

Overview

There is a view among some observers that cities are places where First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultures and communities are lost. As other researchers have observed, assumptions about the incompatibility of urban culture and First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures, and the focus in research and policy primarily on Aboriginal peoples' socioeconomic characteristics, make it important to examine the role of culture for urban Aboriginal peoples.³¹

Notwithstanding the challenges and difficulties Aboriginal peoples face in maintaining their cultural values and beliefs in a mainly non-Aboriginal urban setting, the *UAPS* data show Aboriginal peoples living in Canadian cities are finding ways to respect and practice their cultural traditions.

Indeed, the *UAPS* suggests the cultural revitalization among urban Aboriginal people observed by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report (1996) continues, particularly in certain Canadian cities. But the findings also demonstrate that some groups, notably urban Aboriginal youth, are less likely than others to participate in Aboriginal traditions and cultural activities in their city. The following points summarize the main findings around urban Aboriginal culture (i.e., the ways of life that are passed from generation to generation):

- **There is a sense of cultural vitality among urban Aboriginal peoples in Canadian cities.** By a wide margin, First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit are more likely to think Aboriginal culture in their community has become stronger than weaker in the last five years.
- **This sense of cultural vitality is strongest in Vancouver and Toronto.** Aboriginal peoples in these cities are both more aware of Aboriginal cultural activities in their community and participate in them more frequently. Not surprisingly, residents in these cities are also most likely among urban Aboriginal peoples to think that Aboriginal culture in their community has grown stronger in the last five years.
- **The idea or theory that Aboriginal people cannot be economically successful without losing some degree of cultural authenticity is not well-supported by *UAPS*.** More educated and affluent urban Aboriginal peoples typically have greater awareness of Aboriginal cultural activities in their community, and are more likely than others to say they often participate in them. These findings suggest that the less affluent may be more challenged by the task of maintaining a strong cultural identity in the city.
- **There is an evident confidence in their ability to retain their cultural identity in the city.** While urban Aboriginal peoples acknowledge the need to take pro-active steps to protect their cultural traditions in the city, they are fairly confident in their ability to maintain their cultural identity in the urban setting.
- **Maintaining Aboriginal languages, and customs and traditions is top-of-mind for many urban Aboriginal peoples,** demonstrating these aspects of Aboriginal culture are key links which connect Aboriginal people with their past and "...ground their social, emotional and spiritual vitality."³² Though studies have found that there is less Aboriginal language use and transmission in urban than in non-urban areas,³³ Aboriginal languages still have significant importance in the lives of urban Aboriginal peoples.

31 Evelyn Peters, *Three Myths About Aboriginals in Cities, Breakfast on the Hill Seminar Series*, Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Services, March 25 2004.

32 The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP). 1996. Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 5 vols. Ottawa, Government of Canada, p.531.

33 M.J Norris and L. Jantzen, "Aboriginal Languages in Canada's Urban Areas: Characteristics, Considerations and Implications," *Not Strangers in These Parts*, 2003; *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations*, 2006 Census, Statistics Canada.

- **Urban Aboriginal youth are the least attuned to Aboriginal culture in their communities.** They are less likely than older generations to be aware of Aboriginal cultural activities available in their community, and least likely among urban Aboriginal peoples to participate in them.
- **Urban Aboriginal peoples embrace pluralism, and even more so than non-Aboriginal people.** Their tolerance for languages and cultures other than their own substantially exceeds that of non-Aboriginal urban Canadians.
- **Finally, Aboriginal services and organizations clearly help Aboriginal peoples make significant choices about their cultural, economic and social affairs – and, for some, sustain a sense of collective identity in their city.** Friendship centres, employment centres and health centres are of value to First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit alike, albeit to varying degrees. As well, experiences with particular Aboriginal services and organizations vary substantially by city, and may reflect the different services and organizations available in specific cities.

The following paragraphs elaborate upon aspects of urban Aboriginal culture among First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit. Similar proportions of First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit are aware of Aboriginal cultural activities in their community and participate in these activities with similar frequency. They differ most around what they think is important to maintaining their collective identity in the city.

First Nations

Majorities of First Nations peoples are aware of Aboriginal cultural activities in their city and, like Métis and Inuit, participate in them regularly. Aboriginal spirituality is clearly a very important dimension of majorities of First Nations peoples' lives, particularly for those in Vancouver and Toronto (those cities where urban Aboriginal peoples are more likely to say cultural activities are available). Like Métis and Inuit, they feel Aboriginal peoples need to take steps to protect their cultural traditions from outside influences; they are also more likely than others to feel choosing partners with the same cultural background is important.

According to the 2001 Statistics Canada Aboriginal Peoples Survey, two out of three First Nations peoples felt that keeping, learning or relearning their Aboriginal language was very or somewhat important.³⁴ *UAPS* data corroborates this finding: most status First Nations peoples feel Aboriginal languages are the most important aspect of Aboriginal culture to be passed on to future generations. Aboriginal customs, traditions and Elders are similarly important to majorities of First Nations peoples.

Métis

Majorities of Métis are aware of Aboriginal cultural activities in their city and, like First Nations peoples and Inuit, participate in them regularly. They are also as likely as First Nations peoples and Inuit to think Aboriginal culture has become stronger in their community in the last five years, although this varies for Métis across cities. Overall, Métis feel less strongly than others about what aspects of Aboriginal culture should be passed on, but in certain cities, such as Toronto and Vancouver, they appear as likely as others to note the importance of Aboriginal languages, customs and traditions, spirituality, ceremonies, Elders, and celebrations and events to future generations. They are also as likely as others to feel Aboriginal peoples need to take steps to protect their cultural traditions from outside influences. Finally, Métis are least likely among urban Aboriginal peoples to use and rely on Aboriginal services and organizations.

