


# Issues and challenges in literacy and education for Aboriginals in Saskatchewan

**The Honourable Dr. Lillian Eva (Quan) Dyck,  
Senator**

Presentation to the  
Saskatchewan Aboriginal Literacy Network Spring Gala,  
April 13, 2007





# Outline

- **How many Aboriginal people are there?**
- **Where do they live?**
- **What are their educational attainments?**
- **What are their literacy proficiencies?**
- **How does literacy proficiency affect educational success?**
- **What are some of the issues or challenges in literacy and education?**

Unless indicated otherwise, data shown in this presentation are from Statistics Canada, 2001 census





# Lots of statistical information

- The Canadian picture
- A focus of Saskatchewan
  - Educational attainment
  - Literacy proficiency



Banquet and Evening Gala: 5:30 PM

**Keynote Speaker:**  
**Dr. Lillian Dyck, Senator**



**Entertainer:**  
**Scott Ward**  
**Aboriginal Hypnotist**




**SALN Annual General Meeting**



# 2001 Census


	<b>% of population that was Aboriginal</b>
In Canada	<b>3%</b>
In Saskatchewan	<b>14%</b>
In Saskatoon	<b>9%</b>





# The majority of Aboriginals in Canada in 2001 were Indians.


Aboriginal group	Numbers	%
Indian	608,850	<b>62%</b>
Métis	292,310	<b>30%</b>
Inuit	45,070	<b>5%</b>
Multiple Aboriginal ID	30,075	<b>2%</b>
Total	976,305	





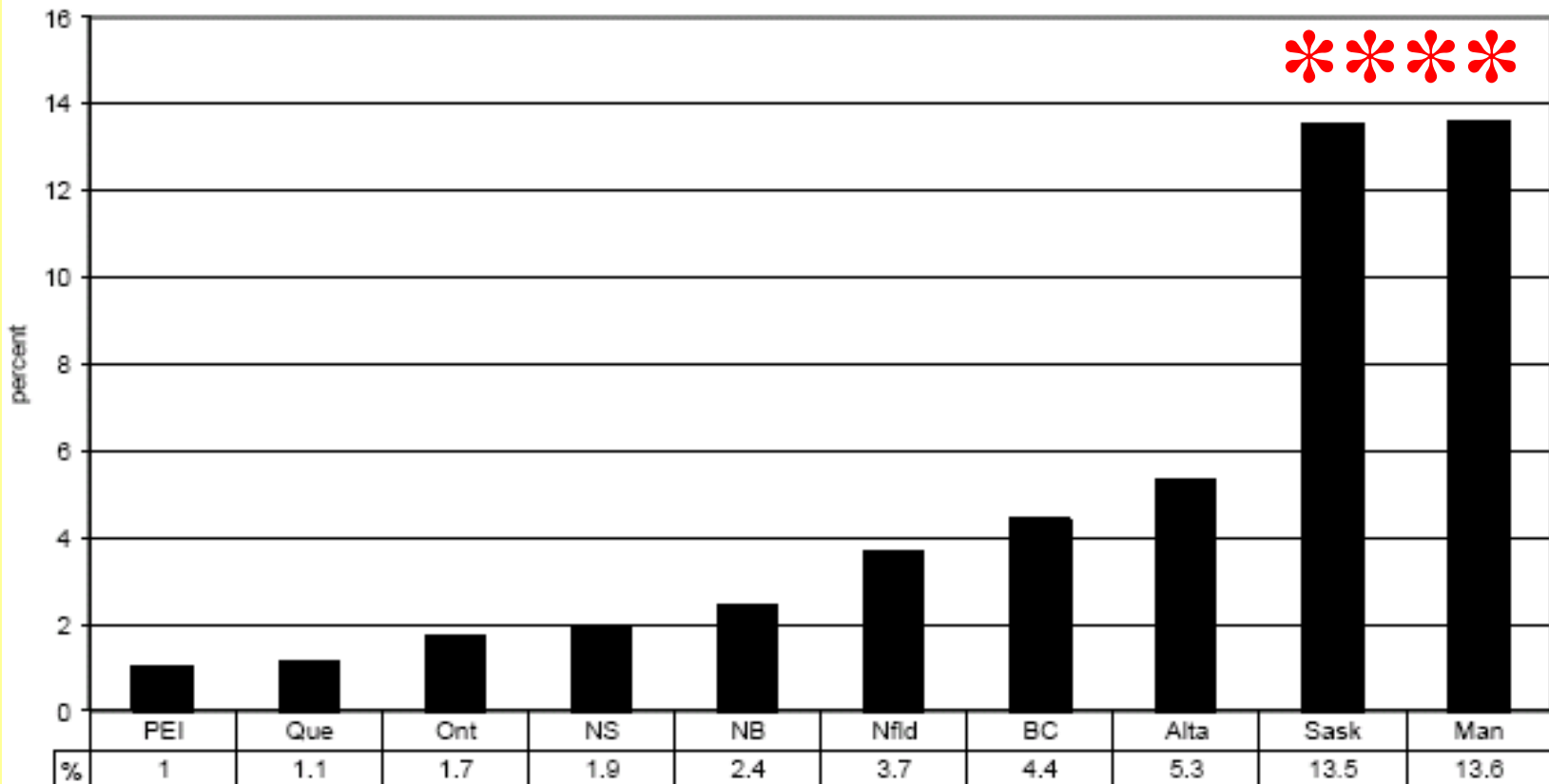
**The majority of Aboriginal People in  
**Saskatchewan** in 2001 were Indian.**

<b>Aboriginal group</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>%</b>
Indian	83,745	<b>64%</b>
Métis	43,695	<b>34%</b>
Inuit	235	<b>0.2%</b>
Total*	130,185	





# Saskatchewan and Manitoba had the highest proportion of Aboriginals amongst the provinces

Figure 1  
Aboriginal identity population as proportion of  
total population, by province and territory, 2001 Census






