COMING FULL CIRCLE? RECONCILING ABORIGINAL DIVERSITY AND CANADA'S MULTICULTURAL NARRATIVE

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ABSTRACT / RÉSUMÉ

The author explores recent efforts to construct an inclusive Canadian historic narrative that makes a link between the contemporary diversity of the country to its Aboriginal origins. It looks at Canadian public opinion on such elements of the narrative as the presence of founding groups and of multiple nations within Canada. It also examines how those more favourable to Aboriginal cultural retention feel about such issues as official languages and multiculturalism. The author maintains that the Canadian narrative has been characterized by ongoing debate between advocates of assimilation of cultural difference and those more favourable to its accommodation. An ongoing challenge for Canadian policy-makers and educators is to relate the multiple stories that reflect Canada's reality and identify the links between them.

L'auteur examine les efforts faits récemment afin de rédiger la trame narrative historique générale établissant le lien entre la diversité contemporaine du Canada et ses origines autochtones. Il étudie l'opinion publique canadienne sur des éléments du récit comme la présence de groupes fondateurs et de nombreuses nations au sein du Canada. Il se penche également sur l'opinion de ceux qui sont les plus favorables à la préservation de la culture autochtone sur des questions telles que les langues officielles et le multiculturalisme. L'auteur soutient que le récit canadien se caractérise par un débat continuel entre les partisans de l'assimilation des différences culturelles et ceux qui privilégient les accommodements. Les responsables des politiques et les éducateurs canadiens doivent relever le défi permanent d'aborder les multiples récits qui reflètent la réalité canadienne et de reconnaître les liens qui les unissent.

INTRODUCTION

The desire to establish some dominant or shared narrative for Canada is deemed to be essential by some observers in defining who we are as a people. The failure to establish a common national story risks leaving the country undefined. Very often advocates of national narratives or official histories seek continuity with the past and thus look for themes that cut across time. A wholesale break with the past does not always fit easily into narratives that seek to create a strong link between past and present. When it comes to Canada's attitude and approach towards Aboriginal peoples, minority language francophones and ethnic and racial communities, there has been much evolution over time. That which follows contends that Canada's historic narrative has been characterized by ongoing debate between those advocating some form of assimilation of minority cultures and those supporting varying degrees of accommodation of cultural differences. This is reflected by the fact that most of the same people that support the preservation and enhancement of Aboriginal cultures are likely to support

multiculturalism and the vitality of official language minority communities. To support this contention, public opinion surveys will be presented that show how a significant segment of the public makes connections between various issues that might comprise a Canadian narrative. In examining the place of Aboriginals within that narrative, we will briefly consider the following points: (1) public opinion over the meaning of nation; (2) how Canadians react to the idea of "founders" and; (3) how Canadians envision the relationship between Aboriginality and the diversity of the Canadian population. Before proceeding, we will explore how Canadian policy-makers have attempted to construct some narrative.

AN OFFICIAL NARRATIVE?

Considerable historic evidence can be offered to support the idea that assimilation of cultural minorities was a tenet of the nation-building process until the end of the second World War. Linked to this has been a failure on the part of the political leadership to extend rights to founding groups (francophones outside of Québec and Aboriginal peoples) to help preserve their languages and cultures. Hence there have been legislative measures introduced in the latter part of the twentieth century aimed at correcting what are widely seen as historic injustices (Taylor 1993). Many contemporary narratives recognize the mistakes of the past and in some instances national apologies have been offered.

In the early 1960s, the establishment of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (RCBB) was appointed to "inquire into and report upon the state of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada, and to recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races [later changed to "peoples"]." The RCBB added as part of its mandate the need to take into account the cultural contribution of other ethnic groups and the means of preserving their contribution. The Commission was virtually silent on the place of Canada's Aboriginal peoples. Given the emphasis on an equal partnership for two founding peoples, it is perhaps not surprising that in the 1970s, the country's Aboriginal leadership introduced the term "First Nations." More recent efforts to establish a Canadian identity narrative have aimed for greater inclusion as reflected in the tendency to make newer Canadians aware of the nation-building role of Canada's founding communities.

