



TORONTO ABORIGINAL SUPPORT SERVICES COUNCIL

Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (TARP) Report

Aboriginal Seniors and Elders 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.

I believe that it is the responsibility of the older people to inspire the younger people. It is the role of the uncles and aunties, the grandmothers and grandfathers, to encourage the younger generation to further their education and to be the best possible person that they can be. It is like that when I am talking, I am speaking the words of my grandmother or my mother. These are not my words but the words that have been passed down to me. (Life History Respondent)

There are a number of factors that impact the lives of Aboriginal seniors and Elders living in Toronto. Some of these factors include poverty, isolation and a greater need for social programming. Elders are considered to have special gifts of cultural and spiritual knowledge. They have worked hard to earn this knowledge and are recognized for it.



www.tassc.ca

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



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Key Issues Affecting Aboriginal Seniors and Elders

Aboriginal seniors and Elders are struggling financially, with a majority earning less than \$20,000 a year and with no representation in the over \$70,000 income category. There is a need for additional services in the areas of activities programming, assisted living and palliative care.

Social isolation is a major issue for Aboriginal seniors and Elders. They are looking for ways to support families and to have places and activities to connect with children and youth in order to pass on their cultural knowledge. Elders have a diversity of roles in the community as organizational board and committee members, teachers and counsellors, spiritual practitioners, guest speakers and advocates for Aboriginal cultures and languages.

Aboriginal seniors and Elders consider racism against Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal people as well as the discrimination against Aboriginal people by other Aboriginal people to be a significant problem.

TARP Report Recommendations for Aboriginal Seniors and Elders

- ❖ That an Aboriginal seniors long-term residential care facility be established in Toronto.
- ❖ Establish programs and activities that involve Aboriginal Elders in an official capacity with appropriate financial compensation.
- ❖ Establish programs where Elders interact with youth on an on-going basis to teach the traditional culture and language, including teaching youth to assume their role of “Shkaabewis” (helpers) and performing ceremonies.
- ❖ That special transportation subsidies and programs be established to facilitate seniors and Elders’ mobility.