34 Statistics Canada, 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=89-589-X&CHROPG=1&lang=eng>,

Inuit

Majorities of Inuit are aware of Aboriginal cultural activities in their city and, like First Nations peoples and Métis, participate in them regularly. They are as likely as others to think Aboriginal culture has become stronger in their community in the last five years and, like First Nations peoples, are more likely than others to feel Aboriginal spirituality is very important in their lives.

Inuit are most likely among urban Aboriginal peoples to use and rely on Aboriginal services and organizations. Language is also of great cultural importance – most Inuit think Aboriginal languages are the most important aspect of Aboriginal culture to be passed on to their children and grandchildren.

1. Aboriginal cultural activity in the city

Availability of Aboriginal cultural activities

Majorities say Aboriginal cultural activities are regularly available in their communities, although this view is stronger in Toronto, Vancouver, Halifax and Thunder Bay, as well as among those who are older and those who strongly identify as Aboriginal.

To what degree are Aboriginal cultural activities seen to be available to Aboriginal peoples living in Canadian cities?

Urban Aboriginal peoples are more likely than not to say there are some, if not a lot, of Aboriginal cultural activities in their community, but there are notable variations in this perception by city, socio-economic status, age and how strongly they identify as *Aboriginal*.

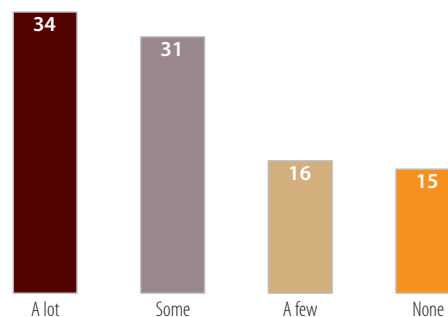
When asked, more than six in ten urban Aboriginal peoples say there are either a lot (34%) or some (31%) Aboriginal cultural activities available in their community. Fewer UAPS participants say there are only a few (16%) or no (15%) activities available to them, while four per cent cannot say how many Aboriginal cultural activities are available in their community.

Overall, First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit differ little in the number of Aboriginal cultural activities they think are available in their community. First Nations peoples (38%) and Inuit (35%) are somewhat more likely than Métis (29%) to say there are *a lot* of Aboriginal cultural activities available, but similar proportions say there are *some* activities available in their community.

More significant differences in the perception of the availability of Aboriginal cultural activities are evident among urban Aboriginal peoples across cities. By a sizeable margin, Aboriginal peoples in Toronto (80%), Thunder Bay (75%), Vancouver (75%) and Halifax (75%) are most likely to think there are at least some Aboriginal cultural activities available in their community. In contrast, Aboriginal peoples in cities such as Calgary (57%), Winnipeg (61%), Regina (61%) and Saskatoon (60%) are much less likely to share this view. Aboriginal people in Montreal (49%) are least likely to say there are at least some Aboriginal cultural activities available in their community.

Aboriginal cultural activities available in your community

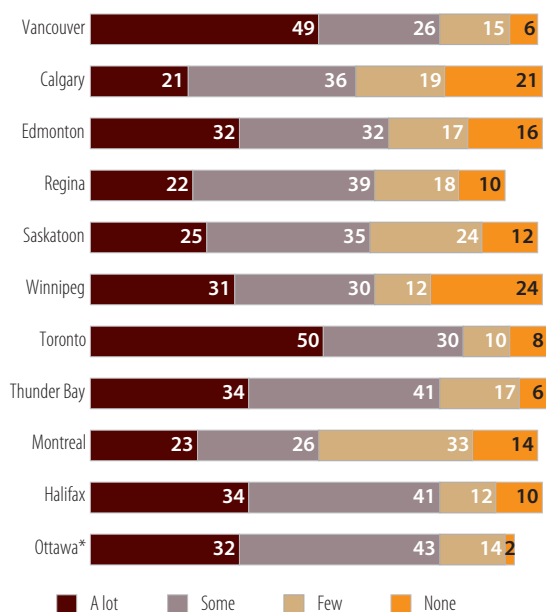
Are there any, a lot, some, a few or no Aboriginal cultural activities available in your community?



More educated and affluent urban Aboriginal peoples display greater awareness of Aboriginal cultural activities in their cities. Specifically, individuals with a university degree and those with incomes between \$30,000 and \$80,000 are more likely than others to say there are at least some Aboriginal cultural activities in their community.

Aboriginal cultural activities available in your community, by city

Are there any, a lot, some, a few or no Aboriginal cultural activities available in your community?



* Inuit only
 Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to those who said they don't know, or chose not to answer the question

Furthermore, just as a sense of Aboriginal identity is less evident among urban Aboriginal youth (see previous chapter on Urban Aboriginal Identity), so, too, do youth appear to be less aware of the cultural activities that may contribute to a sense of collective identity among urban Aboriginal peoples. Older urban Aboriginal peoples are more likely than youth to say there are Aboriginal cultural activities in their community (70% of those aged 45 and older say there are at least some activities available in their community, compared to 65% of those aged 25-44 and 56% of those aged 18-24).

Finally, awareness of Aboriginal cultural activities is clearly higher among individuals who strongly identify as *Aboriginal*. Those who know their family tree very well and those who feel the community they belong to is *Aboriginal* (or equally *Aboriginal* and *non-Aboriginal*) are more likely than average to say there are *a lot* of Aboriginal cultural activities in their community.

Frequency of participation in cultural activities

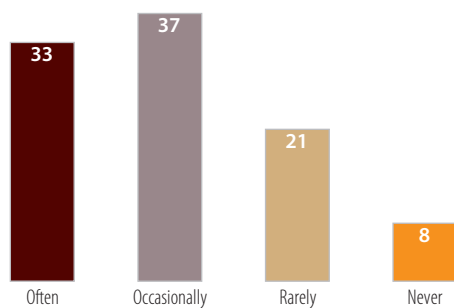
Majorities of Aboriginal peoples participate in cultural activities in their city, with the exception of youth.

