



# Urban Aboriginal Voices:

A Landmark Study of Canada's Urban Aboriginal Peoples

Thunder Bay Findings

ENVIRONICS  
• INSTITUTE •

# The study is an initiative of the Environics Institute...

- Non-profit foundation, established in 2006 by Environics Research co-founder Michael Adams
- Dedicated to the study and execution of opinion research on issues of public importance
- Seeks to inform and stimulate dialogue by:
  - Commissioning original survey research
  - Working with media partners to disseminate results
  - Instigate public engagement to discuss implications of the research

# Approaching the initiative as an independent actor.

- No previous profile or position on Aboriginal issues
- Contacted and consulted a wide range of stakeholders, early and often
- Non-profit model featured:
  - Hands-off involvement by sponsors
  - Full public release of research
  - No position on study implications for policy
  - Commitment to making results useful to Aboriginal community, other stakeholders



# About the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study

# Objectives of UAPS

- Understand the experiences, identities, values, and aspirations of urban Aboriginal peoples
- Use survey research to give voice to good news, positive narratives and hopeful scenarios for the future
- Provide new insights that help reframe the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people
- Build capacity to support further research and understanding of First Nations, Métis and Inuit living in Canadian cities

# Execution

- The research team in Thunder Bay led by Shelley Knott, Acosys Consulting
- Three separate research elements:
  - Aboriginal Peoples survey: *250 per city, in-person interviews*
  - non-Aboriginal survey: *250 per city, telephone interviews*
  - survey of National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation scholars: *180 scholars, online survey*
- UAPS video archive (First Nations University): *50 video interviews*

# UAPS Advisory Circle

- Allan Benoit Métis Nation
- John Berry Queen's University
- Ellen Bielawski University of Alberta
- Lewis Cardinal Cardinal Strategic Communications
- Hayden King McMaster University
- Peter Dinsdale National Association of Friendship Centres
- Calvin Helin Lawyer, author of *Dances with Dependency*
- Calvin Hanselmann Research Director, National Association of Friendship Centres
- Corinne Jetté President and CEO, Mount Pleasant Educational Services Inc.
- Caroline Krause Former principal Grandview Elementary School, Faculty of Educ., UBC
- Peter Menzies Centre for Addiction Mental Health
- Katherine Minich University of Toronto
- David Newhouse Trent University
- Andrew Parkin Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation
- John G. Paul Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs
- Evelyn Peters University of Saskatchewan
- Mark Podlasly N'laka'pmx First Nation / Harvard/Queens (fellow)
- Jennifer Rattray Peepeekisis First Nation / University of Winnipeg
- John Richards Simon Fraser University
- Pamela Sparklingeyes Aboriginal Learning Services, Edmonton Catholic School Board
- Noella Steinhauer National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation

# Adapting research methods to fit

- Quota sampling based on 2006 Census profiles
- Range of methods to recruit eligible respondents
- In-person interviews

# UAPS Thunder Bay respondent profile

	Actual (Unweighted)(#)	Weighted (%)
First Nations	177	73
Métis	73	27
Inuit	--	--
18-24	53	19
25-44	121	43
45+	76	38
Men	103	43
Women	147	57
No degree	81	34
High school completed	66	23
College diploma	70	31
University degree	31	10

**In-person survey with 2,614 urban Aboriginal peoples in 11 cities ...the 10 main cities encompass 46% of the urban Aboriginal census population.**

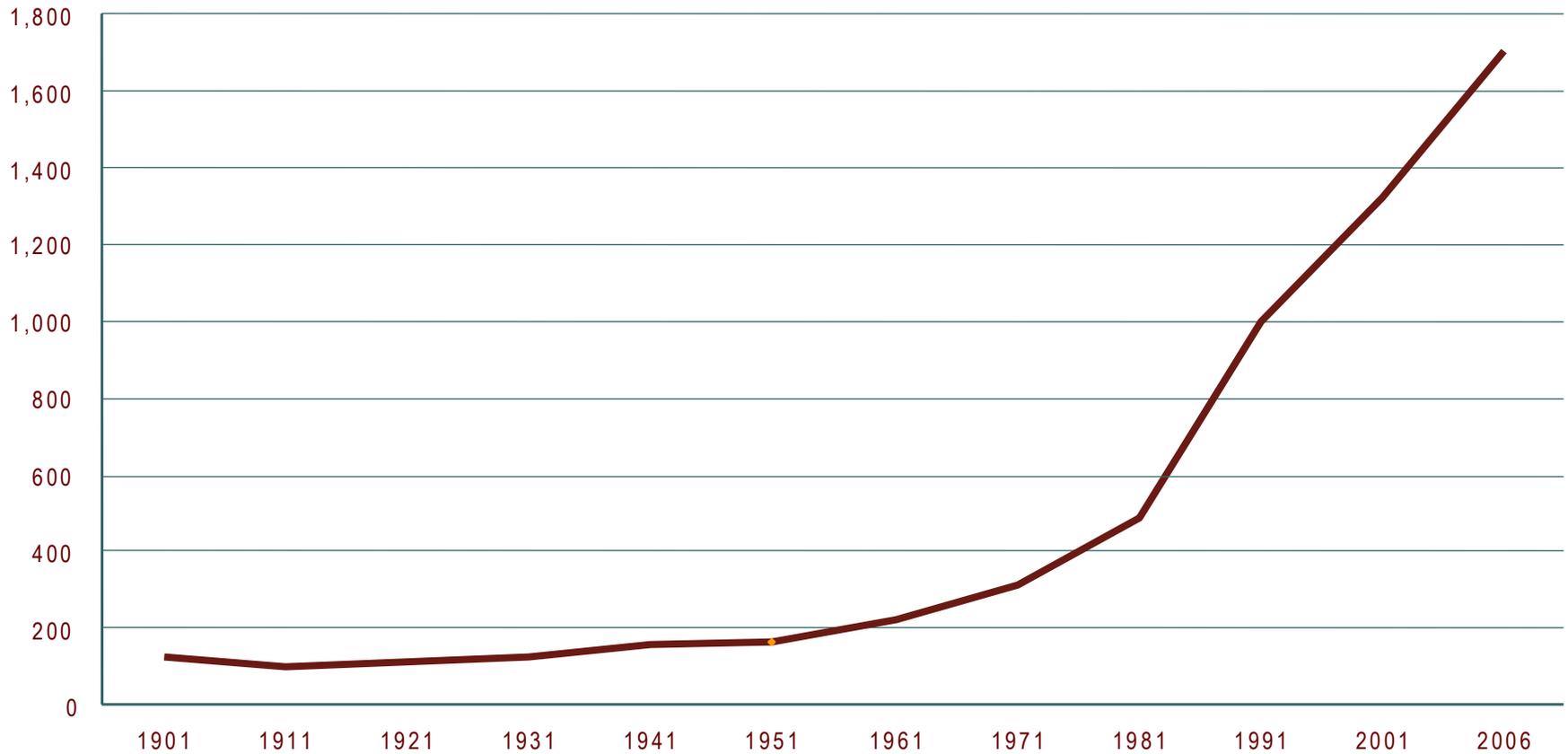


# Why we need to pay attention

- Growing presence in our cities today
- Canada has yet to come to terms with this reality
- Our focus has been on reserve issues and on problems

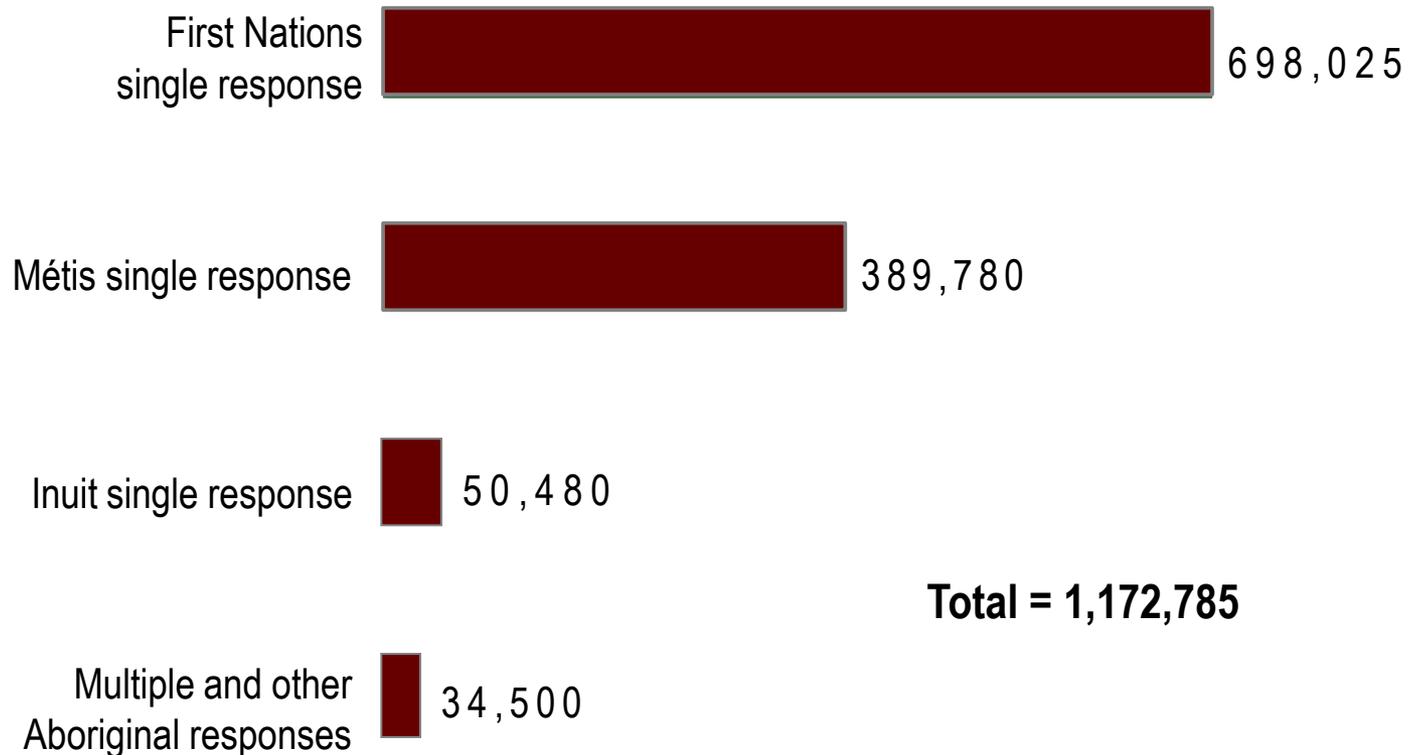
# Canadian population at 33 million in 2006, with nearly 1.8 million reporting Aboriginal ancestry

## Aboriginal Ancestry Population

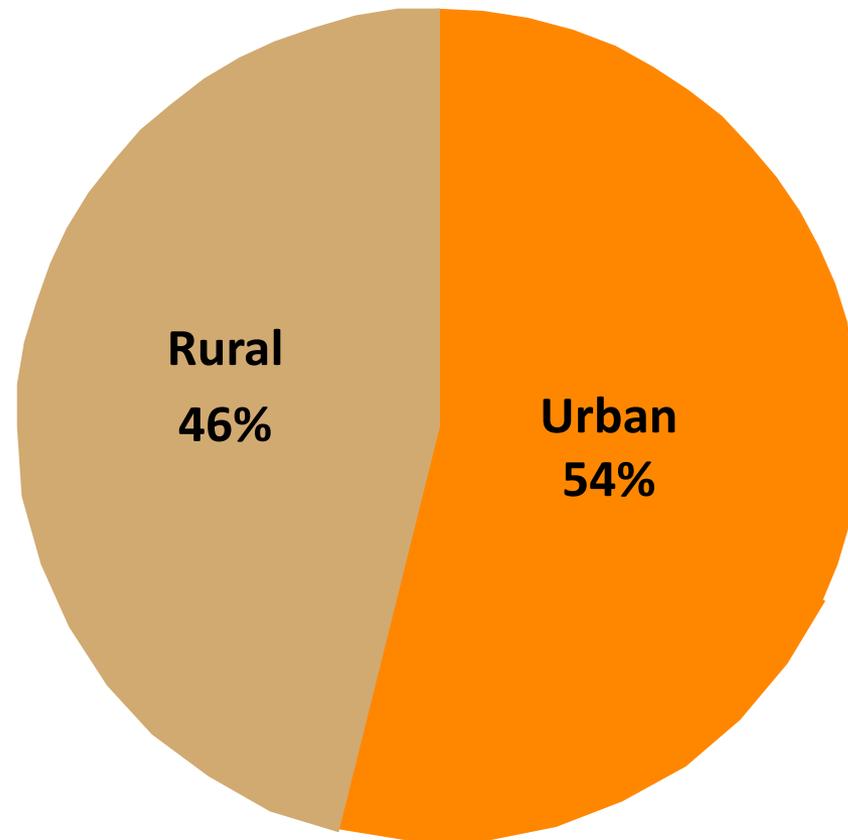


# Of these, 1.2 million report Aboriginal identity, in three distinct groups

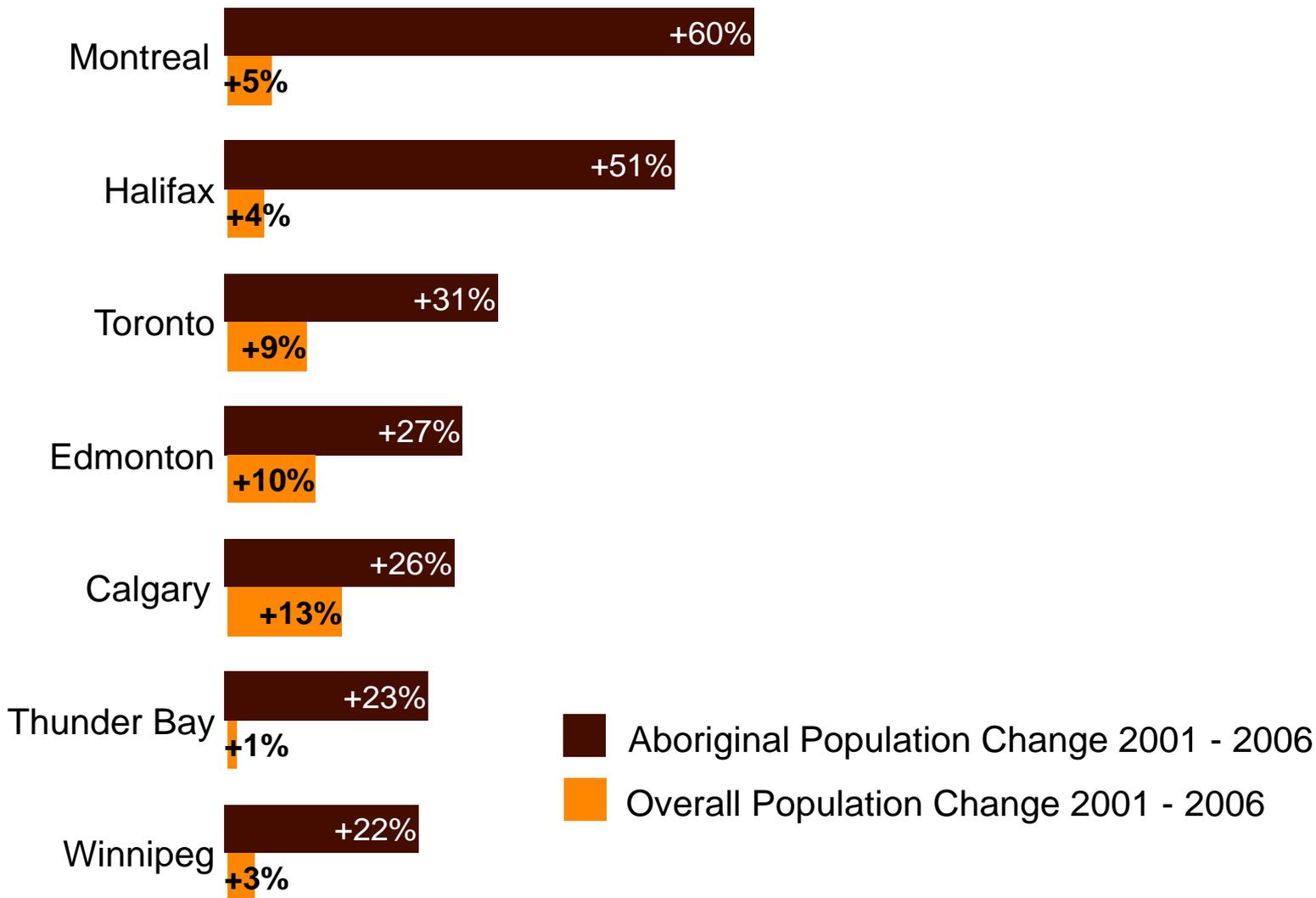
## Aboriginal Identity Population



# One in two of that Aboriginal population live in urban areas...



# ... and these numbers are increasing.





***“Canada is about to become a whole lot  
different in the next couple of generations...”***

**Waubgeshig Rice  
Broadcast journalist and writer  
The Globe and Mail online (July 20, 2009)**

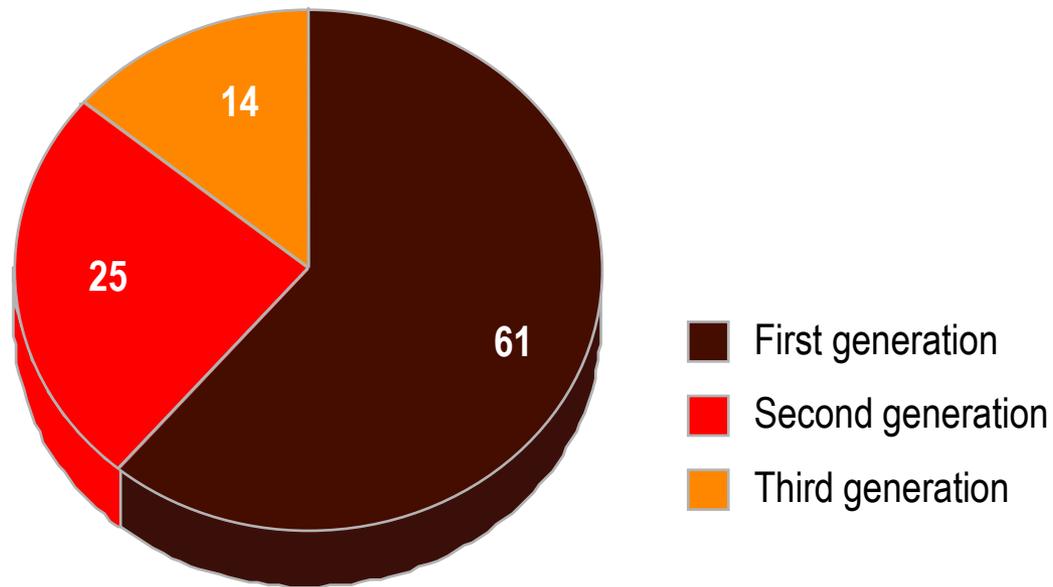


The illustration is composed of several parts: The tail feathers, the body, the head, the feet, and the beak. Each part is labeled with a name in a small font.

