

### FIRST NATIONS' CHILDREN IN CANADA

The Government of Canada is working to enhance the well-being of Aboriginal peoples, including Aboriginal children, to ensure that all Canadians share in the collective benefits of Canada's international success as a desirable place to live. Under *Gathering Strength - Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*, there exists a focus on strong communities, people and economies. To this end, the federal government has a responsibility to ensure that programs exist for First Nations children on-reserve that are comparable to those available more broadly for Canadian children, and that promote the development of First Nations communities.

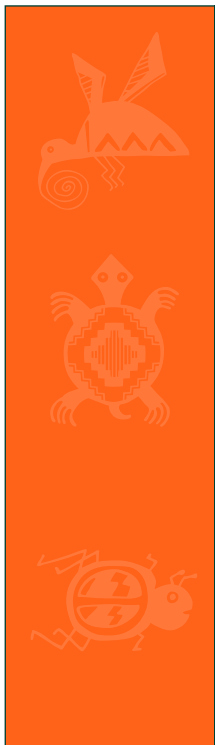


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he context for government action for children and families is also shaped by the country's changing demographic profile. In particular, with a higher birth rate than the Canadian average, Aboriginal children represent the fastest growing population in Canada. Aboriginal people within Canada represent approximately 4.5 percent of the total Canadian population, a percentage that has almost doubled across the country over the last 15 years.

The differences in socio-economic conditions between Registered Indians<sup>2</sup>, First Nations members living on-reserve and the total Canadian population are apparent both within First Nations communities and throughout the larger population of Canada. In 1996, the average number of children for the Registered Indian population on-reserve was 2.1 per family, compared to 1.2 for the entire Canadian population. The First Nations' birth rate of 27 births per 1,000 people is twice the Canadian average. Infant mortality, while improving, is still double that of the non-Aboriginal population.

In 1996, almost one third of Aboriginal children under 15 years of age lived in a lone-parent family, twice the rate within the general population; 40 percent of Aboriginal children living in urban centres live in lone-parent families. According to the 1996 Census, the prevalence of Registered Indian female lone-parent families (23 percent) is about twice the rate reported for female lone-parent families in the Canadian population (12.1 percent). Compared to the Canadian population as a whole, male lone-parent families were nearly twice as common among Registered Indians living on-reserve in 1996.



<sup>2</sup> The term "Registered Indian" is applied to individuals, both on- and off-reserve, registered under the *Indian Act*.

## RECENT SUCCESSES

Registered Indians (both on- and off-reserve) are making steady gains in educational achievement, and more Registered Indians are completing their education. The post-secondary enrolment rate for the Registered Indian population aged 17 to 34 has remained relatively constant. The number of Registered Indians enrolled in post-secondary institutions almost doubled between 1988-1989 and 1998-1999, and the percentage of Registered Indians with university degrees has increased approximately 50 percent since 1996.

In 1996, of the Registered Indian population 15 years of age and over attending school, 80.5 percent were attending full time, 10 percent more than the total Canadian population. A further narrowing of the earnings gap was realized between 1990 and 1995. For Registered Indians living on-reserve, an increase was noted for those who completed trades or non-university training between 1991 and 1996. Within the Registered Indian population, women's employment earnings as a percentage of men's rose between 1990 and 1995.

## FIRST NATIONS AND THE NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT

The National Child Benefit for First Nations operates differently than for the provinces and territories. Although the overall goals and objectives are the same in all instances, First Nations tend to focus on reducing the depth of child poverty and promoting an attachment to the labour market. This is accomplished primarily through the reinvestment component of the National Child Benefit.

First Nations play a significant role in the implementation of the National Child Benefit as they administer the reinvestment component. Similar to the provinces and territories, First Nations that deliver social assistance have the flexibility to reinvest savings from adjustments made through social assistance, in programs and services tailored to meet their needs and priorities while maintaining the overall goals of the National Child Benefit.

