

# Research for Real Life

## Fact Sheet: Aboriginal Research

Over the past decade, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) has pursued a proactive and engaged commitment to Aboriginal research. Recognizing the complexity of the 21st-century experience—including the need for a future in which Aboriginal communities are empowered, culturally vibrant, healthy, safe and prosperous—our approach stresses the importance of Aboriginal knowledge systems to increase our understanding of human thought and behaviour in the past, present and future.

As part of this enduring commitment, SSHRC recently adopted an Aboriginal Research Integrated Strategy; aimed at renewing and strengthening support of Aboriginal research and talent development, the strategy emphasizes research by and with Aboriginal Peoples, focusing on the effective integration of these areas across our funding opportunities. Complementary to this strategy is the Imagining Canada's Future initiative, which promotes, as one of six challenge areas, research exploring how the experiences and aspirations of Aboriginal Peoples are essential to building a successful shared future.

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# \$120M

SSHRC investments in Aboriginal research\*

# 1,200

research projects

# 1,028

researchers

# 700

graduate students

\* These numbers represent multi-year awards across all SSHRC funding programs from 2007 to 2012.

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) builds new knowledge on the issues that matter most to Canadians.

SSHRC funds research by the very best of Canada's 84,834 researchers and graduate students in the social sciences and humanities.

SSHRC also helps share the results of this research with businesses, governments and communities across the country to maximize the benefits of new knowledge for all Canadians.

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For more information  
[www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca](http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca)



# Aboriginal Research

## Not-so-common law

John Borrows, one of Canada's leading legal scholars, is changing the face of Canadian common law. An Anishinabe and a member of Ontario's Chippewas of Nawash First Nation, for more than a decade Borrows has worked to harmonize Aboriginal laws with the broader Canadian legal system. His research shows that Aboriginal legal principles can be used to successfully address some of today's most pressing challenges, such as environmental protection. He has also helped establish a one-of-a-kind law degree at the University of Victoria that combines both common law and Aboriginal legal traditions.

## Improving literacy

Thompson Rivers University researcher Patrick Walton is helping both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children learn to read. With SSHRC funding, Walton discovered that "jingle"-style singing helped kindergarten-age children learn and remember written words with astonishing accuracy. Walton then created a series of rhyming jingles and used them to increase kindergartners' literacy skills, finding that after just twelve 20-minute sessions, three quarters of the children were reading. Walton is now using traditional drumming to improve reading skills among Aboriginal children.

## Preserving culture through language

A project led by linguistics professor Carrie Dyck at Memorial University of Newfoundland is helping local First Nations preserve their cultural heritage. Spoken by fewer than 100 people, the Cayuga language, and the thousands of years of knowledge contained within it, is in danger of being lost. Dyck is working with Mohawk scholar Amos Key Jr., and with local Cayuga speakers, to transcribe and translate Cayuga conversations and ceremonial speeches. The transcriptions are now being used by community members to teach and preserve Cayuga for generations to come.

## SSHRC at a Glance \*

**\$337M**

in grants, fellowships  
and scholarships

**12,563**

applications received

**8,674**

research projects

**30**

disciplines

\* 2012-13