## Research Findings

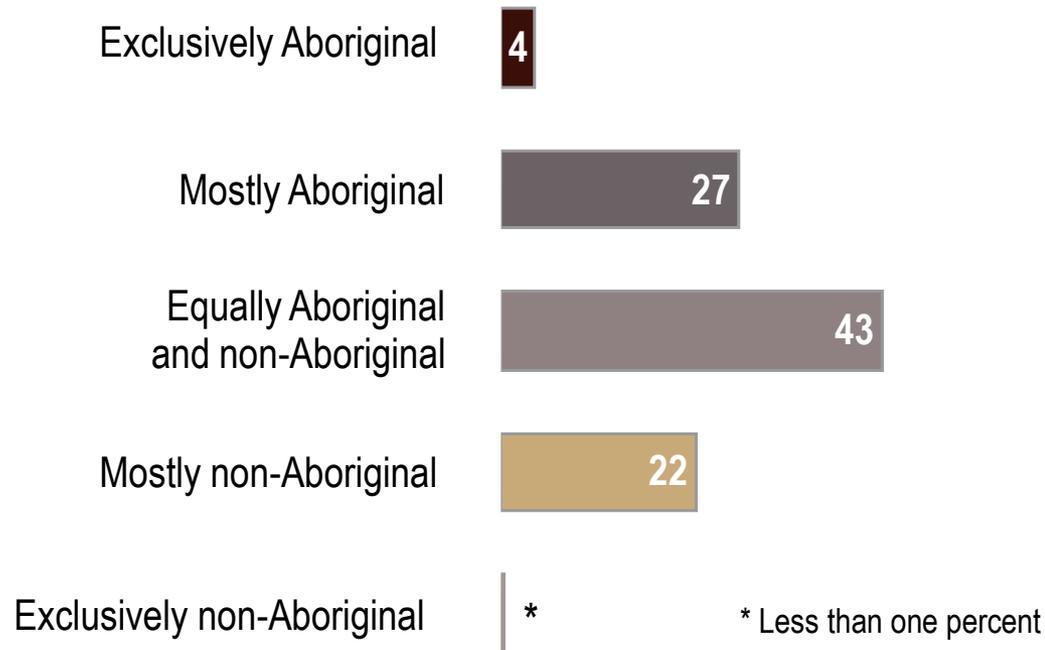
# The majority of UAPS Thunder Bay participants are first generation residents.

First, second and third generation Thunder Bay residents



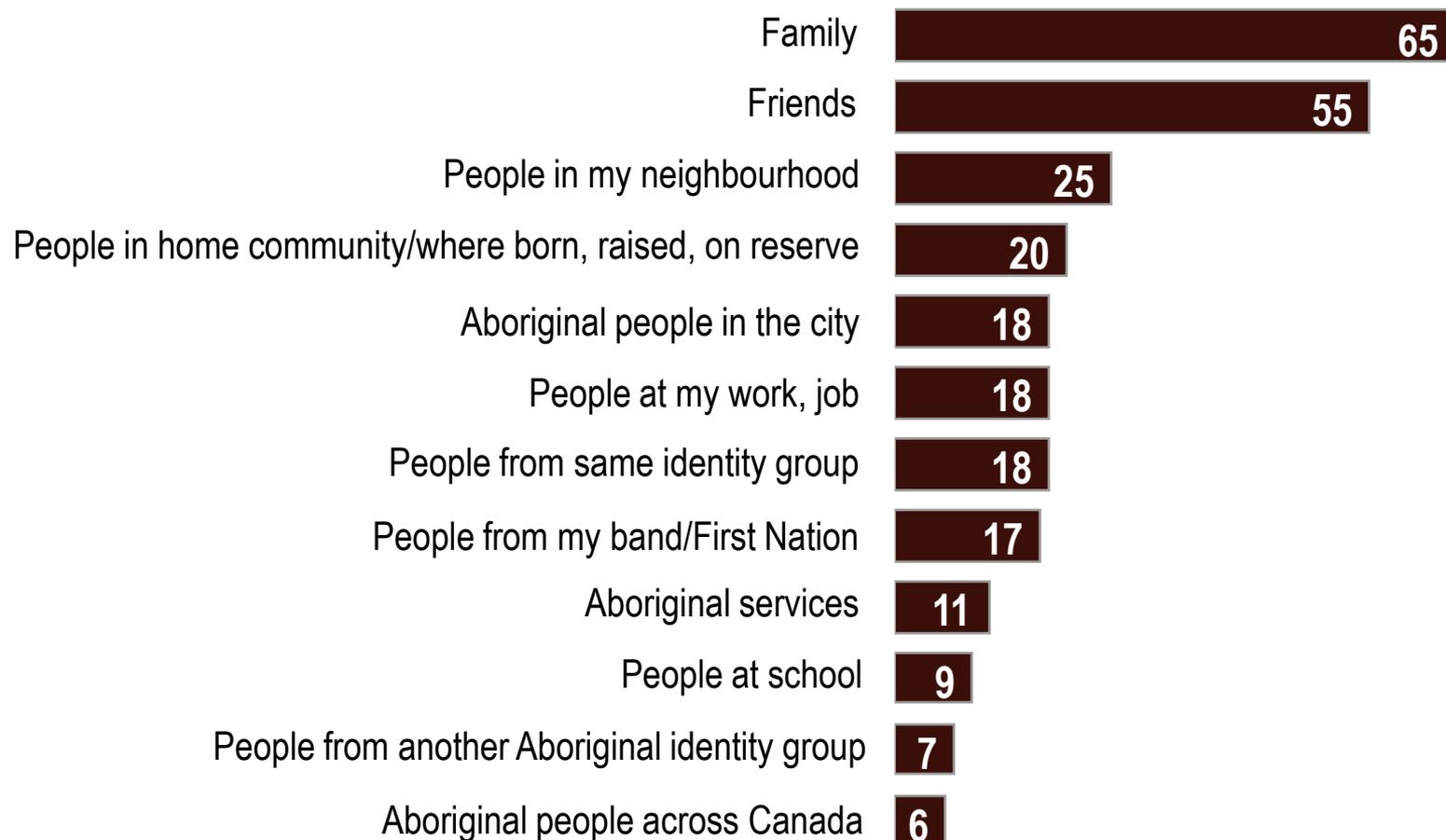
# Many feel that they belong to a diverse community.

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



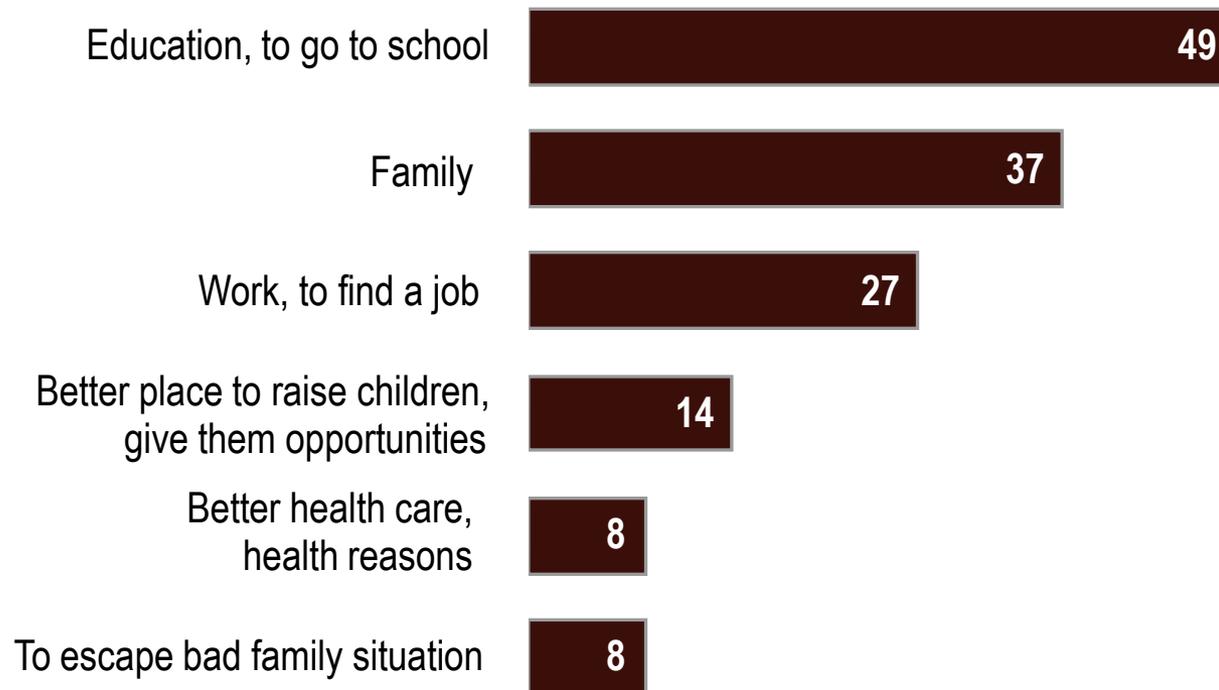
# Definitions of the urban community for Thunder Bay'ers.

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



# They move to Thunder Bay to further their education and for family connections.

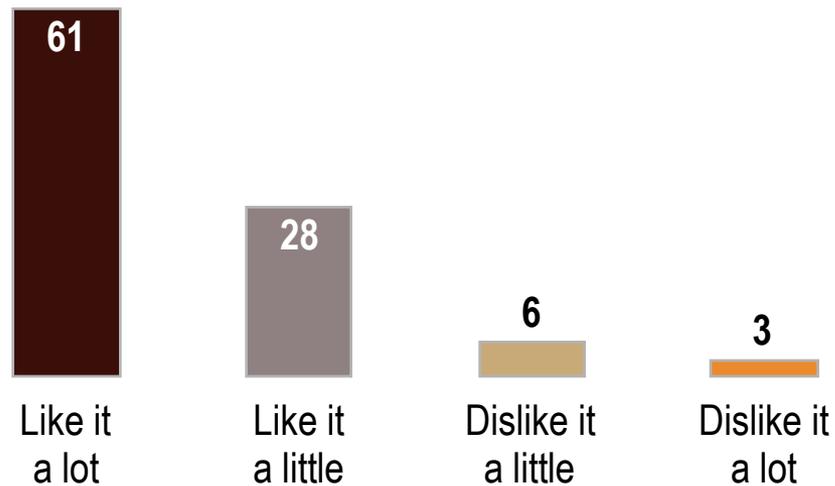
What is the most important reason why you *first* moved to Thunder Bay?



\*Subsample: Among those who were not born or raised in Thunder Bay.

# And they like living in Thunder Bay.

How much do you like living in Thunder Bay?



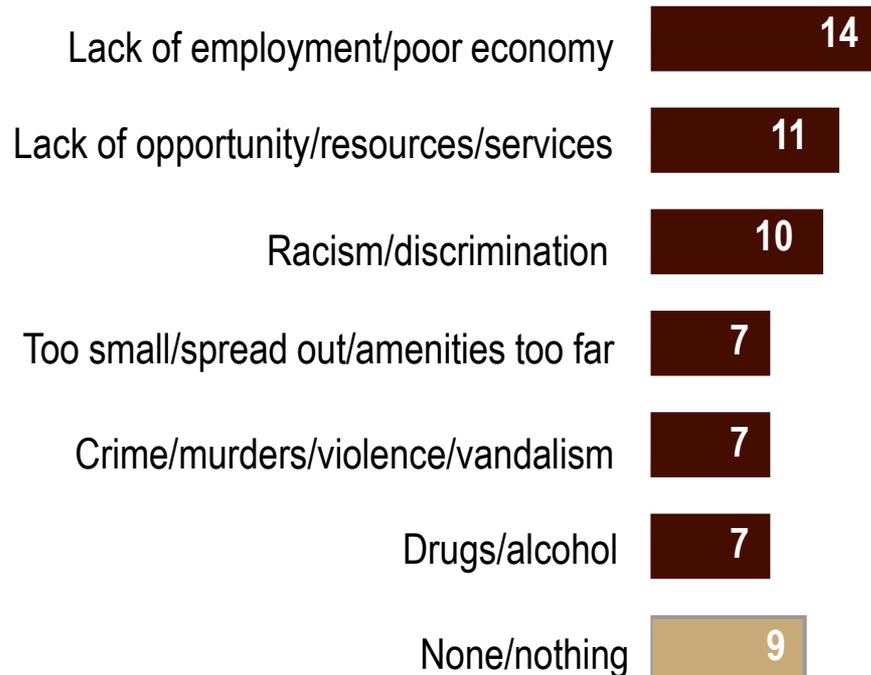
# Many enjoy the sense of community in Thunder Bay...

What is it you like most about living here?



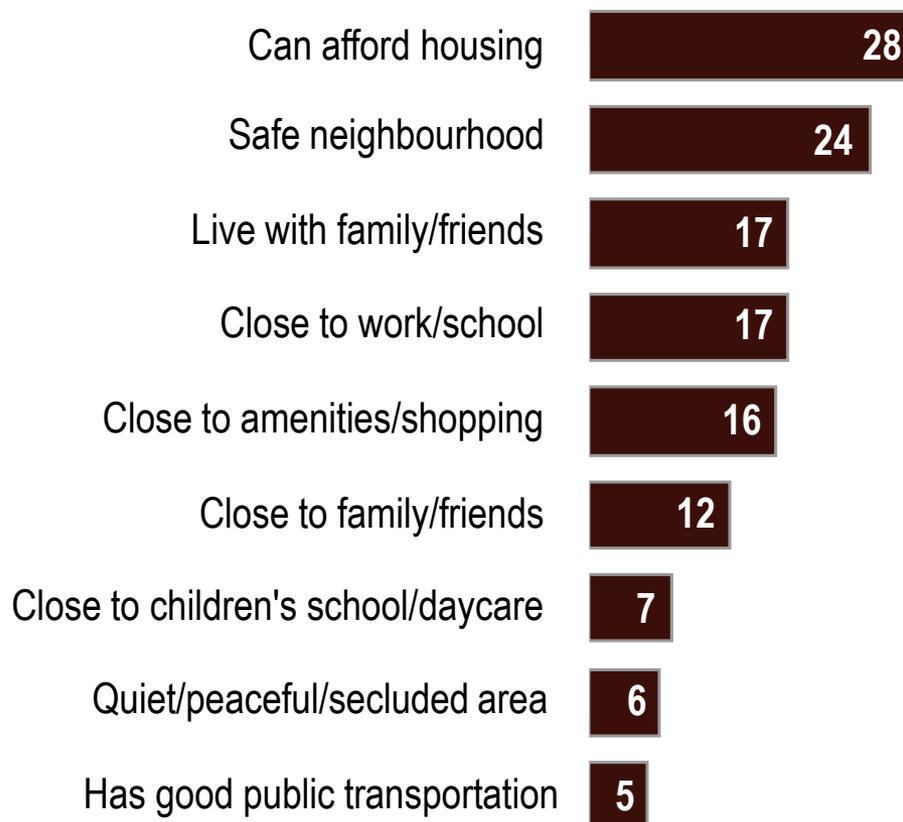
# ...but do not feel there are opportunities for employment.

