

IV. Urban Aboriginal Identity

Overview

One of the reasons cited in existing research for the increased tendency of people to identify as Aboriginal (a major factor in the substantial increases in urban Aboriginal populations between 1981 and 2006²⁵) is that contemporary urban Aboriginal peoples, in particular, are more positive about their Aboriginal identity than at any time in the past.²⁶

Key aspects of Aboriginal identity considered in this chapter include knowledge of family history, pride in Aboriginal and Canadian identities, community belonging, and the continuing intergenerational effects of “colonial projects” upon the identities of Aboriginal peoples in Canadian cities, namely Indian residential schools. How these aspects of urban Aboriginal identity vary socio-demographically is also explored. Other critical aspects of identity, such as participation in urban Aboriginal cultures, and urban Aboriginal peoples’ perceptions of and experiences with non-Aboriginal people, are addressed in subsequent chapters.

The following points summarize the main findings around urban Aboriginal identity:

- **First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit in urban centres maintain great reverence for their heritage and express strong Indigenous pride.** As one survey respondent noted, “You have to know where you’re coming from to know where you’re going,” capturing the perspective of majorities of urban Aboriginal peoples when asked to describe the importance of knowing their Aboriginal ancestry. Few say they ever downplay or hide their Aboriginal identity, particularly their identity as a First Nations person, Métis or Inuk.
- **Education is a critical channel for learning about one’s Aboriginal identity.** Urban Aboriginal peoples with a college or university level education are more likely than others to say they have a greater knowledge of their Aboriginal heritage, and believe this knowledge has contributed positively to their lives. Individuals without any formal education are among those most likely to say they have had *no* opportunity to learn about their family tree.
- **Furthermore, knowledge of one’s family tree is strongly linked to other aspects of Aboriginal identity.** Those who know their family tree well are more likely than others to feel a strong sense of connection to other Aboriginal peoples in their city, and to be very proud of their *First Nations/ Métis/Inuk* and *Aboriginal* identities.
- **A majority of youth are very proud of their Aboriginal identity.** Although they are less likely to have some knowledge of their family tree and feel a connection to other Aboriginal peoples in their city, three-quarters of Aboriginal youth (18-24) express a strong sense of pride in their *First Nations/ Métis/Inuk* identity.
- **Urban Aboriginal peoples are as likely to feel they belong to an Aboriginal as a non-Aboriginal community in their cities.** More than six in ten say they belong to a mostly Aboriginal or equally Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community. This sensibility is particularly strong among First Nations peoples and Inuit, but appears true for Métis in some cities as well.
- **Urban Aboriginal “community” is also a product of unique city environments.** Aboriginal communities in urban areas are not simply transplanted non-urban communities. The importance to urban Aboriginal peoples of particular community ties differ somewhat across cities, suggesting their sense of identity and community also develop in tandem with unique features of the city around them.

25 Statistics Canada.

26 Craig Proulx, “Aboriginal Identification in North America Cities,” *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 2006:26:2, p.405.

- **Having many Aboriginal friends coincides with having many non-Aboriginal friends.** *UAPS* participants with many Aboriginal friends are just as likely as those with *no* close Aboriginal friends to have many non-Aboriginal friends. Among those who do not have many non-Aboriginal friends, almost six in ten say they would like more.
- **Finally, the legacy and effects of Indian residential schools persist among urban Aboriginal peoples.** *UAPS* data show majorities of urban Aboriginal peoples across cities have been affected by Indian residential schools; the belief that this experience has had at least some impact in shaping their life and who they are today is widespread.

The following paragraphs elaborate upon aspects of urban Aboriginal identity among First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit.

First Nations

Majorities of First Nations peoples know their family tree well, but *status* First Nations peoples are much more likely to know their family history than non-status First Nations peoples. Nonetheless, status and non-status First Nations are similarly proud of their identity as a First Nations person. Indeed, First Nations peoples are more likely to be very proud to be *First Nations* and *Aboriginal* than *Canadian*, although nearly two-thirds are very proud to be Canadian.

Maintaining a connection to members of their own First Nation and other First Nations in their city is important to majorities of First Nations residents in cities.

First Nations peoples define their community primarily as family and friends. They are more likely to feel they belong to an *Aboriginal* than *non-Aboriginal* community, although this is not true for non-status First Nations peoples, who are more likely to feel they belong to a *non-Aboriginal* community.

Métis

Majorities of Métis know their family tree at least fairly well, but their knowledge varies considerably across cities, with a particularly strong sense of family heritage evident among Métis in Edmonton. Métis in Toronto stand out from those in other cities for the sense of self-awareness and confidence they say they gain from knowing their family tree well.

Métis are equally very proud to be *Métis* and *Canadian*, and less likely to be very proud to be *Aboriginal*, although seven in ten are very proud of this latter identity. Nonetheless, Métis are clearly more ambivalent of their pride in being *Aboriginal* than *Métis* and *Canadian*, as a small but significant proportion of Métis are either unable or unwilling to say how proud they are to be *Aboriginal*. This is most evident in Winnipeg, within the centre of the Métis Nation Homeland, where two in ten Métis participants are unable or unwilling to say how proud they are to be *Aboriginal*.

In general, Métis living in Canadian cities are more likely to feel they belong to an equally Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, or mostly non-Aboriginal, community.

Inuit

Inuit are more likely than First Nations or Métis to know their Aboriginal ancestry/background well, and derive a great sense of pride from this knowledge. Inuit are more likely to be very proud to be *Inuk* than *Aboriginal* and *Canadian*, although more than two-thirds are very proud of both these latter identities. Nonetheless, one-quarter of *UAPS* participants in Ottawa (where the *UAPS* surveyed Inuit only) are either unable or unwilling to say how proud they are to be *Aboriginal*, and two in ten are unable or unwilling to say how proud they are to be *Canadian*.

However, their strong connection to their Inuk heritage does not preclude a sense of connection to other Aboriginal peoples. Indeed, Inuit are most likely among urban Aboriginal peoples to have a sense of connection with other Inuit *and* other Aboriginal groups in their city.