Such thinking is reflected in a guide prepared by the Government of Canada for new Canadians entitled, "A Look at Canada." It points out that the only people originally from Canada are the Aboriginal peoples. It adds that "…they lived in Canada for thousands of years before the first immigrants came here." The document notes that: "English- and French-speaking people have lived together in Canada for more than 300 years" and stresses that this is an important part of our Canadian identity. As to immigrants, it points out that: "…throughout Canada's history, millions… have helped 'build' our country." "As Canadians," the Guide concludes, "…we are proud that many different cultural and ethnic groups live and work here in harmony" (Canada 2007).

The main elements emerging in the Canadian identity narrative described above are as follows: the Aboriginal peoples as Canada's original settlers, the historic coexistence of English and French (and the importance of the two languages), immigrants contributing to nation-building and pride in the country's intercultural harmony. In short there is something for nearly everyone.

Of course many will point out that this narrative is overly simplistic and fails to document the struggle and challenge communities faced in preserving their identities. Indeed some will undoubtedly maintain that the Canadian story is really about multiple narratives with little connecting them. Some will describe the narratives as competing national stories reflected by intergroup conflict where minority nations describe "cultural survival" as the central theme in their narrative. Others will likely counter that the historic narrative is better defined by a long-term process of reconciliation between peoples and the acknowledgement of mistakes along the way.

CANADA: AN ABORIGINAL NATION?

Alternate narratives have emerged that might be described as working backwards and tracing the origins of what is regarded as the contemporary Canadian accommodation of diversity. Accommodation emerges as a key nation-building theme that reconciles multiple narratives in order to generate a story with which many can presumably identify. In his book, *A fair country: Telling truths about Canada,* John Ralston Saul (2008) proposes just such a vision. He contends that Canada is an Aboriginal nation, and that an unconscious current of Aboriginal ideas of diversity strongly influence the contemporary elements of Canadian identity.

Saul contends that culture and identity in Canada are marked by three pillars, the British, French and Aboriginal cultures, and denying the latter is to deny the very source of the country's national identity. He suggests that the tradition of Aboriginal diversity (the expanded circle) has inspired the accommodation and respect for diversity which traditionally pervades Canadian society. He further contends that métissage – the mix of

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal identities – is quintessentially Canadian and distinguishes us from Americans and Europeans. We are a Métis nation, Saul concludes. Contrary to the idea that our linguistic English-French duality is the precursor to our accommodating diversity, Saul believes that our multicultural empathy comes from our contact with Aboriginals peoples.

Saul is right to remind us of the importance of not neglecting the country's Aboriginal heritage. Yet as Hayday (2009) argues, there is a giant helping of anachronism in how Saul argues the long-term continuities of his thesis. Part of the colonial period of New France did see the intermingling of European settlers and the Aboriginal peoples who taught the former how to survive in Canada. However, as Hayday rightly observes, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have not been a period marked by Euro-Canadians learning from Aboriginal groups and trying to live alongside them, but rather of deliberately isolating First Nations communities and attempting to force them to assimilate into Western models of living. Hayday argues that: "Canada does need to come to terms with its Aboriginal peoples and colonial past, but pretending that Aboriginal ways were always part and parcel of how our government and cultural elites have thought about and organized the country does not square with the historical record."

THE NATION AND ITS FOUNDERS

Canada has invariably described itself as a nation of two founding peoples, a nation of immigrants, a nation of minorities, a bilingual and bicultural society, a multicultural society within a bilingual framework, a federation of many nations and/or a multi-national federation with Aboriginal, Québec and English Canadian nations. The country struggles with articulating collective self-definition and often simply allows people to define the country in the manner they see fit.