What do you like least about living in Thunder Bay?



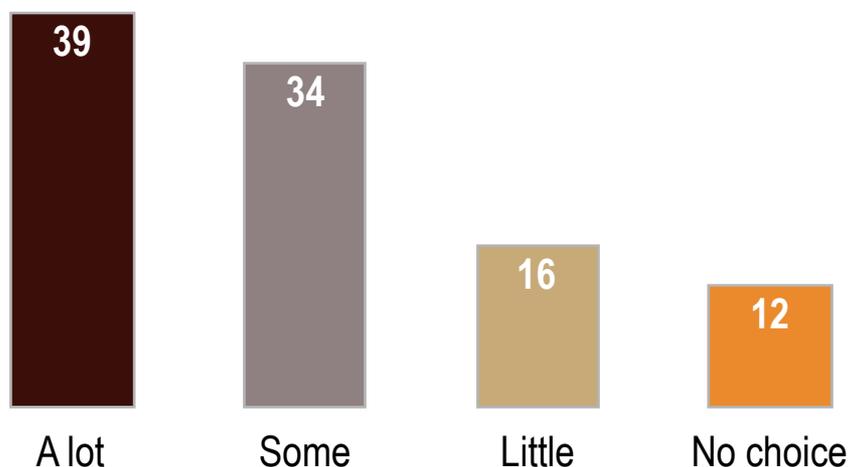
# Neighbourhood choice is influenced primarily by cost.

Why do you live in the neighbourhood you do?



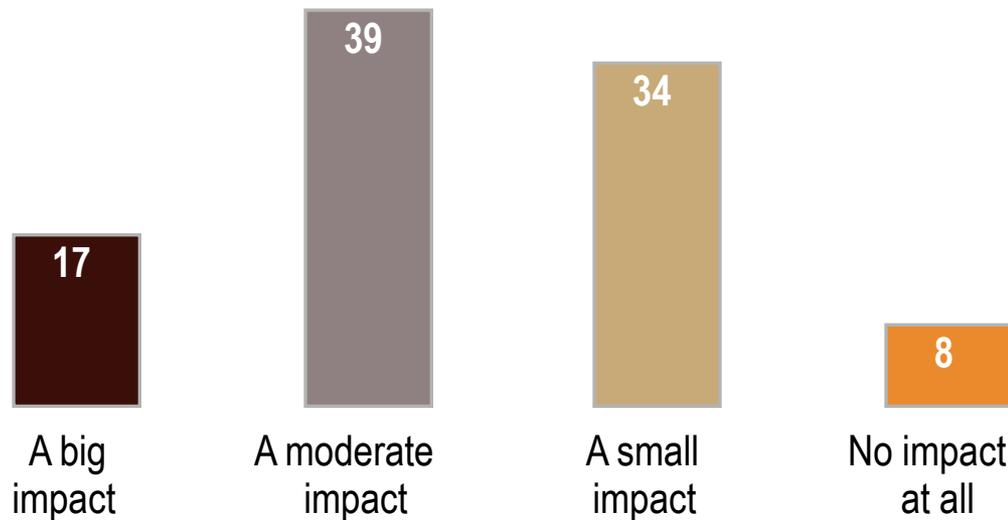
## A small majority feel that they have a lot of choice in where they can live in the city.

To what extent do you feel you have a choice about the neighbourhood you live in?



# Many feel that they can make a difference in making Thunder Bay a better place to live.

Overall, how much impact do you think people like you can have in making your city a better place to live?

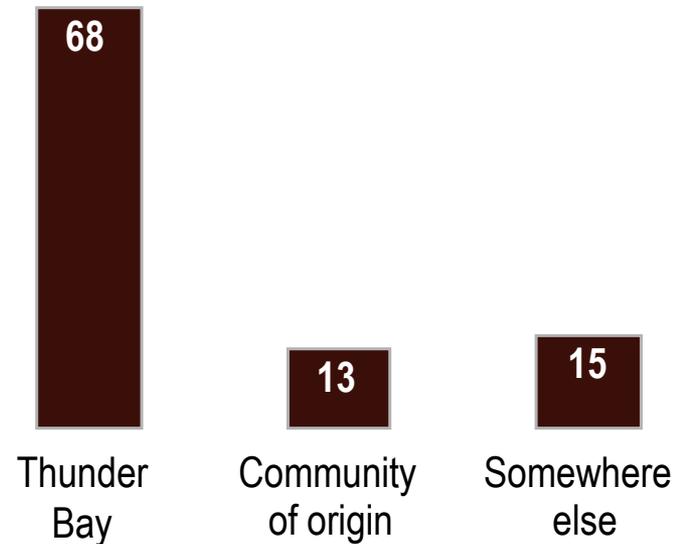


Aboriginal people are *not* rooted in remote communities



# A majority feel that the City of Thunder Bay is home.

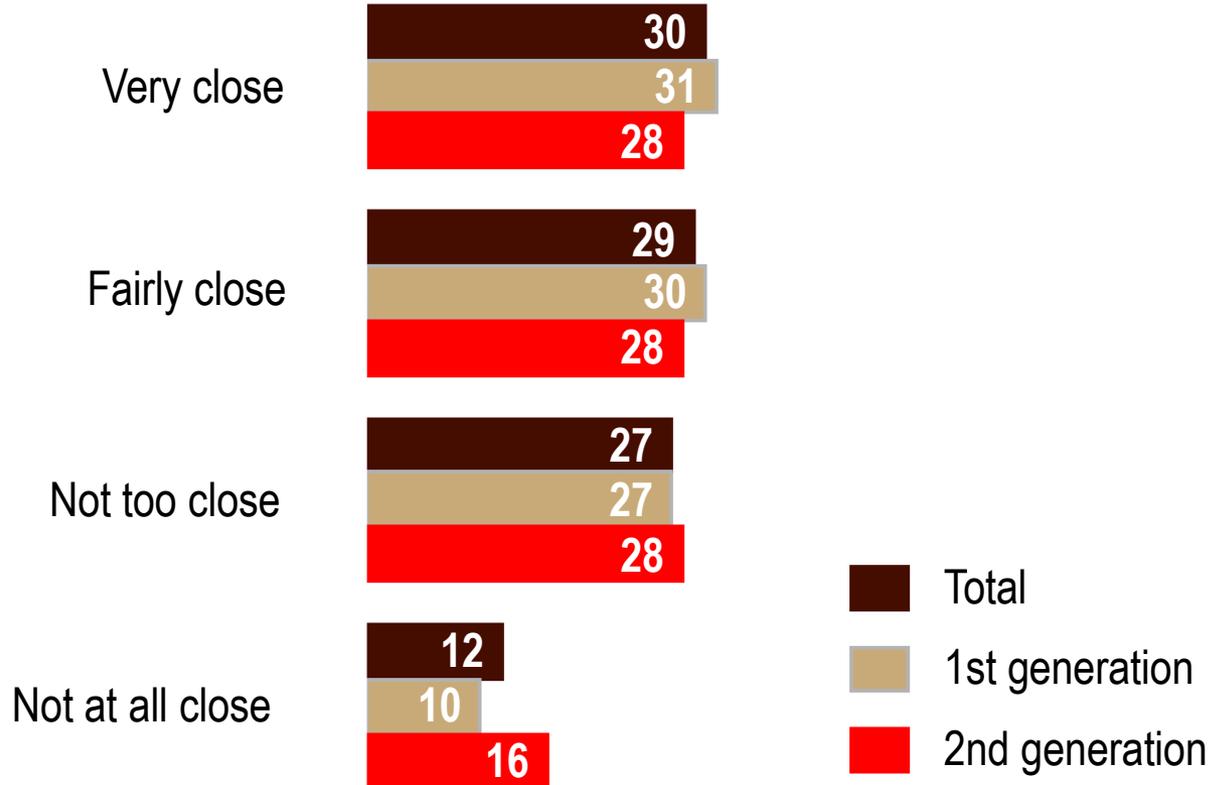
Where is home for you? Is it Thunder Bay, your home community, or somewhere else?



\* Subsample: Those who were not born or raised in Thunder Bay; those who have lived in Thunder Bay all their life and whose parents/grandparents are from another place.

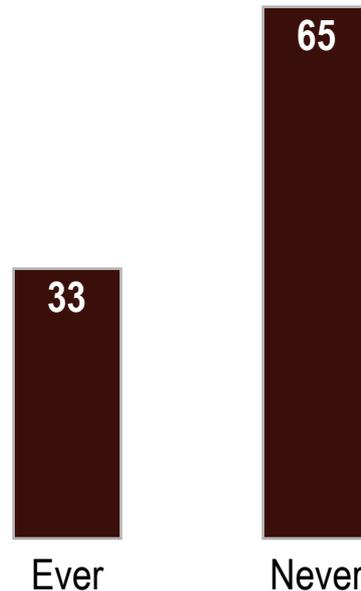
# The connection to home remains strong, but there is disconnect.

How close a connection do you feel to your home community?  
(The place where your parents and grandparents are from?)



# A majority have never moved back to their community since moving to Thunder Bay.

Since you first moved to Thunder Bay, have you ever moved back to your home community?

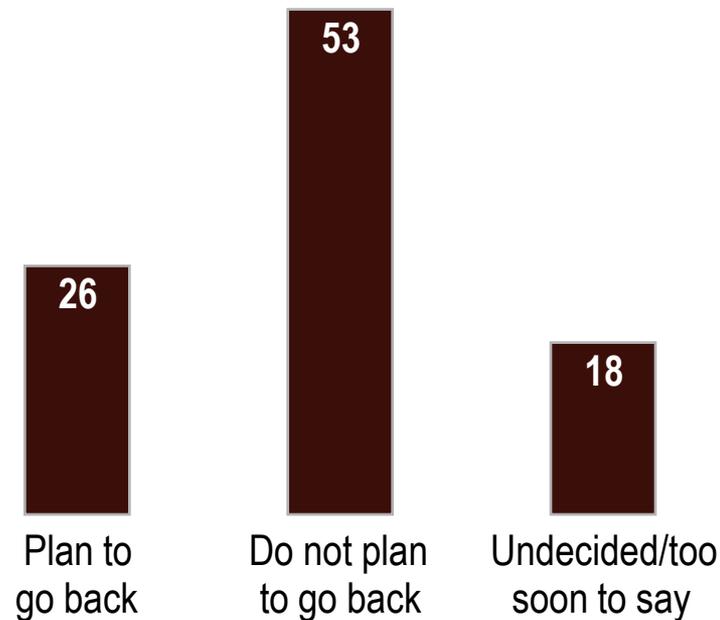


Note: 2% said dk/na

\* Subsample: Those who were not born or raised in Thunder Bay.

## Only a minority plan to return to their home communities permanently.

Do you plan to go back to live in your home community (place where your parents/grandparents are from) permanently one day, or not?

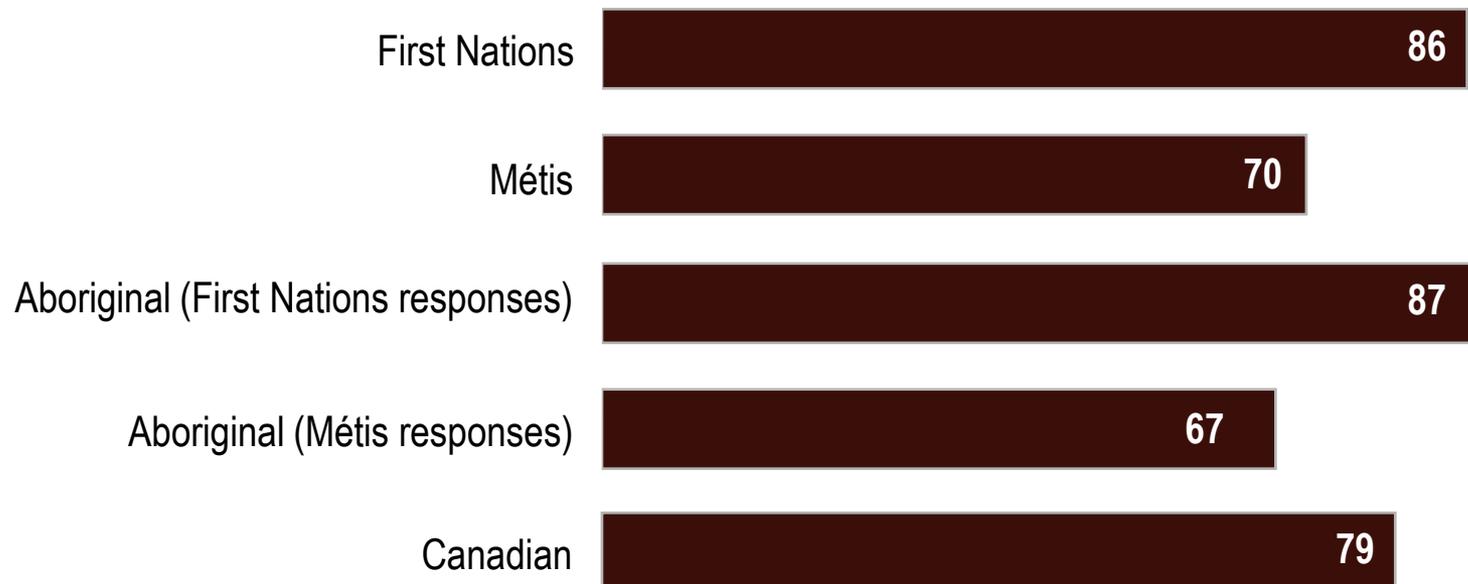


# Identity and Culture



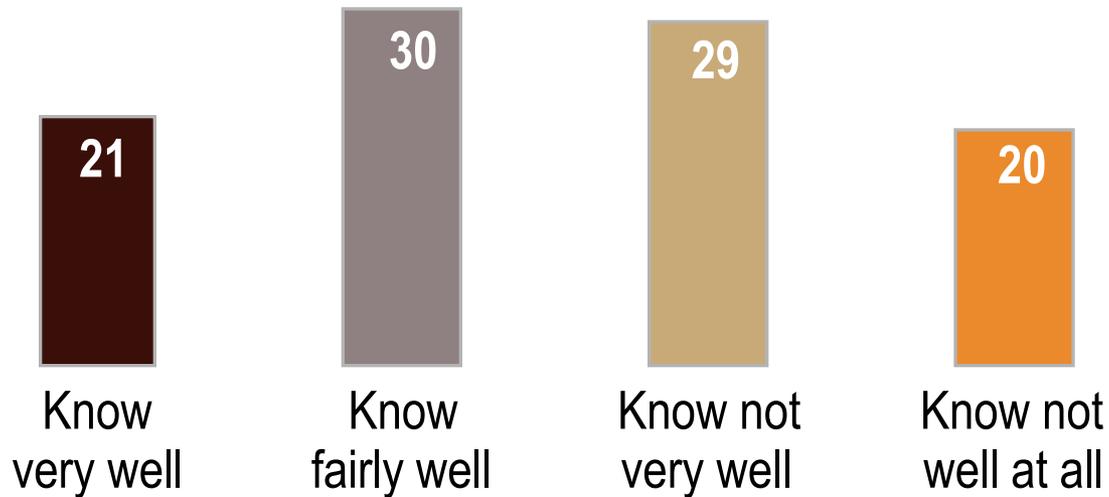
# There is strong Indigenous pride... ...and pride in Canada.

Are you very proud to be...



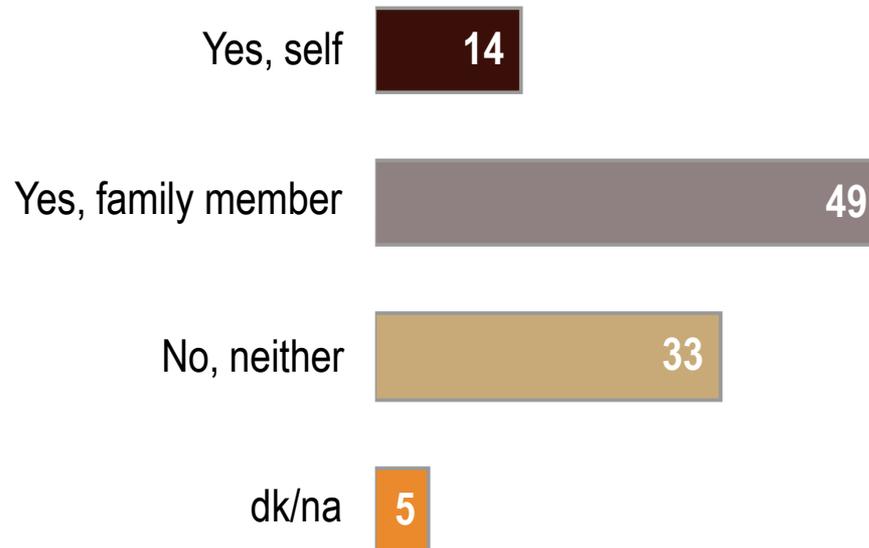
# And there is a small majority who have a connection to their heritage, and many who do not.