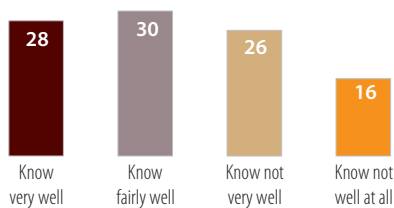
1. Knowledge of Aboriginal ancestry

Knowledge of family tree

Majorities of urban Aboriginal peoples have at least some knowledge of their Aboriginal ancestry, particularly those who are older and university-educated.

Extent of knowledge of family tree

How well do you know your family tree, that is, who your Aboriginal ancestors are?



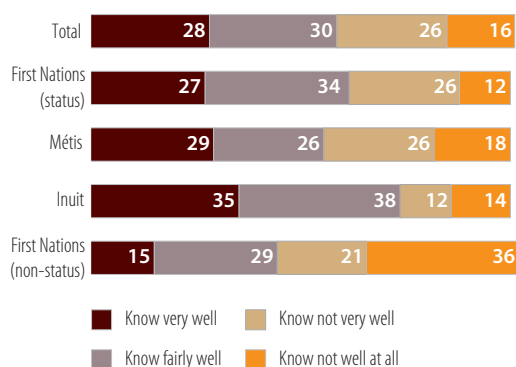
In order to better understand Aboriginal identity in Canadian cities, the *UAPS* survey included several questions that asked participants how well they know their family tree (i.e., who their Aboriginal ancestors are) and what this knowledge means to them in their daily lives.

How well do urban Aboriginal peoples know their family tree? Majorities of urban Aboriginal peoples say they know their family tree (i.e., who their Aboriginal ancestors are) well. Six in ten urban Aboriginal peoples know their family tree very well (28%) or fairly well (30%). Fewer say they know their family tree not very well (26%) or not well at all (16%).

Inuit are more likely than First Nations peoples and Métis to say they know their family tree at least fairly well. In addition, among First Nations peoples, status First Nations (61%) are more likely than non-status First Nations (44%) to say they know their family tree at least fairly well.

Extent of knowledge of family tree, by identity group

How well do you know your family tree, that is, who your Aboriginal ancestors are?



Knowledge of one's family tree varies little by city. The two exceptions are Halifax (72%) and Vancouver (69%), where residents are more likely than those in other cities to say they know their family tree well. In both of these cities, First Nations peoples are notably more likely than Métis to say they know their family tree at least fairly well.

As well, those aged 45 or older are more likely than younger urban Aboriginal peoples to have at least some knowledge of their Aboriginal ancestry (67% versus 56% of those aged 25-44 and 44% of those aged 18-24). Knowing one's family tree very well is also higher among individuals with a college (34%) or university (37%) education, compared to those with high school (24%) or no degree (22%). Those who have attained a certain level of affluence also know their family tree well. One in two urban Aboriginal peoples with household incomes of less than \$30,000 know their family tree, but this jumps to two-thirds of all those with incomes of \$30,000 or more.

Interestingly, birthplace does not substantially affect urban Aboriginal peoples' knowledge of their family tree: first generation urban Aboriginal peoples (i.e., those not born and raised in their city of residence) (60%) are only slightly more likely than those who are second generation (i.e., those born and raised in their city of residence whose family is from another place) (53%) to know their family tree at least fairly well.

Finally, individuals who feel they belong to a mostly or exclusively *Aboriginal*, as opposed to *non-Aboriginal*, community are among those most likely to say they know their family tree well.

Sources of learning about one's family tree

Aboriginal peoples in cities learn about their family tree from a variety of sources, but parents and grandparents are key sources of information, especially for youth.

UAPS participants were also asked from where or from whom they have learned what they know about their family tree (asked unprompted, without offering response choices). By far, parents (55%) are the main source of learning about one's Aboriginal ancestry. Smaller groups of urban Aboriginal peoples also say they have learned what they know about their family tree from other family members, such as grandparents (28%), immediate family relatives (i.e., aunts, uncles, etc.) (20%), extended family and friends (18%), and siblings (8%). A range of non-family sources is mentioned, such as personal research, archives and historical records, genealogy courses, Elders, and home communities and community members, but none by more than five percent of those asked.

These sources of learning about one's family tree are common to First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit, across cities. The one exception is that Métis, albeit still small minorities, are more likely than First Nations and Inuit to have relied on their own research, books, archives and other historical records to learn what they know about their family tree.

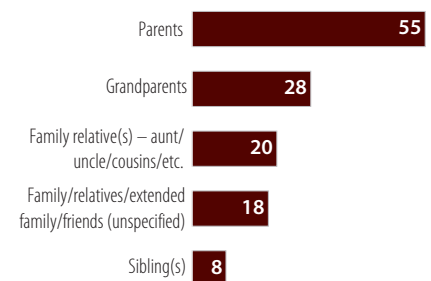
However, sources of learning do vary by city. Aboriginal peoples in Regina are more likely than those in other cities to have learned about their family tree from their parents (67%) and grandparents (40%). In Vancouver, participants are more likely than those in other cities to say they learned about their ancestry from immediate family relatives (30%). Finally, Aboriginal residents of Halifax (37%) are much more likely than others to say they have learned what they know about their family tree from extended family and friends.

Immediate family is the most common source of learning about one's family tree among younger urban Aboriginal peoples. Individuals aged 18 to 24 are much more likely to have learned about their family tree from either their parents (67% versus 57% of those aged 25-44, and 46% of those aged 45 or older) or grandparents (38% versus 28% of those aged 25-44, and 22% of those aged 45 or older). Use of non-family sources, such as archives, historical records and personal research, is more common among older Aboriginal peoples (especially those aged 45 or older), but even among this group is still secondary to extended family and siblings.

Interestingly, study participants with a university level education are just as likely as those with a college or high school education to have learned about their family tree from parents and grandparents; but they are also somewhat more likely than others to have also learned about their heritage from immediate family relatives, and extended family and friends. This is especially true of those who are currently in school. This may suggest that higher education prompts thinking and questions for some about one's heritage and place in the world that extend beyond the knowledge gained from their closest family members.

