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Selected Urban Aboriginal Demography

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Part One: Basic Demography of Aboriginal Peoples

Introduction

The population of Aboriginal peoples (First Nation, Inuit, and Métis) in Canada is growing. Statistics Canada reports that 1,172,790 people, or 3.8% of Canada's total population, identified themselves as an Aboriginal person in the 2006 census, up from 3.3% in 2001 and 2.8% in 1996 (Statistics Canada 2008). Of the total Aboriginal population, the 2006 Census of Canada reports that 54% live in urban areas. To gain further insight into the demographics of urban Aboriginal communities, the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) together with Statistics Canada, created a project from the 2001 and 2006 census data titled, "Informing Program and Service Needs of Aboriginal Populations through a Geographic Approach." The custom tabulations provide demographic data for friendship centre catchment areas across Canada. This chapter explores the identities, age, and gender demographics of Aboriginal peoples living in friendship centre catchment areas from the 2006 census. Comparisons between non-Aboriginal people's age and gender are also drawn for comparison. The chapter also comments on the potential effects of Bill C-3, *Gender Equity in Indian Registration Act*.

Data

This chapter uses Statistics Canada Custom Tabulations to analyze the identities, age, and gender demographics of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations. The paper uses NAFC's custom-defined Aboriginal designation categories. Under the designation, the Aboriginal population includes registered Indians (referring to those who reported being registered under the *Indian Act*) and non-registered Indians (referring to North American Indian identity, Métis identity, Inuit identity, multiple Aboriginal identities, and member of an Indian band or First Nation only). The NAFC definitions categorize the non-Aboriginal population as those who did not identify as Aboriginal, did not report being registered under the *Indian Act*, and did not report that they were a member of an Indian band or First Nation. The age cohorts discussed in the chapter are categorized into four

groupings: 0 to 24 years, 25 to 44 years, 45 to 64 years, and 65 years and over. The regions examined with friendship centre catchment areas are labelled British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, the Atlantic (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador), and the North (Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut). Please note that the labelled regions do not represent the entire geography and population of the provinces with the same name.

Results and Tables

Regional Comparisons

The analysis begins by investigating the national population, by region, in friendship centre catchment areas across Canada. The national-level non-Aboriginal population distributions are depicted in **Figure 1.1**.¹ The national Aboriginal population distributions are provided in **Figure 1.2**.

Figures 1.1 (below) and **1.2** (on the following page) show the distribution of the non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal populations across Canada. **Figure 1.1** illustrates that the non-Aboriginal population is most concentrated in Ontario at 44% (8,004,540), followed by Quebec at 20% (3,539,175). Alberta's population is at 13% (2,348,365), followed closely by British Columbia at 12% (2,187,900). The highest population concentration for Aboriginal peoples is

Figure 1.1: Non-Aboriginal Population by Region

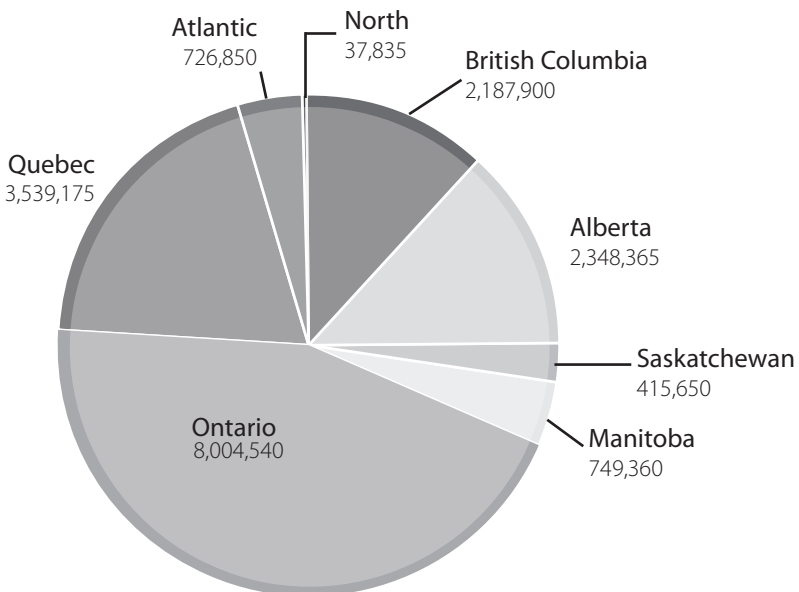
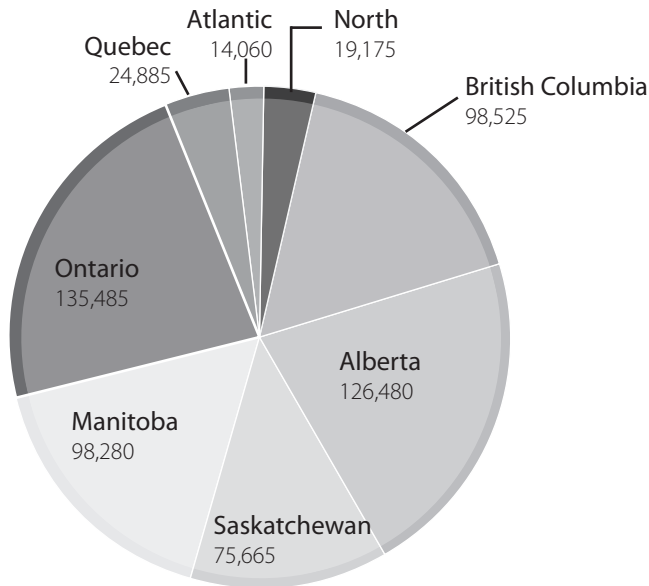


