

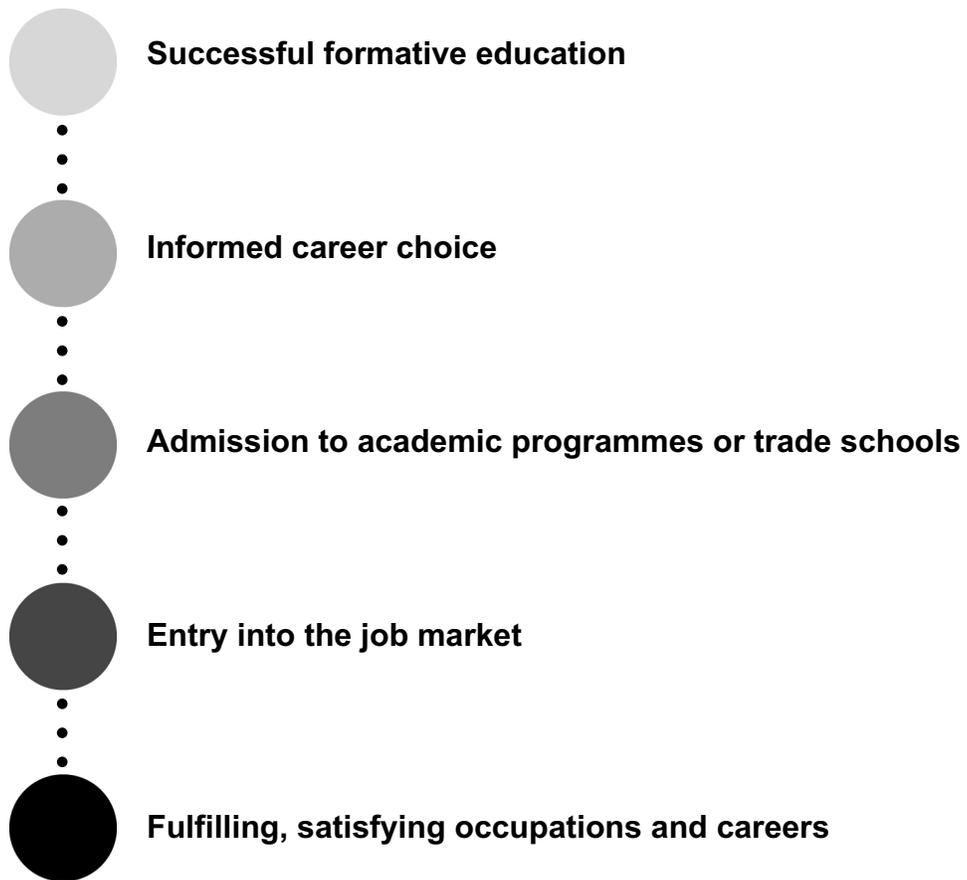
# **Connecting the Dots:**

## **A Study of Perceptions, Expectations and Career Choices of Aboriginal Youth**



**Presented to  
The Aboriginal Human Resources Development  
Council of Canada**

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## Executive Summary

The youth segment of the Aboriginal population in Canada offers enormous potential to increase the participation of Aboriginal people in the Canadian labour market. Demographic analysis shows that 51% of the status Indian population is under the age of 18, with predictably similar percentages for the Non-status, Inuit and Métis populations. But the youth segment must be encouraged to explore their career options early and must be adequately prepared to enter the labour market whether in urban, semi-urban, rural or remote communities.

The task of preparing young Aboriginal people to enter the labour market requires a sustained effort on several fronts by a number of stakeholders concerned with the problem. Parents, educators, guidance counselors, government agencies and departments, corporate human resources specialists, Aboriginal leaders, and classroom teachers all have a role to play in helping to prepare young people for the future. With the development of strategic initiatives to assist this segment of Canada's youth population, business, industry, and local economies will be able to meet the challenge of filling the gaps that are projected to develop in several occupational categories.

But what do Aboriginal youth expect to do in the future? What are their career expectations? What are their educational goals? Where do they plan to seek employment? When do they expect to finish school? And what do they know about skill shortages, employment prospects or how best to prepare themselves for productive, satisfying careers? These are the questions that prompted this study.

A team of researchers from Concordia University in Montreal including Robert J. Oppenheimer, Ph.D., Tom O'Connell, MBA, and Corinne Mount Pleasant-Jetté, B.Ed., C.M., sought out answers to these questions by surveying a group of Aboriginal teenagers attending the National Aboriginal Career Symposium held in the Fall of 2001 in Ottawa. Interested in exploring the career aspirations of Aboriginal youth, the team designed a questionnaire, delivered it on the floor of an exhibition area during the career fair, and analyzed their findings for presentation to the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Council of Canada.

In all, some 433 responses were tabulated, representing over 50% of the participants at the career symposium. Respondents were primarily from Ontario and Quebec. They ranged in age mainly from 12 to 18 and attended schools located both on and off reserve. They participated in the survey with the understanding that they would be helping to build a portrait of what young people are thinking about as they choose their career directions.

In recent years, Aboriginal youth have been encouraged to 'stay in school' through a number of national and local campaigns; have heard the words 'economic development' in their home communities; and have probably been told that they can 'be anything they want to be' to paraphrase the slogan of the U.S. Marine Corps. Yet, even with these messages of encouragement, Aboriginal youth are not performing well in school, are surrounded by high unemployment levels, continue to drop out of school early, experience high levels of teen pregnancy, and are

not entering the work force at the same rate as other youth in Canada. Clearly, for many young people, the mixed messages they are receiving must be overwhelming.

Yet there is reason for optimism, as more and more young people are opting to attend post-secondary education programmes. What remains to be seen is whether or not the educational choices that are being made by some students are in fact preparing them for placement in trades and professions where shortages exist now and are projected for the future. The goals of the study were to identify those occupations that are attractive to young people, those occupations that they respect, and those occupations that they actually think they will pursue as adults. Correlations would be made between their responses with the hope that trends might emerge to help explain the process that lead to career choice.

For the most part, respondents did make connections between the occupations they identified as ‘dream jobs’ and those occupations that they expected to actually work at. A typical respondent who chose ‘doctor’ as his dream job, responded that he actually thought he would be a doctor one day. His choice was reinforced by the fact that he ‘highly respects’ the occupation of doctor. But the major disconnect that was found in the responses from young participants to the survey, was the fact that most do not appear to know what the academic requirements are for many professions or trade occupations. Our prospective doctor above, plans to finish school, establish a meaningful love relationship, and begin his career between 20 and 23 years of age. Since he is now 15 years of age and attending grade 9, he has a lot to do in the next five to eight years. Similar response patterns occurred with other professional categories such as lawyer and engineer.

Another goal of the study was to identify various career information products that could effectively provide the knowledge base to drive career development. Approaches and delivery methods were also explored. Respondents indicated clearly that while they currently do not receive much career guidance information from community job training centres, that this location would be their preferred choice to learn more about careers and professions.

The report reviews the findings and observations from statistical analyses of the results of the survey and invites readers to make further observations by studying the results contained in the tables in the appendices. Conclusions and recommendations are put forward that include suggestions for further data collection to support the major finding that young people do not seem to know how to ‘connect the dots.’ That is, they need to know how to progress from successful formative education, to informed career choice, to admission to academic programmes or trade schools, to entry into the job market, to fulfilling, satisfying occupations and careers.

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## 1.0 Preamble

This research was commissioned by the executive council of Aboriginal Human Resources Development Council of Canada (AHRDCC). The objective was to determine the career information needs for aboriginal youth in order to focus on creating appropriate career development tools. The concept was to design and deliver a career questionnaire for a cross-section of Aboriginal youth, across Canada. The results would then be compiled and the relevant findings, conclusions and recommendations would be presented to AHRDCC.

The research presented here provides a wealth of information for all who work with Aboriginal youth. While the data collection exercise was designed as a pilot project to explore the career choice attitudes of young respondents, we found that the responses provide an interesting overview of more than career choice attitudinal patterns. Teenagers who participated in the data collection showed that they are concerned about their career choices, that they are willing to learn more about the options that are available to them, and finally, that they appear to be fundamentally optimistic about their futures.

As a first step in identifying clear patterns and trends among Aboriginal youth, we would suggest that readers spend some time reviewing the data included as appendices to this report. As a pilot project, the length of the questionnaire, and the extent of the range of questions were presented to respondents with the expectation that they would provide a wide range of data for analysis by the AHRDCC. In subsequent data collection exercises, it would be recommended that more directed questions be asked.



