



## **Urban Aboriginal Community Building and the Basis of Aboriginal Economic Success in Sudbury**

### **KEY FINDINGS**

- Respect, inclusion and the elimination of racism
- A supportive Aboriginal early family life that is rooted in Aboriginal Culture
- A strong cultural identity within a more prominent urban Aboriginal community
- An Aboriginal community that is welcoming and cohesive and which is well connected with the non-Aboriginal community.
- An urban Aboriginal community that is welcoming and cohesive and which is well connected with the non-Aboriginal community.
- Urban Aboriginal communities today are extremely complex; they are generally young, culturally diverse, highly mobile, and home to an increasing number of newly identifying 'new comers'.
- The economically successful urban Aboriginal people who are not working in the social services sector appear to be moving away from the Aboriginal community.
- The urban Aboriginal community in Sudbury is diverse in terms of cultures, First Nations-urban connections, social services and post-secondary institutions.
- Aboriginal people experiencing economic success feel isolated and excluded from the social services community and tend to gravitate towards the university and college Aboriginal communities.
- The urban Aboriginal community is not internally cohesive and is separate and not well connected to the mainstream, non-Aboriginal community.
- Participants spoke of culture as the daily living as an Aboriginal person, a shared worldview or common experience of languages, foods, traditions, the arts, knowledge and in connecting and identifying the earth and one's ancestors.
- There has been very little exposure to learning about their communities, histories, cultures, and languages along their educational path.
- Aboriginal people experiencing economic success consider racism against Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal people to be a significant social problem that is expressed in a systemic way including places of work, in the housing sector, at

schools, at restaurants and malls, in their dealings with the police or the court system, in the media in parks or other public places.

- The majority of Aboriginal people experiencing economic success in Sudbury experienced poverty as a child.
- Many respondents expressed a lack of confidence in Aboriginal political organizations and referred to negative organizational practices for their moving away from Aboriginal political involvement.
- For Aboriginal people experiencing economic success in Sudbury, having healthy and happy children, close friends and family and having a good job are important measures of success.

## INTRODUCTION

There has been a recent growth and economic success in the Aboriginal community across different cities in Canada. However, there has not been much research to date on this topic. This project seeks to better understand and support Aboriginal economic success and the development of a community network of Aboriginal professionals and community leaders in Sudbury. This research focuses on Aboriginal people experiencing economic success outside of the social services, while exploring topics such as: Aboriginal cultures in the city, racism and discrimination in Sudbury, economic and political relations and defining success and future aspirations.

### Recommendations:

The following is a detailed list of the key recommendations that have stemmed from the report:

**Recommendation 1:** The coordination of Aboriginal culture and language programming across sectors with a view to meeting the cultural education needs of Aboriginal people experiencing economic success in Sudbury.

**Recommendation 2:** The creation of Aboriginal professional development programming that focuses on a number of issues relating to Aboriginal economic development including: professional networking, entrepreneurship, business and personal finance, and home ownership.

**Recommendation 3:** The creation of an integrated urban Aboriginal communications network across all sectors which is inclusive of Aboriginal people experiencing economic success in Sudbury.

**Recommendation 4:** The creation of a series of community-based, Sudbury Aboriginal Excellence awards that recognize individual achievements in education, professional success, and community contribution. With a view to creating more integrated and equitable Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations through cultural education and understanding and enhancing the visibility of Aboriginal people in Sudbury over all, the following recommendations focus on the creation of both a shared space of common interest and a local awareness raising campaign that celebrates the many successes and community contributions of Aboriginal people living in Sudbury. We therefore recommend

that a group of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community leaders in Sudbury convene a meeting to discuss

**Recommendation 5:** The establishment of an Aboriginal cultural education centre in downtown Sudbury. Focused exclusively on cultural programming, the centre could be the cultural hub for all Aboriginal organizations and university and colleges in Sudbury while providing an integrated space that is welcoming for those Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people presently outside of the social services sector.

**Recommendation 6:** Significantly increasing the visibility of Aboriginal people throughout Sudbury through the creation of designated spaces, monuments, artwork, and city murals that raise the visibility and highlight the longstanding presence, successes and community contributions of Aboriginal people in Sudbury.

**Recommendation 7:** The development of strategies for the elimination of anti-Aboriginal racism in Sudbury, which may include:

The establishment of an office of an Aboriginal Ombudsman with sufficient independence, authority and staff to investigate complaints of racism, The establishment of an Anti-Aboriginal Racism Committee in Sudbury, The creation of a series of anti-Aboriginal racism initiatives such as: public awareness campaigns, cross-cultural awareness workshops, affirmative action programs etc., and the creation of media focused workshops designed to address pervasive Aboriginal stereotyping.

**Recommendation 8:** That Aboriginal representatives from the social services, the university and college and the wider community in Sudbury meet to discuss the raising of awareness and elimination of lateral violence and divisiveness among members of the Aboriginal community with specific focus on how it affects Aboriginal people experiencing economic success.

**Recommendation 9:** That strong Aboriginal families are recognized and fully supported culturally and economically in their important role in helping Aboriginal children and youth overcome the many barriers faced along their education and employment path.

**Recommendation 10:** Enhance and integrate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal programs and services to Aboriginal students once at college and university in order to address the many barriers to success including: funding, housing, day care, transportation, and racism.

**Recommendation 11:** That Aboriginal representatives from the social services, the university and college and the wider community in Sudbury meet to discuss the idea and feasibility of establishing a politically representative urban Aboriginal Governing Council in Sudbury. Such a council could provide for municipal level Aboriginal political representation of economically successful Aboriginal people in Sudbury, while being the focal point of political relations with the three levels of non-Aboriginal government. In addition to creating an urban Aboriginal political forum in Sudbury, supporting both a more integrated and welcoming urban Aboriginal community and enhancing better relations with non-Aboriginal people in Sudbury can also be take the form of an economic and professional development association.

**Recommendation 12:** There is the need for Aboriginal economic leaders in Sudbury, in cooperation with mainstream private sector representatives, to meet to discuss the idea and feasibility of establishing a Sudbury Urban Aboriginal Professional Network as a partnership between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal private sector.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

The Following partners listed below have assisted to the success and outcome of this project.

- [ ] N'Swakamok Friendship Centre
- [ ] Metis Nation of Ontario
- [ ] Greater Sudbury Police (Aboriginal Liaison Officer)
- [ ] University of Sudbury, Indigenous Studies
- [ ] Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (Northern Aboriginal Services):
- [ ] Youth Innovation.ca
- [ ] Ontario Ministry of Citizenship & Immigration
- [ ] Local Entrepreneur

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research adhered to the research framework principles as articulated by the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (Utility, Self-Voicing, Access and Inter-Relationality). The research was considered to be self-voicing in that the research was overseen at all stages of research. The presentation of findings was presented in a way that was appropriately recognized participants for their contributions. Most of the participants spoke of having a strong sense of community participation in a diverse array of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

## **CONCLUSION**

The research revealed a number of key themes and aspirations that contributed to living the good life in the city, through Mino Biimadiziwin. One of the key themes that emerged from this research is the importance of a culturally grounded, supportive early family life that provides the foundation to educational and employment success.

**For more information on this project visit:**

<http://uakn.org/research-project/urban-aboriginal-community-building-and-the-basis-of-aboriginal-economic-success-in-sudbury/>

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The Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network, the UAKN, is a community driven research network focused on the Urban Aboriginal population in Canada. The UAKN establishes a national, interdisciplinary network involving universities, community, and government partners for research, scholarship and knowledge mobilization. For more information visit: [www.uakn.org](http://www.uakn.org)



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