

Section 3.1:

CAAS Learning Circle and Learning Expectations

CAAS proposes a critical pedagogical shift, which focuses on moving away from compartmentalization of separate study units on Aboriginal Peoples towards the integration of Aboriginal perspectives and content across the curricula in Canadian classrooms. This demands a new conceptual and rigorous framework.



The essential change we advocate is to integrate and legitimize Indigenous

Knowledge as one crucial step towards transforming the institutionalized discourse that has dominated curricula up to the present time. This framework is designed to move forward and make changes in curriculum regarding Aboriginal Peoples' histories and contemporary realities. Our approach requires a logic that focuses on the quality of the end result. It sets measurable standards across all levels of the curriculum that all Canadian students should achieve regarding Aboriginal Peoples.

We have developed two educational tools for establishing and measuring standards of Aboriginal Studies content. The first of these is the CAAS Learning Circle, which offers an opportunity to understand the Aboriginal Studies content that should be integrated across the curricula. It also provides a framework for how this can be done. The second is the Proposed Learning Expectations (PLEx), which is still a work-in-progress. It can be found in Appendix C. Although the PLEx were assembled first, they serve as an elaboration of the Learning Circle. They provide detailed insight into the content that CAAS believes should be



offered to students before they graduate from a Canadian high school. As the Learning Circle is discussed below, our commentary describes some of the content that is referenced in the PLEx.

Development of the CAAS Proposed Learning Expectations (PLEx)

During the course of the tool development stage for the PLEx, the Core Group of the CAAS focused on one central question, “What should young people know about Aboriginal Peoples’ histories, cultures and contemporary issues by the time they graduate from high school?”

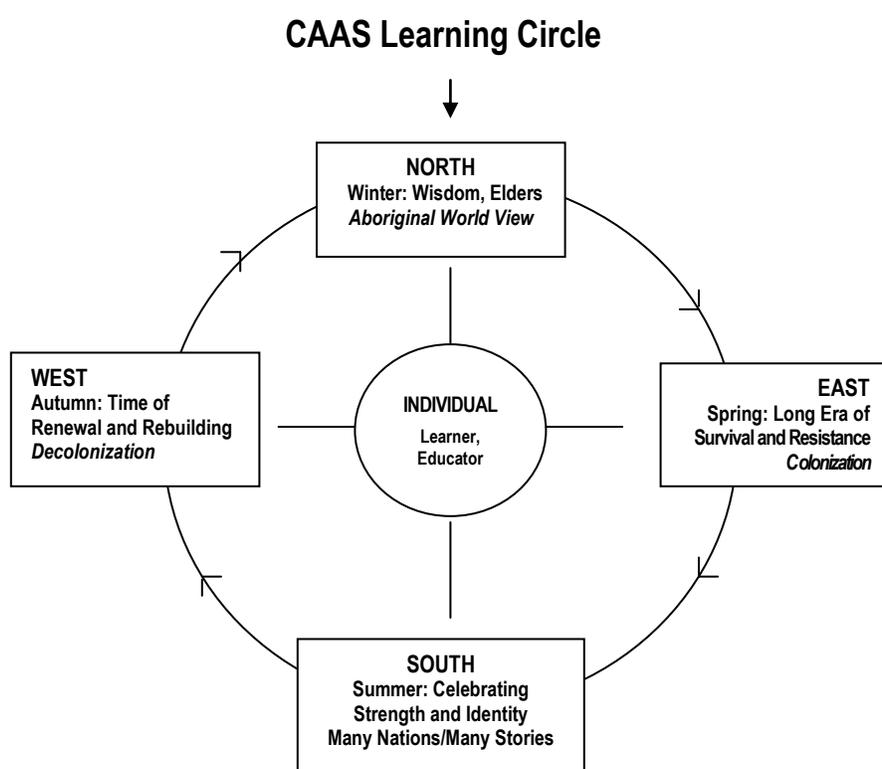
At an intuitive level, each member of the CAAS Core Group ‘knew’ the answer to this question. However, to set out this answer in a manner that could be used as a resource for future education policies, it was necessary to quantify and qualify our learning expectations. This work also helped guide the CAAS in the development of the SAS research instrument (the questionnaire in Appendix E).

The PLEx evolved from research of existing literature, notably:

- The RCAP Final Report;
- Task Force on Aboriginal Issues Final Report, from the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF, 1999);
- So Long as the Sun Rises and the River Flows: Land Rights and Treaty Rights Education and Resource Kit, from the Aboriginal Rights Coalition (2001);
- Existing, newly approved and draft curriculum policy/content documents from across Canada. In particular, the course content and learning expectations/outcomes from new, but usually optional, Aboriginal Studies courses across Canada, provided inspiration for our task (further discussed in *The West*).



The CAAS Core Working Group collected, reviewed, analyzed and culled these materials to ensure a full incorporation of relevant concepts into our PLEx. Several rounds of “brainstorming” among CAAS Working Group members comprised the final tier of research for: the development of the CAAS Learning Expectations; our Learning Circle; and, the content of the SAS. Subsequent to this, the proposed PLEx were posted on the CAAS website, with an invitation for comment and critique. As a result of comments, we amended the PLEx to incorporate some additional points relating to economy, trading and business issues, an area not strongly referenced in the original version.



The CAAS Learning Circle

Examination of the CAAS Learning Circle shows four categories at points on the circle, which are identified with a season, a direction and other traditional attributes. As a teaching tool, the Circle is a fluid and flexible model. The flexibility of this pedagogical approach becomes evident as one becomes comfortable and experienced using it. Everything presented in the Circle is connected. To use the Circle as an educator’s guide, there must be a beginning.

The arrival of European settlers on Turtle Island is not the "beginning" of the history of the Peoples of this land. The history of the Peoples of this land begins *since time immemorial*. For this reason, we begin our Learning Circle in the North. The North is the place where wisdom and understanding are found. It provides a doorway for Indigenous Knowledge.

NORTH: Winter - Wisdom, Elders: Aboriginal Worldview

This covers content such as language, cultural elements, traditional spirituality and customs, as well as the responsibilities of individuals, families, clans, nations, confederacies, and relationships with other parts of the natural world. Historically, Canadian educators have not considered this material relevant, useful or valid. Very recently, as observed elsewhere in this report, educators have *begun* to make a shift towards considering some of this content useful. Even still, it is not given equitable importance in most classroom programs.

In those rare cases when content such as this made its way into mainstream texts and Canadian classrooms, it is usually presented without cultural context. For example, a traditional story that tells about Creation or offers a moral about respect or responsibility would be taught without explaining how and why this story is significant in the particular culture of origin.¹ This discussion is taken up by Linda Tuhiwai Smith in *Decolonizing Methodology*,

The negation of indigenous views of history was the critical part of asserting colonial ideology, partly because such views were regarded as clearly “primitive” and “incorrect” and mostly because they challenged and resisted the mission of colonization (29).

When important stories such as these are not linked to the Peoples' history, they are construed as less valid. Aboriginal Peoples understand these stories to be part of their history – the history of the Original Peoples of this continent. The teaching, learning, sharing and adherence to these stories accounts for the distinctness of Aboriginal cultures, and also helps explain why this part of the world looked the way it did when the Europeans arrived. Failure to understand and respect Aboriginal worldview is seen by Aboriginal Peoples as the root



cause of all the fatal elements and misunderstandings that arose following the beginning of continuous contact between the “Old World” and the “New World”.

Undervaluing, diminishing or invisibilizing this cultural history i.e. not presenting Aboriginal worldview in Canadian classrooms, has contributed significantly to the racism and discrimination that First Peoples experience today.

EAST: Spring - The Long Era of Survival and Resistance: Colonization

Up to now, this is the only area that has been presented in conventional history books and social studies programs. For historians and other educators of European heritage, this is where “North American” history started, and it is all that has been discussed in any detail. In these inadequate curriculum units and resources, we find the “savage nomad” who reigns a vindictive terror on innocent political, religious and economic refugees from European tyranny. We also see the “poor noble Indian” as a romantic victim, one who simply could not compete with the modern (European) ways.

Not only has the information about Aboriginal Peoples in Canadian classrooms been largely limited to exploration of just this one area shown on the CAAS Learning Circle, but this information is almost never presented from an Aboriginal perspective. History, as we know, is often the story of the “winners”. Even in Canada – priding itself on its cross-cultural understanding and tolerance, and its respect for human rights and diversity – the post-contact history of Aboriginal Peoples has always been told from a European colonial perspective.

In the learning expectations (PLEx - see Appendix C) that correspond to this point on the CAAS Learning Circle, we present the Aboriginal side of the story. The PLEx reject the “victim” presentation of Aboriginal Peoples, and present relevant information about the social, cultural, economic, and political experience of contact and colonization from Aboriginal perspectives.



Our learning expectations stress the importance of the treaties, identifying the compromises and the thinking behind the granting of those treaties from the Aboriginal perspective. We look at what happened after the treaties were signed – or not signed, as the case may be in various parts of the country. We examine: the land theft, the broken promises, the double dealing, the lies, the exploitation of resources on Aboriginal treaty and traditional/unceded territories, and the policies of forced assimilation such as *The Indian Act* and the Residential Schools system. We promote analysis of the social, economic and demographic impacts of colonization.

SOUTH: Summer - Strength and Identity: Many Nations/Many Stories

There is no single, unified Aboriginal perspective, history or culture just as there is no one history or culture among European Peoples. While conventional Canadian social studies and history curricula have taken up some aspects of identity and culture, they have mixed and matched customs, cultures and Peoples to create the hybrid “Classroom Indian”.

We all know this **man** (for the “Classroom Indian” is almost always a “man” in conventional Canadian curricula). He sits on a horse in the sunset with a Plains Chief head-dress of many feathers. On one side is his Totem Pole, on the other is his Tipi. His snowshoes (an “Indian” invention) lean against the side of the Tipi. His corn (one of the many “gifts” the Indians “gave” to the European pioneers) is growing in the background. Behind him, to the north, is his requisite Igloo, and his friend the Eskimo – now usually called the Inuit so as to be more respectful.

Curiously, the “Classroom Indian” can be found on thousands of maps generated across Canada each year, which show the six major groupings of Indians (now known more respectfully as Aboriginal Peoples). The forlorn hybrid “Classroom Indian” wanders across the Canadian map from the Eastern Woodland region (where he straps on the snowshoes) to the Plains (where he picks up the head-dress and the Tipi), through the Plateau to the Pacific Northwest (where he acquires the Totem Pole), and finally to the Artic (where he can rest his weary bones, visiting in his friend's Igloo). And the horse, well, he got that from the Europeans, but few students learn that.



Few students in Canadian classrooms have learned about Aboriginal women. The stereotypical images, when presented, are equally one-dimensional. These images also follow the conventional Canadian coding for women as a group: the “good” ones and the “bad” ones. First there is the stereotypical Indian Princess, which can range from Disney's Pocohontas to the more recent beauty queen image. This coding of all Aboriginal women does not in any way resemble how Aboriginal women view themselves, nor how their roles and responsibilities are placed within their cultures.

At a bare minimum, it is fair to say that Aboriginal histories and cultures are conventionally presented in Canadian curricula as quaint, curious, exotic, and past tense – the underlying message being that all one can learn from them is their “old way” of doing things.

Students in Canadian classrooms are virtually left to imagine how these cardboard characters connect to the current media images re: fishing disputes at Burnt Church, the death of Dudley George at Ipperwash, the arrest of non-violent Native Youth Movement protestors at Sun Peaks resort, the Nisga'a treaty talks and the problems of the new Inuit-led government in Nunavut. It is equally difficult for students to make the connection between this one-dimensional pedagogy and gas-sniffing youth in Davis Inlet, local Pow Wows, Band Councils, Sunrise Ceremonies, Residential Schools, alcoholism, suicides, and/or diabetes among Aboriginal populations.

The Southern Door on the CAAS Learning Circle respects that Aboriginal Peoples had, and still have today, their own distinct and valid social and political systems, spirituality, family structures, personal and collective responsibilities, and customs. The Southern Door also allows students to achieve some understanding of how diverse Peoples reacted and dealt with the overlay of colonization. It illuminates the impact of colonialism on specific cultures, providing a glimpse of the different effects on Peoples from regions across Canada. The impact of colonization also varied depending on the colonizing nation, the ethnicity/culture of predominant immigrant populations in that region, impacts of various diseases and policies, and a three hundred year variation in the timing of serious colonization efforts.



