



TORONTO ABORIGINAL SUPPORT SERVICES COUNCIL

## Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (TARP) Report

### Aboriginal Children and Youth Research Summary

#### What is the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council?

TASSC is a not-for-profit policy and research organization that addresses social determinants to improve and enhance the social, economic and cultural base of Aboriginal peoples in the City of Toronto.

TASSC is comprised of the following ten member organizations:

- ❖ 2-Spirited People of the 1<sup>st</sup> Nations
- ❖ Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto
- ❖ Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto Clinic
- ❖ Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment
- ❖ Native Canadian Centre of Toronto
- ❖ Native Child and Family Services of Toronto
- ❖ Na-Me-Res (Native Men's Residence)
- ❖ Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto
- ❖ Nishnawbe Homes
- ❖ Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre

#### What is the Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (TARP) Report?

The TARP Report is the largest and most comprehensive study of Aboriginal people ever conducted in the City of Toronto. With a sample of over 1,400 individuals, 14 topics studied and seven methodologies utilized, the TARP Report provides an important picture of the current situation, the aspirations and the challenges facing Aboriginal people.

*As a young kid I got in a lot of trouble because I didn't learn respect and consideration from other people. Often as youth, we are looking at the other kids who are always wanting to cause fights and always up to no good. It was only when I sat down with the Elders, and I actually became aware of what respect, humility and consideration for others was, that I actually began to take this into practice....*  
(At-Risk Youth Focus Group)

Aboriginal families, children and youth are under significant stress relating to poverty, lack of parenting skills and addictions. Despite their challenges, Aboriginal children and youth are making important contributions to their families and communities and are helping to revitalize Aboriginal culture in the city. However, youth gang involvement is on the rise as a result of the unmet needs for parenting and family protection, community involvement, addictions and poverty.



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

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#### Key Issues Affecting Aboriginal Children and Youth

Aboriginal culture is essential to positive identity formation, educational success, and personal development for Aboriginal children and youth. Aboriginal youth strongly value the First Nations School and the Native Learning Centre in meeting their cultural and educational needs. However, there are unmet educational needs in mainstream schools relating to the lack of Aboriginal cultural content, language immersion opportunities and support for learning disabilities.

Aboriginal youth spoke highly of existing Aboriginal agency youth and cultural programming, but stressed the need for better outreach, communication and cooperation between agencies. Aboriginal youth are looking for a greater sense of community and belonging in the city through the creation of a centralized Aboriginal space and an inclusive form of urban Aboriginal governance.

#### TARP Report Recommendations for Aboriginal Children and Youth

- ❖ Give Aboriginal families priority in the subsidy system to allow for access to culturally specific Aboriginal child care spaces.
- ❖ Build the cost of transportation support into the development of programs for Aboriginal children and youth.

- ❖ That Agencies providing children and youth programs coordinate their services and establish a central facility that can act as a “hub” for children and youth.
- ❖ Establish youth-Elders programs to bring these two groups together for traditional cultural and language teaching.
- ❖ Establish an “Aboriginal school” located outside the downtown area at the intermediate and secondary level.
- ❖ Establish a dedicated employment and career preparation course to assist Aboriginal youth to attain the skills and experience to enter employment.
- ❖ Develop an apprenticeship program to train Aboriginal youth.
- ❖ Establish a “transitional” housing program for youth who move to Toronto.
- ❖ Organize Aboriginal athletic leagues to engage youth in positive recreational activities.
- ❖ Establish a permanent Aboriginal Youth Council.

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