



## First Nations indicators of poverty and well-being

September 2024

## What is IFSD?

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- The Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD) is an independent self-funded research consulting firm hosted at the University of Ottawa.
- IFSD was established by Kevin Page, Canada's first Parliamentary Budget Officer.
- IFSD specializes in solving complex problems and providing decision-support in Canada and other countries.

## Mandate and approach

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- IFSD's mandate: Define indicators to measure First Nations' conceptions of poverty and well-being.
- Approach:
  - Review existing literature
  - Leverage primary and secondary data to build a current state portrait
  - Define a business case for alleviating poverty
  - Develop indicators to measure poverty (special thanks to the working 12-member working group from 6 regions who took on the task)
  - Propose pilot projects

# Timeline of the Conceptualization of Poverty

## 1948-1950s – Monetary Measure of Poverty

- The concept of poverty was presented as a social problem following WWII and the establishment of the World Bank
- Measurement: Per capita income

## 1960s-1970s – Biological Minimum

- Robert McNamara President of the World Bank coined the term 'Absolute Poverty'
- Measurement: Minimum calorie intake

## 1980s – Capabilities Approach

- Amartya Sen developed this approach, focusing on a person's capacity to take factors like education and health to create strong well-being and to make an income
- Measurement: Identifying deprivation of capabilities where a person is limited to to pursue their goals

## 1990s – Consumption-Based Poverty Line

- Poverty understood as the inability to attain a minimal standard of living
- Measurement: US \$1 per day based on expenditure necessary to buy a minimum amount of nutrition and other necessities

## 2000s-Present – Multidimensional Poverty Measure (MPM) and Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)

- World Bank introduced MPM, including indicators like education and basic infrastructure with the headcount ratio
- Measurement: US \$1.90 per day

## What we heard

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- 1) Poverty is pervasive and often not discussed in communities.
- 2) Poverty is structural and cyclical: it stems from colonialism and is perpetuated by existing policies and institutions.
- 3) Deprivation is experienced differently by communities based on place and history.

## Defining *deprivation*

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- As defined by the working group (November 2022):

*Deprivation is the experience of not having what you need to **thrive**. In First Nations, deprivation is a result of colonial legacies and their ongoing impacts. It is **experienced** in a **culturally relative multifaceted manner**. Deprivation, wholistically, disrupts the ability for First Nations to thrive on their own terms, impacting well-being.*

## Deprivation and Income Assistance

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- Income Assistance (IA) was highlighted by working group members as an inadequate response to the pervasive challenge of deprivation.
- The approach creates a vicious cycle (a structure that recreates poverty), making it challenging and costly to escape.
- Another participant highlighted their First Nation's efforts to support skills development and capacity building to break the cycle of dependence on IA.