## 2.0 Introduction

### 2.1 Rationale

For all young people, the prospect of choosing a career orientation marks a major turning point in their personal development. The timing of this event, however, is highly individualistic, and may occur anytime from early childhood to adulthood. Within the non-Aboriginal as well as the Aboriginal youth population, enormous variance exists between the idle dreams of a child and the deliberate decision-making of early adulthood that prompts a definite, clear path to one career or another. For many young people, the prospect of choosing one specific career path is an elusive, troublesome decision that causes frustration, while for others, the choice of a career path is much less of an obsession, and does not create undue anxiety. While some young people seem clearly oriented from an early age, other young people do not set out an any particular path, but do eventually find a niche for themselves that leads to productive, fulfilling job satisfaction. Whether the choice of career originates at an early age, or does not manifest itself until much later, many factors influence the ultimate decision to pursue a particular job category.

Role models, mentors, career guidance counselors, as well as teachers, parents and friends are often the interveners who help young people to learn about different careers and are often responsible for planting the seeds of interest that assist in the decision-making process. In other instances, indirect influences such as television personalities, fictional characters, sports heroes, or public personalities offer additional opportunities for young people to learn about and become interested in various life occupations.

Whatever the case, young people frequently respond to influences that they experience in the context of their everyday lives. If they are exposed to a wide variety of occupational categories, and if they perceive these options to be exciting, challenging, rewarding or simply in tune with their personal interests and personalities, chances are that any particular occupation could become an objective for a young person seeking personal satisfaction and fulfillment.

The key, however, seems to lie in the extent, and the timing of such exposure. Examples abound of young people who choose to be doctors after having been exposed to medical intervention that saved their own life or that of a loved one. In other cases, a parent's occupation provides enough exposure and interest in a young person to prompt them to seek the same career path. Public personalities such as entertainers, athletes, or artists offer another array of possibilities to the young person who is seeking their place in the world. What seems to be fundamental in this process, however, is that the available information presented must be accurate, realistic, comprehensive and presented in a manner that is credible. That is, information received about any given occupation should come to the young person from a credible, trusted source. It should provide sufficient depth and breadth to prove valuable in assessing the advantages and disadvantages of the occupation. And finally, the information should be seen by the young person to be accurate and unfiltered.

Information concerning career choices was previously made available to Aboriginal youth based on assumptions about their needs and a “we know what’s best for you” approach. This research

is intended to open the feedback loop of the communication link and establish a “market driven” approach where Aboriginal Youth would express their needs and subsequently, relevant career information products would be created to fill those needs.

In other cases, information regarding potential career choice may be lacking altogether. In these circumstances Aboriginal young people may be receiving little or no information to help them in learning about the vast array of career directions open to them in the context of a knowledge-based economy. It is crucial that major effort be dedicated to the development of career orientation materials and tools that provide a comprehensive look at a wide range of potential job classifications. This is particularly critical in communities with limited economic development, where chronic unemployment is a fact of life and when young people may not even be aware of various occupational categories.

Given the likelihood that large numbers of Aboriginal young people will continue the pattern of migration to urban and semi-urban centres, it is equally important for them to gain exposure to various occupations and professions that they know nothing about. Finally, the most basic information required by young people relates to the process of preparing for careers and professions by acquiring appropriate education and training.

## **2.2 Methodology**

Youth, in general, have difficulty in expressing themselves to authority and older generations. Often they communicate through dysfunctional behavior, particularly when experiencing frustration at their inability to get their message across through oral or written communication. Our intent was to establish a communication link to probe the feelings of youth concerning their career choices. The format was a user-friendly questionnaire that was not dependent on the participant’s writing skills. The methodology allowed for individuality and anonymity of the participant so that peer pressure and fear of reprisals would not be a factor in their responses.

We designed a questionnaire that would gather significant data concerning Aboriginal youths’ perceptions about careers, and preferences regarding their career choices. The study was exploratory in nature, the primary objective being the gathering of information. We were fortunate to have an opportunity to access a cross-section of Aboriginal youth, primarily from Ontario and Quebec, to fill in the survey document. The occasion was the National Aboriginal Career Symposium (NACS), in Ottawa on October 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

We are grateful to the NACS organization for providing us with a booth to distribute and collect the completed questionnaires. Participants at the NACS symposium were encouraged to stop by the exhibit booth, to sit down, complete the questionnaire and to fill in a ballot to win a combination CD/Stereo system. After two days, we received completed questionnaires from 433 Aboriginal youth, which is over 50% of approximately 800 NACS participants. This survey therefore captures the views of a significant percent of those who attended.

Upon entering the exhibit area, respondents were handed a questionnaire, assured that their responses would be anonymous, and then were provided with a brief explanation of how to complete the form.

The survey, which is contained in Appendix 1, asked the respondents to indicate the following:

- The jobs they consider to be their “dream jobs” (column 1),
- The degree they respect each of the 39 jobs specified (column 2),
- The degree they want to learn more about each job (column 3),
- The likelihood they will actually work in the job (column 4),
- The relatives they have working in each job (column 5),
- Where they learn about careers and where they would like to learn about them (questions 41 and 42),
- Their degree of self-efficacy, cultural identity and cross-cultural acceptance (questions 43-54),
- Whether they know the type of job or career they want (question 55),
- Their educational expectations (question 56),
- Their expectations regarding life events (questions 57-61),
- Demographics of age, grade, gender and attendance of school on or off reserve (questions 63-67).

The results of the analyses of these questions, along with the relationships amongst some of these variables are discussed in this report. Following this are recommendations regarding the type of career information products we believe would be useful to Aboriginal youth. The appendices contain the tables that summarize and provide selected analyses of the data collected.

The data from the questionnaire is provided electronically in both Excel and SPSS formats in Appendix 2.

### 3.0 Findings and Observations

#### 3.1 Dream Jobs (Column 1)

The respondents were asked to indicate which of the jobs listed they considered to be their dream jobs. They were told that they could select as many dream jobs as they wanted. The purpose of this question was to determine what type of jobs or careers they would really like to have. This would therefore be another way of determining the type of jobs for which career information would be desired.

The results are presented by reporting the number that responded to each job, by total, by gender, by grade level and by whether they go to school off or on reserve. The tables summarizing this information are contained in Appendix 3. The following highlights some of these results.

**Table 1: Top Ten Dream Jobs**  
*The top ten Dream Jobs and top five, by gender, in bold*

Rank	Dream Job	Total Selecting N=433	Number of Males Selecting N=151	Number of Females Selecting N=246
1	Business Owner	95	<b>32</b>	<b>59</b>
2	Doctor	84	20	<b>63</b>
3	Lawyer	83	17	<b>63</b>
4	Artist/Crafts Person	77	18	<b>59</b>
5	Police Officer/Correctional Officer	73	<b>27</b>	44
6	Professional Athlete	67	<b>29</b>	35
7	Entertainer/Performer	67	9	<b>57</b>
8	Musician	66	17	48
9	Cook/Chef	62	15	46
10	Teacher	62	8	52
12	Computer Technician	45	<b>23</b>	21
15	Engineer	41	<b>26</b>	13

*Note: Some respondents did not provide their gender, which is why the total selecting does not equal the sum of the males and females selecting each dream job.*

When examining these results by grade level, no clear pattern emerges, with the exception that those selecting Artist/Crafts Person and Musician decreases as the grade level increases.

Examining the dream jobs of those going to school on reserve compared with those off reserve results in identifying a number of differences. The possible reasons for these differences and the social and political implications are beyond the scope of this report. However, an awareness of the differences may be useful when offering alternative career information to schools on and off reserves.

One significant finding in the list of dream jobs, is the fact that the first place selection was that of business owner. From our experience, the drive toward business development in a number of Aboriginal communities has received varying levels of publicity, but it is clear from this finding that young Aboriginal people are interested in pursuing business opportunities in their own communities. While the definition of the term business owner is obviously a broad one, it does denote a tendency toward independence, autonomy, and self-reliance among those young people who made the selection.

We can speculate on the causality factors, which led the youth to choose business ownership as a career choice. Perhaps it's the ease of entry into the profession (no accreditation required), perhaps parental role modeling, perhaps a perception of wealth, or perhaps a combination of all. At this juncture it would be pure speculation to say why they have selected business owner as a dream job. The relevant finding is that Native youth (male and female) are interested in pursuing careers as business owners.

One approach to having youth learn about owning and running businesses is through the establishment of Junior Achievement. This program exists in a number of communities and entails having students form their own businesses. Volunteers, who are usually from businesses in the community, provide guidance.

Among the top 15 occupations selected as dream jobs, respondents chose doctor, lawyer, teacher and engineer. All of these professions require extended post-secondary education, a fact that is contradicted in later findings where respondents anticipate leaving school within a short period of time.

We can again speculate on causality. Television, in particular, will glorify professions. If the youth watching television is not aware of the occupation they may perceive only the upside of the profession and not the hard work and education necessary to be successful in that career. Lawyers and doctors on television become heroic figures but the actual profession is markedly different from what is depicted on television.

