



From Time Immemorial: A Demographic Profile

THE TERM ABORIGINAL obscures the distinctiveness of the First Peoples of Canada — Inuit, Métis and First Nations. With linguistic differences, for example, there are more than 50 distinct groupings among First Nations alone. Among Inuit, there are several dialects within Inuktitut, and the Métis people speak a variety of First Nations languages such as Cree, Ojibwa or Chipewyan, as well as Michif, which evolved out of their mixed ancestry.

To provide a context for the discussion of relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, we look briefly at the population size, location and demographic characteristics of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

1. Historical Population Levels

Aboriginal people often say that they have been here since time immemorial and, indeed, evidence of their presence as Indigenous people is well documented. Estimates of the date of human habitation in North America range up to 40,000 years ago, and Olive Dickason reports that

By about 11,000 [years ago] humans were inhabiting the length and breadth of the Americas, with the greatest concentration of population being along the Pacific coast of the two continents. ...About 5,000-8,000 years ago, when climate, sea levels and land stabilized into configurations that approximate those of today, humans crossed a population and cultural threshold, if one is to judge by the increase in numbers and complexity of archaeological sites.¹

Considerable debate among experts continues with respect to the size of the indigenous population at the point of first sustained contact with Europeans. In the area that was to become Canada, an early scholarly estimate is 221,000 people, a figure derived by compiling published reports, notes of European explorers and other sources to estimate the size of the various nations.² This estimate has been criticized because it pertains not to initial contact but rather to initial *extensive* contact — a time when indigenous populations could already have been seriously affected by diseases spread through incidental contact with Europeans, or indeed through indirect contact via diseases spread through indigenous trading networks.

Using different methodologies, other experts derive estimates that exceed 2 million people.³ Indeed, Dickason points out that estimates of the size of pre-contact populations in the western hemisphere have been increasing steadily in recent years:

They have increased with better understanding of Native subsistence bases and with greater awareness of the effect of imported diseases in the sixteenth century; in some cases these spread far ahead of the actual presence of Europeans, decimating up to 93 per cent of Native populations.... Archaeological evidence is mounting to the point where it can now be argued with growing conviction, if not absolute proof, that the pre-Columbian Americas were inhabited in large part to the carrying capacities of the land for the ways of life that were being followed and the types of food preferred.⁴

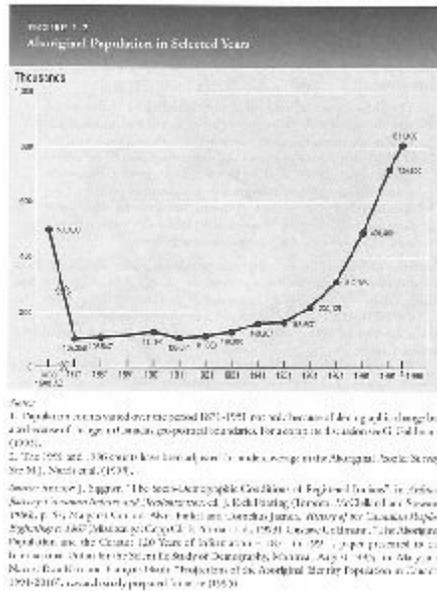
The figure of 500,000 for the indigenous population at the time of initial sustained contact with Europeans is perhaps the most widely accepted today,⁵ although many would regard it as a conservative estimate.

From Figure 2.1 we see that the territories of the various Aboriginal peoples at the time of contact covered the entire area of what was eventually to become Canada.

The diseases brought to North America by Europeans from the late 1400s onward, diseases to which the indigenous inhabitants had little resistance, had an enormous impact on Aboriginal population levels. During 200 to 300 years of contact, diseases such as smallpox, tuberculosis, influenza, scarlet fever and measles reduced the population drastically.⁶ Armed hostilities and starvation also claimed many lives.

The extent of the decline varied from one Aboriginal nation to another and also depended, of course, on the population size before contact. However, a census estimate of the size of the Aboriginal population in Canada in 1871 places the number at 102,000 (Figure 2.2). It would take more than 100 years — until the early 1980s — before the size of the Aboriginal population again reached the 500,000 mark.





During the period from the mid-1940s to the present there was a rapid growth in the Aboriginal population. For people registered as 'Indians' under the *Indian Act*, birth rates ran very high, compared to that of the total population of Canada, until the mid-1960s. At the same time, with improvements in health care delivery on reserves and gradual improvements in community infrastructure, the high rate of infant mortality began a rapid decline in the 1960s. Consequently, the rate of natural increase (the difference between the number of births and the number of deaths) was very high in this period. The birth rate began a rapid decline in the latter part of the 1960s, however, and this decline continued into the 1970s, although the rate never fell as low as the overall Canadian rate did in that period. While equivalent data are sparse for other Aboriginal groups, their age structures appear to match closely that of the registered Indian population, suggesting that they too experienced a demographic transition from high fertility rates to lower ones along with significant declines in mortality rates.

