

Unofficial Review Brief of Environics' Urban Aboriginal Peoples Survey:

Main Survey (draft 01/12/09) and Non-Aboriginal Survey (draft 03/26/09)

Surveys in General:

- Surveys are used to collect facts about a group. Some surveys identify differences in one group as compared to another group. The group to be studied is the test group and the comparison group is called the cohort. The cohort must be “matched” to the test group (age, sex, education, and *etc.*) otherwise differences in response to a question may be due to a variety of environmental, cultural, educational, and *etc.* factors. There should only be one difference (variable) identified between the test group and the cohort group before the survey is done. It is this variable that is being studied to see how it affects the test group.
- Both the test and the cohort group must be asked the exact same questions (just like with Statistics Canada surveys). Questions are set to receive facts as answers. Opinions are not facts. Facts will give the same answers every time the question is asked. Opinions can give different answers to questions when questions are asked again. **This is because opinions are not necessarily based on facts.** Good scientific surveys collect facts and not opinions.
- A social values survey is really a survey of public opinion. One form of a social values survey is a **public opinion poll**. One of the current uses of a public opinion poll is as the justification for government to implement a change in national policy. In this manner the political party in power protects themselves from unpleasant electoral fall-out over the policy change.

Environics' Urban Aboriginal Peoples Survey:

- Environics has obtained approximately \$1.5 million to do a survey on Urban Aboriginal People and would not disclose their funding source on request.
- The Environics survey was actually split into two surveys: non-Aboriginal and Main surveys.
- The Environics survey is a public opinion survey.
- The survey is being done against a political backdrop where the federal conservative government has created a Canadian policy to end forced aboriginal assimilation but has set NO agency or program in place to fulfill this policy. Interesting is the concurrent stalling/failure of the court-ordered Truth and Reconciliation Commission given the commencement of work for the TRC was the impetus for the federal change in Aboriginal policy. There is also the UN *Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* that Canada voted against 18 months ago. **Is one or more political parties or “ruling institutions” in Canada looking for public opinion to support a new policy on Aboriginal people in general, and urban Aboriginal people in specific, in Canada?** Interestingly enough, it would be illegal for the Crown to perform a public opinion poll on Aboriginal people in Canada in lieu of meaningful Aboriginal consultation.

Review:

- There are actually three different surveys embedded within the Environics survey. The identified non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Urban opinion surveys plus a generic public opinion poll.

Unofficial Review Brief of Environics' Urban Aboriginal Peoples Survey:

Main Survey (draft 01/12/09) and Non-Aboriginal Survey (draft 03/26/09)

1- General Public Opinion Poll:

- The generic public opinion poll comprises the first three questions of the non-Aboriginal survey. This part of the survey is done with random calls to the public. Phone calls made to the public at random should give about 3% Aboriginal respondents. The first two questions are opinions that translate to one question, "in your opinion are Aboriginal people important in Canada?" Given 140 years of forced assimilation, disinformation, bilingualism, multiculturalism, and a unique Northern climate, question 1 will have up to 3% choosing that Aboriginal people make Canada unique and question 2 will have up to 3% choosing that Aboriginal people are important in defining Canada. It may be worse, given the wording for the answers. Many Aboriginal respondents could choose against Aboriginal people by trying to select what they think is the most accurate answer.
- Whoever "commissioned" the survey will get back a very focussed public opinion poll that will likely say that over 97% of the people surveyed in Canada do not believe Aboriginal people are unique in Canada and that Aboriginal People are not important in defining Canada. Echoes of the Meech Lake Accord should sound out with this. Elijah Harper already stood against a racist two-founding-nation nation on this very issue. If a political party commissioned this survey, and they are in or come in to power, they may feel they have carte blanche to wipe out Aboriginal rights and culture with no significant backlash as a result of this survey.
- To assess the validity of the three question opinion poll one must look to see if the test and cohort groups are the same except for, in this instance, being Aboriginal. One must also see if basic questions at the heart of the survey are simple and straightforward such that their answers are based on the difference between, in this instance, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. If the survey is valid, then results can be used to make decisions. The three questions actually make up a valid survey with the variances between the test and cohort group averaging out based on the randomness of a telephone survey. **A government in Canada could use the result of this survey to extinguish Aboriginal rights on behalf of the "greater" good for Canada.**
- **This three question public opinion poll is the purpose of the entire Environics survey.**

2- Non-Aboriginal Survey:

- For a survey to be valid, the exact same questions have to be asked of the test group and the cohort group. This does not happen with the non-Aboriginal survey and raises serious doubts as to the ability to compare the supposed Aboriginal test group, in the Main Aboriginal survey, with the supposed non-Aboriginal cohort group in the non-Aboriginal survey. We could only identify that questions 14, A, B, K, O, P and Q were present in both surveys. The non-Aboriginal survey indicates that many of its questions are similar to questions in the Aboriginal survey. However, they must be exactly the same to be included in a valid comparative survey; and, they are not. **This means that the non-Aboriginal survey and the Main, Aboriginal survey are separate surveys.**
- The only identifiable cohort for the non-Aboriginal survey is one region or city vs another. In other words, the non-Aboriginal survey can compare opinions of non-Aboriginal people living in different cities about Aboriginal people. With no other cohort the Environics non-Aboriginal survey is just a public opinion survey whose purpose is to promote a particular opinion platform. That platform can be seen within the survey's questions and how they are presented. Questions can be skewed (biased or slanted) to select for specific answers.