Figure 1.2: Aboriginal Population by Region

Ontario at 23% (135,485), followed by Alberta at 21% (126,480), as shown in **Figure 1.2**. A population difference is seen in Manitoba and Saskatchewan; there is a greater Aboriginal population in Manitoba at 17% and Saskatchewan at 13%, while the non-Aboriginal population for the same provinces are relatively smaller proportions of the overall Canadian population. The discussion section of the paper will highlight additional themes from the national-level analysis.

Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Male and Female Age Comparisons

The analysis of Aboriginal peoples' age and gender demographics begins with a comparison of the male and female population by age cohort. **Figure 1.3** on page 4 displays the age distribution of the Aboriginal male and female population.

The total Aboriginal male and female population is just under 600,000 in friendship centre catchment areas. The total male population is approximately 283,000, with the largest cohort being 0 to 24 at 141,000. Likewise, the total Aboriginal female population is 310,000, with the largest cohort being 0 to 24 at 140,000. **Figure 1.3** illustrates that the Aboriginal population is a young population. Further implications are presented in the discussion section of the paper.

Figure 1.4 on page 4 provides insight into the differences between the Aboriginal male and female population and the non-Aboriginal male and female population. It clearly shows that the non-Aboriginal population is generally more equally distributed across the youngest three cohorts. If we look at the males

