



# Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study

## VANCOUVER EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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# Acknowledgments

The Environics Institute would like to thank all the individuals and organizations who contributed their input and expertise to the *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (UAPS)*. Special thanks to all of the interviewers and study participants for their time and involvement in the research.

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## *UAPS* Steering Committee and staff

The *UAPS* Steering Committee has devoted considerable time, energy and expertise to the successful management and execution of the study. Michael Mendelson (The Caledon Institute), David Eaves (Independent), May Wong (Environics Institute), Amy Langstaff (Environics Institute), Doug Norris (Environics Analytics), Michael Adams (Environics Institute), Keith Neuman (Environics Research Group), Sonya Kunkel (Environics Research Group), Sarah Robertson (Environics Research Group), Jay Kaufman (KTA) and Karen Beitel (KTA) have all played an important role in bringing this study to fruition.

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The Environics Institute is dedicated to the study and execution of opinion research on issues of public importance in Canada. The Institute seeks to inform and stimulate thoughtful dialogue among Canadians by:

- commissioning original survey research;
- funding academic studies related to polling and public opinion; and
- working with media partners to disseminate the results of its research.

Founded in 2006, the Institute has already conducted a number of groundbreaking studies, including a survey of Canadian Muslims, a survey of the people of Afghanistan, and a study (undertaken in partnership with Canada's World) of Canadians' personal engagement with people and issues around the world.

The Environics Institute sees public opinion research as a valuable lens through which Canadians can examine and better understand their own diverse and evolving society.

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## What is the *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study* and why now?

The *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (UAPS)* is a snapshot of the hundreds of thousands of Aboriginal people who now live in urban centres. Conducted by the Environics Institute, and guided by an Advisory Circle of recognized experts from academia and from Aboriginal communities, the study is an enquiry into the values, experiences, identities and aspirations of First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit living in Canada's major urban centres.

The urban Aboriginal population in Canada now numbers over 600,000 and is at an all time high. There are now more Aboriginal people living in urban centres across Canada than there are living in Aboriginal territories and communities on reserves, in Métis settlements and in Inuit communities. Aboriginal people now constitute a permanent presence in Canadian cities, and promise to be an important part of multicultural urban Canada.

The *UAPS* sprang from discussions with diverse stakeholders and opinion leaders across the country that recognized these trends, as well as the need for well-designed empirical research that would credibly express evolving urban Aboriginal perspectives.

## How was the research done?

The *UAPS* investigated a range of issues including (but not limited to) urban Aboriginal peoples' communities of origin, Aboriginal cultures, community belonging, education, work, health political engagement and activity, justice, relationships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, life aspirations and definitions of success, and experiences with discrimination.

The study involved *in-person* interviews, one to two hours in length, with 2,614 Métis, Inuit and First Nations (status and non-status) individuals living in 11 Canadian cities from Halifax to Vancouver. With input from the *UAPS* Advisory Circle, individual questions were organized under four overarching themes:

- *identity*: who are you?
- *experiences*: what's your everyday life like?
- *values*: what's important in your life?
- *aspirations*: what do you want for your future?

In each city, the Environics Institute engaged a small team of local Aboriginal people to construct a 250-person sample and organize the interviews. Key to the study's legitimacy was that the sample be representative of the urban Aboriginal population: that it not select solely among those living in serious poverty or those who are succeeding. The Institute used the 2006 Canadian Census profile of Aboriginal people in each city (CMA) to design an "ideal sample," based on such characteristics as identity group, age, educational attainment and gender. Local research teams in each city then searched out individuals that fit this sample profile.

The study also investigated how non-Aboriginal people view Aboriginal people in Canada today, through a telephone survey with 2,501 non-Aboriginal urban Canadians living in these same cities (excluding Ottawa).

## What did the study find?

Many of the *UAPS* findings suggest that Canadian cities are becoming sites of connection, engagement and cultural vitality for a large number of Aboriginal peoples. Although many segments of First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations in Canada face substantial challenges, the picture in cities is more diverse – and in many cases more hopeful – than public perceptions and media coverage often acknowledge.