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



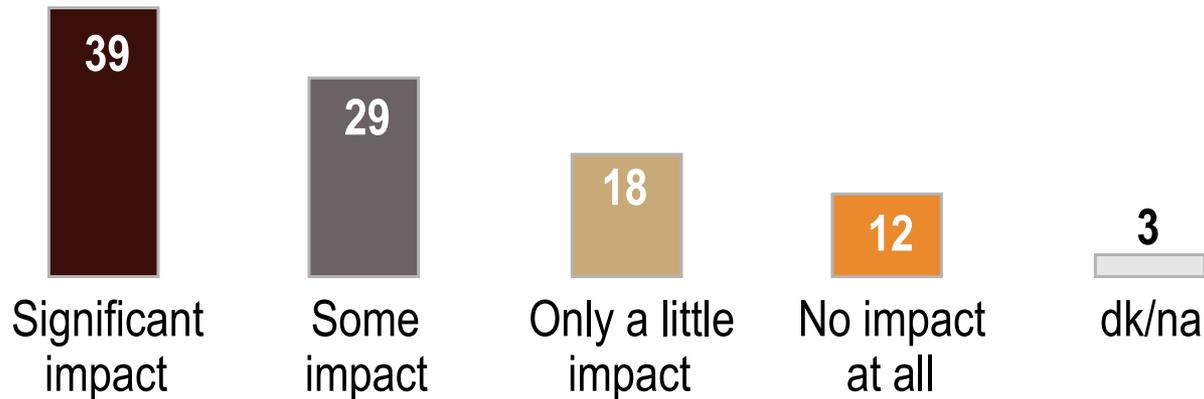
## Many have been personally affected by Residential Schools.

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



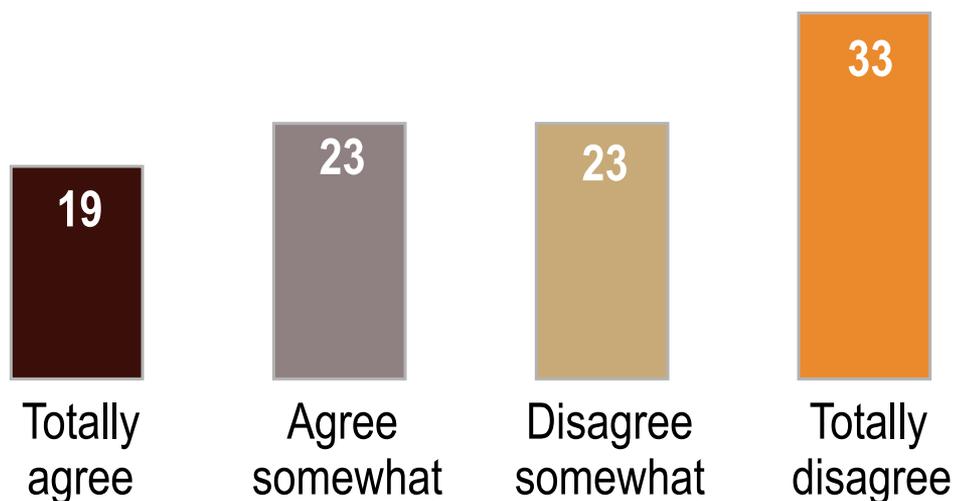
## And it continues to impact them today.

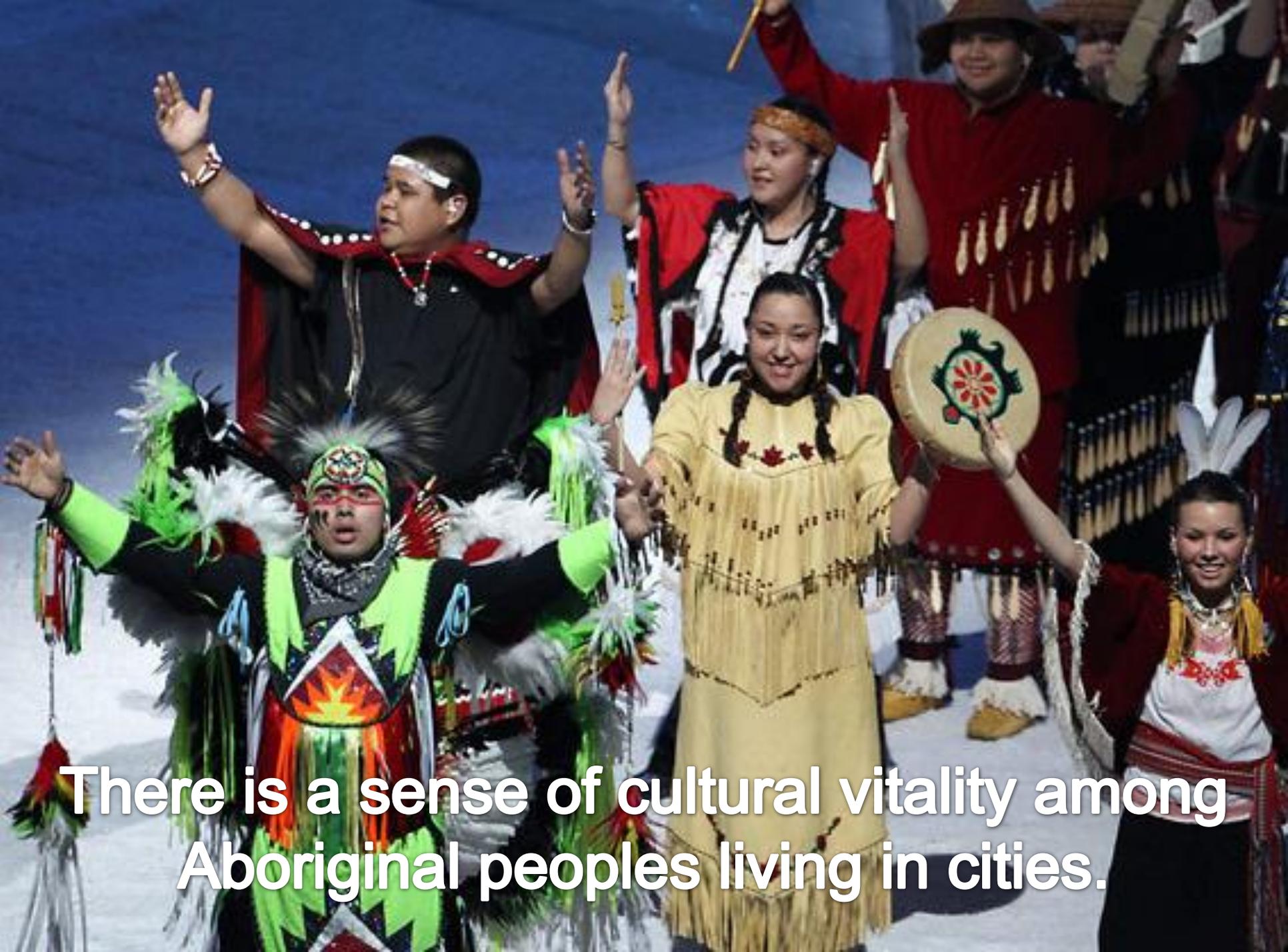
To what extent has this experience/or the experience shaped your life and who you are today?



## Those who say they are concerned about losing their cultures are in the minority...

*"I am concerned about losing my cultural identity."*

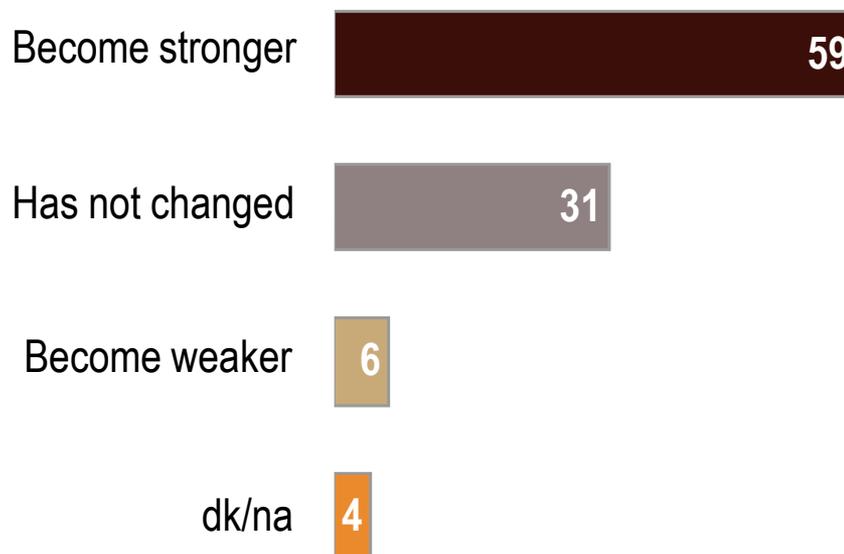




**There is a sense of cultural vitality among  
Aboriginal peoples living in cities.**

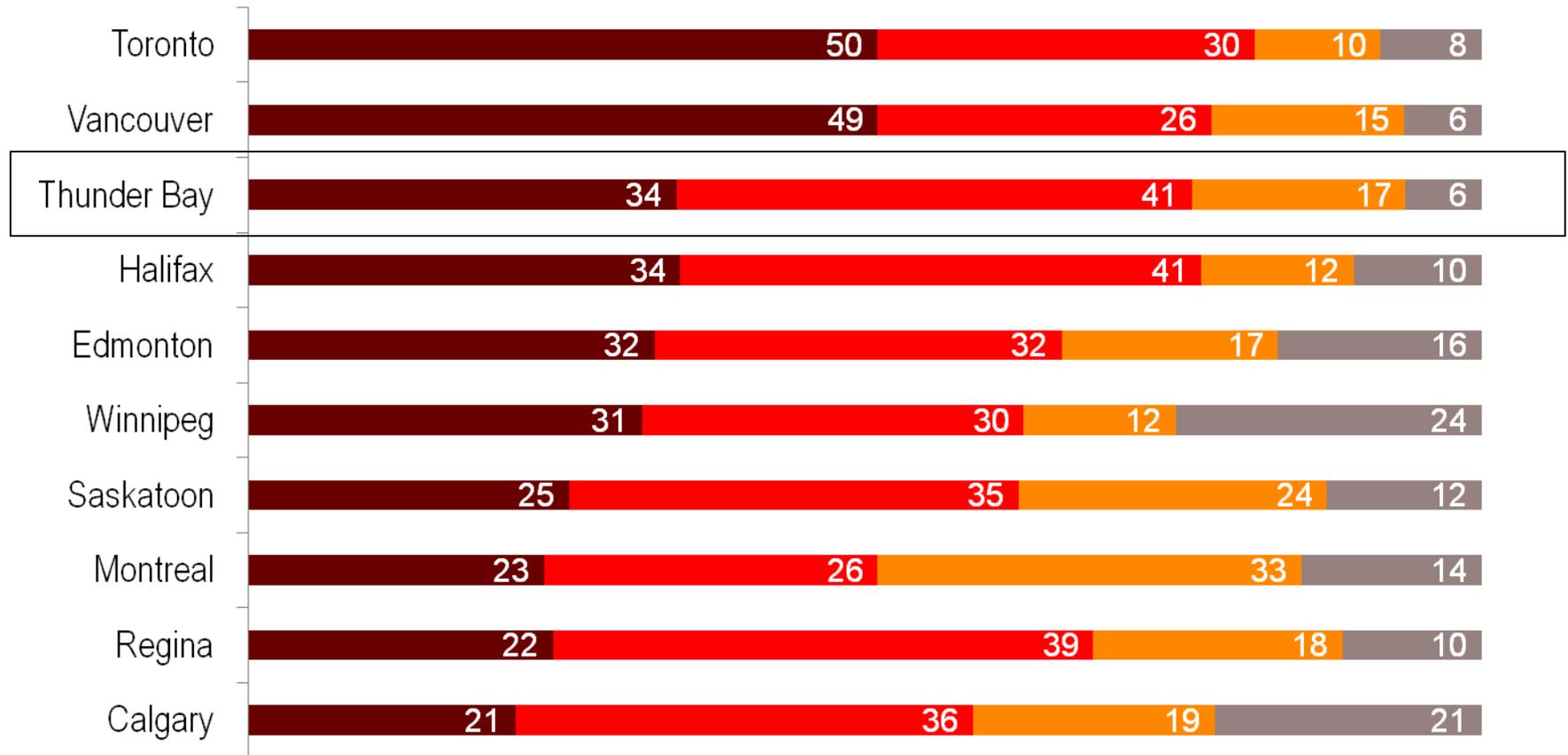
# A majority feel that Aboriginal culture in Thunder Bay has grown stronger than weaker.

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



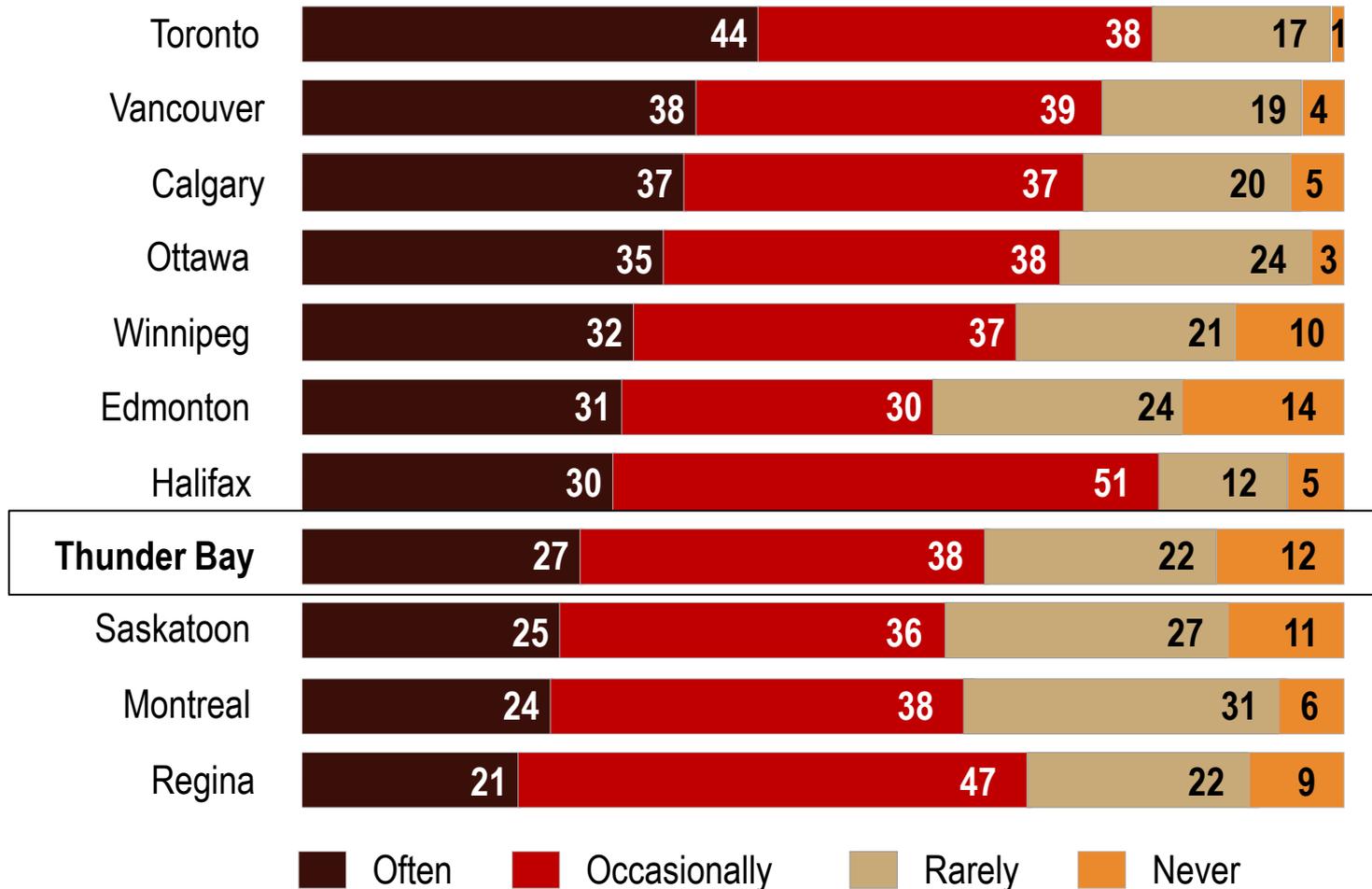
# Many are aware of cultural activities within the city, although some are not.

