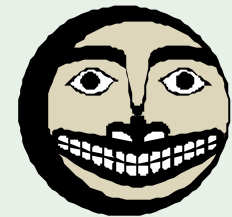


From Generation to Generation: Survival and Maintenance of Canada's Aboriginal Languages Within Families, Communities and Cities



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des villes



Indian and Northern
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et du Nord Canada



Canadian
Heritage

Patrimoine
canadien



GeoSolutions
Consulting

Canada 

History

This poster was developed to communicate the results of research being done by INAC and Canadian Heritage using census data from 1981 to 1996. It was first presented at the 2001 annual conference of the Canadian Indigenous/Native Studies Association (CINSA) at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, and subsequently updated based on consultations and feedback with Aboriginal groups and researchers. Most recently, the poster was presented at the November 2002 Aboriginal Policy Research Conference in Ottawa. The final version of the poster and the more detailed, stand-alone map adapted from the poster have been well received and generated much interest among Aboriginal groups, researchers, Friendship Centres and Cultural Education Centres, educational institutions and government departments and agencies. In an effort to raise awareness about Aboriginal languages in Canada among both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, INAC and Canadian Heritage are working together to distribute the poster and map to organizations interested in Aboriginal languages and culture.

Abstracts

The poster "***From Generation to Generation: Survival and Maintenance of Canada's Aboriginal Languages, Within Families, Communities and Cities***" presents recent research findings on various dimensions of Aboriginal languages. It provides an overview on the viability of languages, factors affecting language survival, language characteristics of the different Aboriginal groups and the mapping of Aboriginal languages across Canada, for both Aboriginal communities and cities. In addition, the poster maps the diversity and status of Aboriginal languages for both indigenous communities, such as First Nations reserves, and major urban areas.

The map "***Aboriginal Languages in Canada – 1996***" is a separate stand-alone map on Aboriginal languages that has been adapted from the poster and provides a more detailed version of the original map within the poster. This enhanced map is based on enumerated communities in the census and also provides information from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada for those First Nation communities where 1996 census data on Aboriginal languages are not available. The map illustrates in more detail the linguistic composition within cities and the variations by size of the urban populations reporting an Aboriginal mother tongue. The map also features an inset with an enlargement of British Columbia, given the significant diversity of Aboriginal languages within this province (see Table of Contents).



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Enhanced Map: Aboriginal Languages in Canada, 1996

Websites/Contacts:

For further information and enquiries concerning this poster and related research on Aboriginal languages please visit:

- INAC's Strategic Research and Analysis Directorate's website at: www.ainc-inac.gc.ca
(see also INAC's **Kids' Stop**)
- To order copies of this poster (English or French) or the detailed bilingual map "*Aboriginal Languages in Canada, 1996*", please contact INAC General Enquiries and Publications Distribution at 1-800-567-9604, TTY 1-866-553-0554, or infopubs@inac.gc.ca

Also, for other additional information, enquiries and products on Aboriginal languages in Canada please visit the following websites:

- Department of Canadian Heritage's **Aboriginal Peoples' Program** website at: www.pch.gc.ca
- Natural Resources Canada's **Atlas of Canada** website at: atlas.gc.ca
- Statistics Canada's website at: www.statcan.ca
- Industry Canada's **First Peoples on SchoolNet** website at: www.schoolnet.ca/aboriginal/
(For section profiling Aboriginal languages and plaques from across Canada see: www.schoolnet.ca/aboriginal/tribute/)
- **First Nations Confederacy of Cultural Education Centres** website at: www.fnccec.com

From Generation to Generation: Survival and Maintenance of Canada's Aboriginal Languages Within Families, Communities and Cities

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada - 2002

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TRANSLATION CONTRIBUTORS

Translation: FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

- Algonquin: Josée Whiteduck, Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg (Translation: "The ones with the wisdom (elders) to the children."), Maniwaki, Quebec
- Coast Salish, Hul'qumi'num dialect: Ron George, Cowichan Tribes (Translation: "From the Elders to their children"), British Columbia
- Gwich'in: William G. Firth: Fort McPherson, Northwest Territories
- Huron-Wendat, Iroquoian Family: François Vincent, Conseil de la Nation huronne-wendat, Quebec
- Inuktitut (Pangnirtung dialect): Looee Okalik, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (Translation: "From Parent to Child"), Ontario
- Michif (Métis Language, Algonquian Family): Norman Fleury, Manitoba Métis Federation, (Translation: "Giving the language"), Manitoba
- Micmac: Anne Levi, Big Cove Band Council, New Brunswick
- Mohawk: Margaret Peters, Mohawk Nation, Akwesasne, in collaboration with the Native North American Travelling College, Ontario
- Montagnais: Angèle Verreault, Conseil des Montagnais du Lac St. Jean, Quebec
- Oji-Cree1: Glen Fiddler, Sandy Lake First Nation, Ontario
- Oji-Cree2: Wawatay Native Communications Society, Ontario
- Ojibwe: Paul Nadjiwan, Ojibwe Cultural Centre, Ontario
- Ojibway: Wawatay Native Communications Society, Ontario
- Oneida, Iroquoian Family: Olive Elm, Onyota'a:ka Language and Cultural Centre, Ontario (Translation: "ongoing families")
- Saanich, Salish Family: Adelynne Claxton, Saanich Native Heritage Society, British Columbia
- Stoney, (Dakota) Siouan Family: Peter L. Wesley, Stoney Nation Education Program, Alberta
- Swampy Cree, Algonquian Family: Ojibway and Cree Cultural Centre, Ontario
- Tlingit: Bessie Cooley, Teslin Tlingit Council, (Translation: "From older to younger person"), Yukon

WHY IS LANGUAGE IMPORTANT?

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

“Canada’s Aboriginal languages are many and diverse, and their importance to Aboriginal people immense. Language is one of the most tangible symbols of culture and group identity. It is not only a means of communication, but a link which connects people with their past, and grounds their social, emotional and spiritual vitality.” (Norris, 1998)

- Language is critical in transmitting culture and identity from one generation to another.
- Loss of language severely handicaps transmission of culture.
- With loss goes unique ways of looking at the world, explaining the unknown and making sense of life.

WHY IS LANGUAGE IMPORTANT?

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

Why is Intergenerational Transmission of Language Important?



- Language transmission from one generation to another is a critical factor in Aboriginal language maintenance and revitalization.
- Unlike other minority language groups, Aboriginal languages cannot rely on immigration flows for maintaining the population of speakers.
- According to UNESCO's (1996) "Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of Disappearing", a language is considered endangered if it is not learned by at least 30% of children in the community.
 - 1996 Census indicates that only 20% of Aboriginal children in Canada learn an Aboriginal mother tongue.

WHY IS LANGUAGE IMPORTANT?

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

Why is Intergenerational Transmission of Language Important?



Intergenerational transmission is necessary for:

- Maintenance: intergenerational transmission of viable languages in communities where the Aboriginal language is both the mother tongue and main language of communication.
- Revitalization: capacity to transmit from one generation to the next must be restored for endangered languages in communities that are undergoing shift to the dominant language.
 - It is not enough to increase the number of second-language speakers, it is also necessary to increase the number of first-language speakers and to restore the transmission of that language from one generation to the next.

WHY IS LANGUAGE IMPORTANT?

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

Barriers to Intergenerational Transmission



- The forces of modernization and the prevalence of more dominant languages in everyday life contribute to declining use of many minority languages, including Aboriginal languages.
- Historical factors such as the discouragement of Aboriginal language use in residential schools may have served to rupture the transmission of language from one generation to another.
- The fact that most Aboriginal languages were predominately oral may also have diminished, in an already difficult environment, their chances of survival.

WHY IS LANGUAGE IMPORTANT?

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

Study Objectives

- To explore which of Canada's Aboriginal languages are flourishing and which are in danger of disappearing.
- To examine factors that differentiate **viable** languages from **endangered** ones and that affect language survival and maintenance.
- To compare language use and maintenance patterns between 1981 and 1996 to understand what happened to Aboriginal languages over the years and what the future may hold for them.
- To analyze the transmission of Aboriginal languages from generation to generation – from parent to child – within families.
- To map diversity, distribution and strength of Aboriginal languages for both communities and cities across Canada.



For an explanation of terms and concepts used in this poster, please see section "Data Sources and Definitions."

WHY IS LANGUAGE IMPORTANT?

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

Important Note

The categorization of Aboriginal languages in this study is based on the classification system used in the censuses of Canada. This classification organizes individual Aboriginal languages by language families and language isolates (languages that cannot be related to any of the major families). While this system is standard in its approach, it is recognized that there can be variants of this classification system (e.g. the language family of “Salish” as used here is elsewhere broken down into Coast Salish and Interior Salish families); and, that individual languages can be known by names other than those used in the census (e.g. Nootka in the census is known as Nuuchahnulth in British Columbia). (Source: The First People’s Cultural Foundation of B.C.) As well, names of languages can also vary in their spelling (e.g. Ojibway in census is also spelled as Ojibwe - see reference for translation in poster). Furthermore, the categorization used here does not provide for further classification of dialects within languages (e.g. the Cowichan dialect of “Hul’qumi’num” used by the Coast Salish people, or the Cree dialect “Swampy-Cree” – see references for translations in poster).

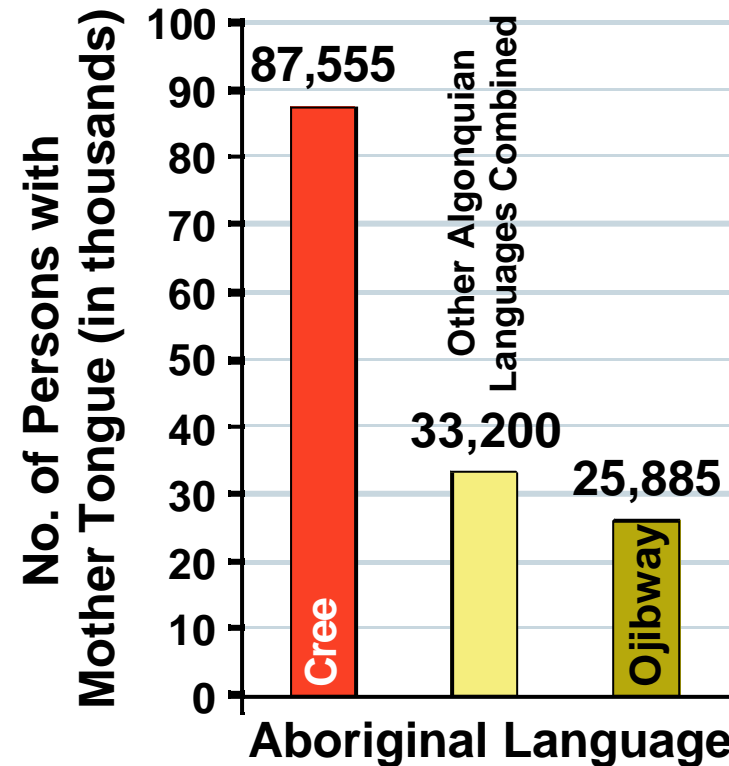
- In addition, separate analysis of the Métis (Michif – see translation in poster) language was not possible, since the language was not classified separately in the census, but rather included within the category “Algonquian languages, n.i.e.”.
- It is not possible within the scope of this study to provide all the variations of language names or their dialects, furthermore any errors or omissions are unintentional. For more information on Aboriginal languages in Canada please refer to websites provided below.