Whether students choose a dream job because of role-modeling, exposure through television, first-hand exposure to a relative or from information received at school, the key element here is that their choices should be based on realistic impressions of the career itself. It is important, therefore, that career information products provide a thorough overview of:

- Educational requirements for the occupation,
- Primary responsibilities and activities associated with the occupation,
- Summary of knowledge and skill requirements,
- Listing of barriers or limitations to entry that would preclude choice of the occupation,
- Examples of Native role models who have chosen the occupation,
- Realistic earnings potential.

Dream jobs chosen by respondents show a wide range of interest in professional categories, and a very low level of interest in the trades. If respondents are reluctant to pursue long periods of post-secondary study, while holding expectations of high income-earning potential, then alternative paths should be provided. This would include better information related to the trades. Aboriginal youth should be provided with more and better information relating to the current shortage of trade workers, as well as the potential for high-income earnings in these occupations. There is also relationship between the fact that many respondents would prefer to work in their home communities and the fact that trade workers will be required in these communities. As better career information products become available to young people, it is hoped that their choices will be based on fact rather than fiction, reality rather than wishful thinking.

**Table 2. Dream Jobs for Respondents On-Reserve**

*Dream Jobs selected substantially more often by those going to school on reserve.*

Dream Job	Selected by those going to school on reserve N=133	% of those going to <b>school on reserve</b> that responded that this is a dream job	Selected by those going to school off reserve N=212	% of those going to <b>school off reserve</b> that responded that this is a dream job
Professional Athlete	28	<b>21</b>	32	<b>15</b>
Cook	27	<b>20</b>	26	<b>12</b>
Teacher	25	<b>19</b>	27	<b>12</b>
Nurse	22	<b>17</b>	21	<b>10</b>
Firefighter	19	<b>14</b>	17	<b>8</b>
Iron Worker	10	<b>8</b>	11	<b>5</b>
Spiritual Leader	10	<b>8</b>	10	<b>5</b>
Carpenter	10	<b>8</b>	7	<b>3</b>

**Table 3. Dream Jobs for Respondents Off-Reserve**

*Dream Jobs selected substantially more often by those going to school off reserve.*

Dream Job	Selected by those going to school on reserve N=133	% of those going to <b>school on reserve</b> that responded that this is a dream job	Selected by those going to school off reserve N=212	% of those going to <b>school off reserve</b> that responded that this is a dream job
Business Owner	24	<b>18</b>	53	<b>25</b>
Computer Programmer/Support Person	21	<b>8</b>	26	<b>12</b>
Accountant	5	<b>4</b>	20	<b>9</b>
Elected Official	6	<b>5</b>	20	<b>9</b>
Aviation/ Aerospace/ Airlines	6	<b>5</b>	16	<b>8</b>

As noted earlier, the life experience of respondents will influence their choice of dream jobs. Decisions to pursue a particular occupation, or simply to learn about a specific job, can only be made following some exposure to that career. Primary exposure to careers is provided by parents (observing working patterns of parents) and television (observing behavior patterns in working situations). If a young person lives in a relatively small, rural community, odds are that he/she will not have been exposed to the same variety of occupational categories as their counterparts who live in more urban areas, except via television shows. The results of a comparison between respondents who go to school on and off reserve shows clearly that selected dream jobs vary significantly. On-reserve respondents identify fire fighter, iron worker, teacher, carpenter and nurse as possible interest areas, while off-reserve respondents select computer programmer, accountant, aviation /aerospace /airline workers in their selections. This finding will be important in targeting career information products for Aboriginal youth that go to school on or off reserve.

For the most part, Aboriginal youth who attend school on reserve, have less exposure to wide varieties of occupations than those who attend schools off reserve. This fact, coupled with the important consideration that generalizations should not be made across Aboriginal communities in Canada, suggests that career resource material may require customization depending on the size and type of community where students are resident. If electronic resources are produced for delivery via the World Wide Web, it will be important to include career information that will be relevant, accessible, understandable, and practical for Aboriginal youth who live in urban, semi-urban, rural, and remote communities.

In summary, we find that Aboriginal youth who responded to this survey are not being adequately prepared for many of the dream job categories at a sufficiently early age. Perhaps more youth could be groomed for these careers but the identification process to determine those who are

interested and the mentoring/tutoring process to help them prepare for the academic requirements needs to be started at an early age, ideally pre-teen. At the age of filling out our questionnaire, many of the dream jobs requiring extensive post-secondary education are already beyond the grasp of the youth – a fact that many seem to be totally unaware of as we see later in their assessment of “expected careers.”

Finally, our findings indicate that a large proportion of Aboriginal youth do aspire to productive, fulfilling occupations and careers. Like their mainstream counterparts, the choice of career is likely to undergo a series of changes from late elementary school through to the end of high school. Younger respondents chose high profile, ‘prestige’-type occupations such as entertainer, professional athlete, and performer, but as they matured, these choices gave way to more realistic choices. Evidence exists of gender stereotyping exists. Young women tend toward the nurturing type of occupations (teacher, nurse, and social worker) and young men lean toward the physical type of occupation (construction worker, carpenter and electrician). However, a number of jobs are equally attractive to young men and young women in equal proportion (business owner and police officer/correctional officer).

### **Summary (Dream Job)**

There is a dilemma as Aboriginal youth aspire to professions that, at present, do not have a high Native practitioner population. Without access to mentoring role models, there is a tendency to perceive only the benefits of the profession, while not having a realistic preview of what is required to succeed in that profession.

It is possible to prepare Aboriginal youth for these occupations, however this requires an early identification process so that those with the potential to achieve these professions could be given individual mentoring toward preparing for these careers. In this regard, culturally-appropriate scholastic aptitude tests may be administered to pre-teen Aboriginal youth in order to identify those who have the potential to excel in careers that have stringent accreditation standards.

For many youth there will not be the potential, nor desire to work in these professions. In these cases, directing these youths toward careers that have high potential for employability is optimal. Information technology workers and the trade professions are in short supply. Directing Aboriginal youth toward these professions would require career information products that would initially increase their perceptions of the desirability and prestige of these occupations.

## **3.2 Most Respected Jobs (Column 2)**

The extent to which different careers are respected was assessed. We believed it would be useful to know whether the dream jobs were also those that are respected. Seven of the ten most respected jobs were included in the top ten dream jobs. The three jobs that are respected, but were not in the top ten dream jobs, are fire fighter, spiritual leader and hospital/medical/dental technician. The three jobs, of the top ten dream jobs, but not included in the top ten most

respected jobs are teacher, musician and police officer/correctional officer.

Timing of the survey may have raised the rate of response in at least one category: fire fighter. The events of September 11, 2001 may have contributed to the extremely high level of respect reported for fire fighters.

The tables showing the degree of respect for each of the jobs, by mean, mode and distribution are shown in Appendix 4. The following highlights the mean scores of the ten jobs most respected. The scale used was 1 was for jobs greatly respected and 5 for those not respected. Therefore, the lower the number, the more the job is respected.

**Table 4. Most Respected Jobs**

(The lower the score, the more respected)

*The top ten, overall, Respected Jobs and top five, by gender, in bold*

Rank by degree of respect	Job	Total Mean N=433	Males Mean N=151	Females Mean N=246
1	Doctor	1.99	<b>2.37</b>	<b>1.74</b>
2	Fire Fighter	2.19	<b>2.14</b>	2.16
3	Business Owner	2.22	<b>2.23</b>	<b>2.14</b>
4	Professional Athlete	2.23	<b>2.12</b>	2.28
5	Arts/Craft Person	2.25	2.42	<b>2.07</b>
6	Spiritual Leader	2.26	<b>2.37</b>	2.15
6	Hospital/Medical/Dental Technician	2.26	2.50	<b>2.06</b>
8	Lawyer	2.32	2.67	<b>2.14</b>
9	Entertainer/Performer	2.34	2.61	2.18
10	Cook/Chef	2.38	2.51	2.20
12	Teacher	2.41	2.85	<b>2.12</b>

It may be interesting to note the extent that the women respect jobs is greater than that of the men and that this holds for almost all jobs. The difference was statistically significant, at the .05 level, in seventeen of the thirty-nine jobs. For fifteen of these, women had more respect for the jobs. The two exceptions were Carpenter and Mechanic. However, it should also be noted that similar results were found to be the case for a non-Aboriginal sample of grade eleven students. That is, in general, the women report that they have more respect for different careers than do men.

In analyzing the degree of respect by grade level, there are very few clear patterns that emerge. However, the degree of respect for the jobs of firefighter, professional athlete and musician all decline as the grade level increases.

Another relevant finding from this section are the occupations least respected. Factory worker, plumber, casino/bingo worker, truck driver and mining are all at the bottom of the respect ladder. When looking at job opportunities realistically, based on the indicated anticipated level of education, most of the youth will more likely work in jobs that they respect less than jobs such as doctor, lawyer, engineer and teacher. So, while there is a high correlation between dream job, respected occupations and expected professions, the indicated anticipated level of education does not reflect an understanding of the path to professional careers.