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



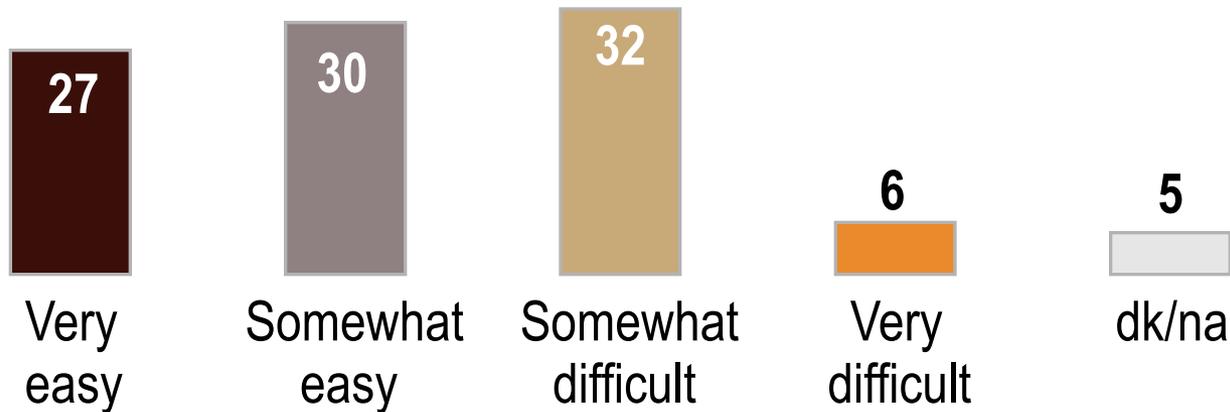
# And Aboriginal Thunder Bay'ers *occasionally* participate in cultural activities.

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



## Many also feel that they have access to traditional healing, although some do not.

How easy or difficult is it for you to access traditional healing practices, such as natural medicines, healing circles, and other ceremonies, and the counsel of elders?

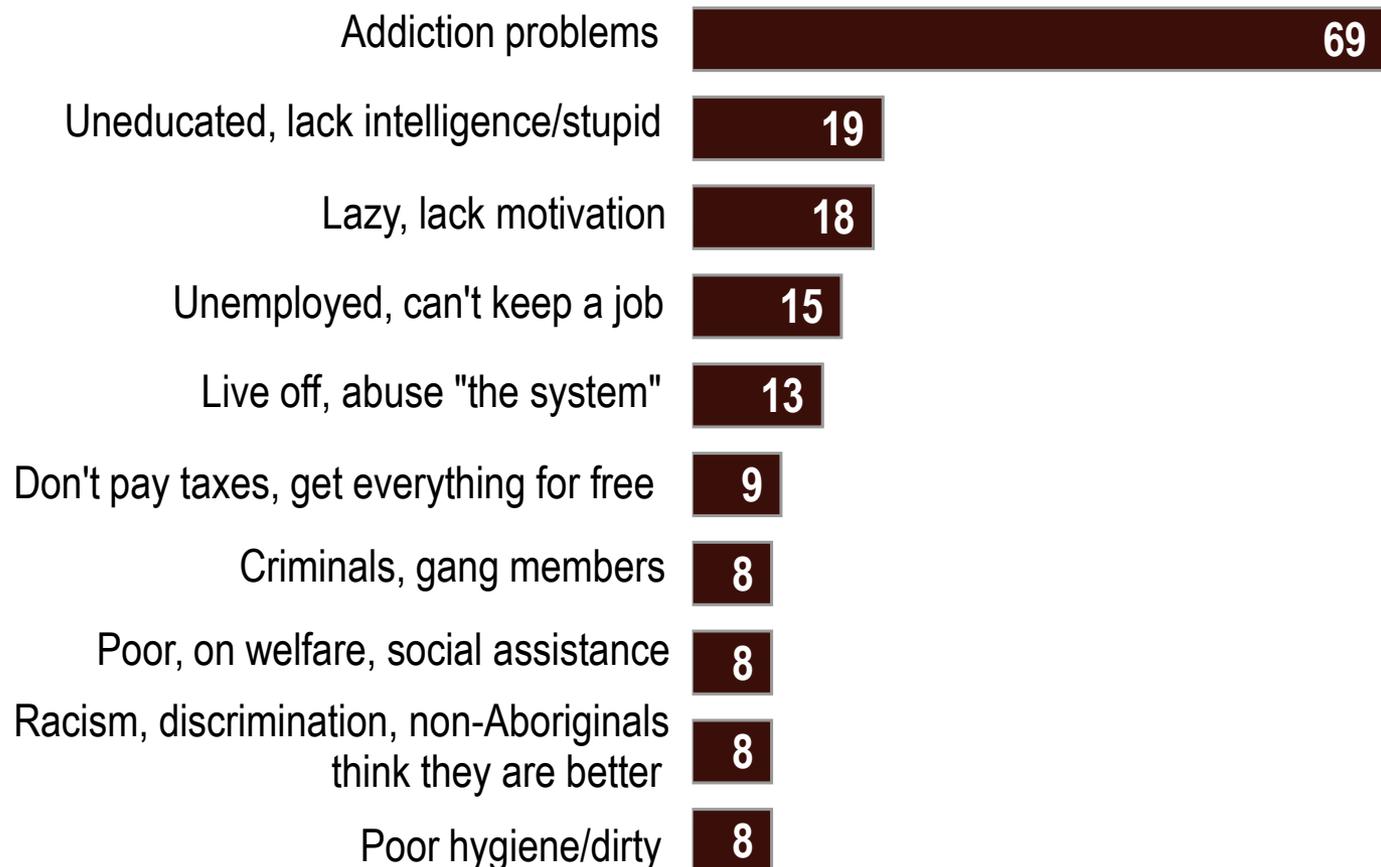




**The picture is far from perfect...**

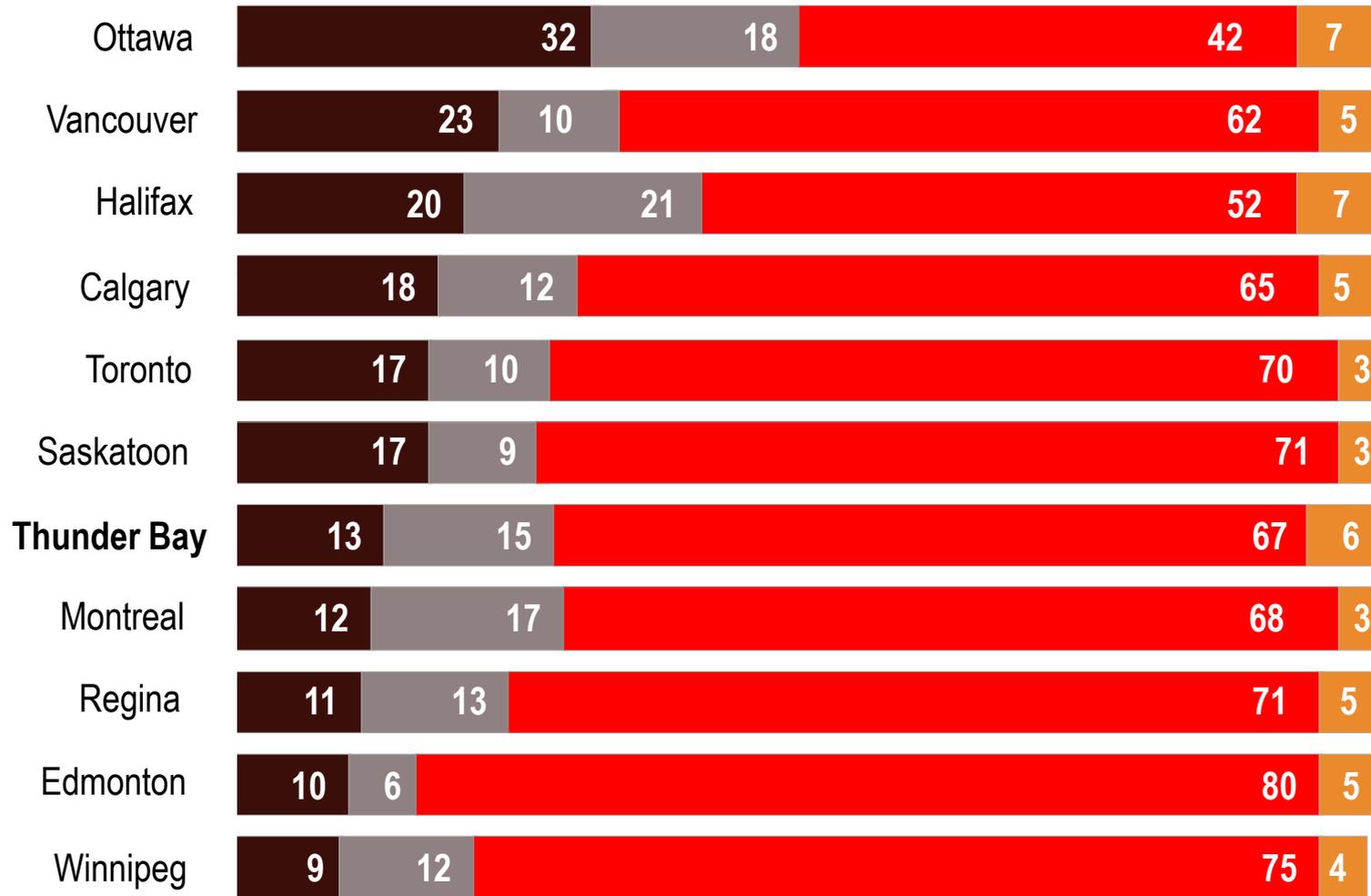
# Many Aboriginal Thunder Bay'ers feel they are perceived negatively.

What do you believe are the most common stereotypes that non-Aboriginal people hold about Aboriginal people, if any?



# Perceptions of non-Aboriginal peoples impressions

Do you think non-Aboriginal people's impression of Aboriginal people is generally positive or negative?



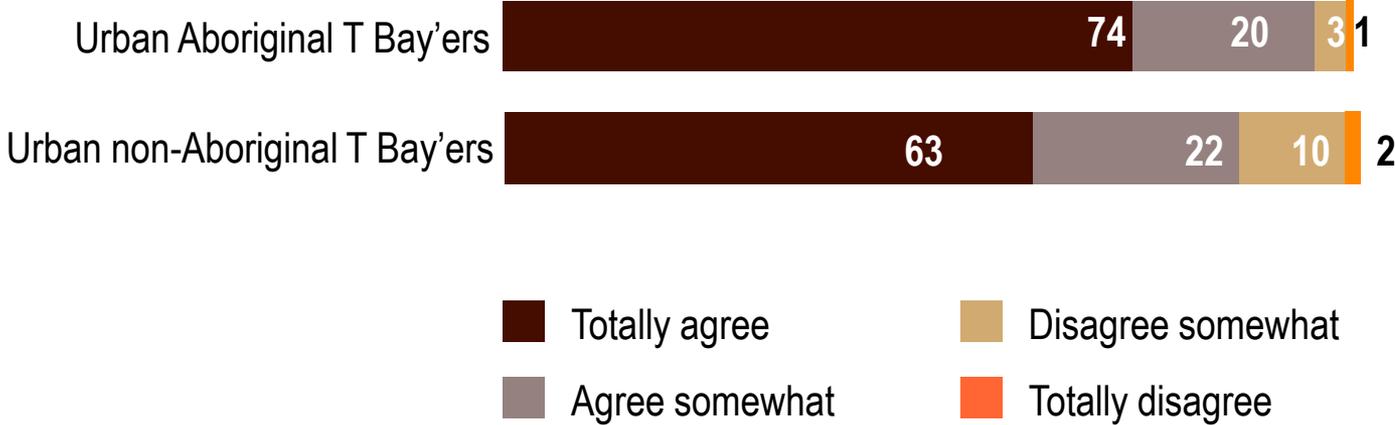
General positive
  Neither positive/negative
  Generally negative
  dk/na

# ...and experience discrimination.

	<b>% Agree</b>	<b>% Disagree</b>
“I think others behave in an unfair/negative way toward Aboriginal people”	<b>86</b>	12
“I have been teased/insulted because of my Aboriginal background”	<b>68</b>	30

# ... and a large majority embrace pluralism... even more so than non-Aboriginal Canadians.

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

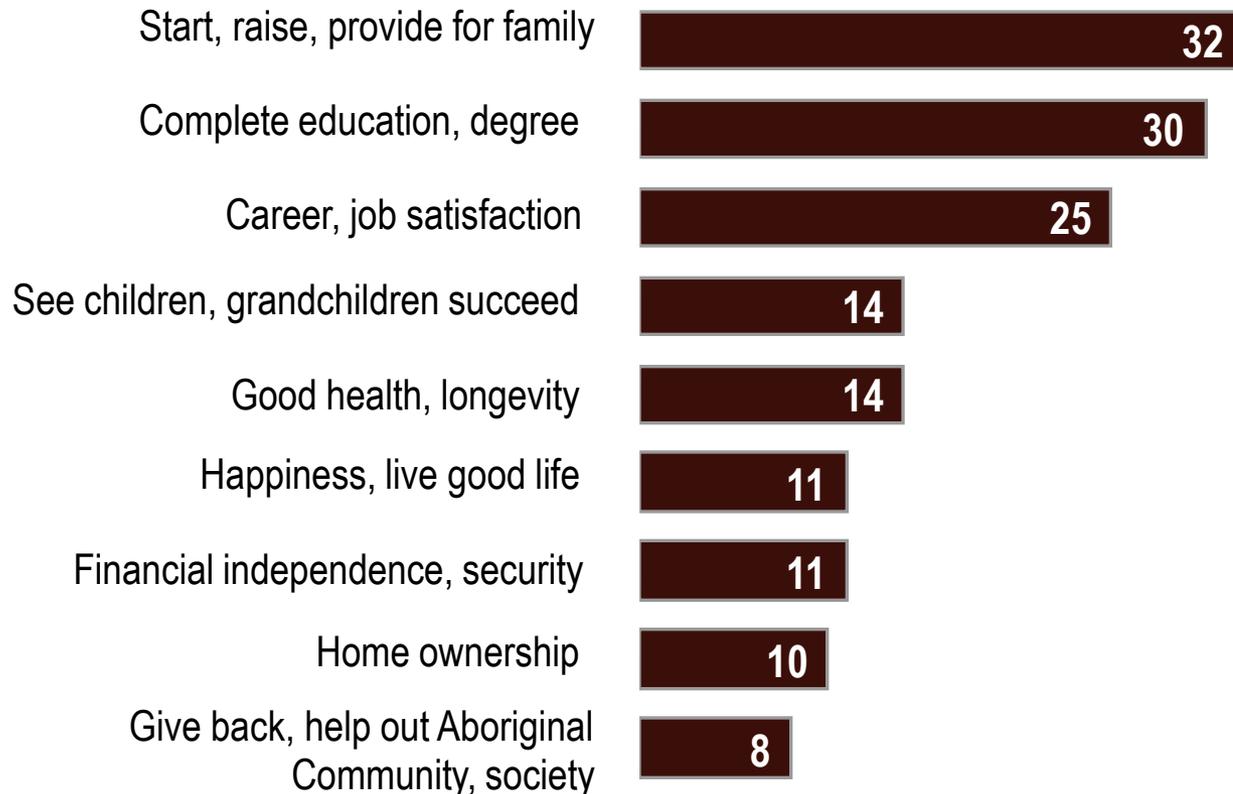




**Education is the enduring aspiration for urban Aboriginal peoples and their children.**

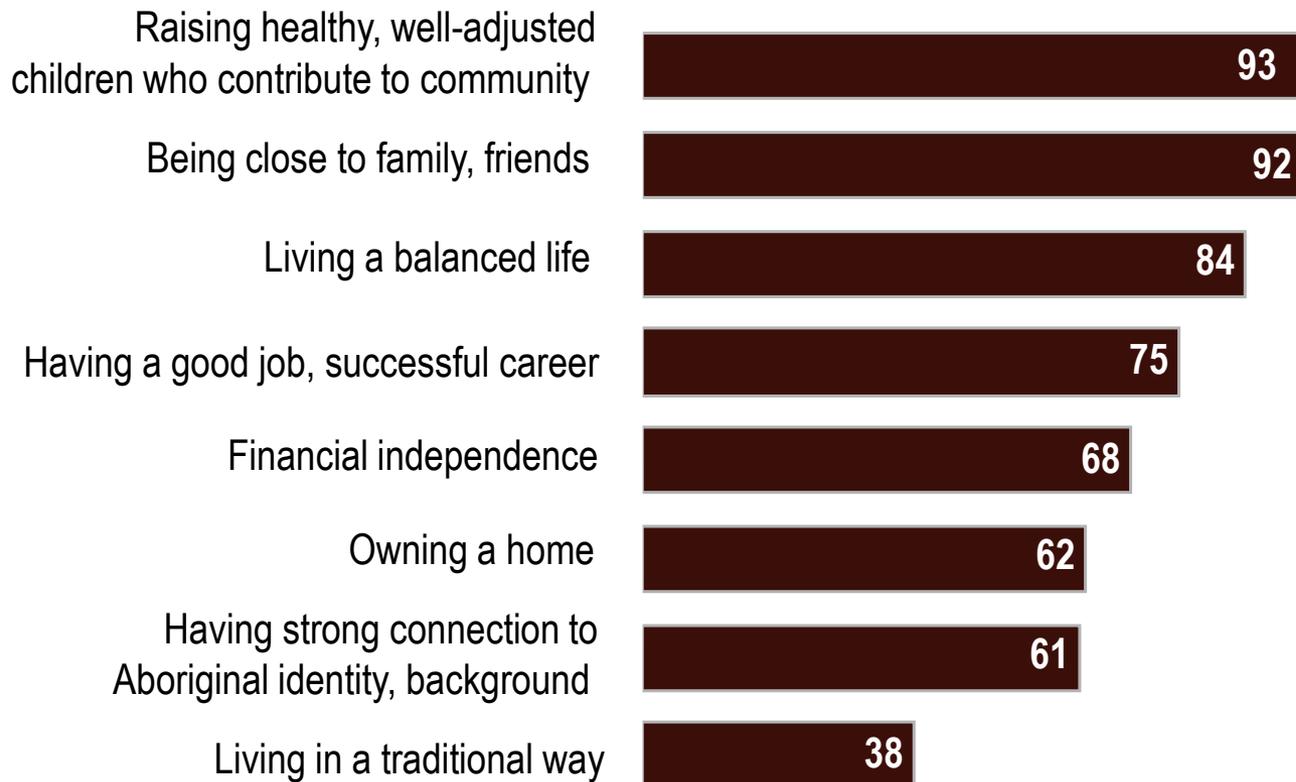
# Aboriginal Thunder Bay'ers desire to be successful in mainstream ways...