Sources of learning about family tree/ Aboriginal ancestry

From where or from whom have you learned what you do know about your family tree?



The importance to urban Aboriginal peoples of knowing one's family tree:

It was always important for me to know where I came from because my ancestors suffered greatly... I need to be able to tell their stories and share that history.

[It has made a] big difference to me. [It is] Important to know who you are. To be proud of the people you are from and their accomplishments.

It's a priority. Very important. Self-knowledge. Necessary.

Roots. Know where I come from. To be able to push forward and be the best I can be, knowing where I came from.

It's important to know who you are. There are many heroes in my family.

Even though I am not connected to my First Nation band, I get a renewed connection talking to Elders and hearing about my family history through them.

Impact of knowing one's family tree

A sense of family heritage, survival, and tradition and a stronger sense of self, are the top ways knowledge of one's family tree has made a difference in urban Aboriginal peoples' lives.

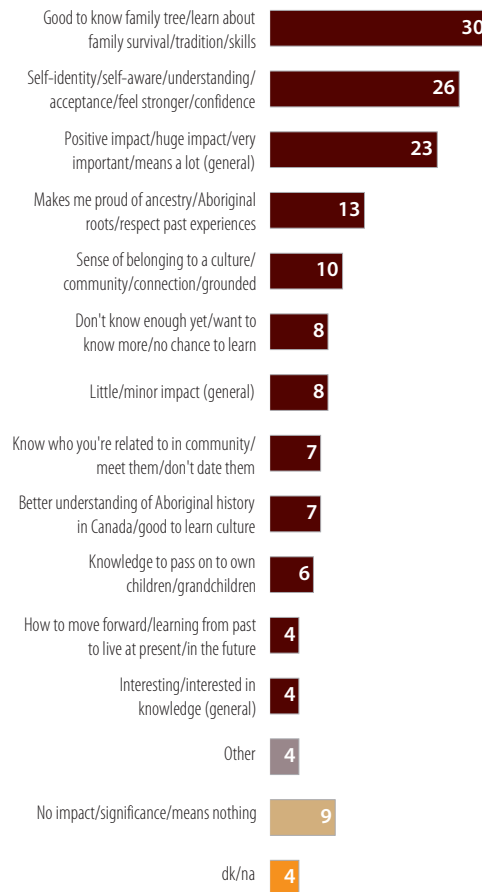
Beyond how well they know and learn about their family tree, what does this knowledge mean to urban Aboriginal peoples' sense of themselves?

Knowledge of one's family tree has a great impact on urban Aboriginal peoples, including a greater sense of self-awareness, pride and cultural continuity in the city. UAPS participants cite five main ways in which knowing their family tree has contributed to their lives:²⁷

- **Understanding of family survival and cultural endurance.** Urban Aboriginal peoples most frequently mention that through knowing their family tree they have learned stories of family survival, endurance and long-held cultural traditions. Three in ten (30%) say these stories of survival and endurance have affected them deeply. Greater understanding is most common among residents of Regina (45%), Calgary (41%), Montreal (40%) and Vancouver (38%), and among those with a college or university education.

Impact of family tree

What has it meant for you personally, or what impact has is made on your life, to learn what you do know about your family tree?



²⁷ UAPS participants were asked what is has meant to them personally, or what impact it has made on their lives, to learn what they know about their family tree.

- **Greater self-identity and self-awareness.** One-quarter (26%) of urban Aboriginal peoples also say they have derived a greater sense of self-identity and self-awareness from knowing about their Aboriginal ancestry. Those in Toronto (38%), Montreal (37%) and Vancouver (34%) are more likely than others to say this is what they have gained, especially Métis in Toronto (51%). Individuals aged 25 and older are also more likely to feel they have gained a greater sense of self-awareness from knowing their Aboriginal ancestry. Finally, *UAPS* participants with a university education (43%) stand out for the greater self-awareness and sense of identity they say they have gained from knowing their family tree.
- **Greater personal meaning.** One-quarter (23%) of urban Aboriginal peoples emphasize the greater personal meaning they've gained from knowing their family tree. Individuals in Vancouver (35%), Halifax (32%) and Toronto (30%) are more likely than those in other cities to describe the impact of knowing their family tree in this way.
- **Instills pride.** Some urban Aboriginal peoples (13%) indicate that knowing their family tree makes them proud of their Aboriginal "roots" and instills a greater respect for their families' past. Inuit (30%) are most likely to feel this way, followed by Métis (14%) and First Nations peoples (12%).
- **Builds a sense of belonging.** One in ten (10%) *UAPS* participants highlight their greater sense of belonging to a community. Similar proportions of Métis (11%) and First Nations peoples (9%) express this view, followed by Inuit (5%). Interestingly, both First Nations peoples and Métis in Toronto are twice as likely as those in most other cities to cite a sense of community belonging derived from knowing their family tree.

Smaller proportions of *UAPS* participants (8% or fewer) mention other ways in which knowing their family tree has had a meaningful impact on their lives. These include a better understanding of Aboriginal history, awareness of family connections, generational continuity and strength to move on from the past that they gain from knowing their family tree. Finally, nearly two in ten say knowing their family tree has either a little (8%) or no impact (9%) on their lives. Only one percent feel knowing their family tree has had a negative impact on their lives.

The importance to urban Aboriginal peoples of knowing one's family tree (continued):

Allows me to know who I am and where I come from. What I can inherit. To be comfortable with myself as an Aboriginal person.

A strong base of knowing who I am. Staying grounded. I made it to university. [Knowing my family tree] gave me strength to finish my degree. Gave me strength to not change who I was. I did my best, never changed who I was.

I always felt there was a part of me that was missing and I realized it was not knowing my Native side.

Resiliency, motivation to succeed. Overall better person.

Certain sense of growing – that you belong to something, somewhere [there is] a foundation.

It has shaped who I am. You have to know where you're coming from to know where you're going.