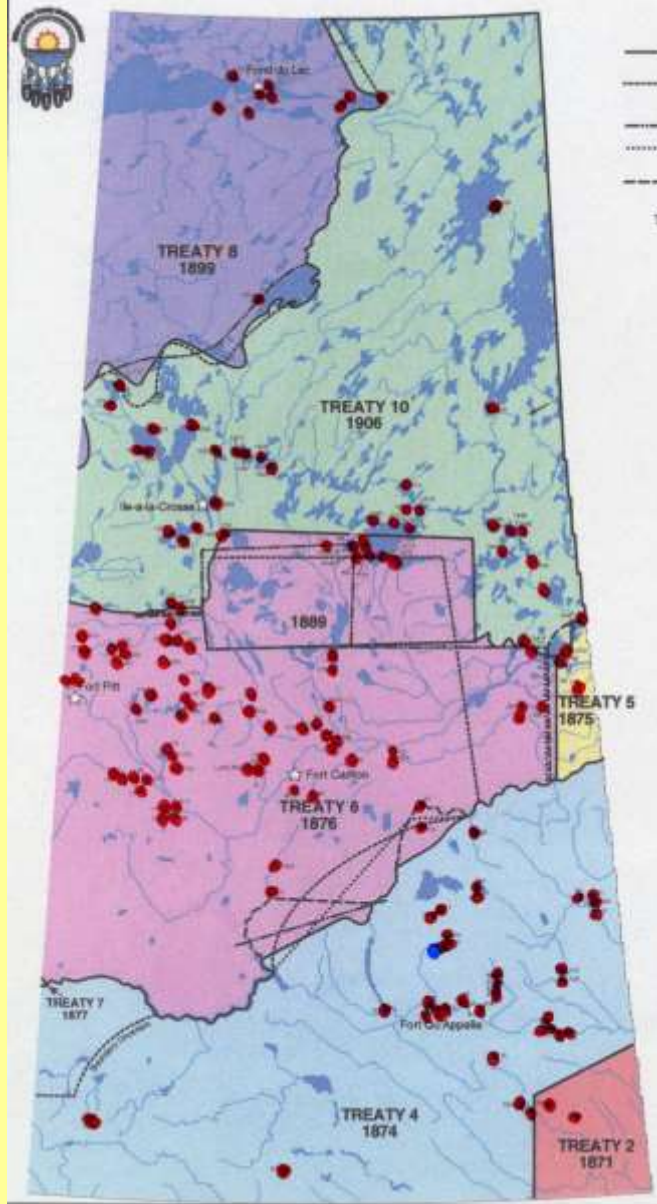
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- There are vastly different patterns in the numbers, percentages and 'sub-types' of Aboriginal people in the different provinces and territories in Canada.
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# The stereotype

- Aboriginal people live on reserves in a remote, Northern area.
  - Aboriginal people live off the land in a traditional lifestyle.
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Treaty Boundaries, Location of First Nations, and Treaty Sites



Most “Aboriginals” live off reserve, while most “Indians” live on reserve.

	% on reserve	% off reserve
<b>Aboriginal*:</b>		
Canada	29%	<b>71%</b>
Saskatchewan	36%	<b>64%</b>
<b>Indian:</b>		
Canada	<b>57%</b>	43%
Saskatchewan	<b>52%</b>	48%


\* Includes Metis and Inuit who do have reserve lands.



In Saskatchewan,  
Most Indians lived on reserves, while  
most Métis and Inuit lived in urban areas.


	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Reserves</b>
<b>Saskatchewan:</b>			
Indian (First Nation)	39%	9%	<b>52%</b>
Métis	<b>60%</b>	33%	7%*
Inuit	<b>81%</b>	15%	4%*


\* Inferred from the other data






# Other stereotypic beliefs

- An Aboriginal person is not to be trusted.
  - An Aboriginal person abuses alcohol or other drugs.
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Racism and discrimination creates barriers for the individual and to the group as a whole.

These barriers span the whole range from micro-inequities to racist behaviours, such as outright hostility.







# The outcome of these stereotyped beliefs

An individual Aboriginal person, as well as Aboriginal people as a whole, are discounted or not seen.

“The marginalization of urban Aboriginal peoples in general and Aboriginal youth in particular, ..., reinforces their incomplete and almost *invisible profile* in the Canadian portrait.”