What the things that you most want to achieve in your lifetime?



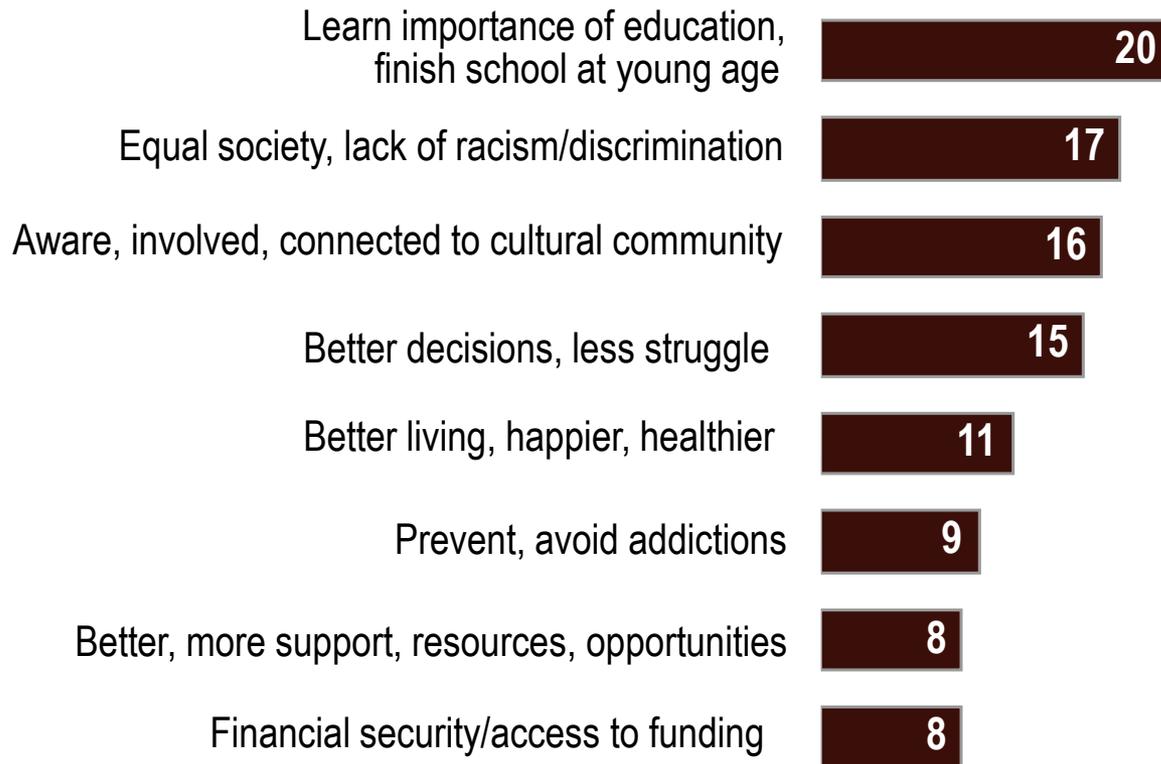
## ...and share universal definitions of a successful life.

Are the following very important to your idea of a successful life?



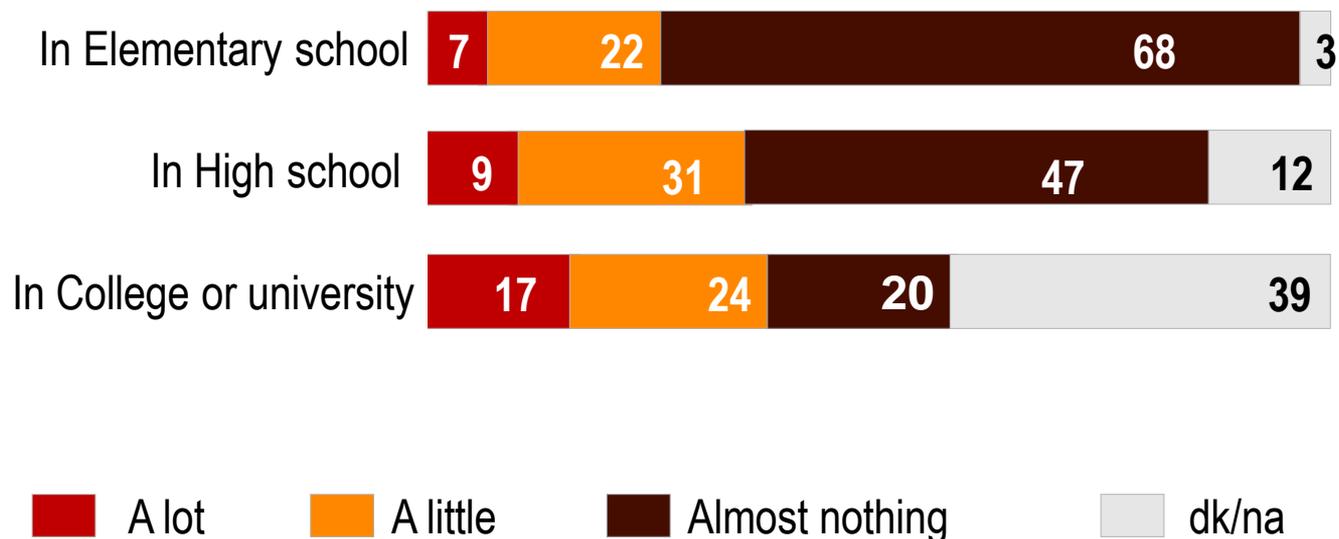
# Education is a top priority for the next generation ...and so is a society free of racism.

Are there ways in which you hope your children's and grandchildren's lives will be different from yours?



# ...and there is very little cultural transmission in schools.

## Exposure to Aboriginal culture

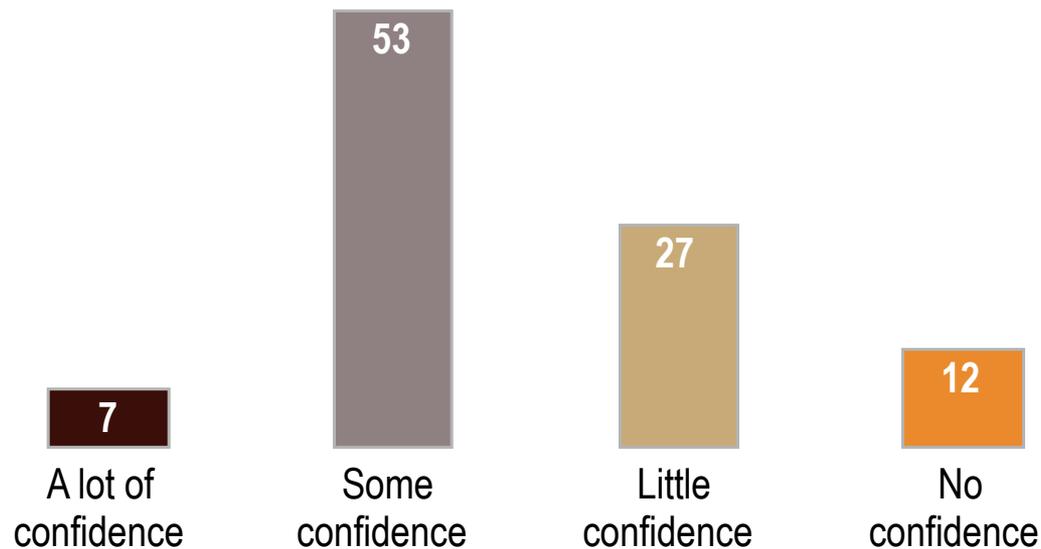




**Aboriginal people in Thunder Bay  
have little confidence in the  
Canadian justice system.**

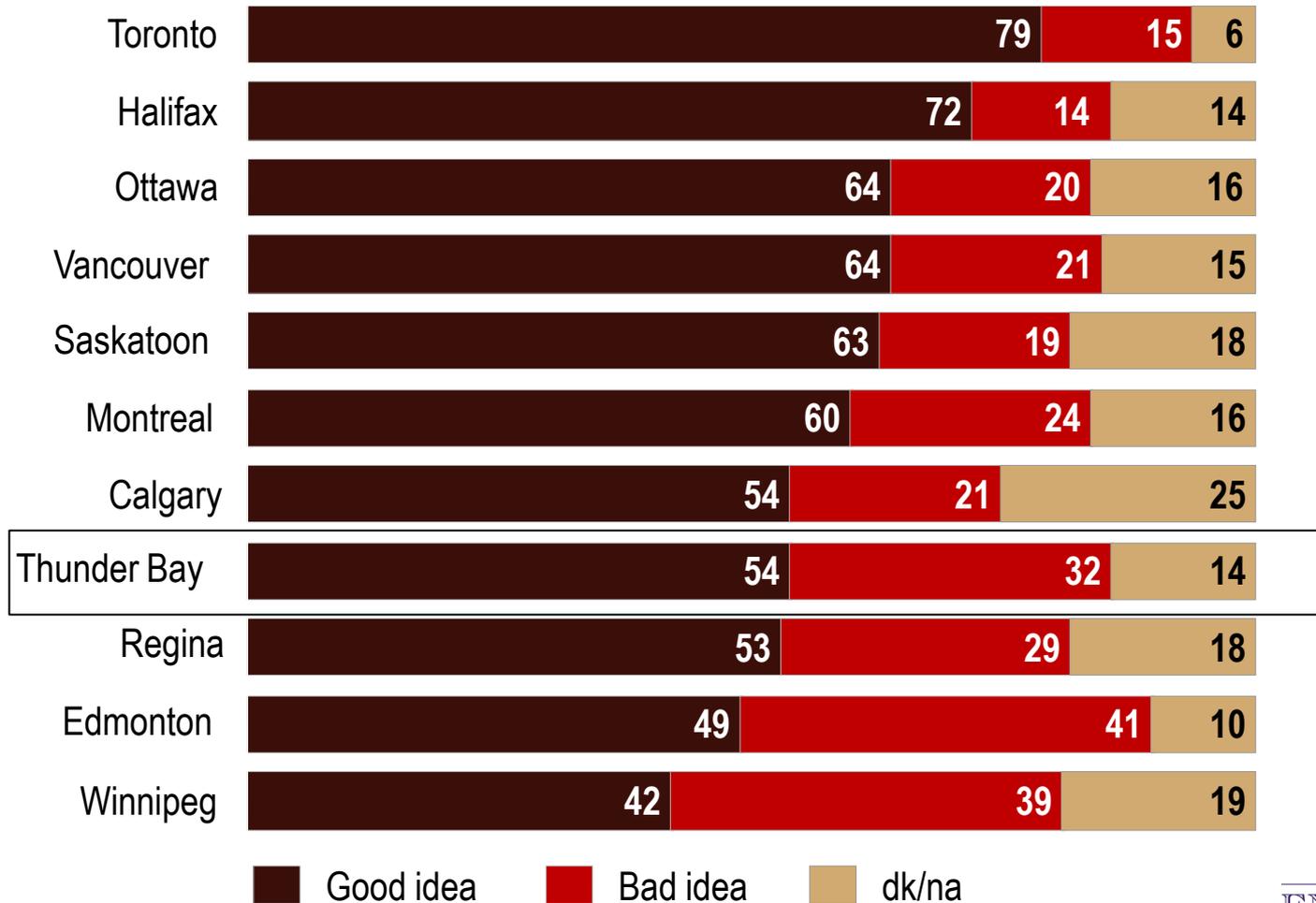
# Many feel that the Canadian justice system isn't working.

In general, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence in the criminal justice system in Canada?



# A slim majority would welcome Aboriginal methods of justice.

Do you think creating an Aboriginal justice system separate from the mainstream system is a good idea or bad idea?

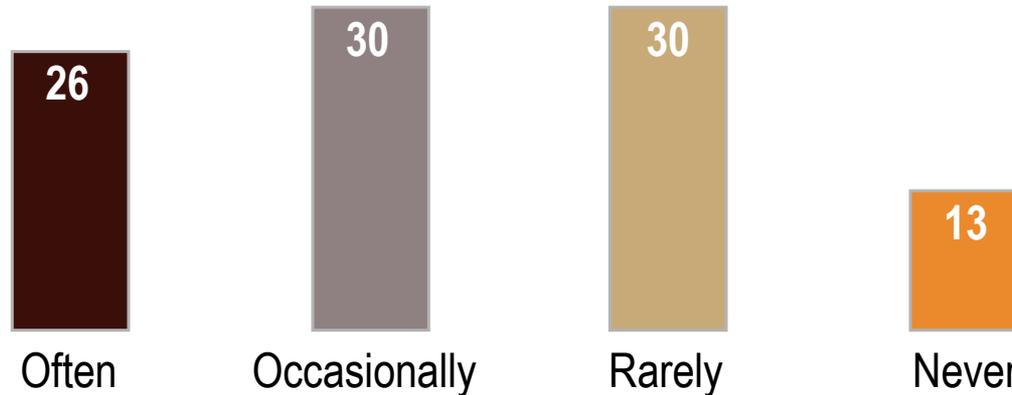




# Organization and political affiliations

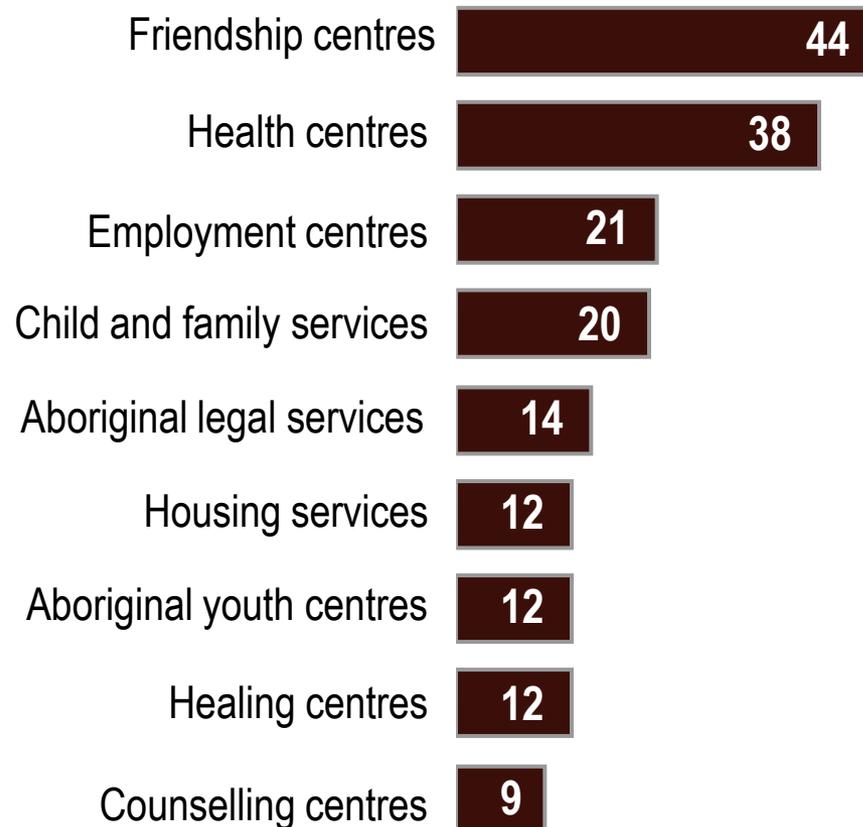
# The majority of Aboriginal Thunder Bay'ers use and rely on Aboriginal services and organizations.