BACKGROUND

- Canada's Aboriginal languages are many and diverse – the current 50 languages of Canada's Aboriginal peoples belong to 11 major language families or isolates – 10 First Nations and Inuktitut – and may include several dialects within each language.
- In the 1996 Census, 207,000 persons reported an Aboriginal language as their mother tongue.
- The three largest families are Algonquian, Inuktitut, and Athapaskan, which together represent 93% of Aboriginal mother tongue population; Cree, Ojibway and Inuktitut are the largest and most widespread languages.

Major Algonquian Languages

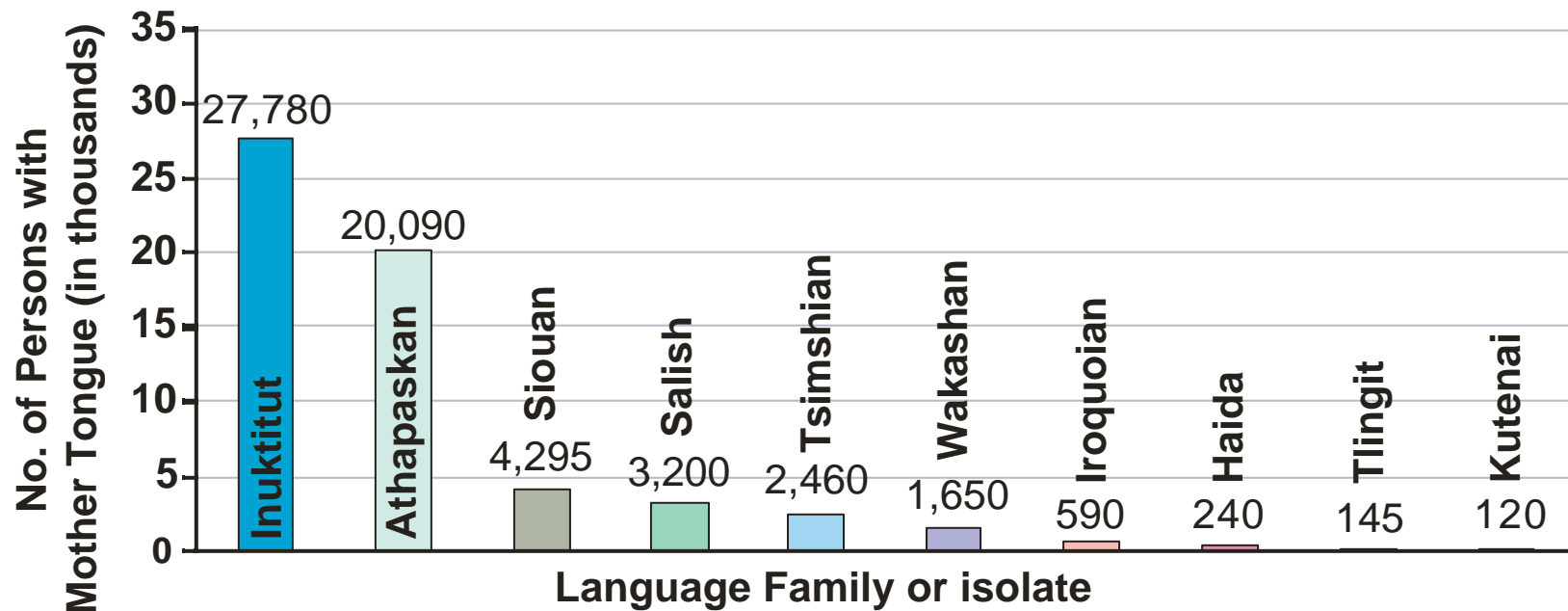
- The Algonquian family is the largest of Canada's Aboriginal language families.



Canada, 1996 Census

Other Major Aboriginal Language Families

- Some languages are large, others are small. The eight smallest language families account for only 7% of the Aboriginal mother tongue population.

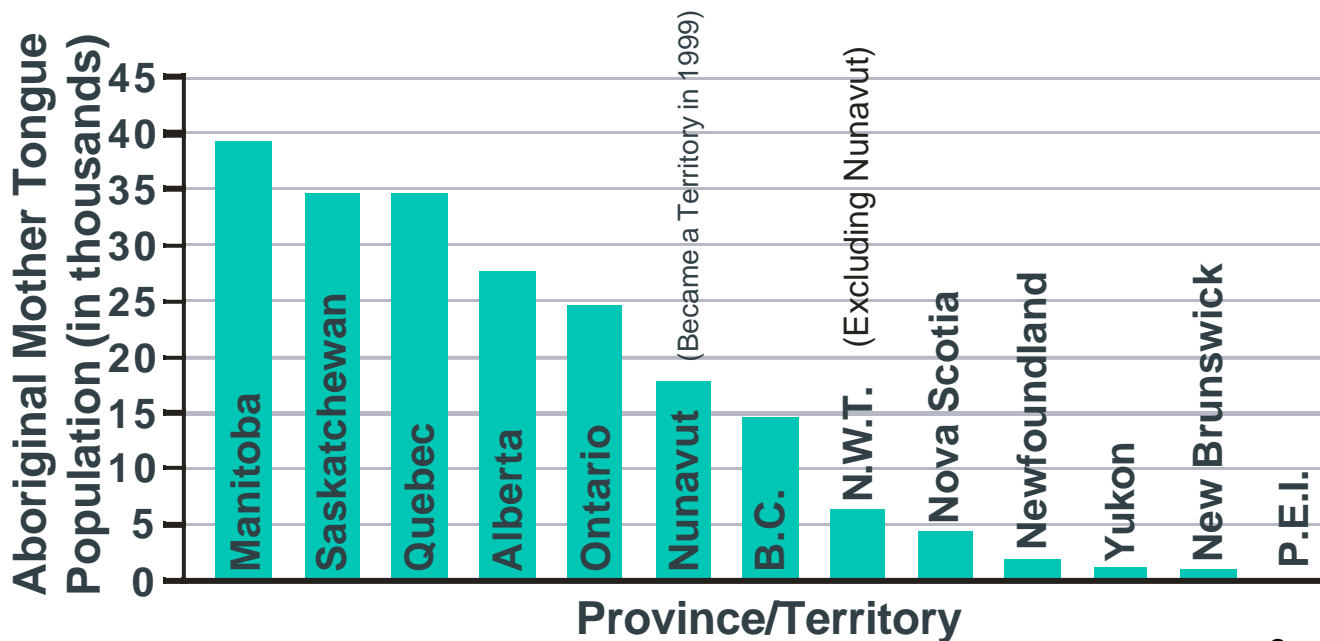


Canada, 1996 Census

REGIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Aboriginal Mother Tongue Population

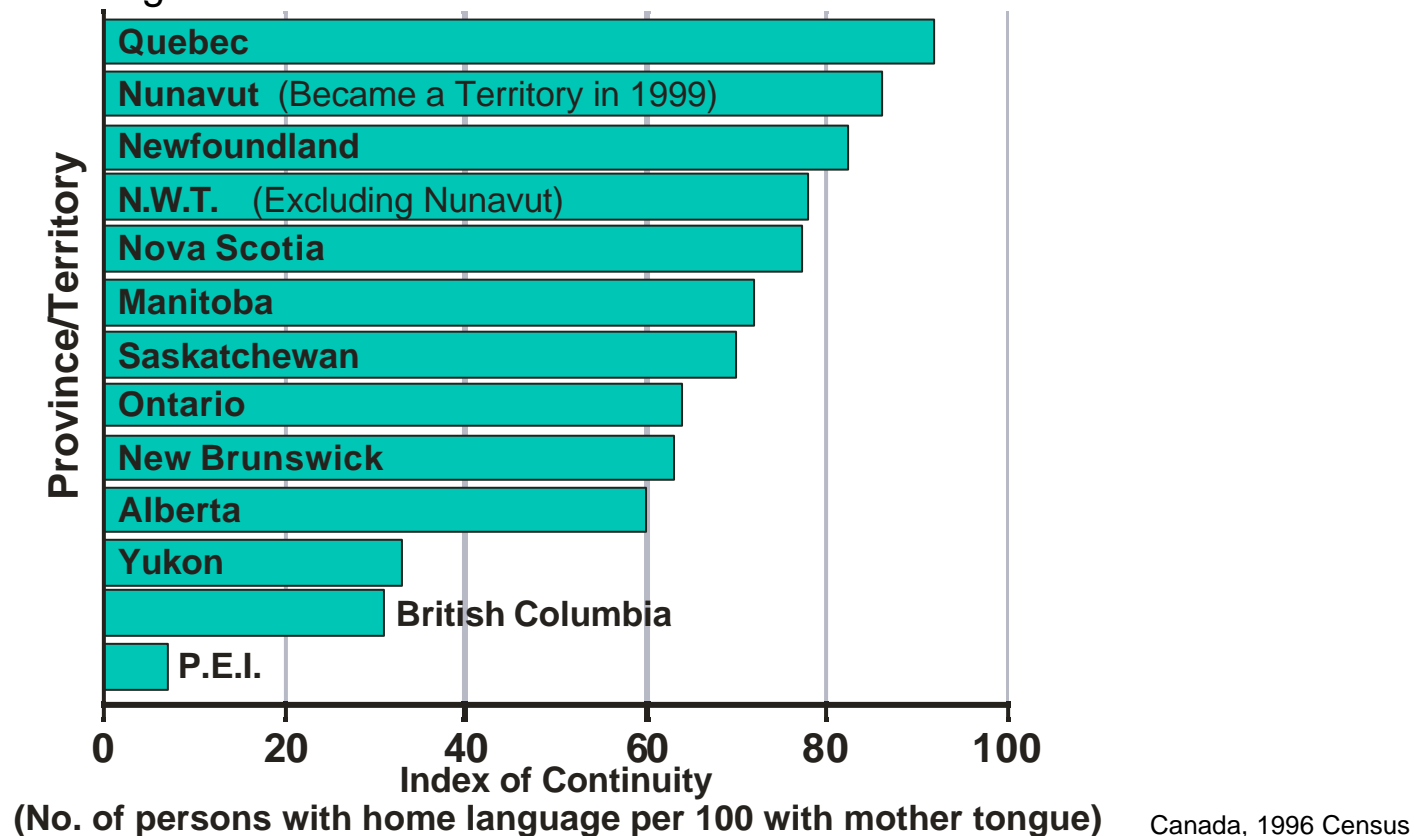
- Geography influences size and diversity of languages: Because of their large, widely dispersed populations, the Algonquian languages account for the highest share of Aboriginal languages in all provinces except British Columbia; British Columbia has the greatest diversity of languages, home to about half of all individual languages but because of the small size of these groups, it accounts for only 7% of people with an Aboriginal mother tongue.