[Knowing my family tree] makes me feel strong to be Métis and from my family. If you endure and persevere, you can overcome obstacles in your life, just like my family tree.

Reason for lack of knowledge

Lack of opportunity, not interest, is the main reason why urban Aboriginal peoples say they do not know their family tree very well.

Why do some urban Aboriginal peoples know their family tree and others do not?

There are many reasons why urban Aboriginal peoples may or may not know their family tree that are not possible to capture in this study. The UAPS survey simply asked those who do not feel they know their family tree very well to identify if this was due to lack of interest or opportunity. Six in ten (58%) urban Aboriginal peoples say it is because they have had no opportunity to learn more about their family tree. This is true for similar proportions of Inuit, First Nations peoples and Métis.

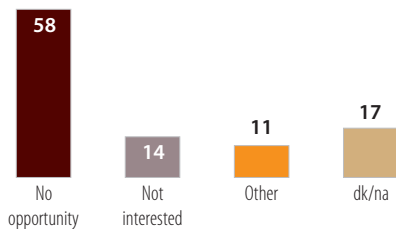
Notably, residents of Saskatoon (73%) are much more likely than Aboriginal peoples in other cities to say they have had no opportunity to learn more about their family tree, as are those without any formal education.

In turn, one-quarter (25%) of urban Aboriginal peoples say they are either not interested (14%) or cite other reasons (11%) why they do not know their family tree very well (such as discomfort with knowing more about their ancestry, lost information, oral traditions where written records are not kept and lack of connection to Aboriginal culture). Urban Aboriginal youth (18-24) are almost three times as likely (20%) as urban Aboriginal peoples aged 45 or over (7%) to say they are not interested in learning more about their family tree.

Almost one in six (17%) urban Aboriginal peoples are unable or unwilling to say why they have not learned more about their family tree.

Reason for lack of knowledge of family tree*

Is the main reason you have not learned more about your family tree because you have not had the opportunity, or because you are not particularly interested?



* Subsample: Those who do not feel they know their family tree "very well."

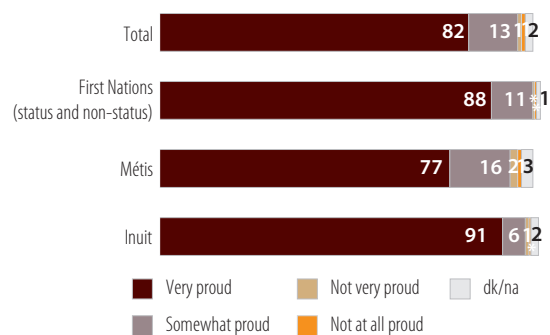
2. Pride in Aboriginal and Canadian identity

There is strong Indigenous pride among urban Aboriginal peoples. Few say they ever downplay or hide their Aboriginal identity.

An important part of UAPS was to understand how proud urban Aboriginal peoples are of their identity and, specifically, to what extent their pride is tied to three distinct aspects of identity: being *First Nations/Métis/Inuk*, *Aboriginal* and *Canadian*.

Pride in being First Nations/Métis/Inuk

Would you say you are very, somewhat, not very, or not at all proud to be First Nations/Métis/Inuk?



* Less than one percent

The results show that, while pride in each of these aspects of their identity is high among urban Aboriginal peoples, there are notable differences among First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit.

PRIDE IN BEING FIRST NATIONS/MÉTIS/INUK. Urban Aboriginal peoples are most proud to be *First Nations, Métis or Inuk*. Overall, eight in ten (82%) say they are very proud of their specific Aboriginal identity (i.e., First Nations, Métis or Inuk). This is particularly true for Inuit (91% very proud) and First Nations (88%), followed by Métis (77%). However, there is some variation in this pattern across cities, as Métis in Calgary, Regina, Winnipeg, Toronto and Halifax are as proud as others of their specific Aboriginal identity.

Importantly, status and non-status First Nations peoples are similarly very proud to be *First Nations*.

PRIDE IN BEING ABORIGINAL. Most urban Aboriginal peoples are also very proud (77%) to be *Aboriginal*, although there is some ambivalence evident among some Métis and Inuit. Pride in this aspect of identity is most widespread among First Nations peoples (85%), followed by Inuit (74%) and Métis (68%). Small but significant proportions of Métis (11%) and Inuit (18%) are unable or unwilling to say they are proud to be *Aboriginal*. Notably, in Winnipeg, within the centre of the Métis Nation Homeland, fewer Métis (50%) say they are very proud to be *Aboriginal*, and two in ten (21%) are unable or unwilling to say they are proud to be *Aboriginal*. Similarly, in Ottawa (where the *UAPS* surveyed Inuit only) one-quarter of participants (26%) are unable or unwilling to respond.

PRIDE IN BEING CANADIAN. Finally, urban Aboriginal peoples are least likely to be very proud to be *Canadian*, although seven in ten (70%) say they are very proud of this aspect of their identity. Three-quarters (76%) of Métis say they are very proud to be *Canadian*, followed by Inuit (68%) and First Nations peoples (64%). However, a significant minority of Inuit in Ottawa (20%) are unable or unwilling to say they are proud to be *Canadian*. In addition, both First Nations peoples and Métis in Vancouver are less likely to say they are *very* proud (51% and 55%, respectively) and more likely to say they are *somewhat* proud to be *Canadian* (27% and 26%, respectively) compared to those in other cities.

What else shapes urban Aboriginal peoples' pride in their *First Nations/Métis/Inuk, Aboriginal* and *Canadian* identities? Survey data show their pride in these aspects of identity also vary by age, their sense of community, where they were born and raised, and knowledge of their family tree.

For instance, older (45 years or older) urban Aboriginal peoples (87%) are more likely than those younger than them to be very proud of their *First Nations/Métis/Inuk* identity. Still, it is important to note that three-quarters (75%) of urban Aboriginal youth (18-24) say they are very proud of their specific Aboriginal identity. Youth (75%) are also more likely than those immediately older (25-44 years of age) (67%) to be very proud to be *Canadian*, although this gap largely disappears among urban Aboriginal peoples 45 years of age and older (72%).