While *UAPS* data do not permit investigation of the specific types of Aboriginal cultural activities urban Aboriginal peoples participate in, the survey did ask participants *how often* they participate in these activities. First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit all regularly participate in Aboriginal cultural activities in their community, although participation varies according to the availability of the opportunities within a given city. Nonetheless, even in those cities where opportunities are more limited, majorities indicate they participate in Aboriginal cultural activities at least occasionally.

Among those urban Aboriginal peoples who say they have Aboriginal cultural activities available in their community, a majority say they participate in them at least occasionally. Seven in ten say they often (33%) or occasionally (37%) participate in these activities. Only three in ten indicate they rarely (21%) or never (8%) participate in Aboriginal cultural activities in their communities.

Frequency of participation in cultural activities*

How often do you personally participate in these Aboriginal cultural activities?



*Subsample: Those who have Aboriginal cultural activities available in their community.

Inuit, Métis and First Nations peoples participate in Aboriginal cultural activities with similar frequency. However, urban Aboriginal peoples in Toronto (82%), Halifax (81%) and Vancouver (77%), those cities where residents are most likely to say there are Aboriginal cultural activities available in their community, are more likely than others to participate at least occasionally in these activities. That said, at least six in ten Aboriginal peoples in all other cities say they participate at least occasionally in Aboriginal cultural activities.

Frequency of participation in Aboriginal cultural activities also varies somewhat by annual household income and how strongly urban Aboriginal peoples identify as *Aboriginal*. The more affluent (i.e., \$30,000- \$80,000) are more likely than others

to say they *often* participate in Aboriginal cultural activities, although this is less apparent among those with the highest household incomes (i.e., \$80,000+). Participation in Aboriginal cultural activities also rises with knowledge of one's family tree, from six in ten of those who do not know their family tree to eight in ten of those who know their family tree very well.

Notwithstanding these differences, majorities still indicate they participate in Aboriginal cultural activities. Even among those urban Aboriginal peoples who feel they belong to a largely *non-Aboriginal* community, six in ten (62%) say they at least occasionally participate in Aboriginal cultural activities.

Urban Aboriginal peoples' participation in Aboriginal cultural activities varies most dramatically by age. Once again, youth are least likely to say they participate in these activities. One in two (52%) of those aged 18 to 24 say they participate at least occasionally, compared to two-thirds (67%) of those aged 25 to 44 and more than eight in ten (84%) of those 45 years and older. A small, but significant, minority (15%) of youth say they *never* participate in Aboriginal cultural activities.

Strength of Aboriginal culture

Urban Aboriginal peoples display a strong sense of cultural vitality, especially in Vancouver and Toronto.

By a ratio of six to one, First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit are more likely to think that Aboriginal culture in their city has become stronger than weaker in the last five years.

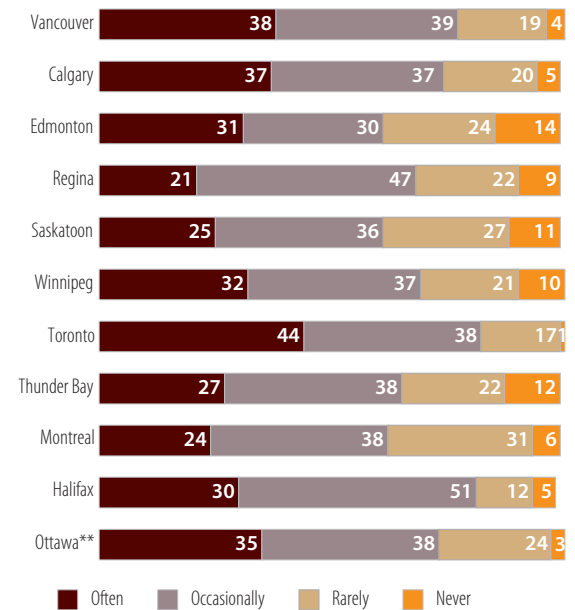
Overall, more than one in two (54%) urban Aboriginal peoples think that Aboriginal culture in their community has become stronger in the last five years. The remainder say it either has not changed (28%) or has become weaker (9%), while another one in ten (9%) cannot offer an opinion on Aboriginal culture in their city in the last five years.

Equal proportions of First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit think that Aboriginal culture in their community has become stronger. But, Aboriginal peoples in Toronto (70%) and Vancouver (70%) are considerably more likely than those in other cities to think that Aboriginal culture in their community has become stronger in the last five years, which likely explains the higher proportion of residents in these cities who say there are Aboriginal cultural activities available in their community. In most other cities, somewhat higher proportions think that Aboriginal culture has not changed; few think it has become weaker.

Likely by virtue of their greater awareness of Aboriginal cultural activities in their community and their higher rates of participation, older urban Aboriginal peoples are more likely than others to think that Aboriginal culture in their community has become stronger in the last five years. Youth (18-24) are most likely among all urban Aboriginal peoples to think the status quo prevails.

Frequency of participation in cultural activities,* by city

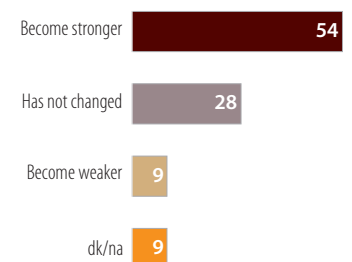
How often do you personally participate in these Aboriginal cultural activities?



* Subsample: Those who have Aboriginal cultural activities available in their community.
 ** Inuit only

Strength of Aboriginal culture

In the last five years, do you think that Aboriginal culture in your community has become stronger, become weaker or has not changed?



