

Canadian Public Opinion on Aboriginal Peoples



FINAL REPORT

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This study was conducted by the Environics Institute for Survey Research, in partnership with the following organizations:

CANADIANS FOR A NEW PARTNERSHIP

The mission of Canadians for a New Partnership is to establish and support a broad-based, inclusive, leadership initiative to engage Canadians in dialogue and relationship building aimed at creating a new partnership between First Peoples and other Canadians.

THE CIRCLE ON PHILANTHROPY AND ABORIGINAL PEOPLES IN CANADA

The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada is an open network to promote giving, sharing, and philanthropy in Aboriginal communities across the country, to connect with and support the empowerment of First Nations, Inuit and Métis nations, communities, and individuals in building a stronger, healthier future.

THE INSPIRIT FOUNDATION

The Inspirit Foundation seeks to create a more inclusive Canada where differences are valued and everyone has equal opportunity to thrive both socially and economically. We achieve these aims by supporting young change leaders, funding media and arts for change initiatives, impact investing, and collaborating with organizations across sectors..

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The Institute on Governance is an independent, Canada-based, not for profit public interest institution, whose mission is to advance better governance in the public interest by exploring, developing and promoting the principles, standards and practices which underlie good governance in the public sphere.

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation was created to preserve the memory of Canada's Residential School system and legacy, and will be the permanent home for all material gathered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

RECONCILIATION CANADA

Reconciliation Canada is leading the way in engaging Canadians in dialogue and transformative experiences that revitalize the relationships among Indigenous peoples and all Canadians. Our model for reconciliation engages people in open and honest conversation to understand our diverse histories and experiences.

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Tides Canada is a national charity dedicated to a healthy environment, social equity, and economic prosperity for all Canadians. We collaborate with both donors and social change leaders, offering a platform for on-the-ground efforts to create uncommon solutions for the common good.

THE ENVIRONICS INSTITUTE FOR SURVEY RESEARCH (www.environicsinstitute.org)

The Environics Institute for Survey Research sponsors relevant and original public opinion and social research related to issues of public policy and social change. It is through such research that organizations and individuals can better understand Canada today, how it's been changing, and where it may be heading.

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Introduction

Aboriginal peoples in Canada

Aboriginal or Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) are the first inhabitants of the lands which many call Turtle Island (which is now more commonly known as Canada). Despite experiencing colonization, assimilation and near extinction, the Aboriginal population has survived and is now among the fastest growing segments of the country's population (estimated at over 1.5 million, or 4% of the total). Over the past few decades, there has been notable progress in the appreciation of Aboriginal history and culture, in the clarification of Aboriginal and treaty rights, and in the acknowledgement of mistreatment and abuse by institutions and other parts of society.

This progress notwithstanding, modern-day Canada's troubled relationship with Aboriginal peoples remains unresolved and fraught with conflict. In June 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued its final report, offering the most compelling evidence yet of just one tragic chapter in this history: that of cultural genocide resulting from Indian residential schools set up by the government and churches to assimilate Aboriginal children into mainstream society by "taking the Indian out of the child." These schools are now closed, but their legacy persists through collective trauma resulting from the residential school experience.

The Aboriginal population in Canada today experiences considerable disparities with the rest of the population in such areas as income, education and health outcomes.¹ Aboriginal peoples are vastly over-represented in the country's prisons and in foster care. Adding to this are a number of unresolved issues, ranging from education reform in Aboriginal communities, to proposed pipelines crossing traditional territories, to treaty rights and land claims.

Central to the challenges facing Aboriginal peoples in Canada today is the way in which they are viewed and

understood (or misunderstood) by other parts of society. Many early European settlers considered the country's first inhabitants to be an inferior race standing in the way of destiny, and threads of this racism remain today. Negative attitudes and stereotypes are fed by an underlying media narrative that accentuates some of the worst aspects of current conditions experienced by many Aboriginal communities (e.g., substance abuse, poor educational outcomes), and points of conflict with government and industry priorities (e.g., pipeline development, control of traditional lands). This type of prejudice is by no means directed only at Aboriginal peoples (witness the ongoing targeting of Muslims and racialized groups), but it appears to be more deeply rooted and resistant to change. Moving past stereotypes and prejudice will be an essential pre-condition to achieving the goal of reconciliation, the term now being used by some to describe a collective healing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country.

What does mainstream society know and think about Aboriginal peoples today? In recent years, there have been a handful of media-sponsored public opinion polls purportedly showing that the Canadian public is "hardening" to Aboriginal aspirations. Such results are not consistent with other research conducted by the Environics Institute and others, which found clear evidence of a more understanding and supportive perspective. What is needed today is a current, balanced and thoughtful understanding of non-Aboriginal Canadian public opinion about Aboriginal peoples, and their relationship to broader society and institutions in Canada. Such research provides essential empirical evidence to inform the media, decision-makers, opinion leaders and others in both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. Such information can help avoid a misreading of public sentiment that can lead to growing divisiveness and conflict that could take years to repair.

¹ Most of the media attention placed on these issues has focused on First Nations communities, but they are also relevant to Métis and Inuit peoples.

Canadian public opinion on Aboriginal peoples – 2016 survey

To address this need, the Environics Institute for Survey Research conducted a national public opinion survey to take a proper reading of non-Aboriginal public knowledge and attitudes about Aboriginal peoples. The objectives of this research are to better understand non-Aboriginal Canadians in terms of:

- What they know and do not know about Aboriginal peoples, and the challenges they face;
- Perceptions and attitudes about Aboriginal peoples generally, and about specific issues (e.g., residential schools, reconciliation, economic disparities);
- How opinions toward Aboriginal peoples have changed (or not) over the past decade; and
- How perspectives vary across the population, based on region, demographics and social values.

For this research, the Environics Institute partnered with following seven leading Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations, which provided most of the funds for conducting the study and played an important role in its design and interpretation:

- Canadians for a New Partnership
- The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada
- The Inspirit Foundation
- Institute on Governance
- National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation
- Reconciliation Canada
- Tides Canada

Additional sponsorship support was provided by Birch Hill Equity Partners and the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN).

The survey questionnaire was developed in collaboration with the project partners, and included selected questions from previous Environics Institute and Environics Research surveys to provide the basis for identifying changes in public opinion over the past decade.

The research consisted of telephone interviews conducted between January 15 and February 8, 2016, with a representative sample of 2,001 individuals 18 years and older across Canada who did not self-identify as Aboriginal (i.e., First Nation, Métis or Inuit). The survey was conducted in English and French (as per respondent's stated preference). Approximately 40 percent of the interviews were conducted via respondents' cellphones.

The sample was stratified to ensure representation by age, gender, and province or territory, and the final data were weighted so that the national results are proportionate to the country's population (based on the 2011 National Household Survey). A sample of this size would be expected to provide results accurate to within plus or minus 2.2 percentage points in 95 out of 100 samples (the margin of sampling error is greater for results for regional and other subgroups of the population).

Report synopsis

The following sections of this report present the results of the research, including how knowledge and opinions have changed over time and how they vary across key segments of the population (e.g., region, age group, education level). Detailed banner tables presenting the results for all survey questions by population segments are available under separate cover. All results are presented as percentages unless otherwise noted.

Benchmark data. The analysis of changes in public opinion over time is based on comparisons with the results from previous national surveys conducted by Environics Research:

- **Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study – Survey of Non-Aboriginal Canadians.** This survey was conducted on behalf of the Environics Institute as part of the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study, as a complement to the main survey of urban Aboriginal peoples in 11 cities across the country. This survey was based on telephone interviews conducted in March 2009 with a representative sample of 2,501 Canadians aged 18 plus who did not self-identify as Aboriginal, with 250 interviews completed in each of 10 cities. For further details see www.uaps.ca
- **2008 National Benchmark Survey.** This survey was conducted on behalf of Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada (IRSRC) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The survey was conducted by telephone in April 2008 with a representative sample of 1,503 Canadians aged 18 plus. For further information see http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/pwgsc-tpsgc/por-ef/indian_residential_schools/2008/414-07-e/index.html
- **Focus Canada (2004, 2006).** These surveys are part of an ongoing series of syndicated national public opinion studies conducted on a quarterly basis by telephone with national samples of 2,000 Canadians.

Notes on terminology

The term “Aboriginal” is used throughout the report in reference to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. It has been the primary term used in both legal and popular contexts until very recently, and is now in the process of being replaced by the term “Indigenous” as a more appropriate term and one consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The term “Aboriginal” is used in this report because the research is about the opinions and knowledge of non-Aboriginal Canadians, for whom this is the most familiar and recognizable term (to maximize comprehension, survey questions need to use language most familiar to the target population, which may not always be the most precise). For this reason, the survey questions used the term “Aboriginal” exclusively, and this included the questions repeated from previous surveys (thus ensuring direct comparability). Because “Aboriginal” is the term used in the research, it is also used in this final report for the sake of consistency.

The report uses the term “Aboriginal community” in some places to refer to the Aboriginal population as a whole. This is not intended to imply that this population is otherwise homogenous or lacks considerable diversity in other ways (e.g., nations, culture).

The population surveyed (individuals aged 18 and over who do not identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit) is defined in this report as “non-Aboriginal Canadians.” To minimize repetition in the report, this population is also sometimes referred to simply as “Canadians,” “the public” or the “mainstream.”

Acknowledgements

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Joseph, Marissa Lawrence, Michelle Cho) and Tides Canada (David Secord, Julie Price).

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Executive summary

What does the public know and think about Aboriginal peoples in Canada today? Have non-Aboriginal Canadians been paying attention to the important events that have occurred in the past few years (most notably the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its findings), and has this informed their knowledge and attitudes? The main conclusions from this research can be summarized as follows.

CURRENT IMPRESSIONS AND UNDERSTANDING OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES. Most non-Aboriginal Canadians have at least some level of awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal peoples, and many acknowledge this community as a part of what defines the country, although by no means the most important part (much greater emphasis is given to such symbols as the health care system, multiculturalism and the geography of the country). The level of knowledge and understanding about Aboriginal peoples varies considerably across the population, but non-Aboriginal Canadians are increasingly paying attention to news and stories, and most express an interest in learning more about Aboriginal cultures. Awareness of the Indian residential schools experience and its consequences has grown significantly over the past decade, and a majority of non-Aboriginal Canadians report at least occasional direct contact with Aboriginal peoples, whether in public settings, at work or in social situations. At the same time, non-Aboriginal awareness of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its conclusions is surprisingly low, even among those who claim to be following the issues.

Some people have positive impressions of Aboriginal peoples in terms of their traditions and cultures, and their legacy as the first inhabitants of these lands. For others the overall impressions are coloured by the tragedies and challenges of colonization, forced assimilation, poor living conditions, and missing and murdered Aboriginal women. The increased profile given to Aboriginal issues in recent years appears to have had a positive effect on the impressions of some Canadians: One-quarter say their impressions are now more positive than before because of what they have learned, compared with one in ten whose impressions have gotten worse. This growing appreciation notwithstanding, the public remains divided on whether Aboriginal peoples have unique

rights and status as first inhabitants or are just like other cultural or ethnic groups in Canadian society.

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AND BROADER CANADIAN SOCIETY. A majority of non-Aboriginal Canadians recognize and understand at some level the challenges and disparities Aboriginal peoples face, and such awareness seems to have grown over the past decade. Many seem to know that Aboriginal peoples live with a stigma of being Aboriginal, experience ongoing discrimination (both interpersonal and institutional), and that there are significant social and economic inequalities between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians. Most Canadians also believe that the challenges Aboriginal peoples face are not of their own making, and increasingly appreciate that the current challenges are tied to the legacy of abuse and discrimination from the Indian residential schools experience.

This public recognition of the challenges facing Aboriginal peoples notwithstanding, it is also evident that many also believe their mistreatment is not necessarily any more significant than that experienced by other marginalized groups in Canadian society such as Blacks and South Asians, and especially Muslims. As well, Canadians are less sure about Aboriginal peoples experiencing systemic institutional discrimination, although they are more apt to believe this happens in the educational and criminal justice systems than in health care or the workplace. Moreover, there is also ambivalence in public attitudes about the significance of the current challenges facing Aboriginal peoples: A majority rejects the idea that mainstream society continues to benefit from such ongoing discrimination, and also expresses the view that Aboriginal peoples have a sense of entitlement about receiving special treatment from governments and taxpayers.

Taken together, this pattern of views on Aboriginal peoples, and how they are treated, reveals crisscrossing sentiments that counter-balance the recognition and understanding of existing challenges with underlying questions about how serious a barrier discrimination and inequality are to Aboriginal peoples' success in building their communities and well-being.

RECONCILIATION AND THE PATH FORWARD. Despite this ambivalence about the place of Aboriginal peoples in broader society, the general public's understanding and feelings about the mistreatment and current challenges underlie a widespread belief in the importance of moving forward to find meaningful solutions. Non-Aboriginal Canadians express strong support for reconciliation, and for taking actions to improve relations between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians.

What actions are non-Aboriginal Canadians prepared to support to develop more positive relations with Aboriginal peoples? First and foremost, it starts with education; there is a broad public consensus on the importance of learning about the historical abuses and discrimination that Aboriginal peoples have faced in Canada. Solid majorities also give strong backing to education-related recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to include mandatory curriculum in all schools to teach about Aboriginal history and culture, and to ensure that funding for Aboriginal schools matches funding for other schools in the same province or territory. There is also strong public support for actions to mitigate the loss of Aboriginal culture through funding to ensure the preservation of Aboriginal languages, and to improve the living conditions on reserves. Smaller majorities endorse steps to cede full control of land and resources to Aboriginal peoples, and to settle outstanding land claims at whatever the cost.

Reconciliation also strikes a chord of cooperation, relationship-building and inclusion. To further this goal, non-Aboriginal Canadians see a place for a strong Aboriginal voice in federal institutions, including guaranteed Aboriginal representation at First Ministers meetings, in the federal cabinet and in Parliament.

The public embraces these actions from institutional actors, but a majority also sees a strong role for individual Canadians such as themselves in helping to bring about improved relations with Aboriginal peoples; and this sentiment has strengthened significantly over the past decade. At the same time — perhaps because of the scope of the challenges, past failures and the slow pace of real change — the public is only cautiously optimistic about the prospects for achieving meaningful reconciliation with Aboriginal peoples in their lifetime.

HOW OPINIONS VARY ACROSS THE COUNTRY. While the conclusions about public opinion described above hold true the non-Aboriginal population as a whole, there are also important differences in viewpoints across the country, by region, socio-demographic characteristics and other dimensions. The key variations are as follows:

Region. There is a general east-west divide in the degree to which non-Aboriginal Canadians hold specific perspectives on Aboriginal peoples, tied in part to the presence and profile of Aboriginal populations with whom non-Aboriginal people would have first-hand contact. The notable exception to this pattern is British Columbia.

Canadians living in Ontario, Quebec, Atlantic Canada, British Columbia and the Territories hold the most consistently positive views of Aboriginal peoples across the various topics covered in the survey. More than elsewhere in the country, they perceive Aboriginal peoples as having unique rights as first inhabitants, and express a stronger interest in learning more about Aboriginal cultures. The sense of relations between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians in these regions is distinctly more positive, with larger proportions exhibiting favourable attitudes towards Aboriginal peoples when it comes to opinions on, among other things, the negative impact of Indian residential schools, acknowledging prejudice, and rejecting the idea that Aboriginal peoples have an unhealthy sense of entitlement. Moreover, residents in these provinces and territories display greater levels of support for action to achieve reconciliation, including the calls for action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and strengthening Aboriginal peoples' voice and representation in federal institutions. And they express a greater commitment to a strong role for individual Canadians to help bring about reconciliation.