Canada, 1996 Census

Language Continuity

- Languages, such as Attikamek and Inuktitut in Quebec and Inuktitut in Nunavut are flourishing; in sharp contrast most of British Columbia's many small and diverse languages are endangered.



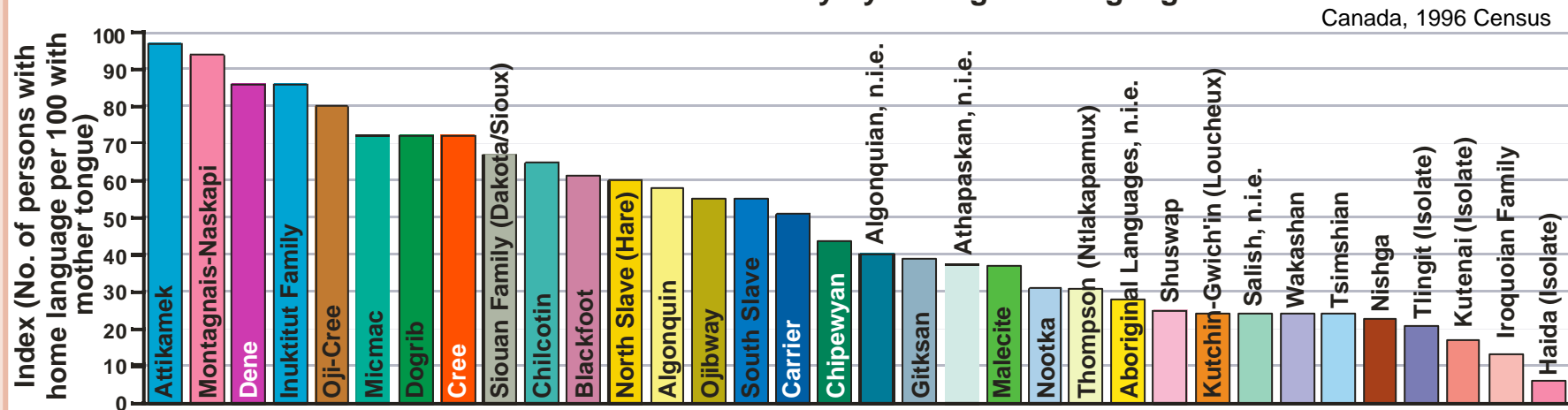
The State of Aboriginal Languages

- For Aboriginal people great losses have occurred: out of some 50 languages, about half are either close to extinction or endangered. Over the past 100 years or more, nearly ten once flourishing languages have become extinct; at least a dozen are on the brink of extinction.
- Large languages are more likely to flourish – only 3 can be considered large enough to be secure from threat of extinction in the long-run.
- While some small languages are viable, many smaller languages are endangered.
- Passing on the language from one generation to another is critical for its survival and continuity.

Language Continuity and Intergenerational Transmission

- The ratio between mother tongue and home language is an important indicator of language vitality – transmission from one generation to the next is difficult when a language is no longer spoken at home.
- Inuktitut and Cree are highly likely to be passed on to the next generation, with relatively high continuity (e.g. 86 persons speak Inuktitut at home for every 100 persons with an Inuktitut mother tongue).
- In sharp contrast, many smaller languages especially in British Columbia, such as Haida, with only 6 persons speaking it at home for every 100 persons with a Haida mother tongue, have extremely low chances of being passed on to the younger generation.
- Yet other smaller languages, such as Attikamek and Montagnais-Naskapi, show good prospects for intergenerational transmission with continuity indexes of greater than 90.

Index of Continuity by Aboriginal Language



Language classification: “viable” and “endangered”

- This 5-category classification of language survival is based on M. Dale Kinkade’s 1991 study, “The Decline of Native Languages in Canada”. Languages which are reported by the census are classified into the “viable” (including “viable and small”) and “endangered” categories (See Table). Examples of languages **already extinct** or **near extinction** are provided separately.
 1. **Already Extinct.**
 2. **Near Extinction:** beyond the possibility of revival (spoken by only a few elderly people).
 3. **Endangered:** spoken by enough people to make survival a possibility if sufficient community interest and concerted educational programs are present.
 4. **Viable but Small:** more than 1,000 speakers and spoken in isolated and/or well-organized communities with strong self-awareness.
 5. **Viable:** large enough population base that long-term survival is relatively assured.

For discussions on viable and endangered Aboriginal languages see UNESCO, 1996; RCAP, 1994; INAC, 1990; L. Drapeau, 1995; Norton and Fettes, 1994; Kinkade, 1991; Burnaby and Beaujot, 1986; and Priest, 1985.

Languages Already Extinct

- Huron, Petun, Neutral, St. Lawrence Iroquoian (Iroquoian Family)

Note: While Huron–Wendat is extinct in the sense that the last Aboriginal speakers died in the first half of the 20th Century, there are efforts being made to bring the language back to life, as evidenced by the translation in this poster. (John Steckley, Professor, Humber College, Personal Communication, July 2002).

- Beothuk (Isolate)
- Pentlatch, Comox (1 speaker in 1990, now deceased) (Salish Family)
- Tsetsaut, Nicola (Athabaskan* Family)

Languages Near Extinction

- Abenaki, Delaware (Algonquian Family)
- Tagish, Han, Tahltan, Sarcee (Athabaskan* Family)
- Iroquoian Family – Tuscarora and Seneca
- Straits Salish (Saanich dialect), Squamish, Sechelt (Salish Family)
- Nitinaht (Wakashan Family)
- Southern Tsimshian (Tsimshian Family)

Canadian Aboriginal Languages in the United States

- Some languages have no equivalent in the United States
e.g. Cree, Wakashan, Tsimshian and some Athabaskan* languages
- Languages with equivalent in the United States:
 - Languages worse off in the United States:
e.g. Salishan Family, Kutenai, Haida and some Iroquoian languages
 - Languages better off in the United States:
e.g. Tlingit (Isolate), Tuscarora, Seneca (Iroquoian Family), Delaware (Algonquian Family)
 - Languages doing fairly well in both countries – Ojibway, Inuktitut, Dakota

Source: Kinkade 1991 (*Language spelling as in Kinkade.)

VIABLE OR ENDANGERED?

Size, Continuity and Viability

- Cree, Inuktitut and Ojibway are the only **viable** languages with large population bases.
- Many of the smaller languages often with far fewer than 1,000 persons, especially most of British Columbia's diverse languages have very low prospects for continuity and are either **endangered** (e.g. Nishga, Haida) or **near extinction**.
- But some of the smaller languages elsewhere, with only a few thousand people or more, can be considered **viable** if their prospects for continuity are high (e.g. Attikamek, Dene).

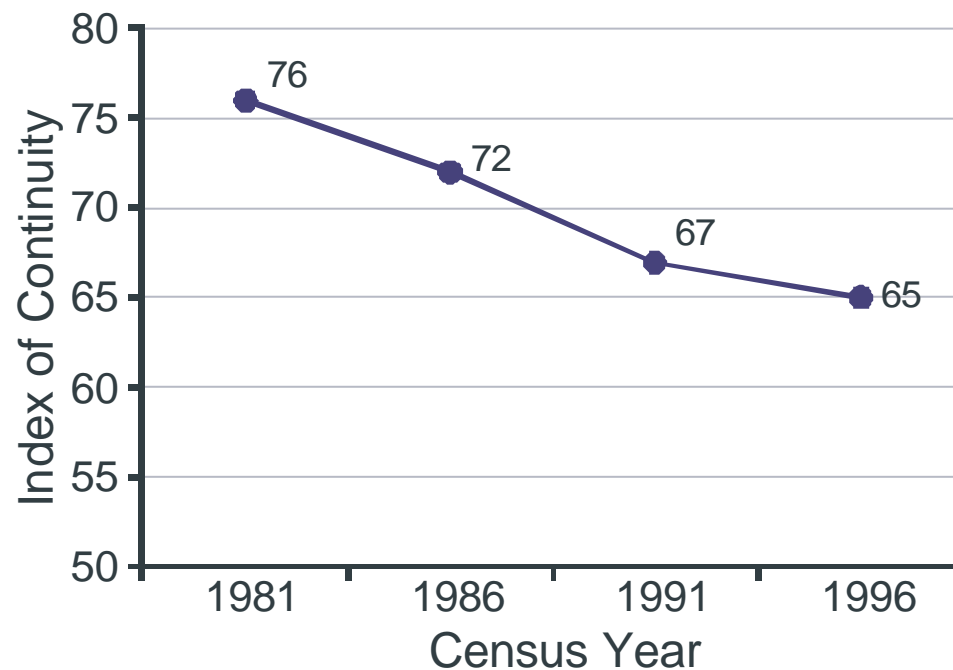
* Note: Data for the Iroquoian Family is not representative due to the significant impact of incomplete enumeration of reserves for this language family. Other languages such as those in the Algonquian Family may be affected to some extent by incomplete enumeration.

Source: Adapted from Norris, 1998 (Canadian Social Trends, Winter, No. 51), Statistics Canada.

Classification of Aboriginal Languages by Viable and Endangered Canada 1996		
Aboriginal Languages (Viable, Endangered, Uncertain)	Mother Tongue Population (Single & Multiple)	STATUS of Language
Total Aboriginal Languages	208,610	Mix of Viable and Endangered
ALGONQUIAN FAMILY	146,635	mostly viable
• Cree	87,555	viable large
• Ojibway	25,885	viable large
• Montagnais-Naskapi	9,070	viable small
• Micmac	7,310	viable small
• Oji-Cree	5,400	viable small
• Attikamek	3,995	viable small
• Blackfoot	4,145	viable small
• Algonquin	2,275	viable small
• Malecite	655	viable small
• Algonquian, n.i.e. (inc. Michif)	350	uncertain
INUKTITUT FAMILY	27,780	viable large
ATHAPASKAN FAMILY	20,090	mostly viable
• Dene	9,000	viable small
• South Slave	2,620	viable small
• Dogrib	2,085	viable small
• Carrier	2,190	viable small
• Chipewyan	1,455	viable small
• Athapaskan, n.i.e.	1,310	uncertain
• Chilcotin	705	viable small
• Kutchin-Gwich'in (Loucheux)	430	endangered
• North Slave (Hare)	290	endangered
SIOUAN FAMILY (Dakota/Sioux)	4,295	viable small
SALISH FAMILY	3,200	endangered
• Salish, n.i.e.	1,850	endangered
• Shuswap	745	endangered
• Thompson (Ntlakapamux)	595	endangered
TSIMSHIAN FAMILY	2,460	mostly endangered
• Gitksan	1,200	viable small
• Nishga	795	endangered
• Tsimshian	465	endangered
WAKASHAN FAMILY	1,650	endangered
• Wakashan, n.i.e.	1,070	endangered
• Nootka	590	endangered
IROQUOIAN FAMILY*	590	uncertain
• Mohawk	350	uncertain
• Iroquoian, n.i.e.	235	uncertain
HAIDA (Isolate)	240	endangered
TLINGIT (Isolate)	145	endangered
KUTENAI (Isolate)	120	endangered
ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES, n.i.e.	1,405	endangered

Continuity of Aboriginal Language

- Language vitality declines between 1981 and 1996, with signs of steady erosion in home language use and increasingly older mother tongue speakers.
- The strength of Aboriginal language continuity has declined steadily over the past 15 years in Canada.
- Practically all age groups, for both males and females, experienced a decline in language continuity with a shift in home language use from Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal.
- The decline in continuity is most pronounced for women, especially in the child-bearing/working age groups.

