RISK, NEEDS AND STRENGTHS OF ABOREIGINAL OFFENDERS IN ALBERTA

TORONTO, CANADA
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International Community Corrections Association

TANYA MYERS AND DAVID ROBINSON
Workshop Outline

- Description of the Aboriginal Population in Alberta Corrections
- Current Correctional Programming Strategy
- Alberta Aboriginal Programming
- Risk/Need/Strengths Data for Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Clients in Alberta
- Implications of Data for Aboriginal Programming
• Service Planning Instrument (SPIn)
• Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI)

- Overall Risk – Low/Moderate/High
- Overall Strength – Low/Moderate/High
- 9 Need Domains and 7 Strength Domains
Populations

- 61,285 – Probation
- 3,656 – (Outcome Sample)
- 752 - Custody (Outcome Sample)

Alberta SPIn Databases*

- 78.9% non-Aboriginal
- 21.1 % Aboriginal
- 58.0% non-Aboriginal
- 41.9% Aboriginal

*Acknowledgement: Dr. Natalie Jones conducted the data analysis for this presentation.
% New Offences by SPIIn Risk Level and Aboriginal Status in the Alberta Probation Sample (n=3,656)

![Bar chart showing the percentage of new offences by SPIIn risk level and Aboriginal status. The chart compares non-aboriginal and Aboriginal groups, with low, moderate, and high risk categories.](chart_image)
SPIn Risk Levels by Aboriginal Status
(Probation Sample, n=61,285)

Non-Aboriginal

- Low: 61.4%
- Moderate: 32.6%
- High: 6.0%

Aboriginal

- Low: 35.6%
- Moderate: 42.7%
- High: 17.2%
% New Offences by Strength Level and Aboriginal Status (n=3,656)

- **Low**
  - Non-Aboriginal: 29.5%
  - Aboriginal: 46.6%

- **Moderate**
  - Non-Aboriginal: 16.5%
  - Aboriginal: 27.8%

- **High**
  - Non-Aboriginal: 7%
  - Aboriginal: 14%
### SPIn Strength Levels by Aboriginal Status

(Probation Sample, n=61,285)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-Aboriginal</th>
<th>Aboriginal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Buffering effect of Strengths (by Risk Level)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Level</th>
<th>Low Strength</th>
<th>Moderate Strength</th>
<th>High Strength</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LOW RISK</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>MODERATE</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIGH RISK</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOW RISK</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MODERATE</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIGH RISK</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>54</td>
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</table>

### non-Aboriginal

### Aboriginal
Custody Sample: % Post-Release Arrests by SPIre Risk Level and Aboriginal Status (n=703, 12-month follow-up)
SPIn Risk Levels by Aboriginal Status
(Post-release Sample, n=703)

Non-Aboriginal:
- Low: 22%
- Moderate: 49%
- High: 29%

Aboriginal:
- Low: 8%
- Moderate: 41%
- High: 51%
% Post-Release Arrests by Strength Level and Aboriginal Status

**NON-ABORIGINAL**
- Low: 40.2%
- Moderate: 27.9%
- High: 12.3%

**ABORIGINAL**
- Low: 50.3%
- Moderate: 34.7%
- High: 20.7%
SPIn Strength Levels by Aboriginal Status
(Post-release Sample, n=703)

Non-Aboriginal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aboriginal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Buffering effect of Strengths (by Risk Level)

- **Low Strength**
- **High Strength**

![Bar chart showing buffering effect of Strengths by Risk Level for non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal populations.](image-url)
Domain Comparisons

Community Sample = 50,659
- 22.6% Aboriginal
- 77.4% non-Aboriginal

Post-Release Sample = 733
- 41.6% Aboriginal
- 58.4% non-Aboriginal

- 93 Full Assessment Items
- 11 Domains
  - Criminal History
  - Response to Supervision
  - 9 Need Domains
  - 7 Strength Domains*