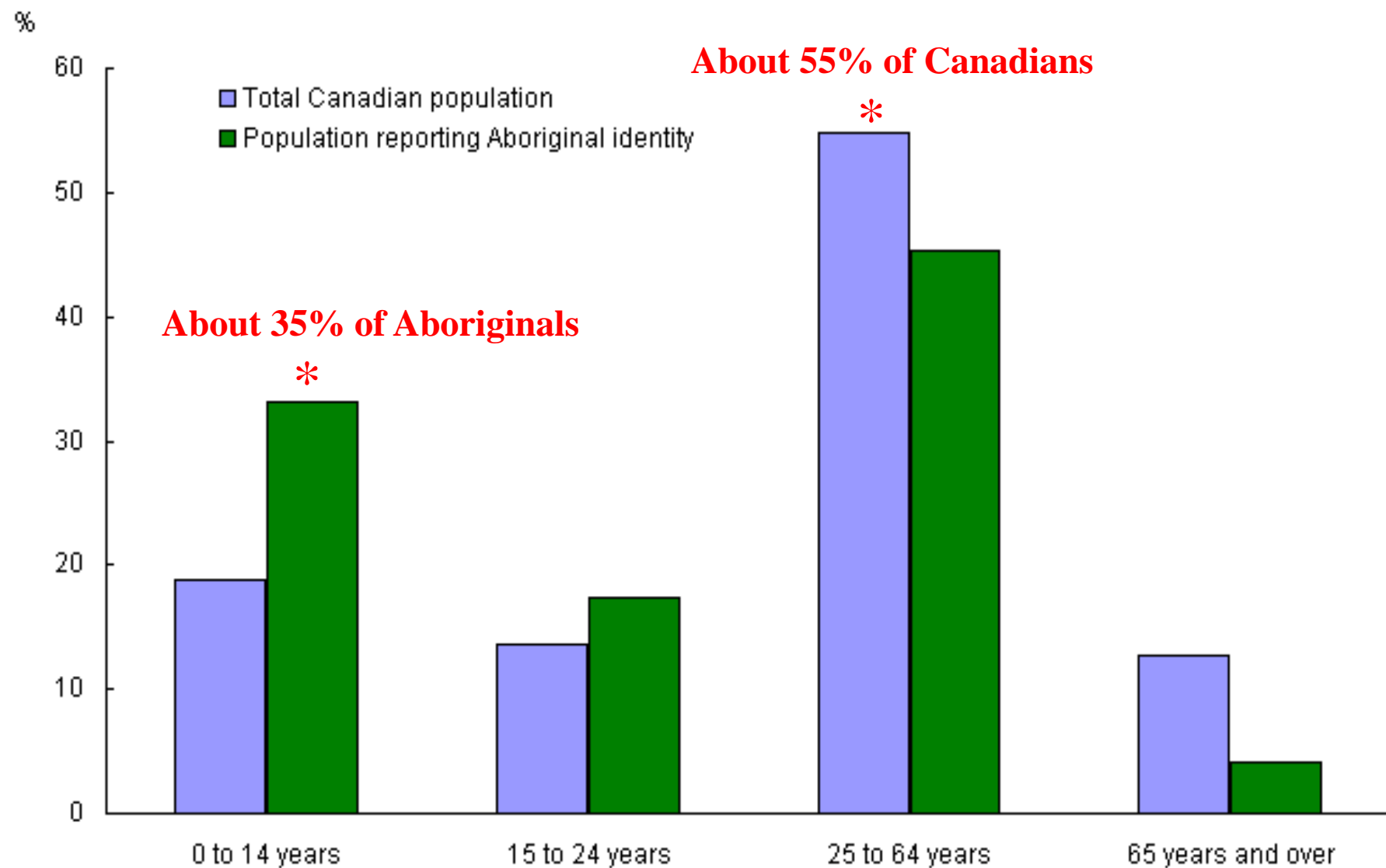


Compared to the rest of the  
Canadian population,

the Aboriginal population is  
relatively young and increasing  
more rapidly.

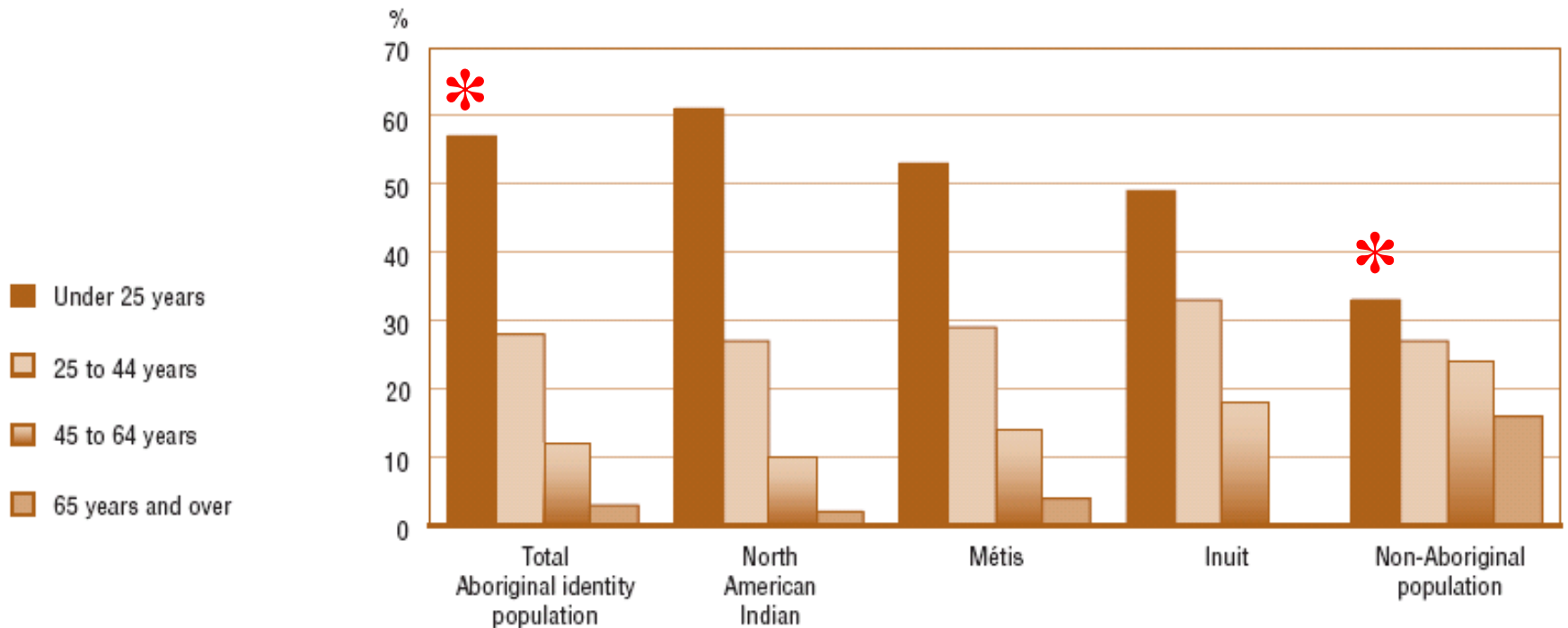


## Population reporting Aboriginal identity, by age group, 2001



**In SASK, about 60% of Aboriginals **off-reserve** were under 25 yrs old, compared to about 30% for the non-Aboriginal population.**

Chart 1: Age distribution, Aboriginal identity groups, Saskatchewan, Off-reserve, 2001 Census



# Aboriginals lag behind the non-Aboriginal population at all levels of education in SK


*(Ages 15 and over)*

	% of Aboriginals	% of Non- Aboriginals
Less than H. Sc.	<b>53%</b>	<b>38%</b>
H. Sc. Grad only	<b>8%</b>	<b>11%</b>
Trades cert/diploma	<b>11%</b>	<b>13%</b>
Bachelor's degree	<b>4%</b>	<b>9%</b>
Masters	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>1.5%</b>
Doctorate (earned)	<b>0.04%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>



If all things were equal,

4000 more Aboriginal people  
would have had a Bachelor's  
degree in Saskatchewan in 2001.

