Race-Based Data Collection: A Focused Scan of Current Practices in Edmonton

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Primary Contributors

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Edmonton Race-Based Data Table, as affiliated with End Poverty Edmonton and the Edmonton Local Immigration Partnership, and the communities they serve and the agencies they partner with.

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We hope this data is useful for reflection and action for all stakeholders involved.

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Executive Summary

> “Data is a Living Relationship”
> – Interviewee

The Race-Based Data (RBD) Table is a collaborative table of practitioners, system representatives and community members in Edmonton interested in working towards the following vision: **Relevant and ethical data actively contributes to reducing systemic racism.** The RBD Table engaged Equity in Action (Roxanne Felix-Mah and Ashima Sumaru-Jurf) as consultants to undertake a focused scan of RBD practices in Edmonton to:

- Understand what is happening with respect to race-based data in the education, health and policing systems in Edmonton
- Identify communities’ concerns and recommendations regarding the current state of the collection of race-based data in the education, health and policing systems in Edmonton.

Methods

The RBD Table emphasized that the methods for this scan should be in line with ethical approaches to race-based data and therefore, focused on the building and restoring of relationships between communities and organizations/institutions that collect and use data; and engaging members of communities who are most affected by race-based data collection in the analysis and interpretation of what we found.

The consultants reached out to 25 stakeholders between June-October 2022 to participate in interviews. 20 organizations agreed to participate, out of which 19 organizations currently had data that they could speak to. Respondents included:

- 1 research organization
- 5 representatives from either the health, education or policing systems (one of which responded through email)
- 2 funding organizations
- And 13 non profit organizations

The consultants then facilitated a discussion with community members to gather their perspectives on the findings of the scan.

What We Found

We divided organizations into four categories, with respect to the state of data collection of race-based data or Indigenous identity data.

Unconcerned Phase - In these organizations, there is no active interest in collecting race-based data or Indigenous identity data for the purposes of reducing systemic racism.

Interest Phase - In these organizations, there is an interest in collecting race-based data or Indigenous identity data for the purposes of reducing systemic racism, but no actions have been taken.

Exploration Phase - In these organizations, there have been some initial steps taken to prepare the organization to collect race-based data or Indigenous identity data.

Action Phase - In these organizations, there has already been commitment and significant investment in preparing the organization to collect race-based data or Indigenous identity data for the purposes of reducing systemic racism or achieving equity for racialized or Indigenous populations in a specific area (through the comparison of service outcomes or advocacy).

Out of the 19 organizations who were collecting data, the distribution of activity related to race-based data or Indigenous identity data were as follows:

Spectrum of Organizational Activity Related to Race-Based Data		
	Total number of organizations	Breakdown - non-profit organizations versus funders and systems
Unconcerned	0	
Interest	7	4 non-profits & 3 funders and system representatives)
Exploration	5	4 non profits & 1 system representative
Action	5	4 non profits & 1 system representative

We also gathered information in four areas: 1) the rationale for race-based or Indigenous identity data collection; 2) frameworks they are using for these data collection and analysis activities; 3) community engagement and governance considerations and 4) constraints and facilitators for these data collection and analysis activities.

Rationale being used for race-based or Indigenous identity data collection

Those organizations in the Action phase of race-based or Indigenous identity data collection did so because they were: committed to reducing systemic racism in their organization; advocating for specific populations (external to the organization) in policy and program development; or seeking to inform recruitment and retention strategy so that staff represent the population served.

All other organizations engaged in this type of data collection because of: funder requirements (description of impact, tied to Federal funding etc.); an interest in improving program efficacy; or an increased awareness because of watershed moments that have driven wide spread understandings of racial and colonial impacts.

The frameworks they identified for race-based data collection and analysis

Three organizations named the First Nations Principles of OCAP® as the framework for their race-based or Indigenous identity data collection and analysis. No other frameworks are in use, or were mentioned, by the organizations who participated in the scan. Three organizations described using a constellation of variables in addition to race and/or Indigenous identity to gather a more holistic perspective of individual identities (ie. ethnicity, primary language, country of origin, fluency in English or French etc.).

Community engagement and governance considerations

Only one organization created a specific community advisory body to advise on race-basd and Indigenous identity data collection. One organization created a working group to contribute to a framework for this type of data collection. Three organizations had pre-existing governance models that already integrated the perspective of community members (who were often racialized and/or Indigenous OR represented the population being served by this organization) . One individual named the relationship between Alberta Health and Métis Nation of Alberta or the Métis General Settlement Council as a good model of how a system can work with community data.

Constraints and Facilitators for race-based data collection and analysis

In our conversations with respondents, consistent themes emerged about the factors that could constrain or facilitate the collection of race-based or Indigenous identity data. These included: role of the funder; the role of legislation; the ability to apply what is learned from this data; the quality of data feasible, dependent on sample size and reliability of self-report; the capacity needed for this type of specialized data collection,analysis and engagement; the ability to understand and/or implement promising practices in this field (including appropriate steps, resistance from frontline workers or public, data categories, and communicating with public); the fear of the potential impact of unsuccessful attempts in this type of data collection; the need for complicated engagement strategies needed for appropriate representation; the need for representation and merging of different expertise areas; and the accountability that comes with this type of data collection and analysis that requires *action* to follow up on what has been learned.

We also gathered information on what types of race-based and Indigenous identity data activities were happening in the health, education and policing systems during the fall of 2022, which is explained in more detail in the full report.

In November 2022, these findings were presented to community members in two focus groups, where they were asked for their input on insights and connections for the analysis. Some key themes generated included:

- The need to link race-based data and Indigenous identity data to government and policy processes.
- The affirmation of hesitancy in sharing race or Indigenous identity information because of previous experiences where data, especially in Indigenous communities, were used to break down rather than support communities.
- The value of race-based data or Indigenous identity data if it is tied to meaningful outcomes.
- The need for existing race-based or Indigenous identity data to be released to the community.
- The absolute necessity of community perspectives in analysis of this data. Research methods can have systemic discrimination embedded within their approach, and these “blindspots” are difficult to avoid without involvement of communities most impacted by this data. These perspectives can ensure that race-based and Indigenous identity data and analysis should focus on the systems that perpetuate oppression. These perspectives can also ensure that race-based and Indigenous identity data should be used to identify strengths and assets of these communities, rather than just where there are gaps.
- There should be efforts to learn from previous efforts in ethical data collection and analysis, such as Alberta First Nations Data Governance models.
- Participants affirmed that the perspectives that community perspectives plus the skills and expertise of researchers and data scientists are needed.
- Many of the previous points converged and participants spoke to the need for relationships in this work. All of these organizations need relationships with communities if they are to ground their data, and the insights from this data, in meaningful ways.
- As work in this area continues, there are other areas to be explored to ensure that data collection leads to meaningful insights: such as,
    - Exploring how race can be defined to enable international comparisons
    - Exploring the many facets that lead to individuals not being willing to identify their race or Indigenous identity.