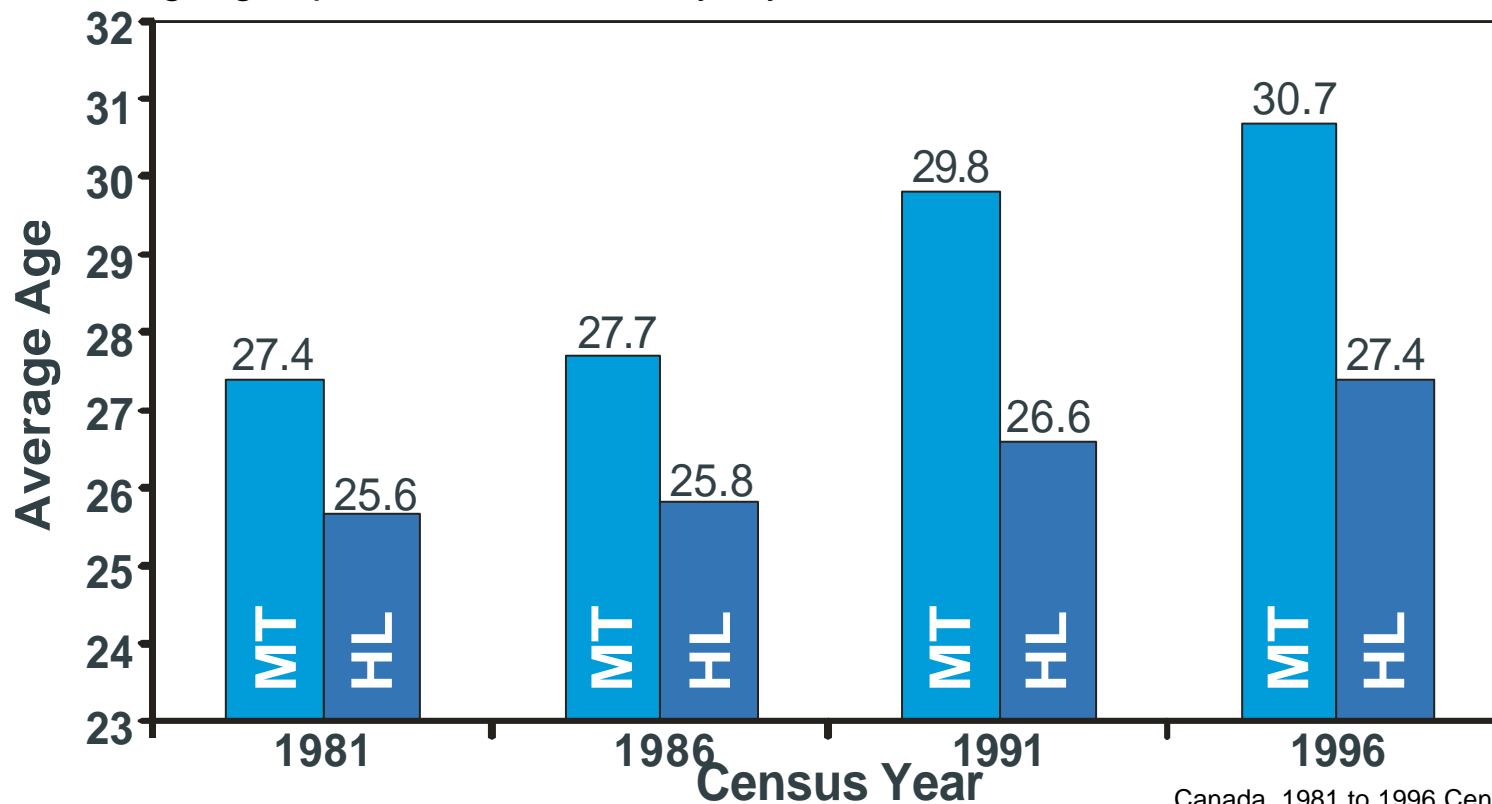


Canada, 1981 to 1996 Censuses, based on single responses.

TRENDS IN LANGUAGE USE AND MAINTENANCE

Average Age of Population with Aboriginal Mother Tongue (MT) or Home Language (HL)

- For Aboriginal languages as a whole average ages are getting higher. The average age of the mother tongue population rose by 3 years, while the average age of home language speakers increased by 2 years.

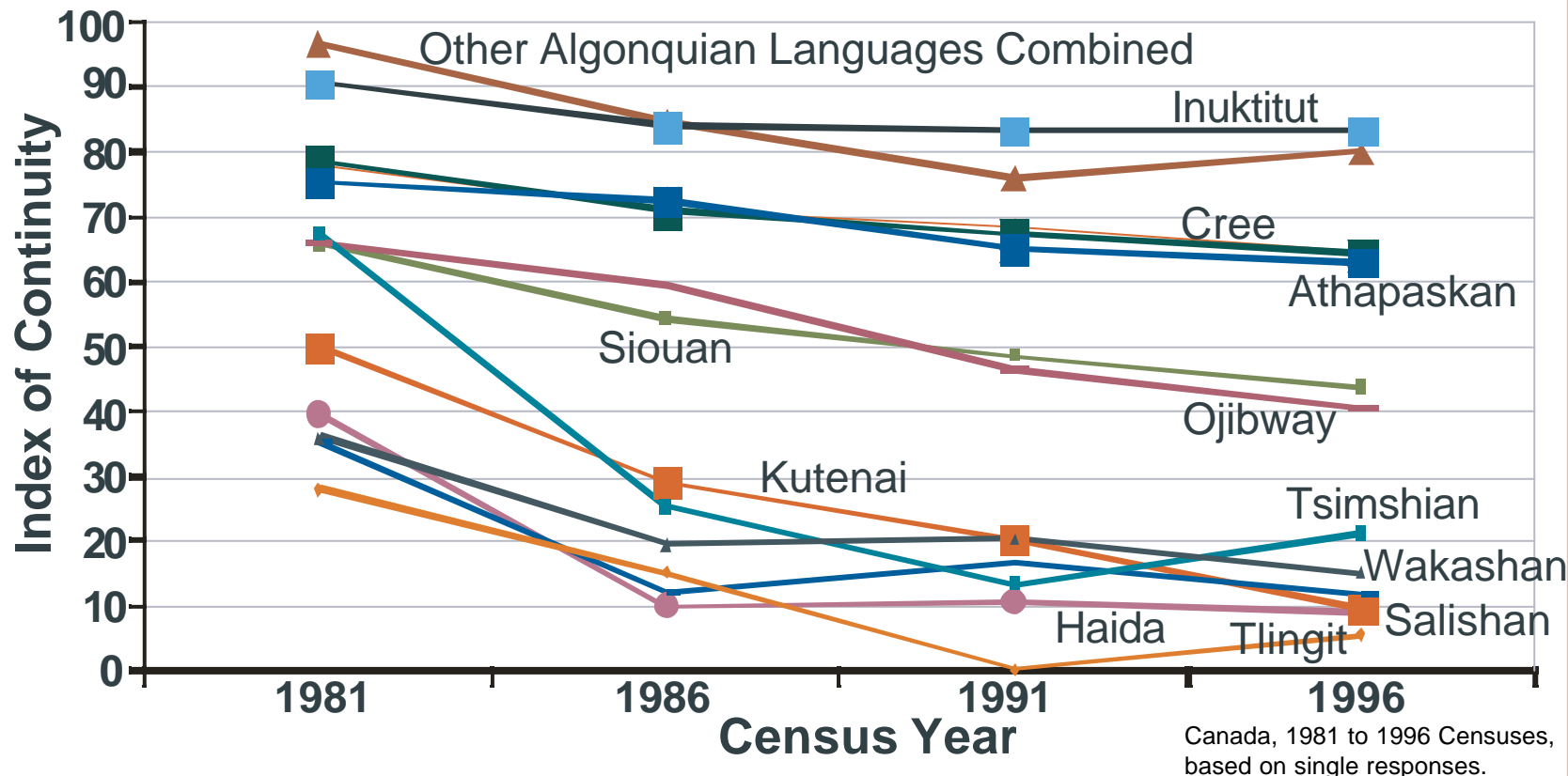


Canada, 1981 to 1996 Censuses, based on single responses.