* Aggression*
* Substance Abuse*
* Social Influences*
* Family*
* Employment*

* Attitudes*
* Skills*
* Stability*
* Mental Health*
### Need Domains by Aboriginal Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>Poor anger management, beliefs support use of violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Influences</td>
<td>Disruption of functioning and/or high frequency use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Influences</td>
<td>Anti-social peer associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Poor quality of intimate relationship, parenting deficits, negative family of origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Poor motivation, lacks skills, poor performance, lacks job search skills, unemployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>Anti-social attitudes, negative toward legal authorities, rejects responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills (Adaptive)</td>
<td>Poor problem-solving, lacks social skills, poor consequential thinking, poor impulse control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stability</td>
<td>Unstable accommodation, inadequate income, lacks access to services, poor budgeting skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>One or more mental health flags – diagnosis, suicidal thoughts, history of abuse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=50,659

All need domains showed higher levels for Aboriginal group.

Statistically significant need differences between non-Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal sub-groups with meaningful differences in need levels (e.g., 10% or more)
**Aggression**
Poor anger management, beliefs support use of violence

**Substance Abuse**
Disruption of functioning and/or high frequency use

**Social Influences**
Anti-social peer associations

**Family**
Poor quality of intimate relationship, parenting deficits, negative family of origin

**Employment**
Poor motivation, lacks skills, poor performance, lacks job search skills, unemployment

**Attitudes**
Anti-social attitudes, negative toward legal authorities, rejects responsibility

**Skills (Adaptive)**
Poor problem-solving, lacks social skills, poor consequential thinking, poor impulse control.

**Stability**
Unstable accommodation, inadequate income, lacks access to services, poor budgeting skills

**Mental Health**
One or more mental health flags – diagnosis, suicidal thoughts, history of abuse

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**Substance Abuse**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% High Need</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Mental Health**
One or more mental health flags – diagnosis, suicidal thoughts, history of abuse
Substance Abuse

Custody Sample

Unstable accommodation, inadequate income, lacks access to services, poor budgeting skills.

Anti-social peer associations.

Poor quality of intimate relationship, parenting deficits, negative family of origin.

Anti-social attitudes, negative toward legal authorities, rejects responsibility.

Poor problem-solving, lacks social skills, poor consequential thinking, poor impulse control.

One or more mental health flags – diagnosis, suicidal thoughts, history of abuse.

Disruption of functioning and/or high frequency use.

Poor anger management, beliefs support use of violence.

Poor motivation, lacks skills, poor performance, lacks job search skills, unemployment.

Aggression

Social Influences

Family

Employment

Attitudes

Skills (Adaptive)

Stability

Mental Health

Substance Abuse

% High Need

Non-Aboriginal

Aboriginal

72.4

88.9
Social Influences

- **Aggression**: Poor anger management, beliefs support use of violence
- **Substance Abuse**: Disruption of functioning and/or high frequency use
- **Social Influences**: Anti-social peer associations, criminal friends
- **Family**: Poor quality of intimate relationship, parenting deficits, negative family of origin
- **Employment**: Poor motivation, lacks skills, poor performance, lacks job search skills, unemployment
- **Attitudes**: Anti-social attitudes, negative toward legal authorities, rejects responsibility
- **Skills (Adaptive)**: Poor problem-solving, lacks social skills, poor consequential thinking, poor impulse control
- **Stability**: Unstable accommodation, inadequate income, lacks access to services, poor budgeting skills
- **Mental Health**: One or more mental health flags – diagnosis, suicidal thoughts, history of abuse

### Social Influences

#### % High Need

- **Non-Aboriginal**: 39.1
- **Aboriginal**: 58

#### % High Strength

- **Non-Aboriginal**: 36.5
- **Aboriginal**: 34.4
Social Influences

Custody Sample

Unstable accommodation, inadequate income, lacks access to services, poor budgeting skills

Anti-social peer associations, criminal friends

Poor quality of intimate relationship, parenting deficits, negative family of origin

Poor motivation, lacks skills, poor performance, lacks job search skills, unemployment

Anti-social attitudes, negative toward legal authorities, rejects responsibility

Poor problem-solving, lacks social skills, poor consequential thinking, poor impulse control.

