

## **Aboriginals more likely to volunteer than non-natives:**

### Study

First Nations, Inuit and Metis have higher rates of volunteerism and family involvement than non-aboriginal Canadians, according to a new study that suggests a different way of measuring the educational performance of aboriginals.

The study by the Canadian Council on Learning says such things as the use of ancestral languages, participating in cultural ceremonies and hunting should all be factored in when evaluating aboriginal education — instead of focusing only on traditional areas, such as high-school attainment and prose-literacy levels.

The State of Aboriginal Learning in Canada: A Holistic Approach to Measuring Success was released Wednesday.

It aims to emphasize lifelong learning.

The study found that more than 70 per cent of First Nations adults living on-reserve volunteered within their own community, compared to 46 per cent of adult Canadians.

The study also found that four in 10 aboriginal youth living off-reserve reported interacting with an elder for at least an hour a week.

Thirty-one per cent of off-reserve aboriginal youth reported involvement in social clubs outside of school, as opposed to 21 per cent of non-aboriginal youth.

"Lifelong learning is a practice we have had since ancient times," said Mary Simon, president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. "When you stop learning, you are not really living anymore."

Simon also said Inuit youth would benefit from an education system controlled by Inuit.

"We would like to see more control," said Simon, during a news conference marking the release of the study. "To teach in our Inuit language as our mother tongue."

First Nations leaders in Saskatchewan and Manitoba have recently called for native-controlled school systems, similar to Catholic and francophone school boards.

Assembly of First Nations national Chief Shawn Atleo said he supported more native control over education.

"That is the strength of our people, the deep resilience of the connection to our culture," said Atleo, who attended the event.

The study drew on several sources, including Statistics Canada's Aboriginal Peoples Survey and Aboriginal Children's Survey, as well as the First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey managed by the Assembly of First Nations.

The study found that 28 per cent of off-reserve First Nations and Metis children and 55 per cent of Inuit children between one and five years old had participated in or attended a cultural gathering, ceremony or activity, according to 2006 data.

It found that 50 per cent of off-reserve aboriginal adults took part in traditional activities such as hunting, fishing or trapping, according to 2006 data.

The study said that 40 per cent of aboriginal adults ages 20 to 24 did not have a high-school diploma, compared to 13 per cent of non-aboriginal Canadians, according to 2006 data.

Source:  
Canwest News Service  
By Jorge Barrera