TRENDS IN LANGUAGE USE AND MAINTENANCE

Continuity of Aboriginal Languages

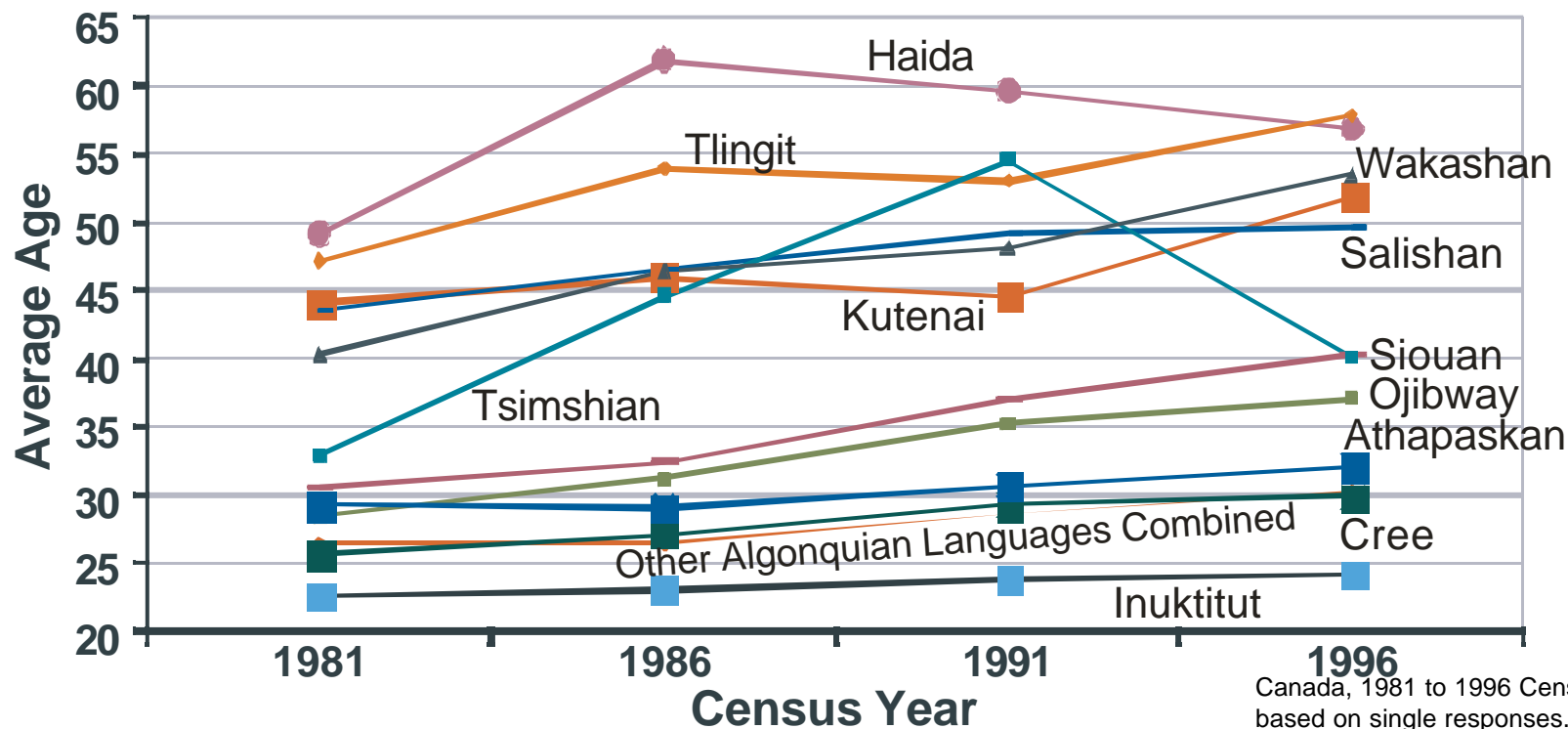
- Although most languages experienced a steady erosion in linguistic vitality, endangered ones suffered the most.
- By 1996, for every 100 speakers with an Aboriginal mother tongue, an average of about 70 used an Aboriginal home language among viable groups, compared with 30 or fewer among endangered groups.



TRENDS IN LANGUAGE USE AND MAINTENANCE

Average Age of Mother Tongue Population by Aboriginal Languages

- Average age and rates of population aging (as affected by intergenerational transmission and fertility) vary by language. Not only do viable languages have younger populations, but the average age of these groups rises more slowly than that of endangered languages. For example, between 1981 and 1996, Inuktitut experienced only a slight average age increase from 23 to 24 years; in sharp contrast, the average age of the population with a Tlingit mother tongue increased from 47 to 58 years. Endangered languages are aging more rapidly, thus accelerating their slide towards extinction.



Importance of Speaking Language at Home

- To survive, a language must be passed on from one generation to the next and the most effective way of making this happen is to speak it at home where children will learn it as their mother tongue.
- Language spoken at home is used as a working tool of everyday life; in contrast, when learned as a second language, it is often used in potentially limited situations.
- In 1996, only 26% of 800,000 persons with Aboriginal identity reported an Aboriginal mother tongue. Even fewer (18%) indicated an Aboriginal home language. In contrast, 30% reported that they had knowledge of an Aboriginal language; that is, they could speak and understand well-enough to conduct a conversation.
- Thus, while some people shift from an Aboriginal to another home language, there is evidence that others may be learning Aboriginal languages later in life, but this is still not equivalent to learning a language as a mother tongue.

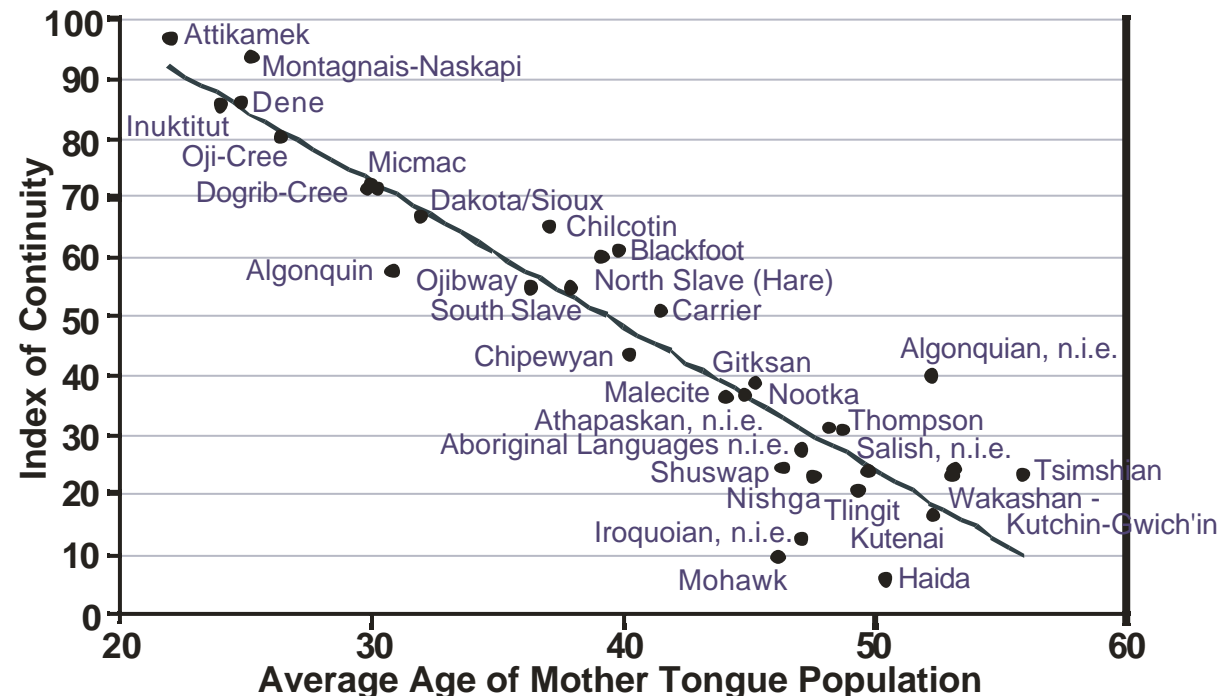
Family and Life Cycle Events

- We can better understand how language use changes over time by looking at stages in the life cycle. Events during the transition years, such as movement away from home, labour force entry and family formation, including intermarriage, can all potentially accelerate language decline.

Language Continuity by Average Age of Mother Tongue Population

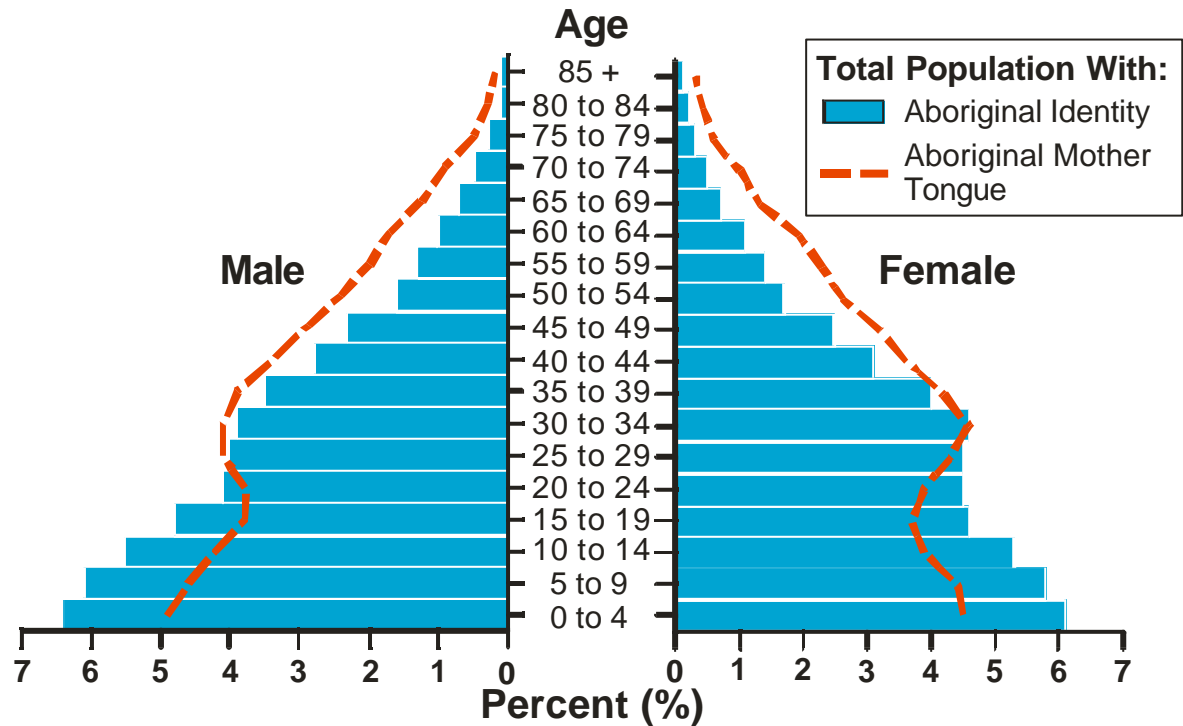
- The average age of those who have an Aboriginal mother tongue reveals the extent to which language transmission has been successful.
- A language that has an “old” mother tongue population, as evidenced by a high average age (e.g. Kutenai) indicates that few young people have it as a mother tongue. As the older people who have an Aboriginal mother tongue die, so may their languages.
- The younger the speakers, the healthier the language.
- High language continuity is associated with “young” mother tongue populations (e.g. Inuktitut).

