



National Association of Friendship Centres  
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## **INFORMATION FOR THE FRIENDSHIP CENTRE MOVEMENT**

### **CENSUS CONFIRMS MORE ATTENTION MUST BE PAID TO URBAN ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

#### **Introduction**

The first data on Aboriginal peoples from the 2006 Census of Population were released on January 15, 2008. These data provide information about the demographic characteristics of Aboriginal (Inuit, Metis, and First Nations) peoples, as well as information about mobility, housing, Aboriginal languages, and family status.

The most important finding in the Census 2006 data is that, **for the first time in Canadian history, a clear majority of Aboriginal peoples live in urban centres.**

Three main stories come out of the Census 2006 data:

- Aboriginal peoples are an increasingly urban population.
- Aboriginal peoples are the fastest-growing population segment in Canada.
- Aboriginal peoples are the youngest population in Canada.

#### **Urbanization**

For the first time in Canadian history, 54 percent -- a majority -- of Aboriginal peoples live in urban areas, up from 49 percent in 2001. This continues a trend to urbanization that has been ongoing for several decades -- a trend about which most Canadians seem unaware.

The Aboriginal population is increasingly concentrated in major metropolitan areas. More than one-quarter of all Aboriginal peoples lived in just 9 census metropolitan areas. Winnipeg has the largest Aboriginal population, followed by Edmonton, Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Saskatoon, Ottawa–Gatineau, Montréal and Regina. The highest concentration was in the census metropolitan area of Winnipeg, whose 68,380 Aboriginal peoples accounted for 10 percent of its population. Among smaller urban centres, the concentration of Aboriginal peoples was the greatest in the Manitoba city of Thompson at 36 percent of the total population.

### **Population Growth**

The Aboriginal population is the fastest-growing population in Canada, and therefore the percentage of the total population that are Aboriginal peoples continues to rise. According to the Census, there were 1,172,790 Aboriginal peoples in Canada in 2006, an increase of 45 percent over ten years. Aboriginal peoples now comprise 3.8 percent of Canada's population, compared with 2.8 percent in 1996.

### **Age Distribution**

Aboriginal peoples continue to be the youngest population in Canada, with a median age of 27, which is a full 13 years younger than the non-Aboriginal median age. Almost one half 48 percent of all Aboriginal peoples are under age 25, compared to 31 percent of the non-Aboriginal population.

Children and youth made up a particularly large share of the Aboriginal population in several urban areas that were home to a large number of Aboriginal peoples. In three urban areas, more than half of the Aboriginal population was aged 24 and under: Regina (56 percent), Saskatoon (55 percent), and Prince Albert (56 percent).

### **Geographic Distribution**

As in previous censuses, the highest concentrations of the Aboriginal population in 2006 were in the North and on the Prairies. Aboriginal peoples in Nunavut represented 85 percent of the territory's total population, the highest concentration in the country. Aboriginal peoples represented one half (50 percent) of the population of the Northwest Territories, and one-quarter (25 percent) of the population of the Yukon. Among provinces, the highest concentrations were in Saskatchewan and Manitoba (15 percent).

### **Mobility**

Aboriginal peoples move more frequently than other Canadians. In the 12 months before the 2006 Census, 19 percent of Aboriginal peoples moved, compared with only 14 percent of the non-Aboriginal population. About 12 percent of those who moved did so within the same community, while the remaining 8 percent changed communities.

## **Housing**

Housing conditions among Aboriginal peoples remain poor compared to non-Aboriginals, especially in urban areas. Almost 11 percent of urban Aboriginal peoples reported living in overcrowded housing, compared to 3 percent of non-Aboriginals. In addition, 23 percent said their housing was in need of major repairs. This is more three times the rate among non-Aboriginal Canadians.

## **Aboriginal Languages**

About one-fifth (22 percent) of the 1,172,790 peoples who identified themselves as North American Indian, Métis or Inuit in 2006 reported that they had enough knowledge of an Aboriginal language to carry on a conversation. This was down from 24% in 2001. Inuktitut, Cree, and Ojibway are the only three Aboriginal languages in Canada that are spoken by enough Aboriginal peoples that their long-term survival is likely. The ability to converse in an Aboriginal language was much lower among urban Aboriginal peoples than those who live on reserves or in rural areas (including Inuit Nunaat).

## **Family Status**

Proportionally, far fewer Aboriginal children aged 14 and under lived with two parents in 2006 than did non-Aboriginal children. Aboriginal children were about twice as likely to live with a lone mother than non-Aboriginal children (29% versus 14%). In several cities with large Aboriginal populations (including Winnipeg, Edmonton, Regina, Portage la Prairie, Cold Lake), more than four out of 10 children lived in lone-parent families.

## **Service Delivery Implications**

The urbanization of Canada's Aboriginal peoples – from only 7 percent in 1951 to 54 percent in 2006 – has not been matched by policy or programming by governments. In particular, the federal government's refusal to adequately address the needs and opportunities of a growing urban Aboriginal population has put inordinate strains on Aboriginal peoples, their communities, and their institutions – especially the Friendship Centre Movement, which is Canada's only urban Aboriginal service delivery infrastructure dedicated to improving the quality of life for Aboriginal Peoples in an urban environment by supporting self-determined activities which encourage equal access to, participation in, Canadian society; and which respect and strengthen the increasing emphasis on Aboriginal cultural distinctiveness.

Government spending on Aboriginal programs has not kept pace with urban Aboriginal realities. Population growth in urban areas – especially when combined with mobility, pronounced housing need, and the high numbers of urban Aboriginal children living in single parent families – highlights the need for increases in government spending on urban Aboriginal issues. Attempting to serve increasing numbers of Aboriginal peoples with the same amount of money year after year is a recipe for disaster. Soon, the creativity and resourcefulness of the Friendship Centre Movement will hit the wall and residents in major urban centres will experience the consequences of government ignorance.

### **Next Steps**

Statistics Canada plans to release additional data from the 2006 Census throughout 2008. Of particular interest to the Friendship Centre Movement will be:

March 4, 2008	Labour, Place of work and commuting to work, Education, Language of work
April 2, 2008	Ethnic origin and visible minorities
May 1, 2008	Income and earnings, Housing and shelter costs
Fall 2008	Aboriginal Peoples Survey and Aboriginal Children's Survey (off reserve and northern regions)
Fall 2008	Labour Force Survey – national estimates for off-reserve Aboriginal population

The NAFC national office will be conducting on-going analysis of Census and other data to support Friendship Centres in their efforts, and will be examining the data for research and advocacy opportunities.

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