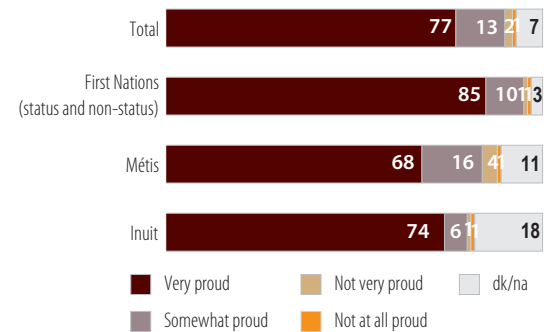
How much pride urban Aboriginal peoples have in their Aboriginal and Canadian identities is also clearly tied to the kind of community they feel they belong to in their city. The proportion of urban Aboriginal peoples very proud to be *First Nations/Métis/Inuk* and *Aboriginal* increases the more they feel they belong to an *Aboriginal* community. For example, pride in being *Aboriginal* rises from 69 percent of those who feel they belong to a mostly or exclusively *non-Aboriginal* community to 86 percent of those who feel they belong to a mostly or exclusively *Aboriginal* community. As could be expected, urban Aboriginal peoples who feel they belong to more of a *non-Aboriginal* community are more likely than those belonging to more of an *Aboriginal* community to be proud to be *Canadian*, although this gap is less pronounced.

Regardless of one's birthplace, Aboriginal peoples are equally proud of their *First Nations/Métis/Inuk* identities. However, *UAPS* participants *not* born and raised in their city of residence (80%) are more likely than those who are (69%) to be very proud to be *Aboriginal*.

Finally, urban Aboriginal peoples' pride in their Aboriginal identities is linked to their knowledge of their family tree. Those who know their family tree very well are among those most likely to be very proud to be *First Nations/Métis/Inuk* (92%) and *Aboriginal* (88%). By comparison, how well urban Aboriginal peoples know their family tree does not affect how proud they are to be *Canadian*.

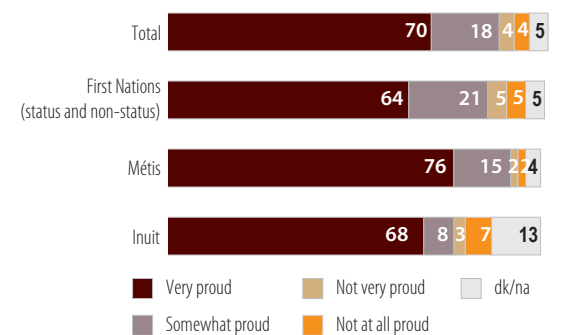
Pride in being Aboriginal

Would you say you are very, somewhat, not very, or not at all proud to be Aboriginal?



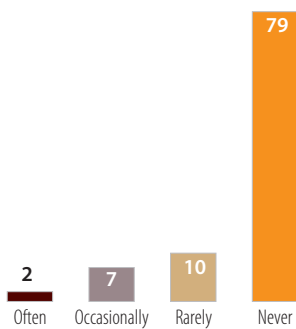
Pride in being Canadian

Would you say you are very, somewhat, not very, or not at all proud to be Canadian?



Downplaying Aboriginal identity

How often do you downplay or even hide your Aboriginal identity?



Do urban Aboriginal peoples ever downplay their identity?

A strong sense of pride is further reflected in the fact that few urban Aboriginal peoples say they ever downplay their Aboriginal identity.

Regardless of where they live, where they are from, or any other socio-demographic characteristic, nine in ten urban Aboriginal peoples say they never (79%) or rarely (10%) downplay or hide their Aboriginal identity. Less than one in ten say they occasionally (7%) downplay their identity and only two percent say they often do.

3. Connection and belonging

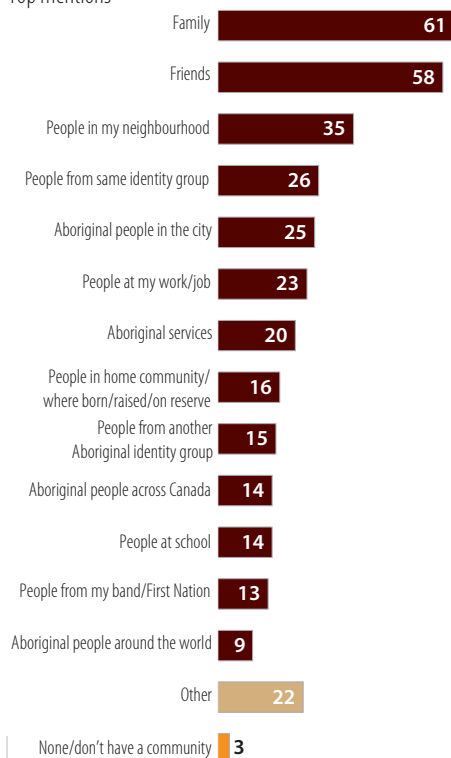
Definitions of community

Urban Aboriginal peoples define their community in a variety of ways, but family and friends are top-of-mind, followed by people in their neighbourhood, members of their own cultural group and Aboriginal people in the city.

Communities play a pivotal role in shaping individual identities. Already noted in this chapter is the way in which urban Aboriginal peoples' pride in their Aboriginal identity grows the more they feel they belong to an *Aboriginal* community. Parents, family, friends, neighbours, members of one's own Aboriginal group, other Aboriginal persons and non-Aboriginal persons transmit social values and understanding that influence Aboriginal identity in cities.

Who or what do you consider to be a part of your community?

Top mentions



In order to better understand what community ties are important, and determine what community means in the lives and identities of Aboriginal peoples living in Canadian cities, the *UAPS* survey explored how participants define their community, along with their sense of belonging and connection to various groups and entities.