One of central elements in the construction of an official or national narrative involves determining who are the "founders" of the nation. Presumably making this determination provides a good "starting point" for the construction of the narrative. During the 2008 commemorations, marking the 400th anniversary of the founding of Québec City, Québec Premier Jean Charest proudly declared that "Québec founded Canada," the leader of the Parti Québecois claimed that rather than marking the founding of Canada, the anniversary was aimed at commemorating the "… founding of the first French settlement in North America." Prime Minister Stephen Harper said "The founding of Québec City is also the founding of the Canadian state." For his part, the leader of the Bloc Québecois proclaimed that "…the 400th anniversary of Québec City is the celebration of the founding of the Québec nation and not of the Canadian nation." (Jedwab 2008). Underlying such observations is a debate about what "founding" a nation entails. Is "founding" a nation an event or a process? Does it incorporate both first settling a nation and participating in its political conception and construction? Being seen as nation founders is not always associated with being seen as a nation builder. Debates about "founding peoples" or founding events are difficult to separate from the potential political ramifications for contemporary political narratives.

The results of a May 2008 survey of 1,500 Canadians commissioned by the Association for Canadian Studies, conducted by Léger Marketing reveal that answers to the question of who founded Canada often diverge on the basis of the language background of the respondent and in particular if they are French or English. It is worth noting that the survey required that one comment separately on the degree to which British, French and Aboriginal peoples founded Canada as opposed to offering the option to say all three groups founded Canada. Correlations of the data are provided to look at the degree to which people said all three did so. As observed in the table below, on the basis of language background, anglophones and allophones were more likely to agree that Aboriginal peoples were founders. Two-thirds of francophones surveyed agree that the French founded Canada in contrast to just over one-third of anglophones and one-half of the allophone population. Anglophones attribute equal weight to the British and Aboriginal peoples in responding to the question on the founding of Canada, while allophones give Aboriginal peoples the highest score. Atlantic Canadians and Albertans score the French lowest in terms of the country's founding. Prairie and Québec residents score Aboriginal peoples lowest. Québecers and Maritimers score the British lowest. Albertans and Maritimers score Aboriginal peoples well above the other groups. On the basis of age, younger Canadians score the British and the French highest when asked about the country's founders.

TABLE 1: Responses to Question on "Who Founded Canada" Amongst Canadians by Language Spoken at Home, 2008

LANG USED AT HOME-2008	TOTAL	FRENCH	ENGLISH	OTHER LANGUAGE
The French founded Canada	45%	67%	36%	50%
Aboriginal peoples	54%	39%	57%	61%
The British	52%	34%	57%	58%

Source: Léger Marketing 2008a

FOUNDERS AND THEIR NATIONS

Being viewed as a founder community is not immediately equated by Canadians with being a nation. While francophones are less inclined to describe Aboriginal peoples as founders of Canada, they are more likely to agree that Aboriginal peoples are nations. In part this is attributable to Francophones viewing groups with deep roots in Canada as nations. To a lesser degree, majorities of both anglophones and allophones also regard Aboriginal peoples as nations. Some eight in ten francophone respondents agree with the statement that Aboriginal peoples are nations (48% strongly agree and 32% somewhat agree), compared to 61% of non-francophones. It is worth noting that the allophones (39%) are somewhat more inclined to "strongly agree" than anglophones (32%) that Aboriginal peoples are nations.

TABLE 2: Level of Agreement that Various Groups Within Canada Constitute Nations, 2008

STRONGLY AND SOMEWHAT AGREE COMBINED THAT THE FOLLOWING ARE NATIONS	FRENCH	ENGLISH	OTHER
Aboriginal peoples	79	61	61
Canadians	91	93	94
Québecers	78	38	43
Acadians	74	37	34
Métis	59	46	44
Francophones within Canada	68	37	42

Source: Léger Marketing 2008a

ABORIGINALITY AND INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Another 2008 Leger Marketing survey of 1,500 Canadians for the Association for Canadian Studies examined the degree of contact that non-Aboriginals have with Aboriginal peoples, the extent to which they hold favourable opinions, the extent to which discrimination is perceived to be a problem and the degree of support for concerns raised by Aboriginal peoples. What is less known are the sources of information that contribute to the formation of opinion on the part of non-Aboriginals, for example, does contact with Aboriginal peoples lead to better understanding?