2. Maintaining Aboriginal cultural identity

Most important aspects of Aboriginal culture to be passed on

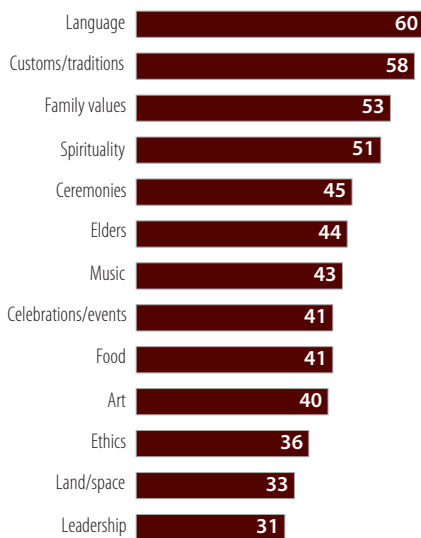
Urban Aboriginal peoples, particularly First Nations peoples and Inuit, feel language, and Aboriginal customs and traditions are the most important aspects of Aboriginal culture to be passed on to future generations.

Urban Aboriginal peoples believe there are numerous aspects of Aboriginal culture that should be passed on to future generations – but feel Aboriginal languages, and Aboriginal customs and traditions are the most important.

Most important aspects of Aboriginal culture to pass to next generation

In your opinion, what aspects of Aboriginal culture are most important to be passed on to your children or grandchildren, or to the next generation?

Top mentions



When asked what aspects of Aboriginal culture are most important to be passed on to their children or grandchildren, or to the next generation (unprompted, without response options offered), six in ten urban Aboriginal peoples say language (60%), and Aboriginal customs and traditions (58%). Considerable proportions of urban Aboriginal peoples also feel family values (53%), Aboriginal spirituality (51%), ceremonies (45%), Elders (44%), music (43%), Aboriginal celebrations and events (41%), food (41%) and art (40%) are important aspects of Aboriginal culture to be passed on to their children or grandchildren, or to the next generation. Smaller groups of urban Aboriginal peoples also mention Aboriginal ethics (36%), connection to the land (33%) and leadership (31%), as important aspects of Aboriginal culture to be passed on to the next generation.

Smaller proportions of UAPS participants (6% or fewer) also mention Aboriginal history, respect for others, Aboriginal medicines and healing practices, respect for nature and wildlife, and treaty rights, among others, as important aspects of Aboriginal culture to be passed on.

First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit differ in some meaningful ways in terms of what they feel to be the most important aspects of Aboriginal culture to be passed on to future generations. Most notably, Inuit (82%) and status First Nations peoples (73%) are much more likely than Métis (48%) and non-status

First Nations peoples (47%) to think Aboriginal languages are the most important aspect of Aboriginal culture to be passed on. This difference likely reflects the fact that status First Nations peoples and Inuit are more likely than non-status First Nations peoples and Métis to speak an Aboriginal language.³⁵ In addition, Inuit and First Nations peoples are more likely than Métis to think Aboriginal customs and traditions, and Elders are the most important aspects of Aboriginal culture to be passed on. First Nations peoples are also more likely than Inuit and Métis to emphasize the importance of Aboriginal spirituality and ceremonies to future generations.

Where one lives also influences urban Aboriginal peoples' opinions of what aspects of Aboriginal culture should be passed on. Perhaps driven by the greater availability of Aboriginal cultural activities in Vancouver and Toronto, individuals in these cities (including First Nations peoples and Métis in Toronto) are most likely among urban Aboriginal peoples to feel Aboriginal languages, customs and traditions, spirituality, ceremonies, Elders, celebrations and events, in addition to several other aspects of Aboriginal culture cited by UAPS participants, should be passed on to future generations.

35 Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations, 2006 Census, Statistics Canada.

Language is also a priority in Halifax. A large majority of eight in ten in this city think language is the aspect of Aboriginal culture most important to be passed on to their children and grandchildren. This finding may in part be the result of Aboriginal Languages Initiatives underway in Nova Scotia to preserve the predominant Aboriginal language spoken in the province, Mi'kmaq.

Aboriginal spirituality

Aboriginal spirituality is important to majorities of urban Aboriginal peoples, but has greater significance among First Nations and Inuit.

There are very little data that identify the extent to which First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit practice and maintain their spirituality, particularly traditional and Aboriginal forms of spiritual practice.³⁶ In order to better understand this aspect of urban Aboriginal peoples' lives, the survey asked UAPS participants how important *Aboriginal* spirituality is in their lives. UAPS data show Aboriginal spiritual practices and traditions clearly have an important place in their lives, especially among First Nations peoples and Inuit.

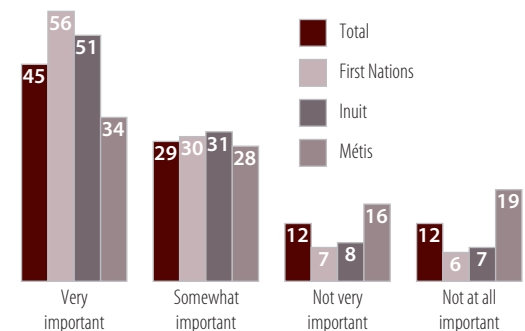
When asked, majorities of First Nations, Métis and Inuit say Aboriginal spirituality is important in their lives. Three-quarters say it is very important (45%) or somewhat important (29%) in their lives. Only one-quarter say Aboriginal spirituality is either not very (12%) or not at all (12%) important to them. However, First Nations peoples (56%) and Inuit (51%) are much more likely than Métis (34%) to feel Aboriginal spirituality is very important (similar proportions think it is somewhat important in their lives).

Similar proportions of Aboriginal peoples across cities feel Aboriginal spirituality is important in their lives, but this feeling is significantly stronger among First Nations peoples and Métis living in Toronto and Vancouver. Aboriginal spirituality is also of greater significance to older urban Aboriginal peoples. Individuals aged 45 or older are much more likely to feel it is very important in their lives (58% versus 43% of those aged 25-44 and 28% of those aged 18-24). One-third of Aboriginal youth in cities feel Aboriginal spirituality is not very or not at all important in their lives.