Unstable accommodation, inadequate income, lacks access to services, poor budgeting skills

One or more mental health flags – diagnosis, suicidal thoughts, history of abuse

Social Influences

Aggression

Disruption of functioning and/or high frequency use

Substance Abuse

Anti-social peer associations, criminal friends

Family

Employment

Attitudes

Skills (Adaptive)

Stability

Mental Health

Non-Aboriginal

Aboriginal

% High Need

69.6

85.9

Non-Aboriginal

Aboriginal

% High Strength

37.9

29.5

Non-Aboriginal

Aboriginal
Family

**% High Need**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Non-Aboriginal</th>
<th>Aboriginal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>58.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Influences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
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<tr>
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</table>

**% High Strength**

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<tr>
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<th>Non-Aboriginal</th>
<th>Aboriginal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Influences</td>
<td></td>
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Employment
Unstable accommodation, inadequate income, lacks access to services, poor budgeting skills

Anti-social peer associations, criminal friends

Poor quality of intimate relationship, parenting deficits, negative family of origin

Poor motivation, lacks skills, poor performance, lacks job search skills, unemployment

Anti-social attitudes, negative toward legal authorities, rejects responsibility

Poor problem-solving, lacks social skills, poor consequential thinking, poor impulse control.

Unstable accommodation, inadequate income, lacks access to services, poor budgeting skills

One or more mental health flags – diagnosis, suicidal thoughts, history of abuse

Aggression
Substance Abuse
Social Influences
Family
Employment
Attitudes
Skills (Adaptive)
Stability
Mental Health

Employment
% High Need
Non-Aboriginal: 8.2
Aboriginal: 19.6

Employment
% High Strength
Non-Aboriginal: 41.2
Aboriginal: 34.9
Stability

Unstable accommodation, inadequate income, lacks access to services, poor budgeting skills.

Anti-social peer associations, criminal friends.

Poor quality of intimate relationship, parenting deficits, negative family of origin.

Poor motivation, lacks skills, poor performance, lacks job search skills, unemployment.

Anti-social attitudes, negative toward legal authorities, rejects responsibility.

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One or more mental health flags – diagnosis, suicidal thoughts, history of abuse.

Substance Abuse

Disruption of functioning and/or high frequency use.

Social Influences

Anti-social peer associations, criminal friends.

Family

Poor quality of intimate relationship, parenting deficits, negative family of origin.

Employment

Poor motivation, lacks skills, poor performance, lacks job search skills, unemployment.

Attitudes

Anti-social attitudes, negative toward legal authorities, rejects responsibility.

Skills (Adaptive)

Poor problem-solving, lacks social skills, poor consequential thinking, poor impulse control.

Mental Health

One or more mental health flags – diagnosis, suicidal thoughts, history of abuse.

Aggression

Poor anger management, beliefs support use of violence.

Effectiveness

% High Need

Non-Aboriginal: 20.2
Aboriginal: 38.9

% High Strength

Non-Aboriginal: 65.2
Aboriginal: 49.7
Stability

Custody Sample

Unstable accommodation, inadequate income, lacks access to services, poor budgeting skills.

Disruption of functioning and/or high frequency use.

Anti-social peer associations, criminal friends.

Poor quality of intimate relationship, parenting deficits, negative family of origin.

Poor motivation, lacks skills, poor performance, lacks job search skills, unemployment.

Anti-social attitudes, negative toward legal authorities, rejects responsibility.

Poor problem-solving, lacks social skills, poor consequential thinking, poor impulse control.

Unstable accommodation, inadequate income, lacks access to services, poor budgeting skills.