It is widely assumed that one of the best ways to learn about members of different communities is to be in contact with them. While contact is believed to lead to better understanding, this is not always the case. As to interaction with Aboriginal peoples, it is in the provinces of Saskatchewan (which also has the highest percentage of Aboriginal peoples in it) and British Columbia where that the highest rates of contact are reported, with Québecers reporting the lowest.

TABLE 3: Degree of Contact with Aboriginals for Canada and Provinces, 2008

2008 % OF CONTACT WITH ABORIGINALS	...OFTEN	...OCCASIONALLY	...RARELY	...OR NEVER
Saskatchewan	46.0%	28.6%	12.7%	12.7%
British Columbia	41.3%	32.7%	12.7%	12.0%
Manitoba	37.1%	46.8%	11.3%	3.2%
Nova Scotia	30.2%	32.6%	16.3%	20.9%
Alberta	26.4%	39.2%	20.8%	13.6%
New Brunswick	25.7%	34.3%	20.0%	20.0%
Newfoundland	21.1%	21.1%	21.1%	36.8%
Canada	19.3%	29.9%	21.9%	28.3%
Ontario	14.0%	32.5%	25.7%	27.2%
Québec	8.0%	19.5%	23.5%	48.5%

Source: Léger Marketing 2008b

It is in the Atlantic provinces where one finds the highest percentage of persons reporting that they have a favourable attitude towards Aboriginal peoples. Québecers have the lowest percentage holding a very favourable opinion of Aboriginal peoples, with Alberta and Ontario respectively holding the next lowest.

As observed in Table 5, there is a clear correlation between those reporting that they most often have contact with Aboriginal peoples and those possessing a very favourable view.

Survey results were correlated around the degree to which people holding favourable opinions of Aboriginal peoples held favourable views of other groups, notably Jews and Muslims. The survey reveals that some 76% of those possessing a very favourable opinion of Aboriginals also hold a favourable opinion of Muslims (44% very favourable and 32% somewhat favourable). Conversely, of those holding "very unfavourable" opinions of Aboriginal peoples some 70% hold unfavourable views of Muslims. Of those holding very favourable views of Aboriginals, some 90% hold favourable opinions of Jews (66% very favourable and 24% somewhat favourable). Conversely, of those holding "very unfavourable" opinions of Aboriginal peoples, some 57% hold unfavourable opinions of Jews.

PERCEPTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND VULNERABILITY

Although a majority of Canadians hold a favourable view of Aboriginal peoples, there are strong concerns around the degree to which Aboriginal peoples are the

TABLE 4: Opinion of Aboriginal Peoples for Canada and Provinces, 2008

OPINION OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES	VERY FAVOURABLE	SOMEWHAT FAVOURABLE	SOMEWHAT UNFAVOURABLE	VERY UNFAVOURABLE	DNK/REFUSAL
Canada	26.9%	50.1%	10.9%	3.6%	8.5%
New Brunswick	40.0%	48.6%	2.9%	2.9%	5.7%
Nova Scotia	37.2%	53.5%	2.3%	–	7.0%
Newfoundland	36.8%	47.4%	5.3%	–	10.5%
Manitoba	32.3%	48.4%	6.5%	6.5%	6.5%
British Columbia	32.0%	47.3%	8.7%	2.0%	10.0%
Saskatchewan	31.7%	47.6%	12.7%	4.8%	3.2%
Ontario	29.2%	47.5%	9.0%	2.8%	11.5%
Alberta	27.2%	53.6%	11.2%	1.6%	6.4%
Québec	17.0%	54.2%	17.0%	6.0%	5.8%

Source: Léger Marketing 2008b

TABLE 5: Degree of Contact and Opinion of Aboriginal Peoples Amongst Canadian Population, 2008