In contrast, non-Aboriginal Canadians living in the Prairie provinces hold more ambivalent perspectives on Aboriginal peoples, and are less sympathetic overall than others to the challenges they face. While they acknowledge a large standard of living gap between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, they are more likely than others to see Aboriginal peoples themselves as the main obstacle to achieving social and economic equality with other Canadians, and they are also more likely to feel Aboriginal peoples have a sense of entitlement when it comes to support from government. For

residents in these provinces, higher levels of direct contact with Aboriginal peoples, and greater awareness of issues like the Indian residential schools and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have not resulted in a more positive appreciation of, and feelings for, Aboriginal peoples.

Gender. Gender appears to be a defining factor in a modest but consistent pattern, with women generally more likely than men to share positive perspectives on Aboriginal peoples. Women consider Aboriginal history and culture a major aspect of what defines Canada, more readily acknowledge that Aboriginal peoples have unique rights as the country's first inhabitants, and express higher levels of interest in learning more about Aboriginal cultures. They are also more convinced of ingrained anti-Aboriginal prejudices among Canadians, and connect the dots between Indian residential schools and the current challenges Aboriginal peoples face, in comparison with men. And women more consistently voice support for recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as well as strengthening Aboriginal representation in federal institutions.

Age. With the benefit of life experience and knowledge, older non-Aboriginal Canadians (notably those 60 plus) are more aware of, and pay attention to, Aboriginal news and stories. Perhaps as a result, they are also more ready to acknowledge the challenges Aboriginal peoples face, including the substantial gap in living standards compared to other Canadians and the frequent discrimination they face, both interpersonal and institutional. Older Canadians, however, also place greater onus on Aboriginal peoples themselves as a key obstacle to their achieving social and economic equality, and are more likely than younger Canadians to believe Aboriginal peoples have a sense of entitlement for government support.

While less informed, non-Aboriginal Canadians 18-29 years of age are more apt to express support for different aspects of reconciliation, including the need to appreciate the history of treatment of Aboriginal peoples, as well as acknowledging the long-term impact of Indian residential schools on current challenges they face. The youngest generation is also much more optimistic about the prospects for meaningful reconciliation in their lifetime (not surprising, given that youth are often the most optimistic of generations).

Country of birth. Canadians who have immigrated to this country demonstrate a small but consistently more positive orientation toward Aboriginal peoples in comparison with those who are Canadian-born. Immigrants are more likely to consider Aboriginal history and culture to be a major aspect of what defines Canada, and to believe Aboriginal peoples have unique rights as first inhabitants. They are also more likely than Canadian-born to have an interest in learning more about Aboriginal cultures, and to perceive relations between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians as positive. Given this perspective, it is not surprising that they give greater support to initiatives that make the teaching of Aboriginal history and culture mandatory components in provincial and territorial education curriculum, as well as to funding to preserve Aboriginal languages.

Distinct world views about Aboriginal peoples. When the different strands of regional and demographic variations are considered together, what emerges are five groups of non-Aboriginal Canadians, each of which has a distinct world view of Aboriginal peoples with respect to the topics and issues covered on the survey. The groups differ primarily across two dimensions: a) a positive versus negative orientation toward Aboriginal peoples and their place in society; and b) the level of knowledge about this population and the challenges it faces.

Two of the groups (making up 41% of the population) have a distinctly positive orientation, one of which is well-informed (Connected Advocates) and one notably less so (Young Idealists). Two other groups (35%) are much more negative in their perspective, one of them being generally knowledgeable about many of the issues (Dismissive Naysayers) and the other mostly uninformed and disengaged (Disconnected Skeptics). The fifth and final group (Informed Critics – 23% of the population) includes among the most informed non-Aboriginal Canadians when it comes to Aboriginal peoples, while their orientation is mix of positive and negative opinions. This typology sums up the spectrum of non-Aboriginal perspectives about Aboriginal peoples, and provides a valuable foundation for future communications and education initiatives.

Impressions and perceptions of Aboriginal peoples

Importance of Aboriginal peoples to Canada

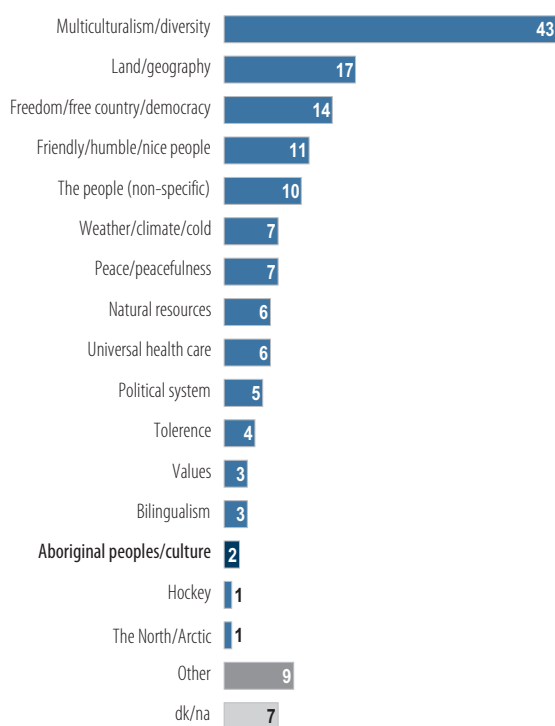
Most Canadians say Aboriginal history and culture are a defining characteristic of what makes the country unique, but it is not what most think of top-of-mind. The public is more likely to emphasize the country's multiculturalism, health care system, and its land and geography.

Non-Aboriginal Canadians perceive a complex web of attributes that make up the country's national identity. When asked, unprompted (without being offered response options), to identify what they think makes Canada unique, Aboriginal peoples and culture is among the responses, but well down the list. Only two percent mention anything related to Aboriginal peoples, indicating it is not top-of-mind as a defining characteristic of the country. This is consistent with results from the 2009 Survey of Non-Aboriginal Canadians which covered the country's 10 largest cities.

What Canadians do define as unique is the country's multiculturalism and diversity, mentioned by over four in ten respondents (43%). Land and geography, the next most common response, is mentioned by 17 percent of Canadians, while smaller numbers refer to the distinctive cold weather/climate (7%), and rich natural resources (6%). For another 14 percent, Canada is unique because of its freedom and democratic system, while universal health care is acknowledged by six percent. For some, what most distinguishes Canada from other countries is Canadians, themselves; one in ten (11%) mentions the "nice," "friendly," "humble" nature of the populace, while another 10 percent refer to "the people" more generically.

While Aboriginal peoples are far from the first thing that comes to mind for most non-Aboriginal Canadians as a defining characteristic of Canada, when prompted directly, more than nine in ten acknowledge Aboriginal history and culture as a very (55%) or somewhat (37%) important characteristics of Canada's identity as a country. Moreover, the importance placed on Aboriginal history and culture has increased 13 percentage points in urban Canada over the

What makes Canada unique?



Q2
What do you think makes Canada unique?

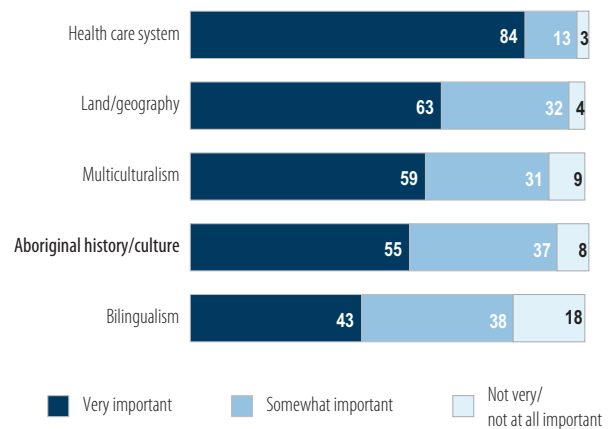
past seven years. In 2009, 45 percent of Canadians living in major urban centres believed Aboriginal history and culture were very important in defining Canada, rising to 58 percent in 2016.

Despite embracing Aboriginal history and culture as an important building block for what defines their country, non-Aboriginal Canadians place greater emphasis on several other defining characteristics presented in the survey, notably the health care system (84% say very important), the land and geography (63%), and multiculturalism (59%). Only bilingualism is given a less prominent role than Aboriginal history and culture in defining Canada, with 43 percent of Canadians calling it very important (a more robust 64% in Quebec).

The importance given to Aboriginal history and culture in defining Canadian identity varies by region, with residents of the Atlantic provinces (63%), Ontario (61%) and B.C. (58%) among the most likely to deem it very important, and those living in Saskatchewan and Quebec least likely to do so (44% each). Among population groups, those most likely to consider Aboriginal history and culture a major aspect of their vision of Canada include immigrants (67% very important vs. 52% of those born in Canada), and women (63% vs. 46% of men).

Finally, awareness of First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities is associated with placing strong importance on their history and culture as a part of what defines Canada. Those who pay a great deal of attention to Aboriginal news and stories, for example, are twice as likely (72%) to say Aboriginal history and culture play a very important role in defining Canada as those who pay little or no attention (35%).

Importance in defining Canada



Q.3

Do you think each of the following is very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important in defining Canada ... Aboriginal history and culture ... Bilingualism ... Multiculturalism ... Land and geography ... The health care system ... ?

General impressions of Aboriginal peoples

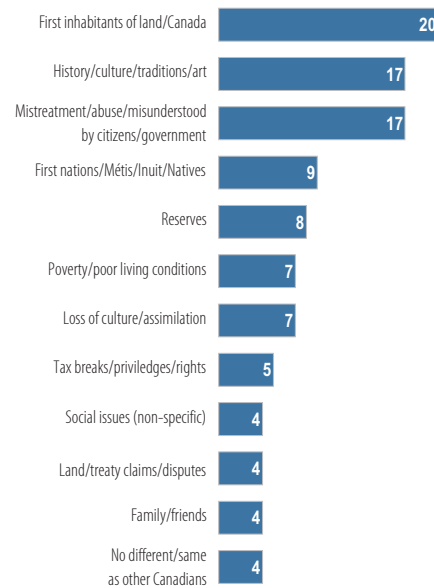
Non-Aboriginal Canadians' top-of-mind impressions of Aboriginal peoples includes a mix of positive and negative attributes. Six in ten say their general impression hasn't changed in recent years, but the balance are more likely to say it has improved than gotten worse.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS. Non-Aboriginal Canadians recognize the importance of Aboriginal history and culture in defining Canada. This includes a full tapestry of images and characteristics of who Aboriginal peoples are and what they mean for Canada. When asked, unprompted, what first comes to mind when they think of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, non-Aboriginal Canadians give a lengthy list of impressions that can be grouped into five broad themes.

- **First inhabitants/specific population group (29%).** The number one top-of-mind response – from 20 percent of Canadians – is that Aboriginal peoples are Canada's first inhabitants. Another one in ten (9%) associates them with various names historically assigned to Aboriginal groups, such as First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Native Canadians and Indians. Aboriginal peoples as Canada's first inhabitants is an image mentioned more frequently by men and by Canadians born outside the country.
- **Negative experiences in Canada (33%).** One in six (17%) recalls a negative legacy of Aboriginal peoples' experiences in Canada, referring to the historic mistreatment and abuse inflicted on Canada's Aboriginal population by the government and other citizens. Similarly, others mention the loss of culture and assimilation associated with institutionalized oppression (7%), land disputes, treaty claims, and protests (4%), their isolation and separation from Canada (3%), and residential schools (2%). Mistreatment of Aboriginal peoples surfaces more readily among older Canadians and university graduates. Canadians living in urban centres are much more likely to have first impressions in this category of negative experiences today than was the case in 2009 (up 17 points, to 35%).
- **Aboriginal history and culture (17%).** One in six non-Aboriginal Canadians (17%) immediately thinks of the rich history and traditions of Aboriginal peoples as reflected by their cultural and artistic practices. Residents of Canada's northern Territories are more likely than others single out

Top-of-mind impressions of Aboriginal peoples

Top mentions



Q.4

What first comes to mind when you think of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada?

this aspect of Aboriginal peoples (31%). The proportion of Canadians living in urban centres who focus on Aboriginal history and culture has increased 10 points since 2009 (from 9% to 19%).

- **Poor living conditions (22%).** A number of Canadians raise issues linked to how Aboriginal peoples live in Canada today. Eight percent mention reserves, others refer to the issue of poverty and poor living conditions often faced by Aboriginal peoples (7%), alcoholism and substance abuse (3%), and social issues generically (4%).
- **Negative views of Aboriginal peoples (13%).** Just over one in ten expresses his or her first impression of Aboriginal peoples in clearly negative terms pertaining to special treatment or negative attributes. This includes mention of tax breaks and other rights and privileges (5%), reliance on welfare or government handouts (3%), that Aboriginal peoples are lazy or don't work to contribute to society (2%), and generally negative feelings (3%). The proportion citing such impressions in urban Canada is essentially unchanged since 2009.

HAVE OVERALL IMPRESSIONS CHANGED? Over the past few years, Aboriginal peoples have often been front and centre in the media and public discourse. Indian residential schools, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the Idle No More movement have all raised the profile of their experiences and living conditions in Canada. Has this activity changed how the non-Aboriginal mainstream in Canada consciously thinks about Aboriginal peoples? For many, there appears to have been little concrete impact; six in ten (61%) say their general impressions have not changed over the past few years. Of the remainder, one in four (26%) says his or her impression is now better, compared with one in ten (10%) who now have a worse impression.

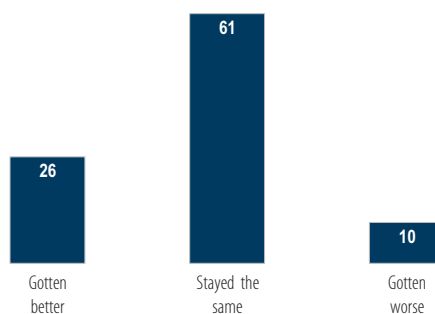
Regionally, Atlantic Canadians (34%) are more likely than those living elsewhere to say their impression has improved, while residents of the Territories are almost three times more likely than the average Canadian to state that their impression has gotten worse (27%). Across population groups, it is older Canadians (60 plus) who are most likely to report an improved view of Aboriginal peoples (33%).

Across the population, non-Aboriginal people born in Canada are twice as likely as immigrants to say their impressions have deteriorated (12% vs. 6%). Knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal peoples is also linked to more favourable impressions: Canadians who report paying attention to, and being aware of, news and stories about Aboriginal peoples are significantly more likely to say their impressions of Aboriginal peoples have improved in recent years, compared with those paying less attention.

Why impressions have improved? When those who say their impressions of Aboriginal peoples have improved in the past few years were asked (unprompted) why this is the case, their responses fall into three broad categories:

- **Increased knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal peoples (64% of this group).** Canadians are most likely to say their impressions have improved because of what they have learned in recent years. This includes those who say they gained a better understanding of, and appreciation for, the history of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, and the legacy of discrimination and abuse they have faced through the residential school system and other institutions (34%). A similar proportion (30%) mentions they have developed a more positive impression through learning about Aboriginal culture and events.

Has your impression of Aboriginal peoples changed?



Q.5
Over the past few years, has your impression of Aboriginal Peoples gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed the same?

- **Increased visibility of Aboriginal peoples (47%).** A sizeable proportion of Canadians in this group say their impressions have improved because of the increased prominence and visibility of Aboriginal peoples in the community and the media (24%), or through perceived advancements in terms of education and economic achievement in Aboriginal communities (23%).
- **Increased contact with Aboriginal peoples (28%).** Some report improved impressions because of friendships or business relationships with Aboriginal peoples (19%), living near a reserve or urban Aboriginal population (7%), or family and friends who work with Aboriginal co-workers (2%).