One recommendation, therefore, is to create career information products that would provide positive information about all occupations, including those that are presently not highly respected by the youth. It may well be that those jobs end up being eventual career choices. It is possible to alter perceptions about a career and increase respect for professions which previously did not command much respect.

Respect for certain occupational categories reported by our respondents suggests that culture and context play a role in their choices. As Aboriginal people, both male and female respondents ranked spiritual leader and doctor among those most respected. Young women highly respect the category artist/crafts person, while young men respect professional athletes and fire fighters. Perhaps most interestingly, all respondents rank business owner as an occupation that is highly worthy of respect, reflecting on the stature that business owners in a small community hold within that community.

There were very few statistically significant differences (at the .05 level), between those going to school on reserve, in comparison to those going to school off reserve. The following table summarizes these differences.

**Table 5. Significant Differences between Most Respected Jobs by On-reserve and Off-reserve Respondents**

(The lower the score, the more the job is respected)

*Significant differences in the degree of respect for jobs by those going to school on reserve and those off reserve*

Respect for Jobs	Goes to school on reserve Mean score	Goes to school off reserve Mean score
Elected Official	2.71	2.32
Fishing	2.66	3.06
Military	2.71	2.37
Social Worker	2.83	2.49

### **Summary (Respected Jobs)**

The significance of the jobs most respected is that Aboriginal youth will be more likely to aspire to respected careers and they will be more receptive to career information products and tools from respected people.

There are two conclusions that may be drawn from this section. One is the need for career information products that enhance the prestige of the less respected jobs, which include many of the trade occupations. The other is to involve those who are respected by the youth in the delivery of the information, in order to increase the receptivity of the youth to the message.

### **3.3 Jobs Interested in Learning More About (Column 3)**

Eight of the top ten jobs that the respondents want to learn more about are included in the top ten jobs they respect. The other two, Police Officer/Correctional Officer and Teacher are included in their top ten dream jobs. This is also the case for the top jobs that they think they are likely to work in and which is discussed in the next section of this report. The tables containing the information regarding jobs interested in learning more about is contained in Appendix 5.

It should be noted that for all the jobs, there are a number of respondents who are extremely or very much interested in learning more about each job. The job that had the lowest mean response regarding interest in learning more about it, is that of plumber. However, 12 respondents said they were extremely interested and 33 very much interested in learning more about the job of plumber. The youth are certainly receptive to information about a variety of occupations.

One significant conclusion that may be taken from this is that regardless of the job, there are some people who are interested in obtaining information about it. Further, certain jobs have a broad appeal and a significantly larger percent of the population would be interested in obtaining information about those jobs.

It is also interesting to note that for certain jobs there are significant differences between what the males and females are interested in learning more about as well as for those who go to school on reserve, compared to those going to school off reserve. The statistical significance showing these differences is contained in Appendix 5.

**Table 6. Jobs Respondents Want to Learn More About**

(The lower the score the more they want to learn about that job)

*The top ten, overall Jobs Interested in Learning More About and top five, by gender, in **bold***

Rank by Interest in learning more	Job	Total Mean N=433	Males Mean N=151	Females Mean N=246
1	Business Owner	2.79	<b>2.63</b>	<b>2.90</b>
2	Doctor	2.91	3.07	<b>2.81</b>
3	Lawyer	2.93	3.07	<b>2.88</b>
4	Police/Correctional Officer	3.01	3.09	2.98
5	Professional Athlete	3.02	<b>2.80</b>	3.14
5	Entertainer/Performer	3.02	<b>3.01</b>	3.01
7	Arts/Craft Person	3.05	3.20	<b>2.96</b>
8	Spiritual Leader	3.09	<b>2.96</b>	3.19
8	Teacher	3.09	3.32	<b>2.97</b>
10	Cook/Chief	3.10	3.14	3.04
16	Engineer	3.30	<b>2.91</b>	3.53

The examination of the jobs which they would like to learn more about by gender, is very interesting. The jobs that men and women are more interested in learning about are different in a number of cases. There are statistically significant differences at .05 level for 24 out of the 39 jobs listed, regarding the jobs for which men and women want to learn more about. It would appear that this should be considered in the development and/or the distribution of information about jobs or careers. One possibility would be to hold career information sessions by gender as a means of allowing both young men and young women to learn about potential occupations within a non-threatening environment.

If given the opportunity to hear about career possibilities in non-traditional fields, young women might consider career occupations in the trades and technologies. Similarly, young men might feel more inclined to explore non-traditional fields if they were free from the pressures of gender influence in small discussion groups. For both groups, an obvious suggestion would be to have gender-specific role models invited to work with young participants. Female engineers and carpenters, or male teachers and social workers could offer young people positive role models to learn from.

Interest in learning more about specific jobs differed significantly for only six of the jobs for those going to school on reserve compared with those going off reserve. In all six cases those going to school on reserve indicated a greater interest in learning more than those going to school off reserve. These six jobs are Artist/Crafts Person, Carpenter, Ironworker, Musician, Sales and Teacher.

### **Summary (Jobs most interested in learning more about)**

Analysis of the data collected under this heading indicate that gender plays a role in the occupations respondents express interest in learning more about. Traditional gender-based distinctions still apply. Young women, appear to be more interested in nurturing careers (teacher, nurse and social worker).

The implications are that the audience is another variable in the communication process of designing and delivering career information products for maximum relevance and acceptance. The tools and the delivery mechanism have an impact, but this section highlights the peer influence in the process. Regardless of the individual youth's perception of career development material, they will be strongly influenced by the peers they receive the information with. Thus, if a seminar is given to a mixed group of youth, there appears to be a strong indication that they will establish an informal group norm that filters the information along traditional gender expectations.

A recommendation is for the design of a career development tool that highlights the career of a non-stereotypical gender profession and the delivery of this material by a non-stereotypical practitioner. The audience for this presentation would be segmented by gender.

### **3.4 Jobs Likely to Actually Work In (Column 4)**

Nine of the top ten jobs that youth surveyed think they will actually work in are the same as those that want to learn more about. The one exception is the job of working on reserve, which replaced Spiritual Leader. This is shown in the table below along with the top five jobs selected by gender. Appendix 6 contains the tables for the jobs they think they will actually work in.



**Table 7: Jobs Respondents Expect to Work In**  
 (The lower the score the more likely they think they will work in that job)  
*The top ten, overall Jobs Most Likely to Work In and the top five, by gender, **in bold***

Rank by Interest in learning more	Job	Total Mean N=433	Males Mean N=151	Females Mean N=246
1	Business Owner	3.12	<b>3.05</b>	<b>3.14</b>
2	Arts/Craft Person	3.19	3.29	<b>3.13</b>
3	Cook/Chief	3.27	3.28	<b>3.26</b>
4	Police Officer/Correctional Officer	3.32	3.26	3.37
5	Lawyer	3.34	3.38	3.31
5	Employee on Reserve	3.34	3.40	3.32
5	Teacher	3.34	3.51	<b>3.23</b>
8	Entertainer/Performer	3.35	3.26	3.39
9	Doctor	3.37	3.57	<b>3.27</b>
10	Professional Athlete	3.43	<b>3.12</b>	3.61
11	Computer Programmer/Support Person	3.46	<b>3.14</b>	3.63
21	Engineer	3.66	<b>3.15</b>	3.97
24	Mechanic	3.75	<b>3.23</b>	4.06

The top five jobs that the men expect to be working in are different than those the women think they will work in, except for being business owners. These findings are similar to the differences in the jobs that the men and women want to learn more about. There is a statistically significant difference (at the .05 level) between the jobs the men expect to work in compared to women for seventeen of the thirty-nine jobs listed. This difference also exists for seven of the jobs between those going to school on reserve and those off reserve. Those going to school on reserve report that they are more likely to work in all seven of the following jobs: Carpenter, Cook, Doctor, Ironworker, Employee on Reserve, Teacher and Truck Driver. The tables showing these statistical significant differences are contained in Appendix 6.

### **3.5 Relationship Between Dream Jobs, Jobs Respected, Wanting to Learn More About a Job and Likelihood to Work in a Job. (Columns 1-4)**

There is a strong relationship between the respondents dream jobs, the jobs they respect, those they want to learn more about and the jobs they expect they are likely going to work in. The correlations between the jobs that they respect and for which they want more information and those they expect to work in are all highly statistically significant. This applies at the 0.01 significance level for all the jobs, with the sole exception of the job of casino/bingo worker. The tables that show this information are contained in Appendix 7.