Figure 1.3: Population Pyramid, Friendship Centre Communities, 2006

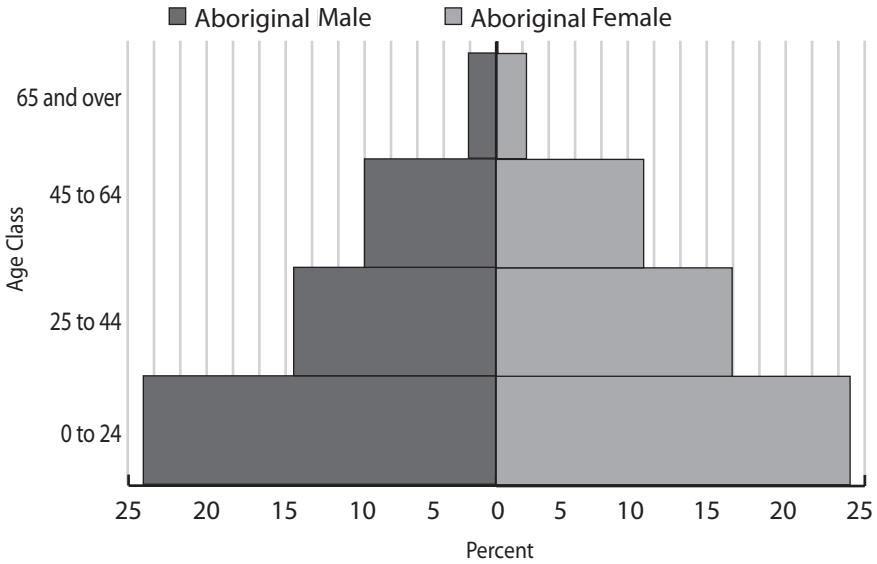
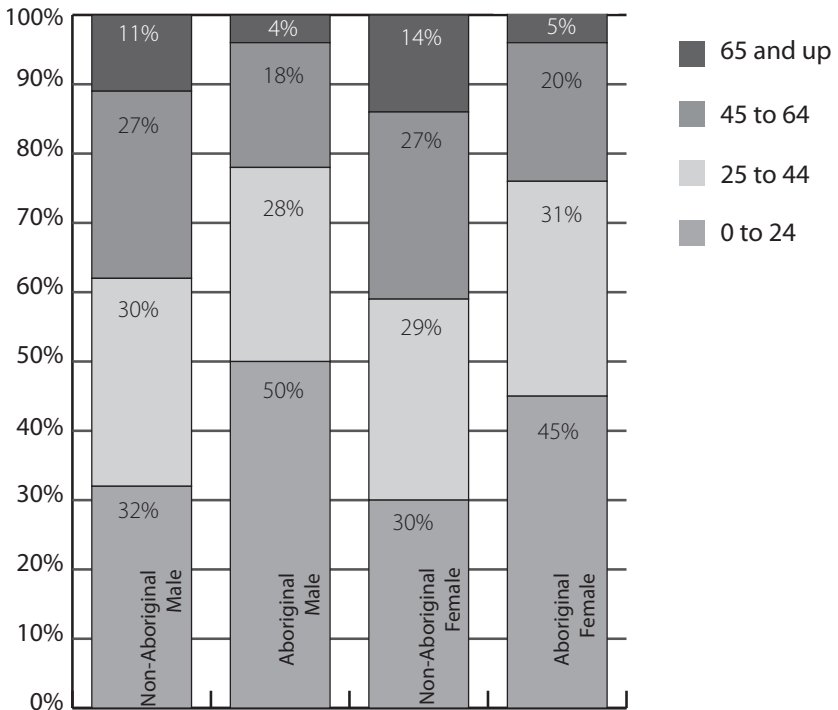


Figure 1.4: Non-Aboriginal Age/Gender Distribution Compared to Aboriginal Age/Gender Distribution



only, we see the 0 to 24 cohort at 32% (2,828,510), the 25 to 44 cohort at 30% (2,609,300), the 45 to 64 cohort at 27% (2,353,750), and the 65 and over cohort at 11% (1,001,345). The non-Aboriginal female population age cohort numbers show the same general distribution characteristics. A clear difference in the age distribution for Aboriginal male and female populations emerges from **Figure 1.4**. The younger male 0 to 24 cohort has 50% of the population, and for females the younger cohort represents just over 45%. Another striking contrast is the disparity between the age cohort 65 and over; while the non-Aboriginal male and female population 65 and over are 11% and 14%, respectively, the same cohort for the Aboriginal males and females is only 4% and 5% of the population, respectively. Taken together, this indicates that the overall population pyramid is much younger for Aboriginal peoples than for non-Aboriginal peoples in this study.

Non-Registered Indian Population

To gain a more detailed population perspective of Aboriginal peoples, a gendered micro-level analysis was conducted for the non-registered Indian population as we defined it above for our catchment areas.² **Figures 1.5** and **1.6** on page 6 show national distribution of the male and female non-registered Indian population.

The total non-registered Métis, North American Indian, and Inuit population in friendship centre catchment areas is 313,990. **Figure 1.5** illustrates a distribution of males across three identity groups: Métis, North American Indian, and Inuit. **Figure 1.6** reports on females in the same identity groups. Except for the North American Indian identity group, the Métis identity group is the largest. This is true for both male and female population groups.

Geography

While we have not reported it in a figure, the data indicate that while the largest number of Aboriginal peoples may reside in Ontario, as a proportion of the population the Aboriginal peoples of the Western regions are dominant and, therefore, more likely to have a greater proportional impact. The next section explores the potential implications of Bill C-3, *Gender Equity in Indian Registration Act*,³ on selected non-registered Indian identities in more detail.

Discussion of Basic Demography

The regional population analysis suggests that there is a strong demographic pattern across all of our catchment geographies. In Quebec, the North, and the Atlantic, the Aboriginal population is relatively small in comparison to the other regions. Similarly, the non-Aboriginal population is also relatively small in the North and the Atlantic regions (the difference being Quebec, where the non-Aboriginal population is second largest in Canada). The largest age demographic among Aboriginal peoples is under the age of twenty-five. This cohort represents nearly half of the total Aboriginal population in friendship centre catchment areas. This trend is seen across all Aboriginal identity groups.