These differences are the stories told at the Southern Door. In “Many Nations - Many Stories”, students gain the understanding they need to travel along the continuum from worldview to colonization and then on to rebuilding the societies and Peoples.

WEST: Autumn - Time of Renewal & Rebuilding: Decolonization

This point on the Learning Circle elaborates the future challenges of students, as they take up their adult civic responsibilities within the community, nation, land, etc.

Young Canadians must gain a knowledge base about where Aboriginal Peoples are going in their efforts to remove the damaging structures and barriers resulting from colonization.

This information will bring Aboriginal Peoples into the present time and will help explain the TV news reports about protests and rights disputes or the news they read in print media about youth suicides and abuses in Residential Schools. An understanding of contemporary spiritual, cultural, economic, political and social issues, events, trends and customs will help develop insightful learning and critical analysis.

The dynamic presentation of these issues in the classroom, together with vibrant, positive presentations of contemporary Aboriginal cultures, will enhance self-esteem and provide Aboriginal students with opportunities to gain a broader knowledge base on the issues facing their communities. It will promote and develop critical analysis skills, and provide the information required to tackle the many problems facing Aboriginal communities today. It will build understanding, pride, respect and, ultimately, justice.

We will be on the road to a strong, healthy future when the day comes that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in secondary and post-secondary classes are discussing this knowledge in the same way that many other environmental and equity issues are discussed in Canadian classrooms. Understanding and dialogue will enable Canadian and Aboriginal societies across Canada to enter the era of post-colonialism.



The Individual Learner

The learner and the teacher are represented in the centre of the CAAS Learning Circle. This location corresponds to the learning journey outlined in the PLEx, which is understood in Aboriginal pedagogy to involve development of personal will and volition, or commitment, to live in a Good Way. As described in the Glossary, living in a Good Way means that the individual has found a path of "right relations" with all living creatures, or is doing her or his best to Walk in Beauty. In conventional Canadian pedagogy, these expectations relate to the social and personal development of the learner.

As can be seen from the Learning Circle diagram, the individual in the centre can connect to the learning journey at any place on the Circle, and can easily move around the Circle to any other place.

Looking Towards the Future: Placing Aboriginal Perspectives in Canadian Classrooms

As things currently stand, not enough young people reach the university level with any knowledge of Aboriginal Peoples. This view is fully substantiated by the findings from the SAS. The students say this themselves. They acknowledge that they have not received the instruction they needed in this curriculum area, and that contemporary issues baffle them.

The CAAS Learning Circle and PLEx provide a framework and guidelines for educators of all students in Canadian classrooms. Offered curriculum that follows the PLEx, students will graduate from high school with a comprehension of life history of First Nations and other Aboriginal societies, such as the Inuit, the Métis and off-Reserve "Urban Aboriginals" (who may or may not be "Status" under *The Indian Act* - see Glossary). Educators and students will also have a framework for understanding complex issues such as local treaty, resource, land and cultural disputes – knowledge "content" that encourages critical analysis and constructive approaches to current political, social and economic concerns.

The elements presented on the Learning Circle and the details elaborated under each PLEx heading support one another. Together they enable the three-dimensional portrayal of



Aboriginal Peoples. This pedagogy will erase the stereotypical, hybrid “Classroom Indian”. The PLEx will allow the teacher and students (for in many cases, the teacher is learning with the students) to pull apart this stereotype.² Once deconstructed, the “Classroom Indian” will disappear as it fills out its disparate parts, emerging whole in a respectful form. The pedagogical approach advocated by CAAS is one valid and accessible way to breathe life and understanding into the gaps in understandings and awareness, and to learn and demonstrate the complexity, richness and diversity of this land’s Original Peoples.

This pedagogy will build both a knowledge base and the critical analysis skills that enable Canadian and Aboriginal students to approach contemporary issues in a more respectful and intelligent manner.



Section 3.2:

The Student Awareness Survey: A Preliminary Data Analysis

In the Fall of 1999, the members of CAAS decided to conduct an assessment of what students across Canada are learning and have learned about Aboriginal Peoples during their elementary and secondary education. We were fortunate to secure funding, principally from the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, to make this possible.



Throughout this report, only the surface has been skimmed in looking at the research findings from the comprehensive SAS (Appendix E). There is much more to learn from the SAS data. In order to produce this document in as timely a manner as possible, the CAAS Core Working Group chose to confine its investigation to boundaries that fit with the resources available to us. We are willing to make the data available to anyone who will use it for a good purpose, as defined by our goals and mandate.

The Design of the Student Awareness Survey (SAS)

The questions on the SAS are based on several elements. Many are drawn from our review of the mandatory expectations in previous curriculum documents as well as expectations taken from the CAAS Proposed Learning Expectations (PLEx - see Appendix C), which overlap with expectations that could have been taught in optional high school courses.

Φ How the SAS Questions Relate to Provincial Curricula

The following is a summary of the questions that are asked in the SAS (Appendix E), and the subject and grade level in which students would have received this information

according to provincial curriculum and/or the CAAS learning expectations:

- Questions 27, 45 and 46 deal with elements of Aboriginal culture and the traditional lands of First Nations. These questions are based on curriculum expectations found in the junior and intermediate divisions, specifically in the social studies curriculum.
- Question 9 is reflected in the primary art curriculum.
- Questions 12, 13, 14, 18, 24, 42 and 43 are based on expectations from the junior and intermediate social studies and history programs. In general, this content deals with particular dates, Aboriginal leaders, and superficial treatment of issues of colonization and treaties.
- The remaining questions are found in most secondary level Aboriginal/Native Studies programs across Canada (and also reflect the content of the CAAS Learning Circle and the PLEx). These senior-level Native Studies programs provide more in-depth study of the many issues facing Aboriginal Peoples today. As previously mentioned, these courses are *optional*. There is no consistent delivery of any of these programs and most students in Canada do not take these courses. Generally, when these courses are offered, they are offered primarily for the Aboriginal student body in a school that has a significant Aboriginal population.

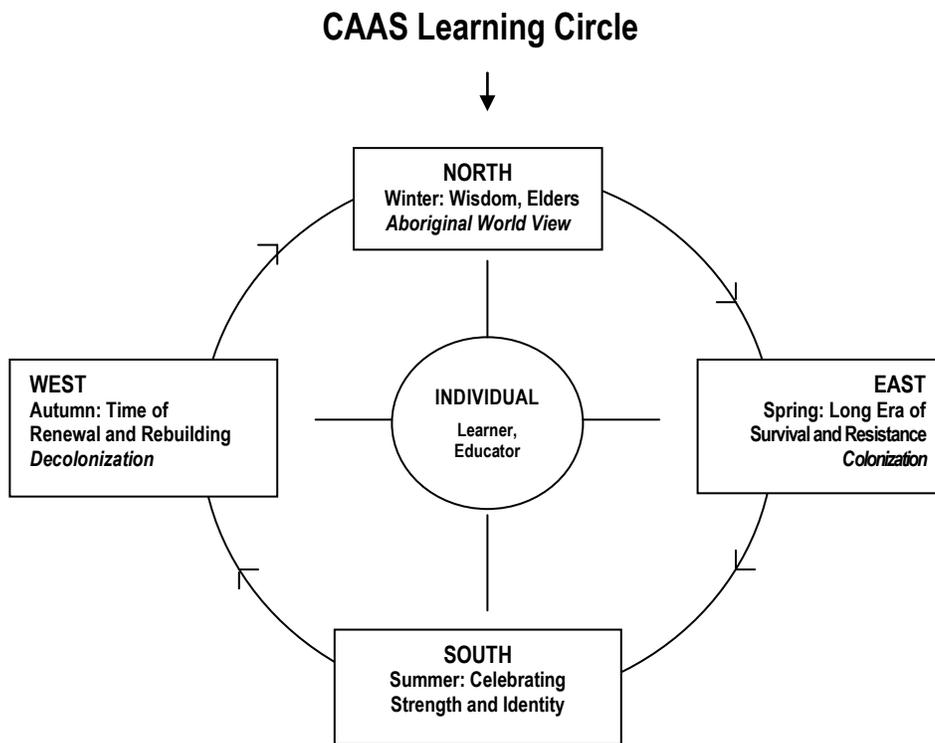
In CAAS' view, the content found in these optional programs and in our PLEx should be studied by all Canadian students. This material should be delivered across the curriculum, in all levels, in a grade-appropriate manner. The inclusive study of Aboriginal Peoples should not be limited to the elementary level or to the secondary one, but should begin in the earliest grades and continue with successively more in-depth study of Aboriginal Peoples through the secondary panel in all curriculum areas. The current system delivers too little, too late, and consequently fails to address the misinformation about Aboriginal Peoples that students absorb from other sources.



Φ **Placing the SAS Questions on the CAAS Learning Circle**

The SAS questions reflect the knowledge and the level of understanding that Canadian students have of Aboriginal Peoples. *Describing how to place them* on our Learning Circle is a much more challenging categorization. To try to make our pedagogical framework accessible to educators, we have to try to fix items to points on a *circle*, which by its character has no hard and fixed points.³

That very aspect of the Circle is one of the reasons it is such a valued intellectual tool among Indigenous Peoples. There is overlap, which reflects the fact that things migrate from one direction (north, east, south, and west) to another along the continuum. Concepts and experiences also cross north-south and east-west, along the traditional lines in the middle of our Learning Circle.



To try to communicate how CAAS sees the Learning Circle in a pedagogical sense, we present the following:

- **NORTH: Winter: Wisdom – Elders: *Aboriginal World View***
Questions 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 25, 35, 42, 43, 45, and 46 fit here.
- **EAST: Spring - The Long Era of Survival & Resistance - *Colonization***
Questions 10, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 26, 28, 33, 39, 40, 41, 42, and 43 fit here.
- **SOUTH: Summer - Celebrating Strength & Identity: *Many Nations/ Many Stories***
Questions 8, 9, 12, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 42, 43, 45, and 46 fit here.
- **WEST: Autumn - A Time of Renewal & Rebuilding: *Decolonization***
Questions 11, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 23, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 42, 43, and 46 fit here.

These points on the circle provide an Aboriginal view of history. From time immemorial, Aboriginal Peoples have been independent nations living on this land. The strength and integrity of Indigenous cultures across this land has brought Aboriginal Peoples to *The West* in our traditional paradigm – where we now engage in the process of renewal through decolonizing methodologies. The wisdom of our Elders is embodied in *The North*. This direction reminds of the cold times when Aboriginal Peoples has to keep their knowledge hidden in order to preserve it. The wisdom that has been preserved intact in *The North*, helped keep Aboriginal Peoples strong enough to endure the long era of colonization represented in *The East*. The colonizers came geographically from *The East*. Therefore, *The East* is where we examine of the long era of resistance to, and survival of, colonization.

All students in Canadian schools require knowledge about, and understanding of, Aboriginal Peoples. The SAS examines where, how and when students learn about Aboriginal Peoples in elementary and secondary school. It measures whether the student respondents are adequately informed about these matters by the time they graduate from high school. The SAS was developed by the members of the CAAS Core Working Group, identified in Appendix B. Some Core Group members contributed to the development of the CAAS



Learning Circle and related learning expectations on which the SAS was based. Some participated in development and review of the questionnaire itself.

Sample – Who Was Surveyed?

The population CAAS sought to survey was first year university and college students, i.e. those young people who recently graduated from secondary schools in Canada.

CAAS' goal was to measure the knowledge and awareness about Aboriginal Peoples among students who fit this criteria because it fits with the CAAS mandate: we are concerned about what is taught in elementary and secondary schools about Aboriginal histories, cultures, worldviews and contemporary issues. Across Canada, over the past decade, there have been changes in the curricula addressing Aboriginal Peoples. CAAS wanted to measure the understanding of those students who may have benefited from recent improvements to curricula. We also wanted to exclude, as much as possible, responses from students who may have learnt more about Aboriginal Peoples in their post-secondary education.

The demographic information required to exclude responses from students outside our target population was not explicitly incorporated into the SAS. We only have incidental information on exceptions to our parameters. Nonetheless, every effort was made to ensure that our surveyed population fit into the established guidelines. In one instance, where the SAS was administered in a class that we knew to include a number of mature students, we asked the instructor to have the respondents mark their ages on the first page: all responses from individuals over 25 years of age were eliminated. In the end, two of the batches of surveys received by CAAS apparently included older students (some second and third year students, and some transition-year college students in their early 20s). However, this portion of the sample is very small i.e. perhaps a maximum of 25 responses (less than 5% of the total sample).

