

# ***Canadian Aboriginal Demographics: Social Development, Economic Development, Employment by Sector***

## ***Demographics***

**Nationally:** 4.4% of all Canadians have Aboriginal ancestry (Department of Indian and Northern Development (DIAND) projections, 1997).

**Cultural diversity:** There are 608 First Nations, comprising 52 nations or cultural groups (Haida, Cree, Mohawk, etc.) and more than 50 languages.

**Population structure:** The Registered (i.e., Status) Indian population is young, with a median age of 25, compared to a median of 35 years for all Canadians. About 53% of Registered Indians living on reserves are under 25 years old. (DIAND projections, 1997)

All age segments are growing: between 1997 and 2005, the Registered Indian population of working age (15-64 years of age) is expected to grow from 64% to 65% and the senior population (65 years and older) will grow from 4.2% to 4.8% (DIAND projections, 1997).

The gender distribution (49:51 male- female) for Aboriginal people is approximately the same as for a Canadians.

Population projections from 1997 to 2005 suggest that the Aboriginal population will grow by 1.7% yearly, a rate slightly higher than the Canadian rate of 1.1%. On reserves, the population is expected to grow by 2.3% over the same period. (DIAND projections, rapid growth)

**Population distribution:** The provinces with the largest proportion of Aboriginal people are Manitoba and Saskatchewan, where Aboriginal people represent 14% of the population, In the territories, Aboriginal people represent 67% of the NWT and 29% of the population in the Yukon.

**Community size:** Many First Nations communities (43%) have fewer than 500 residents; only a small percentage (11%) have more than 2,000 residents. However, 38% of the population is concentrated in the larger communities, whereas only 12% of the population lives in smaller communities.

### **Population location (1991):**

#### **Status Indians Living Outside Reserves**

- In 1985, 29% of Status Indians lived outside reserves.
- By 1991, 40% of Status Indians lived outside reserves. This major change was due to the reinstatement of Status Indians under Bill C-31. (Indian Register actuals)

Most Aboriginal people live outside reserves; however, less than half of the Registered Indian Population (41%) live outside reserves. (1991 census/ Aboriginal Peoples Study (APS), DIAND projections, 1997)

Population is increasingly urban: From 1981 to 1991, the urban Aboriginal population grew by 62%, compared to 11% for other urban Canadians. By 2016, the urban Aboriginal population is projected to be 457,000. Population growth in urban areas is fuelled by natural increases (birth rate) as well as net migration from rural areas. (1991 Census/APS, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) projections)

OFF-RESERVE POPULATION 1991:					
% Urban-Rural by Aboriginal Group (source RCAP)					
	All Aboriginal People	Registered Indians	Non-Registered Indians	Metis	Inuit
% Urban	69	81	69	65	22
% Rural	31	19	31	35	78

**Migration of Aboriginal People** [Clatworthy, 1995]

(i.e. moves within or between provinces, or to another country)

Between 1986 and 1991, 60% of Aboriginal people relocated, compared to 46% of other Canadians.

Migration rates were highest for Registered Indian youth (15-24 years of age): 72% changed locations between 1986 and 1991. (Source: 1991 Census)

The on-reserve population grew by 6.4% due to migration, whereas migration increased the urban (CMA) population by 3.6%. A CMA is an urban centre of more than 100,000 people).

Inter-provincial net migration rates from 1986-1991 were highest in Alberta and British Columbia (2,515 and 1,080 people moved to these provinces), and lowest in Saskatchewan and Manitoba (1,050 and 1,085 Aboriginal people moved away).

Migration flows between geographic zones show that most migration was towards reserves (9,540 returned). Aboriginal migration to urban centres from rural and suburban areas (non-CMA), are both considered as off-reserve. In other words, no net migration occurred directly from reserves into cities between 1986 and 1991.

## ***Social Development***

### **PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL INDICATORS**

#### **PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH**

**Life Expectancy:** The gap in life expectancy between First Nations and other Canadians is seven years. In 1990, the life expectancy of First Nations men was 66.9 years, and for women, 74 years (compared to 74.6 and 80.9 years for all Canadians). Life expectancy is lowest for Registered Indians living on reserves- 62 years for men and 69.6 years for women. (Source: RCAP)

**Suicide** rates of Registered Indian youth (ages 15 to 24) are eight times higher than the national rate for females and five times higher for males. (Source: Medical Services Branch (MSB), Health Canada)

**The birth rate** of Registered Indians is twice the Canadian average: 27 births per 1000 people in the population compared to 13 for Canada as a whole.

