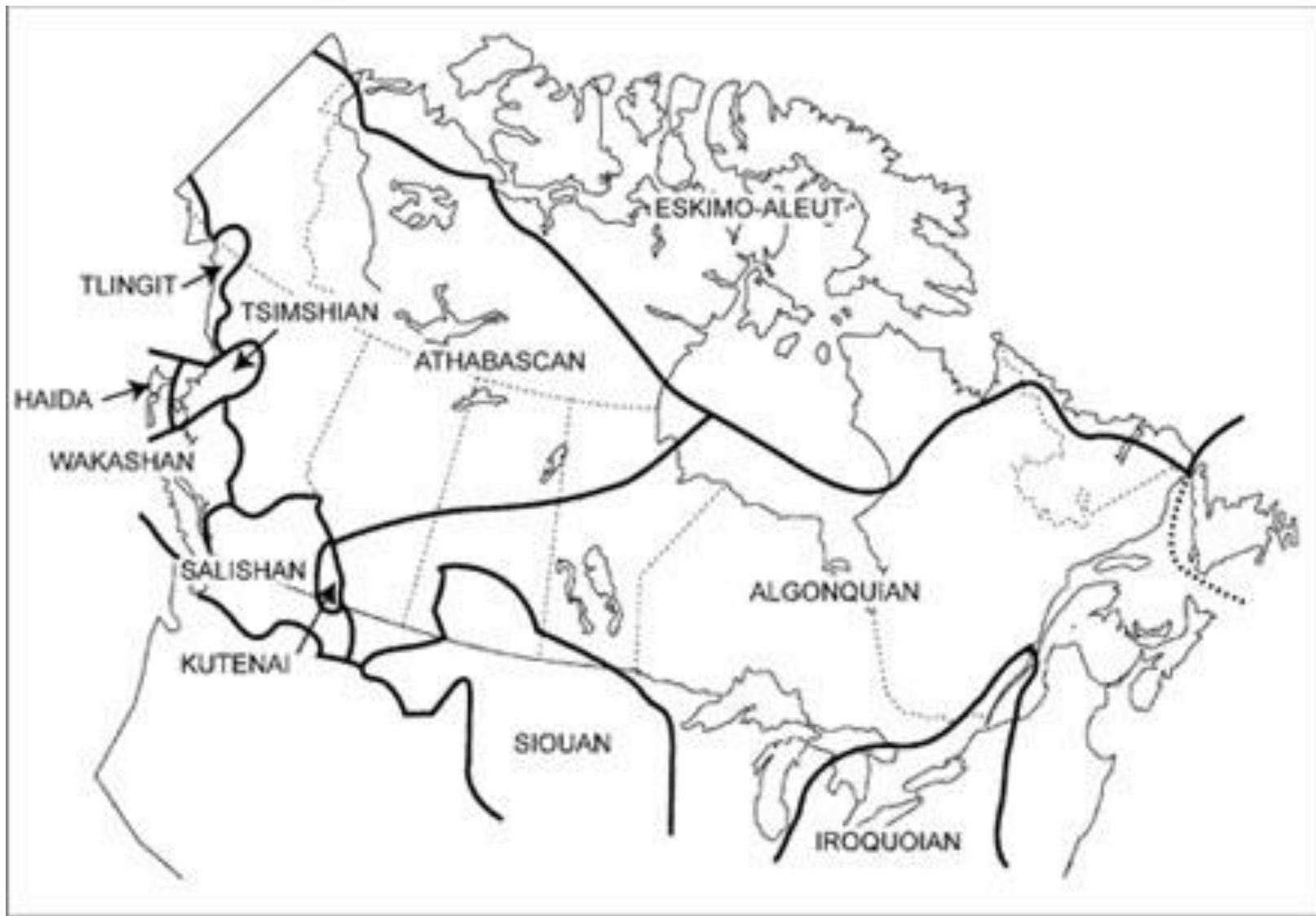
- Founded in the 19th century, the Canadian Indian residential school system was intended to force the assimilation of the Aboriginal Peoples into European-Canadian society
- They were run by churches of various denominations across Canada
- Children were forcibly separated from their families and communities
- Children were punished for speaking their own language, practicing their faiths
- There was an elevated rate of physical and sexual abuse
- Overcrowding, poor sanitation, lack of medical care led to high TB and other infections
- Last one closed in 1996

# Diversity

- Common misconception that Aboriginal Peoples are a homogeneous group
- Each Nation has its own distinct history, traditions, values, social and cultural practices
- Recognition of diversity and respect for differences is needed to begin building relationships with various communities

# Aboriginal Languages

- 10 First Nations Language Families in Canada - Algonquian, Athabaskan, Siouan, Salish, Tsimshian, Wakashan, Iroquoian, Haida, Kutenai and Tlingit
- 1 Inuit Language Family – Inuktitut
- 1 Métis Language Family – Michif
- Over 60 Distinct Languages and Dialects across Canada.