The method used by CAAS to gather this sample is called *snowball*. Using our networks across Canada through the post-secondary education community, CAAS contacted professors and instructors who helped find others, who agreed to assist by administering our



survey to students in their first year courses. This is described as a *sample of convenience* although the end result is indeed a rather random sample. The extent to which this method may have impacted our findings is a matter of speculation. Because we moved through circles of allies to find colleagues and associates to assist with the SAS, it is possible that our findings are based on data from students who may be somewhat better informed than we would have found through a more completely random process. We did not, however, have the resources to administer our study through any means other than relying on scholars and educators in our networks to ask their students to cooperate with our research.

The survey administrators were asked to comply with several criteria. First, the SAS was to be administered on a supervised basis; 45 minutes was required for completion (based on our field tests); it was to be administered in a first year course; and, it was not to be administered in a "Native (Aboriginal or Indigenous) Studies" class.

Over a seven-month period, from December 2000 to June 2001, we collected a sample of 519 surveys from eighteen post-secondary institutions in eight provinces and one territory across Canada. The list of universities and colleges along with the number of responses from these institutions are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Post-Secondary Sources of Surveys

Φ Memorial University (NFLD): 15	Φ Confederation College (ON): 103
Φ University College of Cape Breton (NS): 61	Φ Sioux Lookout (transition year/distance education college program) (ON): 6
Φ Université du Moncton (NB): 18	Φ Red River College (MB): 25
Φ Mount Allison University (NB): 89	Φ University of Winnipeg (MB): 28
Φ Université du Québec à Montréal (QB): 20	Φ University of Saskatchewan (SK): 6
Φ McGill University (QB): 5	Φ University of Northern British Columbia (BC): 26
Φ Concordia University (QB): 18	Φ College of the Rockies (BC): 47
Φ York University (ON): 14	Φ University of Victoria (BC): 3
Φ Laurentian University (Francophone) (ON): 28	



Φ Yukon College (YK): 7



Table 1 indicates three institutions, Confederation College, Mount Allison University, and University College of Cape Breton, provided responses from more than 50 students. Two of these institutions are in Atlantic Canada. Interestingly, approximately 25% of our sample was collected in Atlantic region provinces. The educators who assisted us with SAS administration from this region anecdotally described their desire to help as arising, in part, from the heightened tensions in that area due to the ongoing controversy around implementation of the Marshall Supreme Court Decision (i.e. the Burnt Church lobster fishing issues). The third institution that provided more than 50 responses was located in a part of Ontario where members of the Aboriginal community report many experiences of racism (see *Gathering The Voices*, 2001; also survey data).

In part because of issues raised during our field test, CAAS developed an "answer sheet" and encouraged the educators who administered our survey to use it as a "teaching moment". Many reported that the experience was a beneficial one for their students. This view was well expressed by one of our volunteer administrators, a university professor of English literature, who said his students "*found the experience both enlightening and shocking - the latter because they were somewhat surprised at how little instruction they had received in high school on such important subjects*".

Through this method of data collection, CAAS achieved its goal of conducting *participatory action research*:

- The CAAS grassroots network of educators, who share our concern about improving the integration of Aboriginal perspectives in Canadian curricula, was strengthened; and,
- Students who responded to the survey engaged in both knowledge and critical or analytical skill development regarding their understandings of Aboriginal perspectives.

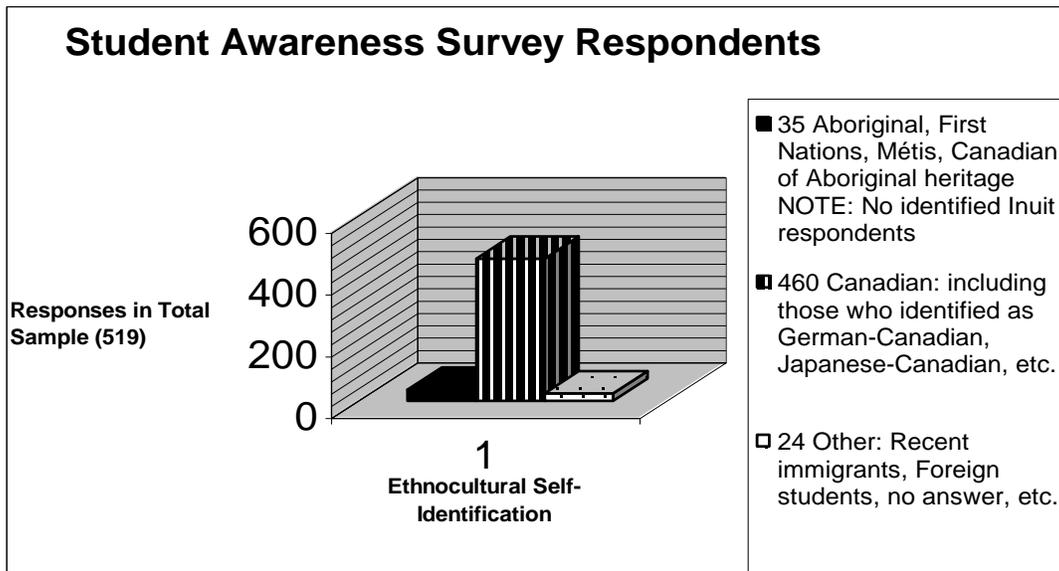
Background Characteristics of Respondents

The first three questions on the SAS asked respondents to describe themselves and provide information about the provinces where they received their elementary and secondary education.



1. Would you describe yourself as: Canadian, First Nations, Aboriginal, Métis, Canadian of Aboriginal Ancestry, Inuit, Other: _____

Of the 519 respondents in our sample, 460 (88.7%) identified themselves as Canadian, 35 (6.7%) identified as Aboriginal, Métis, First Nations, Canadian of Aboriginal Ancestry.⁴ No respondent identified themselves as Inuit. Twenty-two (4.2%) respondents indicated Other, fitting in none of the above categories. Two (0.4%) of the respondents did not indicate their cultural or national identity.



2. Where did you complete your elementary education? City: ___ Province: ___

The survey asked participants to identify the region in which they received their elementary education: One hundred & fifty five (29.9%) from the Atlantic Region; Thirty-eight (7.3%) from Québec; One hundred & forty-six (28.1%) from Ontario; Eighty-four (16.2%) from the Prairie provinces; Seventy-one (13.7%) from B.C. and the North; and 25 (4.8%) who were educated outside of Canada.

3. Where did you complete your secondary education? City: ___ Province: ___

The participants received their secondary education as follows: One hundred & sixty in the Atlantic provinces; Thirty-nine from Québec; One hundred & forty-seven from Ontario; Eighty from the Prairie provinces; Seventy-six from B.C. and the north, and; seventeen who

were educated outside of Canada. A more detailed breakdown of this question informs that the respondents attended high school in the following provinces and territories:

Table 2: Responses by Secondary School in Each Province or Territory

Newfoundland:	15	Saskatchewan:	18
Nova Scotia:	86	Alberta:	18
Prince Edward Island:	10	British Columbia:	69
New Brunswick:	49	Yukon:	2
Québec:	39	Northwest Territories:	4
Ontario:	147	Nunavut:	1
Manitoba:	44	Other/No Answer:	11/6

Questions Based on Mandatory Expectations

Mandatory Basic History and Culture Group:

The following eight information questions are grouped as knowledge questions basic to an understanding of Aboriginal Peoples. As identified above, learning expectations regarding this content are presented in mandatory primary to intermediate curricula across Canada.

9. Briefly describe why the circle is significant for Aboriginal Peoples

- 12.a The distinct People who are descendents of fur traders and Cree, Ojibway or Saukteaux women are called the _____.
- 12.b The traditional territory of this nation is an area of present day Manitoba known as the _____.

- 13.a Name the newest Territory of Canada _____
- 13.b The majority of people in this territory call themselves _____

- 18.a Name the Aboriginal leader hanged in 1885: _____
- 18.b What was he charged with? _____



24. Name an Aboriginal leader who supported the British during the War of 1812:

From the sample of 519, 120 (23.1%) respondents failed to answer any question correctly, and only one (0.2%) respondent was able to answer all eight correctly. A total of 54 (10%) respondents could be evaluated as having a passing mark of "51" or greater on this question, by virtue of answering more than half the questions correctly.

Mandatory "Nations" Question (27):

This is a basic information question presented in a format where more than one answer is requested. This information is covered in mandatory curricula in the junior and intermediate levels across Canada.

27. List four First Nations and the approximate location of their traditional territory.

For example: "The Mi'kmaq Peoples were traditionally located in what is now known as New Brunswick and Nova Scotia".

- i) _____ Peoples were traditionally located in what is now known as _____
- ii) _____ Peoples were traditionally located in what is now known as _____
- iii) _____ Peoples were traditionally located in what is now known as _____
- iv) _____ Peoples were traditionally located in what is now known as _____

Of the 519 respondents, 376 (72.4 %) could not or did not provide at least one correct answer. Forty-two (8.1%) could provide one correct answer; Thirty-eight (7.3%) could provide two correct answers; Thirty (5.8%) could provide three, and; Thirty-three (6.4%) provided all four correct responses.

Mandatory Cross-Cultural Awareness Questions (42, 45, 46):

These are information questions presented in a format where only one answer is requested.



This information is covered in existing curricula within the junior and intermediate levels across Canada.

42. Identify three things that Europeans introduced to the Americas with devastating consequences for Aboriginal Peoples.

Of the 519 responses, 208 (40.1%) respondents did not or could not identify at least one valid⁵ answer to this question. A total of 311 (60%) gave at least one valid answer; of this number, 110 (21%) respondents could identify three valid responses.

45. Briefly describe the difference between how Aboriginal Peoples and Europeans historically relate to the physical environment:

Of the 519 respondents, 167 (32.2%) gave valid⁶ responses. Twenty-five (4.8%) gave partially valid answers and 11 (2.1%) respondents gave answers that were invalid. A total of 316 (60.9%) either did not know, gave incomplete answers or did not answer.

46. How have Aboriginal cultures, histories and perspectives contributed to shaping and defining Canada?

Of the 519 responses, 86 (16.6%) gave valid⁷ answers. Three (0.6 %) gave incorrect answers; Fifty-seven (11%) gave partial answers; Sixty-four (12.3%) answers were incomplete and 309 (59.5%) could not provide any information about how Aboriginal Peoples have contributed to Canada.

A Group of Questions Addressing Content Presented in the CAAS Learning Circle and Learning Expectations

The Learning Circle is a model for understanding and knowledge. There is no dichotomy and there is less chance for a wrong answer or mistake because the connectedness offers resolution. As presented earlier, each of the Four Directions of the Learning Circle represents a significant period of time, season, attribute and thought. The beauty and strength offered by the Learning Circle is the connections made between of all parts of Creation, events and human circumstances. The four doors of the Circle offer an opportunity to analyze and understand different perspectives in relation to the other doors in the circle. Circle teachings are of vital importance to Aboriginal pedagogy.⁸



Land, Resource and Other Aboriginal Rights Group:

Questions 23, 28, 34, 36, 37, and 39 are based on expectations that arise in intermediate and senior *optional* Native Studies programmes. This group of questions is reflected at the Eastern Door on the CAAS Learning Circle. Although in CAAS view they should be, these are not part of the mandatory curricula in any province. They address a knowledge base that would help students to understand many current issues in the ongoing processes of decolonization and rebuilding. This includes issues such as self-government and Aboriginal Peoples current condition of economic marginalization. The results for these are presented in a batch at the end of the list of questions.

23. In disputes between Canadian governments and Aboriginal Peoples over who has authority for parcels of land, four different terms are frequently used. Match the term in the first column with the appropriate description in the second column.

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| A) Land Rights | 1) disputes over territory from a Canadian perspective |
| B) Aboriginal Title | 2) disputes over territory from an Aboriginal perspective |
| C) Land Claims | 3) a formal agreement between nations |
| D) Treaty | 4) recognizes traditional Aboriginal governance over territory |

28. Under the Canadian Constitution, Provinces and Territories have responsibility for the management of natural resources and the Federal government is responsible for matters relating to Aboriginal Peoples.