In April 2010, the Institute released a national report of the study's findings (*Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study – Main Report*, [www.UAPS.ca](http://www.UAPS.ca)). Among the main findings described in the report:

- **For most, the city is home, but urban Aboriginal peoples stay connected to their communities of origin.** Six in ten feel a close connection to these communities – links that are integral to strong family and social ties, and to traditional and contemporary Aboriginal culture. Notwithstanding these links, majorities of First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit consider their current city of residence home (71%), including those who are the first generation of their family to live in their city.
- **Almost eight in ten participants say they are “very proud” of their specific Aboriginal identity (i.e., First Nations, Métis or Inuk).** Slightly fewer – 70 percent – say the same about being Canadian.
- **Urban Aboriginal peoples are seeking to become a significant and visible part of the urban landscape.** Six in ten feel they can make their city a better place to live, a proportion similar to non-Aboriginal urban dwellers.
- **Six in ten are not concerned about losing contact with their culture, while a minority totally (17%) or somewhat (21%) agree that they are concerned.** As well, by a wide margin (6:1), First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit think Aboriginal culture in their communities has become stronger rather than weaker in the last five years.
- **They display a higher tolerance for other cultures than their non-Aboriginal neighbours:** Seventy-seven percent of urban Aboriginal peoples believe there is room for a variety of languages and cultures in this country, in contrast to 54 percent of non-Aboriginal urbanites.
- **A majority believe they are viewed in negative ways by non-Aboriginal people.** Three in four participants perceive assumptions about addiction problems, while many feel there are negative stereotypes about laziness (30%), lack of intelligence (20%) and poverty (20%).
- **Education is their top priority, and an enduring aspiration for the next generation.** Twenty percent want the next generation to understand the importance of education, 18 percent hope younger individuals will stay connected to their cultural community and 17 percent hope the next generation will experience life without racism.

## What does the *UAPS* tell us about Aboriginal peoples who live in Vancouver?

According to the 2006 Census, Vancouver has the third largest Aboriginal population of any city in Canada, after Winnipeg and Edmonton. Yet Aboriginal peoples account for only two percent of the total population of Vancouver, which is one of the smaller per capita concentrations among the *UAPS* cities.

The *UAPS Vancouver Report* is the sixth of a series of city reports, following the release of the main report of the *UAPS* on April 6, 2010. In Vancouver, the main survey consisted of in-person interviews with 261 First Nations peoples (status and non-status), Métis and Inuit (18 years and older), between April 7 and August 6, 2009.

An analysis of the *UAPS* Vancouver data reveals the following about the identities, experiences, values and aspirations of Aboriginal residents of Vancouver:

- **Aboriginal peoples in Vancouver are among the most likely of *UAPS* participants to express a strong sense of their Aboriginality in the city.** Connections to Aboriginal cultural activities and services are among the most widespread in Vancouver and Aboriginal Vancouverites are the most likely of any city to feel they belong to a mostly Aboriginal (rather than a non-Aboriginal) community. Likely as a result, strong confidence in their ability to retain their cultural identity in the city is higher here than in any other city except Winnipeg and Edmonton.
- **There is strong Indigenous pride among Aboriginal peoples in Vancouver.** Most are very proud of their specific First Nations/Métis/Inuk identity and of their collective Aboriginal identity. While Aboriginal peoples in most other cities are similarly proud of their Canadian identity, strong pride in being Canadian is noticeably lower in Vancouver than in any other city except Montreal.
- **There is a notable degree of satisfaction among Aboriginal residents about life in Vancouver.** They are among the most positive about their city, due in large part to the quality of life, particularly the availability of green spaces. Moreover, they are among the most confident about their ability to make a positive impact in the city.
- **It is interesting, therefore, that while a majority of Aboriginal peoples in Vancouver consider the city to be their home, this feeling is less widespread than the national average.** This is likely related to the notably strong sense of connection to their communities of origin, particularly among First Nations peoples in Vancouver. Moreover, the minority of second generation residents (i.e., those born and raised in Vancouver whose family is from somewhere else) who plan to return there permanently is larger in Vancouver than in other *UAPS* cities.
- **Most *UAPS* participants feel discrimination of Aboriginal peoples is a pervasive problem, and one that majorities report having experienced personally.** This is similarly true for Aboriginal peoples in Vancouver, who believe substance abuse is the dominant stereotype about the Aboriginal population. At the same time, they express a greater degree of social acceptance than in many other *UAPS* cities, which is likely related to living in a large and diverse city like Vancouver. As well, a slim majority are optimistic that non-Aboriginal attitudes are changing for the better, a view that is more common in Vancouver than in most other cities.

- **The top life aspirations for Aboriginal peoples in Vancouver include raising a family and higher education.** These are largely consistent with the life aspirations of Aboriginal peoples living in other *UAPS* cities.
- **Family and a balanced lifestyle are considered the most important ingredients of a successful life.** Aboriginal peoples in Vancouver place greater importance than others on having a strong connection to their Aboriginal heritage and living in a traditional way, while (particularly compared to *UAPS* participants in smaller cities) they place comparatively less value on financial independence and home ownership.