Canada, 1996 Census



% Distribution of Aboriginal Identity and Mother Tongue Populations by Age Group and Gender

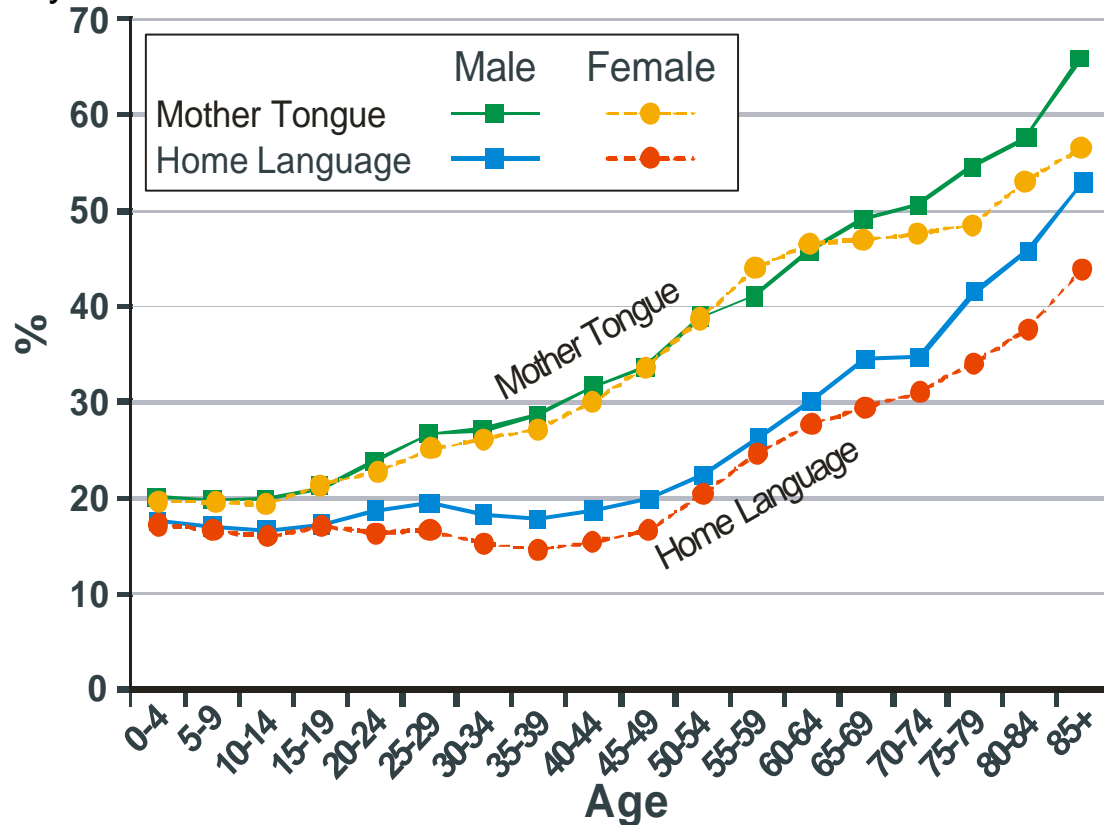
- The population reporting an Aboriginal mother tongue is significantly older than the total population with an Aboriginal identity, with median average ages of 30.7 and 25.5 years respectively.
- The mother tongue population pyramid is narrower at the base and wider at older ages, compared to the pyramid for the overall Identity Population.
- The contrast in age-sex structures demonstrates that children and young adults are less likely to have an Aboriginal mother tongue than older cohorts.



Canada, 1996 Census

% of Aboriginal Population with Aboriginal Mother Tongue or Home Language

- Older persons, especially older men, are more likely than younger generations to report an Aboriginal mother tongue or home language.
- The use of an Aboriginal language in the home is significantly lower in the working ages, especially for females.



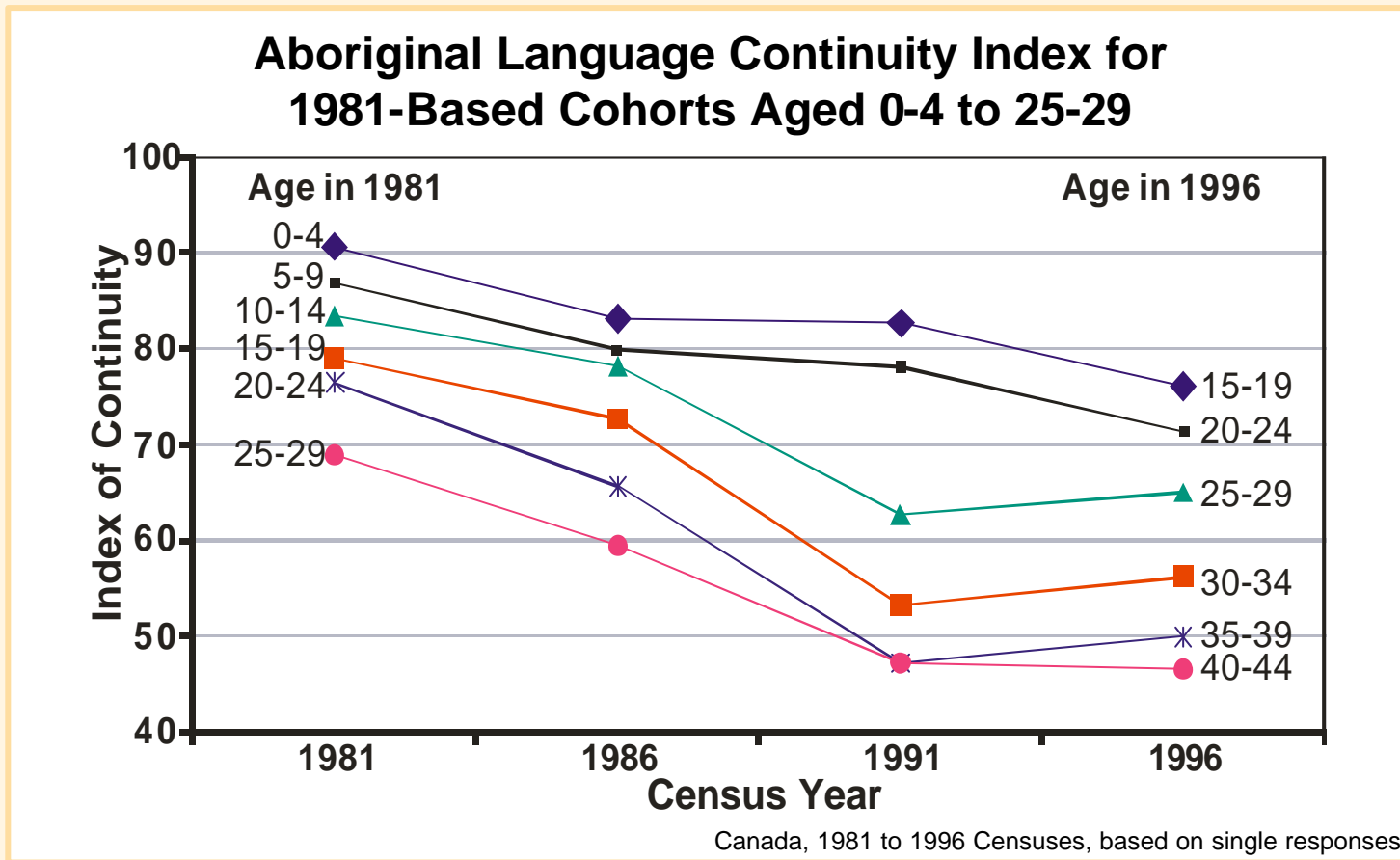
Canada, 1996 Census

LIFE CYCLE AND LANGUAGE USE

Following the extent to which a group of people in a particular age cohort shifts from an Aboriginal to a non-Aboriginal home language, (as measured by the continuity index) provides some understanding of how the life cycle affects language transmission and maintenance.

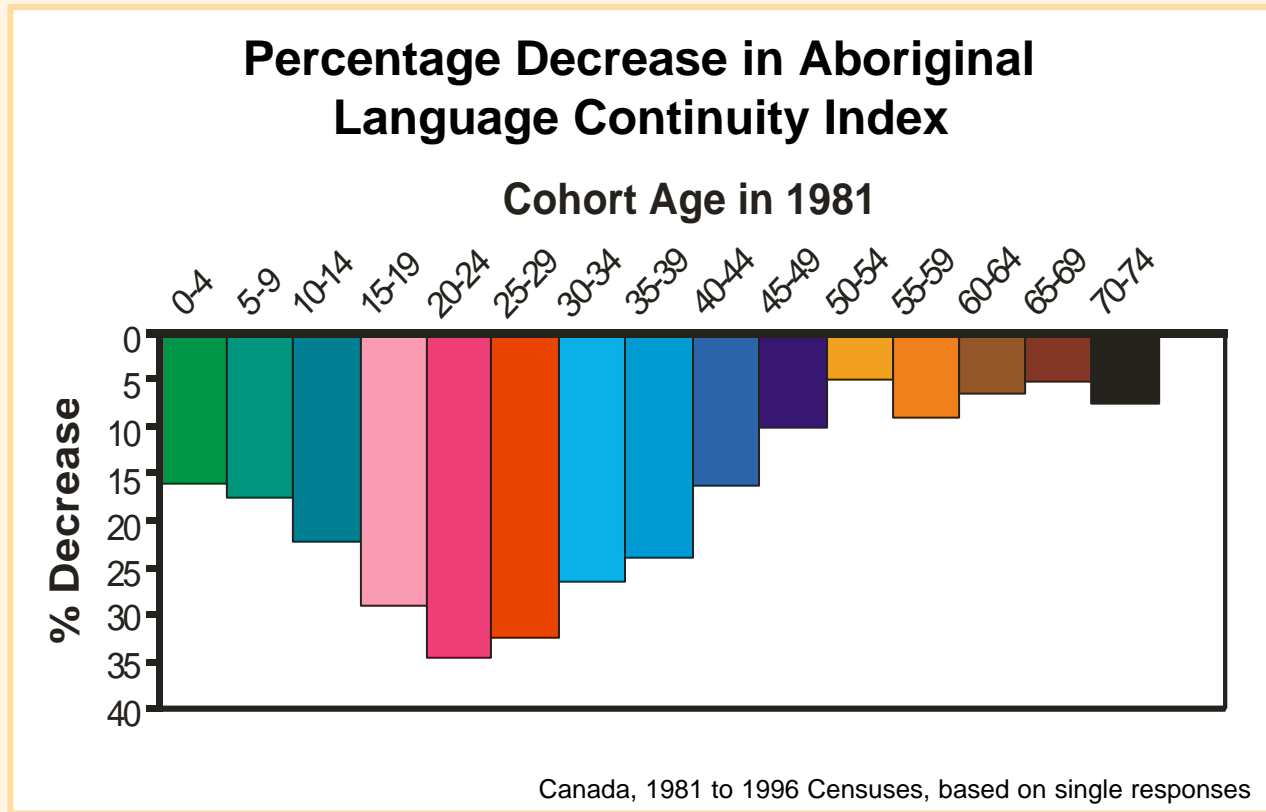
- In 1981, the cohort of young children, under the age of 5 years, had not yet shifted from speaking an Aboriginal language to a non-Aboriginal at home (as evidenced by a continuity index of 91 children with an Aboriginal home language, for every 100 with an Aboriginal mother tongue). As it entered its teen years, this cohort experienced a significant decline in speaking an Aboriginal language at home; such that by 1996 the continuity index for this cohort, now aged 15 to 19, had dropped to 76.
- But the decline is most pronounced among youth in their transition years when they move, enter the labour force and start families, especially among women. The continuity index of 74 for the cohort of women aged 20-24 years in 1981, declined sharply to 45 in 1996, for the cohort now aged 35 to 39.
- With older cohorts nearing the end of their working lives and moving into their retirement years the decline in home language use is less pronounced since most of the loss would have already occurred over younger ages. A similarly slow erosion occurs among seniors.
- **The fact that Aboriginal language loss is most pronounced during the family formation years, especially for women, has serious implications for the transmission of Aboriginal languages to the younger generations, because these are the very years during which women tend to bring up young children.**

LIFE CYCLE AND LANGUAGE USE

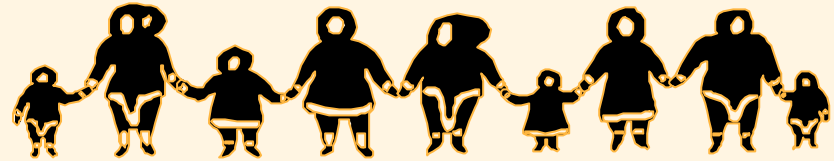


Note: Differences in reporting ethno-cultural affiliation from one census to another may have affected the evolution of language responses, especially between the 1986 and 1991 period. However, an analysis of the evolution of socioeconomic characteristics of Aboriginal populations living in urban areas, where most of the differences in reporting occurred, suggests this phenomenon has not contributed significantly to the observed trends in language use. For more details see: Norris, 1998; Norris & MacCon, forthcoming.