Who or what do urban Aboriginal peoples consider to be a part of their community? *UAPS* data show attachment to family and friends is top-of-mind for majorities of urban First Nations, Métis and Inuk residents. When asked (unprompted, without response options offered), they most frequently consider family (61%) or friends (58%) to be a part of their community. Smaller proportions of urban Aboriginal peoples consider the people in their neighbourhoods (35%), people from the same identity group (i.e., First Nations, Métis or Inuit) (26%), Aboriginal peoples in the city (25%) and co-workers (23%) to be a part of their community.

Yet, smaller groups of urban Aboriginal peoples consider Aboriginal services (friendship centres, healing centres, counselling centres, etc.) (20%), people in their home community (i.e., where they were born and raised) (16%), people from other Aboriginal identity groups (15%), people at school (14%), Aboriginal people across Canada (14%), people from their band/First Nation (13%) to be a part of their community and, finally, Aboriginal people around the world (9%).

Smaller proportions of *UAPS* participants (3% or fewer) mention other connections, including religious communities, community and support groups, music and arts communities, sports and recreation services, and social services.

But definitions of community differ somewhat for First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit. For example, two-thirds of Inuit (68%) and First Nations peoples (64%) consider family as part of their community, followed by Métis (58%). Inuit and First Nations peoples are also somewhat more likely to regard friends as part of their community than are Métis, who are much more likely to see the people in their neighbourhood as part of their community (41% of Métis feel this way, compared to 30% of First Nations peoples and 15% of Inuit).

Almost one in two Inuit (45%) also feel other Inuit are part of their community, whereas only one-quarter of First Nations peoples (27%) and Métis (24%) regard other members of their identity group to be part of their community. But, First Nations peoples (30%) are more likely than others to feel Aboriginal people in the city are part of their community.

Finally, small but significant minorities of First Nations peoples and Inuit feel Aboriginal services and organizations, and people from their home communities to be part of their community.

Some differences among Aboriginal peoples across cities also suggest that where one lives influences their sense of community. While it is generally difficult in this instance to distinguish genuine city differences from differences between First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit, certain “city stories” stand out. Specifically, urban Aboriginal peoples in Regina (75%) are much more likely than those in other cities to consider family to be a part of their community. A higher proportion of Aboriginal residents in Vancouver consider people in their neighborhood and work colleagues to be a part of their community compared to Aboriginal peoples in other cities. And, in Toronto, residents are twice as likely as average to count Aboriginal services such as friendship centres and healing centres as part of their community. Distinctive urban neighbourhoods and environments, the different city histories and trajectories of Aboriginal services and organizations in Canadian cities, the proximity of home communities, settlements and reserves – all these factors likely contribute to the diversity of urban Aboriginal communities across the country.

Finally, individuals with a university degree define “community” somewhat differently from others. While they are as likely as others to consider people in their neighbourhood, people from their own Aboriginal group and other Aboriginal people in the city to be a part of their community, they are also most likely to also consider family, friends and the people they work with to be a part of their community.

Belonging to Aboriginal versus non-Aboriginal communities

Similar proportions of urban Aboriginal peoples feel they belong to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, but distinct differences among First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit are evident.

To what extent do urban Aboriginal peoples feel they belong to an Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal community in the city?

When asked how Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal they feel the community they belong to is, similar proportions of UAPS participants feel they belong to either a mostly Aboriginal (28%), equally Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal (36%), or mostly non-Aboriginal (32%) community. Among those who belong to a mostly Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal community, few feel this community is exclusively Aboriginal (4%) or exclusively non-Aboriginal (4%).

Belonging to an Aboriginal community is strongest among status First Nations peoples and Inuit, while a sense of belonging to a non-Aboriginal community is stronger among Métis and non-status First Nations peoples:

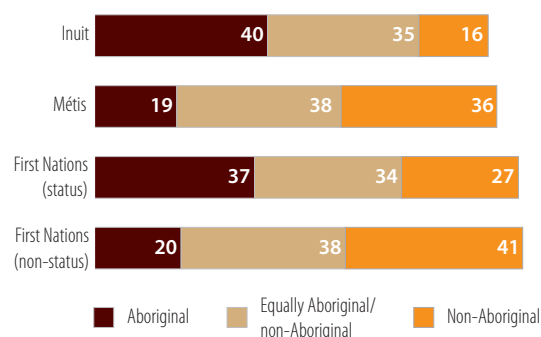
Belonging to Aboriginal versus non-Aboriginal community
Do you feel that the community you belong to is...?



MOSTLY ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY. Those who feel they belong to a mostly Aboriginal community are more typically Inuit (40%) and status First Nations peoples (37%) than non-status First Nations peoples (20%) or Métis (19%). However, Métis in Calgary, Edmonton, Regina and Saskatoon are just as likely as First Nations peoples in these cities to feel they belong to a mostly Aboriginal community. In addition, First Nations peoples in Vancouver are much more likely to feel they belong to a mostly Aboriginal community (49% versus 38% overall). Sense of belonging to a primarily Aboriginal community is also higher among those who know their family tree well and those with household incomes of less than \$10,000.

Belonging to Aboriginal versus non-Aboriginal community, by identity group

Do you feel that the community you belong to is...?



Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% due to those who said they don't know, or chose not to answer this question.

EQUALLY ABORIGINAL AND NON-ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY. Equal proportions of First Nations (34%), Métis (38%) and Inuit (35%) feel they belong to an equally Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community. This group varies little socio-demographically, with one exception. Urban Aboriginal peoples with no formal education are somewhat more likely than others to feel they belong to an equally Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community.

MOSTLY NON-ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY. Finally, urban Aboriginal peoples who feel they belong to a mostly non-Aboriginal community are more typically non-status First Nations peoples (41%) and Métis (36%) than status First Nations peoples (27%) and Inuit (16%). They are most likely to reside in Montreal (41%) and Toronto (40%) (those cities with the smallest relative Aboriginal populations). As well, those with household incomes of \$80,000 or more (a very small proportion of UAPS participants overall) are considerably more likely than others to feel they belong to a non-Aboriginal community.