OPINION OF... ABORIGINAL PEOPLES	...OFTEN	...OCCASIONALLY	...RARELY	...OR NEVER	TOTAL
Very Favourable	48.1%	28.5%	23.2%	13.9%	26.9%
Somewhat Favourable	40.5%	56.8%	54.9%	46.6%	50.1%
Somewhat Unfavourable	5.5%	8.2%	13.1%	15.8%	10.9%
Very Unfavourable	–	2.0%	1.2%	9.6%	3.6%
DNK/Refusal	5.9%	4.5%	7.6%	14.1%	8.5%

Source: Léger Marketing 2008b

subject of discrimination. These are part of the findings of a survey of some 2,000 Canadians conducted by the firm Environics in the year 2006. When Canadians are asked which groups are either often or occasionally the subject of discrimination, Muslims (44% often and 32% occasionally) and Aboriginals (42% often and 32% occasionally) ranked first and second amongst a list of ten groups. As observed below those Canadians reporting more frequent contact with Aboriginal peoples believe that Aboriginal peoples are more often the subject of discrimination than those stating they either rarely or never have such contact.

TABLE 6: Degree of Contact with Aboriginal Peoples and Degree to Which Aboriginals are Seen by Canadians as the Subject of Discrimination

	DEGREE OF CONTACT WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLES			
ARE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES SUBJECT OF DISCRIMINATION	...OFTEN	...OCCA-SIONALLY	...RARELY	...OR NEVER
...Often	57	41	36	28
...Occasionally	25	37	35	31
...Rarely	10	12	17	18
...or Never	7	8	8	17
Don't Know	1	2	3	5

Source: Environics Research 2006

It is not surprising that those Canadians who believe that Aboriginal peoples are never the subject of discrimination think that other groups are also not subject to discrimination. Most respondents that believe that Aboriginal peoples are never the subject of discrimination also feel that Blacks, Muslims and Jews do not encounter discrimination.

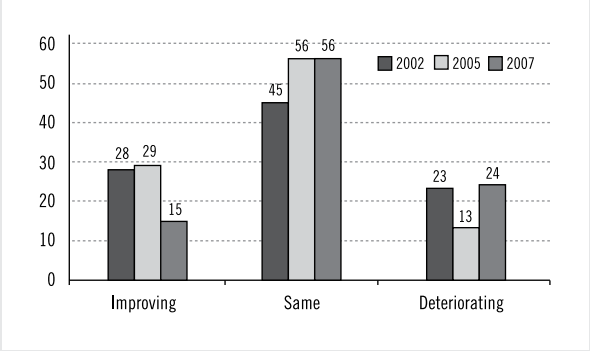
A significant percentage of Canadians also regard the rights of Aboriginal peoples in Canada as vulnerable. Some four in ten Canadians feel that the rights of Aboriginals are either somewhat (25%) or very vulnerable (14%). This contrasts with 32% that feel that the rights of visible minorities are vulnerable, 30% that feel that the rights of official language minorities are vulnerable, and 26% that feel that the rights of religious groups are vulnerable. It is worth noting that some two-thirds of respondents that feel that the rights of Aboriginals are very vulnerable also believe that the rights of visible minorities are vulnerable.

RELATIONS BETWEEN ABORIGINAL AND NON-ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

Favorability of views and perception of discrimination are undoubtedly contributing factors in the way Canadians assess the relationship between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginal groups. But this assessment is equally, if not more influenced by the visibility of political disputes that are prominently featured in the media. Hence the time at which the survey is conducted can have a profound influence on the way in which people evaluate the relationship. Tracking surveys of 1,500 Canadians conducted by the firm Environics reveals much fluctuation between 2002 and 2007 in perception around the state of the relationship.

As observed below, between 2005 and 2007 there was an important decrease in the extent to which Canadians felt the relationship was improving. It was in the province of Saskatchewan (33%) that respondents were most likely to think that the relationship improved over that period. They were least likely to think it had improved in the provinces of Québec and Ontario. It would be helpful to know why Canadians feel the relationship has not improved.