- Finally, participants spoke to how organizations must fully commit to being anti-racist before embarking upon race-based data collection and analysis. It is difficult to collect and analyze data in a way that is committed to reducing systemic discrimination, unless the organization as a whole is committed to this mandate and the implications of this commitment.

In keeping with the principles of the Race-Based Data table, this report did not provide recommendations for next steps. There are, however, some implications to be considered as a result of the findings of this focused scan.

Implication: Building clarity around what race-based data means

- The vision of the RBD table brought clarity to the conversations and made it easier for participants and stakeholders to discuss their experiences, perspectives and learning. The table identified the value of pulling out Indigenous identity data as separate from race-based data, as the history and context of Indigenous identity data is very unique. The race-based data table may want to explore this differentiation further.

Implication: Opportunities for relationship building and co-learning

- Through this process, it was affirmed that relationship building can uncover assets and skills to the achievement of this vision. People identified that they do not know “where to go” to learn more about race-based data collection and analysis. All of the promising practices do explicitly name ongoing consultation and “relationships” as the key to making these processes ethical.

Implication: Value of linking to government systems

- The current strategic plan for the RBD table doesn’t explicitly list a strategy on engaging government systems. Given the feedback of community members, there might be an opportunity for the table to explicitly explore how this might be achieved.

- The scan did reveal how education and health systems are provincial in scope. While local initiatives (like partnerships and data projects) can inform provincial approaches, there might be value in exploring what the table can do to expand its scope provincially if health and education systems continue to be a priority for them.

Implication: Prioritizing next steps for the RBD Table

- The strategic plan can provide a good platform from which to prioritize next steps; however the information provided in this scan should be used to revisit which of the directions should be prioritized.

Implication: Dissemination Processes

- The dissemination process for this scan can be used as a template for acting on all of the implications described above: for relationship building and learning, for linking to the government and to help prioritize next steps. Dissemination processes should involve some cross-sector dialogue to further the vision of this table.

It is hoped that this report - its findings, description of community generated insights, list of community assets and implications to be considered - is useful for stakeholders engaged in moving towards relevant and ethical race-based and Indigenous identity data that reduces systemic racism. It is evident from this process that many stakeholders in Edmonton are interested in this area, which can hopefully be translated to a meaningful impact on those communities most affected by racism in Edmonton.

Introduction & Context

"Data is a Living Relationship"
– Interviewee

The Race-Based Data (RBD) Table is a collaborative table of practitioners, system representatives and community members in Edmonton interested in working towards the following vision: **Relevant and ethical data actively contributes to reducing systemic racism**.

Initially, this group formed in early 2021 for the purposes of continuing collective advocacy around accessing equity data related to the COVID-19 pandemic and disparate health outcomes for racialized communities undertaken by some members of the Edmonton Local Immigration Partnership (ELIP). This work also aligned with End Poverty Edmonton's (EPE) Anti-Racism Game Changer. Subsequently, EPE provided Co-Chair and infrastructure support to this table. This group continues to provide updates on its activities to ELIP partners.

One of the Race-Based Data Table's strategic priorities is to improve the practice of race-based data collection through the creation, sharing and knowledge mobilization of tools. In order to do this effectively for the Edmonton community, the RBD Table wants to get a sense of what's happening in Edmonton through a focused scan of current RBD practices. The RBD Table engaged Equity in Action (Roxanne Felix-Mah and Ashima Sumaru-Jurf) as consultants to complete this work

The purpose of this focused scan of RBD practices is to

- Understand what is happening with respect to race-based data in the education, health and policing systems in Edmonton

- Identify communities' concerns and recommendations regarding the current state of the collection of race-based data in the education, health and policing systems in Edmonton.

It is hoped that this scan would inform the RBD Table's priorities for next steps of action, within the RBD Table's strategic priorities (Appendix A).

Definitions

For the purposes of this paper, we have included these definitions to help clarify the concepts discussed.

Race - In the field of anti-racism, it is common to use the terms white, black, and brown to refer to skin colour and also to use the terms IBPoC or IBMPoC to refer to the differences in how race has been historically and socially determined and embedded (IBMPoC = Indigenous, Black, Mixed-racial identity, and People of Colour). Phenotypical features, such as skin tone, eye colour, hair colour, and other variations of physical features are factors used to place people into racial categories as well as factors such as tribal, regional, or national affiliation.

Race is historically and socially constructed – there is no scientific basis for grouping people into one racial category over another. There are, however, many differences in how people experience racial impacts on an institutional and systemic level. These very real, material effects are historically embedded and continue through organizational, institutional, and social policies; some of these effects embed privilege for white racial groups while others produce disadvantages for non-white racial groups. Racist outcomes will not disappear if we are “colour blind” or socially “decide” to not use race as a construct. Anti-racism requires the intentional dismantling of policies and practices that have racist effects, as outlined in the definition of racism, below.

Racism is a system where power, privilege and prejudice work together to produce unearned privileges for some (White/non-racialized people) and marginalization / disadvantage for others (IBPoC/racialized people).

Racism is:

- *Power*- to tell a story, to create images, to set policies, to make decisions on behalf of others, combined with
- *Privilege* - an unearned advantage that often acts invisibly - and makes it hard to see the system we are creating or operating within, and this system is also mired in
- *Prejudice* - prejudgements about people based on their race. These ideas and judgements come from the biases and stereotypes that are ingrained into systems and institutions, such as education, (social)media, politics, and entertainment.