There are approximately 600 First Nations across the country that participate in the National Child Benefit program. Each community implements the National Child Benefit reinvestment programs according to existing guidelines within the province or territory of residence. Once implemented, First Nations are required by INAC to report annually on how National Child Benefit monies are used and how many children and families benefit from the program. The information contained in this Progress Report has been compiled from this information.

The National Child Benefit allowed us to have money and services to do prevention in the community, and how you do prevention in the communities is with children and families and particularly prevention starts with young children and you work your way up.

- Jon Spotted Eagle, Okanagan First Nation

In the first year of the National Child Benefit, First Nations reinvested approximately \$30.3 million in programs to benefit their children and families. In 1999-2000, this amount increased to approximately \$48.26 million, an increase of about \$20 million over 1998-1999. Projections for 2000-2001 are estimated at about \$55.19 million.

## FIRST NATIONS REINVESTMENT PROGRAMS

The National Child Benefit reinvestment component provides a sense of community ownership of the programs developed because they are designed by First Nations, to address the diverse and unique needs of First Nations communities. The reinvestment component provides flexibility and variability for First Nations to design and develop innovative community-based programs that are culturally relevant, respond to the specific and unique needs of the community and support children and their families living on reserve.

Programs undertaken by First Nations vary from community to community and tend to cover a wider range of program areas than those of their provincial and territorial counterparts. The reason for this is twofold: the National Child Benefit amounts available to First Nations vary according to the size and population of the community, and First Nations tailor their reinvestments to meet the specific needs of their individual communities. For example, First Nations living in the same province or territory may focus on different areas for reinvestment based on the priorities and the situation within their community, as long as they relate back to the goals of the National Child Benefit.

National Child Benefit reinvestment programs for First Nations fall into five broad program areas:

**Child/Day Care** - Programs directed toward the development and enhancement of day care facilities and the provision of child-care services which allow more families with low incomes to gain access to day care spaces, or to have their share of child-care costs reduced. Child/day care programs include enhancements to existing day care centres, increasing the number of day care spaces, and child care for children of parents on employment/training programs.

**Child Nutrition** - Programs directed at improving the health and well-being of children by providing school meal programs as well as education to parents on family nutrition and meal preparation. Some examples include: educational programs aimed at nutrition, food hampers, and meal programs (hot lunches, breakfasts and snacks) provided in school.

**Early Child Development** - Programs directed at early intervention for parents to help their children with a healthy start in life. Some examples include parenting skills programs and drop-in centres for parents.

**Employment Opportunities/Training Programs** - These programs are directed at increasing the skill level of individuals and thereby increasing their chances of obtaining work. Examples include employment and skills development, youth summer work programs and personal development workshops.