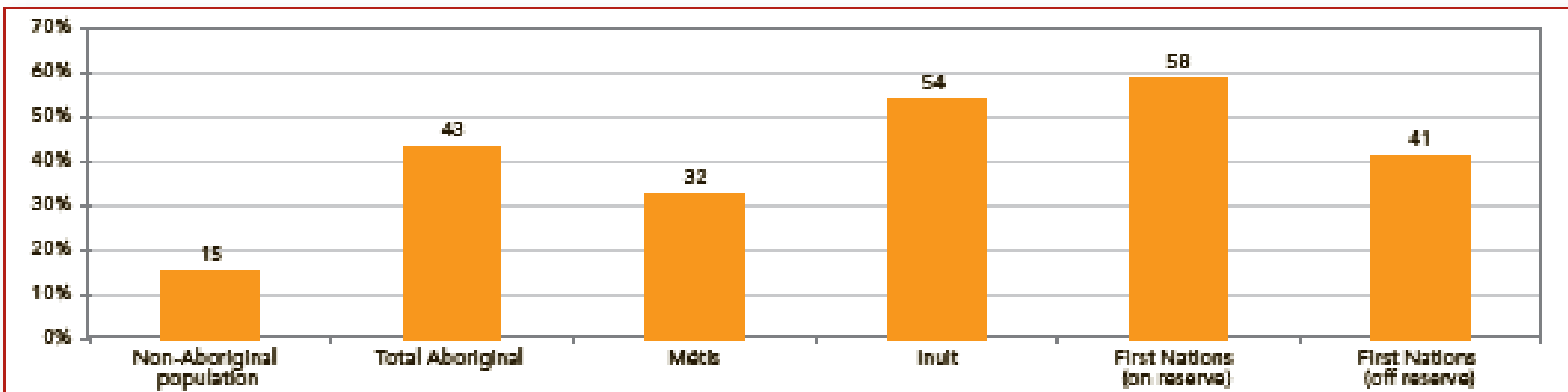


Aboriginals living on reserve in Sask had lower educational attainments than those living off reserve.

<i>(Ages 15 and over)</i>	% of <b><u>on</u></b> reserve Aboriginals	% of <b><u>off</u></b> reserve Abors
Less than H. Sc.	<b>62%</b>	<b>48%</b>
H. Sc. Grad <small>only</small>	<b>7%</b>	<b>9%</b>
Trades <small>cert/diploma</small>	<b>11%</b>	<b>11%</b>
Bachelor's <small>degree</small>	<b>2%</b>	<b>5%</b>
Masters	<b>0.09%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>
Doctorate <small>(earned)</small>	<b>0.04%</b>	<b>0.03%</b>

# On reserve First Nations aged 20-24 had the highest rate of incompleteness of high school in Canada

Proportion of population aged 20 to 24 with incomplete high-school learning, 2001




From: CCL Report, Jan 2007.


# Women had higher levels of education than men (except for the Trades) in Saskatchewan in 2001


<i>(Ages 15 and over)</i>	% of female Aboriginals	% of male Aboriginals	% of Female Non-Abor's	% of male Non-Abor's
< H. Sc	<b>47%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>40%</b>
H. Sc. only	9%	8%	11%	11%
Trades	9%	14%	10%	16%
Bachelor's	<b>5%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>9%</b>
Masters	0.4%	0.3%	1%	2%
PhD	0.05%	0.04%	0.2%	0.7%






The levels of educational attainment were less for  
Aboriginals than non-Aboriginals,  
and  
in both populations,  
men had less education than  
women.





If the sexes were equal,  
937 more Aboriginal men in SK  
in 2001 would have had a  
bachelor's degree.



# % of the Sask population, aged **25-44**, and levels of education


	% of Aboriginal youth	% of Non-Aboriginal youth
Less than H. Sc.	<b>38%</b>	<b>21%</b>
H. Sc. Grad only	<b>9%</b>	<b>13%</b>
Trades cert/diploma	<b>15%</b>	<b>17%</b>
Bachelor's degree	<b>6%</b>	<b>14%</b>

In the age group, **25-44**, women had more education than men except for the Trades in SK, 2001

**Aboriginal**

**non-Aboriginal**

	Female	male	Female	male
Less than H. Sc.	<b>34%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>25%</b>
H. Sc. Grad <small>only</small>	9%	9%	12%	13%
Trades <small>cert/diploma</small>	12%	18%	14%	20%
Bachelor's <small>degree</small>	<b>8%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>12%</b>




**“Failing to get through high school makes a lifetime of poverty increasingly probable.”**


**“...the Prairies and the North continue to lag behind the rest of the country” with respect to Aboriginals and educational attainment.**