Analysis of these findings suggests that young people are optimistic, idealistic, and hopeful for the future. Unfortunately, it also suggests that they are currently misinformed about the obvious relationship between education and occupations. While the so-called ‘Dream Job’ (teacher, doctor, lawyer, engineer) may involve a great deal of post-secondary education or a high degree of specialized training, respondents do not appear to understand the level of commitment in terms of time and effort required to achieve these goals. Career information products should therefore include clear information about academic requirements or specialized training related to all occupational categories.

### **3.6 Relationship Between Dream Jobs and Jobs Likely to Work In (Column 4 and Column 1)**

One of the questions examined is the degree to which the youth expect that they will actually be working in their dream jobs. The most frequently indicated dream job was that of business owner. We examined the relationship between the degree to which the youth expected to work in their dream jobs. In 34 of 39 job categories, over 50% of the youth expect to work in their dream job. The tables showing this are contained in Appendix 8.

We interpret this to mean that the youth are optimistic in that the jobs they would really like to have (their dream jobs) are the jobs that the majority of them expect to be actually working in. We believe that this is a significant finding. This “youthful optimism” implies that they think they can become that which they want to be.

### **3.7 Relationship Between Jobs Likely to Work In and Educational Expectations (Column 4 and Question 56)**

The students were asked to indicate the highest level of education that they expect to complete. These results were compared to the jobs they said they expect to work in. That is, for those who said it was highly likely to work in a job or they possibly will work in a job, their level of expected schooling is examined. The tables showing this information are contained in Appendix 9.

The expectations regarding the jobs many of the students expect to work in are not only optimistic, but in many cases are unrealistic and unrelated to the amount of education necessary. A prime example is the career of Doctor. One hundred and five of the respondents said they expect to be a doctor. That is approximately twice as many as the current number of Aboriginal doctors. Further, only 62% of those saying they expect to be a doctor state that they expect to complete a university education. It should be noted that the categories of “university undergraduate degree” and “university graduate degree” have been combined. This has been done because we are uncertain whether the respondents clearly understood the distinction.

The educational expectations for those who think they will enter other “professional careers” are similarly inconsistent. The following table highlights this.

**Table 8: Relationship Between Educational Expectations and Career Goals**  
*Relationship Between Jobs Likely to Work In and Educational Expectations*

Profession	# Selected Highly Likely or Probably Will Work in that Job	% of Total N=331	% Expecting to Complete University
Accountant	53	19.0	58.7
Doctor	105	31.7	61.9
Engineer	68	20.5	50.0
Lawyer	100	30.2	65.0
Social Worker	83	25.1	51.8
Teacher	106	32.0	59.4

*Note: The percentages in column 3 add up to more than 100% because the respondents were allowed to indicate that they would likely work in more than one job.*

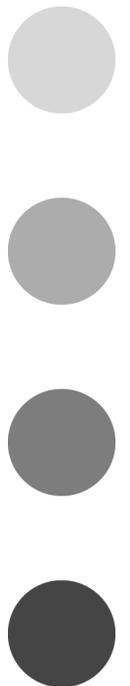
**Summary (Most likely to work in)**

Essentially, the Native youth surveyed are very optimistic about their career aspirations at this point in their development. Unfortunately, the indicators are that they are unrealistic about the accreditation process needed in many of these careers, particularly the academic requirements.

These findings strongly suggest that any career information products or strategies developed should address the disconnect shown by many young people. This disconnect is between their understanding of the academic requirements for a particular career, and their own academic goals. The length of studies in medicine or law or the rigor of studies in engineering or accounting may be common knowledge to guidance counselors and teachers, but this information appears not to have been grasped by the young people who responded to our survey. Realistic goal setting should play a part in career information products developed for use with this population.

**3.8 Relatives Working in Each Job – Role Models (Column 5)**

The objective of asking whether someone has a relative working in a particular job was to determine whether they had a role model who worked in that field. The assumption was that those who had relatives working in a job would be more familiar with it and would be more likely to want to work in it. This assumed that the relative had a positive opinion of the job and communicated this with the respondent.



### **Summary (Relatives working in professions)**

We could not determine any pattern between those having relatives working in a job and the other issues we were examining. Further, we have strong reservations regarding the validity of the responses to this question. As an example, we find it difficult to believe that in a sample of 433 people, 110 are relatives of doctors, 113 are relatives of hospital/medical/dental technicians and 229 are relatives of those in fishing (in Ontario). It is recognized that there is multiple counting as many of the people in the sample may be related; however, the face validity of these results, leaves us suspect as to their accuracy. The tables containing this information are in Appendix 10. Moreover, we believe that many respondents may have misinterpreted the question to mean that they had relatives involved informally in these activities as opposed to relatives who were employed in them. This may explain 229 out of 433 having relatives involved in fishing.

### **3.9 Where Career Information Is Obtained and Preferred Place to Receive Career Information (Questions 41 and 41)**

The place where career information is most commonly obtained is in school. The next most common places are from teachers and relatives. This is the case for males and females, for all grade levels and for those going to school on reserve as well as off reserve.

The places they would most like to receive career information is from job training centers, school, the Internet and teachers, in that order; however, the differences in the preferences for obtaining career information amongst the first three of these is marginal. Similar to where they get career information, there is no distinction between males and females, the grade levels and those going to school on or off reserve, regarding their preference for obtaining career information from these four sources.

This part of the study examined where they obtain and would like to obtain career information. Based upon their responses it appears that it would be well received for the relevant information to be available through the Internet and having it accessible through the schools. Students and schools without adequate access to the Internet may be able to have the information available on CD-ROMs or diskettes.

Although the youth have access to numerous sources of career information, not all information sources have equal value. The influence of parents is particularly powerful. Parents often strongly influence career choices through communicated expectations, either implicitly or explicitly.

The tables containing this information are in Appendix 11.

**Table 9: Where Career Information is Obtained and From Where it is Wanted**  
*Current and Desired Sources of Career Information*

	Number Where Obtained N=332	Percent Where Obtained	Number Where Would Like to Obtain, N=332	Percent Where Would Like to Obtain
School	244	73.5%	143	43.1%
Teachers	206	62.0%	131	39.5%
Relatives	205	61.9%	109	32.8%
TV	150	45.2%	84	25.3%
Friends	140	42.2%	83	25.0%
Internet	138	41.8%	141	42.5%
Books	134	40.4%	110	33.1%
Pamphlets	132	39.8%	103	31.0%
Job Training Center	84	25.3%	147	44.3%

**Summary (Preferred sources of career information)**

The most dramatic finding is that Native youth presently identified career centers as the lowest source of career information yet it is the most preferred source of career information.

It is important that the information has a high degree of acceptance by the youth. The delivery mechanism is critical and the youth are indicating their preferred sources and locations of material delivery.

Parents, teachers, and guidance counselors exercise considerable influence over youth. On the one hand it would be important to get their involvement in the development of the materials, while on the other hand it would be important to “train the trainers” and provide them with the skills to provide realistic previews of careers to the youth. The teachers, guidance counselors and relatives may be overly supportive, attitudinally saying such things as “You can be anything you want to be”. However, they need some support in getting the youth to perceive the aptitudes required for different careers. In this area, career information products could be created and targeted to the people who influence the youth.

With the increasing availability of reliable Internet service and the expansion of the APTN broadcast area, there are excellent opportunities to create career information products specific to the strengths of these media.

Findings from this area of the survey indicate that more should be done to coordinate communication among various sectors at the community level. Young people appear to be open to learning more about occupations, and are willing to receive this type of information from a variety of sources. Their first choices in seeking career information appear to be from job-training centres, schools and from the Internet. Parents,



community leaders, teachers, guidance counselors, job training specialists and human resources practitioners must all work together to ensure adequate levels of information are provided to the youth.

Distribution and delivery of career information resources need to be coordinated between the two primary service agencies at the community level. Better communication and coordination should exist between career resource specialists in both the school district offices and the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Centres. If materials and tools are produced on a national or regional scale, these resources need to be put into place where they will best reach the youth. In some communities, the school would be the best physical location from which to deliver information sessions, and hardcopy materials. In other communities, the job-training centre should deliver the information in close cooperation with school authorities, and could provide access to computer hardware where young people could access Internet sites or view CD-ROM resources.

In all cases, effort should be dedicated to encouraging parental involvement in public information sessions held in schools or human resources training centres. Parents play a pivotal role in helping their children assess career options and in encouraging their children to pursue career goals. Equally, parents can and do influence their children to avoid certain career choices or to abandon dreams that parents think are unrealistic. Wherever possible, effort should be directed to informing parents, with their children, of the range of realistic possibilities that await them with appropriate education and training.

