



TORONTO ABORIGINAL SUPPORT SERVICES COUNCIL

Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (TARP) Report

Aboriginal Culture and Identity in Toronto

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 1st 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.

It reinforces who we are as people... that we are a proud people and we have customs and traditions; a way of life that is unique and makes us who we are. (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

Expressions of Aboriginal cultures and identities are complex, dynamic, and related to factors such as treaties, land displacement, the Indian Act, physical appearance, language, and spiritual/cultural practices. Aboriginal identity within an urban context is even more complex when Aboriginal groups meet that have different languages and cultures.



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16 Spadina Road, Toronto, ON M5R 2S7 | 647.748.6100 | info@tassc.ca



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Key Issues Affecting Aboriginal Culture and Identity in Toronto

The predominant Aboriginal groups in Toronto are Anishnawbe, followed by Haudenosaunee, Métis and Cree.

Aboriginal cultural activities are important to a vast majority of Aboriginal people and there is a strong desire for additional cultural, recreational and spiritual services. Still, the overwhelming majority of Aboriginal people in Toronto are unable to converse in an Aboriginal language.

Aboriginal people negotiate multiple, interrelated identities which are based upon a diversity of markers including, race and skin colour, Indian status, social class, a connection to a First Nation community, the ability to speak an Aboriginal language, one's degree of 'ethnic mobility', one's engagement with Elders and traditional practices, and one's national/cultural affiliation.

Aboriginal culture needs to be more accessible for community members and there is a strong desire for an Aboriginal cultural centre.

TARP Report Recommendations for Aboriginal Culture and Identity in Toronto

- ❖ That Aboriginal organizations develop a program of Aboriginal "language immersion" geared to families.
- ❖ That the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto consider conducting a community wide consultation process relating to the issue of how to institute initiatives to meet the cultural needs of Aboriginal people in Toronto, including becoming a dedicated Aboriginal cultural centre.
- ❖ That an Aboriginal organization take steps to acquire land outside of Toronto which will be designated an Aboriginal "sacred space" where traditional ceremonies can be held. Transportation services would be part of the initiative.



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