**Infant mortality rates** fell from 28 to 11 per 1000 live births between 1979 and 1993. The national rate fell from 11 to 6 in the same period.

**Disabilities:** Aboriginal people are more likely than other Canadians to have hearing, sight, and speech disabilities. Mobility impairment occurs at the same rate for both populations. (Source: Statistics Canada, 1994)

**Addictions and Solvent abuse:** 62% of First Nations people aged 15 and over perceive alcohol abuse as a problem in their community, while 48% state that drug abuse is an issue. (Source: APS, Statistics Canada, 1991)

Solvent abuse by youth is a particular concern: 22% of First Nations youth who report solvent abuse are chronic users and come from homes where there is financial hardship, neglect, family conflict or child abuse. (Source: Health Canada)

**AIDS/HIV** reporting is increasing for the Aboriginal population, whereas reporting in the mainstream is leveling off. The proportion AIDS cases in Canada reported by Aboriginal peoples has risen from 1.4% (1984-1990) to 2.4% (1990-92), to 4.4% (1993-95).

Other health indicators for First Nations people:

- 6.6 times greater incidence of tuberculosis
- 3 times as likely to be diabetic
- 2 times as likely to report a long-term disability  
(Source: MSB, Health Canada)

### **FAMILY AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS**

**Healthy connections:** 92% of First Nations people aged 15 and over reported that they had someone to call on for help; 54% of First Nations people aged 15 and over reported being involved in some form of physical activity and social sport; 51% of First Nations people aged 15 and over

reported that they participate in traditional Aboriginal activities. (Source: APS, Statistics Canada, 1991)

**Children in care:** 4% of First Nations children were in the custody of Child and Family Service (CFS) agencies in 1996/97. (Source: Basic Departmental Data 1997 (BDD97), DIAND, unpublished)

**Social problems:** 39% of Aboriginal adults reported that family violence is a problem in their community; 25% reported sexual abuse and 15% reported rape as problems. More Inuit report these to be problems in their community (44%, 35% and 25% respectively). (Source: APS, Statistics Canada, 1991)

**Incarceration rates** of Aboriginal people are 5-6 times higher than the national average (Source: Solicitor General, 1995) The highest rates of Aboriginal sentenced admissions are in the NWT (80%), the prairies (50%) and BC (20%). (Source: Solicitor General) In some age categories, for example, youth aged 12-18 in Alberta, Aboriginal offenders are projected to account for 40% of the admissions. (Source: RCAP)

**Urban crime rates** for Aboriginal people are 4 times higher than the non-Aboriginal rate in Calgary and 12 times the non-Aboriginal rates in Regina and Saskatoon.

## **EDUCATION, INCOME & WELLBEING**

**Education** of Aboriginal people lags behind other Canadians, although it has improved. In 1991, 18% of Aboriginal people (15 years or older) had less than Grade 9, compared to 37% in 1981. In 1996-97, there were 112,060 students enrolled in kindergarten, elementary and secondary schools. The percentage of students remaining in school to Grade 12 increased to 71% in 1996-97 from just 31% in 1981-82. (Source: 1991 Census and BDD97)

In 1996-97, there were an estimated 27,487 students enrolled in post-secondary education, up from 5,467 in 1981. In 1995-96, there were 3,929 graduates.

**Poverty:** Most Aboriginal people are at or below the poverty line. In major western cities, four times as many Aboriginal people as other citizens are below the poverty line.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Housing:** The total number of housing units on reserves has increased from 60,509 in 1989-90 to 80,443 in 1996-97. Over the same period, the number of adequate units has gone up from 24,659 (40.8%) to 41,885 (52.1%). Fifteen years ago, one-third of houses on reserves were overcrowded compared to about 20% today. (Source: BDD97 & 1991 Census)

**Water and sewer:** In 1977-78, only 53% of houses had adequate water supplies and 47% had adequate sewage disposal, In 1996-97, this increased to 98% and 92% respectively. (Source: BDD97)

## ***Economic Development***

### **ABORIGINAL LABOUR FORCE**

The Aboriginal labour force is young and is growing at twice the Canadian rate. In 1991, 43% of the Aboriginal population was of working age. This is expected to grow to 62% for the on- reserve population by 2015.