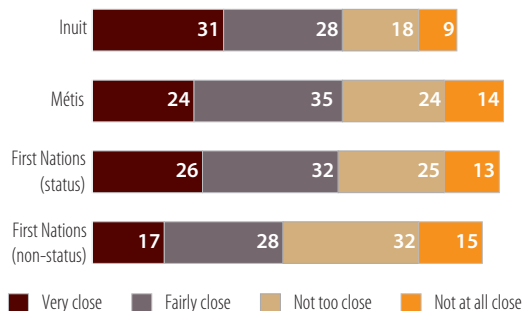
Connection to Aboriginal peoples in the city

Beyond the boundaries of their community, Aboriginal peoples typically express a strong connection to other Aboriginal people in their city, both members of their own Aboriginal group and others.

A majority of First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit feel a close connection to members of their own group in their city and to other Aboriginal people in their city, especially Inuit.

Connection to Aboriginal group, by identity group

How close a connection do you feel [to members of your own Aboriginal group]?



Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% due to those who said they don't know, or chose not to answer this question.

CONNECTION TO ABORIGINAL GROUP. How close a connection do urban Aboriginal peoples have to members of their own Aboriginal group? Overall, equal proportions of Métis (59%), Inuit (59%) and First Nations peoples (57%) feel either a fairly or very close connection to other Métis, other Inuit and other members of their First Nation in their city, respectively.

First Nations peoples are also as likely to feel a close connection to members of other First Nations in their city. Notably, while non-status First Nations peoples (45%) are less likely than status First Nations peoples (58%) to feel a close connection to members of their own First Nation, they are as likely as status First Nations peoples to feel a close connection to members of other First Nations in their city.

First Nations peoples and Métis aged 45 and older are more likely to feel at least a fairly close connection other First Nations/Métis in their city compared to those who are younger. Older Inuit are also more likely to have at least a fairly close

connection to other Inuit in their city, however Inuk youth (41%) are as likely as those aged 45 and older (41%) to have a very close connection to other Inuit in their city.

In addition, urban Aboriginal peoples who know their family tree very well are much more likely than others to feel a strong sense of connection to other Métis, Inuit and members of their First Nation and other First Nations in their city.

CONNECTION TO OTHER ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN THE CITY. How strong a connection do First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit feel to *other* Aboriginal peoples in their city? Inuit (60%) are most likely to feel connected to other Aboriginal peoples, followed by Métis (51%) and First Nations peoples (41%). As well, Métis and First Nations peoples aged 45 and older are more likely to feel connected to other Aboriginal peoples in their city compared to those who are younger, especially youth (this pattern is less apparent among Inuit).

Friendships in the city

Urban Aboriginal peoples are as likely to have many close non-Aboriginal as Aboriginal friends. Aboriginal friends are more common among older urban Aboriginal peoples, whereas youth are more likely to have many non-Aboriginal friends.

Beyond their sense of connection to members of their own or other Aboriginal groups, the *UAPS* survey asked First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit living in urban centres about how many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal friends they have.

FRIENDSHIPS WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLE. Overall, three-quarters of urban Aboriginal peoples say they have many (51%) or some (24%) close friends in their city who are Aboriginal. Similar proportions of Inuit (79%), First Nations peoples (78%) and Métis (72%) say they have some or many close Aboriginal friends.

UAPS participants in Saskatoon (64%), Regina (57%) and Winnipeg (57%) are most likely to say they have many close Aboriginal friends. This is true for both First Nations and Métis residents, and likely reflects the larger relative Aboriginal populations in these cities. In contrast, Aboriginal peoples in Montreal and Toronto, cities with the smallest relative Aboriginal populations, are least likely to have close friends who are Aboriginal.

Urban Aboriginal peoples aged 25 and older (52%) are more likely than those aged 18 to 24 (43%) to have many close friends in their city who are Aboriginal. As well, Aboriginal peoples who know their family tree very well (61%) are much more likely than those who do not know it at all (39%) to have many close Aboriginal friends.

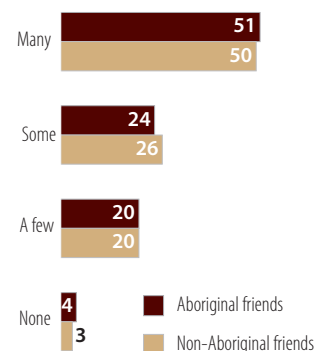
FRIENDSHIPS WITH NON-ABORIGINAL PEOPLE. Just as *UAPS* participants have close Aboriginal friends in their city, equal proportions have some or many close non-Aboriginal friends where they live. Three-quarters say they have many (50%) or some (26%) close friends who are non-Aboriginal.

Once again, fairly similar proportions of First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit have at least some close non-Aboriginal friends in their city. However, Métis (56%) are somewhat more likely than First Nations peoples (43%) to have *many* close non-Aboriginal friends (50% of Inuit have many close non-Aboriginal friends).

Aboriginal peoples in Vancouver (60%) and Winnipeg (57%) are most likely to say they have many close non-Aboriginal friends. In both these cities, Métis are considerably more likely than First Nations peoples to say this is so.

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal friends

Do you have many, some, a few, or no close friends in [your city] who are Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal?



Furthermore, whereas older Aboriginal peoples are more likely to have many close *Aboriginal* friends, Aboriginal youth (18-24 years) are more likely to have many close *non-Aboriginal* friends (57% versus 50% of those aged 25-44, and 45% of those 45 years and older). Nonetheless, this gap between Aboriginal youth and older Aboriginal peoples largely disappears when those with some close non-Aboriginal friends is taken into account.

Urban Aboriginal peoples with a university education (58%) are also somewhat more likely than those with a college (51%) or high school (51%) education to have many close non-Aboriginal friends. Their level of affluence also makes a difference: those with household incomes of \$80,000 or more are most likely among *UAPS* participants to have many close non-Aboriginal friends.

Having many Aboriginal friends coincides with having many non-Aboriginal friends. Those with many Aboriginal friends are just as likely as those with no close Aboriginal friends to have many non-Aboriginal friends.