The link between increased knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal peoples and improved impressions is much stronger in 2016 among urban Canadians than was the case seven years ago: One-third (35%) give this reason today compared to just 13 percent in 2009, close to a three-fold increase. Further, 28 percent of urban Canadians say they have more positive views now due to having learned more about Aboriginal culture and issues, versus 11 percent in 2009.

Why impressions have worsened. Those who report worsening impressions of Aboriginal peoples (10% of the population) give reasons that fall into three categories:

- **Special treatment from government (53%).** The most common response given by this group is the feeling that Aboriginal peoples get special treatment from government, profiting from services and benefits that are not available to other citizens. One in four (26%) in this group believes that Aboriginal peoples abuse privileges and take advantage of laws, while a similar percentage object to them asking for handouts and relying on, rather than contributing to, society (24%). A few have more negative views because they believe Aboriginal issues are over-represented (2%) or that Aboriginal citizens should not be treated differently than other Canadians (1%).
- **Perceived negative behaviours (44%).** Worsening impressions of Aboriginal peoples are also tied to reasons related to negative behaviours attributed to the Aboriginal population, including not taking advantage of opportunities offered to them to improve their lives (13%), alcoholism and substance abuse (11%), criminal activity (8%), militant or violent protests (8%), and refusal to integrate into mainstream society (4%).
- **Negative stereotypes/experience (29%).** Lingering stereotypes and negative portrayal in the media (14%) also contribute to worsening impressions of Aboriginal peoples, while 15 percent say their impressions have changed due to negative personal experiences.

This list of reasons is essentially the same as the one recorded in the 2009 survey in the country's major cities, with somewhat more emphasis given to special treatment and negative stereotypes/experience, and somewhat less given to perceived negative behaviours.

Note: The subsamples for these questions are too small to support analysis by region and population groups.

Are Aboriginal peoples unique or just like other ethnic and cultural groups?

Canadians are divided on whether Aboriginal peoples have unique rights as the first inhabitants of Canada or are just like other cultural or ethnic groups in society. The former view is more firmly held in central and eastern Canada, as well as among women and immigrants.

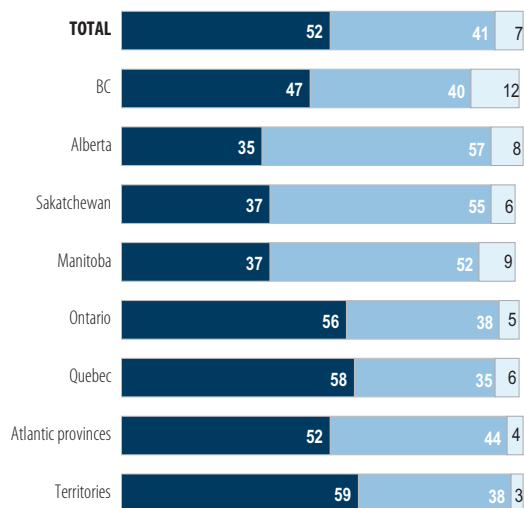
Aboriginal peoples have constitutionally recognized rights in Section 35 of the Constitution Act, as well as in Section 25 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Many non-Aboriginal Canadians recognize Aboriginal peoples as first inhabitants; they acknowledge their unique history and culture; and, when prompted, believe they are an important defining feature of Canada. But does this translate into according them a unique status among Canadians? On this question, the non-Aboriginal public is divided, with little change in views since 2009.

Just over half (52%) of non-Aboriginal Canadians say that Aboriginal peoples have unique rights as the first inhabitants of the continent, compared with 41 percent who believe they are just like other cultural or ethnic groups in Canada's multicultural society. The remainder insist that both statements are true (5%) or that neither is true (2%). Among urban residents, opinions are essentially unchanged from 2009, when 54 percent said Aboriginal peoples have unique rights versus 39 percent who equated them with other ethnic or cultural groups.

This divide in opinions is largely reflected across Canada, although perspectives differ somewhat across the country between Prairie residents and the rest of Canada. Majorities in Alberta (57%), Saskatchewan (55%) and Manitoba (52%) believe that Aboriginal peoples are just like other marginalized groups in Canada, while the opposite view – that they have unique rights – is held more strongly in the Territories (59%), Quebec (58%), Ontario (56%) and the Atlantic provinces (52%).

Opinions are also largely divided across socio-economic and demographic groups, with acknowledgment of Aboriginal peoples as having unique rights is somewhat more evident among women, people born outside of Canada, and those with lower household incomes. There are no differences across age cohorts or level of educational attainment. Moreover, having frequent personal contact with Aboriginal peoples is not linked to greater acknowledgement of their unique status in Canada.

Do Aboriginal peoples have unique rights or are they just like other ethnic/cultural groups?



Q.7

Which of the following two statements best represents how you think about Aboriginal Peoples?

Knowledge and connections to Aboriginal peoples

Sources of information

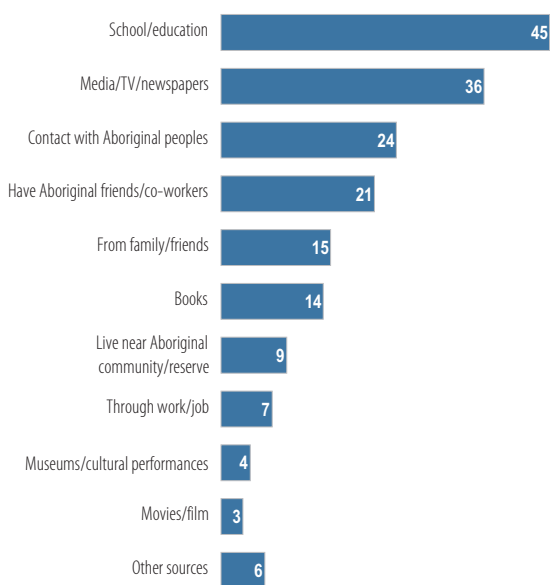
Non-Aboriginal Canadians cite a variety of sources of information about Aboriginal peoples, with the education system being most prominent. Most claim to be paying at least some attention to Aboriginal stories in the news, and express a desire to learn more about Aboriginal cultures.

SOURCES OF LEARNING. Non-Aboriginal Canadians learn about Aboriginal peoples' culture from many different sources, many of them outside of school. Nevertheless, when asked, unprompted, where they learned what they know about Aboriginal peoples and culture, the top response is in school or other educational institutions, a response given by close to half (45%) of those surveyed. Newspapers, television, and other media are sources of information for more than a third (36%), while 14 percent mention books. Very few, by comparison, say they have learned about Aboriginal peoples on the internet or through social media (2%), through government sources (1%), or through other forms of independent research (3%).

Many Canadians also learn about Aboriginal peoples and culture from Aboriginal acquaintances. Nearly a quarter (24%) learned what they know through contact with Aboriginal people. Another one in five (21%) reports having Aboriginal friends, neighbours, or co-workers to keep informed, while one in ten (9%) lives near an Aboriginal community or reserve. Others mention learning through their work (7%) or by word of mouth (through information passed on by non-Aboriginal family and friends) (15%). For a small number of Canadians, Aboriginal art helped them learn about Aboriginal peoples and their history and culture, such as through cultural performances or museums (4%), and movies and films (3%).

Among urban residents, the reliance on different information sources has shifted over the past seven years. For example, learning about Aboriginal peoples through school and education is much more common today (49%) than in 2009 (39%); this is particularly true in Calgary (up 19 points) and Toronto (up 11 points). By comparison, far fewer urban Canadians today depend on the media to learn about Aboriginal peoples (down 13 points, from 51% in 2009 to

Sources of learning about Aboriginal peoples



Q8.

From where, or from whom, have you learned what you know about Aboriginal people and their culture? Anywhere else?

38% in 2016), with a particularly steep drop in Toronto (down 19), Vancouver (down 20), and Calgary (down 15).

Despite the declining reliance on media for learning about Aboriginal peoples, it remains a much more important source for Quebecers, Atlantic Canadians and Ontario residents. Territories residents, as well as those in Western Canada, tend to be more likely than other Canadians to say they have learned through family, friendships, working relationships, or casual contact with Aboriginal people. University graduates are among those most likely to obtain information through school, media, books or a job.

PAYING ATTENTION TO NEWS AND STORIES ABOUT ABORIGINAL PEOPLES.

In the past few years, Canadians have been witness to a series of major issues touching Aboriginal peoples. From Indian residential schools, to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, to the Idle No More movement, to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, to Supreme Court cases acknowledging Aboriginal title on traditional territories in British Columbia, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Aboriginal issues have been more front and centre recently in Canada than at just about any other time for decades. Are non-Aboriginal Canadians paying more attention today than in the past?

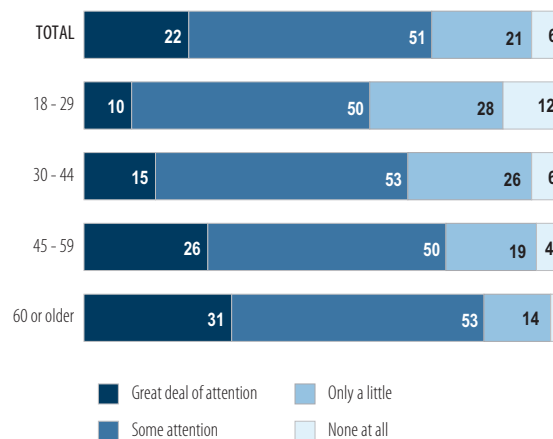
In 2016, three in four say they are paying a great deal of (22%) or some attention (51%) to news and stories about Aboriginal peoples. Very few – just six percent – report to be paying no attention at all to these stories or issues. There is some indication that Canadians are indeed paying more attention to Aboriginal news and stories than was the case in years past. Among those living in major urban centres, the proportion paying a great deal of attention has increased 10 points since 2009 (from 12% to 22%).

Regionally, Canadians across the country pay a similar degree of attention to Aboriginal news and stories. The most notable standout is the Territories, where 66 percent report to be paying a great deal of attention to these stories, a proportion three times greater than any other province. Notable differences are also apparent across population groups: Active attention to Aboriginal stories is most widely reported by older Canadians, as well as by women and residents with more education, and those with frequent personal contact with Aboriginal persons. There is no difference based on levels of household income.

When non-Aboriginal Canadians say they are “paying a great deal of attention” to Aboriginal issues, however, it does not necessarily mean they are up to speed on or follow everything that happens to be going on with Aboriginal peoples. For example, one-fifth of this very attentive group had not read or heard anything about Indian Residential Schools; more than a third (35%) were unaware of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; and fully 57 percent who had heard of the Commission were unable to recall anything specific about its recommended Calls to Action.

How much attention paid to news and stories about Aboriginal peoples

By age cohort



Q.9

How much attention do you generally pay to news and stories about Aboriginal peoples? Would you say you pay ... ?

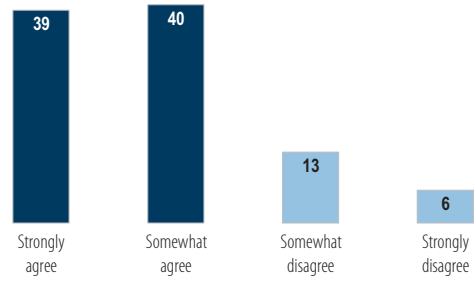
INTEREST IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT ABORIGINAL CULTURES.

In addition to paying attention to Aboriginal news and stories, most non-Aboriginal Canadians express a desire to know more about Aboriginal cultures. Eight in ten strongly (39%) or somewhat agree (40%) that they would be personally interested in learning more about Aboriginal cultures. As might be expected, this includes the vast majority of those already paying attention to Aboriginal news and stories, and who have regular contact with Aboriginal peoples.

However, the net is cast much wider, as fully 64 percent of those who currently pay little or no attention also want to learn more, as do 77 percent of Canadians who have rarely or never had the opportunity to be in direct contact with Aboriginal peoples.

There is a high level of interest in learning more about Aboriginal cultures across the country, with interest particularly strong in B.C. (46% strongly agree), Atlantic Canada (45%) and Ontario (42%), as well as among women (46%) and Canadians born outside the country (50%).

Would be personally interested in learning more about Aboriginal cultures



Q.31g
Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements: I would be personally interested in learning more about Aboriginal cultures.?

Personal contact with Aboriginal peoples

A majority of non-Aboriginal Canadians report personal contact with Aboriginal peoples on an occasional if not frequent basis, largely unchanged from 10 years ago. Contact is more common in western and northern Canada than among those living in Ontario and eastern provinces.

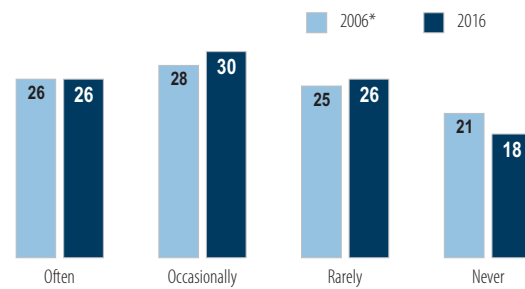
How often do non-Aboriginal Canadians have an opportunity to have direct contact with Aboriginal peoples? More than half say they personally have such contact on a frequent (26%) or occasional (30%) basis, with the balance saying this happens rarely (26%) or not at all (18%). Frequency of contact has changed very little over the past decade, based on comparison with a previous Environics' Focus Canada survey conducted in December 2006. Since 2009, frequent or occasional contact in urban Canada has increased in Calgary and Vancouver, while declining in Toronto and Montreal.

Across the country, there is a predictable east-west divide when it comes to the frequency of contact with Aboriginal peoples.² Residents in the western provinces and the Territories are significantly more likely to have at least occasional contact with Aboriginal peoples than those living in provinces east of Manitoba. This is particularly true of residents of Canada's Territories (77% report frequent contact, which is more than seven times the proportion with similar experience in Quebec – 10%). Across the country, Canadian-born individuals are significantly more likely than immigrants to have frequent or occasional contact with Aboriginal peoples.

Where are Canadians most likely to meet and interact with Aboriginal peoples? Those who report at least some direct contact (82% of the population) were asked if they have interacted with an Aboriginal person in the past 12 months in each of three specified types of settings.

Non-Aboriginal Canadians are most likely to report such contact in public settings, such as at a store, restaurant or event (67% of those who report they have at least some contact), followed by interactions with Aboriginal persons as friends or acquaintances in social situations (63%). Fewer (40%) have encountered Aboriginal persons as a co-worker or professional colleague.

Frequency of personal contact with Aboriginal peoples



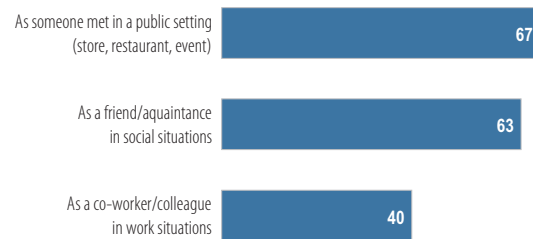
* Environics Research Focus Canada (December 2006)

Q.10

Do you personally have contact with Aboriginal Peoples often, occasionally, rarely or never?

Where interaction with Aboriginal peoples has taken place – past 12 months

Among those who have had personal contact



Q.11

In the past 12 months, have you personally interacted with an Aboriginal person: As a co-worker or professional colleague in work situations ... As a friend or acquaintance in social situations ... As someone you met in a public setting, such as a store, restaurant or event?

A regional breakdown of this pattern shows a consistent trend across the three settings; residents of the Territories are most likely to interact with Aboriginal peoples in each case, followed by those living in the Prairies. Quebecers are least likely to have these types of encounter.

2 This pattern is “predictable” in that Aboriginal peoples and communities are more numerous in western provinces, which results in higher profile and more direct contact with non-Aboriginal Canadians, in comparison with central and eastern parts of the country.