How often do you use or rely on Aboriginal services or organizations in Thunder Bay?



# And there are many valued organizations and services in Thunder Bay.

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

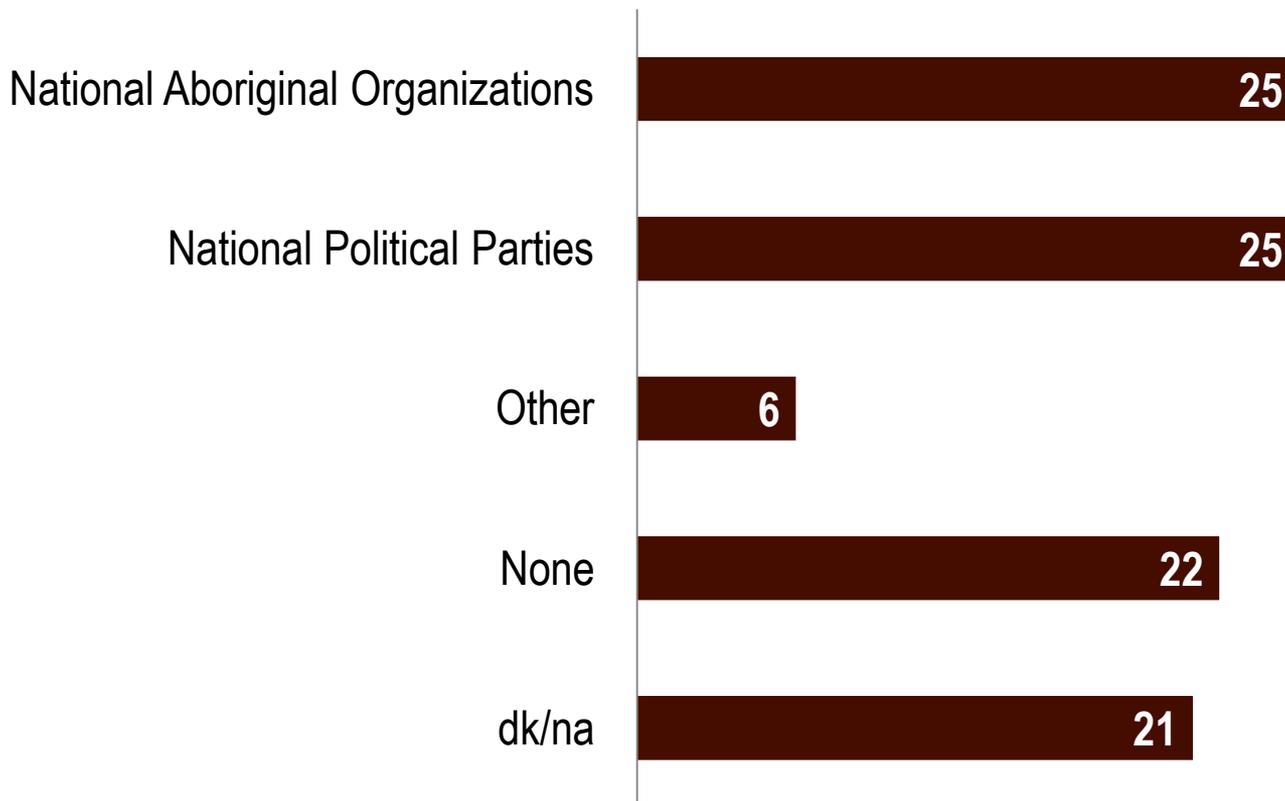


**They identify with a diverse array of political organizations.**



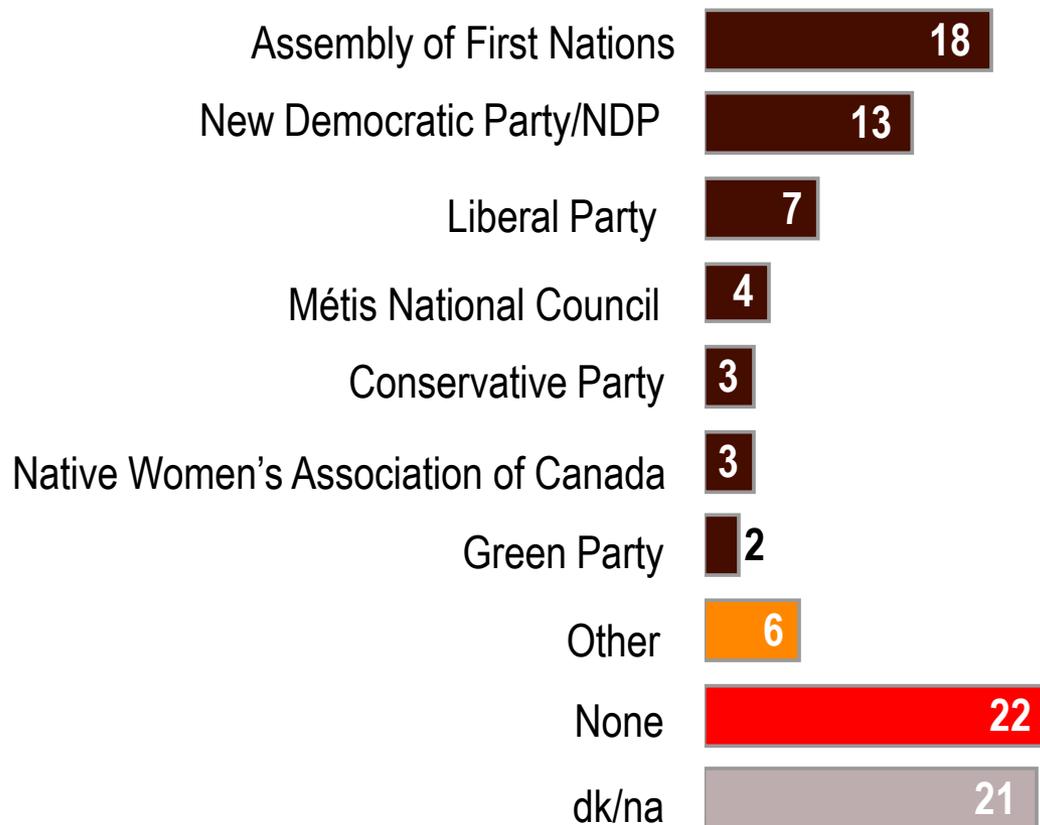
## But a significant minority feels that no political organization or party best represents them.

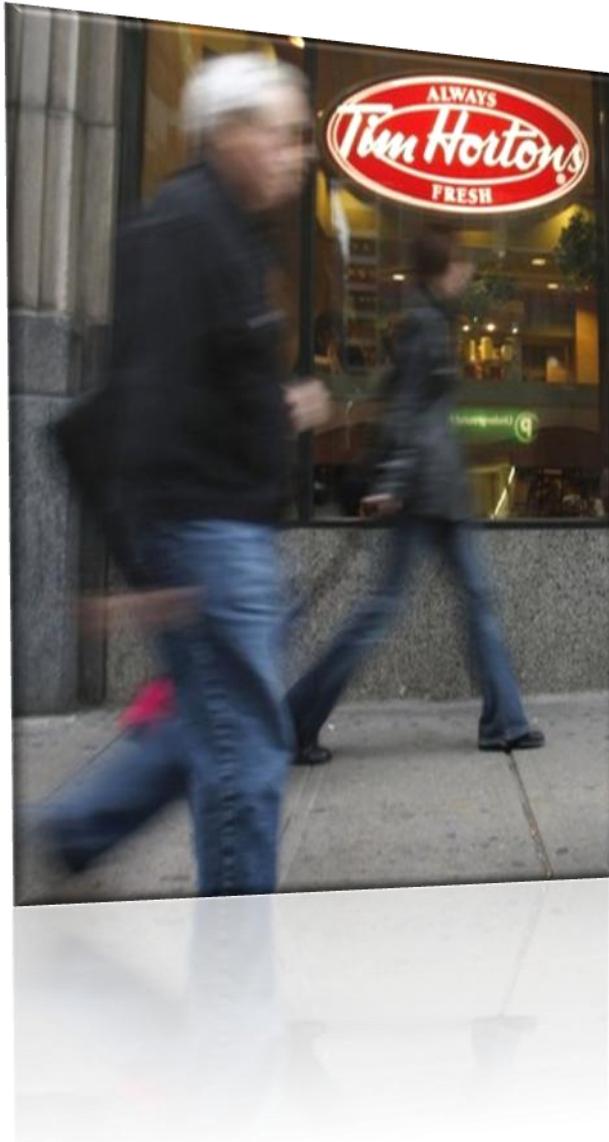
Thinking about *both* Aboriginal political organizations and Canadian political parties, is there one that you feel *best* represents you?



# The AFN tops the list among those that best represent them.

Thinking about both Aboriginal political organizations and Canadian political parties, is there one that you feel best represents you?

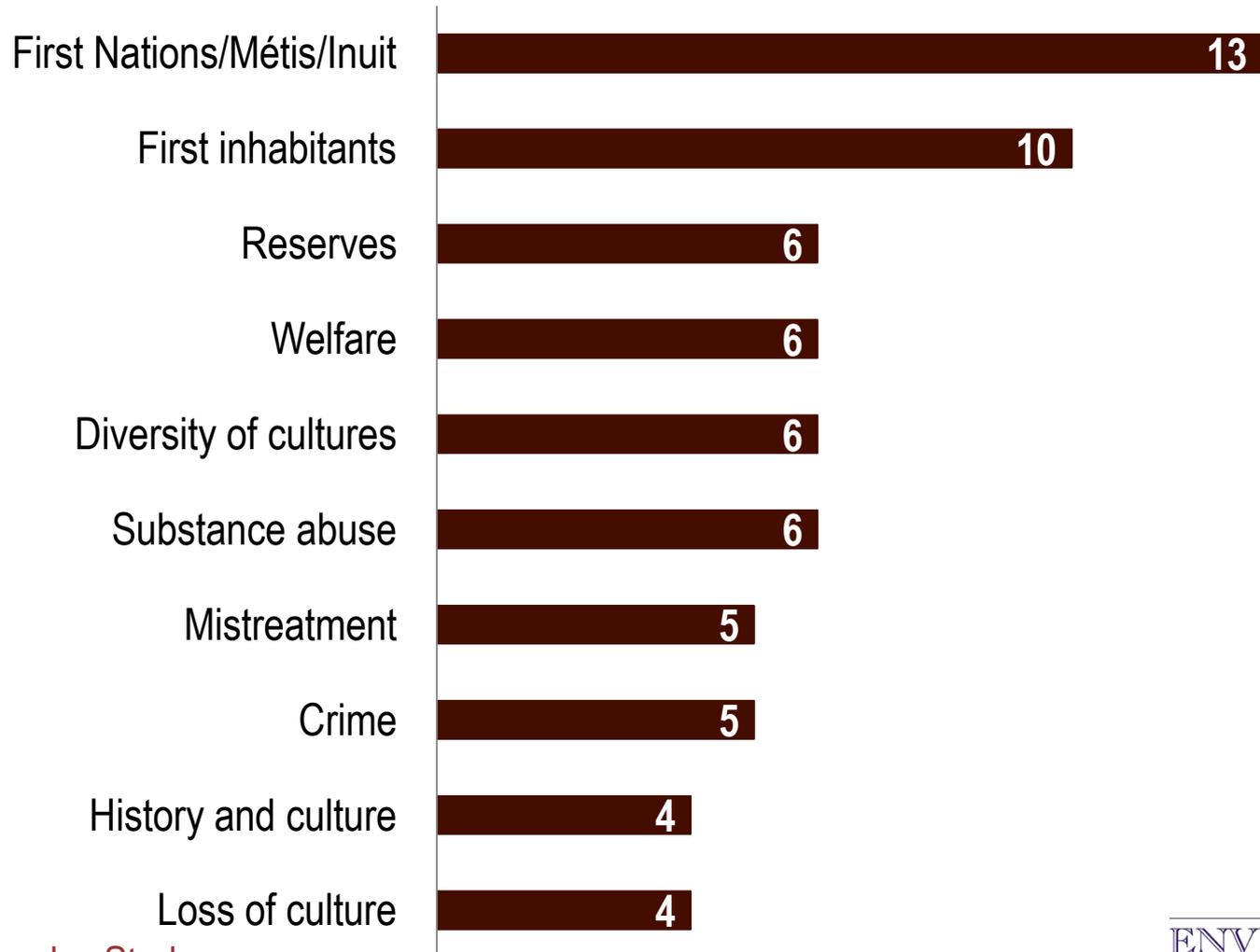




## Non-Aboriginal perspectives in Thunder Bay

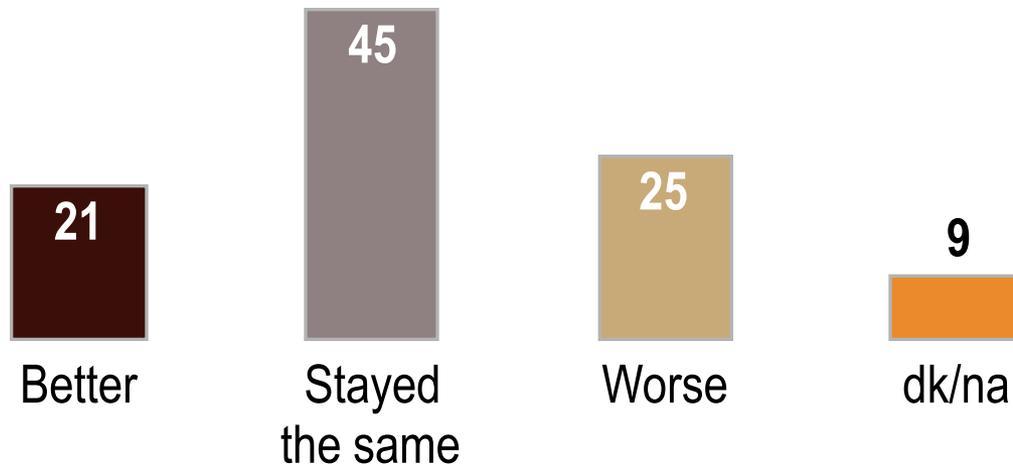
# NA first impressions are somewhere between both positive and negative.

What first comes to mind when you think of Aboriginal people?



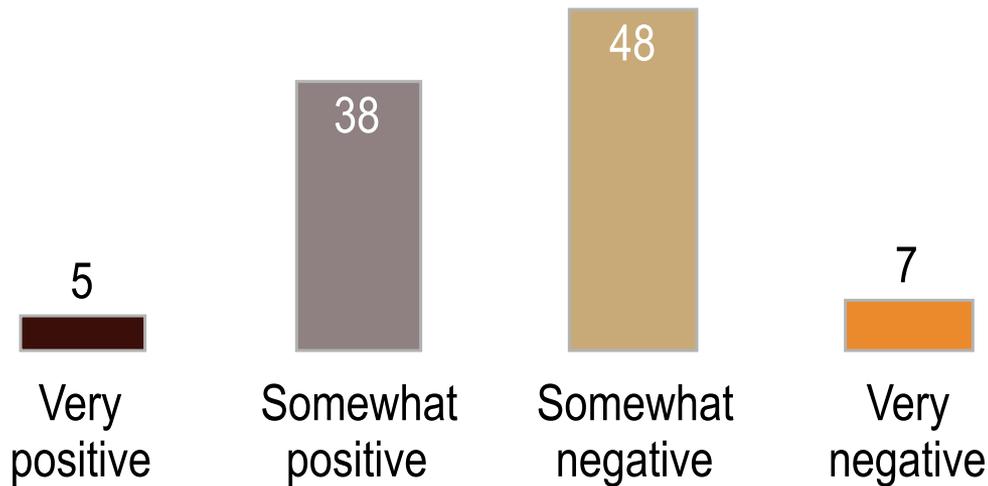
## These impressions remain mostly stable, with some change taking place.