Do *UAPS* participants have any interest in having more non-Aboriginal friends? Among those who do not have many non-Aboriginal friends, nearly six in ten (57%) say they would like more. Similar proportions of First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit feel this way, but status First Nations (61%) are more likely than non-status First Nations peoples (40%) to have an interest in having more non-Aboriginal friends.

Interest in having more non-Aboriginal friends is also more common among those aged 18 to 24 (64%) and 25 to 44 (59%), compared to those aged 45 and older (51%).

Finally, just over four in ten urban Aboriginal peoples are not interested (23%) in having more non-Aboriginal friends or are unable to offer an opinion (20%).

4. Indian residential schools

Two-thirds of urban Aboriginal peoples across cities say they have been affected by Indian residential schools, either personally or through a family member. Most in this group feel this experience has had at least some impact in shaping their life and who they are today.

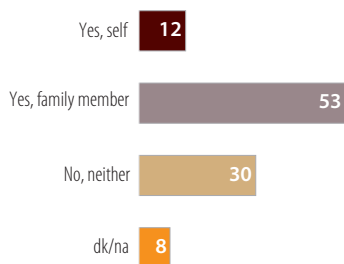
On June 11, 2008 the Government of Canada issued a formal apology to the former Aboriginal students of residential schools, affirming the disruptive impact of historical policies and legislation. The apology formally recognized that “this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in [this] country.”²⁸

The Indian residential school system predates Confederation and grew out of the missionary experience in Canada’s early history. Indian residential schools existed, at one time or another, in all Canadian provinces and territories except Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

The residential school system left in its wake a tragic legacy. It is estimated that as many as 150,000 Aboriginal children attended these institutions. Many former students have reported undergoing hardship, forcible confinement, and physical and sexual abuse while attending the schools. In addition, these students were also not allowed to speak their language or practice their culture. While most residential schools were closed by the mid-1970s, the last school did not close until 1996.²⁹

Indian residential schools

Were you, or any member of your family, ever a student at a federal residential school or a provincial day school?



28 Canada, Office of the Prime Minister, “Prime Minister Harper offers full apology on behalf of Canadians for the Indian residential schools system,” *Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada* [website], www.pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=2149 (accessed December 2009).

29 Environics Research Group, report prepared for the Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *2008 National Benchmark Survey*, May 2008., p. 9.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit children had varied residential school experiences, both in intensity and duration. Regardless, the residential school had a direct impact on Survivors and has spilled over to their descendants, creating challenges pertaining to identity, culture and parenting.³⁰

Majorities of UAPS participants across cities say they have been affected by Indian residential schools, either personally or through a family member. When asked, two-thirds (65%) say either they themselves (12%) or a family member (53%) were a student at a federal residential school or a provincial day school.

Status First Nations peoples (20%) and Inuit (19%) are more likely than Métis (6%) and non-status First Nations peoples (3%) to say they were students at a federal residential school or a provincial day school. Across cities, Aboriginal peoples in Saskatoon (22%) and Regina (20%) are most likely to say they were once a student at these schools.

Status First Nations peoples (67%) are also more likely to say a family member was once a student at these schools than are Inuit (42%), Métis (41%) and non-status First Nations peoples (39%). Across cities, Aboriginal peoples, particularly First Nations peoples, in Vancouver (67%), Toronto (62%), Saskatoon (62%) and Edmonton (58%) are most likely to have a family member who was a student at a federal residential school or a provincial day school. In Saskatoon, equal proportions of First Nations peoples (63%) and Métis (61%) say they have a family member who was a student at these schools.

Three in ten (30%) urban Aboriginal peoples say neither themselves nor a family member were ever a student at these schools. This proportion is highest among non-status First Nations peoples (48%) and Métis (44%).

Impact of residential schools

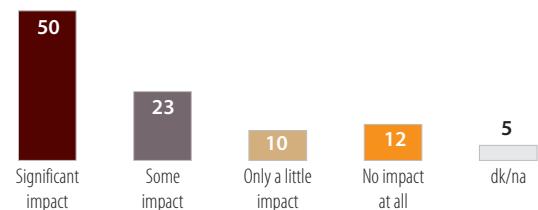
Most urban Aboriginal peoples feel the Indian residential schools experience has had at least some impact in shaping their lives and who they are today.

The Indian residential schools experience continues to shape the lives of urban Aboriginal peoples today. Among those urban Aboriginal peoples who say they or a family member were a student in one of these schools, three-quarters say this experience, or the experience of their family member, has had either a significant impact (50%) or some impact (23%) in shaping their lives and who they are today. This represents close to one-half (45%) of all UAPS participants.

Belief that residential schools had at least some impact on their life is equally true for First Nations, Métis and Inuit. Aboriginal peoples in Vancouver (84%) and Montreal (80%) are more likely than those in other cities to feel the Indian residential schools experience has had at least some impact in shaping their life and who they are today.

Impact of Indian residential schools*

To what extent has [this experience/or the experience of your family member] shaped your life and who you are today?



* Subsample: Those who were, or whose family member was, a student at a federal residential school or a provincial day school.

30 Although status Indians formed the majority of attendees at any given time, many Métis children were accepted, often to boost school enrolment figures. Meanwhile, the number of Inuit children grew quickly in the 1950s when a network of schools was built across the North. Roughly [10%] of the Aboriginal population in Canada self-identify as Survivors of the residential school system. *Aboriginal People, Resilience and the Residential School Legacy*, Aboriginal Healing Foundation Series, 2003.

Only two in ten urban Aboriginal peoples who say they or a family member were a student in one of these schools say the experience has had only a little impact (10%) or no impact at all (12%) in shaping their lives and who they are today. Individuals in this group are typically younger (i.e., 18-24), and are more likely to have little to no formal education, as well as feel they belong to a non-Aboriginal community.

Finally, five percent of urban Aboriginal peoples who say they or a family member were a student in one of these schools are unable or unwilling to say to what extent the Indian residential schools experience has impacted their lives. This proportion is highest in Toronto (18%), where, notably, half of Métis (52%) in this city are unable or unwilling to say to what extent this experience has impacted their lives, and among those with a university degree (11%).