Treatment by mainstream society

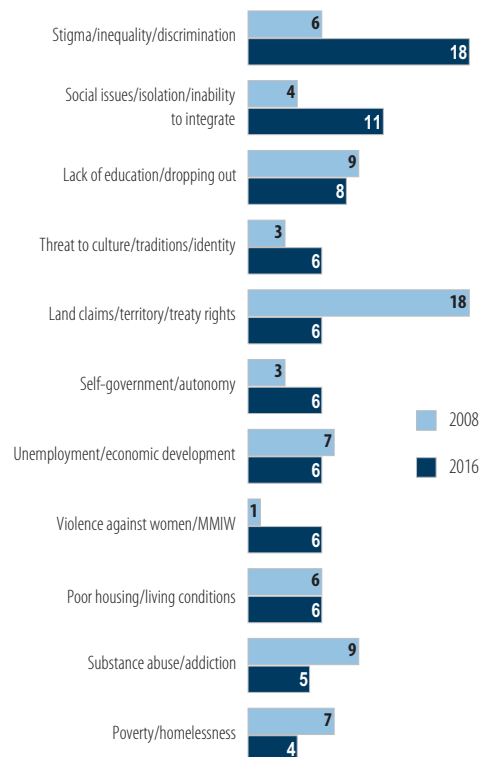
Biggest challenge facing Aboriginal peoples

Lack of acceptance by mainstream Canadian society, contested relations with other governments, and social/economic problems such as educational outcomes, alcohol/drug abuse and poverty, are seen as the most important challenges facing Aboriginal peoples in Canada today.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE. While some non-Aboriginal Canadians hold many positive views of Aboriginal peoples, they are also cognizant of the difficulties Aboriginal peoples confront in this country. When asked, unprompted, what they consider to be the most important challenge Aboriginal peoples face today in Canada, nine in ten are able to provide at least one response, although no single one stands out. Three broad themes emerge:

- **Sense of place and acceptance in Canada.** Topping the list of challenges are issues related to struggles Aboriginal peoples face in being accepted into the Canadian social fabric. At the top of the list is the stigma attached, resulting in inequality and discrimination (18%), followed by isolation and related social issues (11%), and threats to Aboriginal culture and traditions or to their self-identity (6%). Of note, mention of isolation and failure to integrate is more broadly mentioned than in 2008.
- **Governance and relations with governments.** Canadians also mention issues Aboriginal peoples face tied to governance and their relations with governments in Canada, including land claims and treaty rights (6%) and self-government (6%), followed by treatment by governments (3%) and issues of reconciliation (3%). The importance given to challenges associated with land claims/treaty rights has dropped significantly since 2008 (when 18% identified it as the most important issue); this decline is most noticeable in Ontario and among high income earners.
- **Social and economic challenges.** Some non-Aboriginal Canadians also identify the primary struggle for Aboriginal peoples to be in relation to various social and economic challenges, including education/dropping out of school (8%), alcohol/drug abuse (5%), poverty/homelessness

Most important challenge facing Aboriginal peoples today
Top mentions



Q.12

In your opinion, what is the most important challenge facing Aboriginal Peoples in Canada today?

(4%), missing and murdered Aboriginal women (3%), unemployment (3%), economic development/self-sufficiency (3%), housing/poor living conditions (3%) and crime/violence (3%).

The emphasis given to these types of challenges varies across the country. For example, Alberta and B.C. residents are more likely than others to mention Aboriginal peoples' isolation and inability to integrate as key challenges, notably when compared to those living in Saskatchewan. Albertans are also most likely to single out stigma and discrimination.

By comparison, Northerners stand out for seeing economic development and poor living conditions as key struggles for Aboriginal peoples, compared to residents in the provinces. It is worth noting that, across Canada, perceptions of the main challenges facing Aboriginal peoples are not related to the level of attention being paid to Aboriginal stories or the frequency of direct contact (except in the case of the stigma attached to being Aboriginal).

Gap in standard of living

A majority of non-Aboriginal Canadians acknowledge there is a significant disparity in the standard of living between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, with this view especially widespread in the Territories. The public is marginally more likely to believe this gap is growing than shrinking.

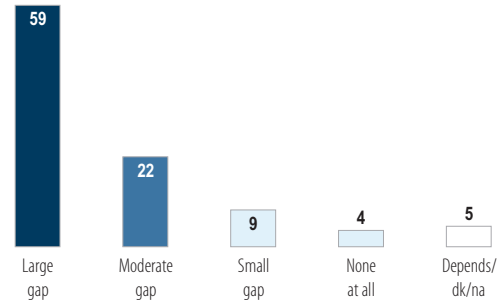
Countless news stories have been told over the past decade of the difficult social and economic situation confronting many Aboriginal communities (especially reserves in remote locations). This comes to mind for many non-Aboriginal Canadians in how they see Aboriginal peoples. Six in ten (59%) believe there is a large gap in the standard of living between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians generally, with another 22 percent describing this as a moderate gap. By comparison, few maintain the gap is small (9%) or non-existent (4%), with another five percent unable to say for sure.

Public awareness of the substantial gap in living standards between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians is evident across the country, but especially so in the Territories (77% say it is a large gap), as well as among older Canadians, those with higher levels of education and income, and those who pay the closest attention to Aboriginal stories. This view is least apt to be shared in Saskatchewan (43%), and among those who pay little or no attention to Aboriginal peoples in the news (45%).

Tellingly, there is little optimism among the non-Aboriginal population in Canada that progress is being made in narrowing this gap in living standards. Among those who believe a gap exists, a majority (54%) do not believe it has been changing, while one in five (22%) says the gap is actually getting bigger, compared with 17 percent who think it is getting smaller.

The perception of a growing gap in standard of living is most evident among Canadians who believe the gap is large (26%) versus those who think it is moderate (17%) or small (14%). Residents in the Territories are especially likely to hold this view (48%) and it is shared but to a lesser extent among men, Canadians aged 30 to 59, those with higher levels of education and income, and those who follow Aboriginal stories closely.

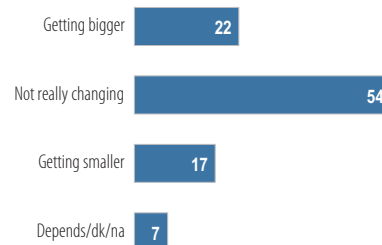
Aboriginal – Non-Aboriginal gap in standard of living



Q.13

From what you know or have heard, would you say there is a large gap, a moderate gap, a small gap, or no gap at all in the standard of living between Aboriginal Peoples and other Canadians generally?

Has the standard of living gap been changing?



Q.14

And from what you know or have heard, do you think this gap in standard of living between Aboriginal Peoples and other Canadians is getting bigger, getting smaller or not really changing?

Biggest obstacle to achieving economic and social equality

Non-Aboriginal Canadians are divided on whether the primary obstacle to economic and social equality for Aboriginal peoples lies with government policies, public attitudes or Aboriginal peoples themselves. Some insist all three share equal responsibility for progress in this area.

While most non-Aboriginal Canadians acknowledge there is a sizeable gap in the standard of living between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, there is no consensus on the most significant barrier to reducing it. When asked which of three obstacles is the biggest to achieving economic and social equality for Aboriginal peoples, opinions are split.

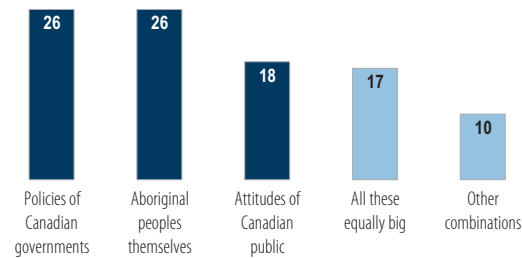
One-quarter (26%) say it is the policies of Canadian governments, while the same proportion (26%) maintains it is Aboriginal peoples themselves, and a smaller proportion (18%) put the primary responsibility on the attitudes of the Canadian public. Notably, one in six (17%) volunteers that all three are equally large obstacles to such progress, while another 10 percent mention other combinations of the options (e.g., public attitudes and governments equally). [Note: Combined options were not offered to respondents as part of the survey.]

There are significant regional differences in perspectives on this question. Quebecers (36%) are much more likely than those in other provinces to single out Canadian government policies, while residents in Saskatchewan (41%), Manitoba (35%) and Alberta (32%) are more inclined to view Aboriginal peoples themselves as the biggest obstacle to their achieving economic and social equality with other Canadians.

Opinions are also a function of age cohort. Close to one-third of younger Canadians (18-29) emphasize the role of government policies (31%) or public attitudes (30%), while more than one-third (35%) of those 45-59 years of age put the onus on Aboriginal peoples themselves.

Views about the obstacles impeding economic and social equality are linked to Canadians' broader opinions about Aboriginal peoples in a consistent pattern. For example, those most likely to single out policies of Canadian governments as the main impediment also tend to be those who agree that mainstream Canadians benefit from ongoing discrimination against Aboriginal peoples. In contrast,

Biggest obstacle to achieving economic and social equality for Aboriginal peoples



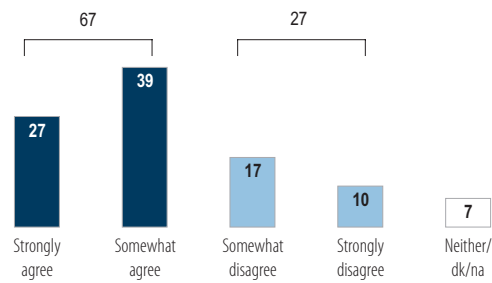
Q.15

Would you say that the biggest obstacle to achieving economic and social equality for Aboriginal peoples is ... ?

Canadians who believe Aboriginal peoples have a sense of entitlement about receiving support from government and taxpayers are also the ones most likely to see Aboriginal peoples themselves as the greatest obstacle to achieving socio-economic equality with other Canadians.

A sense of entitlement. The survey confirms there is a widely-held view among non-Aboriginal Canadians that Aboriginal peoples have a sense of entitlement in terms of receiving special consideration and financial benefits from governments that are not available to other Canadians. Two-thirds strongly (27%) or somewhat (39%) agree with this view, compared with one in four who somewhat (17%) or strongly (10%) disagrees. Such agreement is evident across the country, but is particularly strong in Saskatchewan (37% strongly agree) and Alberta (34%), as well as among Canadians 45 years and older (33%), and those who believe that Aboriginal peoples are themselves the biggest obstacle to their own future success (43%).

Aboriginal peoples have a sense of entitlement about receiving support from government and taxpayers



Q.31c
Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements:
Aboriginal Peoples have a sense of entitlement about receiving support from governments and taxpayers?

Relations between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal Canadians

Non-Aboriginal Canadians are evenly divided on whether current relations between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians are positive or negative, although opinions are not strongly polarized.

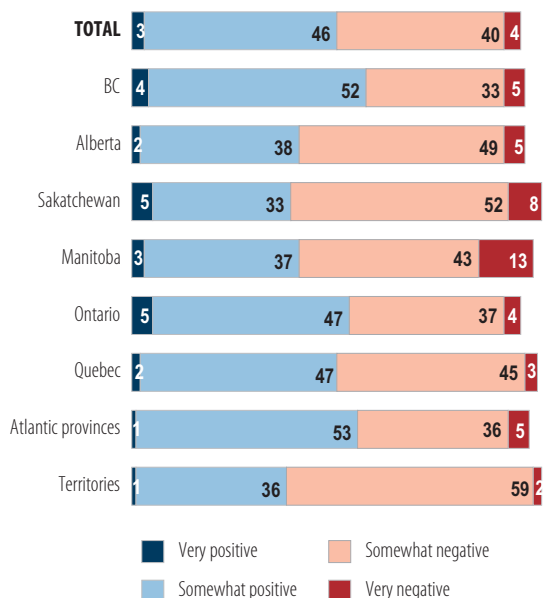
When asked to describe current relations between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal people, Canadian public opinion is evenly split with few expressing a strong opinion either way. Half describe current relations to be very (3%) or somewhat (46%) positive, compared to almost as many who say it is somewhat (40%) or very (4%) negative.

Public opinion about Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relations has improved marginally over the past seven years, at least in major urban centres. In 2009, the balance of opinion was

47 percent positive versus 46 percent negative (compared with 49% versus 44% in 2016).

This divided view exists to varying degrees across the country. Atlantic Canadians, Ontarians and B.C. residents tend to perceive current relations as positive, and this perspective is also most apt to be shared by Canadians 60 plus, those with less formal education and lower incomes, and those born outside Canada. Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relations are more likely to be seen in a negative light among residents of the Territories and Prairie provinces, as well as among Canadians in the top income bracket, and those familiar with both Indian residential schools and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Current relations between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians



Q.16

Would you describe the current relations between Aboriginal Peoples and non-Aboriginal people in Canada today as very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative or very negative?

Discrimination against Aboriginal peoples

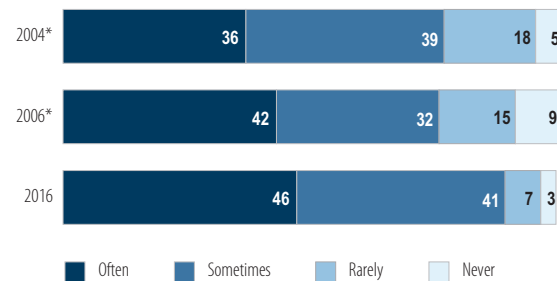
An increasing majority of non-Aboriginal Canadians believe Aboriginal peoples experience discrimination on a regular basis, comparable if not worse than what happens to other minorities. There is general agreement that most people are prejudiced against Aboriginal peoples even if not aware of it.

EXTENT OF DISCRIMINATION. Results from the survey reveal that many non-Aboriginal Canadians acknowledge that discrimination represents an important challenge for Aboriginal peoples, one that is also tied to a sense of isolation, separation from others in Canada, and a certain stigma for being Aboriginal. And there is widespread recognition that discrimination against Aboriginal peoples is commonplace. Close to nine in ten say that Aboriginal peoples are often (46%) or sometimes (41%) the subject of discrimination in Canadian society today, compared with just one in ten who maintain this happens rarely (7%) or never (3%). Only three percent are unable to offer an opinion on this question.

Non-Aboriginal Canadians seem more ready today to perceive anti-Aboriginal sentiment than was the case a decade ago, based on comparative data collected by Environics Research. Since 2004, the proportion of Canadians who say discrimination is happening often or occasionally has increased 13 percentage points, while the number that say rarely or never has declined by the same percentage. A similar trend emerges in urban Canada: Between 2009 and 2016, the proportion of urban residents who believe discrimination against Aboriginal peoples is a frequent occurrence has increased from 39 to 45 percent.

Strong majorities of non-Aboriginal Canadians in all provinces and territories believe Aboriginal peoples experience discrimination at least occasionally. However, a greater number of Quebecers and British Columbians feel the discrimination happens often (51% each) compared to Saskatchewan (39%) and Ontario (40%) residents. Older Canadians (60 plus), university graduates, higher income earners and those who are Canadian-born are also among those most likely to say Aboriginal peoples experience frequent discrimination. Those born outside of Canada are the most likely to say Aboriginal peoples are never the subject of discrimination (11%).

Extent of discrimination against Aboriginal peoples in Canadian society



* Environics Research Focus Canada (2004, 2006)

Q.17

Do you think Aboriginal Peoples are often, sometimes, rarely or never the subject of discrimination in Canadian society today?

Perceptions of ongoing discrimination against Aboriginal peoples have strengthened across the population over the past decade. The likelihood of stating that it rarely or never happens has declined in every identifiable group of Canadians, but this decline is most dramatic in Quebec (dropping from 40% in 2006 to 10%), and among Canadians 60 and older (from 31% to 8%).

Non-Aboriginal Canadians who closely follow stories about Aboriginal peoples are more inclined to believe they confront discrimination frequently, as are those who have more frequent personal contact, and those who are aware of both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Indian residential schools.