## How do non-Aboriginal residents of Vancouver perceive Aboriginal people?

As part of the *UAPS*, Environics surveyed a representative sample of non-Aboriginal Canadians to learn how they view Aboriginal peoples and what informs these views. The results of the non-Aboriginal survey are based on telephone interviews conducted from April 28 to May 15, 2009 with 250 non-Aboriginal people in each of the same 10 urban centres in which the main survey was conducted: Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Thunder Bay, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax (excluding Ottawa). In all, 2,501 non-Aboriginal urban Canadians (“NA urban Canadians”) participated, providing a rich picture of how NA urban Canadians see Aboriginal people in cities today.

Topics explored in the survey include non-Aboriginal urban Canadians’ perceptions of Aboriginal people in Canada, their awareness of Aboriginal peoples and communities in their cities, their contact and interaction with Aboriginal people, their perspectives on how well institutions respond to the needs of Aboriginal people, their knowledge of salient Aboriginal issues (i.e., Indian residential schools, acceptance of differential systems of justice), and the importance of Aboriginal history and culture in the minds of NA urban Canadians.

A closer look at the responses of non-Aboriginal residents of Vancouver yielded the following insights into their attitudes towards Aboriginal people, their awareness of Aboriginal people and communities in their city, their perceptions of the top issues facing Aboriginal people today and, finally, their perceptions of future relations with Aboriginal people. Specifically:

- **Among non-Aboriginal people in Vancouver, there is no single common top-of-mind impression of Aboriginal peoples.** Similar to other *UAPS* cities, impressions revolve primarily around their history as the first inhabitants of Canada and their First Nations/Métis/Inuit identities.
- **Opinions are divided about whether Aboriginal people have unique rights and privileges as the first inhabitants of Canada, or are just like other cultural or ethnic groups in Canadian society.** Nonetheless, belief in the unique rights of Aboriginal people is more common here than in most other *UAPS* cities except Montreal and Toronto.
- **Almost half of non-Aboriginal Vancouverites are *Cultural Romantics*: idealistic individuals with a strong belief in Aboriginal peoples’ artistic and cultural contributions.** A segmentation analysis of the *UAPS* data reveals that non-Aboriginal participants have four distinct broad viewpoints of Aboriginal peoples. All four are evident in Vancouver, at levels similar to the national average, with Cultural Romantics being the most prominent.

- **Virtually all Vancouver residents know Aboriginal people live in their city, and awareness of an Aboriginal community (either physical or social) in their midst is higher than in the other big cities of Toronto and Montreal.** Most non-Aboriginal Vancouverites have at least occasional contact with Aboriginal people, and minorities know Aboriginal people as close friends, neighbours and co-workers, but this is understandably less common than in cities with large relative Aboriginal populations (i.e., Regina, Winnipeg and Saskatoon).
- **Threats to culture and identity are perceived to be the top challenge facing the Aboriginal population in Canada overall as well as in cities.** The balance of opinion in Vancouver is that the problems faced by Aboriginal people in Canada have largely been caused by the attitudes of other Canadians and the policies of government than by Aboriginal peoples themselves. A majority of Vancouver residents have heard about Indian residential schools, and this group is among the most likely in any *UAPS* city to feel these schools have contributed to the challenges facing Aboriginal communities today.
- **Vancouver residents clearly recognize that Aboriginal people experience discrimination, and believe they endure at least as much as other groups in Canadian society.**
- **A slight majority of non-Aboriginal residents of Vancouver believe the current state of relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada is positive.** This perception is more widespread in Vancouver, Halifax and Toronto than elsewhere. Non-Aboriginal Vancouverites are similarly among the most optimistic that relations are changing for the better.

## About the Research

**BACKGROUND.** The urban Aboriginal population in Canada now numbers over 600,000 and is at an all time high. The largest Aboriginal community is no longer a reserve but Winnipeg itself, with a diverse Aboriginal population that exceeds 60,000 people. Urban Aboriginal populations are permanent populations, and promise to be an important part of multicultural urban Canada.

The *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study* sprang from discussions with diverse stakeholders and opinion leaders across the country that recognized these trends, as well as the need for well-designed empirical research that would credibly express evolving urban Aboriginal perspectives. Throughout 2009, the Environics Institute, a not-for-profit foundation established by Environics Research co-founder Michael Adams that supports original research on important issues of public policy and social change, oversaw with its Advisory Circle community-based research in 11 Canadian cities: Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Thunder Bay, Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver.

The objectives of the *UAPS* are to better understand the perspectives of urban Aboriginal peoples as complex individuals and communities, and provide new insights that stimulate dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal urban communities across Canada. Designed to be an enquiry about the values, experiences, identities and aspirations of Aboriginal peoples living in cities, the study investigated a range of issues including (but not limited to) urban Aboriginal peoples' communities of origin, Aboriginal cultures, community belonging, education, work, health political engagement and activity, justice, relationships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, life aspirations and definitions of success, and experiences with discrimination.

