



UAKN  
Urban Aboriginal  
Knowledge Network

rcdu  
Réseau de connaissances des  
Autochtones en milieu urbain

## RESEARCH PROJECT SUMMARY

### Atlantic Research Centre

#### Name of Project:

“This is what I wish you knew”: Identity and Well-being among Urban Aboriginal Peoples in Halifax

#### Research Start-up Summary and Abstract:

The separation of Aboriginal communities from their land base under colonization, the subsequent segregation on reserves, and the current influx of individuals to urban centres have created challenges for connection to traditional cultural practices, values and belief systems. Aboriginal people have suffered continuing assaults on their individual and collective identities, which has contributed to continuing health and social disparities. The current proposal seeks to use film as a method of data collection and as a dissemination strategy in a larger community-based participatory research project exploring urban Aboriginal identity and mental health in Halifax. The following research questions, which build off of UAKN Atlantic’s key questions, will guide the research:

- **Who are we and how did we get here?** How do Aboriginal people in Halifax define and experience different aspects of their individual and collective identities in the urban setting, and how are these interrelated?
- **What do we do?** What are the key strengths and challenges related to identity for Aboriginal people in Halifax and how do they navigate these?
- **Where are we going and how are we getting there?** How are the impacts of urban living on Aboriginal identity related to mental health and well-being? What is needed to support Indigenous people’s sense of identity, mental health, and well-being in Halifax?

#### Engagement Objectives:

- Explore how Aboriginal peoples living in Halifax define and experience their sense of individual and collective identity and how this is related to their well-being.
- Explore the perceptions, understanding and experiences of the urban environment, including narratives reflecting values, beliefs, attitudes, cultural orientations/practices, feelings of belonging, and perceptions of inequality and resilience.
- Understand coping strategies for dealing with challenges at the community, familial, and individual levels (e.g., violence, racism, poverty), and identify existing support practices (e.g., social support) and services (as well as gaps in the informal and formal systems of support).

- Implement participatory methods to empower Indigenous peoples in Halifax to express their individual and community experiences and needs to inform the development of a broader strategy on well-being, including policy, programming and additional research.
- Generate public discussion with the larger non-Indigenous community on the intersecting issues of urbanization, the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, societal attitudes, and federal, provincial and municipal governance.

**Collaborating Friendship Centre and/or other urban Aboriginal organization:**

Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre

**Main contact:**

Amy Bombay  
Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia  
[amy.bombay@dal.ca](mailto:amy.bombay@dal.ca) 902-944-2225