DISCRIMINATION COMPARED TO OTHER GROUPS.

The non-Aboriginal public in Canada recognizes that Aboriginal peoples experience ongoing discrimination, but how do they believe it compares with the treatment of other marginalized groups in this country? Canadians are more likely than not to believe that Aboriginal peoples experience the same or more frequent discrimination in comparison with South Asians (70%) and Blacks (73%) in this country, but are more divided on whether this applies in the case of Muslims (47% say Aboriginal peoples experience the same or more, versus 46% who say it is Muslims who fare worse in Canada).

In urban Canada, the perception that Aboriginal peoples suffer more discrimination than Blacks has jumped 10 percentage points since 2009, while the opposite trend has occurred in comparison with Muslims (43% of Canadians living in major cities today think Aboriginal peoples face less discrimination than Muslims, a 5 percentage-point increase from 7 years ago).

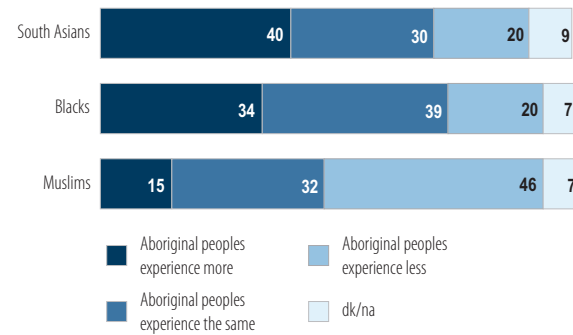
While the pattern of overall perceptions is largely consistent across the country, Manitobans stand out as being significantly more likely to think Aboriginal peoples experience more discrimination than any of the three other minority groups. The opposite is true in Quebec, where residents are more likely to believe Aboriginal peoples are less discriminated against.

Across population groups, university graduates are more likely than others to believe Aboriginal peoples experience more discrimination than Blacks, Muslims and South Asians, while younger Canadians (18-29) are more likely to feel they are less discriminated against than either Blacks or Muslims.

EXTENT OF PREJUDICE. Discrimination against specific groups is rooted in large measure in attitudes and prejudice that are deeply embedded in society. To what extent do non-Aboriginal Canadians believe that such attitudes are well established in mainstream society (and within themselves)? Two-thirds strongly (24%) or somewhat (41%) agree with the statement “Most Canadians are prejudiced against Aboriginal peoples, whether or not they are conscious of it,” compared with three in ten who somewhat (20%) or strongly (10%) disagree.

This sentiment is shared across all regions and population subgroups in Canada, but overall agreement with the

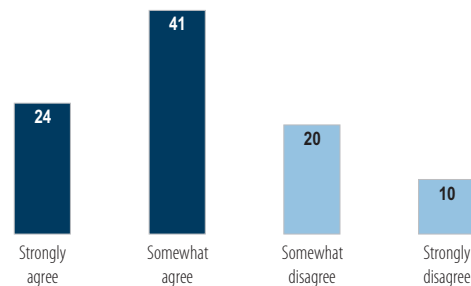
Discrimination experienced by Aboriginal peoples compared to other groups



Q.18

In Canada, do you think Aboriginal Peoples experience more discrimination, less discrimination or about the same amount of discrimination as each of the following groups ... Blacks ... Muslims ... South Asians?

Most Canadians are prejudiced against Aboriginal peoples, whether or not they are conscious of it



Q.31e

Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements: Most Canadians are prejudiced against Aboriginal Peoples, whether or not they are conscious of it?

statement is particularly strong in Quebec (78%), among women (69%), young Canadians (72%) and Canadian-born individuals (67%). Disagreement is the minority view in all groups, but is most apt to be expressed in Ontario (37%) and the Territories (37%), and among Canadians who pay little or no attention to Aboriginal peoples in the news (41%).

Institutional discrimination

Many believe Aboriginal peoples receive worse treatment from institutions than other Canadians, especially in the education and criminal justice systems. At the same time, most also reject the idea that mainstream society currently benefits from ongoing discrimination.

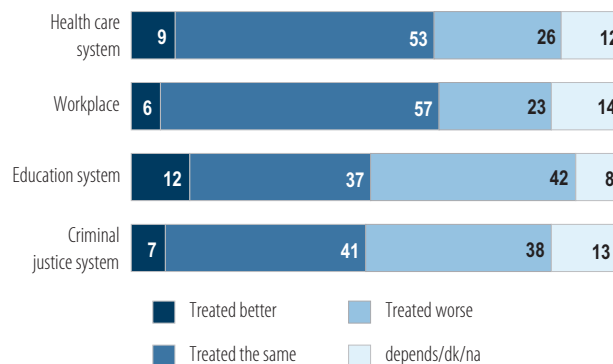
Discrimination against marginalized groups within society happens in different ways, and one form that is often less visible to those unaffected is how individuals from these groups are treated differently by institutions. This tends to be systemic in nature and may involve institutional barriers to employment opportunities and services, singling people out for increased scrutiny, or insensitivity to cultural practices. To what extent do non-Aboriginal Canadians recognize that Aboriginal peoples experience this type of institutional discrimination in the country today?

The survey asked about the treatment of Aboriginal peoples relative to other Canadians with respect to four major institutions: health care, education, criminal justice and the workplace. Across these four, non-Aboriginal Canadians are most likely to believe that Aboriginal peoples receive the same treatment (47%), but one-third (32%) says they receive worse treatment, compared with one in ten (9%) who think they get better treatment than other Canadians.

Public views on the treatment of Aboriginal peoples relative to others vary somewhat depending on the institution. Canadians are most likely to believe that Aboriginal peoples are treated as well as or better than others when it comes to the health care system (62%) and the workplace (63%), in comparison to the education system (49%) and the criminal justice system (48%). In all four cases, however, Canadians are much more likely to say that Aboriginal peoples are treated worse than they are treated better.

The overall pattern of perceived institutional discrimination (across the four institutions combined) holds consistently across the country, but the view that Aboriginal peoples are treated worse than others is shared more widely in Atlantic Canada, Quebec and Ontario than elsewhere. This sentiment is also more likely to be shared among older Canadians (60 plus), university graduates, people who pay a great deal of attention to news and stories about Aboriginal peoples, and those who are aware of both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Indian residential schools. Belief that Aboriginal peoples receive better treatment by institutions is most evident in Saskatchewan (17%), and among those who pay little or no attention to Aboriginal stories in the news (13%).

Treatment of Aboriginal peoples by institutions compared to other Canadians



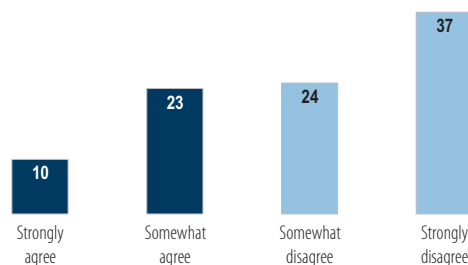
Q.19

How do you think Aboriginal Peoples are treated [SPLIT SAMPLE: by the health care system/by the education system/by the criminal justice system/in the workplace] in Canada? Do you think the treatment Aboriginal Peoples receive is generally better, about the same, or generally worse than that received by other Canadians?

Does the mainstream currently benefit from discrimination against Aboriginal peoples? Despite acknowledgement by many that Aboriginal peoples face systemic discrimination and unconscious prejudices in Canadian society, the non-Aboriginal public is much less sure that the mainstream currently benefits from this state of affairs. Only one-third strongly (10%) or somewhat (23%) agree with the statement “Mainstream Canadian society today benefits from ongoing discrimination against Aboriginal peoples,” compared with six in ten who somewhat (24%) or strongly (37%) disagree.

Those most likely to object to this characterization of mainstream benefitting from discrimination live in Alberta, are university graduates, live in high-income households, were born in Canada, and pay limited attention to news and stories about Aboriginal peoples. Agreement with the statement is most likely to be expressed by residents of Montreal (45%) and the Territories (43%), and by Canadians with the lowest household incomes (48%).

Mainstream Canadian society benefits from ongoing discrimination against Aboriginal peoples



Q.31a
Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements:
Mainstream Canadian society today benefits from ongoing discrimination against Aboriginal Peoples?

Indian residential schools and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Awareness and knowledge about Indian residential schools

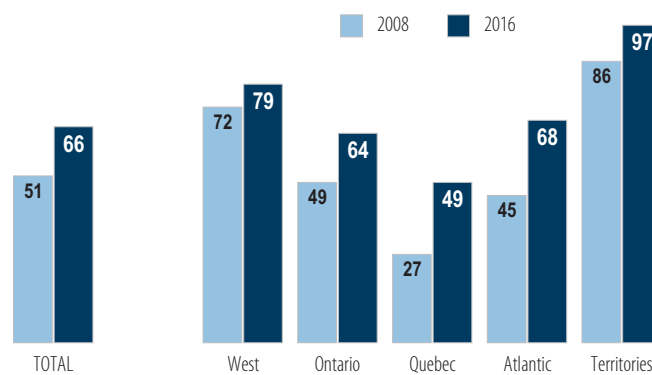
Two-thirds of non-Aboriginal Canadians have heard or read something about Indian residential schools, up noticeably from 2008. Canadians most closely associate residential schools with the mistreatment of young students, the break-up of families, and the loss of culture and language.

In the past decade or more, Canadians have been witness to troubling stories of the mistreatment of Aboriginal children in Indian residential schools, to public declarations about cultural genocide, and to reports and recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. So in 2016 it would be expected that this part of the country's history would now be widely recognized, and there is evidence that awareness is in fact growing. Two-thirds (66%) of non-Aboriginal Canadians say they have read or heard something about Indian residential schools; this represents a significant increase from the proportion expressing such awareness in 2008 (when 51% did so).

Awareness of Indian residential schools varies across provinces and territories. Canadians in the Territories (97%), Manitoba (84%), Saskatchewan (84%) and B.C. (82%) are most likely to have read or heard something about the schools, with awareness lowest in Quebec (49%). Awareness of residential schools has increased in all regions since 2008, but most dramatically in Quebec (up 22 points) and Atlantic Canada (up 23 points).

Across population groups, awareness of Indian residential schools is highest among women, and rises noticeably with age, education level and household income, but has increased across all groups (except those in the lowest income bracket). Age appears to have the most defining impact, with awareness reported by only 52 percent of Canadians 18 to 29 years of age, rising to 80 percent among those 60 and older.

Have read or heard about Indian residential schools



Q.20

Have you read or heard anything about Indian Residential Schools?

WHAT NON-ABORIGINAL CANADIANS KNOW ABOUT RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS.

Those reporting awareness of Indian residential schools were asked, unprompted, what they recall hearing or reading. Almost everyone in this group could recall something, with the following themes most commonly given:

- **The mistreatment of Aboriginal peoples**, including the abuse and molestation of students (42%) and general mistreatment of Aboriginal peoples and discrimination (29%);
- **The impact on Aboriginal families**, with mention of children being separated from their families (31%), and the long-term impact on families having to deal with trauma and dysfunctional relationships (6%); and
- **The cultural impact on Aboriginal peoples**, including being forbidden to speak their languages or learn their culture (18%), their integration and assimilation into mainstream society (11%), and cultural genocide (4%).

Other responses focus on the fact that the schools were run by government or church staff (6%), and more recent developments in terms of the schools being closed due to poor living conditions (3%), lawsuits and financial settlements (5%), and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (3%).

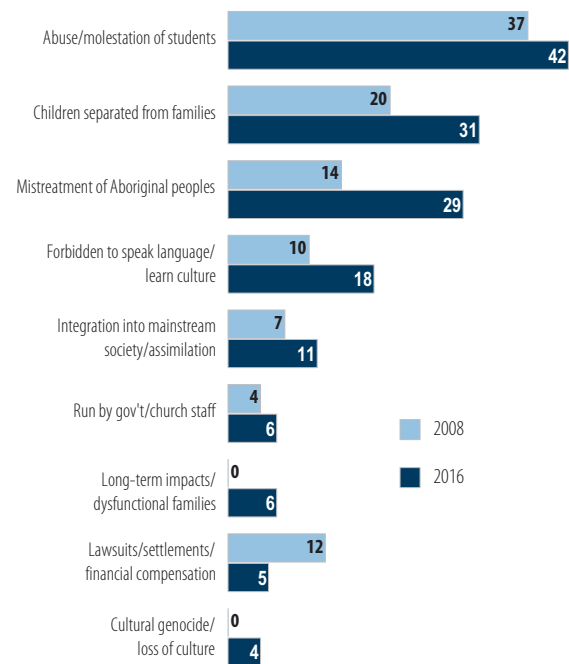
A very small number mention neutral or positive responses, including that the schools provided Aboriginal children with an education (4%) or were not all bad (1%).

Overall, the depth of knowledge of Indian residential schools among the non-Aboriginal Canadian population has jumped considerably since 2008. This is evident on two levels: the significant drop in the proportion of Canadians unable to mention anything about what they heard about residential schools (from 26% in 2008 to just 2% in 2016); and in the significant increase in the proportion of Canadians who identify many of the specific issues (e.g., mistreatment of Aboriginal peoples – up 15 points, children separated from families – up 11, forbidden to speak their language – up 8, abuse/molestation of students – up 5).

Recall of specific elements of Indian residential schools is consistent across the country, and among different population groups. Standouts include: 23 percent of Northerners mention the schools were run by the church

What have you heard or read about residential schools?

Top mentions – Those aware of residential schools



Q.21

What have you heard or read about Indian Residential Schools?

and government staff (compared to 6% overall); 47 percent of university graduates recall the abuse/molestation of Aboriginal students (compared to 37% of those with high school or less); and 28 percent of younger Canadians mention Aboriginal students being forbidden to speak their language (vs. 16% of those 30 and older).

Not surprisingly, Canadians who pay more attention to Aboriginal stories in the news are more likely to recall specific elements of Indian residential schools. This is particularly true in the case of those mentioning the abuse/molestation of Aboriginal students, children being separated from their families and cultural genocide.

Impact of residential schools experience on Aboriginal peoples

Three-quarters of non-Aboriginal Canadians believe the challenges facing Aboriginal peoples today are to some extent the result of the residential schools experience. But the public is divided on whether the residential schools system was intended to destroy Aboriginal culture.

Do non-Aboriginal Canadians appreciate the long-term impacts the residential school experience has had on the affected families and the Aboriginal community generally? Among those who are aware of residential schools, three in four believe that the challenges facing Aboriginal communities today are to a great extent (32%) or to some extent (41%) a result of the residential schools experience. Moreover, this view has strengthened considerably since 2008, when only 18 percent felt the impact of residential schools was being felt to a great extent in the present day.

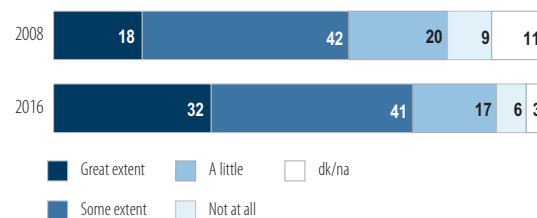
This increasing appreciation of the long-term impact of residential schools has taken place across the population, but most significantly in eastern Canada, among women and younger Canadians. Today, this connection is most widely acknowledged by British Columbians (38% say to a great extent), women (39%), Canadians aged 18 to 29 (42%), those in the lowest income bracket (43%), immigrants (39%) and those who follow Aboriginal issues closely (48%). This view is least apt to be shared in Saskatchewan (22%), Alberta (25%), and among Canadians earning \$100K or more in household income (25%). In Saskatchewan today, close to one in five (18%) holds the view that the residential school experience has no connection to current challenges in the Aboriginal community.