TABLE 7: The State of the Relationship Between Aboriginal Peoples and Other Canadians, 2007



Source: Environics Research 2007

To put the relationship between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations in a broader context of intergroup relations in Canada, a 2007 Association for Canadian Studies-Léger Marketing survey of some 1,500 Canadians asked whether Canadians were optimistic or pessimistic about their state looking ahead to 2017. As revealed below, Canadians were somewhat more pessimistic about Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships than they were around most other forms of group interaction. Again, it would be useful to know to what such pessimism is attributable.

TABLE 8: Degree of Optimism or Pessimism Around the State of the Relationship Between Selected Groups as Seen by Canadians, 2007

	TOTAL OPTIMIST	TOTAL PESSIMIST
White and Visible Minority Canadians	79%	16%
Christians and Jews	77%	14%
English and French	75%	19%
Immigrant and non-Immigrant	73%	22%
Religious and Secular Canadians	69%	23%
Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians	65%	29%
Christians and Muslims	58%	34%

Source: Léger Marketing 2007

FROM ABORIGINALITY TO CANADIAN DIVERSITY

While there appears to be growing interest in learning more about the history and sociology of Aboriginal peoples, little attention is devoted to what Canadians actually know about Canada's First Nations. Forming opinions about Aboriginal peoples, based on what one learns is rarely done in a vacuum. Youth in particular will often interpret the knowledge they acquire about Aboriginal peoples in conjunction with what is learned about other peoples and communities through either history or social studies courses. Hence more thought needs to be directed at the connections that students make in their broader learning process. Also it is valuable to know what such knowledge acquisition implies for what they learn about identities in general and how it helps shape their own identities. When seen from this perspective, insight might be offered into the challenge confronted by educators in conveying multiple narratives about Canadian identity to youth as well as to help them make sense out of what it is a complex story.

How does knowledge about First Nations histories and about the contemporary condition of the communities affect broader debates about Canadian diversity? To what extent does fostering more openness towards Aboriginal peoples transfer onto other groups and have a positive effect on broader public opinion when it comes to societal diversity? To explore this relationship we correlated data on the degree of contact with Aboriginal peoples and reaction to certain common questions that arise in debates within Canada around identity and diversity. The specific focus below is on the issue of assimilation with a view to determining how those more likely to favour Aboriginal peoples giving up customs and traditions feel about multiculturalism, official languages and the Charter of Rights.

TABLE 9: Agree with View that Aboriginal Peoples Should Maintain their Culture and Way of Life Correlated with Degree of Pride in Multiculturalism, Official Languages and Charter of Rights, 2003

	% AGREE THAT ABORIGINAL PEOPLES SHOULD MAINTAIN THEIR CULTURE AND WAY OF LIFE		
PROUD OF....	MULTICULTURALISM	HAVING TWO OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	CHARTER OF RIGHTS
Not proud at all	32.5%	43.3%	44.4%
2	50.0%	51.3%	57.9%
3	44.7%	38.7%	53.6%
4	50.0%	64.7%	36.2%
Neither	42.2%	54.2%	53.6%
6	51.8%	68.5%	58.6%
7	62.5%	66.9%	59.2%
8	67.1%	69.6%	60.1%
9	74.2%	72.5%	70.0%
Very proud	72.8%	74.9%	70.6%

Source: Ipsos-Reid 2003

TABLE 10: Degree to Which Canadians Think that Aboriginal Peoples Have Been the Subject of Discrimination Correlated with Views on Whether There are Too Many Immigrants in the Country not Adopting Canadian Values, 2006