Figure 1.5: Non-Registered Indian Identities, Male

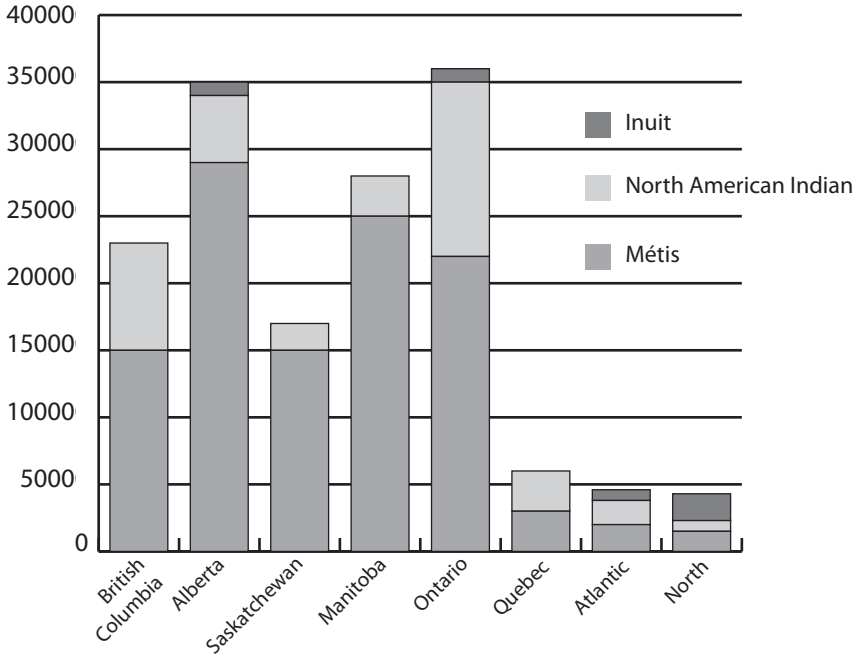
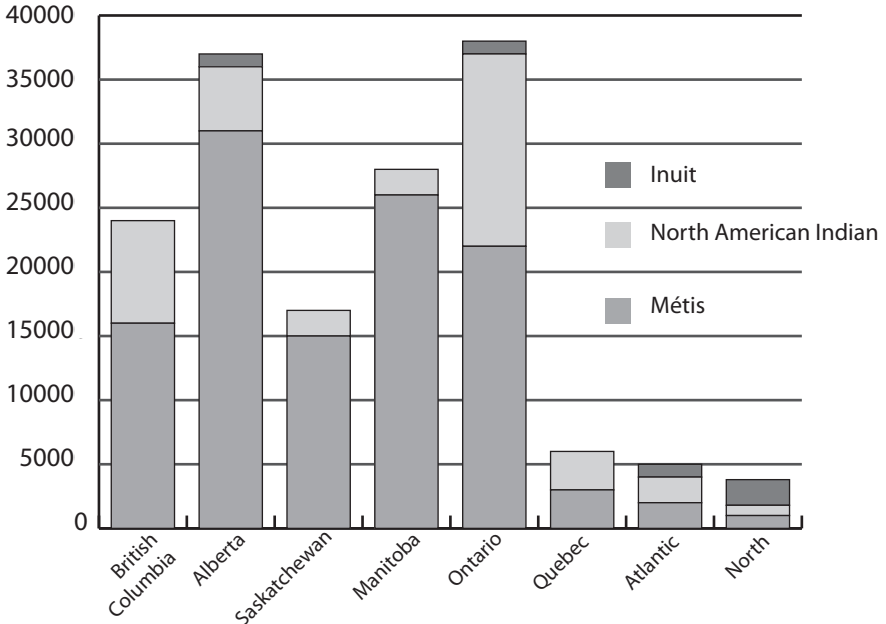


Figure 1.6: Non-Registered Indian Identities, Female



Of the total North American Indian population, the 0 to 24 age cohort represents 51%; of the total Métis population, the 0 to 24 age cohort represents 45%; and of the total Inuit population, the 0 to 24 age cohort represents 53%. In comparison, the non-Aboriginal population in the 0 to 24 age cohort is strikingly smaller at 31%. This analysis presents a point of interest for the broader friendship centre movement. Given the largest demographic is under the age of twenty-five in friendship centre catchment areas, friendship centres may need to prepare for further service delivery needs of the population they serve. Recent surveys, such as the 2006 Aboriginal People's Survey (APS), show that two out of three (62%) off-reserve Aboriginal peoples aged fifteen years and over lived in friendship centre catchment areas in 2006.