- a) Do Provincial and Territorial governments make decisions about the natural resources on Aboriginal or First Nation territories?**
- b) In practice, does the Federal Government require the governments of Provinces and Territories to consider the well-being of Aboriginal**



- communities when decisions of this sort are made (e.g. issuing of forestry or mining license)?
34. a) The most recent Treaty was signed by Canada with which First Nation?
b) Name the Provincial government that also signed this Treaty
36. Who or what is Delgamuukw?
37. What *Treaty Right* does the Supreme Court's Marshall Decision deal with?
39. Which of the following legal precedents did the Royal Proclamation of 1763 establish? Check all that apply:
- ___ the establishment of Reserves
 - ___ the responsibility of the British Crown, later the Canadian government, to establish Residential Schools
 - ___ a recognition of the formal nation-to-nation diplomatic relationship between First Nations and the "Crown"/Canada

The results to this group of questions are as follows: from 519 responses, 107 (21%) could only answer one of the nine questions correctly, and five (1%) were able to answer all nine questions correctly. Four hundred and eleven (79%) could not answer a single question.

The "Circle is Unbroken" Question (8):

This question measures a degree of awareness and respect for Indigenous knowledge and how this understanding is communicated through the Canadian school system. The primary location of this knowledge is in the Northern Door on the CAAS Learning Circle. As noted in the introduction to this data analysis, many students provided answers that did not respond to the question, a matter taken up further down in this section.

8. Name or briefly describe the significance of any Traditional teachings or stories from any of the Aboriginal Peoples in Canada.



Of 519 respondents, 85 (16.4%) were able to provide an appropriate answer or valid ⁹ to this question, while 50 (9.6%) provided somewhat appropriate answers and 36 (6.9%) gave invalid answers. Two hundred and ninety-six (57%) respondents did not answer this question, and a total of 52 (10%) either provided no answer or said “don't know.”

The "Fractured Circle" Questions (10 and 11):

These two questions attempt to measure how well respondents comprehend the impact on Aboriginal Peoples cultures of the many and various assimilative programs and policies of the government of Canada; the results are presented in a batch at the end of the two questions. This information corresponds to all points on the CAAS Learning Circle. What is being measured is the students' understanding about the decline in First Nations languages from the historic point identified in question ten (the time of European contact) to the present day, the subject of question 11. Although many students could not answer the precise questions correctly, our inquiry was directed to their understanding of *the rate of decline*.

10. Approximately how many Aboriginal languages were spoken in Canada at the time of first European contact? _____

11. Approximately how many languages are spoken today by enough people to ensure the survival of the language? _____

From the sample of 519, only 14 (2.7%) respondents could answer question ten correctly and 94 (18.1%) were able to answer question 11 correctly. Our inquiry was into the respondents' understanding of the rate of decline in the use of Aboriginal language, as a measure of their awareness of the impact of colonization on Aboriginal Peoples cultures. A 5% to 15% (ratio of Q11 to Q10) “survival rate” was established as a range that fits with the approximate nature of these questions.¹⁰ Using these figures, 45 (8.6%) respondents presented answers that reflect an accurate range of decline in language. One hundred and eighty-two (35%) of all respondents gave answers that were considerably outside this range,



i.e. 20% or more, and 2% or less. The remaining respondents were unable to respond to this inquiry any meaningful way.

Popular Culture Question (22):

This question, which addresses contemporary Aboriginal popular culture, is presented in a format where more than one answer is requested. This information is not covered in all mandatory curricula, although it could be included in language, visual arts, music or other curricula in the intermediate and secondary levels across Canada. This content corresponds most directly to the Eastern and Southern Doors on the CAAS Learning Circle.

22. Name at least one contemporary Aboriginal person in each of these four categories:

i) Artist: _____

ii) Musician: _____

iii) Actor: _____

iv) Writer: _____

Of the 519 respondents, 271 (52%) could not identify even one Aboriginal artist, musician, actor or writer. One hundred and twenty-four (23.9%) respondents could identify just one contemporary Aboriginal performing, literary or visual artist. The two most common responses in any categories were Susan Aglukark and Tom Jackson. Only 14 (2.5%) respondents could identify one Aboriginal person in each category.

Federal Initiatives to create Public Awareness and Understanding Group

Questions 14, 35 and 38 pertain to the many public education concerns addressed in the final *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. Significant events such as these have all occurred since 1995 and could have been taught in a wide variety of curricula (history, law, politics, media studies, civics, etc.) in Canadian high schools. However these topics are not generally covered by mandatory courses across Canada. These matters correspond to the Eastern and Western Doors on the CAAS Learning Circle, on a learning curve that passes particularly through the Southern Door.



14. When is National Aboriginal Peoples Day? _____

Fifteen (3%) of respondents identified June 21st as National Aboriginal Peoples Day. Five hundred and four (97%) of the 519 respondents were unable to answer the question correctly.

35. A valuable report on Aboriginal matters completed in 1996 is called the:

Seven (1.3%) respondents were able to name the final report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People. The remaining 512 (98.3%) respondents were unable to identify this report.

38. Do you recall discussing the “Statement of Reconciliation” during any of your High School classes? The statement dealt with: _____

Only one of the 519 (0.2%) respondents could provide a valid¹¹ response to identify the content of the Statement of Reconciliation. Two others (0.5%) could provide partially correct answers.

Cultures of Aboriginal Peoples Group:

Questions 16, 20, 21, 25, 29, 30, 31, 32, 45 and 46 are grouped because they relate to the cultures of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada today, and they are found primarily on the CAAS Learning Circle along the axis between the North and the South. In general terms, cultural matters correspond to the Southern Door on the CAAS Learning Circle and traditional cultural elements pertain to the Northern Door. However, the contemporary issues facing Aboriginal communities relate directly to the Eastern and Western Doors on the Learning Circle. Some of these topics are covered in some mandatory curricula across Canada, in particular the last two of these questions (which are also presented above in a different grouping of mandatory questions).

16. Match a word in the first column to its description in the second column

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| A) Potlatch | 1) a traditional ceremony from the culture of the First Peoples of the entire continent. It cleanses the participants in preparation for important events. |
|--------------------|---|



- B) Smudging 2) a traditional ceremony from culture of the First Peoples of the prairie. It renews and reconnects the participant with all creation.
- C) Pow Wow 3) a traditional ceremony celebrated by the First Peoples of the North-West Pacific Coast that marks important community events
- D) Sundance 4) a traditional celebration from the culture of the First Peoples of the entire continent. It coincides with the beginning of an important undertaking.

20. Name a national Aboriginal organization. _____
21. Name the leader of a national Aboriginal organization. _____
25. In Aboriginal communities, “Elders” are people who have the following role and responsibilities or do the following things:
- i) _____.
- ii) _____.
- iii) _____.
- iv) _____.
29. The population of Aboriginal persons living in Canada is increasing.
- True False Don't Know
30. The majority of Aboriginal people are under 25 years old.
- True False Don't Know
31. Name the two Provinces or Territories that have the largest number of Aboriginal people?



i) _____

ii) _____

32. Name the five cities in Canada with the largest Aboriginal populations: ¹²

i) _____

ii) _____

iii) _____

iv) _____

v) _____

45. Briefly describe the difference between how Aboriginal Peoples and Europeans historically relate to the physical environment:

46. How have Aboriginal cultures, histories and perspectives contributed to shaping and defining Canada?

The responses to this group of questions require a total of 17 answers. Out of 519 respondents, one (0.2%) could respond to all correctly. Seventy-four (14.3%) respondents could not answer any of the questions correctly. Only 78 (15%) respondents were able to provide nine or more correct answers, which is half of the total answers required from this group of questions.

Human Rights Group:

Questions 15, 17, and 33 pertain to some of the human rights violations that Aboriginal Peoples first experienced during the era of European colonization, the realities and impacts of which continue to affect Aboriginal children, families, communities and First Nations. These matters correspond to the axis from the Western Door to the Eastern Door on the CAAS Learning Circle.

15. In what year were all Aboriginal persons across Canada eligible to vote in Federal elections? _____



17. a) The celebration of Aboriginal cultural events was considered a threat to the establishment of the Canadian nation.

- True False Don't Know

b) Which ceremonies were outlawed by the Canadian government?

- Potlatch Pow Wow Dancing
 Smudging Sundance Don't Know

c) Are they all legal today?

- Yes No Some Don't Know

33. List three things you know about *"The Indian Act"*:

i) _____

ii) _____

iii) _____

These questions require a total of 9 correct answers. Out of 519 respondents, five (less than 1%) were able to answer all of them correctly. One hundred and forty-seven (28%) respondents could not answer any of the questions correctly. Only 59 (11%) respondents were able to correctly answer five or more questions.

Recognition of Aboriginal Rights Question (40):

This question addresses the extent to which Canada acknowledges that it has signed binding nation-to-nation agreements with First Nations through the treaty process, a matter of primary concern to Aboriginal Peoples. The matter of constitutional recognition is an active concern, in several regards, to First Nations Peoples and their leaders today, so its specific location is at the Western Door on the CAAS Learning Circle, but treaties emerge at the Eastern Door and their impact is seen around the Circle.

40. Are Aboriginal Treaty Rights recognized in Canada's Constitution?



Yes No Don't Know

From 519 respondents to this question, 146 (28.1%) were able to correctly answer "yes" to this question, 81 (15.6%) respondents answered the question incorrectly, 209 (40.3%) replied "don't know," and a total of 83 (16%) gave incomplete or no answers.

Beothuk Question (41) :

This question addresses one of the bleakest elements of early Canadian history, the eradication of an entire First Nation of Indigenous People. For many Aboriginal historians, teachers, leaders and Peoples, the elimination of this entire culture remains an exemplar warning of the brutality of colonialism. As such, it is found at the Eastern Door, in the era of European colonization but is also a component of other issues at various points around the CAAS Learning Circle. In some jurisdictions this is taught in the mandatory curriculum.

41. Can you name the First Nation that was completely eradicated from Newfoundland? _____

From a total of 519 responses, 52 (10%) respondents were able to correctly identify the Beothuk as the First Nation eradicated from Newfoundland (which happened in the early part of the 1800's). In looking at this result, it is important to bear in mind that approximately 25% of the responses to the SAS come from Atlantic Canada, where this topic should be covered in the classroom program, yet only 10% of our total respondents could answer it correctly.

Residential Schools Question (26):

This question measures the knowledge of the respondents concerning the reasons that the residential schools program was implemented as a policy by the government of Canada. It also examines respondents' understanding of the impacts of these schools on the children who attended them, as well as their families, communities and Nations. The impacts of this program pertain to all points on the CAAS Learning Circle, but its primary location on the Circle is at the Eastern Door. It is a complex question, and each section will be evaluated separately as these are major issues in Aboriginal communities today. These issues have serious implications for Aboriginal - Canadian relationships and for many Canadian

institutions. Pertinent information on residential schools is included in the intermediate mandatory curriculum in some jurisdictions, but not all.

26. For more than a century, beginning in the mid-1800's, many Aboriginal children in Canada attended Residential, or boarding, Schools.

a) Generally speaking, these Residential Schools were a positive experience and a contribution to the wellbeing of Aboriginal students and their families.

- True False Don't Know

Of the 519 responses to this question, 339 (65.3%) correctly provided the answer "*false*" to this question. Thirty-six (6.9%) of the respondents provided the incorrect answer "*true*". In the remaining responses, 105 (20.2%) said "*don't know*", and a total of 39 (7.5%) were either incomplete or no answer. Some of the respondents who checked "*don't know*" to this portion of the question answered subsequent portions.

b) What was the Federal Government's purpose in sending children to these schools? Check all that apply:

- to learn to speak English and/or French
- to speed up the assimilation of Aboriginal Peoples into Canadian Society
- to convert Aboriginal children to Christianity
- to prepare Aboriginal children to work in Canada
- None of the above
- All of the above

Of the 519 respondents, 231 (44%) indicated a profound understanding of this matter by answering "*all of the above*". Please note that respondents were asked to "check all that apply." Those who answered by individually checking all the correct answers were coded as having answered "all the above." Given the response to other questions, especially the correlation CAAS has done on primary sources of information (Q5) and valid ¹³responses to Q46 concerning contributions to Canadian culture by Aboriginal Peoples (presented below) it seems that the difference in the respondents' awareness on this topic, relative to the other



questions presented in the SAS, may arise from their “own reading” and media coverage not from “lessons learned in school” (Q5).

Each of the separate options available for this question is examined here. A total of 380 (73.2%) respondents were aware that one of the policy goals of residential schools was to teach the children to "*speak English or French*". A total of 365 (70.3%) respondents were aware that one of the policy goals of these Schools was "*to speed up the assimilation of Aboriginal Peoples into Canadian Society*". A total of 334 (64.4%) respondents were aware that one of the policy goals of these Schools was "*to convert Aboriginal children to Christianity*". A total of 264 (50.9%) respondents were aware that one of the policy goals of these Schools was "*to prepare Aboriginal children to work in Canada.*" A total of 11 (2.1 %) respondents answered "*none of the above*".

c) Describe some of the impacts of the residential schools on Aboriginal people, their families and communities. _____

A total of 293 (56%) of respondents, gave written answers to this final open-ended portion. Many of their open-ended responses are in other sections of this report. A total of 263 (89.8%) of the respondents' comments were valid¹⁴ answers, 12 (4.1%) were not considered valid, and 18 (6.1%) responses were somewhat valid.