Race-based and Indigenous identity data is data that collects information on race and Indigenous identity in order to identify and monitor inequities that stem from racism, bias and discrimination, and to inform interventions in order to improve equity in a variety of outcomes.[1]

Methods

The RBD Table emphasized that *how* this table engages in its work is as important as *what* this table seeks to accomplish. They requested that the consultants apply principles of the RBD table (such as centering people most affected by inequities and engaging diverse perspectives) in the completion of the focused scan of current practices. For this reason, the *methods used to achieve this scan's objectives were deliberately participatory and anti-oppressive in its approach.*

The approach for the interviews and dissemination, in line with ethical approaches to race-based data, is to contribute to the building and restoring of relationships between communities and organizations/institutions that collect and use data. As well, the RBD Table has highlighted they want to have sustained and meaningful engagement with members of communities who are most affected by race-based data collection and use.

The steps in the methods for this focused scan of current practices included:

- Four members of the Race-Based Table volunteered to form a working group for this project. They provided guidance for the methods and approach for this project and liaised with the Race-Based Table as a whole and other stakeholders interested in this work.

- The consultants approached key contacts (identified through the Race-Based Data table) who worked in the health, education, and policing systems who could facilitate the collection of information related to this scan

- The consultants also approached approximately 10 non profit organizations who have advanced data collection practices within *each* of these three sectors (health, education and justice)

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[1] https://www.cihi.ca/sites/default/files/document/guidance-and-standards-for-race-based-and-indigenous-identity-data-en.pdf

- The consultants facilitated a discussion with community members to gather their perspectives on the findings of the scan. The consultants asked for participants who were:
    - members of racialized or Indigenous communities AND
    - had an understanding of the impact of data on how education, policing or health services are delivered because of their professional/educational background OR because they had directly supported racialized / Indigenous community members in their interaction with education, policing or health systems

- Focusing on dissemination, including facilitated opportunity for exchange of information and further dialogue.

The intended outcomes of this process included:

- A scan design that is robust and relevant for communities and the end goal of "ending systemic racism", as well as for those who work within systems.

- The foundations of relationships between members of the RBD Table, members of community and system representatives.

- The experience of a "process" that is relational and focused on meaningful, authentic engagement.

- A focused scan of current RBD practices, where implications and recommendations are generated by community members.

The consultants reached out to 25 stakeholders to either participate in interviews or to identify stakeholders who should participate in this scan.

The consultants had conversations with 20 organizations, out of which 19 organizations currently had data that they could speak to (Appendix B). These conversations took place between June and October 2022.

Respondents included:
- 1 research organization
- 5 representatives from either the health, education or policing systems (one of which responded through email)
- 2 funding organizations

- And 13 non profit organizations

Many organizations in this scan of practices were collecting identity data (for example, age, gender, ethnicity, race, and Indigenous identity). However, in line with the vision of the RBD table, this scan was particularly interested in identifying efforts made to collect race-based data and/or Indigenous identity data that is intended to actively contribute to reducing systemic racism.

An interview guide (Appendix C) was used to guide the discussion. Much of this guide was based on his guide was based on the Data Equity Framework from *We All Count Project* (weallcount.com/the-data-process) . However, depending on the extent to which an organization was collecting race-based data or Indigenous identity data, some of the questions were not relevant and were not used in the interview. The interview guide was intended to provide a snapshot of where the organization was in terms of its data collection practices for the purposes of informing the RBD Table's next steps. It was not intended to provide an exhaustive review of demographic variables being collected by these organizations or data collection methodologies.

What We Found

Current State

For clarity, we have divided organizations into four categories, with respect to the state of data collection of race-based data or Indigenous identity data

Unconcerned Phase - In these organizations, there is no active interest in collecting race-based data or Indigenous identity data for the purposes of reducing systemic racism.

Interest Phase - In these organizations, there is an interest in collecting race-based data or Indigenous identity data for the purposes of reducing systemic racism, but no actions have been taken. Some of these reasons include: no direct relevance to current everyday service, no mandate for this type of data, or the perception that these initiatives are out of their realm of control.

Exploration Phase - In these organizations, there have been some initial steps taken to prepare the organization to collect race-based data or Indigenous identity data. Some examples of initial steps might be: mapping out data fields, having working groups on this issue, or identifying resources for this work. Alternatively, they may have started collecting this data to expand their services or find service efficiencies, but it is not intentionally used to identify and eliminate barriers for racialized and Indigenous communities so that they can achieve equitable outcomes.

Action Phase - In these organizations, there has already been commitment and significant investment in preparing the organization to collect race-based data or Indigenous identity data for the purposes of reducing systemic racism or achieving equity for racialized or Indigenous populations in a specific area (through the comparison of service outcomes or advocacy).

Out of the 19 organizations who were collecting data, the distribution of activity related to race-based data or Indigenous identity data were as follows:

Spectrum of Organizational Activity Related to Race-Based Data

	Total number of organizations	*Breakdown* - non-profit organizations versus funders and systems
Unconcerned	0	
Interest	7	4 non-profits & 3 funders and system representatives)
Exploration	5	4 non profits & 1 system representative
Action	5	4 non profits & 1 system representative

Based on respondents interviews, we have summarized their comments into the following themes:

- The rationale being used for race-based or Indigenous identity data collection
- The frameworks they identified for race-based data collection and analysis
- Community engagement and governance considerations
- Constraints and Facilitators for race-based data collection and analysis

There is a final section that provides a summary of the current state of race-based data or Indigenous identity data collection in the health, education and policing systems. Quotations from respondents are included in this section to illustrate some of the themes and are indented and italicized.

Findings: Rationale for the Collection of Race-Based Data

Action Phase

The four organizations that are in the *action* phase of race-based data collection were collecting data specifically to

- reduce systemic racism in their organization,
- advocate for specific populations (*external* to the organization) with respect to policy, programming and funding for equitable outcomes, or
- help inform their recruitment and retention strategy, so that their staff represented the population served by the organization as part of their anti-racism and equity approach.

The desire to use data for advocacy is illustrated in this quote.