Given that friendship centres have been identified as the most useful Aboriginal service organizations in urban communities, it will be important to keep programming relevant for the younger populations. The age profiles and potential of increasing reinstatements through legislation have a significant effect on friendship centres. Provincial analysis of inter-Aboriginal identities was conducted to determine if any differences from the national-level age, gender, and identity were present. The provincial data show no significant difference from the national-level data. No other striking indicators were observed.

Part Two: Potential Effects of Bill C-3⁴

We wish to look at Bill C-3 because it is not only the currently defined Aboriginal population that affects Canadian society, but also the potential population. Our discussion above notes the youthful population of the Aboriginal peoples, which implies a high fertility rate and ever-increasing population growth that is going to be higher than non-Aboriginals. There will also be shifts in who can claim to be an Aboriginal, status and non-status. This is affected by Bill C-3, *Gender Equity in Indian Registration Act*. First, we will make a reference to the potential effects on the Aboriginal population, with special consideration given to the potential effects on the friendship centre movement. We will then discuss the implications in more depth.

It is expected that Bill C-3 will affect the non-registered Indian population who were previously excluded from being able to be registered under the *Indian Act*, including North American Indian, Métis, multiple Aboriginal identities, and perhaps those claiming to be a member of an Indian band or First Nation (but not declaring status). The data we present highlights the broadest population counts that may be affected by the legislation and is not meant to forecast new registered Indian population counts. It is not known how many people who currently identify themselves as Métis will be able to obtain Indian status should Bill C-3 come into force and effect. Complicating matters is the whole set of challenges to Bill C-3, which may lead to amendments. While membership in the Métis Nation requires direct lineage, it is not clear how many Métis are also considered

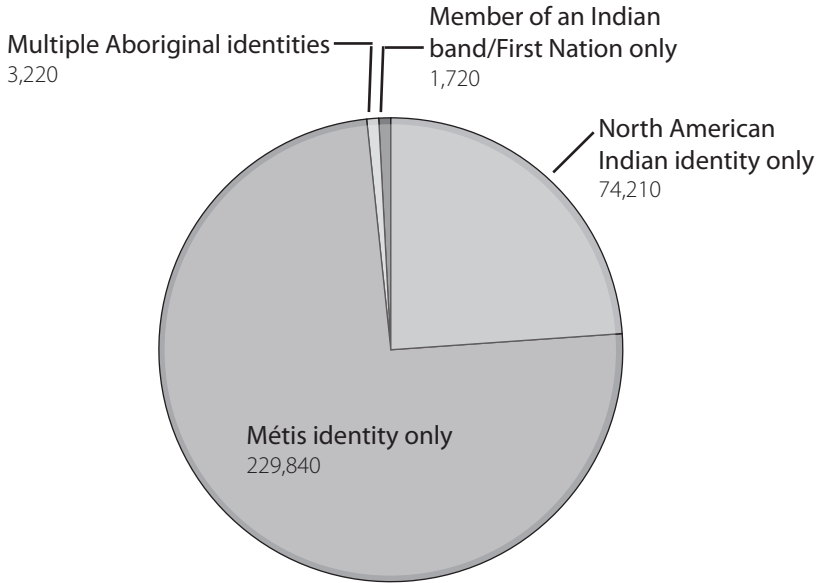
non-status Indians. It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a discussion on the Métis Nation's membership; however, it is likely that at least some of their membership will be able to obtain registered Indian status should Bill C-3 come into effect.

Likewise, the non-registered Indian populations that were previously excluded from being able to be registered under the *Indian Act* may be affected should the proposed amendments to Bill C-3 be accepted by Parliament. The proposed amendments accepted by the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development include those "who lost status due to marriage to a non-status person and those who lost status even though they were born outside of wedlock because the Registrar deemed their father to be non-status" (Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs 2010). These amendments may pertain to the North American Indian, Métis, Multiple Aboriginal identities, and possibly to members of an Indian band or First Nation.