## Considerations in measurement

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Measurement = Monitoring

Measurement ≠ Solutions

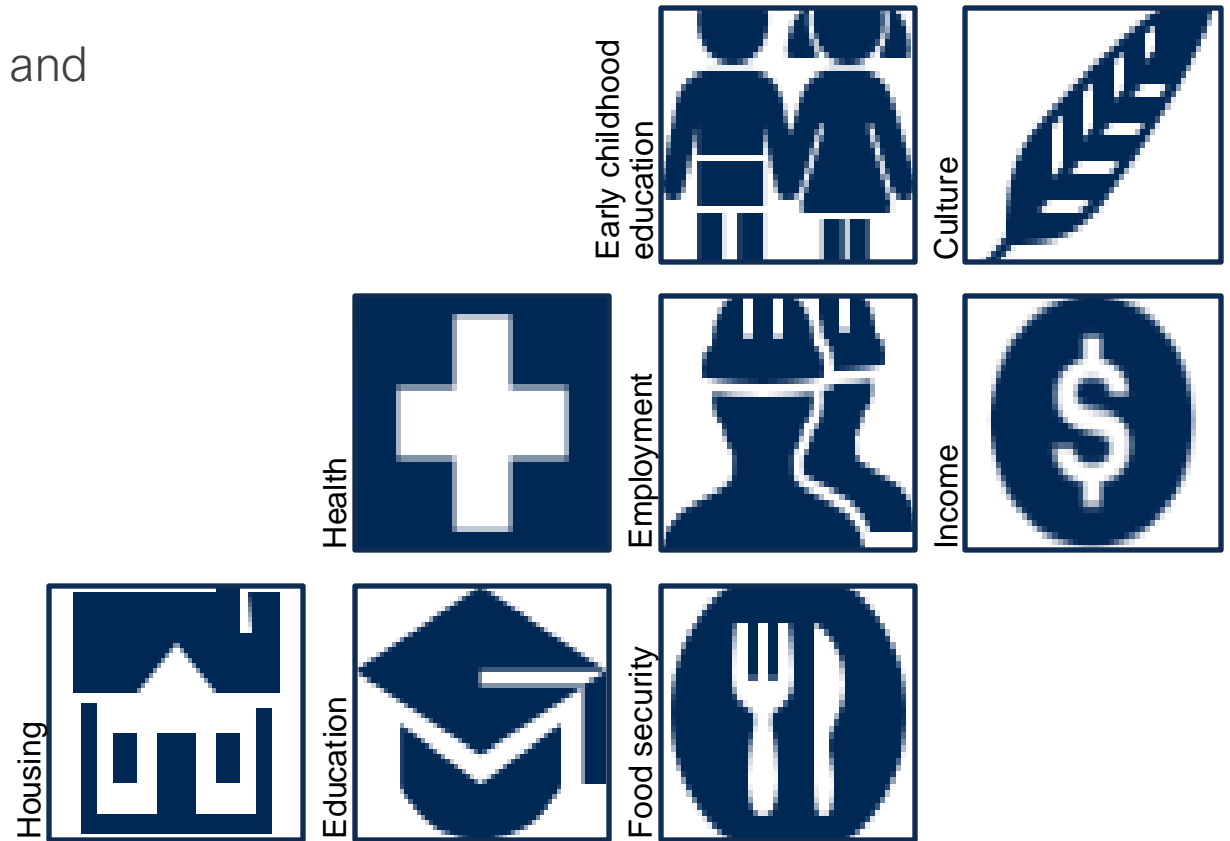
- Measurement cannot tell you *why* something is occurring. The *why* must come from qualitative data to supplement the quantitative indicators being monitored.
- Define principles first, i.e., what matters?, and then align indicators to principles.



# Proposed dimensions

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Consensus was built around 8 dimensions and 39 indicators as a starting point to capture deprivation and to measure its change.



## Proposed indicators

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### Housing

- Safe and suitable housing
- Number of people in a dwelling
- Number of transition homes on-reserve



### Education

- High school completion rate (inc. GED and ALP)
- Literacy rates
- Numeracy rates
- Highest degree attained
- First Nation (or entity) offering land-based programming for youth



### Food security

- Rate of food insecure households
- Presence of nutrition cupboards (or other community-led food security initiative)
- Access to traditional foods
- Water advisories
- Potable water from source to tap

## Proposed indicators (cont'd.)

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### Health

- Rate of chronic disease
- Access to health services in community
- Mental Health and wellness
- Rates of substance misuse
- Access to addictions treatment
- Percentage of people foregoing health services for any reason



### Employment

- Participation rate
- Employment rate
- Unemployment rate
- Number of band-offered jobs
- Jobs with livable income wages in-community
- First Nations community corporation-offered jobs
- Instances of unpaid care/work
- Self-declared skills gap



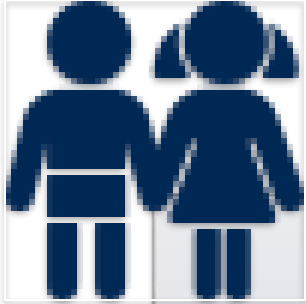
### Income

- Percentage of population receiving Income Assistance
- Total median household income