Intent of Indian residential schools. In the past year, Supreme Court Chief Justice Beverly McLachlin, former Prime Minister Paul Martin and TRC Commissioners all asserted that Canada's Indian residential schools system was part of a deliberate policy of cultural genocide against Aboriginal peoples.

The non-Aboriginal public is divided on this issue. Just over four in ten reject the idea of cultural genocide, strongly (16%) or somewhat (26%) agreeing with the statement: "Canada's residential schools policy was not an intentional effort to destroy Aboriginal culture and connection to the land," with almost half somewhat (19%) or strongly (28%) in disagreement. Another one in ten (11%) did not offer an opinion either way.

Extent of connection between residential schools experience and current challenges facing Aboriginal communities

Those aware of residential schools

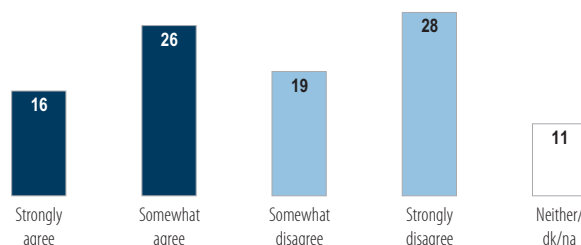


Q.22

To what extent do you think that the challenges facing Aboriginal communities today are a result of Aboriginal peoples' experiences in residential schools? Would you say to a great extent, some extent, a little or not at all?

Canada's residential schools policy was not an intentional effort to destroy Aboriginal culture and connection to land

Those aware of residential schools



Q.31

Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements: Canada's residential schools policy was not an intentional effort to destroy Aboriginal culture and connection to the land

Belief in the government's deliberate intention to destroy Aboriginal culture and connection to land is most widely held among residents in the Territories (72% disagree with the statement, 52% strongly so), while least evident in Saskatchewan (43%). Opinions on this question also vary depending on how closely one pays attention to stories involving Aboriginal peoples: those who pay a great deal of attention tend to subscribe to the belief in cultural genocide (57% disagree with the statement), compared with 36 percent of those who pay little or no attention.

Awareness and knowledge about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Four in ten non-Aboriginal Canadians say they have heard or read anything about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but few within this group can recall anything specific about the Commission's recommended Calls to Action.

In 2009, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada began a multi-year process to listen to survivors, communities and others affected by the Indian residential school system. The Commission issued its final report in June 2015, which included an extensive list of "calls to action."

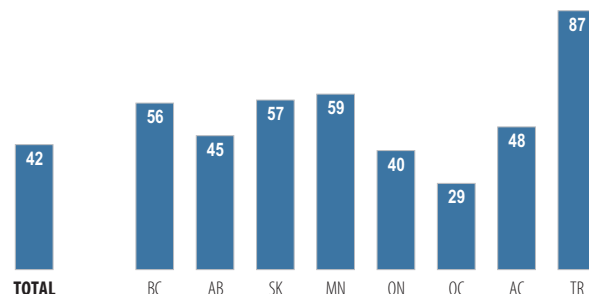
Despite considerable media coverage devoted to the Commission when the final report was issued, the level of public awareness today is modest. Just over four in ten (42%) non-Aboriginal Canadians say they have heard or read anything about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Even more surprising is the fact that 40 percent of those aware of Indian residential schools had not read or heard anything about the TRC. Moreover, the same is true for more than a third (35%) of non-Aboriginal Canadians who say they pay a great deal of attention to news and stories about Aboriginal peoples.

Awareness of the TRC varies dramatically across the country, ranging from a high of 87 percent in the Territories to a low of 29 percent in Quebec. Awareness also increases noticeably by age cohort, education level and household income. Only one-quarter (24%) of non-Aboriginal Canadians aged 18 to 29 say they have heard or read about the TRC, rising to 56 percent among those 60 plus.

Awareness of the TRC Calls to Action. It is one thing to have heard about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but another to know something about what it actually was about. When those indicating some awareness of the TRC were asked, unprompted, what they recall about the Commission's recommended calls to action, few could do so: Two-thirds (67%) of this group could offer nothing specific about what they heard or read about, and none of the calls to action or topics identified were mentioned by more than five percent.

The most often mentioned calls to action relate to some form of financial arrangement for Aboriginal peoples: government funding (5%), funding for Aboriginal education (4%), and

Have read or heard about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

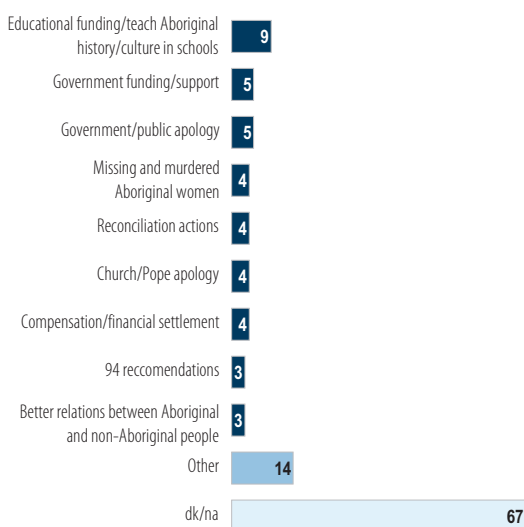


Q.23

Have you read or heard anything about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

Recall of TRC Calls to Action

Those aware of the TRC



Q.24

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established by the federal government to hear testimony from residential school survivors across the country, and to make recommendations for how to move forward toward reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and institutions. Do you recall anything specific about the recommended Call to Actions that the Commission released several months ago?

compensation/financial settlements (4%). Others cite education curriculum/teach Aboriginal history and culture (5%), government/public apology (5%), launch of a missing and murdered Aboriginal women inquiry (4%), actions to achieve reconciliation (4%) and church apologies (4%).

Reconciliation

What does reconciliation mean?

The idea of reconciliation between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians evokes themes of equality, cooperation, forgiveness and relationship-building. Reconciliation with the Canadian government is also associated with justice, fair treatment and creating a level playing field for all.

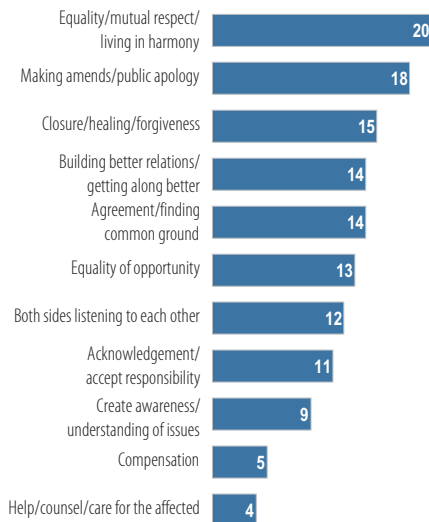
Leading up to the release of Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report, reconciliation moved more directly to the front burner of discussions about Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Aboriginal organizations, together with many non-Aboriginal Canadians – individuals, governments, businesses, civil society organizations and churches – raised the banner of reconciliation across the country to move dialogue to action. The survey asked non-Aboriginal Canadians, unprompted, what the term reconciliation means to them, both in terms of relations between Aboriginal peoples and other people living in Canada, and with respect to Aboriginal peoples and the Government of Canada.

RECONCILIATION BETWEEN ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AND OTHER PEOPLE IN CANADA. In defining what they think about reconciliation between Aboriginal peoples and other people living in Canada, the following words and phrases emerge:

- **Equality.** This is expressed in terms of equality and mutual respect and living together in harmony (20%), and equality of opportunity (13%).
- **Forgiveness and apology.** Under this theme, Canadians use phrases such as making amends and public apology (18%); forgive, closure, and moving forward (15%); and acknowledgement and accepting responsibility (11%).
- **Building relations.** Some think of reconciliation as getting along better (14%), finding common ground and coming together (14%), both sides listening to each other (12%), and creating awareness and understanding of the issues (9%).
- **Repairing the damage.** Fewer Canadians also spoke about actions to repair the damage caused by Indian residential schools: compensation (5%), help or counsel to care for

What does "reconciliation" between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians mean to you?

Top mentions



Q.26

What does the word "reconciliation" mean to you, when you think about relations between Aboriginal Peoples and other people living in Canada? Anything else?

the affected (4%), improving support from government (1%) and recognizing Aboriginal rights (1%).

Notably, a relatively small number of Canadians – just 13 percent – were unable to offer any ideas about what reconciliation between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians might mean to them.

The meanings attributed to reconciliation between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians are shared largely to the same degree by Canadians across the country, with a few standouts: Quebecers are much more likely to mention equality, mutual respect and living together in harmony (32%), while those in Saskatchewan emphasize agreement and finding common ground (23%), and Canadians living in the Territories are most likely to mention creating awareness and understanding of the issues (26%). Those age 60+ stand out as being most likely to describe reconciliation as both sides listening to each other (16%).

RECONCILIATION BETWEEN ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AND THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA. When

Canadians were asked what reconciliation meant to them in terms of relations between Aboriginal peoples and the Government of Canada, they use many of the same words and phrases from their description of relations with other Canadians. But they also offer a set of new lenses through which to view reconciliation.

Equality remains a dominant theme. However, in addition to the idea of mutual respect and living together in harmony (17%), Canadians also describe reconciliation as “fair policies” and a “level playing field” (18%), implying some form of action is required or intended in how they view reconciliation. Canadians also see reconciliation between Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian government as cooperation and working together (11%), where both sides are listening to each other, with communication and dialogue (7%).

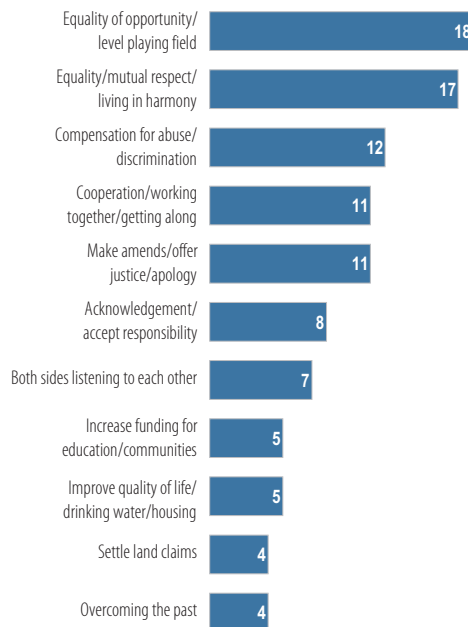
Concrete actions to address reconciliation also surface as a theme, and with a similar list of items: general compensation (8%), increased funding for education (5%), improving quality of life (i.e., drinking water) (5%), settling land claims (4%), financial compensation for abuse (4%) and improving financial support from government (3%).

Finally, **apology and acceptance** is another common theme, which refers to acknowledgement and acceptance of history (8%), apology (7%), making amends and offering justice (4%), and making peace (3%). One in five (19%) is unable to offer any ideas about what reconciliation between Aboriginal peoples and the federal government might mean to him or her.

These associations with reconciliation are similar across the country and population groups, with a few notable exceptions: A much greater proportion of Northerners mention increased funding for education (21%), while Albertans are more likely than others to talk about general compensation (14%). Saskatchewan and Atlantic Canada residents are least able to offer any description of reconciliation (28% and 25%, respectively).

What does "reconciliation" between Aboriginal peoples and the Government of Canada mean to you?

Top mentions



Q.27

And what does “reconciliation” mean to you, when you think about relations between Aboriginal Peoples and the Government of Canada? Anything else?

Role of individual Canadians in bringing about reconciliation

More than eight in ten believe that individual Canadians have a role to play in helping to bring about reconciliation with Aboriginal peoples, and the strength of this sentiment has increased noticeably over the past eight years.

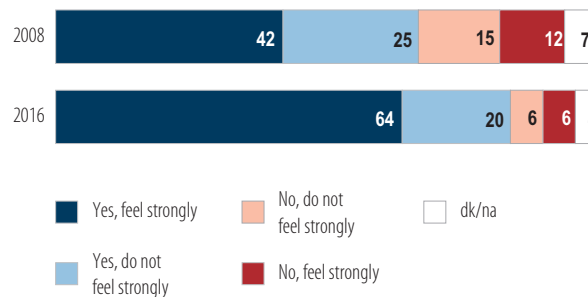
Non-Aboriginal Canadians are divided on the state of their relations with Aboriginal peoples, but most are now aware of the residential schools legacy, and express strong interest in learning more about Aboriginal history and cultures. This suggests an opening for greater understanding between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians as a means to improve relations, but does it mean that non-Aboriginal Canadians see themselves as active participants in reconciliation? The answer appears to be a resounding “yes.”

More than eight in ten (84%) non-Aboriginal Canadians say they believe individual Canadians have a role to play in efforts to bring about reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. Moreover, 64 percent feel strongly about this, and this proportion has jumped a significant 22 points since 2008 (42%). This rise in feeling about the public’s role in reconciliation is evident across the country, but most significant among Canadians 18 to 29 (up 31 points).

Part of what might be driving this commitment to reconciliation is views about anti-Aboriginal sentiment and discrimination. Among those who feel strongly that individual Canadians have a role to play in reconciliation, fully 69 percent also agree that most Canadians are prejudiced against Aboriginal peoples whether or not they are conscious of it, and 75 percent believe mainstream Canadian society today benefits from ongoing discrimination against Aboriginal peoples.

The public’s sentiment about the role of individual Canadians in reconciliation is shared across all regions in the country, and among all population groups. The strongest proponents are in Quebec (71% “feel strongly”) and British Columbia (68%), along with women (69% vs. 58% of men), and those who earn less than \$60K annually (70% vs. 61% of those who earn more than \$60K). Canadians who pay a great deal of attention to Aboriginal news and stories (82%), and those who are aware of residential schools and the TRC (71%), also stand out as feeling strongly about the role for individual Canadians in bringing about reconciliation.

Do individual Canadians have a role in bringing about reconciliation?



Q.25

Now thinking about Canadians generally? Do you believe that individual Canadians do or do not have a role to play in efforts to bring about reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples? Do you feel strongly about this or not?

Support for Aboriginal rights and reconciliation

There is majority public support for a number of policies related to Aboriginal rights and reconciliation, with the strongest support in areas dealing with education and improving the quality of life on reserves, and less so when it comes to settling land claims and giving Aboriginal communities control over natural resources.

In its June 2015 final report, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission listed 94 “Calls to Action” to federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal governments “in order to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation.” The survey gauged public support for six areas, some of which tie directly into the TRC’s calls to action while others relate to longstanding issues that remain unresolved. All six areas receive majority support, although the strength of support varies by recommendation.

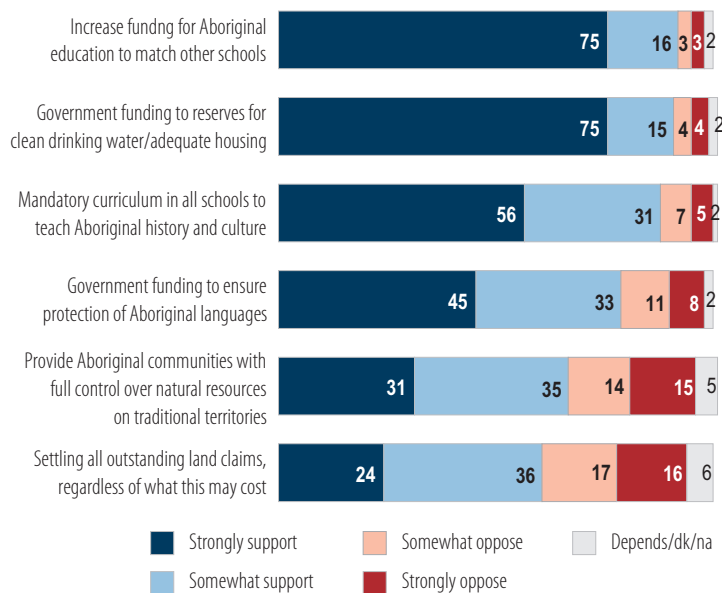
The two areas that garner the strongest public support are increased funding for Aboriginal schools so that it matches funding for non-Aboriginal schools in the same province or territory (91% support, with 75% in strong support), and increased government funding to reserves to ensure clean drinking water and adequate housing (90% support, 75% in

strong support). Very few oppose either recommendation, although opposition to increased education funding in Aboriginal schools is most evident in Manitoba (13%) and Saskatchewan (15%).