LIFE CYCLE AND LANGUAGE USE



FROM PARENT TO CHILD



Language Transmission in Families from Parent to Child

- Looking at the children (aged 5 -14) of those parents who have an Aboriginal mother tongue can help assess transmission of the language to the next generation. Among the nearly 58,000 children:
 - Overall at least 90% of these children have the ability (knowledge) to conduct a conversation in the Aboriginal language of their parent; but less than half (47%) of children have their parents' Aboriginal mother tongue; while only 38% of children speak an Aboriginal language at home. Erosion of home language use is occurring among younger generations.
- Transmission of languages from parent to child is much lower for endangered languages:
 - **The proportions of children with an Aboriginal mother tongue are well below UNESCO's 30% minimum; furthermore, this also appears to be the case for some of the smaller viable languages.**
 - **Children are much more likely to learn an endangered language as a second language, rather than as a mother tongue.**
 - **Practically none of the endangered Aboriginal languages are spoken by children at home. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that these languages could be close to extinction within a generation.**
- Children learning an Aboriginal language as a second language may go some way towards preventing, or at least slowing down, the extinction of endangered languages – which is encouraging. However, if the language is not their mother tongue they are less likely to pass it on to their own children.

FROM PARENT TO CHILD

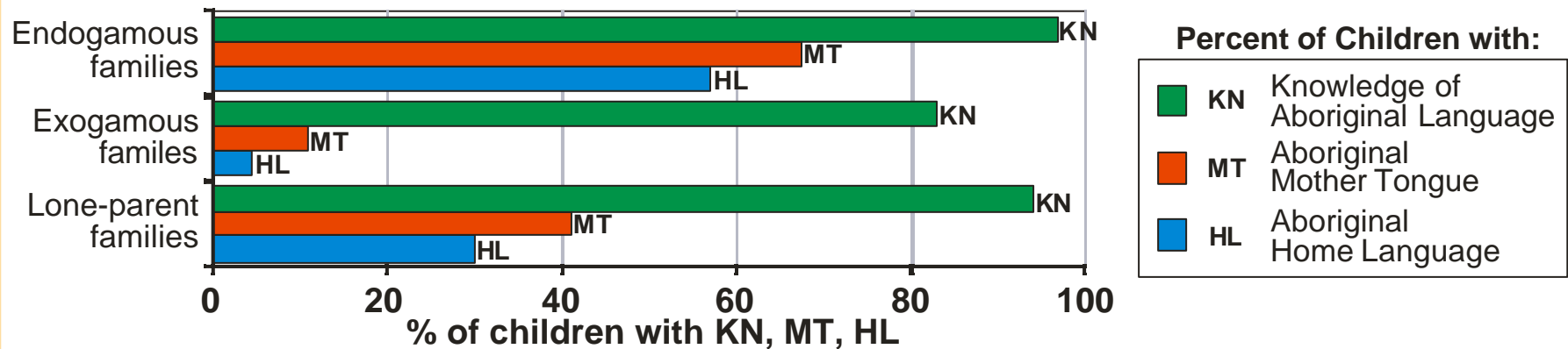
Passing on Language from Parent to Child by **Viable** and **Endangered** Languages (% of Children with Knowledge of an Aboriginal Language, or Aboriginal Mother Tongue or Home Language), Canada, 1996

Mother Tongue of Parent(s) (Viable , Endangered , Uncertain)	% of Children With at Least One Parent Having An Aboriginal Mother Tongue:		
	Able to speak the language	With Aboriginal Mother Tongue	With Aboriginal Home Language
ALGONQUIAN FAMILY	94.5	43.8	34.0
• CREE	96.7	45.4	35.7
• OJIBWAY	87.1	24.9	16.0
• MONTAGNAIS-NASKAPI	98.5	87.3	81.1
• MICMAC	96.0	49.3	30.9
• OJI-CREE	95.9	58.0	43.7
• ATTIKAMEK	96.9	93.3	91.8
• BLACKFOOT	90.7	7.9	4.6
• ALGONQUIN	89.5	56.8	17.9
• MALECITE	86.8	2.6	7.9
INUKTITUT FAMILY	98.1	79.0	69.9
ATHAPASKAN FAMILY	90.9	41.4	33.2
• DENE	94.4	66.8	58.1
• SOUTH SLAVE	93.0	28.7	18.9
• DOGRIB	96.7	50.0	32.8
• CARRIER	88.7	7.5	4.7
• CHIPEWYAN	79.8	11.0	7.3
• ATHAPASKAN, n.i.e.	80.7	12.3	7.0
• CHILCOTIN	90.0	8.0	4.0
• KUTCHIN-GWICH'IN(LOUCHEUX)/NORTH SLAVE(HARE)	74.4	11.6	4.7
SIOUAN FAMILY (DAKOTA/SIOUX)	83.1	38.6	33.1
SALISH FAMILY	67.5	8.9	1.6
TSIMSHIAN FAMILY	89.8	10.2	0.8
WAKASHAN FAMILY	52.5	3.4	0.0
IROQUOIAN FAMILY	43.8	31.3	0.0
HAIDA-TLINGIT-KUTENAI (Isolates)	64.7	23.5	0.0
TOTAL ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES	93.7	47.1	37.6

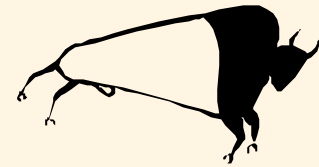
FROM PARENT TO CHILD

Language Transmission by Family Structure and Intermarriage

- Family structure and exogamy (intermarriage – mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal languages) appear to be significant factors in the transmission of an Aboriginal language from parent to child, either as a mother tongue or home language; but less so in the case of the child’s knowledge of the language.
- In terms of language transmission, children fare best within endogamous marriages (when both parents have Aboriginal mother tongue), followed by lone-parent families, and are generally “worst off” within exogamous marriages.
- Impact of residence on language must also be considered in interpretation, since endogamous marriages are most likely to occur within Aboriginal communities.