### **3.10 Correlations Between Self-Efficacy, Cultural Identity, Cross-Cultural Acceptance With Career Expectations and Life Events (Questions 41-61)**

Three scales were developed to assess the levels of self-efficacy, cultural identity and cross-cultural acceptance in order to determine whether there were significant correlations between these variables and career interests and life event expectations. Self-efficacy, the degree that one has confidence in their ability to achieve task related goals, consists of questions 43, 46, 49 and 52. Cross-cultural Acceptance consists of questions 44, 47, 50 and 53 and Cultural Identity consists of questions 45, 51 and 54. Question 48 was initially part of the scale for Cultural Identity; however, an analysis of the internal reliability of this scale, determined that psychometrically the scale would be a more accurate reflection of the variable if question 48 was not included. It was therefore dropped from subsequent analyses. The tables relating to these three variables are contained in Appendix 12.

#### **3.10.1 Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is significantly related to a number of the issues examined. Those with a high level of self-efficacy are significantly more likely (at the .01 level) to know what type of job or career they want and this is the case for males, females, those going to school on reserve and

off. In contrast, self-efficacy is not related to the level of schooling that they expected to be obtained.

When considering the careers that they say they are likely to actually work in, only two are significantly related. The greater the self-efficacy, the more likely they are to expect to be a lawyer and the less likely they expect to be a casino/bingo worker.

With regard to the life events, the greater the self-efficacy the younger they expect to be when they will have a meaningful love relationship (married or living with someone) and the greater the self-efficacy the younger they expect to be when they will start a career or full time job.

### **3.10.2 Cross-cultural Acceptance**

The greater the level of cross-cultural acceptance the more likely they are to know what type of job or career they want. This relationship is significant for males and those going to school off reserve at the .01 level. It is significant for females and those going to school on reserve at the .05 level. Interestingly, for the total sample the greater the cross-cultural acceptance, the higher the level of education they expect to complete (at the .01 level), but when separating this by gender and schooling, this relationship holds only for those going to school off reserve.

The higher the degree of cross-cultural acceptance the more they think that they are likely to work as an entrepreneur or police officer/correctional officer and the less likely they believe they will work as a casino/bingo worker or engineer. Cross-cultural acceptance is not related to any of the life events examined in this study.

### **3.10.3 Cultural Identity**

The greater the level of cultural identity the more likely (at the .01 level) to know what type of job or career they want. This is somewhat similar to the findings for self-efficacy and cross-cultural acceptance in that it is significant for the total group, the males and those going to school on and off reserve at the .01 level and at the .05 for the females. There were no significant relationships with cultural identity and the level of schooling they expect to be complete.

The greater the level of cultural identity the less likely they expect to be in communication/multimedia, computer programmer/support, military, or trucking, at the .01 level, and the less likely they expected to work in casino/bingo, engineering, factory work, mining, or sewing/seamstress/tailor, at the .05 level. The only positive significant correlation is with being an employee on reserve. That is, the stronger the level of cultural identity the more they expected to work as an employee on reserve, at the .05 level. There were no significant relationships between cultural identity and the life events that were measured.

The most significant finding in this section is that cross-cultural acceptance is correlated with a propensity to continue in school. It is possible that the accepting of other cultures provides a solid footing for continuing in school. This would not be surprising since Native youth need to transfer to a non-Native environment in order to attain post high school academics.

### **Summary (Self-Efficacy, Cross-cultural Acceptance, Cultural Identity)**

Cross-cultural Acceptance is significantly correlated with a propensity to continue in school. A strong sense of who you are, while being accepting of diverse cultures, provides a solid footing for continuing in school. This is not surprising since Native youth need to transfer to a non-Native environment in order to attain post-secondary education.

### **3.11 Extent Type of Job or Career Wanted Is Known (Question 55)**

Based upon the results of this questionnaire, close to two-thirds of the respondents say they know what type of career or job they want. More specifically, 45.6% say they strongly agree and 19.2% say they agree with the statement, “I know what type of job or career I want.” There is very little difference between the males and females. The tables showing these results as well as those for level of schooling expected, life events and age distribution are contained in Appendix 12.

### **Summary (Type of career is known)**

This data reinforces previous observations that indicate there is “youthful optimism” about career choices. Almost 67% of the respondents state that they know what type of career they want, but our findings indicate that most respondents have unrealistic expectations about career choices. Particularly given the amount of schooling they expect to obtain.

### **3.12 Highest Level of Schooling Expected (Question 56)**

In examining the highest level of schooling that the respondents expect to achieve, interesting patterns emerge. The following table provides this information by gender.



**Table 10: Educational Expectations**  
*Highest Level of Schooling Expected to be Completed - by Gender*

	Total		Male		Female	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
High School	67	17.4	31	21.8	36	14.9
Apprentice- ship or trade program	16	4.1	12	8.5	4	1.7
Community College or CEGEP Career Program	54	14.0	11	7.7	43	17.8
Community College or CEGEP University Preparation Program	31	8.0	13	9.2	18	7.4
University Undergraduate Degree	35	9.1	15	10.6	20	8.3
University Graduate Degree	162	42.0	52	36.6	109	45.0
Other	21	5.4	8	5.6	12	5.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>100.0</b>

We note that 51.1% expect to complete University, 8% expect to complete a CEGEP/community college university preparation program, 18.1% expect to complete an apprenticeship, trade program or CEGEP/community college career program and 17.4% expect to have high school as their highest level of education.

Appendix 13 contains this table and others relating to the level of schooling expected. Included in this Appendix is the table, Educational Expectations by Grade, which indicates that their expectations to complete a University degree program decrease significantly as they get older. Compressing graduate and undergraduate responses, the following percentage of youth, by grade, expect to complete a University degree:

- Grades 6-8    68.6%
- Grades 9-10   61.7%
- Grade 11     **47.8%**
- Grade 12     **30.7%**

At the same time, expectations to complete an apprenticeship, career or trade program increase significantly. For this statistic we compress the apprenticeship and trade category with the career

programs at CEGEP or community college. It should be noted that in this study CEGEP is only applicable for Quebec, while community college is applicable in Ontario.

Grades 6-8	4.7%
Grades 9-10	9.8%
Grade 11	<b>23.4%</b>
Grade 12	<b>29.6%</b>

### **Summary (Highest level of schooling expected)**

Particularly noteworthy is the dramatic shift between grades 10 and 11. This indicates that any planned intervention should lead this trend and be applied in grade 9-10, prior to the dramatic change in expectations.

Without speculating on causality, the indications are that Native youth become less optimistic about university opportunity and shift focus to the trade and career programs as they get older.

This does not explain why they indicate a high degree of expectation to pursue careers as doctors, lawyers and other professional occupations that require a significant amount of university academic training. They exhibit decreased expectations about obtaining a university education and increased expectations about completing trades and career programs, while maintaining high expectations about careers that require extensive academic preparation.

The expectations of higher education are dramatically higher than the actual incidence of Native youth graduating from university. Many Native youth are expecting to work in dream jobs that require significant schooling for accreditation, and the expectations for these careers are not high enough.

It is interesting that around 50% expect to graduate from university, while only 8.5% (males) expect to complete an apprenticeship program (trades). There is a much higher likelihood of completing the apprenticeship program than the university education, yet 50% still have aspirations to complete university.

Career information products that provide an understanding of entry level requirements and realistic expectations of the commitment necessary to complete a university education are essential.

Perhaps scholastic aptitude tests can be utilized to assess the potential to achieve a university education. Those who have the capacity can be directed to tools, which enhance study skills, tutoring availability (perhaps an on-line aboriginal portal), and preparation for university regimes.

Those who have the propensity to succeed in trade careers should be guided through tools designed for a career track in the trade professions.



### **3.13 Life Events – Raise a Family – Meaningful Love Relationship –Start Career – Relocate For Employment – Finish Going to School (Questions 57-61)**

The respondents were asked the age range they expected each of these life events would happen for them. With regard to raising a family, 72.6% expect to do this in their twenties, with the most frequent response (33.3%) being between 24 and 26.

For those expecting a meaningful love relationship (married or living with someone) 69.6% expect that this would occur in their twenties, while 20.1% thought this would happen before they were 20 or that it was the current situation. The 24-26 year old age range was the most frequent response (27.3%) when they expect to be in a meaningful relationship.

For those stating when they expect to start their career or full-time job, 29% reported at age 20 or before or that it was the current situation. For the age categories of 21-23 and 24-26, the responses were 28.8% and 31.9% respectively. Encouragingly, for a career placement perspective, only three respondents (0.8%) said they do not expect this to happen. Thus, almost everyone expects to start a career or full-time job.

The above data is more proof of unrealistic expectations. Almost 30% of respondents anticipate starting a career at or before 20 years of age. Over 50% expect to start a career at or before 23. Realistically speaking, the professions selected as expected require academic training and accreditation that will take significantly longer to accomplish.

The most frequent response to the question regarding relocating for employment is between 21-23, with 22.0%. The percent saying they would do this under age 20 is 15.3, while those saying they would relocate between ages 24-29 is 34.8%. It is worth noting that only 15% report that they do not expect that they would relocate.

This means that 85% of the respondents anticipate that they will leave their community to pursue their expected career.