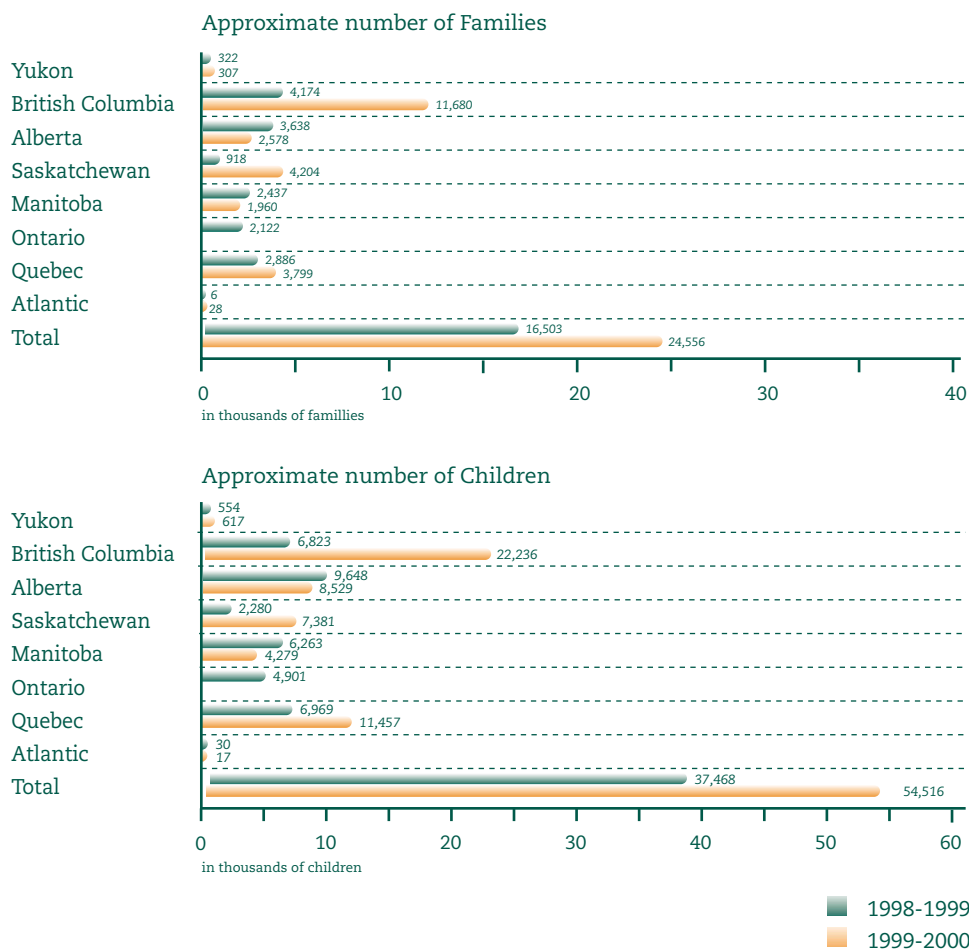
**Other** - National Child Benefit programs that fall into the category of "other" represent a broad range of areas (e.g., cultural awareness or traditional teachings, recreation activities, and income supplements for low-income families).



## WHO BENEFITS

Although difficult to assess the number of children and families specifically benefiting under the National Child Benefit, it is evident that a significant number of First Nations are involved in reinvestment programs. While the figures that follow were submitted by First Nations, there may be more children benefiting than are represented in the numbers. In some instances, First Nations combined resources with existing resources allocated for a current program (e.g., Aboriginal Head Start, First Nation and Inuit Child Care). The data includes only those First Nations for which NCB has funding responsibility and excludes self-governing First Nations in the regions of the Atlantic, Quebec, British Columbia and Yukon.

### NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT INITIATIVES BENEFICIARIES



**Note:**  
 1998-1999 Yukon, the number of reporting First Nations was revised to reflect the 8 First Nations who submitted their data.  
 1999-2000 Ontario, the information was not available.  
 Atlantic, the information is incomplete.

## 1998-1999 Data

### FUNDS AVAILABLE TO FIRST NATIONS FOR NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT INITIATIVES

Region	Projected Funds Available for NCB Initiatives (\$ M) <sup>3</sup>
Yukon	\$ 0.2
British Columbia	\$ 2.3
Alberta	\$ 1.7
Saskatchewan	\$ 4.4
Manitoba	\$ 4.3
Ontario <sup>4</sup>	\$ 2.7
Quebec <sup>5</sup>	\$ 7.5
Atlantic <sup>6</sup>	\$ 1.0
Total	\$ 24.1
Additional Reinvestment Envelope <sup>7</sup>	\$ 6.7
Final Total	\$ 30.8

3 Bands funded under multi-year agreements (e.g., Alternative Funding Arrangements, Financial Transfer Agreements and Canada/First Nation Funding Agreements) are excluded from the totals in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and the Atlantic. Funding for social assistance and National Child Benefit-related initiatives in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut are provided by the territorial governments. As well, self-governing bands in Yukon are excluded.

4 These amounts do not include the sole support cases remaining with the Ministry of Community Social Services, that may have been transferred before March 31, 2000 for the region of Ontario.

5 For the Quebec region, the amount includes savings from the New Family Allowance and the National Child Benefit Supplement. The total includes financial transfer agreements estimated savings for eight communities.