*From the Mendelson Report*



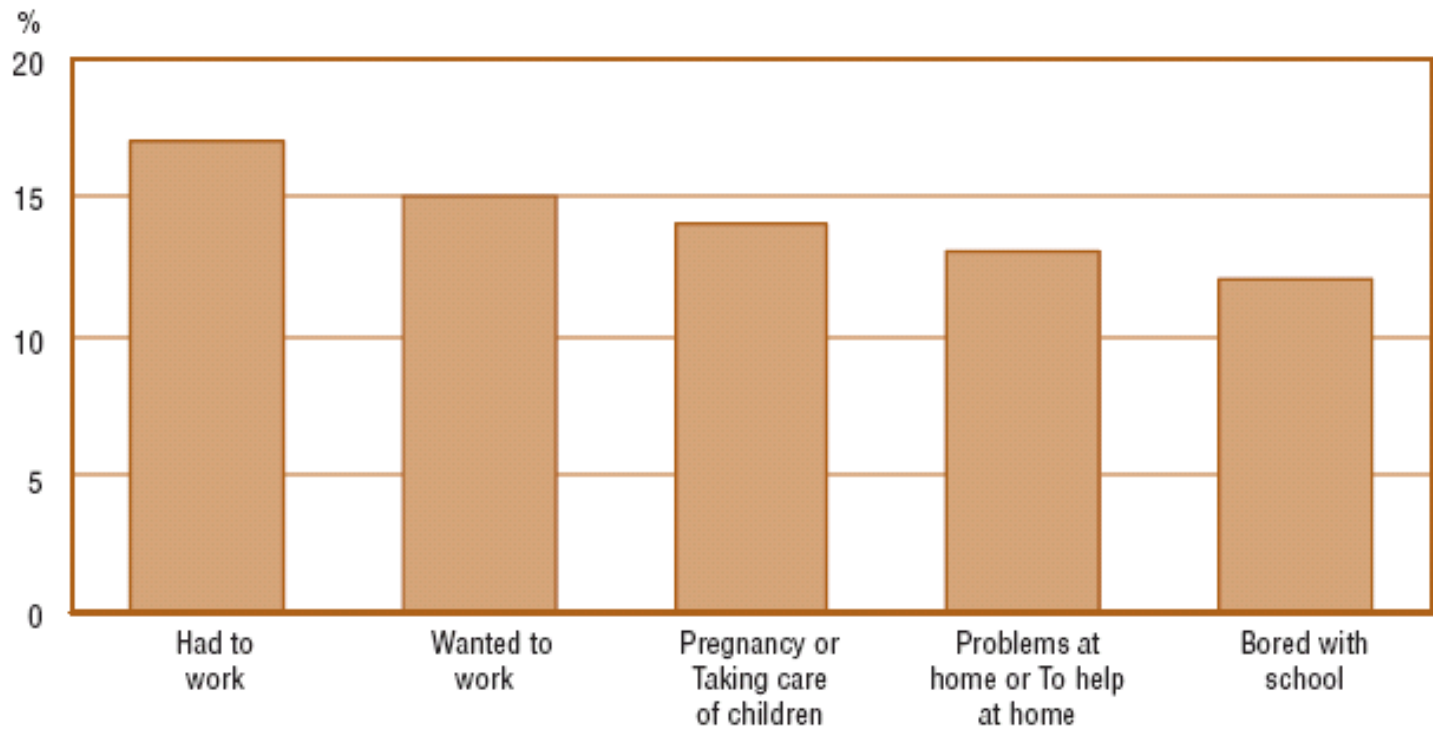


Men and women had different reasons for not completing high school. For young Aboriginal men aged 15 to 34, the most commonly reported reason was 'wanted to work' (22%). 'Pregnancy/taking care of children' (39%) topped the reasons provided by young Aboriginal women in the same age group.



# Reasons for dropping out of high school

Chart 3: Reasons for not finishing high school, Aboriginal adults 15 years and over, Saskatchewan, Off-reserve, 2001 APS<sup>1</sup>




1. Respondents could give more than one answer.

Note: these data are for off-reserve Aboriginals.






**Canadian Council on Learning Report:  
“State of Learning in Canada –No Time  
for Complacency”** January 26, 2007

“Literacy really matters in every country for social, cultural, political and economic reasons. Countries that ignore the imperatives of developing literacy skills to the highest possible levels do so at their peril.”







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- Literacy proficiency is the daily ability to understand and to use printed information at home, at work and in the community.
  - Level 3 - of 5 levels - is considered to be the minimum requirement for a given individual to function adequately in our current modern, knowledge-based economy.
  - A given population should have at least an average literacy score of level 3 in the domains assessed: prose, numeracy, document and problem solving.
  - If the average score is less than level 3, the skill level of the population is not sufficient for satisfactory job performance and everyday functioning.
- 



# Wake-up Call







# % of the population with less than level 3 literacy proficiency

<i>(ages 16-65)</i>	Prose literacy	Numeracy literacy
Canada	<b>48%</b> (about 9 million people)	<b>55%</b>
SK	<b>33%</b> (about 200,000 people)	<b>42%</b> (about 250,000 people)


**(only about 7,000 adults in SK are being helped by literacy programs)**






% of young adults (aged 16-25)  
with less than level 3 literacy  
proficiencies


Canada	45%
<b>SK</b>	<b>39-40%</b> <b>(about 56,000 young adults)</b>
Nunavut	80%
All other provs	38-45%





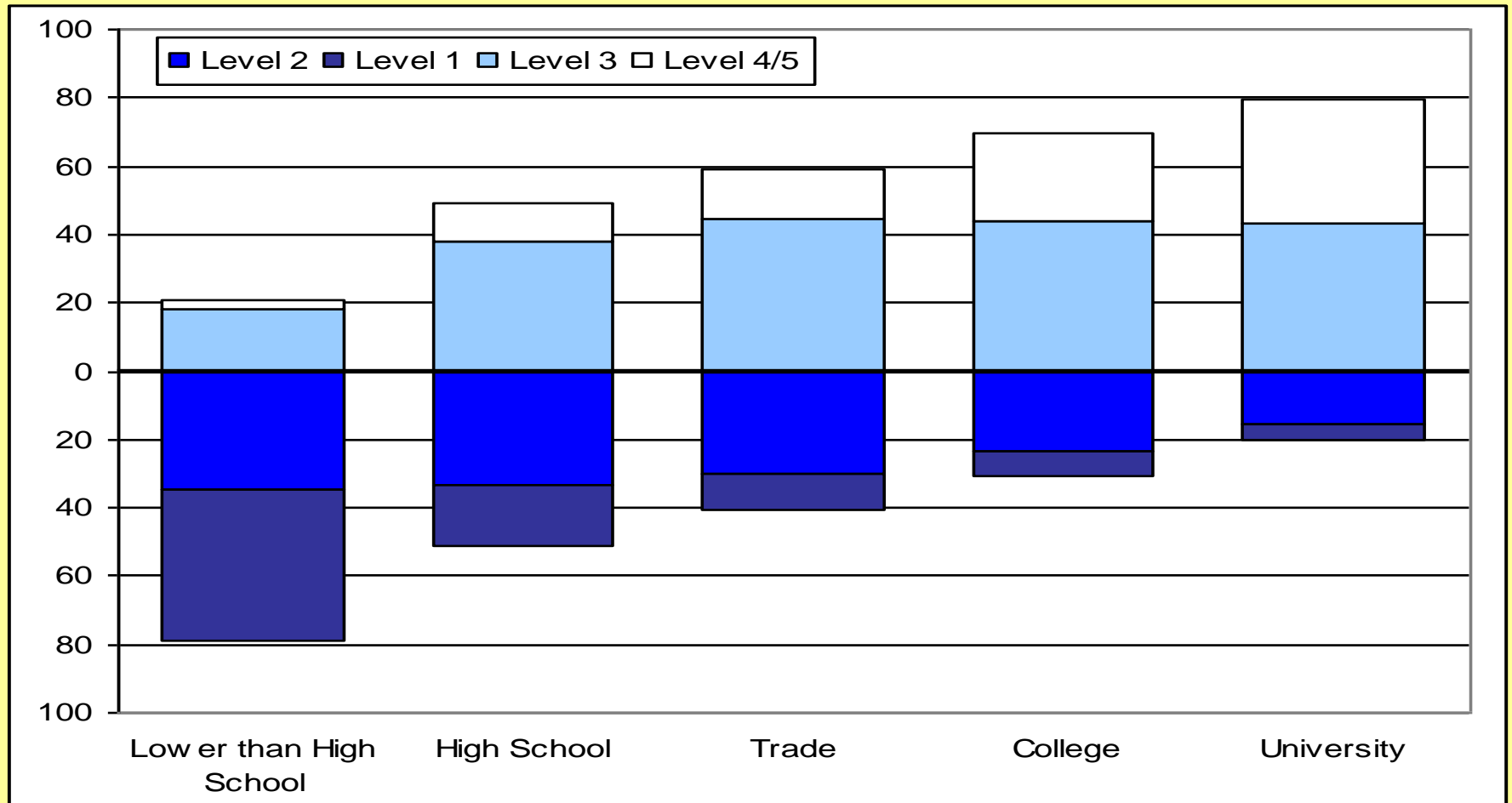
Proportionally more urban Aboriginals than non-Aboriginals in SASK have less than level 3 prose proficiency