One or more mental health flags – diagnosis, suicidal thoughts, history of abuse.

Aggression

Substance Abuse

Social Influences

Family

Employment

Attitudes

Skills (Adaptive)

Stability

Mental Health

Non-Aboriginal

Aboriginal

% High Need

40.6

58.6

% High Strength

51.7

37.9

Non-Aboriginal

Aboriginal
Mental Health

Disruption of functioning and/or high frequency use

Antisocial peer associations

Poor quality of intimate relationship, parenting deficits, negative family of origin

Anti-social attitudes, negative toward legal authorities, rejects responsibility

Poor problem-solving, lacks social skills, poor consequential thinking, poor impulse control.

Unstable accommodation, inadequate income, lacks access to services, poor budgeting skills

One or more mental health flags – diagnosis, suicidal thoughts, history of abuse

Mental Health

% High Need (1 or more flags)

Non-Aboriginal 44

Aboriginal 55
% New Offenses by ACE Scores (n=3,656)

New Arrests within 1 Year

Low ACEs

High ACEs

ACE Scale Items

- Domestic violence among caregivers
- Single-parent home
- Parental substance abuse
- Parental mental health disorders
- Sexual abuse
- Physical abuse
- Foster or other placements
- Victimization or trauma as an adult

High ACE = 2 or more experiences

12

29.9
% High ACE Scores (2 or more) by Aboriginal Status

Women with 2 or more ACEs

- Non-Aboriginal: 31.7%
- Aboriginal: 54.3%

Non-Aboriginal: 23.3%
Aboriginal: 42.6%
What need domains were most predictive of recidivism for the Aboriginal group?

1. **Aggression**: 58% with high need and more predictive for Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal group.

2. **Stability**: 39% with high need and more predictive for Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal group.

3. **Skills (Adaptive)**: More predictive for Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal group, but only 20% high need.

4. **Employment**: Slightly more predictive for Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal group, but only 20% high need.

- **Substance Abuse**
- **Social Influences**
- **Family**
- **Mental Health**
What need domains were most predictive of recidivism for the Aboriginal group?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Percentage with High Need</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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What need domains were most predictive of recidivism for the Aboriginal group?

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What need domains were most predictive of recidivism for the Aboriginal group?

- **Aggression**: 58% with high need and more predictive for Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal group
- **Substance Abuse**: Slightly more predictive for Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal group, but only 20% high need
- **Social Influences**: More predictive for Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal group, but only 20% high need
- **Family**: 39% with high need and more predictive for Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal group
- **Employment**: 4
- **Attitudes**: 3
- **Skills (Adaptive)**: 2
- **Stability**: 1
- **Mental Health**:
What need domains were most predictive of recidivism for the Aboriginal group?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Influences</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills (Adaptive)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Substance Abuse**
- less predictive than other domains
- artefactual effect of a high frequency need domain?
- substance abuse remains an area of priority
What need domains were most predictive of recidivism for the Aboriginal group?

1. Social Influences
2. Stability
3. Skills (Adaptive)
4. Employment
5. Substance Abuse
6. Family

**Family**
- dynamic component of family is less predictive than other domains
- family history (e.g. ACE’s) very important
- strengths also predictive
What Strength domains were most important?

- Stability
- Skills
- Social Influences
- Family

1. **Stability**: Strength in the Stability area was more important for the Aboriginal group.
2. **Skills (Adaptive)**: Strength in Adaptive Skills was slightly more important for the Aboriginal group.
3. **Social Influences**: Strength in the Social Influence domain was important for both groups.
4. **Family**: Strength in the Family domain was slightly more important for the Aboriginal group.
Comparisons with the **CUSTODY SAMPLE**

- The pattern of results for the custody sample were generally consistent with the community sample.
- Higher needs and lower strengths were evident across domains for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups.
- The Aboriginal group demonstrated considerably higher need in the following domains:
  - Social Influences (86%)
  - Substance Abuse (89%)
  - Stability (59%)
  - Family (58%)
Comparisons by Gender