Interestingly, the importance of Aboriginal spirituality in the lives of urban Aboriginal peoples varies little by level of education or household income, but does appear to be somewhat influenced by place of birth: those not born and raised in their city of residence (48%) are more likely than those who are (38%) to feel Aboriginal spirituality is very important. This may be due to the fact that "first generation" urban Aboriginal peoples tend to be older and, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, older individuals are more likely to feel Aboriginal spirituality is important in their lives. But, it may also suggest that Aboriginal spiritual practices and traditions help some Aboriginal peoples maintain connections to their home communities and communities of origin.

Finally, Aboriginal spirituality is of greater importance to those who know their family tree very well (59% very important versus 29% of those who know their family tree not at all).

Importance of Aboriginal spirituality, by identity
How important is Aboriginal spirituality in your life?



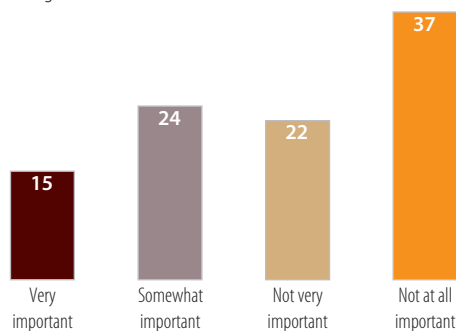
36 The Canadian Council on Learning, *The State of Aboriginal Learning in Canada: A Holistic Approach to Measuring Success*, 2009, p.29.

Importance of choosing partners with the same cultural background

Métis and non-status First Nations peoples largely reject the notion that Aboriginal people should choose partners with the same cultural background as their own, but status First Nations peoples and Inuit are more divided.

Importance of choosing partners from same cultural background

And in your view, how important is it that Aboriginal people choose partners with the same cultural background as their own?



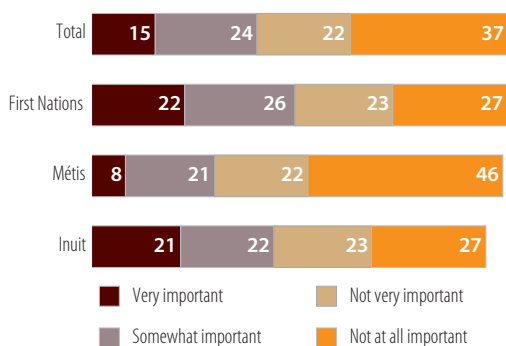
Overall, a majority of urban Aboriginal peoples think choosing spousal partners with the same cultural background is *not* important. However, status First Nations peoples and Inuit are more divided than others on its importance, as are older urban Aboriginal peoples.

When asked how important it is that Aboriginal people choose partners with the same cultural background as their own, four in ten feel it is either very (15%) or somewhat (24%) important to them. A larger proportion of urban Aboriginal peoples feel choosing partners from the same cultural background is either not very (22%) or not at all (37%) important to them.

However, status First Nations peoples and Inuit are more likely than Métis and non-status First Nations peoples to think choosing partners with the same cultural background as their own are important. Half (48%) of status First Nations peoples, followed by Inuit (43%), think choosing partners with the same cultural background is at least somewhat important, compared to three in ten Métis (29%) and non-status First Nations peoples (33%). Almost half of the latter two groups think choosing partners with the same cultural background is *not at all* important.

Importance of choosing partners from same cultural background, by identity group

And in your view, how important is it that Aboriginal people choose partners with the same cultural background as their own?



Age and sense of belonging to an *Aboriginal* versus *non-Aboriginal* community also influence urban Aboriginal peoples' views on this topic. The importance of choosing partners with the same cultural background steadily rises with age (from 29% of those 18-24 years of age to 46% of those aged 45 and older). As well, urban Aboriginal peoples who belong to a mostly *Aboriginal* community are much more likely than others to think choosing partners with the same cultural background as one's own is important, as do those who know their family tree well, albeit not to the same extent.

Finally, urban Aboriginal peoples' views on the importance of choosing partners with the same cultural background also differ somewhat by household income (but not by level of education). Roughly four in ten urban Aboriginal peoples with household incomes of less than \$60,000 think choosing partners with the same cultural background is important, but this drops to three in ten or fewer of those with household incomes of \$60,000 or more.

Attitudes towards protecting cultural traditions

Urban Aboriginal peoples feel strongly that they have to take steps to protect their cultural traditions from outside influences, but this view is less evident among youth.

Many UAPS participants agree that Aboriginal peoples have to take steps to protect their cultural traditions from outside influences. Using data from the non-Aboriginal survey of UAPS, a comparison also shows urban Aboriginal peoples are much more likely to feel these steps are necessary compared to non-Aboriginal urban residents, who are less likely to feel they need to take steps to protect their own cultural traditions.

Eight in ten urban Aboriginal peoples totally (57%) or somewhat (25%) agree that Aboriginal peoples have to take steps to protect their cultural traditions from outside influences. Only a handful disagree somewhat (9%) or totally disagree (6%) with this idea.

First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit feel similarly that Aboriginal peoples need to take steps to protect their cultural traditions from outside influences. This view is also generally consistent across socio-demographic groups, as it is among individuals who strongly identify as Aboriginal and those who do not – although it is more predominant among those who live in a mostly Aboriginal community.

However, Aboriginal peoples in Halifax (71%) and Toronto (69%) are somewhat more likely than those in other cities to *totally* agree that they need to take steps to protect their cultural traditions from outside influences.