2. Current Population

According to the two most recently published data sources, the number of Aboriginal people in Canada in 1991 was between 626,000 and just over 1,000,000, depending on the definition and data source used. The 1991 census reported the latter figure, based on a question that determined *cultural origins* or *ancestry*, while the former figure resulted from a 1991 national survey of Aboriginal people known as the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS), also conducted by Statistics Canada. Unlike the census, this survey focused on those who *identified* with their Aboriginal ancestry.⁷

Both approaches to identifying the Aboriginal population have merit, but the Commission has relied primarily on the count of those who *identify* with their Aboriginal ancestry. It does so knowing that some portion of the 375,000 who do not do so now may well do so

in the future. However, there was some undercoverage in the APS, and Statistics Canada has adjusted the 626,000 figure (at the Commission's request) to compensate for it. Thus, the adjusted figure for the identity-based Aboriginal population is 720,000.⁸

As noted, a full survey of Aboriginal people was last conducted in 1991. To establish the population size for 1996 and later years, the Commission asked Statistics Canada to develop a population projection model. By 1996 the total Aboriginal population is projected to be just over 811,400 or 2.7 per cent of the total population of Canada (29,963,700).⁹ The population of the major Aboriginal groups projected for 1996 is shown in Table 2.1.

For statistical and other purposes, the federal government usually divides the Aboriginal population into four categories: North American Indians registered under the *Indian Act*, North American Indians not registered under the *Indian Act* (the non-status population), Métis people and Inuit. Basic population characteristics of each group are described below using the 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey as the source.

TABLE 2.1
Estimated Aboriginal Identity Population by Aboriginal Group, 1996

| Aboriginal Group | 1996 Population (projected) | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| | Number | Per Cent |
| North American Indian | 624,000 | 76.9 |
| Métis | 152,800 | 18.8 |
| Inuit | 42,500 | 5.2 |

Note: Population counts are rounded to the nearest hundred. Count of people identifying themselves as North American Indian includes registered and non-registered people.

2.1 North American Registered Indian Population

The North American Indian (identity-based) population was estimated at 550,700 in 1991, 438,000 of whom were registered Indians.¹⁰ While a majority of registered North American Indians (58.1 per cent) lived on reserves and in Indian settlements (254,600), a sizeable minority (41.9 per cent) lived in non-reserve areas (estimated at 183,400), most in urban locations (Figure 2.3).

In terms of their geographic distribution, 62 per cent of registered North American Indians lived in what the Commission has defined as southern Canada, while the other 38 per cent lived in the North (32 per cent are in the mid-north and 6 per cent in the far north). Within the mid-north zone, two-thirds of the population lived on reserves and in settlements.¹¹ In the south, the population was more likely to live in non-reserve areas than on reserves (Table 2.2).

TABLE 2.2
Aboriginal Identity Population Percentage Distribution by Zone of Residence and
Aboriginal Identity Group, 1991

| | North American Indian | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Zone of Residence | Registered | Non-Registered | Métis | Inuit | Total |
| Far North | 5.9 | 2.1 | 4.5 | 88.8 | 9.7 |
| Mid-North | 32.2 | 17.4 | 25.0 | 0.8 | 26.4 |
| On-reserve | 20.7 | 1.7 | 2.0 | 0.1 | 12.4 |
| Non-reserve | 11.6 | 15.7 | 22.9 | 0.8 | 14.0 |
| South | 61.8 | 80.5 | 70.5 | 10.3 | 63.9 |
| On-reserve | 24.5 | 1.5 | 0.6 | 0.1 | 14.2 |
| Non-reserve | 37.3 | 79.0 | 69.9 | 10.3 | 49.7 |

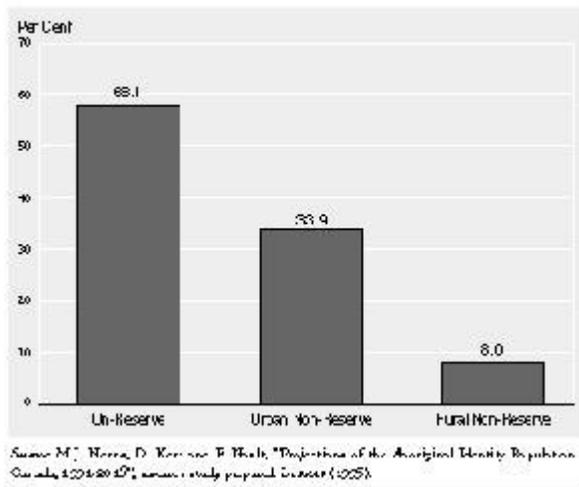
Notes:

1. Based on unadjusted 1991 APS data.

2. Total includes North American Indian population with unknown registration status and population reporting multiple responses to the Aboriginal identity question in the 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey.

Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, custom tabulations (1991).

FIGURE 2.3
Adjusted Registered North American Indian Identity Population
by Residence, 1991



Perhaps the most important issue raised during the Commission's hearings was maintenance of cultural identity. In Table 2.3, estimates for the North America Indian population are presented by linguistic/cultural affiliation.¹² For example, the Cree make up the largest linguistic group (31 per cent of this population), followed by the Ojibwa (about 22 per cent).

TABLE 2.3
**Estimated Adjusted Registered North American Indian Identity Population
 Distribution by Linguistic/Cultural Grouping, 1991**

| | Adjusted Identity | | | Adjusted Identity | |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| | number | percentage | | number | percentage |
| Abenaki | 1,385 | 0.3 | Iroquois Confederacy | (35,910) | (7.3) |
| Algonquins | 6,635 | 1.5 | -Mohawks | 25,175 | 5.7 |
| Attikameks | 3,320 | 0.8 | -Cayugas | 3,770 | 0.9 |
| Beavers | 1,390 | 0.3 | -Onéidas | 4,395 | 1.0 |
| Bella-Coolas | 890 | 0.2 | -Onondagas | 780 | 0.2 |
| Blackfoot | 11,845 | 2.7 | -Sénécas | 530 | 0.1 |
| Carriers | 6,260 | 1.4 | -Tuscaroras | 1,260 | 0.3 |
| Tsilhqot'n | 2,060 | 0.5 | Kaskas | 1,050 | 0.2 |
| Coast Tsimshian | 4,990 | 1.1 | Kutenais | 580 | 0.,1 |
| Comox | 1,210 | 0.3 | Kwakwa ka'wakw | 4,440 | 1.,0 |
| Cree | 137,680 | 3.,4 | Lillooets | 3,790 | 0.9 |
| Dakotas | 10,570 | 2.4 | Malecites | 3 ,490 | 0.8 |
| Delawares | 1,400 | 0.3 | Micmacs | 16,965 | 3.9 |
| Dene Nation | (20,100) | (4.6) | Montagnais/Naskapis | 10,530 | 2.4 |
| -Chipewyans | 9 230 | 2.1 | Nisg_a'as | 3,705 | 0.8 |
| -Dogribs | 2,545 | 0.6 | Nootkas | 5,090 | 1.2 |
| -Gwich'ins | 1,970 | 0.4 | Ojibwas | 94,350 | 21.5 |
| -Hares | 1,170 | 0.3 | Okanagans | 2,605 | 0.6 |
| -Slaveys | 5,185 | 1.2 | Potawatomis | 140 | 0.03 |
| Gitksan | 4,210 | 1.0 | Sarcee | 900 | 0.2 |
| Haida | 2,560 | 0.6 | Sechelt | 695 | 0.2 |
| Haisla | 1,090 | 0.2 | Sekani | 745 | 0.2 |
| Halkomelem | 9,725 | 2.2 | Shuswap | 5,500 | 1.3 |
| Han | ,445 | 0.1 | Squamish | 2,235 | 0.5 |
| Heiltsuk | 1,465 | 0.3 | Straits | 1,855 | 0.4 |
| Huron | 2,155 | 0.5 | Tahltan | 1,410 | 0.3 |
| | | | Thompson | 4,170 | 1.0 |
| | | | Tlingit | 1,425 | 0.3 |
| | | | Tutchone | 2,290 | 0.5 |
| | | | Wet'suwet'en | 1,705 | 0.4 |
| | | Total | | 438,000 | 99.6 |

Notes:

1. Information on the methodology and data sources used to prepare this table is found in note 24 at the end of this chapter.
2. Totals may not add because of rounding. All population counts have been rounded to 0 or 5.
3. Grand total does not include the Innu of Labrador, who were not registered under the *Indian Act*. The 1991 census reported 1,165 persons as Montagnais/Naskapi (or Innu) in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Source: See note 24 at the end of this chapter.

2.2 Non-Status Population

A significant share of the North American Indian population is not registered under the *Indian Act*. In 1991 this population was estimated to be about 112,600. Geographically, the non-registered Indian population is distributed quite differently from the registered Indian population. About 80 per cent live in southern Canada, 17 per cent live in the mid-north and two per cent live in the far north, with a large proportion living in non-reserve areas (Table 2.2).