NOTE: The measurable level of awareness on this question is greater than any other question asked on the SAS survey.

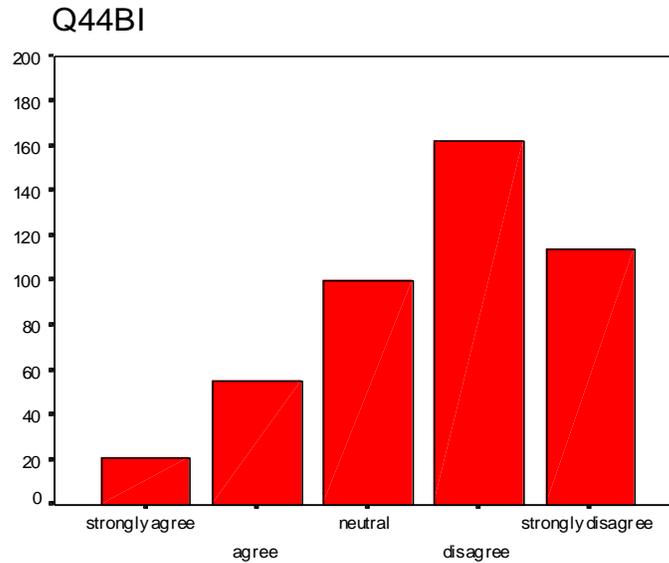
Do Schools Provide Opportunity for Students to Learn and Understand Aboriginal Issues?

Opportunity to Learn:

The answers to this question provide us with the student's evaluation of how well the school system met their needs for learning about Aboriginal Peoples. 44b) I had adequate opportunity to learn about Aboriginal history and culture in school.



The graph below demonstrates that 348 respondents expressed a clear view of whether they agreed or disagreed. Of these, 21 (6%) “Strongly Agreed” that they had an adequate opportunity to learn about Aboriginal Peoples. A total of 51 (14.7%) “Agreed” to this statement a total of 162 (46.6%) “Disagreed” and a total of 114 (32.7%) “Strongly Disagreed.”



Expressed differently, 276 (79.3%) of the students who expressed a clear view on these questions, were not satisfied with their education in this regard. A total of 72 (20.7%) of those who expressed a clear view were satisfied with their education in this regard. A total of 100 (28.7%) students expressed a neutral position on this question.

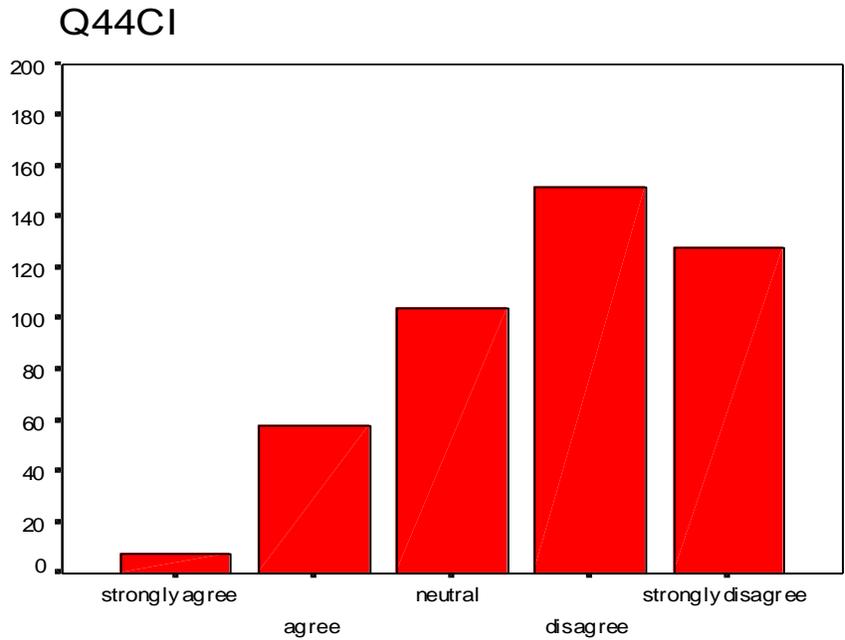
Not included in these findings from the total sample of 519, 71(13.7% of the total sample) either gave incomplete answers, no answer or wrote in that they “didn't know.”

44c) Based on what I learned in school I am able to understand the current issues between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada.

The graph below indicates that 347 respondents expressed a clear view of whether they agreed or disagreed. Of these, 8 (2.3%) “Strongly Agreed” that based on what they learned in

school they could understand contemporary issues. A total of 59 (17%) “Agreed” to this statement, 152 (43.8%) “Disagreed” and 128 (36.9%) “Strongly Disagreed.”

Expressed differently, 280 (80.7%) of the students who expressed a clear view on this topic were not satisfied with their education in this regard. A total of 67 (19.3%), of those who expressed a clear view, were satisfied with their education.



Out of 519 total survey respondents, 104 (20%) students expressed a neutral position on this question and a total of 68 (13.1%) either gave incomplete answers, no answer or wrote in that they “didn't know.”

Where Did Respondents Learn About Aboriginal Issues?

Sources of Information:

The following question probes what students report as their primary source of information with regards to Aboriginal Peoples histories, cultures, worldviews and contemporary issues.

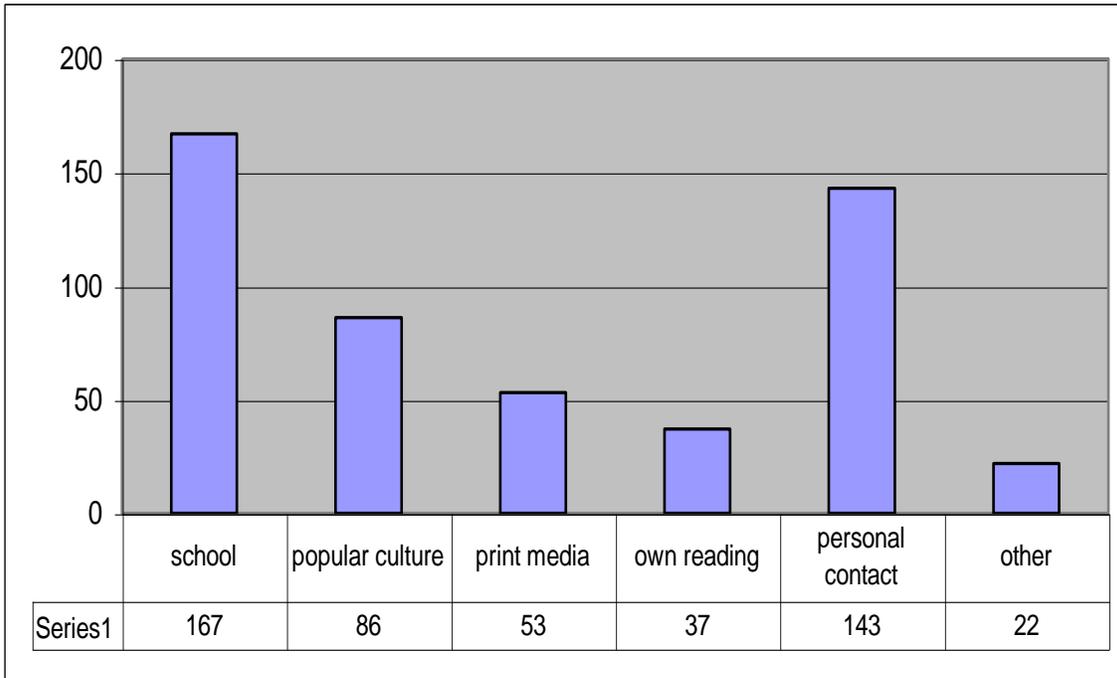


5. What is the main source of your knowledge about Aboriginal people? Please rank the following from 1 to 6, with 1 being the source which provided the **MOST** information to you:

- Lessons taught in school
- Popular culture including TV, movies, advertisements
- Newspapers and news magazines
- Own reading
- Personal contact (friends, family etc.)
- Other _____

Only 486 (93.6%) of the 519 total respondents to the survey made a “first” choice. Of these, 167 (34%) indicated that “lessons taught in school” was their first choice. “Popular culture” was first among 86 (17.5%) respondents. “Newspapers and magazines” was indicated as the first choice by 53 (11%) of the respondents. A total of 37 (7.5%) respondents identified “Own reading” as the first choice for information. “Personal contact” (friends, family, etc.) was the first choice for information of 143 (30%) respondents.

A total of 22 (4.5%) respondents indicated “other” as their first source of information; these respondents provided diverse answers, which could not usefully be analyzed. ¹⁵



Measuring Sources of Knowledge Relative to Correct Answers:

In this view of the data, CAAS examines the correlation between the respondents' primary source of information and one of the open-ended or opinion “awareness” questions:

46. How have Aboriginal cultures, histories, and perspectives contributed to shaping and defining Canada?"

The purpose of this secondary analysis is to see if any one of the information sources identified in question five produced significantly better results than the others. It is important to remember that the answers to Q46 were ranked according to their “validity” rather than their “correctness”; therefore, a answer such as “unfortunately not very much,” as one respondent replied, is considered a “valid,” albeit uninformed, opinion because it does not reflect outright racism or bias.

This mandatory curriculum question asked respondents to identify how Aboriginal Peoples have contributed to shaping and defining Canada. As established previously for question 46, there were 86 valid answers.

Φ Lessons taught in school:

As established, 86 respondents answered the “contribution” question validly. A total of 21 respondents of this group of 86 identified “school” as their first source of information. This represents 24% of the total number of valid answers to the “contribution” question. Only 21 of the 167 respondents who identified “school” as their first source of information were able to provide a valid answer to the “contribution” question. This number represents 12.5% of the total number of respondents relying primarily on “school” for information about Aboriginal Peoples.

Φ Popular culture:

As established, 86 respondents answered the “contribution” question validly. A total of 19 of this group of 86 identified “popular culture” as their first source of information. This represents 22% of the total number of valid answers to the “contribution” question. Only 19 of the 86 respondents who identified “popular culture” as their first source of information were able to provide a valid answer to the “contribution” question. This number represents 22% of the total number of respondents relying primarily on “popular culture” for information about Aboriginal Peoples.

Φ Newspapers and magazines:

As established, 86 respondents answered the “contribution” question validly. A total of 7 of this group of 86 identified “newspapers and magazines” as their first source of information. This represents 8% of the total number of valid answers to the “contribution” question. Only 7 of the 53 respondents who identified “newspapers and magazines” as their first source of information, were able to provide a valid answer to the “contribution” question. This number represents 13% of the total number of respondents relying primarily on “newspapers and magazines” for information about Aboriginal Peoples.

Φ Own reading:

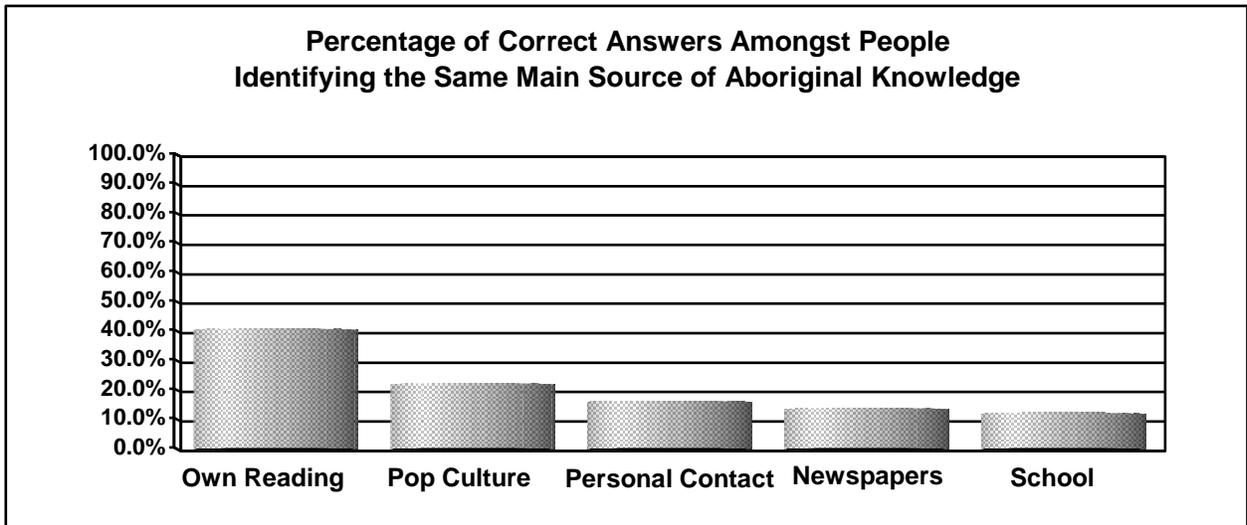
As established, 86 respondents answered the “contribution” question validly. A total of 15 of this group of 86 identified “own reading” as their first source of information. This



represents 17% of the total number of valid answers to the “contribution” question. Only 15 of the 37 respondents who identified “own reading” as their first source of information were able to provide a valid answer to the “contribution” question. This number represents 40.5% of the total number of respondents relying primarily on “own reading” for information about Aboriginal Peoples.