> *"There is a strong drive to do common advocacy and awareness and education campaigns and we can only really do that well if we're collecting this information"*

Interest and Exploration Phases

For those organizations in the *interest or exploration* phase of race-based data collection, if they are collecting race-based or Indigenous identity data about their program participants or users, it tends to be because:

- data collection is driven by funder requirements for evaluation or
- funding is tied to identifying program participants. It is reported that funders are interested in describing which populations their funding reaches
- funding from the Federal government is sometimes specifically tied to whether or not someone is First Nations

Organizations in the *interest* or *exploration* phase are very interested in improving their program efficacy. For example, organizations described using such information they have to inform:

- Staff training and recruitment
- Resources needed by the program clients
- Ways to improve program delivery

- Areas where more funding is needed
- A better understanding of who their programs serve

A few of these organizations identified that collecting race-based data and Indigenous identity data *from their staff* is important to help them create an equitable organization that can recruit and retain individuals who are underrepresented in their workforce. One organization identified that there was a greater turnover for staff that were racialized or Indigenous. This data was key to pursuing a deeper investigation of this trend, and the subsequent changes in performance review and management processes that resulted from this investigation.

Organizations in all phases of race-based data and Indigenous identity collection expressed a greater awareness of the importance and value of race-based data with the different developments over the last couple of years (i.e. the murder of George Floyd, the discovery of graves at residential schools). These recent developments reaffirmed or created a public commitment to equity in these organizations.

Findings: Frameworks for the Collection, Use, and Governance of Race-Based Data

The consultants asked respondents if any frameworks were used to guide race-based data collection and/or analysis activities.

Three organizations described they were using the First Nations Principles of OCAP®. One organization spoke of the importance of transparency and confidentiality and the importance of people knowing “*what we’re doing with this data and why we’re doing it*.”

No other organizations mentioned any other frameworks.

Three organizations described using a constellation of variables in addition to race and/or Indigenous identity to gather a more holistic perspective of individual’s identities. Some of the other information collected included:

- Ethnicity
- Preferred language or primary language
- For newcomers, the country they immigrated from
- For newcomers, their migration pathway (i.e. refugee, refugee claimant, economic immigrant, student etc.)
- For newcomers, how long they have been in Canada
- Fluency in English or French

Findings: Community Engagement and Governance of Race-Based Data

The consultants asked organizations how communities were engaged in the collection and/or analysis of race-based or Indigenous identity data.

Only one organization had created a specific community advisory body to actively advise their race-based data collection.

One organization created a working group within the organization so that employees could contribute different perspectives to a framework for collecting race-based data. This working group focused on questions of what the information would be used for and why the information was needed as a starting point before getting into topics like “data categories” and “feasibility” within their own data collection infrastructure.

Three organizations had pre-existing governance models that already integrated the perspective of community members (who were often racialized and/or Indigenous OR represented the population being served by this organization), either through advisory committees or the commitment of seeking certain perspectives in the existing governance structure. While each separate data project may not go through these mechanisms, the organizations in general have a set of ethics and principles that ensure there is appropriate consultation and transparency. The consultants observed that these organizations already had strong relationships with communities most affected by this data. With pre-existing governance structures, the trust and relationships in which discussions about data can take place already exist. One participant observed that there are challenges in trying to build trusting relationships on one aspect of an organization’s work (i.e. data) separate from other aspects of the organization, especially with something so sensitive as data and knowledge that it produces.

Another respondent felt that her organization had a strength in having a commitment to this type of governance, but also identified that a policy guiding race-based and Indigenous identity data collection would strengthen the quality and sustainability of her organization’s commitment to the collection and use of this type of data.

Finally, another respondent identified that the working relationship between Alberta Health and Metis Nation of Alberta or the Metis General Settlement Council is a good model of how a system can work with community data. In this partnership, everything is driven by the community organization. Alberta Health does not compile or share any information without direction from these organizations.

Findings: Constraints and Facilitators as it Relates to the Collection and Use of Race-Based Data

In our conversations with respondents, consistent themes emerged about the factors that could constrain or facilitate the collection of race-based or Indigenous identity data.

- **Role of the Funder:** Many stakeholders identified that interest in race-based data or Indigenous identity data in non-profits would not proceed past the “exploration” phase unless it was mandated by the funders. The limited demographic data that is currently being collected is often done so because the funders requested it.

One respondent identified that this type of data collection is complicated, requires extra resources and is politically sensitive. They identified that without a mandate to collect this data, there also aren't supports (i.e. funding, resources for data collection, analysis, community engagement and interpretation) to ensure this data is of good quality and is used meaningfully to inform policy and/or practice.

- **Role of Legislation:** This situation is similar for all systems - there is no mandate for the education, policing and health systems for the collection of this data. There are also considerations on how existing legislation has implications for the privacy and confidentiality of data as it intersects with race-based or Indigenous identity data.

- **Ability to Apply what is Learned from this Data** - While most stakeholders agreed that there was much to be learned from the use of this data, because this data was not being requested by funding agencies and/or ministries - stakeholders felt uncomfortable considering the collection of data that may not be used anyway in decision making (as they felt that was out of their scope).

- **Quality of the Data** - **Sample Size** - There are constraints on the validity and use of this data if the population used to collect the data isn't large enough. Such efforts to collect race-based data or Indigenous identity data needs to be at the population level for it to be meaningful.

- **Quality of Data** - **Reliability of Self-reported Race / Indigenous Identity -** Currently, self-reporting is one of the approaches used to collect this type of data. Respondents commented on the reliability of this type of data when many individuals would be hesitant to self-identify for a number of reasons.

- **Capacity** - Data collection and analysis tends to not be funded well in organizations and systems. A couple of respondents identified the lack of capacity for this type of data collection and analysis, which would need to be heavily resourced to do it correctly and consistently.

- **Understanding of Promising Practices** - Many of the respondents identified some of their concerns with collecting race-based or Indigenous identity data. Some of the more common concerns included:
    - *How to collect this data:* Organizations are concerned that collecting this data would affect frontline relationships and trauma-informed practice
    - *Resistance from frontline workers collecting this data:* Many organizations identified that their frontline workers expressed hesitancy to collect this data. Some wondered if it was a human rights violation to ask identity-based questions or if it takes advantage of power in service relationships.
    - *Resistance from the public in collecting this data:* A few organizations identified that communities they serve have expressed hesitancy to provide this information or have this data collected
    - *Identifying data categories:* Organizations had questions on how to create data categories that reflect how participants think of their identities but also bring consistency to the data set.
    - *Communicating with the public about race-based data:* Organizations highlighted that communities and the public must trust the value of this data and that any process to collect this data has integrity, in order for the findings to be used and applied meaningfully.