Unofficial Review Brief of Environics' Urban Aboriginal Peoples Survey:

Main Survey (draft 01/12/09) and Non-Aboriginal Survey (draft 03/26/09)

- Some of the questions in the survey ask for opinions on statements that support assimilation or racism. For example Q10, "In what ways are Aboriginal People different from non-Aboriginal People?" This question can only be asked if the sister question is asked as well, "In what ways are non-Aboriginal people different from Aboriginal people?"
- Some of the questions ask to choose between one of two views where the view that supports assimilation policies or racism is made more attractive. For example Q11, "Some people say Aboriginal people should be considered just like other cultural or ethnic groups in Canada's multicultural society. Other people say that as the First Peoples of Canada, Aboriginal people should have unique rights and privileges. Which one of these two views is closest to your own?" In this example the first choice is promoting equal civil rights and multiculturalism (racial tolerance) whereas the second choice is promoting a class system where the respondent would be placed in a second class position. This is a very skewed question favouring the first choice. It should be noted that Canada does not have a multicultural society, it only promotes one.
- Q12 promotes that Aboriginal people should blend into Canadian society and not have separate communities.
- In Q18, "In your opinion, have Aboriginal people in Canada largely caused their own problems or have the problems been caused by the attitudes of Canadians and the policies of governments?" Does anyone think the respondent will assume responsibility for his/her attitude being a root cause of the suffering of Aboriginal people in Canada? No, he/she will choose that Aboriginal people largely caused their own problems especially when Q18 follows Q 16 and 17 where social problems facing Aboriginal people are identified.
- A quick review of the "opinion" questions in the non-Aboriginal survey shows **the survey is skewed to receive answers to support the opinion platform that Aboriginal people are no different then non-Aboriginal people:** (1) Aboriginal people should be considered just another ethnic group and be made to blend into Canadian society; (2) Aboriginal people do not significantly contribute to Canadian society and so Aboriginal history and culture are not important; (3) Social problems are the number one enemy of Aboriginal people and not non-Aboriginal attitudes or government policy; and, (4) Aboriginal people should be treated the same in the justice system as non-Aboriginal people because they are no more discriminated against then other visible ethnic minorities.
- The non-Aboriginal survey will start with 3% of the respondents being Aboriginal people who exit the survey after the three question public opinion poll. This leaves 97% of the respondents as non-Aboriginal respondents to complete the survey. With skewed questions it would be safe to assume that a majority (51.6%) of non-Aboriginal people will choose skewed answers in favour of Environics' platform. This will translate into a publicized result where, "The majority of Canadians surveyed believe Aboriginal people should be treated the same as any other ethnic group in Canada." This 51.6% is a very simple target to hit with skewed questions. (51.6% of 97% gives 50+% of the whole group taking the survey (including the 3% Aboriginal respondents)).
- It appears Environics skewed the survey to obtain results that show Aboriginal people in Canada should be treated like any other cultural or ethnic group in Canada. It would be self-defeating to believe that questions in the non-Aboriginal survey were skewed in favour of Aboriginal assimilation by accident.

3- Aboriginal (Main) Survey:

Unofficial Review Brief of Environics' Urban Aboriginal Peoples Survey:

Main Survey (draft 01/12/09) and Non-Aboriginal Survey (draft 03/26/09)

- The draft of the Main Aboriginal survey we reviewed was an early draft with very little “Aboriginal” detail. We assume the draft was not finished enough for a thorough review. However, trends in the survey can be seen.
- Again, as in the non-Aboriginal survey, the only identifiable cohort for the Aboriginal survey is one region or city versus another. With no real cohort the Environics Aboriginal survey is just a public opinion survey whose purpose is to promote a particular opinion platform. Again, that platform should be seen in questions and how they are skewed.
- Most questions in the Main Aboriginal survey are about collecting facts on urban Aboriginal people with focus areas for community, governance, education, justice, employment, identity, and aspirations. Unfortunately, most of the questions do not have Aboriginal culture-based answer choices and so do not generate accurate facts. In essence, **the survey forces Aboriginal people to choose non-Aboriginal answers.**
- QB1, “Who do you consider to be part of your community?” There are no choices for Elders, clans, traditional councils, etc. There are only general Aboriginal choices and choices for registered/incorporated “visible” community Aboriginal services.
- QC6, “In what ways, if any, do you think non-Aboriginal People are different from Aboriginal People?” As with the converse question in the non-Aboriginal survey, this question can only be asked if the sister question is asked as well, “In what ways, if any, do you think Aboriginal people are different from non-Aboriginal people?”
- QH12 actually is designed to have the respondent choose which aspects of Aboriginal culture are not important in his/her opinion for the future of Aboriginal Peoples by asking which ARE the most important. Are not all important? This is a purposely misleading question.
- QI7 has the respondent choose that he/she has access to traditional healing practices even if the respondent only has access to a small fraction of what is involved with traditional healing.
- Questions I8, F21 and F22 ask to choose between one of two views where the view that supports assimilation is made more attractive as in the non-Aboriginal survey. The wording in these three questions is skewed (1) to favour mainstream education over traditional Aboriginal education and (2) to favour mainstream healthcare over traditional healing practices. At no point in the Aboriginal survey is there a choice for the respondent to create alternatives to the mainstream versus traditional services dichotomy.
- A quick review of questions in the Main Aboriginal survey seems to show **the survey is skewed to receive answers to support the opinion platform that urban Aboriginal people prefer mainstream non-Aboriginal society over a traditional Aboriginal way of life.**

Disclaimer: This document was not prepared by a statistician or any other professional working within the field of statistics. Should you wish to use this brief, or any part of it, in a decision process of any kind involving the Environics Urban Aboriginal Peoples Survey, seek professional statistical advice. We do not accept civil or criminal responsibility for individual, group, or corporate use of information contained within this document. This document was not prepared for public circulation.