• Men and Women in the Aboriginal group showed similar need and strength levels across most domains
• Men and women in the Aboriginal Group exhibited similar high need profiles in the Social Influences domain (59.1%/53.5%)
• Women were less likely to be high risk (11.5%/19.7% for men)
• Stability needs were higher for Aboriginal women (44%/36.7% for men)
• Aboriginal women exhibited higher mental health needs than men (65.7%/50.6%)
Responsivity: ACEs and Trauma

- The ACE proxy measure showed consistently higher levels for Aboriginal members of the population.
Correlates of higher ACE scores...

- Higher rate of mental health conditions
- Higher rate of depression
- More suicidal ideation
- More problems in the family
- More relationship problems and less ability to trust others
- Higher rate of Substance Use issues
- Greater incident of community living problems
- Overall higher risk levels and lower strengths
Higher rates of trauma/ACEs among Aboriginal clients suggest a number of special considerations.

Stabilization services may be necessary to help prepare individuals to address criminogenic needs.

While trauma may not be directly related to criminal behavior or recidivism, experience of trauma may lead to maladaptive behaviors that pose special challenges in supervision:

- Substance abuse
- Unhealthy relationships
- Poor emotional regulation
- Mental health conditions
- Economic disadvantage
Youth Samples

Community Sample = 8,878
- 29.7% Aboriginal Youth
- 70.3% non-Aboriginal Youth

Community Outcome Sample = 464 (new arrests/18 months)
- 25.8% Aboriginal Youth
- 74.2% non-Aboriginal Youth

- 33 Pre-Screen items (risk, need, strength components)
- 88 Full Assessment Items
- 10 Domains
  - Legal History
  - 9 Need Domains
  - 7 Strength Domains

Legal History  Mental Health
Family  Aggression
School  Attitudes
Community/Peers  Skills
Substance Use  Employment/
               Free Time
YASI Risk Levels by Aboriginal Status

Non-Aboriginal
- Low: 41%
- Moderate: 43%
- High: 16%

Aboriginal
- Low: 25%
- Moderate: 48%
- High: 27%
YASI Strength Levels by Aboriginal Status

Non-Aboriginal:
- Low: 28%
- Moderate: 44%
- High: 28%

Aboriginal:
- Low: 36%
- Moderate: 43%
- High: 21%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>% High Need Non-Aboriginal</th>
<th>% High Need Aboriginal</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficients Non-Aboriginal</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficients Aboriginal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Use</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>58.2%</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills (Adaptive)</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employ/Free Time</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
% New Offenses by ACE Scores (n=464)

Low ACEs  High ACEs

New Offenses within 18 Months

13.5  31
% High ACE Scores (2 or more) by Aboriginal Status

- **Adults**
  - Non-Aboriginal: 23.3%
  - Aboriginal: 42.6%

- **Girls with 2 or more ACEs**
  - Non-Aboriginal: 43.1%
  - Aboriginal: 63.4%
Summary of Youth Strengths

- Aboriginal youth were slightly lower than non-Aboriginal youth on strengths in most domains
- Exceptions:
  - Family – Aboriginal youth showed similar strength levels in family (42.1% and 43.8%)
  - Community/Peers – Aboriginal youth had slightly higher strength levels in community/peers (54.2% and 51.4%)
• Community and Peers are major need areas that drive risk for Aboriginal youth
• Traditional predictors – Attitudes and Adaptive Skills are important
• ACE levels – call for attention to trauma as a responsivity factor (trauma-informed care)
• Family and peers are important strengths
IMPLICATIONS FOR ADULTS

• Social network issues deserve *special* focus (social relationships, cultural attachment, co-production)
• Stability/employment issues are salient (structural, co-production)
• High ACE’s / Trauma – Prevention, Responsivity, Trauma-Informed Care (co-production, cultural attachment)