Φ Personal contact:

As established, 86 respondents answered the “contribution” question validly. A total of 23 of the 86 respondents identified “personal contact” as their first source of information. This represents 26.5% of the total number of valid answers to the “contribution” question. Twenty-three of the 143 respondents who identified “personal contact” as their first source of information were able to provide a valid answer to the “contribution” question. This number represents 16% of the total number of respondents relying primarily on “personal contact” for information about Aboriginal Peoples.



NOTE: This analysis indicates that the students relying on “own reading” are the best informed, and those relying on “lessons taught in school” are the most poorly informed about Aboriginal Peoples. The second best source is shown to be “popular culture,” a category that

many respondents indicated elsewhere (Q19) they believe to include TV and radio news.

Grades in School where Respondents Learned about Aboriginal Peoples:

Mandatory curriculum generally places this learning at the junior and intermediate levels (grades four to nine). Still, CAAS felt we could get a better sense what is actually going on in the classroom by asking the two-part question 6a/b.

6.a) Did you specifically learn about Aboriginal Peoples in school?

From our sample of 519 respondents, 331 (63.8%) answered “yes.” A shocking 121 (23.3%) answered “no” to this question. 51 (9.8%) respondents provided “don't know” as their answer, and a total of 16 (3.1%) either gave no answer or an incomplete one.

6.b) If yes, in what Grade or Grades?

There was room for up to two answers to this question, but there was no substantial difference between the distribution of first and second choices.

Among “first” responses, 161 (31%) respondents were unable to or did not identify a grade where they learned about Aboriginal Peoples. This is a startling fact. Beyond this fact, the answers were not easy to code because this was an open-ended question. Of those who provided information: 109 (21%) respondents said elementary school (kindergarten to grade 6); 82 (15.8%) said junior high (grades 7/8/9); 56 (10.8%) answered high school (grade 10 and up, including CEGEP); 47 (9.1%) said they had learned about Aboriginal Peoples in a combination of grades at various levels in elementary and secondary school; 49 (9.4%) identified post-secondary sources. Finally, two (0.4%) respondents answered “don't know” and there were 13 (2.5%) incomplete answers for this question.

Information on Contemporary Issues of Aboriginal Peoples:

This is a complex question. It has several parts and we will look at each part separately to better understand what it tells us about where the respondents get their information about current concerns of Aboriginal Peoples.



19.a) Provide a brief description of an issue that is currently of concern to Aboriginal Peoples in YOUR region or ACROSS Canada. For example, land rights, treaty issues, community services, or cultural practices.

From our sample of 519, 303 (58.4%) respondents were able to provide at least one valid¹⁶ example of a current concern, and another 12 (2.3%) provided a somewhat valid response. Another 12 (2.3%) respondents provided inappropriate answers. Among the responses given most frequently were: the fishing issue (frequently referenced to “Burnt Church”), other resource rights issues, land rights, self-government, youth issues such as suicides and substance abuse, unemployment/poverty, racism, social services, cultural matters and treaty issues. 19 (3.7%) respondents said “don't know” and 22 (4.2%) gave incomplete answers. 151 (29.1%) respondents did not or could not answer this question.

19.b) How did you hear about this issue?

A total of 313 (60.3%) respondents answered this part of the question. From this sample, 220 (70%) said they heard about the issue through the news media as their first response. Other first (often *only*) responses to how they heard about the issue were: post-secondary institution: 16 (5.1%); Aboriginal People *and* “word of mouth/people”: 13 (4.2%) each; friends and self/observation: 10 (3.2%) each; elementary or secondary school: 9(2.9%); family: 8 (2.6%); work: 7 (2.3%); personal reading *and* government sources: 2 (0.6%) each; church/various/alternative sources: 1 (0.3%) each.

19.c) Did you ever discuss this type of topic in school?

From our sample of 519, 169 (32.5%) said they had discussed *these kinds* of issues in school and 183 (35%) respondents indicated they had not. 167 (32%) provided no response: 66 did not answer this question, and there were a total of 101 incompletes and “don't knows.”

NOTE: These figures indicate that fully two-thirds of students across Canada may never have discussed issues of "current concern" to Aboriginal Peoples in their elementary or secondary school classrooms.



19.d) How would you resolve the issue?

From the total sample of 519, 119 (22.9%) respondents identified a valid approach, including getting more information, negotiating, and other more detailed and creative reflections. A total of 34 (6.6%) respondents gave an answer that was invalid and 64 (12.1%) respondents provided an answer that was somewhat valid - often solutions that were culturally inappropriate or otherwise unworkable however well-meaning. 302 (58.2%) respondents offered no comment on this question (don't know/no answer/incomplete).

Observations from Surveys

Following are a few overall observations about the manner in which various students responded to the survey form.

Telling All at the Beginning:

Survey respondents seemed eager to tell what they knew about Aboriginal Peoples. They often appeared to “dump” everything they knew into the first question that asked for knowledge, Q8 -- which asks for the name and/or significance of any traditional story. In Appendix G is a table containing all the open-ended responses provided by respondents in answer to this question. The reader can see that many students contributed information on topics totally unrelated to the question.

Don't Knows:

Many respondents took the time to write in “don't know” or an equivalent (where this response was not one of the optional answers provided), or to put question marks on questions they were unable to answer. Some appeared to be troubled by their ignorance, a theme taken up immediately below.

Incompletes:

“Incompletes” is a category of response that grows from less than twenty respondents in the first ten questions to approximately sixty by the end of the survey.

There are less than twenty respondents who appear to have been born and educated outside Canada. Even though some of them only answered the demographic questions and then



stopped responding, they have all been left in the survey sample. These responses were retained because of two factors. Firstly, several individuals fitting these demographics *did* respond to the entire questionnaire (and, interestingly, some did quite well overall). Secondly, an unknown number of these respondents may now be in Canada as immigrants with the intention of remaining here, in which case their overall knowledge about Aboriginal Peoples is relevant to the broader goals of the CAAS. Consequently, some of the individuals (approximately 10 - 15) who identified as “Other” account for a portion of the large number of “incompletes” found in SAS responses.

Most of the other “incompletes” are respondents who appeared to *give up* before they finished. These are not simply “no answers”: these individuals stopped answering any questions at all. This generally appeared to happen after they made it clear that they didn't know very much about the topics covered in the SAS. During our field test we noticed this phenomenon.

This is pedagogically interesting and merits both mention and further investigation. Its significance arises from the feelings expressed by the respondents in comments in the margins and in responses to open-ended questions that did not relate to the asked question. Comments such as these became noticeably more prevalent as the respondents completed the survey and became intimately acquainted with their lack of knowledge. In this way, the survey seemed to function as a tool for deconstruction of the inadequate curriculum to which the students had been exposed. The indicators of this process were apologetic answers, specific comments expressing frustration, in some cases with illustrative “doodles.” This sentiment appears commonly among our sample.

A survey that illustrates this dynamic was completed by a young female student in a University of Toronto class where the first field test was done. She drew the frowning equivalent of a “happy face” [☹] next to several questions she couldn't answer, and in other cases she wrote comments such as “sorry, I don't think I know ” or “I cannot describe this person.” While this was the most touching example of the survey's *deconstruction* impact, it was not unique.



Another exemplar of this *deconstructive* process is found in a survey from a respondent from our second field test, at another Ontario university. On page two (Q's 6 - 9), the student drew a total of three question marks as answers. These marks measure approximately 5 millimeters in height. By page three (Q's 10 - 16), the question marks - of which there are seven - have grown to 7 millimeters and the dot at bottom is emphasized. On subsequent pages, there are question marks up to 4 centimeters, even 5 centimeters, in height. As well, the student begins to draw in "x's" and lines across the questions she or he finds unanswerable. On Q33 (re: the Indian Act), s/he has written in "Nothing" in letters up to a centimeter high. S/he circled the answer "strongly disagreed" with heavy pen marks when responding to the questions asking for an evaluation of his or her "adequate opportunity to learn" (question 44b) and ability "to understand current issues" (question 44c).

CAAS' Core Working Group was concerned about the adverse impact of this frustration on the respondents, and introduced measures to address it, including developing the Answer Sheet in Appendix E. CAAS asked our volunteer survey administrators to provide the answer sheet to each respondent when they completed their survey.

Ran out of Time:

Roughly ten respondents noted that they could not complete the survey due to lack of time.

Summary:

The meaning of these responses must be left to another round of analysis. The analysis in this report examines some of the evident information presented in these surveys, but much remains to be extracted from the intersection between the students responses to the questions and their open-ended commentary.

The limited resources of the CAAS required us to make determinations about which pieces are most relevant to present in this particular report. Because of the social value of the data we have collected, we are willing to share this data with any researcher or organization who will use it for good purposes. The CAAS Core Working Group is open to requests of this nature.



Conclusion

More than 50% of all students surveyed state clearly that they did not have an adequate opportunity to learn about Aboriginal Peoples' histories and cultures in elementary and secondary school. This group of respondents indicated they were poorly or very poorly prepared to address the current issues between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. When incomplete, “no answers,” “don't knows” and neutral responses are excluded from the data, about 80% of the respondents expressed serious or very serious dissatisfaction with what they had learned about Aboriginal Peoples in school.

When a majority of students in undergraduate programs across Canada feel the education system has failed to prepare them for dealing with Canada's “most pressing human rights issue,” there is *clearly* something wrong with the system.¹⁷

These results tell us that the emerging generation of Canadian community and business leaders are not prepared to deal effectively, justly, sensitively, or appropriately, with Canada's domestic agenda.

As the SAS responses also clearly demonstrate, the students are very concerned about this shortfall. That *is* encouraging.

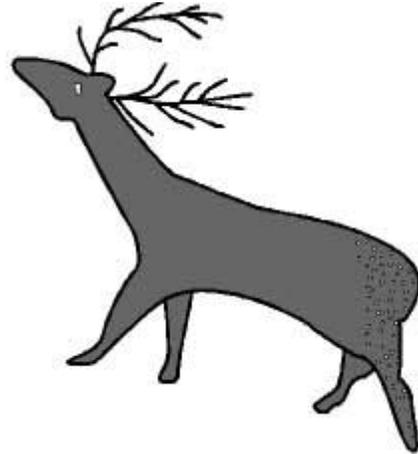


Section 3.3:

A Hopeful Message from Canadian Students

Canadian Students Acknowledge their Ignorance

Open-ended responses to Q19 on the survey, which asks the respondents to identify an issue of current concern to Aboriginal Peoples, are not detailed here. The answers to this question show great awareness of economic issues such as fishing and land rights, and other issues that cannot be attributed to current mandated school curriculum.



Despite their abilities to correctly identify an issue of current concern to one or more groups of Aboriginal People, however, many of the respondents could not present any real suggestions regarding how to begin to resolve these matters (Q19d asks for this). Far too many of the students' answers were simply an admission that they needed more information.

This self-evaluation of their ignorance also comes out in open-ended responses to Q's 44b and 44c, where the students express their disappointment with the curriculum about Aboriginal Peoples in Canadian classrooms. Overwhelmingly the surveyed students are asking, "Did I learn anything useful in school about Aboriginal Peoples? Why didn't I learn useful information?"