The non-status Indian population will continue to grow not only through natural increase, but also because of the effects of Bill C-31, which amended the *Indian Act* in 1985. This change allowed a large number of persons who had lost their status under the act's old provisions to regain status, but it also has resulted and will continue to result in certain children not obtaining status under the amended *Indian Act*.¹³ Thus, by the year 2041, in the absence of action to address this situation, it has been predicted that the absolute size of the status Indian population will begin to decline, based on assumptions about future rates of marriage between people with status and those without it.¹⁴ In other words, within two generations, the ranks of the non-status population will swell at the expense of the status Indian population.

2.3 The Métis Population

The 1982 constitutional amendments included the Métis people as one of the three Aboriginal peoples of Canada. The government has not kept records of this population. Before 1981, the term 'halfbreed' which no doubt included many Métis, was used in a limited number of censuses.¹⁵ In 1901, the census reported 34,481 'halfbreeds', and in 1941 the number reached 35,416.¹⁶ It was not until 1981 that the term Métis was used in the census, at which time approximately 126,000 persons gave their origin as Métis (as a single category response or as part of a multiple response on the ethnic origin question).¹⁷

As of 1991, the population self-identifying as Métis was estimated at 139,000.¹⁸ Regionally, most Métis people are concentrated in the prairie provinces, with an estimated population of 101,000 (Table 2.4). About 24,000 live in Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces, and a total of 14,000 in British Columbia, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. The majority of Métis people reside in urban areas (65 per cent), while the remainder live in rural areas (32 per cent) and on reserves (about 3 per cent).

TABLE 2.3
**Estimated Adjusted Registered North American Indian Identity Population
 Distribution by Linguistic/Cultural Grouping, 1991**

| | Adjusted Identity | | | Adjusted Identity | |
|--|-------------------|------------|--|-------------------|------------|
| | number | percentage | | number | percentage |
| | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|----------|--------------|----------------------|----------------|-------------|
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| Algonquins | 6,635 | 1.5 | -Mohawks | 25,175 | 5.7 |
| Attikameks | 3,320 | 0.8 | -Cayugas | 3,770 | 0.9 |
| Beavers | 1,390 | 0.3 | -Onéidas | 4,395 | 1.0 |
| Bella-Coolas | 890 | 0.2 | -Onondagas | 780 | 0.2 |
| Blackfoot | 11,845 | 2.7 | -Sénécas | 530 | 0.1 |
| Carriers | 6,260 | 1.4 | -Tuscaroras | 1,260 | 0.3 |
| Tsilhqot'n | 2,060 | 0.5 | Kaskas | 1,050 | 0.2 |
| Coast Tsimshian | 4,990 | 1.1 | Kutenais | 580 | 0.1 |
| Comox | 1,210 | 0.3 | Kwakwa ka'wakw | 4,440 | 1.0 |
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| Dene Nation | (20,100) | (4.6) | Montagnais/Naskapis | 10,530 | 2.4 |
| -Chipewyans | 9,230 | 2.1 | Nisg_a'as | 3,705 | 0.8 |
| -Dogribs | 2,545 | 0.6 | Nootkas | 5,090 | 1.2 |
| -Gwich'ins | 1,970 | 0.4 | Ojibwas | 94,350 | 21.5 |
| -Hares | 1,170 | 0.3 | Okanagans | 2,605 | 0.6 |
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| Huron | 2,155 | 0.5 | Tahltan | 1,410 | 0.3 |
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Notes:

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3. Grand total does not include the Innu of Labrador, who were not registered under the *Indian Act*. The 1991 census reported 1,165 persons as Montagnais/Naskapi (or Innu) in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Source: See note 24 at the end of this chapter.

TABLE 2.4
Adjusted Aboriginal Identity Population by Region and Aboriginal Group, 1991

