

Status Indians (on-reserve) 45%, Status Indians (off-reserve) 24%, Inuit 53%, Metis 35%, Canada 17%. Aboriginal literacy issues also have some distinctive aspects such as aboriginal language retention and literacy in aboriginal languages.

The potential for aboriginal people to improve their economic prospects through literacy in one or both of the official languages is great and the potential to strengthen their cultures through aboriginal language and literacy programs equally so. Many aboriginal communities have launched successful literacy initiatives, inspired and designed by aboriginal people themselves. A review of aboriginal literacy issues with a focus on successful programs and the connection to aboriginal language issues, could assist in the task of acquiring a national perspective on the status of literacy in the aboriginal population.

CONCLUSION

The list of issues in this Report represents an urgent agenda of unfinished business between Canada and the aboriginal people of this country. If a significant and positive impact were made on this agenda, the 1990's could in fact become "the decade of aboriginal peoples".

This decade is an especially appropriate time for Canada to address the unacceptable socio-economic status of aboriginal people and the many outstanding issues respecting their political and legal rights. Canada has an obligation to achieve some substantial progress on aboriginal affairs matters as part of the global struggle to ensure a universal respect for human rights and self-determination.

Further, the Committee has been made aware that aboriginal people in Canada are looking at preparations in the non-indigenous community to "celebrate" or commemorate in 1992 the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Columbus in the Americas, with some apprehension.

Clearly from an aboriginal perspective, there is little to celebrate. The calendar date of 1492 is significant to aboriginal people for completely different reasons than it is for non-aboriginal people. While some Canadians may recall that the so-called New World provided an opportunity to develop and foster democratic