  This work in reality, is still evolving, although there are promising practices documented (see the resources at the end of this document). For example. those with some experience in race-based data collection have identified that it would be best to have this information tracked (i.e. attached to identification or health care card, *within the system*) in such a way that no frontline provider ever sees this information unless necessary.

- **Fear of Impact of Unsuccessful Attempts** - A few respondents identified that while the potential value of race-based and Indigenous identity data is very high, there is an equally high risk of very negative impacts if efforts to collect this data go wrong.

- **The Engagement Process is Complicated - Representation -** Respondents highlighted that the process of engaging communities in this process is complicated for a number of reasons. For example, data collection and analysis is a very specific topic that requires specific expertise. How does one design consultations that gather community perspectives on the narrow aspects of data collection and analysis?

  One respondent identified the complication of engagement specifically around race-based data. Indigenous communities are diverse and heterogenous, but there are some identified bodies that can represent either the communities themselves or their perspectives. However, there is an absence of any collective "body" for systems to consult with for race-based data. This absence can affect an organization or system's readiness to engage in this type of data collection or analysis.

  Each system trying to identify individuals with appropriate perspectives and expertise, while building a consultation process that is anti-racist and representative, is a challenge. Exploring data and what it means as the first and only task in a partnership can detract from building positive, strong relationships. One system representative identified if there was a way that systems could tap into community knowledge consistently, to help build the system's capacity for managing and working with race-based data, it would be hugely helpful.

  Another respondent identified that it would be difficult for an organization to "compartmentalize" how it works with community in only one area (i.e. data collection). Trust around data collection and analysis would be difficult to build if there isn't trust between communities and the organization in other areas as well. This respondent identified that organizations need to be "anti-racist first and foremost" before they can collect and analyze data that affects racialized or Indigenous communities.

- **Engagement Process Complicated - Merging of Different Expertise Areas - ** A respondent highlighted that the forum to have a productive conversation around race-based data or Indigenous data is likely beyond the capacity / skill set of one group. It would require the collaborative efforts of those with:

- Expertise in data and data governance
- Expertise in community consultation

The translation of “reliable data” to “meaningful data” and vice versa between a) groups who understand data access and analysis and b) groups who understand policy and advocacy for racialized and/or Indigenous populations is required for race-based and Indigenous identity data collection and analysis. These types of conversations cannot take place without mutual capacity buildings and continuity, which implies that an infrastructure to consistently steward these conversations is needed in order to continue to foster trust and a meaningful process.

“Trust is fragile and we need to make sure information is being produced in a meaningful way to support the [community’s] needs. But it can't happen by just data folks or “interested stakeholders”. And unfortunately there are lots of people who don’t know or how to step into data. If there was a way to create a table that was consistent that could tap and help build into some of these things around RBD - for example, infrastructure - that would be extremely helpful. There could be working groups set up for specific tasks - data issues, governance issues, representation, consultation.”

- **Accountability and Race-Based Data and Indigenous Identity Data** - One respondent identified that the value of collecting race-based data is not only in the data and the insights they generate, but in the accountability of the organization to engage in this work well (and not in ways that further oppress those already marginalized) and then acting upon what they find in the data in policy development, resource allocation and program delivery. They highlighted that unless there are strategies to strengthen and follow-up on this type of accountability, the impact of such data would be limited.

  “It is one thing for leadership to dictate the mandate of reconciliation, it is another thing to get people to adhere to that in good faith. It becomes almost

> *worse in the wrong hands - so there's' a lot of risks to the people - the people you hire to do that, to the community who is impacted. Because someone who operates in good faith, but from a marginally informed space can do more damage ...There has to be a pass-fail on someone's performance in that space. There are no measures / accountability for not following values/mandates [and the result is] the person who was targeted by racism becomes the problem."*

Findings: Current State of Race Based Data Collection - Health, Education and Policing Systems

Health

Alberta Health recognizes the value of collecting race-based data and Indigenous identity data for the purposes of better identifying what affects health outcomes and how to improve these health outcomes. Currently, most health administrative information systems do not collect data on race or ethnicity. There is some immigration information for new Alberta Health Care registrants which could potentially serve as a proxy for race or ethnicity. There is also information on First Nations status, but no other Indigenous identities. There is some race-based data obtained through notifiable disease reporting forms, including some data collected on Covid 19 cases.

Alberta Health has had experience in working in partnership with various First Nations communities and organizations, the Metis Nation of Alberta, as well as the Metis General Settlement Council. Currently, Alberta Health is rolling out a new system for health care registration (ENMOC - Enabling New Models of Care Initiative) that encompasses registration, enrollment, payments, claims, and reporting on health system outcomes. There are some opportunities with this new system to explore how race-based data could be captured at a population level.

Police

The Edmonton Police Service (EPS) is addressing the call for race-based data in policing services through its participation in a Statistics Canada project initiated in 2020. This project is a joint project of Statistics Canada and the Canadian

Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP) to collect data on the Indigenous and racialized identity of all victims and accused persons reported through the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey (a national dataset used to monitor the nature and extent of police-reported crime in Canada). The report states that the purpose of this project is "provide insights and further understanding of experiences faced by Indigenous and racialized peoples to address systemic issues of racism, discrimination, and inequity within the Canadian criminal justice system" (p. 5). It should be noted, however, the project currently focuses only on police-reported criminal incidents. It has a recommendation to extend data collection in the future to all police incidents, even those that do not result in a crime (use of force, traffic stops, wellness checks, missing persons, mental health related police encounters and unwanted person calls).
(https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/consultation/2021/ucrs/report).

This report recommends a variety of methods for collecting information on race or Indigenous identity such as self-identification, officer perception, and a combination of both. The Edmonton Police Commission recently passed a motion to write a letter to the Alberta government seeking the addition of race-based data on government issued ID, including driver's licenses.

The report does say analysis and use of information should be done in a manner that reflects the realities experienced by Indigenous and racialized communities, through the inclusion of context to all its publications and related dissemination products. The report also states that other stakeholders have recommended sustained community engagement for input on these type of processes - including local public consultation and working groups.