| Region | Registered | | Non-Registered | | Métis | | Inuit ³ | | Total | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-------|----------------|-------|---------|-------|--------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| | No. ¹ | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Atlantic ² | 15,800 | 3.6 | 4,800 | 4.3 | 2,500 | 1.8 | 4,800 | 12.7 | 27,700 | 3.8 |
| Quebec | 43,700 | 10.0 | 9,800 | 8.7 | 9,100 | 6.5 | 7,200 | 19.0 | 69,300 | 9.6 |
| Ontario | 91,500 | 20.9 | 39,600 | 35.2 | 12,800 | 9.2 | 900 | 2.2 | 143,100 | 19.9 |
| Manitoba | 65,100 | 14.9 | 8,500 | 7.5 | 34,100 | 24.5 | 500 | 1.3 | 107,100 | 14.9 |
| Saskat-chewan | 59,900 | 13.7 | 6,500 | 5.8 | 27,500 | 19.7 | 200 | 0.4 | 93,200 | 12.9 |
| Alberta | 60,400 | 13.8 | 18,400 | 16.3 | 39,600 | 28.4 | 1,400 | 3.7 | 118,200 | 16.4 |
| British Columbia | 87,900 | 20.1 | 23,800 | 21.1 | 9,400 | 6.7 | 500 | 1.4 | 120,700 | 16.7 |
| Yukon ⁴ | 4,400 | 1.0 | 500 | 0.4 | 200 | 0.1 | — | 0.2 | 500 | 0.7 |
| Northwest Territories ⁴ | 9,300 | 2.1 | 800 | 0.74 | 200 | 3.0 | 22,200 | 58.7 | 36,200 | 5.0 |
| Total | 438,000 | 100.0 | 112,600 | 100.0 | 139,400 | 100.0 | 37,800 | 100.0 | 720,600 | 100.0 |

Notes: — population count is less than 100.

1. All counts are rounded to the nearest hundred.
2. The Inuit count for the Atlantic region is actually for Labrador. The APS reported an unadjusted Inuit count of 55 in Nova Scotia and in New Brunswick. These counts were flagged to be used with caution because of sampling variability.
3. To obtain estimated counts for the Inuit population (3,560) in regions other than Labrador, Quebec and the Northwest Territories, the 1991 APS unadjusted counts were used to derive the shares of the adjusted Inuit population in each remaining region.
4. The adjusted count of non-registered North American Indian and Métis populations in the Yukon and Northwest Territories were derived using their respective percentage shares in each territory based on unadjusted 1991 APS data.

Source: M.J. Norris, D. Kerr and F. Nault, "Projections of the Aboriginal Identity Population in Canada, 1991-2016", research study prepared for RCAP (1995).

2.4 The Inuit Population

Unlike the Métis people, Inuit have been counted in censuses since early in this century. In 1921 the count was approximately 3,000,¹⁹ and by 1971 the population had reached just over 25,000.²⁰ By 1991 the Inuit population was estimated at nearly 38,000. The vast majority (89 per cent) live in the far north — Labrador, northern Quebec, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, and only 10 per cent live in southern Canada (Table 2.2). Most Inuit live in rural locations or small urban areas.

In 1991 an estimated 18,000 Inuit were living in what will be the new territory of Nunavut, in what is currently the eastern portion of the Northwest Territories (see Volume 4, Chapter 6).

3. Projected Population Growth

A population grows as a result of three factors: births, deaths and migration. It is well known that the Aboriginal population has been growing more rapidly than the Canadian population as a whole, mainly because of much higher fertility rates. Mortality is also higher than in the general population. However, a significant decline in the infant mortality rate in the 1960s, coupled with a fertility rate, particularly among registered

Indians,²¹ that did not decline rapidly until the late 1960s, produced rapid growth in the Aboriginal population during the 1960s and early '70s.

During the 1980s, both fertility and mortality rates continued their decline, and they are expected to maintain this decline throughout the 1991-2016 projection period. Net migration among Aboriginal people has been relatively minor and is not expected to affect the overall growth of the Aboriginal population.

As a result of the rapid decline in infant mortality rates during the 1960s, a period when fertility rates remained high, a large generation of Aboriginal children was born and survived. This boom continued for several years after the general post-war baby boom and for different reasons. Nevertheless, the demographic and societal effects of this large generation of Aboriginal children are being felt and will continue to be felt for many years to come.

Using the adjusted APS data, the Aboriginal identity population is expected to grow from an estimated 720,000 in 1991 and a projected 811,000 in 1996 to just over 1,000,000 in the year 2016 under a low- and medium-growth model, or possibly to 1,200,000 under a high-growth model.²² The Commission selected a medium-growth model as its preferred projection (Figure 2.4), since it is based on recent trends in fertility, mortality and net internal migration patterns.^{23 24}

Accordingly, the North American Indian population registered under the *Indian Act* is expected to increase from the 1991 figure of 438,000 to 665,600 by 2016; the non-status North American Indian population from 112,600 to 178,400; the Métis population from 139,400 to 199,400; and the number of Inuit from 37,800 to 60,300. Regionally, the share of Aboriginal people is not expected to shift dramatically from the distribution in 1991 (Table 2.5). The minor shifts are attributable mostly to differences in regional fertility rates, which tend to be higher in Manitoba and Saskatchewan and lower in the east and remaining western provinces. A significant increase is predicted in the Aboriginal share of the population in some provinces. In Saskatchewan, for example, the proportion of the provincial population that is Aboriginal in origin is expected to increase from 9.5 per cent in 1991 to 13.9 per cent in the year 2016 according to our projections (Table 2.5). The share of the Saskatchewan population made up of Aboriginal persons under 25 years of age is projected to be 20.5 per cent by the year 2016.