The rationale behind this aspect of the research project lies in determining if there are specific constraints or barriers within the Aboriginal population that militate against young people who are in the process of making sound career choice decisions. Are there any unique aspects to the life experience of Aboriginal youth that set them apart from other adolescents who are seeking career information? And are there any circumstances that should be addressed in designing career information materials for them?

The Life Events portion of the questionnaire indicates that young people are influenced by the demographic realities of the communities where they live. Teen pregnancies and high birth rates among young women are a fact of life in most Aboriginal communities, and as such, are considered normal patterns among our respondents. Many male and female respondents expect to complete formal education early. The incongruence between this and the high career expectations that many respondents hold should be cause for concern.

While many respondents, particularly among the female group, expect to remain in their home communities while pursuing a career, others realistically expect to leave in order to find employment. This finding indicates clearly that young people are poised to continue the migration to urban centres that has been in evidence for more than a decade.

**Summary (Life and career decisions)**

The youth appear to be realistic about the career options in their communities, with 85% expecting to relocate in order to pursue career choices. To develop career opportunities within the communities is the role of economic development and beyond the scope of this study. It does highlight the importance of a total community model, which, would involve more than the education department in the youth career development process.

On a micro-level, the relocation imperative (85%) establishes the need for career development tools that provide the youth with information and methodologies to make the relocation transition easier and more likely to be successful.

**3.14 Age Distribution (Question 63)**

The average age of those responding is 15.88. Almost all of them, 86.0%, were between the ages of 12 and 18, with 5.8% age 19, another 6.8% being 20 or 21 and the remaining 1.4% being 10 or 11.

**Summary (Age distribution)**

The participants in the study are at an age when they should be having realistic expectations about career choices. The study indicates that many have very definite expectations about career choices, but many of them tend to be unrealistic, given the levels of education expected and actually achieved.



## 4.0 Conclusions

While certainly not an exhaustive study of the career aspirations of Aboriginal youth, the research project undertaken here has identified a number of facts related to the current thinking of 433 young Aboriginal students who attended the National Aboriginal Career Symposium held in Ottawa in October 2001. Our observations and findings indicate that the following conclusions can be drawn from this sample. Conclusions are drawn from the statistical responses with some supplementary comments reported by students as they filled out the questionnaires. These conclusions are presented for the consideration of the AHRDCC and serve as the basis for the recommendations in the next section of this document.

- C.1 Positive reaction to the request to complete a career interest questionnaire on the part of over half of the NACS participants indicates that Aboriginal youth are indeed interested in their career prospects for the future. This also indicates a willingness, on their part, to communicate their aspirations and expectations by means of a survey.
- C.2 Aboriginal respondents are optimistic that they will pursue satisfying careers. Whether they live on or off reserve, both male and female youth clearly show their “youthful optimism” and appear to have accepted the message that they “can be anything they want to be.” There is a strong relationship among the responses to the “dream job,” “most respected job,” “jobs interested in learning more about,” and “job most likely to obtain” questions.
- C.3 Respondents hold high expectations for the range of professional career choices that they will work in. While it is not clear where these expectations are derived from, the influence of television characters and other dramatic portrayals may be responsible for their interest in the professions of medicine and law.
- C.4 Respondents do not express interest in trade occupations. Some degree of negative stereotyping, together with a lack of knowledge of the advantages possible in these occupations, appears to discourage young people from showing interest in fields such as electrician, plumber, carpenter or other trade categories. Respondents appear to have very low expectations of trade occupations when stating their dream job intentions.
- C.5 Respondents have gender-role stereotypical attitudes. Given the wide degree of exposure in recent years to the possibility that young women can pursue non-traditional careers and occupations, it is clear that young Aboriginal women are more interested in remaining in their home communities or pursuing careers in the nurturing professions.
- C.6 Respondents indicate interest in business ownership. Perhaps surprisingly, the most frequent response in the ‘dream job’ category was business owner. If this finding indicates that youth are seeking autonomy, independence, flexibility, and self-directed career paths, they will need resources designed to provide good information to help them achieve this objective.

- C.7 Respondents have a wide range of career interests outside the 39 choices suggested in the questionnaire. When given the opportunity to write in occupational titles that were not listed on the questionnaire, respondents showed interest in many other areas.
- C.8 Aboriginal youth responses show very high correlations between those occupations they respect, and those that they expect to pursue.
- C.9 Respondents have relatives in many occupational categories. This fact may be useful in designing career resources, where students could be asked to seek out role models within their own family group to obtain more detailed information on a particular job occupation.
- C.10 Respondents have the least respect for the jobs of plumber, gaming workers, factory workers, truck drivers and mining.
- C.11 Respondents respect and have high interest in careers in the arts and the professions. High profile, well-known celebrities or professionals may therefore, be able to play a role in delivering career-related information to young people.
- C.12 Female respondents have respect for, but do not aspire to be engineers. This fact indicates that not unlike young people in mainstream schools, Aboriginal youth may view the engineering profession as an ‘unknown entity’. With little or no knowledge of what engineers do, they do not realize the extent to which engineering impacts on their daily lives. Stereotypical perceptions of engineers as only working outside, or spending their entire careers involved in mathematical calculations, serve to discourage interest among most young people.
- C.13 Respondents have respect for spiritual leaders. While this respect does not translate into career aspiration, it does indicate that spiritual leaders could be involved in the delivery of career information resources, whether as spokespersons for information campaigns, or as participants in direct discussions with young people about their plans for the future.
- C.14 Respondents do not know academic requirements for professions or various job classifications.
- C.15 There is a dramatic shift in educational expectations of the respondents as they progress through high school. Expectations at the lower level diminish as they reach higher grades.
- C.16 Career information is primarily obtained from school, teachers and relatives. While the lowest current actual location for obtaining career information is the job training centre, students state it is the location from which they would most prefer to obtain career information.

- C.17 Career information is wanted from school, Internet, and teachers as well as from the job-training centre. This fact indicates that students may wish to make a distinction between information they receive at school as part of their educational experience, and other career-oriented information that they may accept more readily from an employment centre. There are a number of sources of influence that shape the youths' career choices.
- C.18 Preference for source of career information shifts from TV to Internet. This finding may indicate that more young people are accessing the Internet, and that they perceive it to be a more attractive means of gaining information. It should also be noted that rather than a passive experience sitting in front of a television, students might prefer to be engaged by an interactive format in the design of web-based career resource materials.
- C.19 Two-thirds of respondents state they know what career they want. While this is a significant percentage, young people tend to change their mind several times before narrowing the focus on a specific career option. Nonetheless, the respondents were quite willing to state a choice at this time.
- C.20 Only 4.1% of respondents expect to attend a trade school or apprenticeship program.
- C.21 More than half of respondents expect to attend post-secondary education. It is not clear what type of post-secondary education they anticipate obtaining, but it is clear that at least half understand the importance of continuing their education after high school.
- C.22 More than half of respondents expect to raise a family in their early to mid-20's.
- C.23 More than half of respondents expect a meaningful relationship in their early to mid-20's.
- C.24 More than two-thirds of respondents expect to start a career/job in their early to mid-20's.
- C.25 Eighty-five percent of the respondents expect to relocate for employment. This fact indicates that although they may have a desire to remain in their home communities, they do not perceive enough employment potential will exist for them there.
- C.26 More than half of respondents expect to finish schooling before 23 years of age.
- C.27 Given the diversity within Aboriginal communities, in terms of size, location, proximity to employment centres, and level of sophistication, it seems clear that any career information products developed would have to take this diversity into account.

## 5.0 Recommendations

Recommendations provided here are based on both the analysis of the statistical responses to the survey, as well as the experiential knowledge of the researchers. Since one of the goals of the project was to identify possible career information products and resources that would be effective with Aboriginal youth, a separate listing of recommended tools and delivery methods is included under recommendation 5.21 in this section. Recommendations are intended to provide direction and to promote discussion of the best strategies to follow in order to provide young people with the knowledge base to drive career development. Based on findings from the career interest survey, it is recommended that AHRDCC:

- R.1 Create resources in consultation with parents, teachers, guidance counselors and youth that will provide comprehensive information on a wide range of career /job occupations. These key influencers in the youths' career choices should be involved in the development, understanding and delivery of the tools to ensure their buy-in to the tools and methodology of delivering them. Special emphasis should be placed on those occupations where skill shortages currently exist, or will become evident in the short and medium terms. Details should be provided on the nature of the work, the education required to enter the occupation and the benefits and limitations that characterize the occupation.
- R.2 Create resources in a wide variety formats for delivery in various types of Aboriginal communities including urban, semi-urban, rural and remote. Recognizing the diversity within the Aboriginal population of Canada, it is recommended that particular attention be paid to such diversity as materials are designed, developed and delivered.
- R.3 Make career resources region specific. It is understood that specific regions will offer young people career/job opportunities that do not exist in other regions. As well, career resources designed for use in particular regions should promote the industrial and economic sectors that are particularly active in those regions.
- R.4 Work in conjunction with the other sector councils within HRDC to identify existing career information resources that could be adopted, or adapted, for use with Aboriginal youth.
- R.5 Create and deliver tools and materials that provide in-depth, factual representations of a wide range of careers. Include descriptive analysis of job requirements, testimonial statements from role models who work in the field, rewards made possible through the occupation, fringe benefits and income potential, among other pertinent information. Most important, would be the need to inform young people about what workers in that particular occupation actually do in their work.