This report does not refer to any frameworks in the development of its recommendations. It consulted experts and partners and produced a written document, on which it sought feedback through written surveys and virtual roundtables. 93 people participated in this feedback process, 3 of which represented Indigenous organizations and 18 represented community associations. The rest were academics (8), police services (40), governmental working groups (17) and other (7).

Education

The Edmonton Catholic School Division (ECSD) currently collects information as mandated by Alberta Education. They are engaged in some discussion on the mechanisms and use for race-based data collection. As of now, they have no immediate plans to collect this data.

The Edmonton Public School Board had been engaged in the development of a policy on equity and anti-racism for three years (https://www.epsb.ca/ourdistrict/policy/h/haabbpanti-racismandequity/) which took effect in June 2021. They also have an Anti-Racism and Equity Plan (https://www.epsb.ca/media/epsb/ourdistrict/topicsofinterest/anti-racismandequity/anti-racism-equity-action-plan.pdf) which includes the collection of student demographic data, including race-based data.

There are three different committees advising on this process, one of which specifically includes community members from racialized communities. The collection of the data is specifically focused on supporting the organization in becoming anti-racist. The data is intended to provide insight on which students are thriving in our system (through a number of outcomes, not just academic) and connect this data to other data sets to inform where students are struggling and where the system has an opportunity to do better. EPSB is clear that the students will not have to change, but the systems will have to evolve and meet the needs of students.

Supports put in place for this initiative included a working project team; three advisory committees; a budget and plan for the collection, storage and analysis of this data; a budget and plan for engagement; and communications support. Some of the factors to be considered in planning included: the absence of a provincial mandate for this data (which has implications for FOIP); privacy; confidentiality; consent; plans for the data; and an appropriate representative sample of the student population.

The data is at an individual level so that individual outcomes can be linked to demographic data, but the reporting will be at the cohort level. EPSB already had a governance model for data in place (they already collect critical vulnerable data) that was built upon for this project. EPSB recognizes the advisory committee for this work needs to continue and be in place for many years. They have also identified the high importance of all stakeholders understanding this project and trusting the integrity of this process so that the data is validated and the findings trusted.

Community Generated Insights

These findings were presented to two focus groups who had participants who were

- members of racialized or Indigenous communities AND
- had an understanding of the impact of data on how education, policing or health services are delivered because of their professional/educational background OR because they had directly supported racialized / Indigenous community members in their interaction with education, policing or health systems

Some key themes generated in response to these findings included:

- **The need to link race-based data and Indigenous identity data to government and policy processes** - Participants identified that policy development takes place in government and in order for this type of work to have a meaningful impact, any work moving forward needs to ensure a linkage to government priorities.

- **Affirmation of hesitancy in sharing race or Indigenous identity information -** Participants affirmed that there has to be transparency in how this data is used because of previous experiences where data, especially in Indigenous communities, were used to break down rather than support communities. Participants said the ethic of "nothing about us, without us" should be applied to data collection and analysis. The whole spectrum of this process should be transparent: what is being collected, why it's being collected, what it will be used for, the findings of the data collection, and what actions are being taken because of these findings.

Participants also shared ideas and initiatives where race-based data was embedded in the "back end" of systems so it could be shared with a higher degree of confidentiality. They shared this was valuable as they could be seen as a person with a need or strength/contribution *first* but then the relevant implications of their race (such as in relation to healthcare treatment and outcomes) could be taken into account where it was a benefit to them rather than a detriment.

- **Value of race-based data or Indigenous identity data if tied to meaningful outcomes -** Participants provided many examples of how this data can support organizations and systems in taking actions to reduce systemic discrimination. For example, such data can be used to enable greater access and affordability to post-secondary programs, essential services, essential information for health and wellness, and to identify whether or not there are systemic barriers in areas like health and employment. However, participants noted that this data is only helpful if it's tied to outcomes and not just on "who's being served".

- **Need for existing race-based or Indigenous identity data to be released to community** - Participants shared that data already exists in the health and education systems that can support racialized or Indigenous communities in identifying important and meaningful actions. However, this data is not accessible to these communities.

- **Absolute necessity of community perspectives in analysis of this data** - Participants shared examples that validates the methodology of including people with lived experience of discrimination as they bring vital perspectives to the *identification of research questions and analysis* that is *more meaningful and useful* towards reducing systemic discrimination. Research methods can have systemic discrimination embedded within their approach, and these "blindspots" are difficult to avoid without involvement of communities most impacted by this data.

- In particular, these perspectives can ensure that **race-based and Indigenous identity data and analysis should focus not only on community members, but on the systems themselves that perpetuate oppression.** As one participant identified:

  > "*One of my fears is that the folks who collect this data don't have the understanding on how to analyze it from an anti-oppressive and anti-racist lens, rendering it pointless".*

  For example, one participant had questions about the number of cesarean section procedures performed on mothers, and what kinds of drugs are given to manage pain, depending on the race or Indigenous identity of the mothers. Another participant was interested in the demographics of family physicians and the demographics of whom they are serving. These types of research questions would reveal much about the inequities in health care, but would likely not be identified as a concern without the observations of community members themselves.

  > "*We get so much data from community members - what can we do to make these stories and experiences count"*

  Another example emerged from the experience of a participant that referred to the education system.'

  > "*We need to track the student data (for example, graduation rates) and then embed it in other school data – what's the diversity of staff, what else is going on in the school? Do we have a prayer space for our kids? We want to see diversity in more than the janitorial staff. Are you reporting on the things that are important? I don't want to know how many Black kids are being suspended, I want to know who's suspending the Black kids?"*

- These perspectives can also ensure that **race-based and Indigenous identity data should be used to identify strengths and assets of these communities, rather than just where there are gaps.** There needs to be a commitment to ensuring that this research doesn’t present racialized and Indigenous people as the problem. For example, one participant spoke about one community’s work with the police and their observation of the positive outcomes of that relationship, with racialized youth being reintegrated back into the community after incarceration. She wanted to know if this type of data is being collected and if it could be used to strengthen community-based programming.

> “*We have centuries of deficit based data and we’re still working with it but strength-based data brings people together. All the data we can find for things like funding applications is deficit-based data and that data is keeping us there.”*

- There should be efforts to **learn from previous efforts in ethical data collection and analysis, such as Alberta First Nations Data Governance** models. There would be valuable lessons in community governance of data that could be transferable to many contexts.