<i>(ages 16-65)</i>	%
Aboriginal	<b>67%</b> (about 22,000 Aboriginals)
Non-Aboriginal	<b>40%</b> (about 180,000 non-Aboriginals)




# Higher levels of literacy proficiency are associated with higher levels of education

Prose literacy levels by educational attainment, ages 26-65 years, Canada, 2003

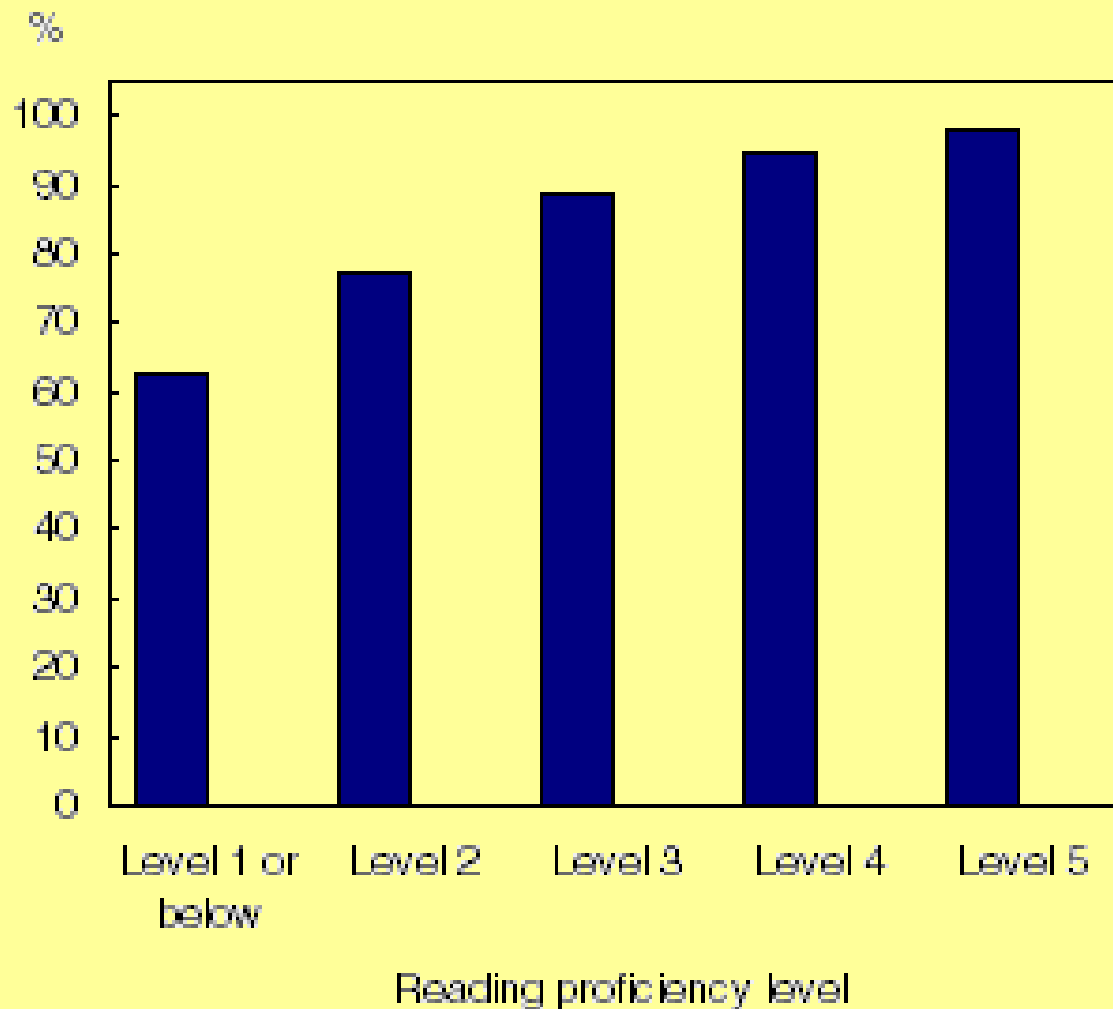





# Literacy proficiency affects educational success

- Young people who had dropped out of high school by age 19 had lower reading scores at age 15.
  - The proportion of youth who finished high school by age 19 rose with reading proficiency.
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The proportion of students who completed high school increased with their reading proficiency at the age of 15