6 Figures for the Atlantic regions do not include New Brunswick.

7 The Additional Reinvestment Envelope is based on additional monies received by provinces/territories to the extent that they further invest in National Child Benefit-related income support and benefit programs beyond the level of their federal National Child Benefit reinvested savings. When a province or territory reinvests more than the value of its reimbursements in income support programs, INAC may be required to increase resources to enable First Nations living on-reserve to access an equivalent level of programming and services. For example, in 1998-1999, Saskatchewan implemented the Saskatchewan Child Benefit. An additional \$8.1 million was available for reinvestment.

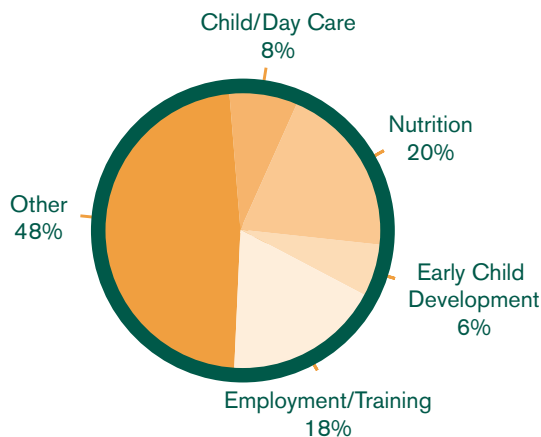


When I started looking at the criteria and the funding that was available through the National Child Benefit, we found out that there was a lot that we could do.

- Lorna Joseph, Squamish First Nation

### FIRST NATIONS REINVESTMENTS BY PROGRAM AREA

In order of priority, the following areas were the focus of reinvestment in 1998-1999 by First Nations:



For First Nation communities across Canada, the National Child Benefit is making a difference.

- Adam Beach, First Nations Actor, "Seeing the Possibilities, Making a Difference" video

The breakdown of First Nations expenditures by program area are as follows:

#### ACTUAL EXPENDITURES IN 1998-1999 ON NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT INITIATIVES <sup>8</sup>

NCB Initiatives by Program Type	Actual Total Expenditures on NCB Initiatives (\$M)
Child/Day Care	\$ 810,589.00
Child Nutrition	\$ 4,029,434.04
Early Child Development	\$ 389,238.00
Employment Opportunities/Training	\$ 4,066,230.00
Other	\$ 5,776,075.91
Sub-Total <sup>9</sup>	\$ 15,471,566.95
Additional Reinvestment Envelope	\$ 6,700,000.00
Additional Regional Reinvestment <sup>10</sup>	\$ 174,690.95
Additional Expenditures by First Nations with Multi-year agreements and Comprehensive Funding agreements <sup>11</sup>	\$ 8,693,431.00
<b>Total Reported Expenditures</b>	<b>\$ 31,039,688.90</b>

<sup>8</sup> These figures were compiled from data reported to INAC by First Nations.

<sup>9</sup> Includes amount of \$400,000 in Ontario which was not broken down by program area.

<sup>10</sup> The region of Alberta expended an additional amount beyond its projected stated total of \$1.7 million for 1998-1999.

<sup>11</sup> In some cases, First Nations were unable to deliver the reinvestment program in 1998-1999, but will do so in 1999-2000. In the case of First Nations under multi-year agreements, we are not able to provide program results and expenditures due to the specific conditions of this type of agreement. The National Child Benefit monies are included in their core budget for which they already have management flexibility. They have developed their own approach to the National Child Benefit, which can be verified through a federal transfer agreement regional management assessment. In the case of First Nations under reimbursable funding agreements, not all First Nations that received National Child Benefit funding submitted a formal report to INAC. This is due, in part, because the money was received by the First Nation late in the fiscal year which did not enable time to develop and implement National Child Benefit-specific initiatives. Therefore some First Nations subsidized existing programs that benefited children on-reserve (e.g., First Nation and Inuit Child Care, Aboriginal Head Start).