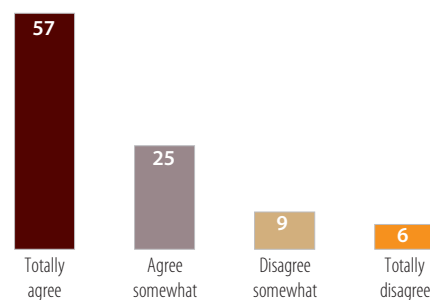
Urban Aboriginal peoples' belief that they need to take steps to protect their cultural traditions varies most by age. While youth agree Aboriginal peoples need to take steps to protect cultural traditions, they are less likely to *totally* agree that this is necessary. Among those aged 18 to 24, just over four in ten (44%) *totally* agree Aboriginal peoples need to take steps to protect their cultural traditions from outside influences, compared to seven in ten (69%) of those aged 45 and older.

ABORIGINAL VERSUS NON-ABORIGINAL PERCEPTIONS. Overall, non-Aboriginal urban peoples' attitude towards their own cultural traditions is quite different from that of urban Aboriginal peoples. Data available from the non-Aboriginal survey of UAPS shows only a third (34%) of participants feel strongly that they have to take steps to protect their own cultural traditions from outside influences – considerably fewer compared to urban Aboriginal peoples.

While not as pronounced as it is among urban Aboriginal peoples, some groups of non-Aboriginal people express a stronger need than others to protect their cultural traditions from outside influence. Across cities, this sentiment is strongest among those in Montreal (45%) and Thunder Bay (41%). Individuals born in Canada are also more likely than others to feel steps are necessary (36% *totally* agree they have to take steps to protect their own cultural traditions from outside influences, compared to 26% of those individuals born outside Canada), as are those with less formal education (individuals with only a high school diploma are twice as likely as those with a university degree to *totally* agree they have to take steps).

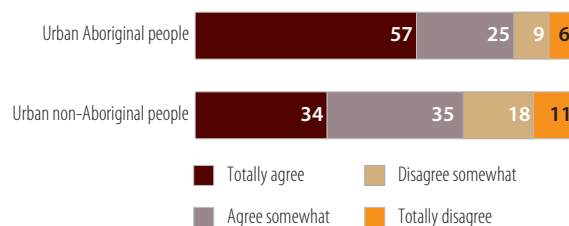
Have to take steps to protect cultural traditions from outside influences

"We have to take steps to protect our cultural traditions from outside influences."



Have to take steps to protect cultural traditions from outside influences

Do you totally agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat or totally disagree with the following statement: "We have to take steps to protect our cultural traditions from outside influences."



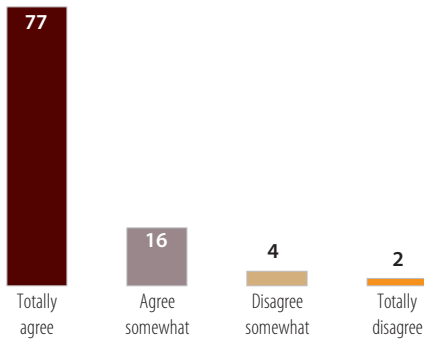
Attitudes towards other languages and cultures

Urban Aboriginal peoples are strongly accepting of other languages and cultures, and much more so than non-Aboriginal urban peoples.

Although there is broad agreement that steps must be taken to protect their cultural traditions from outside influence, nine in ten First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit either totally (77%) or somewhat (16%) agree that Canada is a country where there is room for a variety of languages and cultures.

There is room for a variety of languages and cultures in this country

Do you totally agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat or totally disagree with the following statement: "There is room for a variety of languages and cultures in this country."



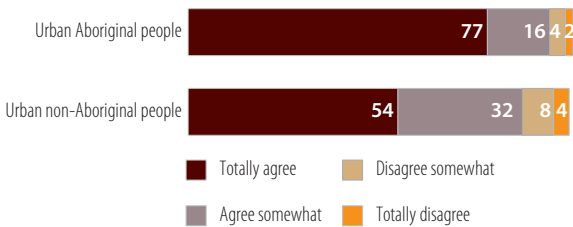
Similar proportions of Aboriginal peoples across cities hold this view. The one exception is Calgary, where residents appear more ambivalent in their attitudes towards other languages and cultures compared to those in other cities (just over one-half totally agree there is room for a variety of languages and cultures, compared to three-quarters or more of those in other cities).

Urban Aboriginal peoples' attitudes towards other languages and cultures do not vary substantially by other socio-demographic factors.

ABORIGINAL VERSUS NON-ABORIGINAL PERCEPTIONS. Notably, urban Aboriginal peoples express a much greater degree of tolerance for other languages and cultures in comparison with non-Aboriginal people. Using data available from the non-Aboriginal survey of *UAPS*, urban Aboriginal peoples (77%) are much more likely than non-Aboriginal people (54%) to *totally* agree there is room for a variety of languages and cultures in Canada.

There is room for a variety of languages and cultures in this country

Do you totally agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat or totally disagree with the following statement: "There is room for a variety of languages and cultures in this country."



Still, some groups of non-Aboriginal people display greater acceptance, chiefly younger individuals (67% of those aged 18-29 totally agree there is room for a variety of languages and cultures, compared to 44% of those aged 60 and older) and those with a university degree. Interestingly, birthplace does not appear to influence non-Aboriginal peoples' perceptions: similar proportions of those born in Canada (53%) and those born outside Canada (59%) totally agree there is room for a variety of languages and cultures in the country.

3. Concern over losing cultural identity

A majority of urban Aboriginal peoples do not express much concern about losing their cultural identity, but First Nations peoples and Inuit are more divided.

As the previous results demonstrate, urban Aboriginal peoples display a pro-active stance towards protecting their cultural traditions, while at the same time showing a high tolerance for other languages and cultures. Perhaps by virtue of this perspective, only a minority of urban Aboriginal peoples express concern about losing their cultural identity, with the division of opinion being remarkably parallel to that of non-Aboriginal people.

When posed with the statement “I am concerned about losing my cultural identity,” a majority of urban Aboriginal peoples disagree. Six in ten totally disagree (39%) or disagree somewhat (21%) that they are concerned about losing their cultural identity. Smaller proportions agree somewhat (21%) or totally agree (17%) with this statement.