# The Role of Elders

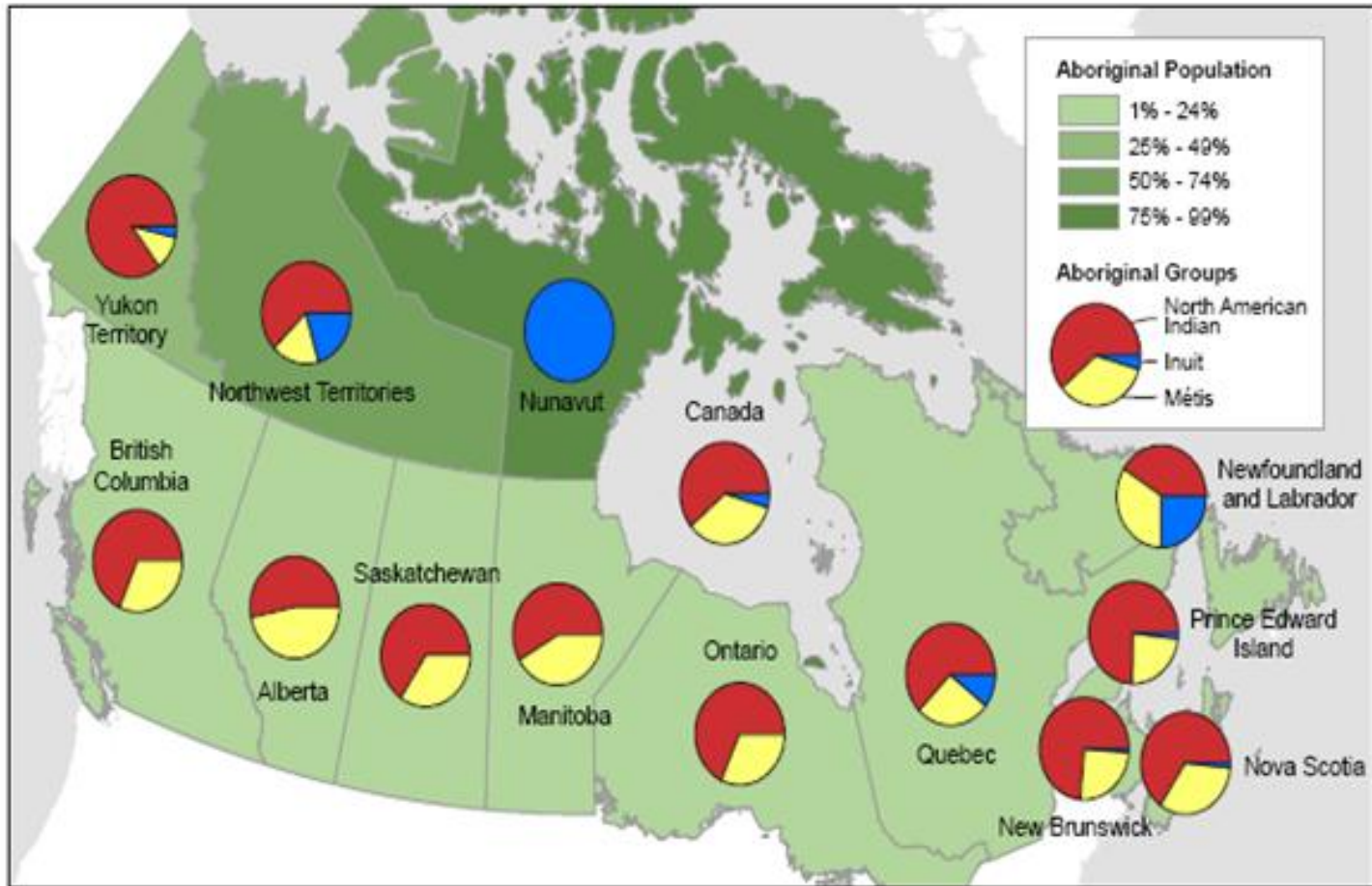
- Elders are respected and honored by their communities for their spirituality, wisdom, high intelligence, knowledge, life experiences, and teachings
- Elders have a deep understanding of people and communities
- They are the link to the past and provide teachings for future generations
- Respect for their importance, knowledge, and role within their community must be exhibited in relationship building



# DENSITY OF POPULATION



## Aboriginal Identity Population, Canada 2006



# How can we approach relationship building?

- Openness to learning, willingness to be the student
- Collaborate, work as a team to develop common goals
- Clearly discuss how both parties will benefit from the relationship
- Respect for traditions, spirituality and reciprocity when providing services or support
  - Clients may be person with dementia, their immediate family, and the entire community



# Questions to Reflect On

- 1) What relationships currently exist between your org/AS and an Aboriginal community in your region?
  - a) What relationships currently exist between your Aboriginal community and a health service provider (dementia care) in your region?
- 2) Does your org/AS currently provide services to Aboriginal Peoples? If so, what is the nature of these services? If not, why is this?
  - a) Does your Aboriginal community currently receive services from a regional health service provider (dementia care)? (see above follow-up Q's)
- 3) What challenges have you come across in developing a relationship or providing services?
- 4) Do you see any barriers that would hinder relationship building?
- 5) What help do you need in order to move towards building a stronger relationship?

# Sources

- Aboriginal Canada Portal  
<http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/acp/site.nsf/eng/index.html>
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- CBC News Special: A history of residential schools in Canada  
<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2008/05/16/f-faqs-residential-schools.html>
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<http://www.encyclopediecanadienne.ca/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0003983>
- Government of Nunavut <http://www.gov.nu.ca/hr/site/beliefsystem.htm>
- Provincial maps and statistics – see handout for specific Provincial data
- Statistics Canada <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2007001/9628-eng.htm>
- Teachings and lectures from Billie Allan, Native Women's Association of Canada
- Voyageur, C., & Calliou, B. (2000). Various Shades of Red: Diversity within Canada's indigenous Community. *London Journal of Canadian Studies*, 16, 109-123.



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