**UAPS IN VANCOUVER.** The *UAPS Vancouver Report* constitutes the sixth of a series of city reports, following the release of the main report of the *UAPS* on April 6, 2010. In Vancouver, the main survey consisted of in-person interviews with 261 First Nations peoples (status and non-status), Métis and Inuit (18 years and older) between April 7 and August 6, 2009.

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The table on the next page presents a profile of the final sample of participants, by such characteristics as identity, gender, age and education. At the analysis stage, data were weighted so that the final sample accurately reflects the distribution of the population according to the 2006 Census. The table presents the actual number of participants (unweighted) within each subgroup, as well as the weighted proportion each subgroup represents within the total sample.

The results contained in this report are based on the total sample, and are reported separately in some cases for First Nations peoples and Métis, but the sample size is not sufficiently large to allow for analysis by characteristics such as age and education.

In addition to the main survey, a telephone survey was conducted with 250 non-Aboriginal residents of Vancouver (18 years and older) between April 28 and May 15, 2009. This is an important component of the *UAPS* because it reveals how the non-Aboriginal population views the experiences of Aboriginal peoples, reflecting some of the barriers and opportunities facing the Aboriginal community. The margin of error for a probability sample of 250 is plus or minus 6.2 percentage points, 19 times in 20.<sup>1</sup>

Further details on the methodology of both *UAPS* surveys can be found in the main report on the *UAPS*, available at [www.uaps.ca](http://www.uaps.ca).

**IN THIS REPORT.** The *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study – Vancouver Report* is organized into nine chapters.

**Chapter 1, the Urban Context**, provides a demographic snapshot of the Aboriginal population in Vancouver, and information on where study participants are from, how long they have lived in Vancouver and the strength of their connection to Vancouver and to their home community.

**Chapter 2** delivers main findings from the *UAPS* on Aboriginal peoples' expressions of **Aboriginal Identity and Culture** in the city.

**Chapter 3, Experiences with Non-Aboriginal People**, summarizes how Aboriginal peoples living in Vancouver feel perceived by the non-Aboriginal population-at-large.

**Chapter 4, Experiences with Aboriginal Services and Organizations**, explores study participants' perceptions of and interactions with Aboriginal services and organizations in Vancouver.

**Chapter 5** explores how Aboriginal peoples feel about living in Vancouver in **Urban Experiences**.

**Chapter 6, Urban Aspirations**, delves further into contemporary Aboriginal urban experience and explores Aboriginal peoples' life aspirations and definitions of success.

**Chapters 7 and 8** are Special Themes in the Vancouver report: **Confidence in the Criminal Justice System** and **Gender Issues**.

**Chapter 9, Non-Aboriginal Perspectives**, the final chapter of the report, captures non-Aboriginal Vancouver residents' perceptions of Aboriginal peoples, including their awareness of and level of contact with Aboriginal people, their knowledge of salient Aboriginal issues, and the perceived importance of Aboriginal history and culture.

An overview at the beginning of each chapter summarizes the main *UAPS* findings.

*Unless otherwise noted, all of the numbers in the graphs are percentages.*

## *UAPS* participant profile in Vancouver

	# (Unweighted) (%)	% (Weighted)
<b>IDENTITY</b>		
First Nations	168	60
Status	152	55
Non-status	13	4
Métis	85	40
Inuit	8	*
<b>GENDER</b>		
Men	112	46
Women	149	54
<b>AGE</b>		
18-24	42	16
25-44	141	47
45+	78	37
<b>EDUCATION</b>		
No diploma	54	24
High school diploma	79	29
College degree	73	38
University degree	55	9
<b>HOUSEHOLD INCOME</b>		
<\$10,000	40	16
\$10,000 - \$30,000	65	25
\$30,000 - \$60,000	64	23
\$60,000+	63	27
Refused	29	10
<b>LIVING SITUATION</b>		
Renting an apartment or house	159	57
Homeowner	42	19
Living with friends or family	36	14
Renting a room in a rooming house/hostel	9	3
Living in a temporary shelter	6	4
<b>ELDER</b>		
Yes	27	13
No	234	87

\* Less than 0.5%

1 Because the sample for the main survey is based on individuals who initially "self-selected" for participation, no estimate of sampling error can be calculated for the main survey. It should be noted that all surveys, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error, including but not limited to sampling error, coverage error and measurement error.

Published by

**Environics Institute**

900 - 33 Bloor Street East, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4W 3H1

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ISBN 978-0-9866104-0-0

Cover logo generously designed and donated by a **UAPS** research team member who wishes to remain anonymous.

Design by **Gravity Inc.** ([www.gravityinc.ca](http://www.gravityinc.ca)), with layout by Sandra Sarner and editorial by Cathy McKim