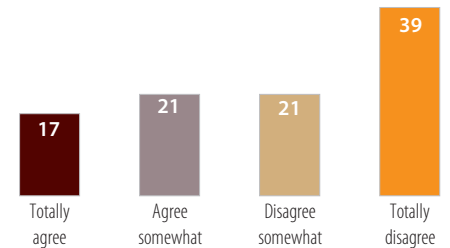
Who is concerned about losing their cultural identity? Status First Nations peoples and Inuit, albeit still minorities, are more likely than others to express concern about losing their cultural identity – they are twice as likely as Métis and non-status First Nations peoples to feel a strong sense of concern about this. However, this concern is somewhat offset by knowledge of family history, as urban Aboriginal peoples who know their family tree very well express less concern than others about losing their cultural identity (48% totally disagree, compared to one-third of those who know their family tree not well or not at all). Those who often participate in Aboriginal cultural activities are also less likely than others to express concern about losing their cultural identity.

ABORIGINAL VERSUS NON-ABORIGINAL PERCEPTIONS. Notably, urban Aboriginal peoples are no more concerned about losing their cultural identity than are non-Aboriginal peoples. Equal proportions of non-Aboriginal urban Canadians and urban Aboriginal peoples say they either totally disagree or disagree somewhat with the statement “I am concerned about losing my cultural identity.”

Non-Aboriginal Canadians differ little in the degree to which they are concerned about losing their cultural identity. The two exceptions are Montrealers (43%), who are much more likely than other non-Aboriginal participants to express strong concern about losing their cultural identity. Also, remarkably, individuals born in Canada (22%) are twice as likely as those born outside Canada (12%) to *totally* agree they are concerned about losing their cultural identity.

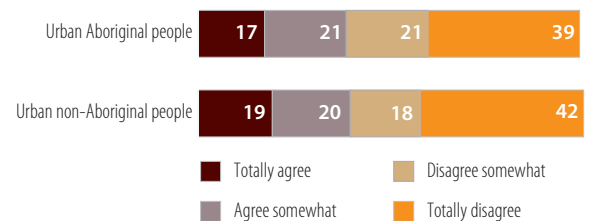
Concern over losing cultural identity

Do you totally agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat or totally disagree with the following statement: “I am concerned about losing my cultural identity.”



Concern over losing cultural identity

Do you totally agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat or totally disagree with the following statement: “I am concerned about losing my cultural identity.”



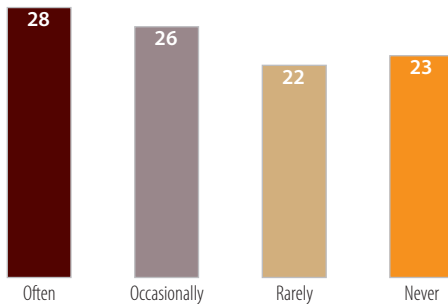
4. Experiences with Aboriginal services and organizations

Frequency of use of urban Aboriginal services and organizations

Half of urban Aboriginal peoples use and rely at least occasionally on Aboriginal services and organizations in their city, rising to seven in ten Inuit.

Use of Aboriginal services or organizations

How often do you use or rely on Aboriginal services or organizations in [your city]?



Many Aboriginal services and organizations promote culture and identity for urban Aboriginal peoples through their types of services, the events they sponsor, and simply through their existence as Aboriginal organizations in the city. The *UAPS* survey asked participants how often, and why, they use these services and organizations, and to identify which ones they find most useful.

Urban Aboriginal peoples divide among those who use and do not use Aboriginal services and organizations in their city, with use most common among First Nations peoples and Inuit, and among those who live in Vancouver and Toronto.

Just over one-half of urban Aboriginal peoples often (28%) or occasionally (26%) use or rely on Aboriginal services or organizations in their city. Just under one-half of urban Aboriginal peoples either rarely (22%) or never (23%) use or rely on such services or organizations.

Who among urban Aboriginal peoples make the greatest use of Aboriginal services and organizations in their city? Inuit (71%) are most likely to occasionally or often use and rely on these services and organizations, followed by First Nations peoples (59%) and Métis (48%). Use is also more common among Aboriginal peoples in Toronto and Vancouver, those cities already noted for their greater availability of Aboriginal cultural activities. Across cities, residents of Regina (40%) are least likely to use or rely on Aboriginal services and organizations in their city.

Frequent use of Aboriginal services and organizations is also more common among Aboriginal peoples aged 45 years and older, and those less affluent (use of these services and organizations steadily declines as household income increases).

Finally, Aboriginal services and organizations are equally important to similar proportions of those new to their city (i.e., those who arrived in their city within the last two years) and long-time residents (i.e., those who arrived in their city 20 or more years ago).

Reasons for use

Aboriginal services and organizations clearly help some individuals make significant choices about their cultural, economic and social life – and, for some, sustain a sense of collective identity in their city.

Beyond how often they use and rely on Aboriginal services and organizations, the *UAPS* survey explored why some use them more regularly than others (unprompted, without response options offered).

Among those who use Aboriginal services and organizations regularly, *UAPS* participants emphasize the value of the health, employment and educational resources they offer, along with their positive environments.

WHY THEY USE ABORIGINAL SERVICES. When asked why they use Aboriginal services and organizations, those who use them regularly (i.e., often or occasionally – 54% of *UAPS* participants overall) do so largely for the specific resources and positive environment they are seen to offer. Some of these reasons are illustrated in verbatim comments in the sidebar on this page. Specifically:

- **Specific resources.** This is the most common reason why urban Aboriginal peoples (45%) use or rely on Aboriginal services and organizations. Programs and social services, health supports, and education and employment services are most typically the types of resources they describe using. Notably, those aged 18 to 24 (55%), followed by those aged 25 to 44 (48%), are more likely than those aged 45 and older (37%) to use Aboriginal services and organizations for this reason.
- **Positive environment.** Similar proportions of those who use Aboriginal services and organizations regularly also cite their positive environment (38%), whether it be the personal relationships, supportive community and/or the connection to Aboriginal culture, sharing circles and Elders that they offer. These features are particularly important for those who *often* use Aboriginal services and organizations.
- **Employee/volunteer.** A small group of *UAPS* participants (14%) also use Aboriginal services and organizations because they are either employed by them, or volunteer their time and services.