The lag in labour force participation is greatest for on-reserve Indians. The rates were 47% for Status Indians living on reserves, 57% for off-reserve Indians, 57% for Inuit and 59% for Metis, compared to the national rate of 68%. (1991 Census)

The Aboriginal labour force constitutes about 3% of the Canadian labour force. It is concentrated a in government services, (15.2%), wholesale and retail trade (14.6%, manufacturing (10.3%) and accommodation/food and beverage (9.4%). As a whole, Aboriginal people are well-represented in construction and the natural resource industries but under-represented in manufacturing and financial/ insurance services.

### **ECONOMIC BARRIERS**

The transition to economic self-reliance is difficult. Many Aboriginal communities face formidable challenges- access to equity and debt capital, business and market development, workforce training and experience, lands and resources, and innovation in the workplace.

#### **Equity and Debt Capital**

As Aboriginal communities grow, so does the need for development capital- The National Aboriginal Financing Task Force has made 21 recommendations to improve access to capital for Aboriginal community and business development They include regulatory, policy and operational changes by government, the financial services sector and Aboriginal people.

#### **Business/Market Development**

Most Aboriginal businesses serve only the local Aboriginal community. To create jobs and increase incomes, Aboriginal businesses need assistance to expand into regional, national and international markets. This will require the partnership of the federal government, private sector, the provinces and the voluntary sector.

#### **Workforce Training/Experience**

By upgrading their skills and work experience, Aboriginal people will be able to compete more successfully in the increasingly knowledge-based labour markets in Canada.

#### **Lands and Resources**

As the level of economic benefits that Aboriginal communities derive from resource-based developments increase, so too will their economic self-sufficiency. Supporting Aboriginal people's participation in land and resource management negotiations, and their ability to acquire equity positions in resource licensing and related business opportunities, will strengthen Aboriginal communities.

## **Innovation**

With support for the acceleration of the adaptation of new processes and new product development, Aboriginal businesses will be better able to compete in the marketplace- Improved access to the governments' innovation initiatives, and a business culture that encourages and rewards innovation in the workplace, will also help increase their ability to compete.

### **BUSINESSES OWNED AND OPERATED BY ABORIGINAL PEOPLE**

(Aboriginal post-Census survey, 1991)

About 20,000 businesses in Canada are owned and operated by Aboriginal people. This represents less than 1% of all Canadian businesses. Half are located on reserves.

Aboriginal businesses are concentrated in business and personal services (25%), retail/wholesale trade (18.8%), primary and natural resources (16.9%) and construction (15.9%).

About 75% of businesses owned by Aboriginal people have one employee or less. The vast majority of Aboriginal, privately owned businesses serve local markets only.

Community-owned enterprises are generally bigger and employ an average of ten employees. Large enterprises such as Cree Construction International Ltd. in Quebec and the forestry companies owned by the Meadow Lake Tribal Council in Saskatchewan, are significant players in their respective regional economies and employ hundreds of workers.

There is great growth potential identified for Aboriginal business in tourism, trade, business services and health service sectors. Export trade by Aboriginal firms is projected by 15% to 20% annually.

**Aboriginal People and All Canadians (1991)**

Sector	Aboriginal People (x)	%	Canadians (y)	%	% of Aboriginal representation in overall sector
Agriculture	10605	2.3	521335	3.7	2
Fishing and Trapping	5425	1.2	48165	0.3	11.2
Forestry and Logging	10100	2.2	106485	0.7	9.5
Mining	8490	1.8	192030	1.3	4.4
Manufacturing	47700	10.3	2084115	14.7	2.3
Construction	35630	7.7	933425	6.6	3.8
Transportation/Communication	31930	6.9	1060995	7.5	3
Trade (wholesale & retail)	67335	14.6	2445695	17.2	2.7
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	14150	3.1	810565	5.7	1.7
Business Services	18050	3.9	802405	5.6	2.2
Government Services	70160	15.2	1111385	7.8	6.3
Education Services	27515	5.9	972520	6.8	2.8
Health Services	38615	8.3	1277340	9	3
Accommodation/Food & Beverage	43440	9.4	909710	6.4	4.8
Other service industries	33310	7.2	944065	6.6	3.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>462,475</b>		<b>14,220,235</b>		<b>3.2</b>

(x) = 1991 Census: Profile of Canada's Aboriginal Population, table 1

(y) = 1991 Census: Industry and Class of Workers, The Nation, table 1