### 1999-2000 Data

The year 1999-2000 marked the beginning of the second phase of the National Child Benefit. At this time, the federal government invested an additional \$850 million in the National Child Benefit system. This translated into a reinvestment by First Nations in programs and services for families with children of approximately \$48 million. Based on reinvestment trends established in the first year of the National Child Benefit, it is anticipated that First Nations will continue to support similar programs, although community priorities may shift from year to year.

#### PROJECTED NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT REINVESTMENT FUNDS

Region	Projected Funds Available for NCB Initiatives (\$M) <sup>12</sup>
Yukon <sup>13</sup>	\$ 0.36
British Columbia	\$ 3.40
Alberta	\$ 3.50
Saskatchewan	\$ 8.60
Manitoba	\$ 8.40
Ontario	\$ 5.30
Quebec	\$ 8.50
Atlantic <sup>14</sup>	\$ 2.10
Total	\$ 40.16
Additional Reinvestment Envelope	\$ 8.60
<b>Final Total</b>	<b>\$ 48.76</b>

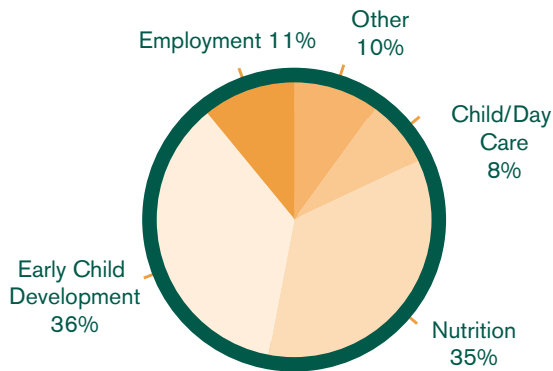
12 In calculating the figures for subsequent years, the preceding footnotes for 1998-1999 figures apply for both 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 projections.

13 Could be subject to change if a First Nation signs a self-government agreement.

14 This number is based on INAC headquarter's estimates.

#### FIRST NATIONS REINVESTMENTS BY PROGRAM AREA

In order of priority, the following areas were the focus of National Child Reinvestment funds for 1999-2000 <sup>15</sup>:



15 This information was compiled based on a "snapshot" in time and reflects 31.3 percent of total data received from First Nations.



## 2000-2001 Data

### PROJECTED NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT REINVESTMENT FUNDS

Region	Projected Funds Available for NCB Initiatives (\$M)
Yukon	\$ 0.95
British Columbia	\$ 4.20
Alberta	\$ 4.20
Saskatchewan	\$ 11.50
Manitoba	\$ 8.40
Ontario	\$ 6.30
Quebec	\$ 8.50
Atlantic <sup>16</sup>	\$ 3.00
Total	\$ 46.85
Additional Reinvestment Envelope <sup>17</sup>	
Saskatchewan	\$ 8.10
Yukon	\$ 0.24
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 55.19</b>

<sup>16</sup> This number is based on INAC headquarter's estimates.

<sup>17</sup> In 1999, \$240,000 was secured for Yukon to implement the Yukon Child Benefit in First Nation communities.

## SUMMARY

Reinvestments by First Nations tend to cover a wider range of program areas than those of their provincial and territorial counterparts; First Nations tailor their reinvestments to meet the specific needs of their individual communities. For example, First Nations living in the same province or territory may focus on different areas for reinvestment based on the priorities and the situation within their community. The uniqueness can be appreciated through the examples of current operational programs in the next chapter.

It's important to bring back a lot of the teachings.  
A lot of us have missed that.

- Language Teacher, Chehalis First Nation

### YELLOWQUILL FIRST NATION, SASKATCHEWAN

To provide youth with an opportunity to participate and practice traditional craftsmanship in a variety of trades, band elders established a program with activities ranging from storytelling to recreational sports. The youth involved in this program worked with a variety of band departments and were exposed to a variety of activities (e.g., home care renovation, clerical work, etc.). The benefits to be gained by this program were to encourage a positive social interaction and to provide motivation for youth to learn new skills that will allow them to participate in the labour market.