Smaller proportions of *UAPS* participants (12% or fewer), mention other reasons for using Aboriginal services and organizations. These typically reflect a lack of need or efforts among those who use them only occasionally to not rely on them too often.

Why urban Aboriginal peoples use and rely on Aboriginal services and organizations:

I am still new here. I want to get to know the Aboriginal community better so I have involved myself with an Aboriginal Women's Professional Association to be part of a larger circuit. I may be more involved when I develop more contacts.

Because they help me to achieve projects that I'm working on. And it's also for community development, striving for a better community and staying connected. I've found strengths in them as an Aboriginal person seeking truths, development and balance.

Without their services and support, it would be hard to adjust in the city. They provide a sense of community.

Why do I use them? Sometimes I need a blanket, a clean pair of socks, something to eat or for coffee, or for taking a shower. The friendship centre knows the kind of needs I have.

I just feel more comfortable with Aboriginal services. I don't feel as judged. I feel that I don't have to be ashamed about being Aboriginal. I feel that it is easier for me to talk about my problems because they know about my background and my culture.

Why urban Aboriginal peoples do not use and rely on Aboriginal services and organizations:

Just because I'm independent. I feel that there are too many handouts. I just feel like everyone can help. I just don't feel that it has to be Aboriginal-based.

I don't really rely on the Aboriginal services, but I am really happy that they are there for me when it comes to using them for school.

Because I've never been on unemployment, had troubles with rent or had family difficulties. There's not been a need.

Because I'm independent. My goal is to not be dependent on any system. To me, that is a form of government control.

I don't know what is out there and at the same [time] think that I do not need them that much. I think I can fairly rely on myself in that respect. Also, when it comes to certain services, I am reluctant to use them on the basis [that] I am Aboriginal. If I am to use a service, I prefer to be entitled to it on my own merit than exclusively based on my background.

Some organizations I don't know about. I moved from Ottawa. Many of them catered towards people in the Downtown Eastside. I'm not in that situation.

There is no information about where to go to get services.

WHY THEY DON'T USE ABORIGINAL SERVICES. Those who rarely or never use Aboriginal services and organizations (representing 45% of UAPS participants overall) typically indicate they have no need for them (49%). Smaller groups do not use them either because they are personally unaware of the services and organizations available in their city (14%), or feel they are unhelpful (10%). Some of these reasons are illustrated in verbatim comments in the sidebar on this page.

Most useful Aboriginal services and organizations

Urban Aboriginal peoples value a variety of Aboriginal services and organizations, particularly friendship centres.

Among those who have used or relied on Aboriginal services or organizations in their city at one time, which ones have they found particularly useful?

Urban Aboriginal peoples value a wide range of Aboriginal services and organizations, but first and foremost name friendship centres (42%), followed by employment centres (37%).

Others note the importance of Aboriginal services and organizations, such as health centres (25%), counselling centres (19%), housing services (18%) and healing centres (16%). Some urban Aboriginal peoples also find child and family services (15%), Aboriginal youth centres (14%), Aboriginal legal services (12%), and Aboriginal educational and scholarship programs (10%) to be useful.

Smaller proportions of *UAPS* participants (less than 10%) mention several other services and organizations, including AHRDA (Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement holder), specific Métis or First Nations associations, women's centres, spiritual services, and arts and music services as particularly useful.

Inuit (55%) and non-status First Nations peoples (56%) are somewhat more likely than status First Nations peoples (43%) and Métis (39%) to value friendship centres in their cities, but similar proportions find employment centres and counselling centres particularly useful. First Nations peoples and Inuit are twice as likely as Métis to value health centres, housing services, and child and family services. Notably, non-status First Nations peoples (30%) are much more likely than others to have found healing centres to be particularly useful.

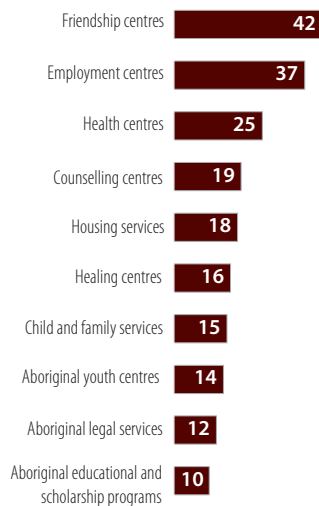
Urban Aboriginal peoples' attitudes towards the usefulness of particular Aboriginal services and organizations are shaped in part by the availability of these services and organizations in their city. While examining the correlation between availability and perceptions of value is beyond the scope of this study, *UAPS* data show the following variations in urban Aboriginal peoples' perceptions of specific types of Aboriginal organizations and services across cities:

- Aboriginal peoples in Halifax are much more likely than those in other cities to find friendship centres particularly useful, followed by those in Montreal and Vancouver.
- Employment centres are of somewhat greater value to Aboriginal peoples in Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary and Regina.
- Six in ten Aboriginal peoples in Toronto find health centres particularly useful.
- Aboriginal peoples in Regina are twice as likely as average to find housing services particularly useful.
- Aboriginal peoples in Vancouver are most likely to have found Aboriginal youth centres particularly useful.
- Aboriginal peoples in Toronto are much more likely than those in other cities to value child and family services, and Aboriginal legal services.

Most useful Aboriginal services and organizations*

What kinds of Aboriginal services or organizations have you found to be particularly useful?

Top mentions



*Subsample: Those who have used Aboriginal services in their city.