TABLE 2.5
Adjusted Aboriginal Identity Population as a Percentage of Total Population by Region 1991, 1996, 2006 and 2016

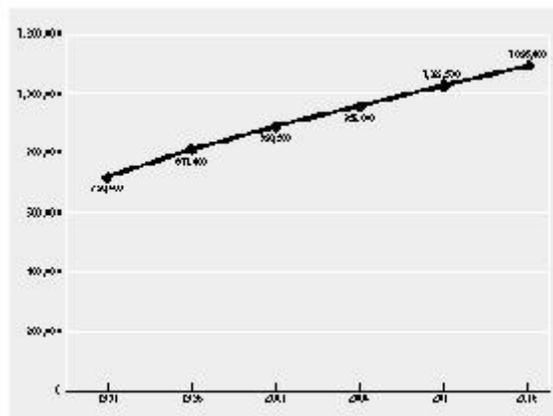
| Region | 1991 | | 1996 | | 2006 | | 2016 | |
|----------|---------|-----|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| Atlantic | 27,700 | 1.2 | 30,300 | 1.3 | 33,900 | 1.4 | 37,300 | 1.5 |
| Quebec | 69,300 | 1.0 | 76,400 | 1.0 | 87,300 | 1.1 | 97,300 | 1.1 |
| Ontario | 143,100 | 1.4 | 159,500 | 1.4 | 183,800 | 1.4 | 203,300 | 1.3 |
| Manitoba | 107,100 | 9.9 | 119,500 | 10.6 | 138,700 | 11.7 | 155,400 | 12.5 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|-----------|------|
| Saskatchewan | 93,200 | 9.5 | 105,300 | 10.5 | 124,800 | 12.4 | 142,400 | 13.9 |
| Alberta | 118,200 | 4.7 | 137,500 | 4.9 | 171,300 | 5.4 | 203,300 | 5.8 |
| British Columbia | 120,700 | 3.7 | 135,500 | 3.6 | 161,900 | 3.6 | 186,900 | 3.6 |
| Yukon | 5,100 | 18.4 | 6,300 | 18.2 | 7,800 | 20.0 | 8,900 | 21.7 |
| Northwest Territories | 36,200 | 63.0 | 41,200 | 62.0 | 49,700 | 62.4 | 58,700 | 62.4 |
| Total | 720,600 | 2.7 | 811,400 | 2.7 | 959,000 | 2.8 | 1,093,400 | 2.9 |

Note: All population counts are rounded to the nearest hundred.

Source: M.J. Norris, D. Kerr and F. Nault, "Projections of the Aboriginal Identity Population in Canada, 1991-2016", research study prepared for RCAP (1995).

FIGURE 2.4
Projected Aboriginal Identity Population, 1991-2016



Note: All numbers have been rounded to the nearest hundred.

Source: M.J. Norris, D. Kerr and F. Nault, "Projections of the Aboriginal Identity Population in Canada, 1991-2016", research study prepared for RCAP (1995).

Further detail about the Commission's projections of the Aboriginal population, including information about the changing age and sex composition and its implications for issues such as dependency rates, employment, housing, and income support, is found in Volumes 2 and 3 of the Commission's report.

It is clear that, despite declining fertility rates, Aboriginal people will be a continuing presence in Canadian society; indeed, their population share is projected to increase. Demographic projections thus reinforce the assertion of Aboriginal people that they will continue as distinct peoples whose presence requires a renewed relationship with the rest of Canadian society.

Notes:

- 1 Olive P. Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1992), pp. 25, 34, 28.
- 2 J. Mooney, "The Aboriginal Population of America North of Mexico", in *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections* 80/7 (1928), pp. 1-40.
- 3 R. Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History Since 1492* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), p. 32.
- 4 Dickason, *Canada's First Nations* (cited in note 1), pp. 26-27.
- 5 Dickason, *Canada's First Nations*, p. 63. See also Margaret Conrad, Alvin Finkel and Cornelius Jaenen, *History of the Canadian Peoples: Beginnings to 1867*, volume 1 (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1993), p. 12.
- 6 Recent writings place particular emphasis on disease as the major factor decimating indigenous populations. See, for example, Georges E. Sioui, *Pour une auto-histoire amérindienne* (Quebec City: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1989), also published as *For An Amerindian Autohistory* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992); and Ronald Wright, *Stolen Continents: The New World Through Indian Eyes Since 1492* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1992).
- 7 There is some evidence that the population *not identifying* with their Aboriginal roots demonstrate socio-economic characteristics quite similar to those of Canadians as a whole, while those who do identify as Aboriginal have quite different socio-economic characteristics. Recent testing of questions for the 1996 census revealed that when an Aboriginal identity question was asked, the resulting count was within 2 per cent of the 1991 APS count, providing further evidence that the identity-based count may be a more appropriate count for examining Aboriginal conditions.
- 8 No data collection vehicle is perfect. With regard to the Aboriginal Peoples Survey, there was undercoverage. First, a number of reserves and settlements were enumerated incompletely for a variety of reasons, including some band councils' refusal to admit survey takers to reserves. Second, the survey was not able to enumerate all the Aboriginal populations living on reserves that *did participate* in the survey or in non-reserve areas. Approximately 220 reserves and settlements were enumerated incompletely in the 1991 census and APS combined. This represented an estimated missed population of 53,000 or 23 per cent of the on-reserve population. Some of the undercoverage issues in the APS were inherited from the 1991 census. The APS drew its sample of Aboriginal respondents from the 1991 census forms. Any undercoverage problems in the census were passed along to the APS. Statistics Canada has estimated the extent of this undercoverage and taken it into account in establishing a 1991 base year population for the projection period (1991-2016). A full description of this adjustment for undercoverage appears in the report

prepared for RCAP: Mary Jane Norris, Don Kerr and François Nault, “Projections of the Aboriginal Identity Population in Canada, 1991-2016”, prepared by Statistics Canada (Population Projections Section, Demography Division) for RCAP (February 1995). (For information about research studies prepared for RCAP, see *A Note About Sources* at the beginning of this volume.)

Taking into account the three types of population undercoverage in the APS shifts the published unadjusted count in 1991 from 626,000 to an adjusted 720,000. Other results of this adjustment include, for example, an increase in the percentage of the total Aboriginal population living on reserves and settlements, from 29 per cent (unadjusted) to 35 per cent (adjusted), and the share of total Aboriginal population living in non-reserve urban areas falls from 49 per cent (unadjusted) to 44 per cent (adjusted).

To avoid confusion, tables and charts specify whether adjusted or unadjusted population data are being used. The general rule is that we use the adjusted 1991 base year population when presenting results of the population projections from 1991 to 2016. In most other cases unadjusted data are used, particularly in examining socio-economic conditions. Where other sources of data on Aboriginal people are used in this report, they are identified.

There is much debate about the population of the various Aboriginal peoples. The debate is largely a function of the limited number of data sources and collection systems for basic demographic information. Even where sources or systems exist, the possibility of obtaining valid counts is limited by the way Aboriginal groups are defined for data collection purposes; this in turn tends to be determined by the legislation or government programs for which information is being gathered.

9 This projection is based on the extension of recent trends in birth, death and migration rates among Aboriginal groups before 1991. A full description is found in Norris et al. (cited in note 8). The population count for each Aboriginal group shown in Table 2.1 contains a small number of persons who reported multiple Aboriginal identities in the APS on which the projections are based (e.g., those who reported identifying as both North American Indian and Métis). Therefore, the counts shown in Table 2.1 do not add to the total Aboriginal count of 811,400, a figure that does not contain double counting. The source for the total population is Statistics Canada, “Projection No. 2: Projected Population by Age and Sex, Canada, Provinces and Territories, July 1, 1996”, unpublished tables.

10 The Indian register, a population register maintained by the federal department of Indian affairs and northern development (DIAND), has a count of 511,000 registered Indians in 1991. For the sake of consistency, however, the Commission relies primarily on the adjusted population counts derived from the 1991 APS. The population of 438,000 includes only those who reported North American Indian identity in the 1991 APS and excludes persons who are Métis and Inuit by identity, but who had Indian status under the *Indian Act*. Since the Commission’s major focus is the cultural identity of Aboriginal peoples, these two groups have been included in their respective identity groups, rather

than in the registered North American Indian count. This reduces the amount of double counting among the groups. Also excluded from the 1991 APS (and therefore from projections based on it) is the Aboriginal population residing in institutions, such as prisons or chronic care institutions, and Aboriginal persons with Indian status who were living outside Canada at the time of the survey. These factors (although not exhaustive) account for about 45 per cent of the difference between the Indian register count and the APS adjusted count.