- R.6 Produce resources for electronic delivery. While hardcopy materials and tool kits will form the basis of some materials, it is strongly recommended that formats such as CD-ROMs and web-based information modules be developed for delivery on line. Video segments should also be considered for broadcast through local TV programming or through APTN, but should only be considered for upload to websites if the users' access capability is sufficient for high-speed connection to the web.
- R.7 Identify strategies to ensure that distribution of resources should be the joint responsibility of education authorities and human resources training authorities. Since young people are in need of such a wide variety of guidance opportunities, the burden of production and delivery of these resources should be shared by both education and training authorities.
- R.8 Encourage more sharing between schools and job-training centres. While students currently receive information on careers at school, they have indicated their desire to make use of job training centres as a local community resource for the purpose of learning about career/job possibilities.
- R.9 Expand career information products and resources to address gender identification with specific occupations. Mainstream Canadian youth may have received stronger messages pertaining to gender-role identification within certain professions and job categories and Aboriginal youth need to be exposed to similar messages. Young women need to know the benefits to them of pursuing non-traditional occupations in the trades and technologies and young men need to be exposed to the shortages that currently exist in such professions as teaching, nursing and care for the elderly. Given the strong cultural influences at play in Aboriginal communities, young people may not have been exposed to the fact that men and women can function in otherwise traditionally gender-typed occupations.
- R.10 Provide youth with information on projected skill shortage areas. Respondents have indicated that they are interested in knowing which career/job occupations will be in high demand. To the extent possible, youth need to know that their skills and talents are needed.
- R.11 Recruit and train more career counselor specialists. The sheer numbers of Aboriginal youth, and the degree to which they seem ill informed about the labour market requirements, combine to point out that a large number of guidance specialists are required immediately. These people could be attached to either the school system or the job-training centres. The volume of work that needs to be done in the short term necessitates a major effort to recruit, train, and deploy counselors throughout all communities whether urban, semi-urban, rural or remote.

- R.12 Enlist role models as career guidance facilitators. Where possible, a database of individuals in specific career occupations should be created to provide a pool of role models who could be invited to address Aboriginal youth. Effort should be made to identify those organizations that currently have such a pool of role models, so that duplication of effort can be avoided. One resource that could be created as well would involve a ‘training handbook’ that could be distributed to these role models so that they could act effectively as facilitators in situations where groups of youth are gathered. Presentations made by role models should be videotaped and be made available to those that would use them.
- R.13 Introduce career information products at mid-elementary level. Since many occupation categories require academic preparation based on a successful high school performance, it is far too late to introduce career-oriented materials only at the high school level. Therefore, specific career information tools and resources should be created that target children from 9 to 12 years of age, for delivery at the grade four level.
- R.14 Involve parents in career guidance opportunities. In the first instance, ‘train the trainers’ sessions should be developed for parents at the local community level. Other opportunities should also be presented for parents and their children to explore career information tools and resources together. Parents need to be informed of the important role they play as influencers in decisions made by their children.
- R.15 Concept, design, development and delivery of career information products should include elders or spiritual leaders as spokespersons. Given the strong cultural affinity that many Aboriginal young people experience, it is recommended that the individuals they respect be chosen as guides in the decision-making process.
- R.16 Identify ways to assist Aboriginal youth to distinguish among unskilled work, trades, and professions. Employment is seen by some youth as an all-inclusive category, where an individual either works or does not work. It is crucial that young people understand the entry requirements for various occupations and that these requirements frequently involve time and effort over a prolonged period of years.
- R.17 Create career information products and resources that include direct references to local economic development. Aboriginal young people need to ‘connect the dots’ between education, career choice, job entry, and community economic development. This will only be possible if materials that make direct connections for them facilitate their understanding.
- R.18 Develop special resource tool kits on small business ownership. Since this occupation received the highest response rate under the heading of ‘dream job’, it would be opportune to create specific materials related to entrepreneurship, including ‘case study’ descriptions that would be designed for young readers.

- R.19 Identify and, if necessary, create a set of career interest assessment instruments that would be used at the local level. Aptitude, interest and personality tests, delivered in hardcopy or through interactive CD-ROMs, are currently available to assist young people in their career choice direction. Local educational and training authorities should all possess such materials and be sufficiently trained in administering them. In some areas there may be people available who are certified to administer and interpret these types of tests. In areas where this is not the case, it may be necessary to bring these people in.
- R.20 Continue the process of collecting information from Aboriginal young people on their career interests. To aid in the development of relevant, appropriate career information tools and resources for use with Aboriginal youth, AHRDCC should consider some of the follow suggestions that would build on the model used for this research.
- R.20.1 Refine and streamline the questionnaire size
  - R.20.2 Develop questionnaires that include region-specific material
  - R.20.3 Ensure readability and vocabulary levels for grade 6-7 reading level
  - R.20.4 Provide larger range of occupational categories
  - R.20.5 Administer surveys through large-group gatherings such as NACS
  - R.20.6 Administer community-based surveys through job-training centres
  - R.20.7 Compile national results to form database of youth responses
  - R.20.8 Ask respondents to show knowledge of educational requirements for jobs
  - R.20.9 Ask respondents to indicate expected income ranges for jobs
  - R.20.10 Provide incentives for youth to participate in survey
- R.21 Create a range of tools and delivery methods that would allow for the delivery of career-related information to young people. Some suggestions would include the following:
- R.21.1 Elementary-level activity books/lessons on various occupations
  - R.21.2 Elementary-level CD-ROMs with high level of interactivity
  - R.21.3 CD-ROMs on sector-specific occupational categories
  - R.21.4 CD-ROMs on region-specific occupational categories

- R.21.5 A guide for parents to help their children through career choice
- R.21.6 A guide for role models who would meet youth to explain their experience within a certain occupation
- R.21.7 Organizational manuals for job training centres to organize community-level information sessions for parents, career fairs, or visits from role models.
- R.21.8 Produce promotional items, booklets, posters, etc. that are specific to regions/trades/sectors in partnership with corporate sponsors
- R.21.9 Develop specialized testing services to measure interests and aptitudes of Aboriginal youth, and then provide these resources at the community level
- R.21.10 Internet site with a broad range of elements, and links to career information sites
- R.21.11 Web-based link showcasing Aboriginal role models in a wide range of careers.
- R.21.12 Web-based link illustrating what people in various occupations actually do in their jobs
- R.21.13 Video resources for broadcast on APTN or local TV stations.
- R.21.14 Video resources containing messages from elders or spiritual leaders sending motivational messages to youth.
- R.21.15 Curriculum material that could be used by school districts that integrate 'career choice' into regular school programming
- R.21.16 Traveling career guidance specialists who would visit communities, work with local teachers and/or job training centres to administer and explain the results of personality/ interest/aptitude testing services to local youth
- R.21.17 Regional training centres to recruit, train, and dispatch career guidance specialists to local communities.
- R.21.18 Regular regional/national meetings or conferences to exchange information on data collected through career interest surveys and career testing.

**Appendix 1.  
Questionnaire**



**Appendix 2.**  
**Questionnaire data in Excel and SPSS Formats**



**Appendix 3.  
Dream Jobs**



**Appendix 4.**  
**Respect for Jobs**



**Appendix 5.**  
**Jobs Interested in Getting More Information About**



**Appendix 6.**  
**Job Likely to Work In**



**Appendix 7.**

**Correlations: Knowing Type of Job Wanted and Educational Expectations**

**Correlations by job with: Respect for job, Interest in getting more information,  
Likely to actually work in that job, Knowing type of job wanted and Educational  
expectations**



**Appendix 8.**  
**Dream Jobs and Expectations of Working in that Job**



**Appendix 9.**  
**Expectations of Working in a Job and Educational Expectations**



**Appendix 10.  
Relatives in Each Career**



**Appendix 11.**  
**Where Career Information Is Learned and From Where Career Information Is  
Wanted**



**Appendix 12. Self-efficacy, Cross-cultural Acceptance and Cultural Identity**



**Appendix 13.**

**Know What Type of Job Wanted, Educational Expectations and Life Events: Raise a Family, Meaningful Love Relationships, Start Full-time Job, Relocate for Employment, Finish Going to School, and Age**