Over the past few years, has your impression of Aboriginal people gotten...?



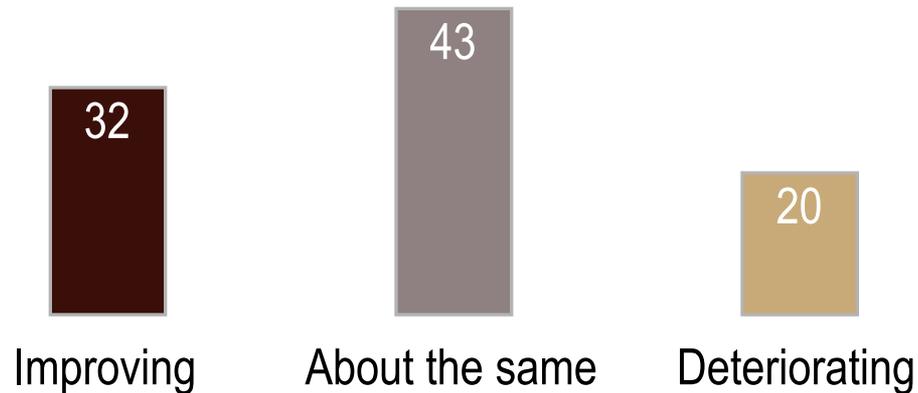
# More feel that relations across Canada are growing more negative than positive.

Would you describe the current relations between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people in Canada today as...?



## Some will still say that they see these relations improving.

Do you think relations between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people in Canada are...?



**... but, they do possess distinct perspectives,  
some more negative than others.**

**Dismissive Naysayers**  
(31%)

Tend to view Aboriginal peoples and communities negatively, i.e., entitled and isolated from Canadian society.

National (24%)

**Cultural Romantics**  
(40%)

Idealistic and optimistic, they have a strong belief in Aboriginal peoples' artistic and cultural contributions.

National (45%)

**Inattentive Sceptics**  
(12%)

Uninformed and unaware, they typically think Aboriginal peoples are no different from other Canadians.

National (14%)

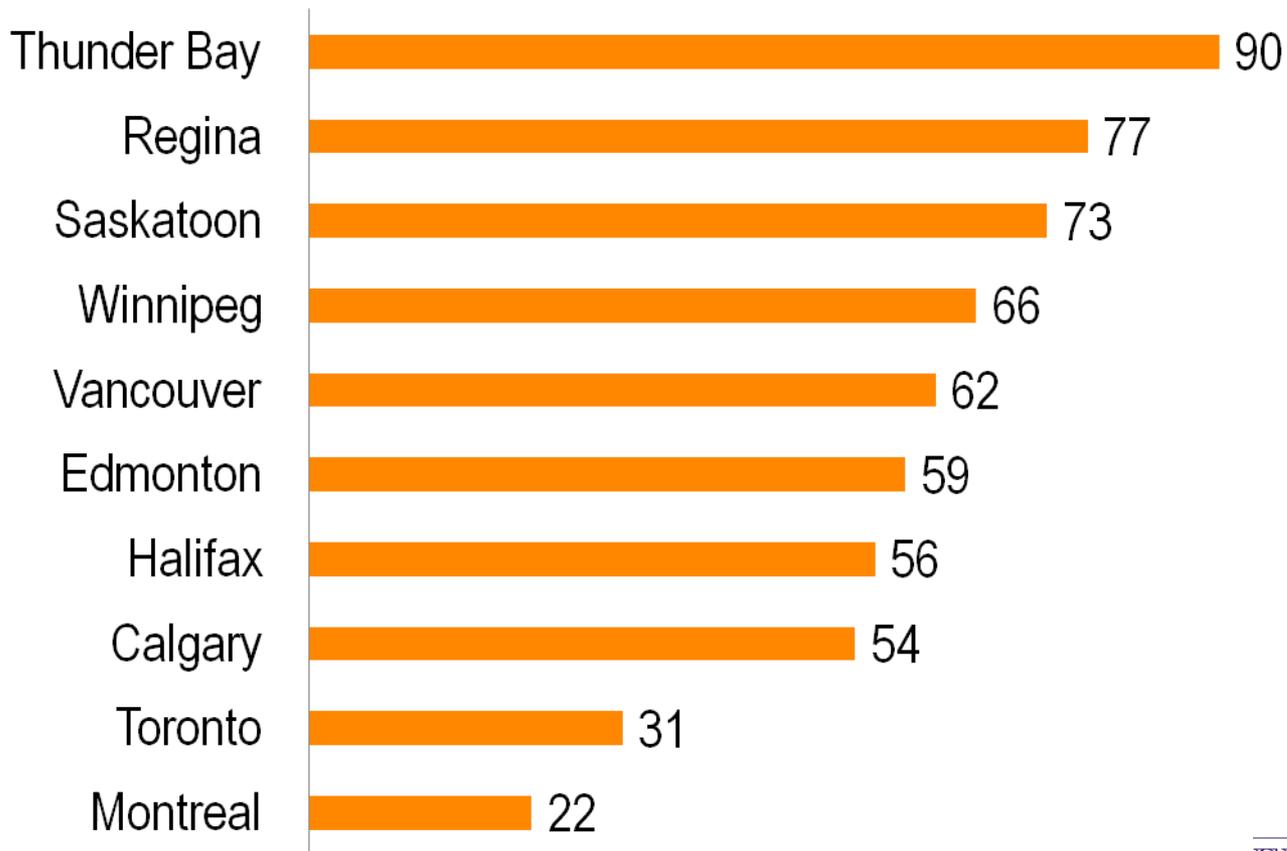
**Connected Advocates**  
(17%)

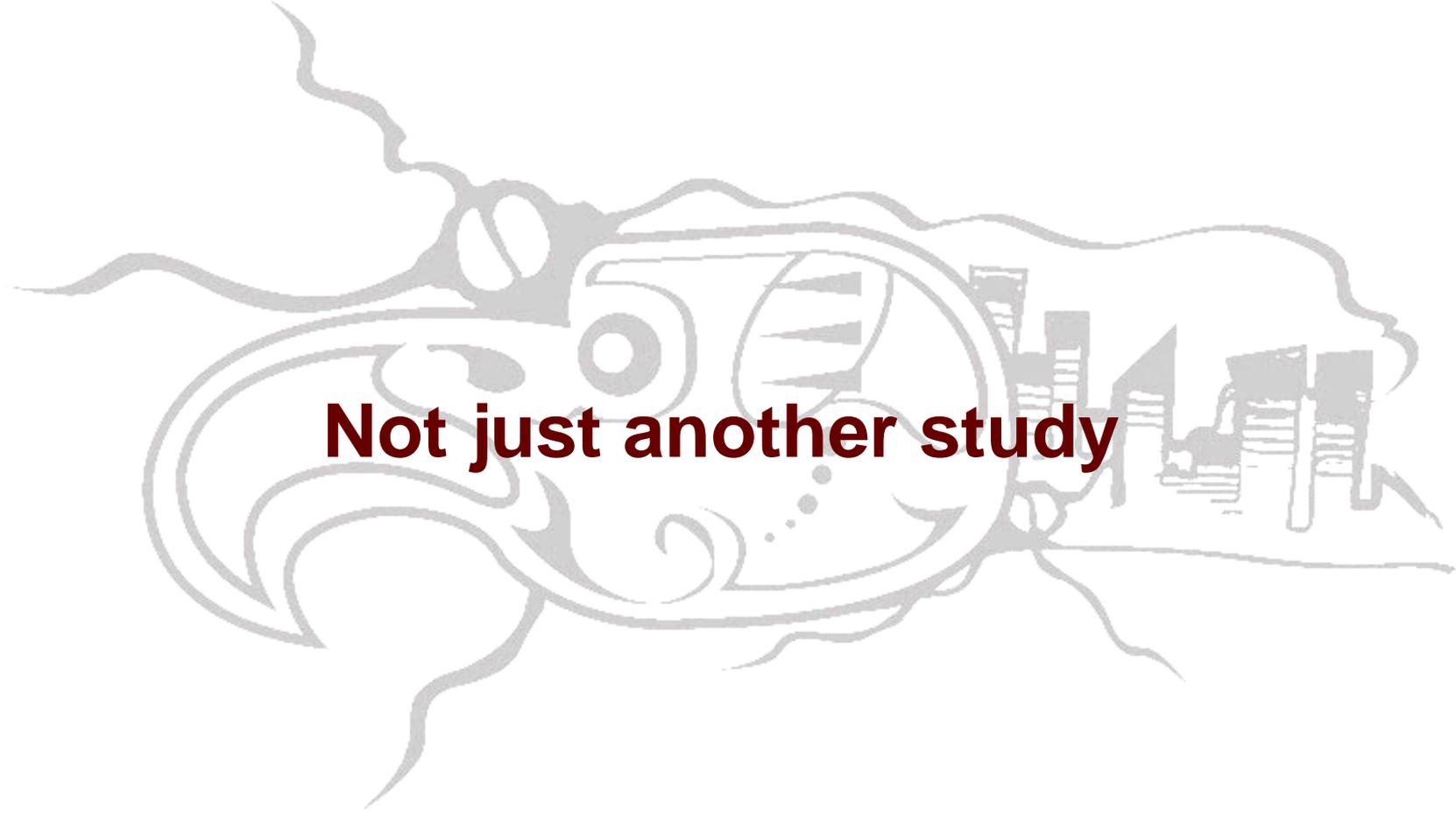
High level of contact and strong belief that Aboriginal peoples often experience discrimination.

National (17%)

# And there is a general awareness of the local urban Aboriginal community in the city.

Are you aware of an Aboriginal community in your city?  
(Either a physical area, neighbourhood, or social community.)





**Not just another study**

## Urban aboriginals strive to make significant difference in their communities, report says

But many first nations people feel negative preconceptions persist about addiction and poverty

BY KIM PEMBERTON, VANCOUVER SUN APRIL 7, 2010

## The city is home

THE OTTAWA CITIZEN APRIL 13, 2010

A funny thing happened when interviewers set out to talk to Metis, Inuit and First Nations residents in cities: they discovered a sense of optimism.

The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study from the Environics Institute provides a picture of aboriginal Canadians that shatters stereotypes.

CANADA

**Hope in the city**

## Most urban aboriginal people opt to stay in city

Last Updated: Tuesday, April 6, 2010 | 10:48 AM ET Comments 290 Recommend 146  
CBC News

Winnipeg Free Press - PRINT EDITION

## Urban natives content: study

Survey shows happiness in white society, lingering stereotype fears

NEWS: Nunavut April 06, 2010 - 2:58 pm

Urban Inuit aspire to the “good life,” study says  
Most have no plans to return to north

## Aboriginal urbanites aspire first to higher education

Environics research finds that postsecondary learning is viewed as route to empowerment.

# Evidence of success

- Successful completion of the research
- Legitimacy with Aboriginal community
- Policy impact to date
- Building Aboriginal research capacity

# Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study



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UAPS participant voices, produced by INCA, First Nations University

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## This study is about the future, not the past.

The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study is an extensive new research study that has gone beyond the numbers to capture the values, experiences and aspirations of Aboriginal peoples living in Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Montreal, Halifax and Ottawa.

Speaking directly with a representative group of 2,614 First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit living in these major Canadian cities, as well as 2,501 non-Aboriginal Canadians, the Environics Institute, led by **Michael Adams**, has released the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study, which offers Canadians a new perspective of their Aboriginal neighbours. Guided by an Advisory Circle, Aboriginal people designed the research themes, methodology, and executed the main survey.

[Click here for the UAPS report summary, full report, or quick key findings from the study.](#)

### UPCOMING EVENTS

- **UN PERMANENT FORUM**  
April 21, 2010  
United Nations, New York » [more](#)
- **INCLUSION WORKS 2010**  
April 29, 2010  
Aboriginal Human Resources Council, Toronto  
» [more](#)

[» See All Events](#)

### NEWS

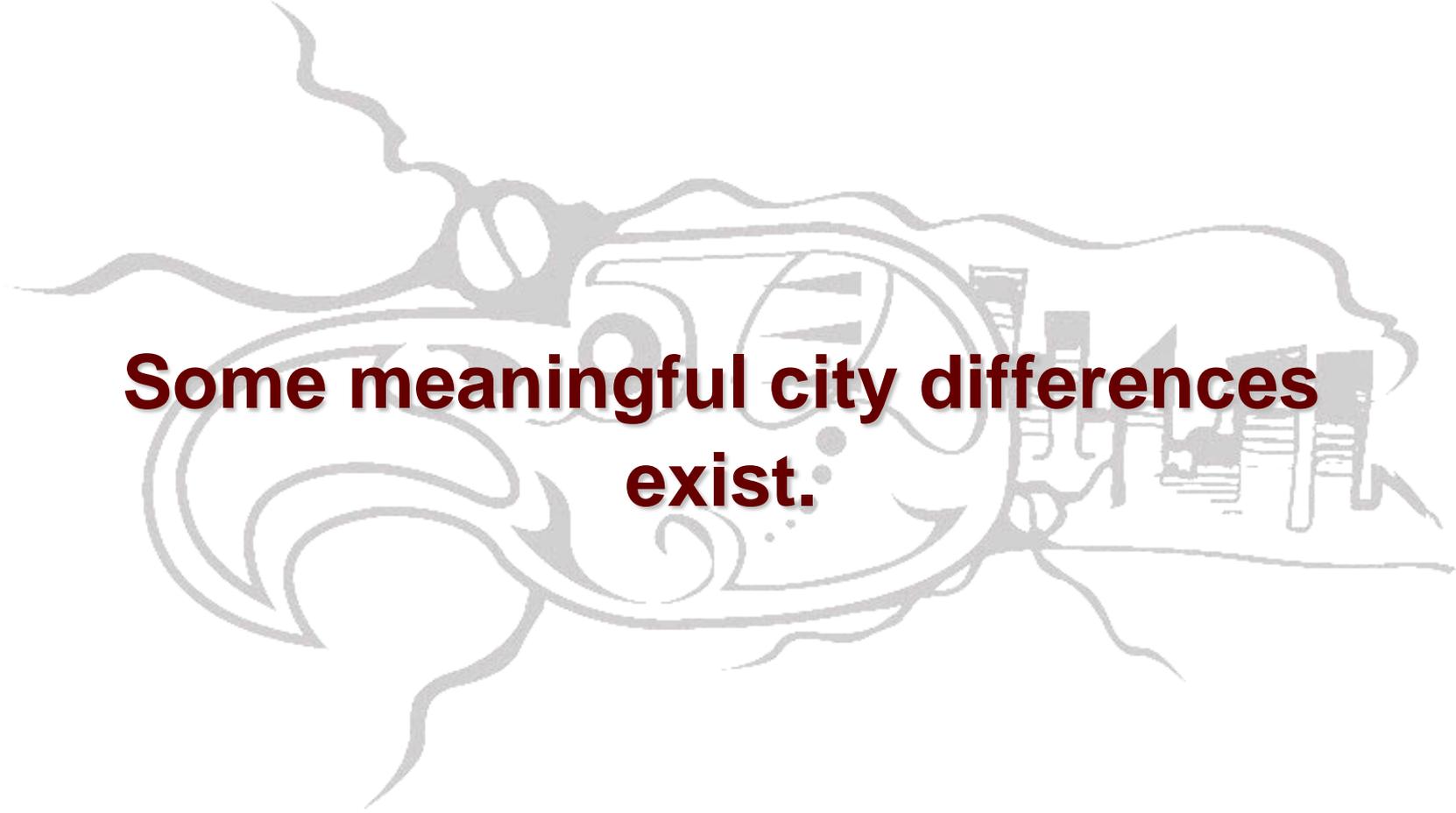
- **IT'S TIME FOR US TO WORK TOGETHER WITH OUR ABORIGINAL NEIGHBOURS**  
*Globe and Mail, April 23, 2010* » [more](#)
- **NATIVE IDENTITY DOES NOT GET LOST IN THE CITY**  
*Globe and Mail, April 19, 2010* » [more](#)

[» See All News](#)

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Email:

[www.uaps.ca](http://www.uaps.ca)



**Some meaningful city differences  
exist.**

# City differences

Who is **most** satisfied with life in their city?

**Vancouver and Halifax**

Who is **most** likely to believe they can make their city a better place to live?

**Toronto and Vancouver**

Who is **least** likely to say Aboriginal cultural activities are available?

**Calgary, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Regina**

Who is **least** confident in the criminal justice system?

**Edmonton and Toronto**

Who is **most** likely to believe they are perceived negatively?

**Edmonton**

Who is **least** likely to feel accepted by their non-Aboriginal neighbours?

**Saskatoon and Regina**

**The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study – Thunder Bay –  
would not be possible without the support of our  
generous sponsors ~ Thank-you!**



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