Strong majorities of non-Aboriginal Canadians also support recommendations aimed at introducing mandatory curriculum in all schools to teach Aboriginal history and culture (87%), and providing government funding to ensure the preservation of Aboriginal languages (78%), with relatively few expressing opposition.

There is somewhat less consensus on calls to action that deal with land and natural resources. Two-thirds (66%) endorse providing Aboriginal communities full control over the natural resources on their traditional territories, while six in ten (60%) support settling all outstanding land claims with First Nations, Métis and Inuit people regardless of what this might cost. In both cases, levels of strong support are lower than for other calls to action tested (31% and 24%, respectively), with three in ten expressing opposition.

Support for Aboriginal rights and reconciliation



Q.28

Please tell me whether you would strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose each of the following steps to address reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people?

Across Canada, there is consistent majority support for all six of the recommendations covered in the survey. However, the level of support varies depending on where one lives. For example, recommendations related to education and quality of life on reserves elicit stronger levels of support in Quebec, Ontario, Atlantic Canada and the Territories than in the four Western provinces. This also applies to support for providing government funding to preserve Aboriginal languages, except that British Columbians join those living east of Manitoba in their strong support of this measure.

When it comes to land claims and control of natural resources, however, regional differences in public opinion are a bit more nuanced. Settling all outstanding land claims regardless of cost generates stronger support among Atlantic Canadians, Ontarians, and those living in the Territories, with Saskatchewan and Alberta residents much more divided on this recommendation. Giving

Aboriginal communities full control over natural resources on traditional territories garners the strongest opposition in Quebec (35%), Alberta (36%), Saskatchewan (34%), and the Territories (36%).

Levels of support for specific calls to action also vary somewhat across different population groups. Recommendations related to education – equal funding for Aboriginal schools and mandatory Aboriginal history and culture in the curriculum – are strongly supported by all non-Aboriginal Canadians regardless of their socio-demographic characteristics. However, women lend stronger support to both than men, and the same is true for funding to preserve Aboriginal languages. It is also interesting to note that immigrants are more likely to support both mandatory curriculum to teach Aboriginal history and culture, and funding to preserve Aboriginal languages, in comparison with those born in Canada.

IMPORTANCE OF CONTROL OVER LAND AND RESOURCES.

A number of Supreme Court decisions over the past decade have brought victories to Aboriginal peoples in their struggle to have a say in, or control over, what happens on their lands, particularly with respect to resource development. But non-Aboriginal Canadians are divided on the need for communities to have such control over their lands and resources. More than four in ten strongly (17%) or somewhat (28%) agree with the statement “Aboriginal communities do not need control over their land and resources to be successful,” while half somewhat (26%) or strongly (25%) disagree.

The underlying tension in Canadian public opinion on the need for Aboriginal peoples to have control over their traditional territories is further revealed by the fact that, among those who say this control is not necessary for Aboriginal peoples to be successful, a majority (56%) nonetheless supports the idea of providing Aboriginal communities full control over the natural resources on their traditional territories, a key recommendation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

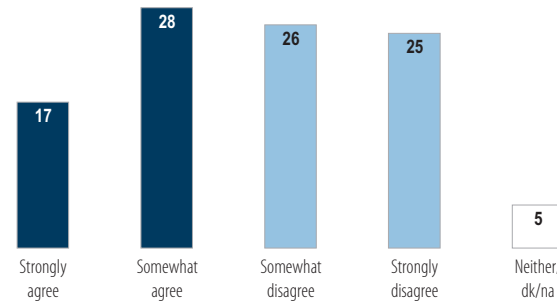
Canadians in all regions of the country display a divided view on this issue. But Atlantic Canadians are more inclined than others to link Aboriginal control of land and resources to the success of Aboriginal communities (57% disagree with the statement), while Saskatchewan residents (38%) are least likely to share this opinion.

IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING HISTORY OF TREATMENT OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES.

If reconciliation is, in part, about accountability, apology and making amends, then developing a greater appreciation of the history of the treatment of Aboriginal peoples is an important first step. Consistent with the broad public support for introducing mandatory education curriculum in all schools, nine in ten say it is very (62%) or somewhat (30%) important for all non-Aboriginal Canadians to understand the true history of how Aboriginal peoples have been treated by governments and society in this country.

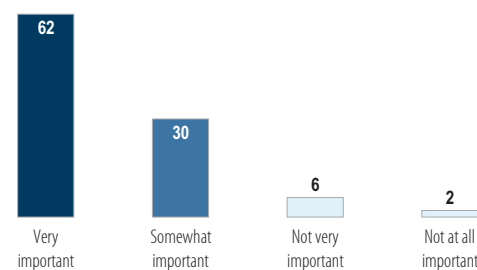
This sentiment has strengthened among Canadians living in major cities since 2009 (with those saying very important increasing by 10 percentage points). This view is shared across all regions and population groups, but is strongest in Atlantic Canada, Ontario and British Columbia, as well as among women, younger Canadians (18-29), low income earners and people born outside Canada.

Aboriginal communities do not need control over their land and resources to be successful



Q.31f
Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements: Aboriginal communities do not need control over their land and resources to be successful?

Importance of understanding true history of how Aboriginal peoples have been treated in Canada



Q.29
In your opinion, how important is it for all non-Aboriginal Canadians to understand the true history of how Aboriginal Peoples have been treated by governments and society in this country?

Prospects for reconciliation

Non-Aboriginal Canadians are cautiously optimistic about meaningful reconciliation happening in their lifetime. At the same time, most believe that reconciliation will be impossible as long as there continues to be social and economic disparities between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians.

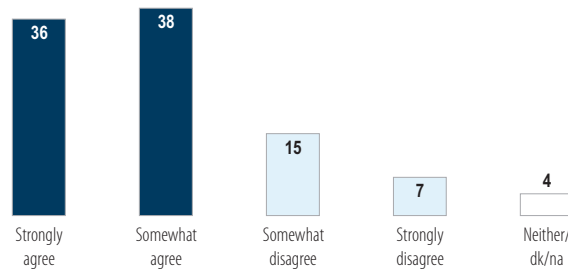
The public acknowledges a sizeable standard of living gap between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, and most believe this represents a major obstacle standing in the way of reconciliation. Three-quarters strongly (36%) or somewhat (38%) agree with the statement “Reconciliation will be impossible as long as Aboriginal peoples remain socio-economically disadvantaged,” compared with one in five who disagrees.

Non-Aboriginal Canadians across all regions share this perspective, with particularly strong views held among those living in the Territories (64% strongly agree). Disagreement is most evident in Alberta (33%) and Saskatchewan (28%). University graduates, and Canadians who pay a great deal of attention to news and stories about Aboriginal peoples are more likely to strongly agree with this statement than others.

OPTIMISM ABOUT THE FUTURE. This survey reveals widespread public support for meaningful reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. What are the prospects for meaningful progress? Two-thirds say they are very (17%) or somewhat (51%) optimistic that there will be meaningful reconciliation in their lifetime, compared with three in ten who are somewhat (23%) or very (7%) pessimistic.

Optimism (very or somewhat) is evident across the country, but most widespread in Toronto (76%) and Atlantic Canada (73%), as well as among women (71%), Canadians 18 to 29 (79%), those in the lowest income bracket (76%), and immigrants (78%). This view is least apt to be shared in Saskatchewan (59%), where positive views about Aboriginal peoples generally, and with respect to reconciliation, are least evident.

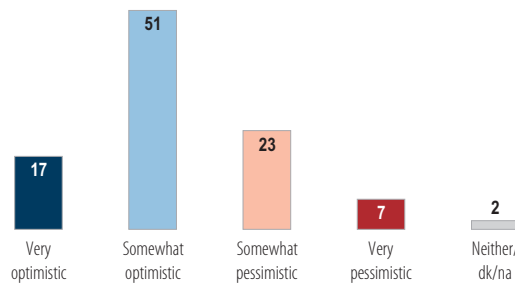
Reconciliation will be impossible as long as Aboriginal peoples remain socio-economically disadvantaged



Q.31d

Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements: Reconciliation will be impossible as long as Aboriginal Peoples remain socio-economically disadvantaged?

Prospects for meaningful reconciliation happening in your lifetime



Q.30

Are you very optimistic, somewhat optimistic, somewhat pessimistic or very pessimistic that there will be meaningful reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in your lifetime?

Aboriginal governance

Local community leadership

Most believe Aboriginal leaders do as good a job or better in comparison with local government leaders in their province. One in four is critical of Aboriginal leadership, primarily because of perceptions of mismanagement of funds, corruption or lack of proper qualifications.

In recent years, a proliferation of news stories has put the functioning and management of Aboriginal communities increasingly under the microscope. Issues of poor housing conditions, water contamination, and mismanagement of funds appeared in tandem with stories of successful Aboriginal businesses and economic development projects, sending mixed messages about the effectiveness of Aboriginal governments. In 2011, the federal government passed the First Nations Financial Transparency Act, which requires bands to make public their audited consolidated financial statements, including the salaries of chief and council.

When non-Aboriginal Canadians are asked to compare the leadership of Aboriginal governments to local governments

in their province, a majority believe that Aboriginal leaders do as good a job (54%) if not better (7%) than local government leaders in their province. One-quarter (24%) say Aboriginal leaders do a worse job, with another 14 percent unable to offer a clear response to the question.

Views on the relative performance of Aboriginal leaders vary depending on where one lives. Prairie residents, and particularly those in Manitoba are the most critical of Aboriginal leadership (42% say they do a worse job), while Quebecers (16%) are least likely to share this view.

Among population groups, negative perceptions of Aboriginal leadership are most evident among men (32% versus 17% of women), Canadians 45 and older, university graduates and high income earners.

Critical views of Aboriginal leaders are closely tied to the belief that Aboriginal peoples have a sense of entitlement to support from government and Canadian taxpayers.

Effectiveness of Aboriginal leaders compared to local government leaders in your province



Q.34

In terms of governing, do you think that Aboriginal leaders as a whole do a better job, a worse job, or about the same job as leaders of local governments in your [province/territory]?

Why Aboriginal leaders do a better job. Canadians who believe that Aboriginal leaders do a better job than other local government leaders are most likely to say (when asked unprompted) that this is because Aboriginal leaders are more knowledgeable or more familiar with their local issues (34% of this group), and that they care more - or have more at stake in - their local communities (24%).

Others respond by saying Aboriginal leaders are doing more with less (9%), receive more support from their communities (9%), and are generally better able to represent their communities than a non-Aboriginal government (8%). Some in this group believe that Aboriginal governments are less interested in profit (4%) and less corrupt than their non-Aboriginal counterparts (4%), and are better able to focus because they are working in smaller areas (4%).

Why Aboriginal leaders do a worse job. Canadians who believe Aboriginal leaders do a worse job than other local leaders say this is mostly about management issues. By far, the most common reason for citing poor leadership is mismanagement of funds (41%). Others cite the belief that Aboriginal governments are plagued by corruption and greed (16%), that leaders are overpaid (15%), and that they rely too much on support from taxpayers and government handouts (6%).

Others say Aboriginal leaders do a worse job because they are poorly suited to the job. One in five (19%) expresses the belief that Aboriginal leaders are poorly educated or otherwise unqualified for leadership, while smaller numbers highlight issues with accountability to constituents (5%), and even substance abuse (2%). One in ten explains this critical judgement of Aboriginal leadership as based on what he or she has seen or heard in the media (4%), or based on personal experience (6%).

Strengthening Aboriginal representation in the federal government

Canadians endorse new measures to strengthen Aboriginal representation in the federal government, including guaranteed seats in the federal cabinet and at First Ministers meetings, as well as a new Aboriginal parliamentary committee to review laws from an Aboriginal perspective.

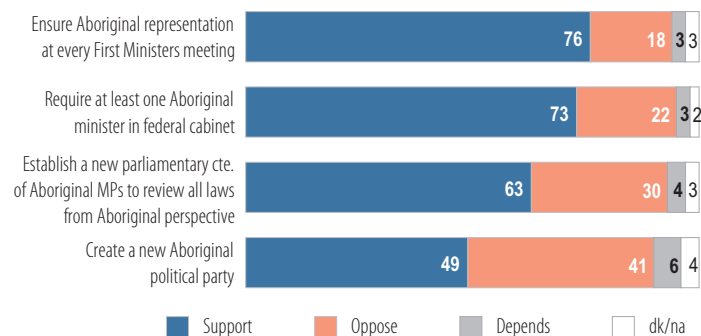
The recent federal election resulted in a record number of 10 Aboriginal candidates winning seats in Parliament, with two appointed to the federal cabinet. At the same time, there are no specific requirements or measures in place to ensure that Aboriginal peoples are formally represented in any of the major institutions of the federal government (e.g., Parliament, Supreme Court). Would it make a difference if there were mandated Aboriginal appointments in positions of authority?

The non-Aboriginal Canadian public is very supportive in principle of strengthening Aboriginal representation in the government’s major institutions. Strong majorities would support requirements that there be an Aboriginal

representative at every meeting of the country’s First Ministers (76%), of requiring at least one Aboriginal Minister in the federal cabinet (73%), and establishing a new parliamentary committee composed of Aboriginal MPs from all parties to review all laws from an Aboriginal perspective (63%). By comparison, just half (49%) support the creation of an Aboriginal political party, versus 41 percent who oppose this idea.

Support for all four policy options varies consistently across regions and population groups. They are most popular in Quebec and Atlantic Canada, and to a lesser extent in Ontario. More than three-quarters (77%) of residents of the Territories are in favour of requiring Aboriginal representation at First Ministers’ meetings; however, they are the only regional population that is more likely to oppose than support the other three proposed policies. Younger Canadians (18-29) are more supportive than others of all proposals to strengthen Aboriginal representation, as are women and people born outside Canada.

Support for strengthening Aboriginal representation in federal institutions



Q.38

Currently there are no specific requirements or measures to ensure that Aboriginal Peoples are fully represented in the institutions of federal government. Would you support or oppose each of the following ways in which this representation might be strengthened?

The big picture: Non-Aboriginal perspectives on Aboriginal peoples

Introduction

This survey measured public opinions across a range of topics and issues to determine what non-Aboriginal Canadians currently know and think about different aspects of Aboriginal peoples. Essential to this initiative is to understand how these opinions are similar or different across regions and socio-demographic groups across the country because the data show clearly that there is indeed a range of opinions; there is no one singular non-Aboriginal Canadian point of view on any of the topics covered. But underlying the many differences in attitudes by region, age, gender and socio-economic status are distinct perspectives or world views that have been shaped by many factors (family upbringing, social values, living circumstances, community context). Identifying these perspectives provides an important way to fully understand how mainstream society views Aboriginal peoples.