11 The Commission divided Canada into three zones for analytical purposes. The Far North consists of the Yukon, Northwest Territories, northern Quebec (using the Census Division #99) and Labrador (Census Division #10). The Mid-North consists of the northern portions of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario, and a zone in Quebec consisting of Abitibi-Témiscamingue in the west to the North Shore in the east. The South consists of the remainder of the provinces not included in the two northern zones and all of Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the island of Newfoundland. See Volume 4, Chapter 6, for further discussion of these divisions.

12 It is not known with any accuracy how many North American Indians who are *not* registered under the *Indian Act* (i.e., non-status Indians) affiliate with one of the linguistic groups listed in Table 2.3.

13 Children are not entitled to status if one parent is classified as a ‘section 6(2) Indian’ (under the amended *Indian Act*) and the other parent does not have Indian status. For a more detailed discussion of the impact of Bill C-31, see Chapter 9 in this volume.

14 S. Clatworthy and A.H. Smith, *Population Implications of the 1985 Amendments to the Indian Act* (Ottawa: Assembly of First Nations, 1992).

15 An extensive discussion of historical counts of Aboriginal populations in what is now Canada appears in the introduction to a government publication entitled *Censuses of Canada, 1665 to 1871*, Statistics of Canada, volume IV (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1876), pp. xiv-lxxv. Various references are made to ‘halfbreeds’, but without definition. The term Métis is used in the French version of the publication, however. Counts of ‘halfbreeds’ appear to be included with counts of non-Aboriginal people and not shown separately. Nevertheless, it is an explicit acknowledgement of a population with mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal origins. The province of Manitoba undertook a census of its “half-breed inhabitants” in November 1870 and reported a figure of 9,800 persons (34 Victoria Sessional Papers (20), pp. 74-96).

16 Not everyone who identified as ‘halfbreed’ would necessarily consider themselves Métis.

17 G. Goldmann, “The Aboriginal Population and the Census, 120 Years of Information “1871 to 1991”, paper presented at the International Union of Scientific Studies in Population Conference, Montreal, September 1993, pp. 6, 7.

18 It should be noted that about 17,000 Métis persons are also registered under the *Indian Act*, although they still identified as

Métis on the APS questionnaire. Nevertheless, for statistical purposes, the Commission has given precedence to reported Métis identity, as opposed to legal Indian status, and therefore the Métis count includes this registered population. Indian registration before 1985 was likely acquired through marriage to a status Indian male; the female spouse gained status, as did her offspring. Others and their children would have regained Indian status more recently as a result of reinstatement under Bill C-31. For whatever reasons, this group of 17,000 still chose to self-identify as Métis in the 1991 APS.

19 Inuit in Labrador were not counted in the 1921 census, because Newfoundland was not part of Canada until 1949.

20 Norris et al. (cited in note 8).

21 Fertility and mortality data on Aboriginal groups other than registered Indians are rather sparse.

22 Four projection scenarios were developed based on various assumptions about future trends in fertility, mortality and migration rates. These scenarios were applied to Aboriginal groups in various regions of Canada. For a detailed description see Norris et al. (cited in note 8).

23 Norris et al. (cited in note 8).

24 The starting point for Table 2.3 was information provided by Statistics Canada, which has assigned bands or First Nations to broader linguistic/cultural groups, mainly on the basis of their linguistic and cultural affiliation. For details on this methodology, see Statistics Canada, “1991 Census List of Indian Bands/First Nations by Indian Nations”, Social Statistics Division, unpublished table and related methodological notes.

The number of registered Indians belonging to each band or First Nation and each linguistic/cultural group was calculated, based on data in *Indian Register Population by Sex and Residence, 1991* (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, March 1992).

Since the Commission prefers to use the Aboriginal identity population derived from the 1991 APS rather than the population derived from the Indian Register, we estimated the size of the status identity population belonging to each linguistic/cultural group by calculating the percentage of the total registered Indian population accounted for by each linguistic/cultural group, then applying that percentage to the APS adjusted status Indian identity population. For example, if a particular linguistic/cultural group made up 5 per cent of the registered Indian population, then 5 per cent of the total status identity population was taken as the size of that linguistic/cultural group as reported in Table 2.3.

The size of the identity population is derived from Norris et al. (cited in note 8).

The Commission made some changes in the grouping of bands or First Nations into linguistic/cultural groups, based on information supplied by the Canadian Museum of Civilization, in order to show the groups that make up the Dene Nation and the Iroquois Confederacy.

The Commission recognizes that individual First Nations may not necessarily group themselves into these linguistic/cultural categories and that such affiliations continue to evolve. Other forms of affiliation beyond the band or community level are based on criteria such as common treaty affiliation or political groupings in the form of tribal councils or province-wide political organizations.