My Literacy Skill Development  
Regal Café, Killam, AB



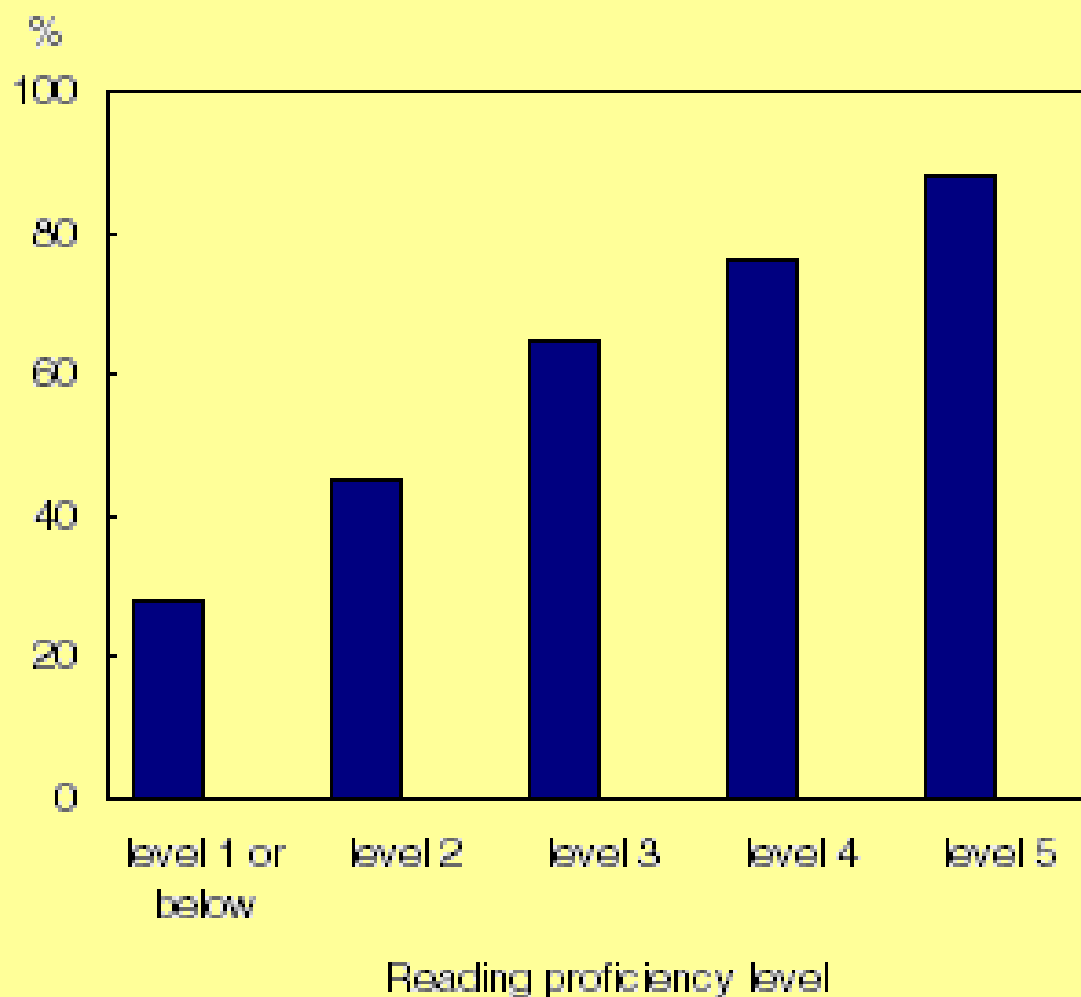



# **Reading proficiency is related to pursuit of postsecondary education**

- Proficiency in reading at age 15 was related to the pursuit of postsecondary education by age 19.
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The proportion of young people who participated in postsecondary education increased with their reading proficiency at the age of 15






Why are the literacy proficiencies and educational attainments of Aboriginals less than the rest of our population?

What can be done to close the gaps?






# Uneven educational opportunities

- Urban vs Rural or remote schools
  - On reserve vs off reserve schooling
  - Parenting-childcare issues
  - Funding issues
  - “Churn” – mobility of Aboriginal families.
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# Gender and status issues

- Bill C-31 - loss of registered Indian status – loss of educational funding
  - High rate of male Aboriginals dropping out of high school.
  - Teen Pregnancy and single mothers attending school and PS institutions.
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# Socioeconomic issues

- Poverty
  - FAE, FAS, learning abilities
  - Family instability
  - Child care, fostercare
  - Single mothers
  - Loss of identity, language, culture
  - Racism, discrimination
  - Difficulty accessing services (funding, awareness of what is available, etc)
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# What can be done to close the gaps

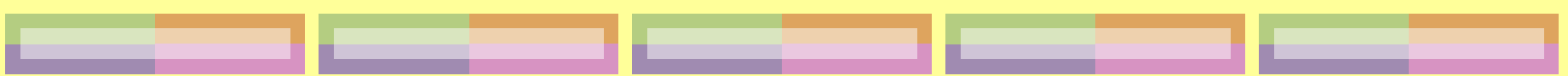
- Restore or increase funding to programs that allow adults to increase their literacy skills or increase their educational level.
  - Increase the percentage of Aboriginals who complete high school.
  - and who obtain postsecondary education.
  - Increase funding to individuals to allow them to attend PS institutions.
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# Conclusions

- **The Aboriginal population is complex and this must be kept in mind when program development occurs.**
  - **The respective Aboriginal communities should be directly involved in development of educational programming for their community.**
  - **For eg., First Nations control of First Nations education is considered to be essential for success.**
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**“Adequate and sustainable investment in education is the key to to the successful development of vibrant FN governments and economies.”**

**Education is a way out of poverty.**

Quotation from the Assembly of First Nations Briefing package, Apr 2006.





