

ABORIGINAL RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation with Aboriginals Possible for Two-in-Five Canadians

A majority (53%) believes the federal government owes Aboriginals an apology like the one Australia offered to its native population.

[VANCOUVER - May 7, 2008] – Just weeks before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) begins to operate, Canadians hold differing views on whether Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals will reach a point of full reconciliation, a new Angus Reid Strategies poll has found.

In the online survey of a representative national sample, 39 per cent of respondents think sincere reconciliation is possible, while 32 per cent believe the goal is unattainable. The results come less than a month before the TRC—a component of the negotiated Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRS)—begins a five-year mandate that will seek to gather the experiences of those affected by the Residential School legacy as a way to promote understanding and reconciliation.

In February, Australian Prime Minister and leader of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) Kevin Rudd became the first head of government to formally apologize to Australia's Aboriginal population for the "laws and policies of successive parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss" upon them.

Respondents were asked whether the Canadian government should follow the Australian model and apologize to the country's native populations. More than half of Canadians (53%) think Ottawa should offer an apology to Canadian Aboriginals, while 28 per cent disagree. Support for an official act of contrition has increased by 11 percentage points since the previous Angus Reid poll on this issue, conducted in March.

KEY FINDINGS

- » **39% of Canadians think reconciliation between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals is possible; 32% disagree**
- » **Only 35% of Canadians aged 55+ believe sincere reconciliation is possible**
- » **53% of Canadians want government to officially apologize to Aboriginals for unjust treatment in the past**
- » **Support for an official apology has increased by 9% since March**

More results are at the end of this release.

From April 30 to May 1, 2008, Angus Reid Strategies conducted an online survey among a randomly selected, representative sample of 1,023 adult Canadians. The margin of error for the total sample is +/- 3.1%, 19 times out of 20. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population of Canada. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

A detailed look at the results shows that Quebec (28%) and Manitoba and Saskatchewan (30%) hold the lowest proportion of respondents who think that full reconciliation between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals is possible in Canada. Conversely, half of respondents in British Columbia think this could happen one day.

Male respondents (41%) are slightly more inclined than females (37%) to say that the two groups will overcome their differences one day, while older Canadians are the most skeptical—only 34 per cent of respondents over the age of 55 believe in full reconciliation, compared to 40 per cent of respondents aged 18 to 34. Canadians with a high school degree or less (34%) are much more skeptical about the possibility of reconciliation with Aboriginals than those with a college (40%) or university (42%) degree.

In Manitoba and Saskatchewan, BC and Atlantic Canada, more than three-in-five respondents want Ottawa to issue a formal apology to Canadian Aboriginals for unjust treatment in the past, while the number is much lower in Quebec and Alberta (both at 41%).

More women (56%) than men (49%) favour an official apology from the federal government. Older respondents (54%) are also much more likely to endorse an act of contrition by the government than younger respondents. The same is true for respondents with a higher degree of education. At least 40 per cent of those with a college or university degree support the apology, while the number drops to 34 per cent among respondents with a high school degree or less.

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Aboriginal Reconciliation

As you may know, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is a component of the negotiated Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRS). The TRC will be launched on June 1 and has a five-year mandate to hold hearings across the country to oversee a process to provide former students and anyone who has been affected by the Indian Residential School legacy, with an opportunity to share individual experiences in a safe and culturally appropriate manner. Do you think sincere reconciliation between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals is possible?

	Region						
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ONT	PQ	ATL
Yes	39%	50%	38%	30%	43%	28%	44%
No	32%	33%	44%	32%	26%	36%	27%
Not sure	29%	17%	19%	38%	31%	36%	29%

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	Gender			Age			Education		
	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	High School or less	College / Tech school	University +
Yes	39%	41%	37%	40%	41%	35%	34%	40%	42%
No	32%	36%	27%	30%	30%	36%	29%	33%	33%
Not sure	29%	23%	35%	30%	29%	29%	37%	28%	25%

Aboriginal Reconciliation

As you may know, the Government of Australia offered an official apology to the country's Aboriginal population for the "laws and policies of successive parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss" on Australia's Aboriginal peoples. Do you think the Canadian government should offer a similar apology to Canada's Aboriginal population?

	Region						
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ONT	PQ	ATL
Yes	53%	62%	41%	61%	57%	41%	61%
No	28%	23%	48%	23%	25%	32%	24%
Not sure	19%	15%	10%	16%	18%	27%	15%

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	Gender			Age			Education		
	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	High School or less	College / Tech school	University +
Yes	53%	49%	56%	48%	55%	54%	46%	53%	58%
No	28%	35%	21%	31%	24%	32%	27%	31%	26%
Not sure	19%	15%	23%	20%	21%	15%	27%	16%	16%

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	May 2008	March 2008
Yes	53%	42%
No	28%	39%
Not sure	19%	19%

Angus Reid Strategies is a full-service polling and market research firm which is a leader in the use of the Internet and rich media technology to collect high-quality, in-depth insights for a wide array of clients. Dr. Angus Reid and the Angus Reid Strategies team are pioneers in online research methodologies, and have been conducting online surveys since 1995.

Angus Reid Strategies, along with its sister company, Vision Critical, is now the largest Canadian-owned market research enterprise. In addition to its four offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices San Francisco, New York and London, England. Its team of specialists provides solutions across every type and sector of research, and currently serves over 200 international clients.

Angus Reid Strategies polls are conducted using the Angus Reid Forum online panel (www.angusreidforum.com), which is recruited via an industry-leading process that incorporates a randomized, widespread invitation approach and a triple opt-in screening procedure. The panel is maintained through state-of-the-art sampling techniques and frequent verifications of personal identity, contact information, and demographic characteristics. This premier online survey platform presents respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses.

Over the last year, Angus Reid has covered five elections in Canada—more than any other pollster in the country—and the results have accurately predicted the outcome of each of these democratic processes. <http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=news&newsid=194>

More information on the way Angus Reid Strategies conducts public opinion research can be found at <http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/ARS.ARF.WP.pdf>

- 30 -

**For more information, please contact
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

**Copies of this poll are available on our website:
www.angusreidstrategies.com**