I learned practically nothing about Aboriginal history and culture in school. [Atlantic Region/Canadian]

Aborigi-who? [Atlantic Region/Canadian]



They taught about the fur trade. [Québec/Canadian]

Too fast - too vague. [Québec/Québécoise]

None what-so-ever [Prairies Region/Filipino]

What I learned in University has helped me but nothing from school was relevant or helpful. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

I don't have a clue what's going on and don't know where to go to get the truth. [Prairies Region/Canadian]

We didn't spend enough time on the history of Native People... I believe we should know more. [Atlantic Region/Canadian-Francophone]

I don't remember anything significant. [Prairies Region/Canadian]

Definitely not enough, there was little to none. [Atlantic Region/Canadian]

I learned very little at an early age, so I can't hardly remember anything now. [Atlantic Region/Canadian]

I obviously don't know enough because I couldn't answer any of the questions. [Ontario/Canadian]

B.C. has such interesting, dynamic, rich aboriginal history. I learned nothing, not even who Bill Reid was or what territory my school, and city were on. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

Schools (elementary) don't teach the issues surrounding Aboriginal culture. We only learned about buffalo hunts and teepees. More needs to be taught to children so we can solve the problems, before we can do that we must be educated on them. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

I think we covered one chapter in Grade 8 and then moved on. [Ontario/Canadian]



This admission of ignorance at least indicates an open mind. It also demonstrates a willingness to try to set things “right,” far more than one would expect from people educated under the BOC.

The openness, receptiveness to learning, and willingness to try, means that the effectiveness of the *pedagogy of oppression* is on the wane. It also begs the question: Why do many young people seem to know some things, to care about the issues, and to have the beginnings of an understanding about their importance and relevance? As we saw in the previous section, the media may be responsible for much of this change. In its 21st century format, the mass media seldom delivers background information. The media's lack of breadth-in-coverage (i.e. failure to report all sides fairly) is a problem Aboriginal Peoples commonly experience and leads to public misinformation. The media's lack of depth-in-coverage bequeaths little opportunity for those using this source of information to develop critical analysis skills. It seems almost unnecessary to mention that this content and these analytical learning skills are vitally important, and they are supposed to be learned in school.

Again referring to CAAS' curriculum overview, during the past decade in particular, educators are beginning to re-examine and change their approach and their policies: very slowly, but movement is perceptible. While the CAAS network may be seen as one of many vanguard efforts, it is not unattached to the real concerns of the education community. Teachers and academics generally seem to know that the time has come for change. Politicians and others in positions of social power may be lagging behind on this move for social change, but they will need to listen when they hear students and teachers saying the same thing. If sluggish, Canada is still a functional democracy.

Students Reject the Bad Old Curriculum's Messaging

Ken Osborne (quoted earlier, in *The East*) quotes from a 1916 speech by R.S. Thornton, then Manitoba's Minister of Education, who was advocating for compulsory school attendance. (Forced attendance at Canadian schools was a foundational element in the Residential



Schools policy.) Thornton said that the state has two valid reasons for interfering with individual rights on matters related to education:

First, it [the state] does so for its own protection. Boys and girls, the citizens of the future, must be qualified to discharge the duties of citizenship. Second, the state interferes in education for the benefit of the children themselves, who must be fitted to aid themselves so that they may not become a charge to the public (Osborne, 20; citing Henley and Pampallis, 81).

Since the advent of Canadian public education, it has been an accepted precept that schools are used to “fit” students to society, so that they can “discharge the duties of citizenship.” The SAS findings presented in this report demonstrate that many students (81% of those respondents who expressed a clear view) feel that what they learned about Aboriginal Peoples in elementary and secondary school has not prepared them to understand “current issues between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal People in Canada.” This finding is relevant to the question of the competency or incompetency Canadian youth might demonstrate in addressing what the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the United Nations have called Canada's most serious human rights problem: the situation of Aboriginal Peoples (Pohl, 2000, 9-12; Pohl, 2001, 4)

Many open-ended responses to the SAS show that Aboriginal and Canadian students reject the oppressive program of restricting and pre-interpreting information about Aboriginal Peoples for use in public schools. Informal investigation of results point towards the media and isolated exemplary teachers instilling this awareness in students, not the needed changes in mandatory curricula and policy.

However, when one reads through the students' comments, it is clear that change is in the air. SAS respondents can see that the prescriptive messaging offered to them through the education system was originally designed to “fit” them for “citizenship” in a society that had the goals of eradicating Aboriginal cultures. Many of the voices we have heard above reject this pedagogy as dishonest, unjust and biased. Here are a few more voices from the SAS survey calling more directly for new, respectful, and honest curricula:



Too many American textbooks. Too much European perspective of history. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

Textbooks never talked about consequences of arrival of Europeans. Rather it talked of “discovery” by European. [Atlantic Region/Canadian]

Biased history slant towards glorifying European actions (plagues, killing). [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

Perspectives: differ, mostly colonial oppression, show Canada is not able to adhere to First Peoples and treaties. Cultures: are misinterpreted by White anthropologists, geographers and historians. History: is written by Whites. [Prairies Region/First Nations]

School - just learned culture, not effects of Westernization. [Atlantic Region/Canadian of Aboriginal ancestry]

European dominance has not allowed a lot of influence or contributions but hopefully in the very near future these influences will emerge to provide sustainability in future development. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

We were taught mostly about trying to convert Aboriginals to Christianity. [Québec/Canadian]

Many young people in Canada’s post-secondary institutions - tomorrow’s business, community, social and political leaders - can clearly see the damage and the injustice arising from these programs of *cultural invasion* and *repression*. From the students’ responses to the open-ended questions of the SAS, and their other comments in margins and at the end of the survey form, a picture emerges of a youthful population across Canada who care about the economic, social, cultural and political marginalization of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. Many respondents, both Aboriginal and Canadian, demonstrate recognition that Aboriginal cultures are still strong, still full of integrity and value, and they have much to contribute to Canada.



They are misunderstood and judged. They strongly believe in family and traditions. They live a completely different lifestyle from me. [Ontario/Canadian]

I think they have contributed [to Canadian culture] by surviving the assimilation attempts, genocide of culture, etc. demonstrating their innate strengths and spiritual connections regarding family, environment and growth. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

The negative way in which Canada has traditionally dealt with the Natives/Aboriginals has contributed to a fractious outlook on solving issues. I think it takes Canada down a notch or two in terms of being an internationally recognized just society. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

It is hard to describe since Aboriginal People have been regarded as “2nd class citizens”... [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

This group has been ignored as an important part of Canada. [Atlantic Region/Canadian]

My family taught me the Native way of living and to be proud of who I am. [Ontario/First Nations]

Aboriginal people across Canada struggle to maintain their culture, and just as important, their pride of heritage. Our society tends to try to assimilate the native people into a mushy “North American” culture mold... [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

The First Nation people will look out for the welfare of not only themselves but also our natural resources. [Ontario/Canadian]

Historically they have given traditions, ways of life, but they have been so oppressed I think it would be hard to find someone who could say how they shaped this country. Sad but true. [Atlantic Region/Canadian]

Right now in my region, racism and relations between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals is paramount due to the actions of some members of the police service in Saskatoon... I have no idea [how to resolve this]. In an ideal world, children would be taught to love and respect each other



regardless of any difference, but as long as adults continue to act this way, how can we teach children? [Prairies Region/Canadian]

My love for creative, imaginative literature was partially fueled by Aboriginal tales since they dealt with sorcery and wisdom and hardship - even though I did not give in to stereotypes. In this way, our nation has grown in terms of literary merit and influence. [Ontario/Canadian]

I think the greatest issue facing aboriginal people is the displacement of culture. This has led to widespread drug problems and despair... Have no idea [how to address this issue]. A lot of damage has been done to aboriginal cultures. I'm not sure if it can be repaired. [Québec/Canadian]

I didn't learn about the different tribes. I learned the story of the Native people in Canada and I know that if the Whites hadn't come, they would have had less diseases, less alcoholism and that it's us who showed them alcohol. We took advantage of them and then we showed them the use of arms and took over the hunting. [Ontario/Francophone Canadian]

It is native land and it must be ensured that the profits make it into the right hands and that the land is conserved. [Québec/Canadian]

Governments must realize that aboriginal people have rights that must be respected and a culture that must be preserved. [Atlantic Region/Canadian]

We are identified as having a "Native Problem". Natives add depth to our democratic, diverse society. [Prairies Region/Canadian]

I was taught how savage the natives were in early North American history. I have since learned the significance of their existence pre-Columbian era and how sophisticated they were. [Atlantic Region/Canadian]

Let's face it, they were doing better without European influences. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]



I'm intrigued by the way they handle rebellious youth. I believe they're healing circles of elder councils are very good for misguided teens. [Ontario/Canadian]

If anything the government has seen them as an obstacle to be overcome. I have little knowledge of how Aboriginal culture has been incorporated into contemporary Canadian society. [Québec/Canadian]

I think the teachings of hunting, fishing and living off the land are some of the best teachings that have been handed down to me. [Ontario/Canadian of Aboriginal ancestry]

They have the gift of sharing. Very peaceful people. [Ontario/Canadian]

Traditional territories are being logged at an unsustainable rate right now while Land Rights negotiations are slowly being discussed. By the time aboriginal people have control of their territories, there will be nothing left. This is the case in B.C. anyway. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

(Comments taken from responses to various questions on SAS survey.)

Aboriginal and Canadian Students Comment on Residential Schools

As mentioned previously, the findings from the SAS demonstrate an exceptionally high awareness among the post-secondary school population about the experiences of Aboriginal Peoples in Residential Schools. Next, we hear what the respondents are saying about these schools. It is instructive to recall that the initial and century-long effectiveness of the Residential Schools policy rested on the foundation of the BOC. As established earlier, the young of the dominant social class and the young of the marginalized class must be indoctrinated with the same overall message. During the era of the Residential Schools, this indoctrination took place in segregated school systems, where the youth of the dominant class were taught to feel superior and those of the marginalized class were taught to regard themselves as inferior. The Residential Schools policy could never have been so effective if students in Canadian classrooms were learning the truth about the policies of forced assimilation and cultural eradication being implemented by Canada to rid itself of the “Indian Problem.”



The policy of removing young Aboriginal children from their homes and placing them in these boarding schools was certainly one of Canada’s vilest programs of *cultural invasion* and *repression*. For more than a century, these institutions have sown personal anguish, cultural dislocation and disintegration, and almost infinite varieties of social and cultural dysfunction into successive generations of Aboriginal peoples communities.

Many students commented on this question asking about rational for, impacts and long-terms effects of the Residential Schools policy. What follows is just a sampling. Reading through these comments will demonstrate that there is some range of perspectives among non-Aboriginal respondents. These views range from the majority who see the Schools as what could be called a human rights disaster, and the noticeable minority, who see no particular problems with the Schools. The ratio presented here is consistent with the SAS sample (see Appendix G for responses to several open-ended questions on the SAS). This range of views is not found among the Aboriginal respondents – these students could see no positive side to the Schools.

The large number of responses to the open-ended segments of this question supports the conclusion that, overall, young adults in Canadian post-secondary institutions are well informed on this matter. Let the students speak for themselves...