# Wake-up call

**the Brown Baby Boom:**


**By 2017, 21% of the population in SASK will be Aboriginal.**

**By 2045, 50% of the SASK population will be Aboriginal.**





# Key Messages

- Aboriginals lag behind mainstreamers at all levels of education.
  - Aboriginal men lag behind Aboriginal women in education.
  - The Brown Baby Boom calls for action.
  - Action requires sustained support (\$\$\$\$ over multiple years).
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...tainer:  
**Scott Ward**  
**Aboriginal Hypnotist**




**“When I snap my fingers,**



**“You will awake refreshed and alert, and when you hear the words ‘Saskatchewan Aboriginal Literacy Network’, you will open the cash register and give them lots of money to support their great work and important programs!”**





# Major references


- Urban Aboriginal Youth: An action plan for change, Standing Senate committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 2003.
  - Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2001 – Provincial and Territorial Reports: Off reserve Aboriginal Population, Statistics Canada.
  - Aboriginal peoples in Canada's urban area – Narrowing the education gap, Education Matters 2005, Statistics Canada.
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- Provincial Drop-out rates – Trends and consequences, Stats Canada.
  - Aboriginal Peoples living off reserve in Western Canada, Stats Canada.
  - Aboriginal Peoples and postsecondary education in Canada, Mendelson M, Caledon Institute of Social Policy Research, 2006.
  - Assembly of First Nations Briefing Package, April 2006.
  - The Daily, June 7, 2006, Study: Relationship between reading literacy and education outcomes. Stats Canada.
  - State of Learning in Canada: No Time for Complacency, Canadian Council on Learning, January 26, 2007.
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# **Educational Gaps identified for First Nations people**

- It will take 26 yrs for First Nations to catch up to non-Aboriginals.**
  - 70% of First Nations students on reserve will not complete high school.**
  - 10,000 FN students are waiting for funding.**
  - 27% of FN students (age 15-44) compared to 46% of Canadian students hold a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree.**
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## Aboriginal youth: Tough times in the job market

Aboriginal youth, a growing group, struggled to obtain employment in western Canada.

**The unemployment rate for off reserve Aboriginal youth was double that of non-Aboriginal youth, 15-24 yrs of age**

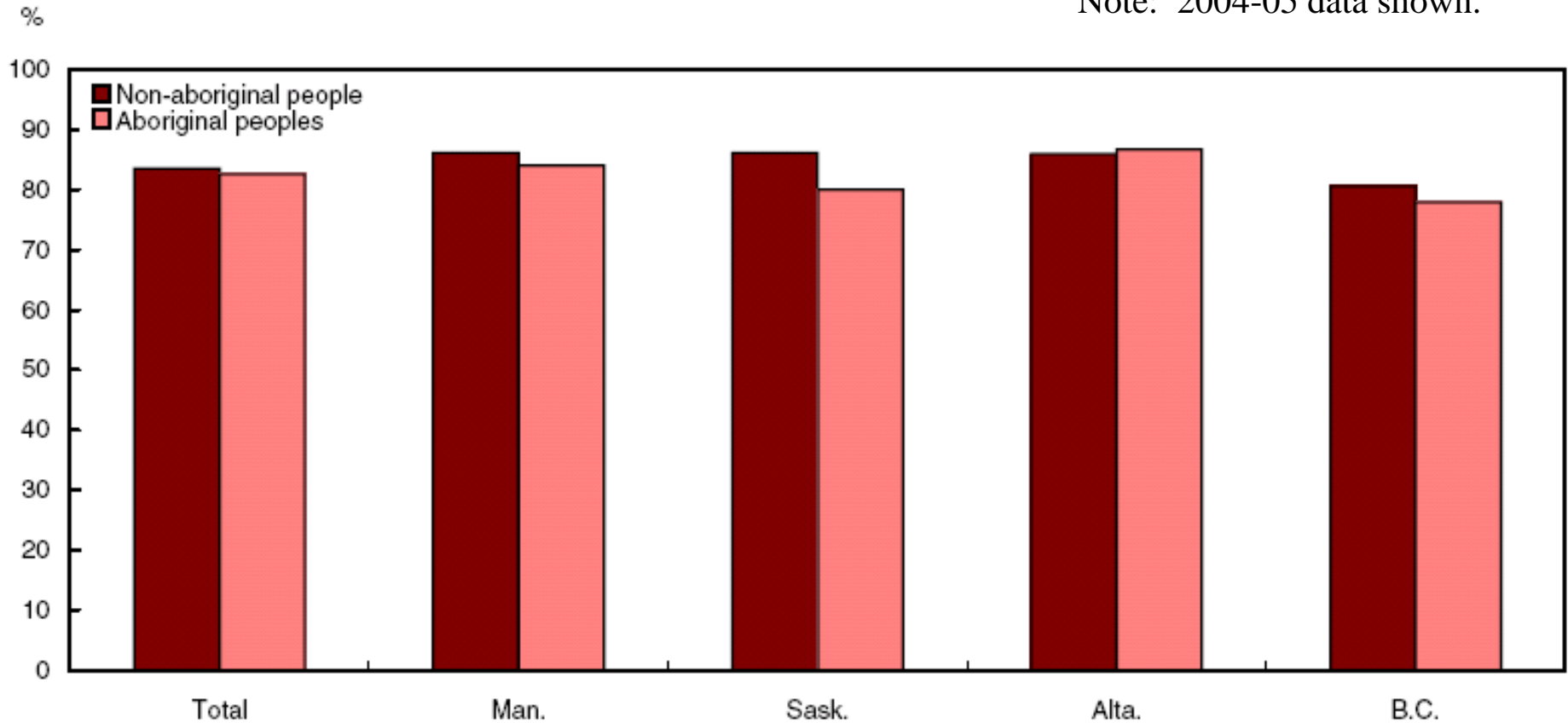


## Education: Levelling the playing field

**Completing PSE equalizes the employment of off reserve  
Aboriginals to that of non-Aboriginals.**

Off-reserve employment rates, postsecondary completers, non-students aged 25-64, April 2004 to March 2005


Note: 2004-05 data shown.






# % of Canadian youth aged 20-24 with various levels of education

	% of Aboriginal youth	% of Non- Aboriginal youth
Less than H. Sc.	<b>43%</b>	<b>16%</b>
H. Sc. Grad only	<b>16%</b>	<b>15%</b>
Post-Secondary Non-Univ	<b>17%</b>	<b>28%</b>
Bachelor's degree	<b>2%</b>	<b>11%</b>





# Math and science literacy

- **Data unknown ????**
  - **low % in PS science related programs, especially compared to social work, education and health programs.**
  - **Programs are being developed across Canada to increase interest and provide hands-on SET experience.**
  - **Math and science skills are needed for the trades and technical training, as well as for professional programs, such as engineering.**
- 