- Participants also affirmed that the **perspectives needed for effective race-based and Indigenous identity data collection and analysis are diverse** and important to seek out. They acknowledged that community perspectives plus the skills and expertise of researchers and data scientists are needed.

- Many of the previous points converged and participants spoke to **the need for relationships in this work.** There would be a real asset to all if relationships existed to enable individuals and organizations to explore this all. All of these organizations need relationships with communities if they are to ground their data, and the insights from this data, in meaningful ways.

> *“Police, Health, and Education... instead of asking us what they want to know, they need to ask, ‘what data do you want to collect and what do you want to know?; Then you would get more relevant race-based data. The community knows what’s going on... how do they flip the consultation*

> *around? They [systems] might not know how to do that, but we have to flip the system around. How do we approach and build relationships? What questions are you asking your community members?"*

- As work in this area continues, there are **other areas to be explored to ensure that data collection leads to meaningful insights:** such as,
    - Exploring how race can be defined to enable international comparisons
    - Exploring the many facets that lead to individuals not being willing to identify their race or Indigenous identity. Participants discussed factors such as: fear of what the data is used for, discomfort with the terminology used to describe their identity, feeling connected to their identity in ways that they feel confident identifying it in research, capturing the complexity of people's intersectional identities)

- Finally, participants spoke to **how organizations must fully commit to being anti-racist before embarking upon race-based data collection and analysis.** It is difficult to collect and analyze data in a way that is committed to reducing systemic discrimination, unless the organization as a whole is committed to this mandate and the implications of this commitment.

> "*There's collecting race and there is being anti-racist ...Collection of race based data should be embedded in organizational strategy and not just an add on, which is an after thought.":*

Implications for Race Based Data Table

In keeping with the principles of the Race-Based Data table, this report will not provide recommendations for next steps. Instead, we believe the information provided in this report can be a jumping point for meaningful dialogue and engagement about what would be helpful in achieving the vision of this group: **Relevant and ethical data actively contributes to reducing systemic racism**.

We have, however, provided some implications to be considered as a result of the findings of this focused scan.

Implication: Building clarity around what race-based data means

- In this scan, it was very clear that the vision of the RBD table brought clarity to the conversations and made it easier for participants and stakeholders to discuss their experiences, perspectives and learning. We found that, in particular, the focus on "systemic discrimination" supported clarity in the conversation and that it was easier to move forward in the discussion, understanding that race-based data was not to take place of participatory or qualitative research.

- As consultants, we identified the value of pulling out Indigenous identity data as separate from race-based data, as the history and context of Indigenous identity data is very unique. The race-based data table may want to explore this differentiation further.

Implication: Opportunities for relationship building and co-learning

- Through this process, it was affirmed that relationship building can uncover assets and skills to the achievement of this vision. We have listed below some of the assets uncovered through this scan of current practices

Edmonton Stakeholders as a Resource	
Looking for insights on ...	**Talk to ...**
Comprehensive organizational investment (policy, consultation, privacy, data storage, data analysis) to support the collection and analysis of race-based data	Edmonton Public School Board
Implications of stigma and data	Alberta Council of Women's Shelters HIV Edmonton Zebra Child & Youth Advocacy Centre
Data Systems Infrastructures	Family Centre

	Homeward Trust Alberta Council of Women's Shelters
Non Profit Models of Governance that involve diverse voices	Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (Governance involves member organizations of women shelters, not clients directly) Homeward Trust HIV Edmonton Zebra Child & Youth Advocacy Centre
Holistic Identity Models	Islamic Family and Social Services Association Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative
Data Governance Committees and Data Governance Assessments	Family Centre
Working Groups on Race-Based Data	Bissell Centre
Building capacity in how collect and use data (non profits) Data Maturity Assessments Knowledge Mobilization Data Management Linking academic and provincial government stakeholders	PolicyWise for Children and Families Building Better Data toolkit https://policywise.com/buildbetterdata/
Community driven community census	Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative

- People identified that they do not know "where to go" to learn more about race-based data collection and analysis. This local contextual work, combined with some of the work coming out of Ontario (EGAP Framework), British Columbia (Anti-Racism Data Act), and national bodies (CAR Principles for Indigenous Data Governance, First Nations Principles of OCAP, CIHI Standards for Race-based Data) provides strong foundations for the process and principles to consider when collecting, analyzing and using race-based data.

- All of the promising practices do explicitly name ongoing consultation and "relationships" as the key to making these processes ethical. As a result, we have embedded learning into the relationship building section as these two processes are intertwined.

Implication: Value of linking to government systems

- The current strategic plan for the RBD table doesn't explicitly list a strategy on engaging government systems. Given the feedback of community members, there might be an opportunity for the table to explicitly explore how this might be achieved.

- The scan did reveal how education and health systems are provincial in scope. While local initiatives (like partnerships and data projects) can inform provincial approaches, there might be value in exploring what the table can do to expand its scope provincially if health and education systems continue to be a priority for them. Without a provincial mandate for race-based data collection, municipal organizations, boards and programs don't have the resources to adequately collect and analyze this data. More importantly, individuals identified there is an ethical challenge in collecting information that may not be used to inform decision making with respect to policies (as that decision-making falls largely out of their control/jurisdiction). Provincial legislation also provides the infrastructure and legal protection for privacy and legal considerations.

Implication: Prioritizing next steps for the RBD Table

- The strategic plan can provide a good platform from which to prioritize next steps; however the information provided in this scan should be used to revisit which of the directions should be prioritized.

Implication: Dissemination Processes

- The dissemination process for this scan can be used as a template for acting on all of the implications described above: for relationship building and learning, for linking to government and to help prioritize next steps. Dissemination processes should involve some cross-sector dialogue to further the vision of this table.

In summary

It is hoped that this report - its findings, description of community generated insights, list of community assets and implications to be considered - is useful for stakeholders engaged in moving towards relevant and ethical race-based and Indigenous identity data that reduces systemic racism. It is evident from this process that many stakeholders in Edmonton are interested in this area, which can hopefully be translated to a meaningful impact on those communities most affected by racism in Edmonton.