Aboriginal Respondents comment on “the impacts of Residential Schools”:

A lack of love to the future children. [Atlantic Region/First Nations]

A lot of people I talked [with] still remember residential schools like it happened yesterday. It will always be with them. [Ontario/Canadian of Aboriginal ancestry]

Segregation, desperation, hatred, attempted assimilation. [Ontario/First Nations]

The children were abused physically and sexually by the nuns. Because of this, when they got older some of them did this to their own children and others killed themselves. [Ontario/Métis]



Tore families apart. Painful and emotional. [Ontario/Canadian of Aboriginal ancestry]

Children could not communicate to family. [Ontario/Métis]

Loss of culture. [Ontario/Francophone Canadian of Aboriginal ancestry]

Disrupt completely. Separate from home/life known. Destroy community, culture, future of aboriginal people. [Atlantic Region/Canadian of Aboriginal ancestry]

I personally know someone who had experienced this... emotional and physical, sexual abuse.
[Prairies Region/Aboriginal]

Low self-esteem. Not knowing where they came from. Broken Hearts. Hatred toward not only “whites”, but to each other. [Prairies Region/First Nations]

Loss of parenting experience. [Prairies Region/First Nations]

Lack of knowledge with traditions/survival skills. [Ontario/Aboriginal]

Forgot their basic values. [Québec/Métis]

The impacts would be racism and violence [regardless of what] kind of children they are (i.e. non-native, African-American black people, Chinese people, etc.). [Ontario/Native]

Basically everything was taken from them when they went to Residential Schools. They had to leave their families at a young age. [Ontario/First Nations]

I can't describe the impact. All I could say is that it left a deep scar that is always reminded as pain.
[Ontario/Aboriginal]



Non-Aboriginal Respondents comment on “the impacts of Residential Schools”:

Children lost out on their culture. Some were physically, emotionally and sexually abused. Families were destroyed, like any family would be that was torn apart. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

...Discouraged, by punishment, from using native language. [Atlantic Region/Canadian]

Taught to reject their own culture leading to multiple problems. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

They were isolated from their parents. They felt abandoned and guilty. [Ontario/Canadian]

...Some people working in the schools shouldn't have been working there and made the experience a terrible one. [Atlantic Region/Canadian]

They lost their cultural identity - communication barrier between old and young. [Atlantic Region/Acadienne]

Destroyed family units, language, self-esteem and traditional customs, resulting in much alcoholism, abusers (self and of others), suicide, FAS/FAE. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

Culture shock going back into white society / then after going back [to the] 'old' ways. Cultural confusion. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

People who don't feel they belong in either community. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

Unlike popular beliefs, it did more good than bad. [Prairies Region/Canadian]

Most of these Aboriginal People feel that their childhood has been stolen from them and their beliefs of their own culture. [Prairies Region/Canadian]

Splintered families, brought feelings of shame to Aboriginals... [Atlantic Region/Canadian]

Forced them [to be] assimilated. [Atlantic Region/Irish-East Indian/Canadian schooling]



Hurt all involved, tactics didn't work, made things worse. [Atlantic Region/Canadian]

Tore families apart - emotional disturbance of children as a result - loss of cultural practices - some cases no damage. [Prairies Region/Canadian]

Loss of cultural identity and pride. [Québec/Canadian]

Depriving them of their own religious beliefs. [Atlantic Region/Canadian]

Raped the children. [Prairies Region/Canadian]

Parents unable to speak the language of their child. [Prairies Region/Canadian]

Suicide, depression, fear, hatred. [Ontario/Canadian]

Culturally decimated them, left very few with parenting skills, promoted abuse of children. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

(Comments taken from among many responses to Q26c on SAS survey.)

These comments demonstrate the clarity of understanding, on the part of almost all the respondents from Canada's post-secondary institutions, concerning the brutal Residential Schools policy. Public policy and education policy designers and decision-makers should take this commentary as an advisory. The truth has somehow leaked out from underneath or behind the BOC. Likely the media is responsible for part of this, but even more responsible are the courageous Aboriginal persons who first came forward to speak openly of the abuses they suffered in the Schools. As well, the international human rights community and the sharing of experiences with other Indigenous Peoples around the world have both played a very significant role in supporting Aboriginal Peoples in Canada to demand their rights.

The fact that so many students perceive these injustices so clearly must be understood as a profound discrediting of Canadian political, social, religious and education institutions. At



some level, the respondents must be wondering and preparing to ask their professors, community leaders, clergy and themselves:

- How and why did the Residential Schools program come into existence?
- Why have the offenders (institutions - systemic offenders - not individuals) not been totally forthright about admitting their crimes and other responsibilities for the abuse?
- Why have public agencies not been totally forthcoming about addressing the issues?
- Why are these complex human rights and urgent domestic policy and social issues still not broadly and productively addressed in the Canadian classroom?

These are hard questions and some of them are very pointed. We wonder whether Canada can answer these questions or whether Canada can deal with the results of not answering them. As examined elsewhere in this report, mixed signals emanate from Ottawa, which has primary constitutional responsibility with Aboriginal Peoples. In this confusion, little direction is provided to education ministries across Canada on what part they should be playing in dealing with these “civics” issues. As we see in *The West* and the bibliography of curricula appended, provincial and territorial governments are constantly reviewing and renewing their curricula. There are some indications of readiness to move away from the BOC - the *pedagogy of oppression*. But there have also been plenty of indications that others have no intention of so doing.

If educators do not meet this challenge, the picture for Canada is not a pretty one. Here is just one example of the kind of immediate social concern described in the RCAP final report:

The issues confronting urban youth attracted considerable attention at the Commission’s round table on urban issues... A high percentage of the people using needle exchange programs in cities such as Edmonton and Vancouver are Aboriginal youth, and many young people are homeless, live on the

streets from day to day, and are involved in prostitution, drugs and violence. Participants spoke in terms of surviving on the streets rather than living.

Many Aboriginal young people are facing the same situations as their older counterparts: cultural confusion, lost identity, high unemployment, violence, racism and substance abuse. Participants also described Aboriginal youth as experiencing much higher rates of pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease than other young Canadians. Young people often wind up living on the streets in urban centres because of abusive situations at home. One participant has seen people as young as 14 dying with needles in their arms. Others said Aboriginal youth need immediate help but that the kinds of services they need are rare and already overburdened.

The special needs of Aboriginal youth are often overlooked or underestimated by service agencies developing and delivering programs. Boredom is an ever-present problem. Ways must be found to involve Aboriginal youth in developing programs that they will find relevant...

The majority of the Aboriginal population is under 25 years of age. Population projections indicate that the age composition of the Aboriginal population will remain young, compared to the non-Aboriginal population, for at least another 25 years. This demographic reality, coupled with the current shortage of meaningful programming for Aboriginal youth, highlights the need for urgent and aggressive measures in urban centres (RCAP, 1996:Vol. 4,561/62).

The Aboriginal youth population is growing and becoming frustrated with the injustices their Peoples have faced. The majority of settler and newcomer youth in post-secondary institutions across Canada sympathize with Aboriginal Peoples and are aware of the brutal human rights abuses they have suffered, as well as being dissatisfied with the teaching they have received about Aboriginal Peoples.

Clearly, Canada ignores the call for change and for action at its own peril.

A Receptiveness to Learn: The First Step Towards Learning About Walking in Beauty



The gap between what is taught and what should be taught about Aboriginal Peoples in provincial and territorial schools has long been identified by Aboriginal educators, parents and community leaders.

The Canadian respondents to the SAS have joined their voices to this demand for change, and for respect for the First Peoples of this land.

A large number of the SAS respondents are concerned about their lack of knowledge and their limited understanding of Aboriginal Peoples' cultures and contemporary concerns. Some even worry about what their poor education will mean for Canada.

We were cheated out of our nation's true history. [Atlantic Region/Canadian]

When I was in high school, teachers didn't find learning/teaching this was that important. I think it is. [Ontario/Canadian]

Wish I had a better education about it. I feel dumb not knowing. [Ontario/Canadian]

I wish I was taught about it...Never been taught. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

I feel, especially after this survey, very ignorant about the issues. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

I have not learned enough. It's a shame... I don't know anything (or VERY little) and it's even a bit frustrating. They are so close to us?! [Atlantic Region/Acadienne]

We did not learn anything about the indigenous people in school! Absolutely nothing (except for historical facts)... It would be good for young people to be more informed on the culture and history of First Nation people; that would prevent useless prejudice. [Atlantic Region/Acadienne]

I didn't learn anything about the politics surrounding Aboriginal issues in school, except university. Most of what I do know I learned from listening to other people, radio, TV, newspapers. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]



I'm just beginning to understand the complexity of the issues - we learned nothing in elementary and high school. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

I don't have a clue about what's going on and don't know where to go to get the truth. [Prairies Region/Canadian]

I can learn much more from the media [than school] - although I feel it's a biased representation. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

I was barely taught ANYTHING regarding Aboriginal Peoples in school... I am absolutely clueless with regard to these issues. I am uneducated on these matters and as such feel ill equipped to even have an opinion much less come to an understanding. [Ontario/Canadian]

Never did I realize how little I really knew about the Aboriginal people... it's embarrassing really... [Atlantic Region/Canadian]

In four lines? I wish Aboriginal culture and perspective shaped Canadian culture more and that people were more aware of the history, but you've shown me how long I could have gone unaware and unaffected. Aboriginal culture, history, perspectives, politics, are things I'm just starting to learn more about, whether university will be a good place to do this remains to be seen. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

*They gave us a rich history, a diverse nation and a reminder of the mistakes that our government made at times and the devastating effect of that. I'm so **ashamed** of how little I know and understand of the First Nations people of this land.* [Prairies Region/Canadian]

Historian[s] have not really considered aboriginal people. [Atlantic Region/Canadian]

If the purpose of [this survey is] determining how little Canadians know about Aboriginal peoples, their culture, politics & rights, You've done a good in proving that we do know little to nothing about Aboriginals. There should be more awareness and education about Canada's first inhabitants. [Prairies Region/Japanese-Canadian]

European dominance has not allowed a lot of influence or contributions but hopefully in the very near future these influences will emerge to provide sustainability in future development. [British Columbia & Yukon/Canadian]

(Comments taken from responses to various questions on SAS survey.)

Canada's young people have evaluated their schools. They have determined that the education system is not informing them how to approach the issues of relationship between Aboriginal Peoples and Canada. Mass media, one of the most frequent sources of information identified by SAS respondents, or other haphazard learning opportunities are not adequate.

In Canada, public education is the primary social vehicle for learning and teaching about the “discharge” of “the duties of citizenship,” and about how to “share and protect a particular social order (Osborne).” Of course, the citizenship and social order CAAS envisions has to do with learning about *Walking in Beauty*, so that – as Tim Thompson says at the very beginning of this report – we can begin our beautiful walk together, as all Peoples of this land. It is clear that only a *Pedagogy of Respect and Honesty* will get all of us to that new social order, or “restructured relationship” – to use the language of the final RCAP report.



Endnotes

¹ In the mid-1990s, the author of this section spent some time evaluating Canadian history textbooks. During this research, many examples were evident of this tendency to invalidate Aboriginal cultures and worldviews by presenting traditional stories out of context. In one particularly bad example published by Fitzhenry and Whiteside (see bibliography), the retelling of various Creation Stories trivialized Aboriginal stories as if they were mythical or fictional. These stories are Aboriginal beliefs and should not be presented in this frivolous manner.

² In order to support this process and enhance teachers' abilities to engage in this new learning, the CAAS current priority is to ensure related professional development opportunities are provided to teachers already in Canadian classrooms. We are also working to identify ways to augment faculty of education curricula so new teachers are better equipped to handle this material – see the Future Directions section of *The West*.

³ To get additional perspective on the way that Indigenous Knowledge can be accessed and presented on the Circle, please refer to *The Sacred Tree: Reflections on Native American Spirituality*, produced by the Four Worlds International Institute in Alberta. This book is an excellent resource for understanding the Circle as a paradigm for Indigenous worldview.

⁴ Only eleven of the 519 respondents indicated they had ever attended a school on a First Nation's territory.

⁵ "Valid" means that the answer represents a thoughtful opinion that does not reflect racist or blatantly stereotypical content. It does not mean that CAAS agrees with the view held by the respondent.

⁶ See note 5.

⁷ See note 5.

⁸ As Aboriginal CAAS Core Group member David Anderson tells us, "The Four Colours teaching offers another example of a learning circle. Each of the colours, Red, Black, White and Yellow represent the four colours of the human race. Where the four colours come together in the middle demonstrates how each is dependent and connected to the other."

⁹ See note 5.



¹⁰ As reported by various sources, including Olive Dickason in *Canada's First Nations* and Volume 3 of the *RCAP Report*, there were from fifty to seventy languages spoken prior to colonization. There are now three to ten languages that are still spoken by enough people to be considered viable: this ratio of 3:50-70 or 10:50-70 represents a net decline to 5% - 15% of the Original languages.

¹¹ See note 5.

¹² The data used for coding the 'correct' answer to this question, as shown on the Answer Sheet in the Appendices, was from the RCAP Report and based on the 1991 census. More recently available data, crunched by Richards for his study cited in the Bibliography in Appendix A, shows that the ranking has changed and that our answer sheet is not as 'correct' as it could be. By the time this was discovered, it was not possible to make this adjustment in our data analysis. The Answer Sheet appended has been left as it was originally circulated, with this incorrect answer. What this points to, among other matters, is that the data scholars need to do this kind of work is not very accessible. Informally, CAAS members often report this kind of problem, especially vis-a-vis making supportable arguments for funding and program priorities. Especially in urban school environments, the fact that we cannot 'count' the Aboriginal student population or even the Aboriginal student body in a particular school weakens our advocacy efforts.

¹³ See note 5.

¹⁴ See note 5.

¹⁵ The statistical deviation from our sample norm of 519 arises not just from those who did not make a "first" choice, but also from variations in the ranking system and the fact that not everyone answered this question.

¹⁶ See note 5.

¹⁷ United Nations Human Rights Committee, April 7, 1999, *Concluding Observations to Canada* re: compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

