

# Knowledge and connections to Aboriginal peoples

## Sources of information

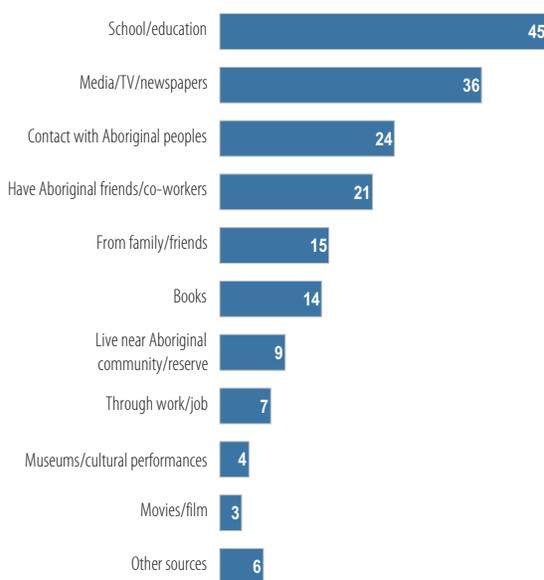
*Non-Aboriginal Canadians cite a variety of sources of information about Aboriginal peoples, with the education system being most prominent. Most claim to be paying at least some attention to Aboriginal stories in the news, and express a desire to learn more about Aboriginal cultures.*

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

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

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

Sources of learning about Aboriginal peoples



Q8.

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

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

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

**PAYING ATTENTION TO NEWS AND STORIES ABOUT ABORIGINAL PEOPLES.**

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

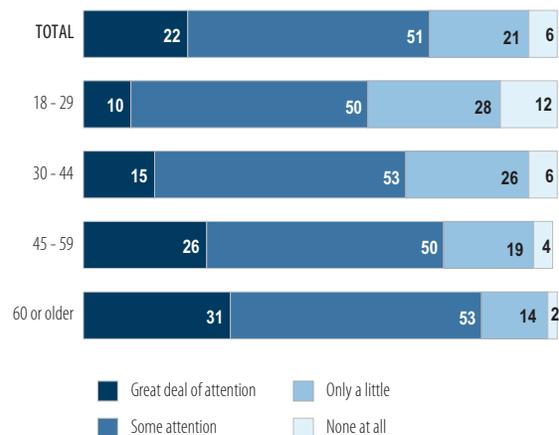
In 2016, three in four say they are paying a great deal of (22%) or some attention (51%) to news and stories about Aboriginal peoples. Very few – just six percent – report to be paying no attention at all to these stories or issues. There is some indication that Canadians are indeed paying more attention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

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

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

How much attention paid to news and stories about Aboriginal peoples

By age cohort



Q.9

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

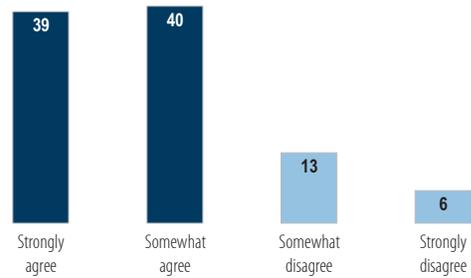
**INTEREST IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT ABORIGINAL CULTURES.**

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

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

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

Would be personally interested in learning more about Aboriginal cultures



Q.31g

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

## Personal contact with Aboriginal peoples

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

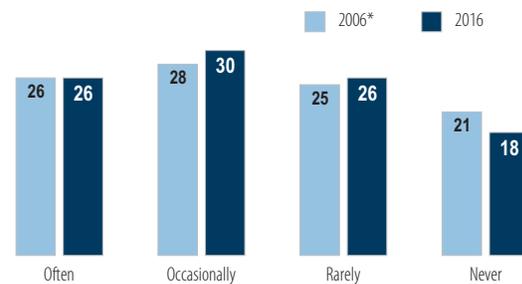
**How often do non-Aboriginal Canadians have an opportunity to have direct contact with Aboriginal peoples?** More than half say they personally have such contact on a frequent (26%) or occasional (30%) basis, with the balance saying this happens rarely (26%) or not at all (18%). Frequency of contact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

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

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

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

Frequency of personal contact with Aboriginal peoples



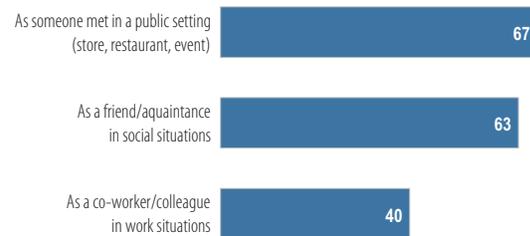
\* Environics Research Focus Canada (December 2006)

Q.10

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

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

Among those who have had personal contact



Q.11

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

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

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