This is accomplished through statistical methods commonly known as “segmentation analysis,” which uncovers patterns of responses to the full set of survey questions that reveal consistent orientations on relevant issues. The results produce clusters or segments of the population, each of which represents a conceptually distinct world view toward Aboriginal peoples. This provides a valuable means of understanding perspectives beyond what is possible through

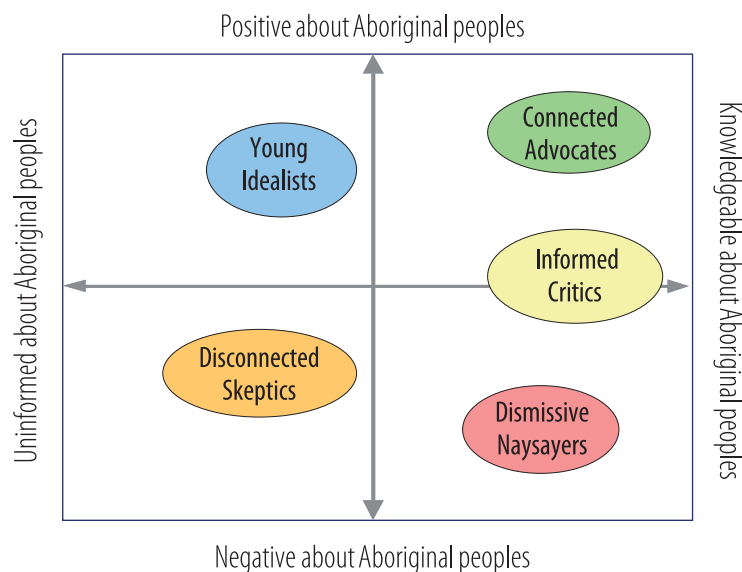
the individual findings alone, and can offer guidance for future communications and educational initiatives.

In 2009, this type of segmentation analysis was undertaken with non-Aboriginal urban Canadians in 10 major cities as part of the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study. For the current survey, a new analysis was conducted, based on a full national sample (including the Territories) and the updated set of survey questions, some of which cover new topics such as reconciliation.

THE FIVE NON-ABORIGINAL WORLD VIEWS ON ABORIGINAL PEOPLES. The segmentation analysis conducted in 2016 yielded five distinct groups or segments of non-Aboriginal Canadians, based on their overall perspective toward Aboriginal peoples.

The five groups differ primarily along two dimensions: a) positive versus negative orientation toward Aboriginal peoples; and b) level of knowledge or understanding of Aboriginal peoples and the issues they face. The groups can be plotted on these two dimensions as presented in the accompanying chart.

The following pages provide a portrait of the five mainstream world views about Aboriginal peoples.



Connected Advocates

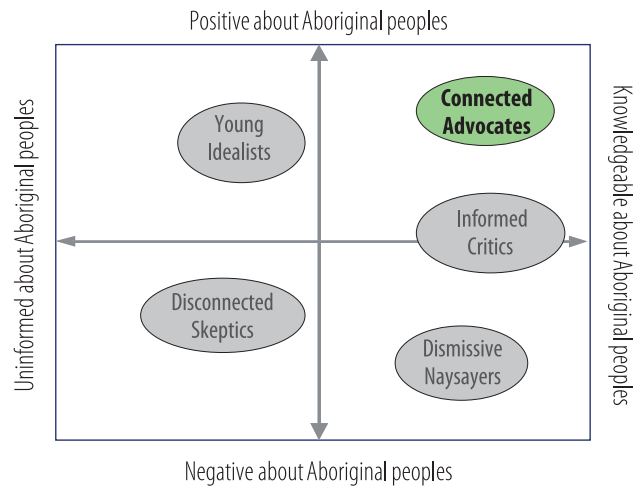
Connected Advocates (18% of the non-Aboriginal population) stand clearly at one end of the spectrum as the most positive and supportive group with respect to Aboriginal peoples in this country. They are the most knowledgeable about the history and current challenges facing the Aboriginal community, they feel the most connected, and are the strongest proponents of changes to address these challenges.

Connected advocates can be distinguished in terms of:

- Placing the greatest importance on Aboriginal history and culture as a defining aspect of Canada;
- Seeing Aboriginal peoples as unique rather than as another ethnic or cultural group (88%);
- Closely following Aboriginal issues in the news;
- Having frequent contact with Aboriginal peoples;
- Seeing a large and growing gap in the standard of living between Aboriginal peoples and others;
- Being most likely to see discrimination happening at both the individual and institutional levels;
- Believing most Canadians are prejudiced against Aboriginal peoples;
- Seeing governments and the public as the main obstacles holding Aboriginal peoples back from achieving the same standard of living as other Canadians;
- Expressing the strongest support for TRC Calls to Action; and
- Feeling strongest about individual Canadians' role in achieving reconciliation (96% feel strongly);

At the same time, they are not especially optimistic about the realization of reconciliation in their lifetimes.

Who are they? Connected advocates can be found across the country, but they are more likely to be women, older (especially in the 60 plus cohort) and have a post-graduate degree, but not necessarily the highest household incomes. They are equally spread across urban, suburban and rural communities, and are most apt to be found in the Territories, Atlantic Canada and B.C.



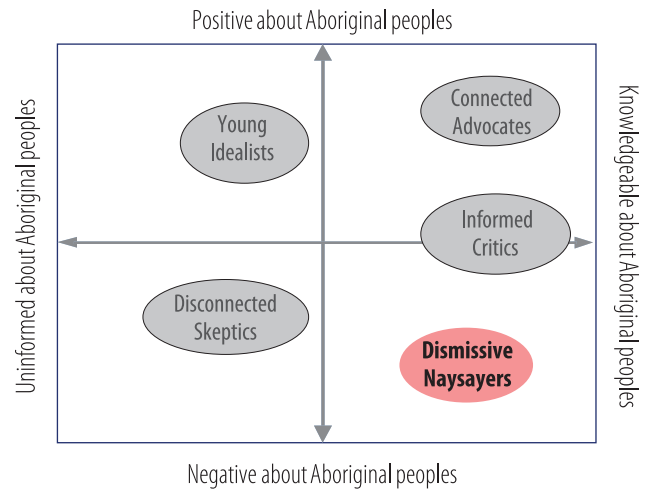
Dismissive Naysayers

Dismissive Naysayers (14%) can be found at the opposite end of the spectrum of world views from Connected Advocates. They stand out as being the most negative of non-Aboriginal Canadians, and embody much of the visceral resentment that sometimes emerges in online commentary and racist incidents.

Dismissive Naysayers can be distinguished in terms of:

- Placing the least importance on Aboriginal history and culture as defining Canada;
- Being most likely of all groups to consider Aboriginal peoples as no different from other ethnic or cultural groups;
- Being least apt to see socio-economic disparity between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians;
- Being most likely to believe that Aboriginal peoples have an unhealthy sense of entitlement (55% strongly agree with this view);
- Being most critical of Aboriginal leadership (62% say they are doing a worse job than local government leaders in their province);
- Looking at Aboriginal peoples as being responsible for their own problems;
- Being least supportive of all groups in supporting TRC Calls to Action;
- Being least likely to feel individual Canadians have a role in realizing reconciliation (only 24% agree strongly); and
- Expressing by far the most pessimism about the likelihood of reconciliation happening in their lifetimes.

Who are they? Dismissive Naysayers are most likely to be male, older (but not necessarily in the 60 plus cohort), and have higher than average incomes, but not higher than average levels of education. They are the least urban of all groups, and tend to live in smaller towns and rural areas, and are concentrated primarily in the three Prairie provinces (and least evident in Quebec).



Young Idealists

Young Idealists (23%) are one of two groups composed mostly of younger urban non-Aboriginal Canadians. The world view of this segment shares much in common with that of Connected Advocates in being very positive in its orientation to Aboriginal peoples. In some ways, this group is even more sympathetic about the place of Aboriginal peoples in Canadian society and noticeably more positive about the future. But at the same time they are much less knowledgeable about the history and current challenges, and do not have the same level of personal engagement.

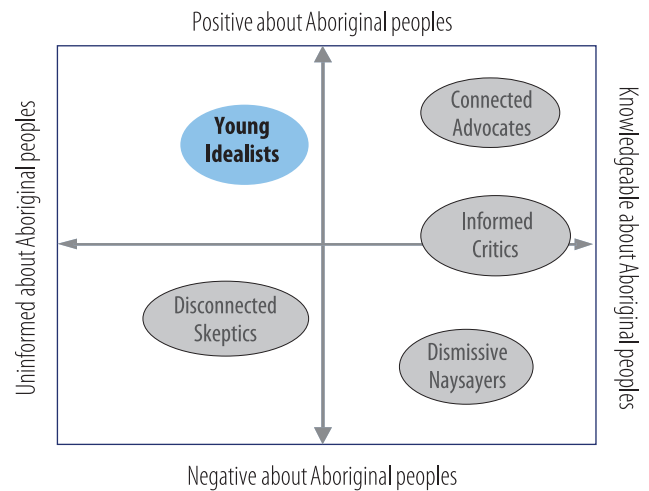
Young Idealists share a number of characteristics with Connected Advocates in terms of:

- Placing strong importance on Aboriginal history and culture as important in defining Canada;
- Seeing governments and the public, rather than Aboriginal peoples, as the biggest obstacles to achieving social and economic equality with other Canadians; and
- Expressing strong support for TRC Calls to Action.

At the same time, they are less likely than Connected Advocates to:

- Closely follow Aboriginal issues in the news or have direct contact with Aboriginal peoples;
- Have heard or read anything about Indian residential schools or the TRC;
- Consider Aboriginal peoples as unique and distinct from other ethnic or culture groups;
- See the gap in standard of living between Aboriginal peoples and others;
- Believe discrimination is happening, especially at the institutional level;
- Believe that control over land and resources is critical to the success of Aboriginal communities; and
- Feel strongly about the role of individual Canadians in reconciliation.

This group stands out as being the most positive of all about current relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, and as the most optimistic about the prospects



for meaningful reconciliation in their lifetimes (84% are optimistic versus 13% who are pessimistic).

Who are they? Young Idealists share many opinions in common with Connected Advocates, but they are a very different group. They are, by far, the youngest group of Canadians (with the largest proportion under 24 years of age), female, urban, concentrated in Toronto and Montreal, and is the group most likely to include individuals born outside of Canada. Being young, they are less likely than most other groups to have a post-secondary degree (though many are currently students) and they have lower than average household incomes. This group may well be the next generation of Connected Advocates.

Disconnected Skeptics

Disconnected Skeptics (21%) are the other group of young urban Canadians, but one with a very different orientation toward Aboriginal peoples. In contrast to Young Idealists, Disconnected Skeptics are mostly tuned out and unsympathetic to the existence of Aboriginal peoples and the challenges they face. In some respects, they are a 'lite' version of Dismissive Naysayers, with less emotional negativity because they are mostly disengaged: they know the least and care the least of any of the five groups.

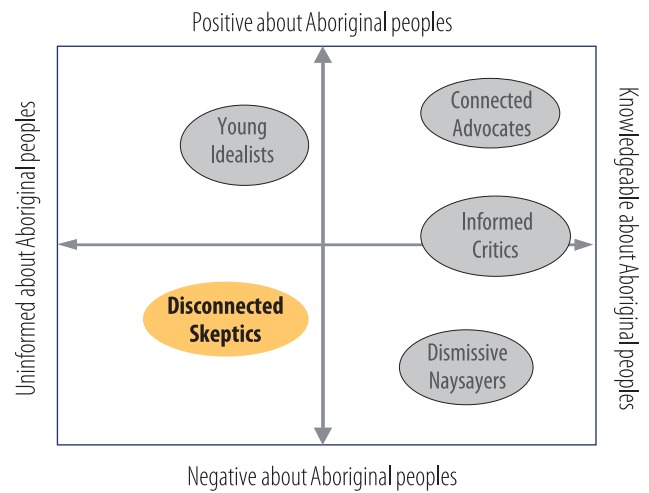
Disconnected Skeptics share a number of characteristics with Dismissive Naysayers, although not to the same degree, in terms of:

- Placing low importance on Aboriginal history and culture as defining Canada;
- Believing Aboriginal peoples are no different from other ethnic or cultural groups;
- Not seeing institutional discrimination against Aboriginal peoples;
- Believing Aboriginal peoples are most responsible for their own problems;
- Expressing comparatively lower levels of support for TRC Calls to Action;
- Not feeling that individual Canadians have a role in achieving reconciliation; and
- Demonstrating a lack of interest in learning more about Aboriginal peoples.

Disconnected Skeptics stand out most in terms of:

- Paying the least attention to Aboriginal issues, or to have personal contact with Aboriginal peoples;
- Being least likely to believe in ongoing discrimination against Aboriginal peoples; and
- Having the least awareness of residential schools (28%) or the TRC (4%);

Unlike Dismissive Naysayers, Disconnected Skeptics do not generally agree that Aboriginal peoples have a sense of entitlement or that Aboriginal leaders do a worse job than local government leaders (perhaps because these



are not issues they have ever thought about). One opinion they share with Young Idealists is being among the most positive about current relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Their sense of optimism about future reconciliation is similar to that of Connected Advocates; much more positive than Dismissive Naysayers, but much more negative than that of Young Idealists.

Who are they? Disconnected Skeptics are – like Dismissive Naysayers – more of a male-dominated group. They also tend to be young and foreign-born, although not quite as much as Young Idealists. They are most likely to be found in Quebec, and in smaller towns and rural areas. While a bit older than Young Idealists, they are less likely to have a high school diploma or post-graduate degree.

Informed Critics

Informed Critics (23%) are perhaps the least obvious of the segments, in that unlike the other four groups they are not clearly positioned on either the positive or negative side of the spectrum. Informed Critics are among the most knowledgeable and connected of Canadians, but are not especially sympathetic to the challenges and aspirations of Aboriginal peoples in this country.

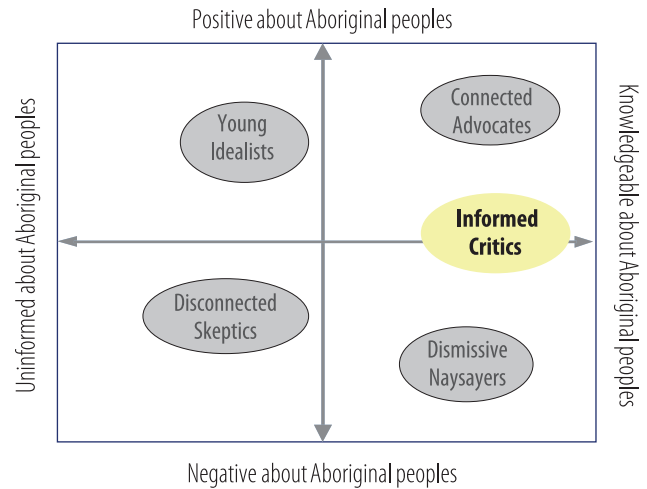
On the one hand, Informed Critics share some opinions with Connected Advocates, in terms of:

- Paying attention to Aboriginal issues and having personal contact;
- Having high levels of awareness of Indian residential schools and the TRC;
- Identifying the gap in standard of living between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, and the necessity of addressing this to achieve reconciliation; and
- Viewing government and the public as having some responsibility for the challenges facing Aboriginal people.

On the other hand, they also tend to line up closer with Dismissive Naysayers and Disconnected Skeptics (although not quite as strongly) in terms of:

- Placing lower importance on Aboriginal history and culture in defining Canada;
- Not considering Aboriginal peoples to be unique versus like other ethnic or cultural groups;
- Expressing lower levels of support for the more contentious TRC recommendations (settling land claims, giving full control over traditional lands);
- Rejecting the idea that mainstream society continues to benefit from poor treatment of Aboriginal people, and that control over land is necessary for communities to be successful; and
- Being critical in assessing the performance of Aboriginal leaders.

This group's level of optimism about future reconciliation is comparable to that of Connected Advocates and



Disconnected Skeptics (more positive than the view of Dismissive Naysayers, but much less so than that of Young Idealists).

Who are they? This group can be characterized as the oldest and most affluent of the five groups, comparable to Connected Advocates but more so: this group includes the highest concentration of Canadians 60 plus, and those with household incomes of \$100K or more. This is also the most urban of the groups, and is most heavily concentrated west of Ontario, especially in the Territories, Manitoba and Saskatchewan.



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