## Proposed indicators (cont'd.)

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### Early childhood education

- Availability of early childhood education in community
- Number of children in care
- Access to childcare



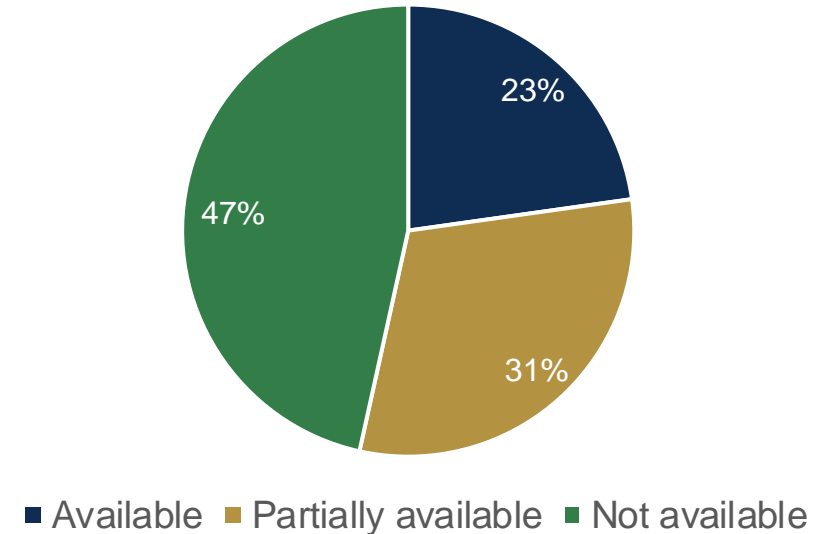
### Culture

- Adult opportunities to learn Indigenous language
- Youth opportunities for land-based activities
- Can you access cultural ceremonies in your First Nation?
- Would you like to access cultural ceremonies in your First Nation?
- Are there knowledge keepers in your First Nation?

## Data availability

- The indicators are a starting point.
- Some information is available through public or other accessible sources.
- Other information would have to be generated by the First Nation with varying levels of difficulty.

Data availability for selected indicators



3) Food security	Rate of food insecure households			
	Presence of nutrition cupboards (or other community-led food security initiative)			
	Access to traditional foods			
	Water advisories			
	Potable water from source to tap			
4) Health	Rates of chronic disease			
	Access to health services in community			
	Mental health and wellness			
	Rates of substance misuse			
	Access to addictions treatment			
	Percentage of people foregoing health services for any reason			

## Potential pilot projects

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- Two pilot projects are proposed (approximately 3-year timeline; resources required):
  - 1) Testing the poverty measurement framework
    - i. Establish a baseline by building detailed profiles of the current state of First Nations using some or all the proposed indicators.
    - ii. Define required resources and develop tools for gathering information.
    - iii. Identify contextual factors impacting or perpetuating deprivation in a First Nation.
    - iv. Record and share learnings and revise the approach as required.
  - 2) Implementing poverty alleviation strategies and assessing their results.
    - i. Identify tools and approaches for disrupting the root causes of poverty.
    - ii. Identify approaches to target specific challenges to poverty in the First Nation.
    - iii. Design and implement approaches and monitor results.

## Future applications of this work

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- Recognizing different points of departure in First Nations, identify case studies for measurement pilots.
  - Build detailed profiles of their current state using proposed indicators.
  - Identify contextual factors impacting or perpetuating deprivation.
  - Can factors influencing deprivation be disrupted?
  - What are the tools, e.g., policy, funding, people, data, etc., that can be applied for the disruption? How will change be monitored and evaluated?
- Eliminating poverty is a challenge. Identifying approaches to alleviate the effects of poverty is practical.
  - What strategies have successfully been employed by First Nations for poverty alleviation? What has not worked?
  - Is a minimum or guaranteed incomes a useful tool? Or, is it better suited for specific community needs/profiles?
  - Can successful strategies be redeployed in other places?
  - How will change be monitored and evaluated?

## Get in touch

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