Appendix A - Strategic Priorities for the Race-Based Data Table

This section contains a synthesis of the strategic priorities for the Race-Based Data Table for 2022 onwards. A more detailed document is available with the background, approach, definition, values and methods used to identify these priorities.

Vision Statement

Members agreed upon the following vision statement for this table.

Relevant and ethical data actively contributes to reducing systemic racism.*

*This statement should be complemented with definitions and a list of prioritized strategies when shared externally.

Prioritized Strategies

There were three strategies that were prioritized by the members of this table.

Two strategies are specific areas for action. The third strategy describes how action should be undertaken. Discussion and insights around these strategies are included as part of these notes.

Participants identified that the context is always changing, and that if new opportunities and challenges arise, it would make sense to revisit the prioritization of these strategies.

STRATEGY 1: Improving the Practice of Race-based Data Collection through the creation, sharing, knowledge mobilization and synthesis of tools

Some sample projects under this strategic priority would include:

- Generating a list of principles, within the Edmonton Context, on the collection and use of race-based data (one of the jamboards)
- Developing a set of questions to guide the use of such data
- Conducting an environmental Scan of how Race Based Data is collected in Edmonton across different sectors
- Conducting an environmental scan of relevant initiatives that would help inform the Edmonton context
- Conducting an environmental scan of community charters around data collection
- Developing of a community charter which would provide guiding principles, processes and data standards for race-based data collection
- Conducting a scan of anti-racism advisory committees across systems in the city

STRATEGY 2: Raising Awareness of the Value and Impact of Race-Based Data through Data Projects

Some sample projects under this strategic priority would include:

- Preparing and sharing examples of how already existing race-based or equity data can be used to highlight disparities and generate relevant recommendations
- Examining race-based data for representation in workplace, leadership positions and board composition in non-profit or for-profit sector
- Creating an Expression of Interest to pilot a race-based data collection initiative and share learnings from that work

STRATEGY 3: Strengthening Table Practice of Co-Learning and Collaboration

Table members recognized that the table members as a collective need to have a solid foundation to ensure activities undertaken in the prioritized strategies have a positive impact. This third strategy is not a “separate” strategy persay, but any activity undertaken in strategy #1 and #2 should contribute to the table’s own practice of co-learning and collaboration.

Some one-time activities to initially contribute to strengthening the table include:

- Finalizing the Terms of Reference, including identifying a time period in which to revisit them

- Identifying processes to keep the values and principles of how you work together “alive” in your time together

Other Strategies

The following strategies are still important approaches to be integrated as part of the prioritized areas above, but would not be priority areas of action.

1. Modeling how to sustain community capacity and engagement
2. Raising Awareness of the Value and Impact of Race-Based Data through Communication Mechanisms
3. Building Relationships and Strategic Connections to Highlight the Value and Impact of Race-Based Data

Appendix B - Organizations who participated in the Focused Scan of Current Race Based Data Practices in Edmonton

Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters
Alberta Health
Alberta Health Services
Bissell Centre
Boyle Street Community Services
Boys & Girls Club Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton & Area
City of Edmonton, Family and Community Support Services Program
Edmonton Catholic School Division
Edmonton Police Service
Edmonton Public School Board
Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers
Family Centre
HIV Edmonton
Homeward Trust
Islamic Family and Support Services Association
Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative
Policywise for Children and Families
United Way
YMCA Northern Alberta
Zebra Centre

Appendix C - Interview Guide

The Race-Based Data Table is a collaborative table of practitioners, system representatives and community members interested in working towards the following vision: Relevant and ethical data actively contributes to reducing systemic racism.

One of their strategic priorities is to improve the practice of race-based data collection through the creation, sharing and knowledge mobilization of tools. In order to do this effectively for the Edmonton community, the Table wants to get a sense of what's happening in Edmonton through a focused scan of current Race-Based Data practices.

The purpose of the scan is to:

- Understand what is happening with respect to race-based data in the education, health and policing systems in Edmonton?
- What are communities' concerns and recommendations regarding the current state of the collection of race-based data in the education, health and policing systems in Edmonton.

Of course, the scan will be shared with anyone who participates in this process.

**

What kind of race-based data, if any, are you collecting?

None?

- Are you interested in collecting race-based data
- What support do you need? (probe different domains: funding, motivation, project design, data collection & sourcing, analysis, interpretation, communication & distribution)

Yes….

**Funding / Power / Data*[2]

- Please describe where the mandate and funding for this type of data collection is coming from in your organization?

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[2] Using framework from weallcount.com/the-data-process

**Motivation*
- Please describe what the organization hopes to achieve / accomplish through collecting this data. (What are the objectives?)

Project Design
- Are there specific questions that are being answered through this data?
- What were the steps in identifying the design of this project and/or data collection?

Data Collection & Analysis
- Data fields, data collection methods, how protect information and privacy
- How, when and where do you get the data?
- Do you use any “Frameworks” to guide your race-based data collection and/or analysis activities
- Is the use of the data consistent with the purpose of the data collection?
- Who is involved in data analysis?

**Interpretation*
- please describe, if any, community engagement/consultation as part of this Process of collecting or interpreting data
- What happens with any type of data analysis produced from this data? How is it used?

Communication & Distribution
- If applicable, how do you share this data externally and internally?

General
- What are some of the factors in your system that either facilitate or challenge collecting and analyzing race-based data ?

- If you were able to collect race-based data in an effective way, how do you see that making a difference for your organization?

- How about for the community you serve?

***

After we collect this information, we have two more steps to this process.

1. The table believes there would be value from engaging members of

racialized communities in interpreting the results of the scan and engaging in dialogue around race-based data collection.

2. The table wants to support the building and restoring of relationships between communities and organizations that collect and use data. We plan to share the results of BOTH the scan and the community engagement dialogue in a forum that allows for further discussion and dialogue with community members and organizational stakeholders.

Given these steps, we have some other questions:

- What kind of information would be valuable for you from the community to facilitate the collection of race-based data for the end goal of ending systemic racism

- **Do you work with any community engagement committees that have members that you would recommend for our community engagement sessions?

- What would you like to see happen with the results of this scan?

- What would your system need to use or trust the results of this scan?’

Wrap up

- If you’re not already connected to the RBD table, would you like us to do an email introduction? We know they are always looking for people to participate.