The member of an Indian band or First Nation identity designation presents a distinctive discussion when considering the impacts of Bill C-3. Statistics Canada explains that this identity option applies to respondents who did not identify as Aboriginal in the census and who did not report being registered under the *Indian Act*, but who did report that they were a member of an Indian band or First Nation. This definition provides two points of discussion. First, the respondents who identify themselves as members of an Indian band or First Nation are not Aboriginal peoples, as they did not report being Aboriginal (registered or non-registered) in the census. The assumption is that the respondents may be the non-Aboriginal spouses of First Nation members, adopted children or extended family members permitted to reside on reserves, or are included in band membership. It is likely that those respondents who identified themselves as only members of an Indian band or First Nation are non-Aboriginal family members and will not be affected by Bill C-3, *Gender Equity in Indian Registration Act*. However, it is impossible to be certain. It is possible that some members of an Indian band or First Nation may also be considered non-status Indians. In such cases, they are included in the second generation cut-off rule being challenged by Bill C-3 and may be able to obtain Indian status once amendments come into force and effect.

Future research on registered Indian population counts and potential effects for reserve and urban Aboriginal communities will be needed should Bill C-3 be fully implemented. **Figure 1.7** on the following page shows the identity population counts that may be affected by Bill C-3.

The total population of the North American Indian, Métis, multiple Aboriginal identities, and member of an Indian band or First Nation identities is 308,990 in friendship centre catchment areas. **Figure 1.7** indicates that the Métis and North American Indian identities have the greatest population overall at 229,840 (74%) and 74,210 (24%), respectively. Direct implications of this population count cannot be determined at this time; however, the potential effects of Bill C-3, with amendments, may influence the numbers of North American Indian,

Figure 1.7: Identity Totals — Individuals that May be Affected by Bill C-3

Métis, multiple Aboriginal identities, and member of an Indian band or First Nation population who can claim Indian status. If so, this change will certainly be a consideration for future population profiles.

The discussion of the potential population effects of Bill C-3 requires an in-depth investigation, assessment, and discussion of the history of and current debates on the issues of identity and citizenship for indigenous peoples in Canada. This is outside of the scope of this short introductory chapter, though we would like to make a few points to help the reader.

The foundational issue is centred on who is providing the definitions of identity. INAC has assumed the responsibility of determining who is eligible for Indian status through the Indian Register and the regulations/legislation that determine how it will work. The Indian Register had its beginnings in the mid-1800s to assist the colonial government in determining which Indian bands were to be entered in the treaties. In the 1950s, the Indian Register was officially mandated to bring “together all of the existing records of persons who were recognized by the federal government as members of an Indian Band. It serve[s] as the main record of the people registered as Indians under the *Indian Act*” (INAC 2010). The register serves to track which Indians are eligible to obtain the specific rights and benefits attributed to them as Status Indians, e.g., on-reserve housing and education. And further, “Under the *Indian Act*, the Registrar—an employee of INAC—is responsible for maintaining the Indian Register. The Registrar is the sole authority for determining which names will be added, deleted, or omitted

from the Register” (ibid.). The issue then is how many people will be added or removed? Such analyses are complex and fraught with problems. The best assessment is that Bill C-3 will allow 45,000 new Indian Status registrations, but some place the number at potentially 200,000.⁵

This discussion is complicated by the recent critiques of Aboriginal individuals and groups on two points:

1. There is criticism concerning how the governments have approached the process of amending the *Indian Act*. Many still believe that the new Bill C-3 changes retain gender discrimination (see the Canadian Bar Association 2010).
2. The inherent right of Aboriginal peoples to determine their identity and citizenship is systematically ignored by all governments.

On the first point, although Bill C-3 may pave the way for the new registration of 45,000 people, it “will not end the sex discrimination in the status registration provision of the *Indian Act*” (McIvor 2010). The Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development accepted submissions by Ms. Sharon McIvor, the Native Women’s Association of Canada, and other witnesses that confirmed, “Bill C-3 ... will still give women and their descendants an inferior form of Indian Status compared to men and their descendants. Known as the second generation cut-off, the cut-off would apply to descendants of women one generation earlier than it applies to male lineage descendants” (Day 2010). McIvor (2010) recommended amendments to Bill C-3 that would apply to “both those who lost status due to marriage to a non-status person, and those who lost status even though they were born outside of wedlock because the Registrar deemed their father to be non-status” (Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs 2010). Acceptance of the amendment could potentially increase new registrations from 45,000 to 200,000 (Day 2010).

