

Circles for Reconciliation Gathering Theme

Canadian Public Opinion on Aboriginal Peoples

In June, 2016, Environics Institute published the Final Report of its 2016 national survey of non-Aboriginals in Canada on their attitudes toward Aboriginal peoples. The survey includes many comparisons to a survey they conducted called the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study in 2008. One of many sponsors of the survey was the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

As you hear these findings, try to think about where you fit and where you think your family and friends fit.

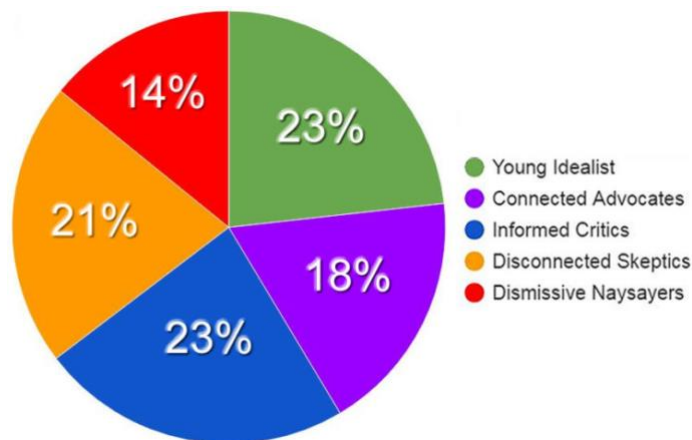
Here are some of the key findings of the 2016 survey with comparative findings with 2008:

1. One quarter (26%) of the non-Aboriginal respondents say that their views of Aboriginal peoples have improved over the last few years. (61% “stayed the same”, 10% gotten worse).
2. Thirteen percent (13%) say that Aboriginal people get special treatment from governments, abuse their privileges, and take handouts rather than contribute to society.
3. Without being prompted, here is where respondents say they learn about Aboriginal peoples;
 - a. School/education 45%; media, newspapers 36%; contact with Aboriginal people 24%; have Aboriginal friends, coworkers 21%.
4. Three out of four say they pay “a great deal of attention” (22%) or “some attention” (51%) to news and stories about Aboriginal peoples. The “great deal” of attention has gone from 12% to 22% since 2009.
5. In addition to paying attention to Aboriginal news and stories, 80% of non-Aboriginals express a desire to know more about Aboriginal cultures. This includes 39% who “strongly agree” and 40% who “somewhat agree.”
6. “Personal contact with Aboriginal peoples” has not changed much since 2009; “Often” (26%), occasionally, (30%)

7. A majority (56%) agreed more needs to be done to educate school children about abuse and discrimination faced by Aboriginals,
8. 75% said funding for reserve schools should match what is paid in the rest of Canada.
9. The biggest challenge faced by Aboriginals, when asked unprompted, is “stigma, inequality, discrimination.” It topped the list (18%, up from 6% in 2008) of about ten issues.
10. There is little optimism among Non-Aboriginals that progress is being made in narrowing the gap in living standards (“getting bigger” 22%; “Not really changing” 54 %).
11. There is no consensus on the biggest obstacles to achieving economic and social equality (Government 26%; “Aboriginal people themselves” 26%, attitude of Canadian public 18%).
12. Nine out of ten say Aboriginal people are “often” (46%) or “sometimes” the subject of discrimination. This perception has increased by 13% since 2004 and 2006 surveys.
13. Awareness of residential schools is only 52% among 18-29 year olds, but 80% among those 60+.
14. There is an increase in agreement that Canadians have a role in reconciliation; 84% up from 67% in 2008.

THE BIG PICTURE

After compiling the answers to all the questions, the researchers came up with five non-Indigenous world views on Indigenous peoples.



Connected Advocates (18%) High level of contact and strong belief that Indigenous peoples often experience discrimination.

Young Idealists (23%) Idealistic and optimistic, Close to Connected Advocates but they do not have as much knowledge of history and current challenges and not the same level of personal engagement. They may be the next group of Connected Advocates. Female and urban, concentrated in Toronto and Montreal, immigrants, often students.

Informed Critics (23%) Knowledgeable like the Advocates, but not especially sympathetic to challenges and aspirations of Aboriginals. Oldest and most affluent of all five groups, and most urban, concentrated in the West.

Disconnected Skeptics (21%) Uninformed and unaware, they typically think Aboriginal peoples are no different from other Canadians. Like the Dismissive naysayers, but without the emotional negativity. Simply don't know and don't care. More of a male-dominated group, often young and foreign born. Found in Quebec and rural regions.

Dismissive Naysayers (14%), tend to view Aboriginal peoples and communities negatively, i.e., entitled and isolated from Canadian society. Opposite end of spectrum from Advocates. Most likely to be male, somewhat older, higher than average incomes but not higher than average education. Least urban and concentrated on the prairies.

1. Sharing Circle.

How do we feel about this information? (The initial response from a number of Aboriginal leaders in the country is a sense of cautious optimism).

- Have you encountered people who share these world views?
- How do you respond to people who make uninformed, inaccurate, or negative comments about Aboriginal people.
- How can you become a better Committed Advocate?

5. Resources:

Recommended Readings

[The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report](#)

Did you know? Each of the seven flames in the circle of the TRC's logo represents one of the Seven Sacred Teachings – Truth, Humility, Honesty, Wisdom, Respect, Courage, and Love.

[94 Calls to Action from the TRC](#)

In order to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission makes the following calls to action.

ii. [Videos](#)

iii. Organizations

iv. Actions