	DO YOU THINK THAT ABORIGINAL PEOPLES HAVE OFTEN, SOMETIMES, OCCASIONALLY, RARELY OR NEVER BEEN THE SUBJECT OF DISCRIMINATION			
THERE ARE TOO MANY IMMIGRANTS COMING INTO THE COUNTRY THAT ARE NOT ADOPTING CANADIAN VALUES	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	RARELY	NEVER
Strongly agree	33.2%	40.1%	54.9%	52.7%
Somewhat agree	26.9%	29.0%	24.3%	23.4%
Somewhat disagree	17.4%	16.4%	9.5%	10.9%
Strongly disagree	18.4%	10.6%	9.2%	8.5%
Neither agree/disagree	2.0%	2.0%	0.4%	2.0%
DK/NA	2.0%	2.0%	1.8%	2.5%

Source: Environics Research 2006

A 2003 survey conducted by Ipsos amongst 2,000 Canadians for the Centre for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC), reveals that some 62% of Canadians think that Aboriginal peoples should try to maintain their culture and way of life. Some two in three Ontarians, Atlantic Canadians, British Columbians and Prairie residents endorse this view. Québecers (56.4%) and Albertans (53.2%) were somewhat less likely to support this.

Those who are proud of Canada's policies in the area of diversity are more supportive of the preservation of Aboriginal cultures. As seen below, those less proud of multiculturalism are less likely to agree that Aboriginal peoples should maintain their culture and way of life. Whereas amongst those who are proud of having two official languages and the Charter of Rights are more likely to agree that Aboriginal peoples should maintain their culture and way of life.

Some 73% of those saying they are very comfortable hearing languages other than English or French being spoken on the streets in Canada, agree that Aboriginal peoples should try to maintain their culture and way of life compared to 45% amongst those who are uncomfortable hearing languages other than English and French on the streets. Nearly 70% of those who agree that societies with a variety of ethnic and cultural groups are more able to tackle new problems also agree that Aboriginal peoples should try to maintain their culture and way of life. In contrast, of those who disagree that diverse societies are better able to tackle new problems, some 45% agree that Aboriginal peoples should try to maintain their culture. Although paradoxical, some might find it paradoxical some 45% of those who believe mixed race marriages are a bad idea, agree that Canada's Aboriginal peoples should try to maintain their culture and way of life. Compared some 68% that think endogamy is fine. As observed

below, those most likely to think Aboriginal peoples are the subject of discrimination are less likely to agree that there are too many immigrants coming into the country that are not adopting Canadian values; whereas, to the group that never thinks Aboriginal peoples are subject to discrimination are far more likely to agree that many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values.

CONCLUSION: ADVOCATES OF ASSIMILATION VERSUS ADVOCATES OF ACCOMMODATION

We have attempted to demonstrate that the idea that the Canadian narrative offers some continuity between the vision of the country's architects and the contemporary outlook, but Canada's approach to population diversity of its population is flawed. Paradoxically it may be argued that it is the presence of historic debate about the place of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and the acceptance of diversity that offers some degree of continuity. There consistently appear to have been persons advocating assimilation and those favoring recognition of differences. However it is essential to point out that the concepts of assimilation and accommodation have evolved over time and public debate around the issues of population diversity is more civil that it was historically.

As noted above, today most Canadians hold favourable views of Aboriginal peoples and they express relatively significant concern about the level of discrimination encountered by them. Ideally it would be useful for policy-makers to know more about the causes behind the negative sentiment towards Aboriginal peoples on the part of the minority of Canadians. This requires a broader examination of what Canadians know about the histories and the contemporary condition of Canada's First Nations. It also entails knowing more about from where people secure information about Canada's First Nations. In this regard, a November 2008 survey of some 1,500 Canadians conducted by the firm Léger Marketing reveals that some 80% of Canadians agree that: "teaching about the treatment of Aboriginals in our history should be more of a priority" (Léger Marketing 2008c). Policy-makers need to explore ways of helping the public better understand the history of Canada's Aboriginal peoples.

It has been established above that there are important connections between those who support the promotion of Aboriginal cultures, endorse the principle of multiculturalism, and value the presence of official languages. However, an important segment of Canadians reject this vision of the country. Policy-makers need to explore how these pillars of Canadian identity are interrelated and provide resources to educators tasked with helping the population to properly explain our diverse reality.

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