As a result of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development’s submission, the Speaker of the House ruled the proposed amendments to Bill C-3 out of order. The heart of the issue may rest in the Crown’s fiduciary duty to provide specific rights and benefits to Status Indians included in the Indian Register. Should the amendments be accepted, the new registrants added to the Indian Register would experience a substantial increase in the rights and benefits accorded to them. At the time of this writing, Bill C-3 has not been accepted by Parliament. It is unknown if the government will make the necessary adjustments to address the outstanding issues or continue through the legislative process well into 2011.

The second critique provided by Aboriginal individuals and groups concerns the inherent right of Aboriginal peoples to determine their own identity and citizenship. The Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) explains that “the long-term solutions to [gender discrimination] lie not within the *Indian Act* but within the exercise of Indigenous Nationhood” (UBCIC 2010). The exercise

of the inherent right to determine identity and citizenship codes is in direct contravention of the current approach of INAC's Indian Register legislation, as INAC assumes "sole authority for determining which names will be added, deleted, or omitted from the Register." These issues may be given special consideration when INAC convenes its "exploratory process on the broader issues associated with registration, membership, and citizenship" (INAC 2010) with national Aboriginal organizations, First Nations, and individuals across Canada in the summer of 2010. Notwithstanding the process that may unfold for Bill C-3, the friendship centre movement may need to begin discussions on how the new status Indian registrations may influence the needs and priorities of the 117 friendship centre communities across Canada.

Conclusion

This chapter provides a glimpse into select characteristics of Aboriginal people in Canada, namely the identities, age, and gender demographics of Aboriginal people living in friendship centre catchment areas. Comparisons were made to the non-Aboriginal population in friendship centre catchment areas. The Aboriginal population is clearly numerically important across all regions of Canada.

We also examined the potential effects of Bill C-3, which may mean there are more people who can claim Indian status. The implementation of Bill C-3 is still undecided. It is likely that the issue may require further discussion between the Government of Canada and Aboriginal peoples. To this end, the NAFC is invited by INAC to be a part of its exploratory process on the broader issues associated with registration, membership, and citizenship. This provides an opportunity for the friendship centre movement to not only create awareness of the stated identity concerns, but also to allow the movement to be an active participant in the wider identity and citizenship landscape.

Endnotes

- 1 “National” applies at all times to the national distribution of Friendship Centre catchment areas.
- 2 The Multiple Aboriginal Identities and Member of Indian Band/First Nation populations, while important, have not been included in the analysis as the focus is on the largest population counts. However, these populations are considered in the section of this paper entitled Potential Impacts of Bill C-3.
- 3 On March 11, 2010, the Government of Canada introduced Bill C-3, *Gender Equity in Indian Registration Act*, to address the requirements of the British Columbia Court of Appeal decision in *McIvor v. Canada*. Once passed, Bill C-3 will ensure that eligible grandchildren of women who lost status as a result of marrying non-Indian men will be entitled to registration (Indian status) in accordance with the *Indian Act* (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/mr/j-a2010/23333-eng.asp).
- 4 The bill is Ottawa’s response to *McIvor v. Canada*, a 2009 B.C. Court of Appeal ruling that found that Section 6 of the *Indian Act* violates Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The court gave Ottawa a year to fix the legislation. Until 1985, the *Indian Act* defined an Indian as “a male Indian, the wife of a male Indian or the child of a male Indian.” This meant that if an Indian women married a non-Indian, she and her children lost status. In 1985, Bill C-31 was introduced to “rectify” this unequal treatment of women, but it only partially did so (see Jerry White et al. 2007 for a full discussion of the history and implications of Bill C-31). Bill C-31 created impediments for passing status to grandchildren and children in some cases. While the new Bill C-3 is supposed to correct the discriminatory issues present in Bill C-31, many people believe that there are many problems with the new bill (see, for example, the Canadian Bar Association, 2010, www.cba.org/CBA/submissions/pdf/10-21-eng.pdf). For a copy of the Act as of December 15, 2010, see www2.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications.aspx?DocId=4340270&Language=e&Mode=1.
- 5 For a more detailed discussion, see Estimates of Demographic Implications from Indian Registration Amendments: *McIvor v. Canada*, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, March 2010, www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/br/is/eod-eng.asp. See Day 2010 for a discussion of the idea that the number of people affected may be as high as 200,000.

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