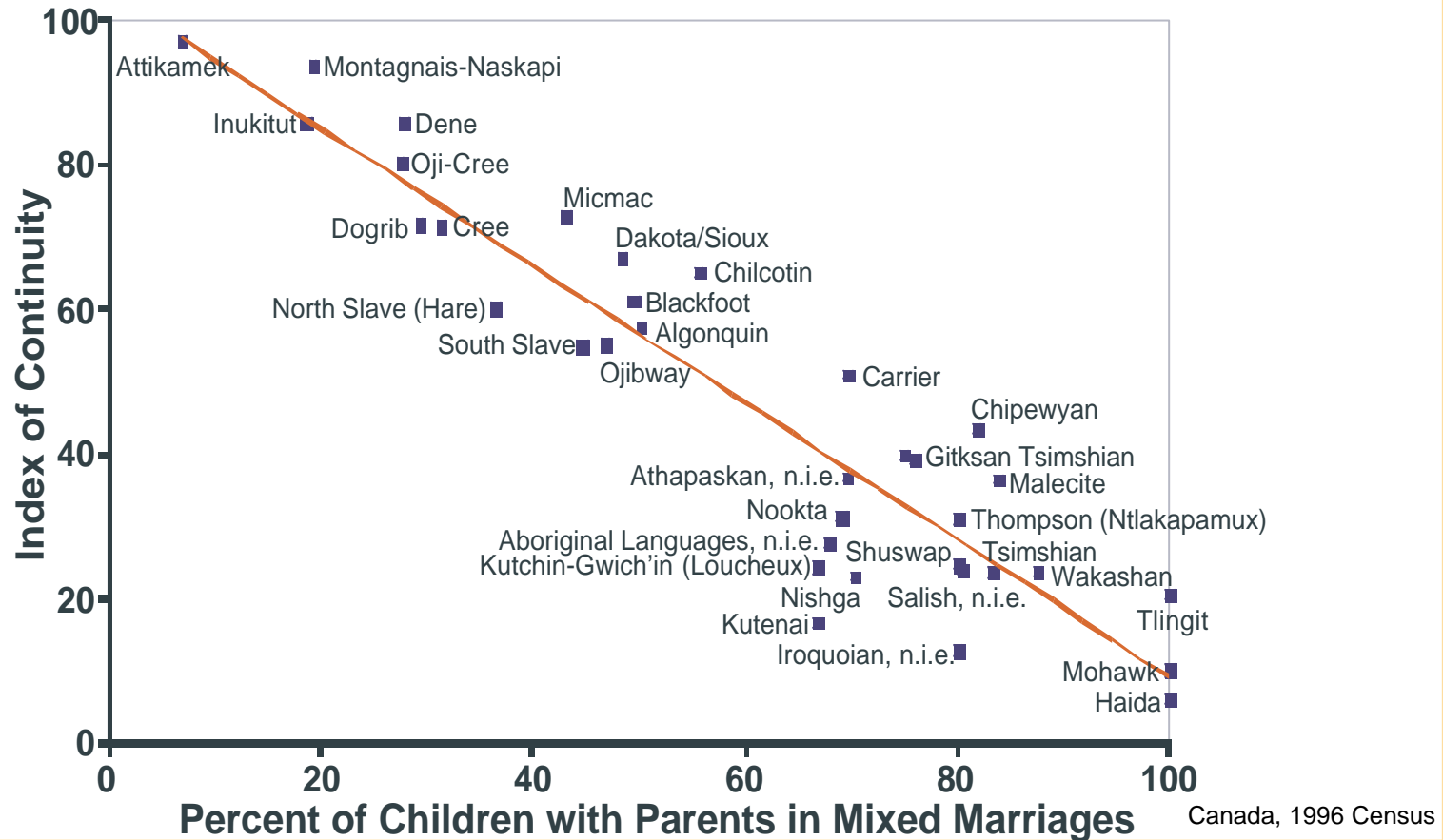
Canada, 1996 Census



FROM PARENT TO CHILD

Language Continuity by Exogamy

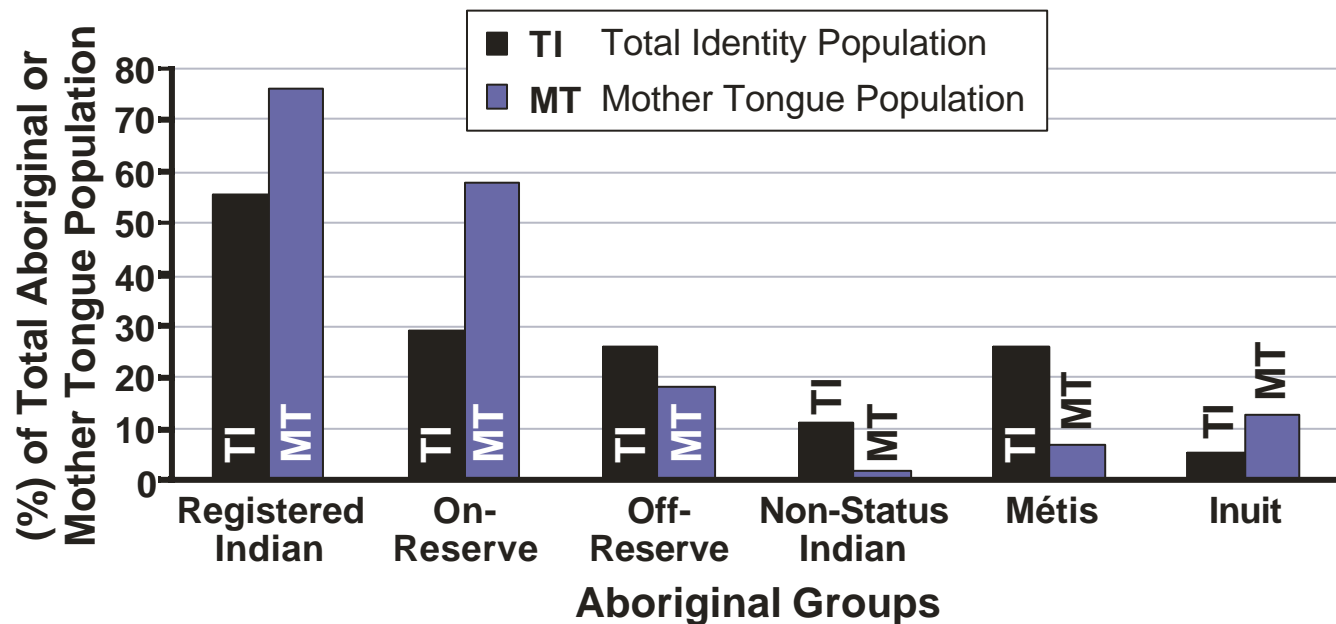
- A high degree of out-marriage – exogamy – is associated with diminished continuity of language. There is a strong inverse linear association between language continuity and exogamy.



- Groups that live in remote communities or in settlements with concentrated populations of Aboriginal speakers, such as Registered Indians on-reserve or Inuit, generally find it easier to retain their language than groups, such as the majority of Non-Status Indians or Métis, who live off-reserve, outside of such communities.
- The strength or continuity of a particular language varies by location and type of community. Viable languages tend to be spoken in isolated and/or well-organized communities, with large population groups.

Distribution of Aboriginal Groups by Total Identity Population and by Mother Tongue Population

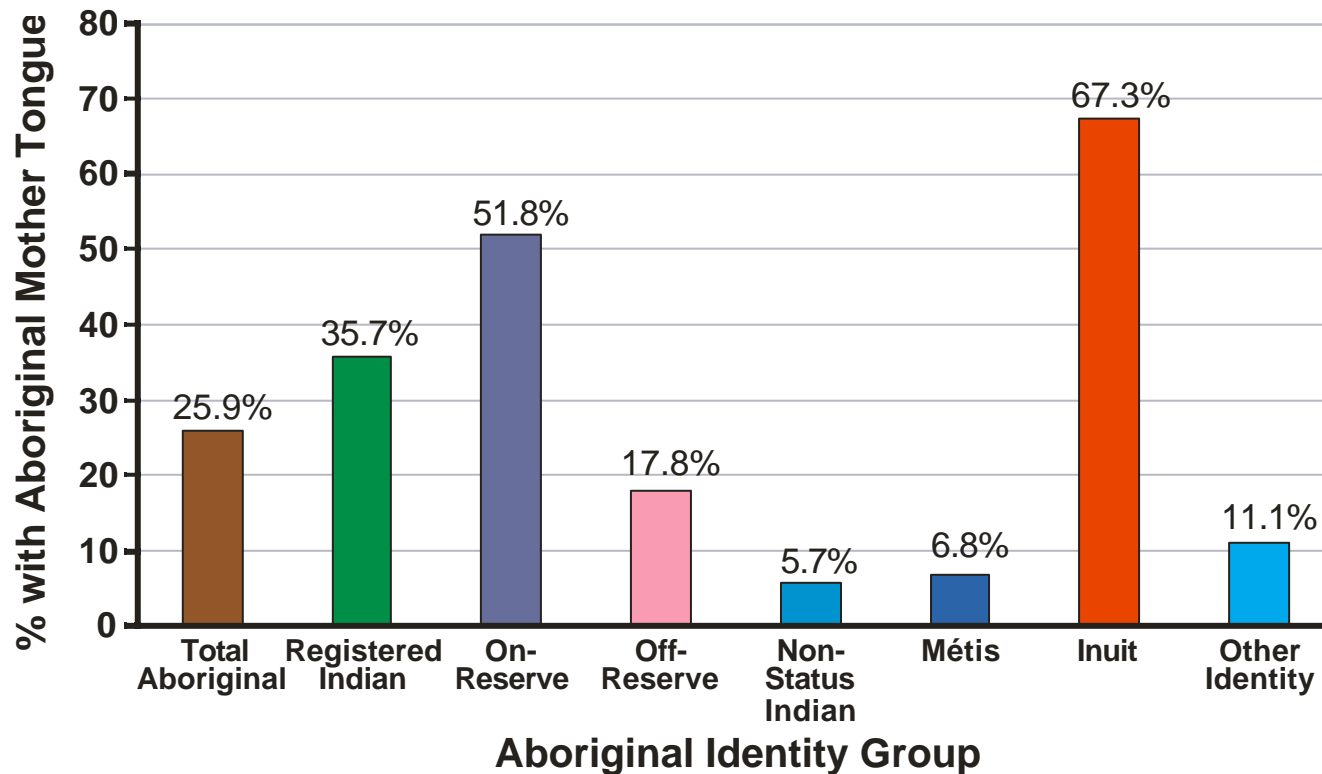
- Registered Indians account for the vast majority of the Aboriginal population reporting an Aboriginal mother tongue, disproportionately higher than their share of the total Identity Population.



Canada, 1996 Census

Percent of Group with Aboriginal Mother Tongue

- Clearly, northern communities and reserves tend to support the maintenance and transmission of Aboriginal languages. In contrast, the off-reserve environment poses major threats to Aboriginal languages.



Canada, 1996 Census

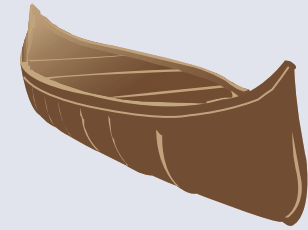
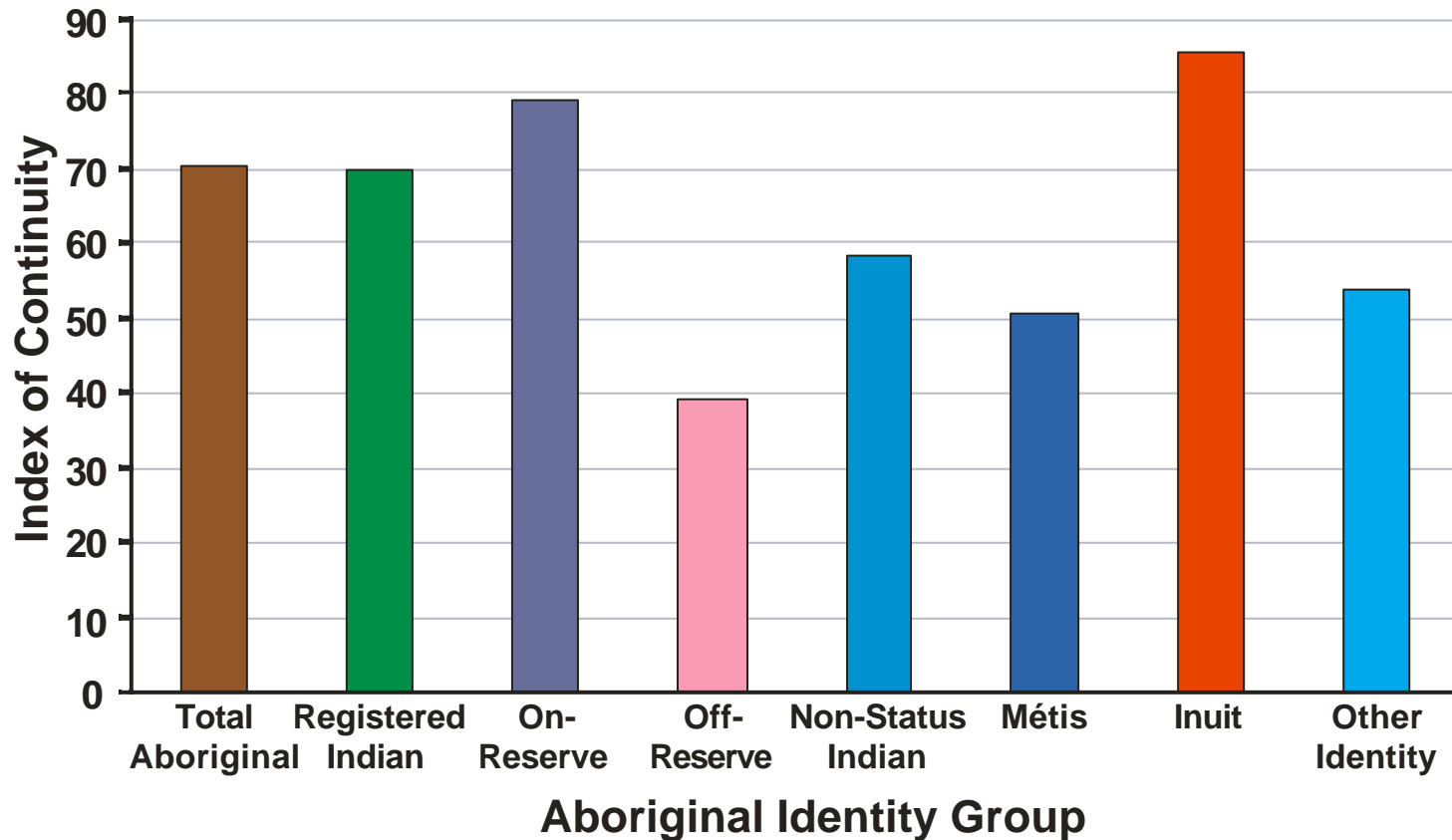


Image of Algonquin canoe, courtesy of The Canadian Canoe Museum, www.canoemuseum.net.

Index of Aboriginal Language Continuity by Aboriginal Group

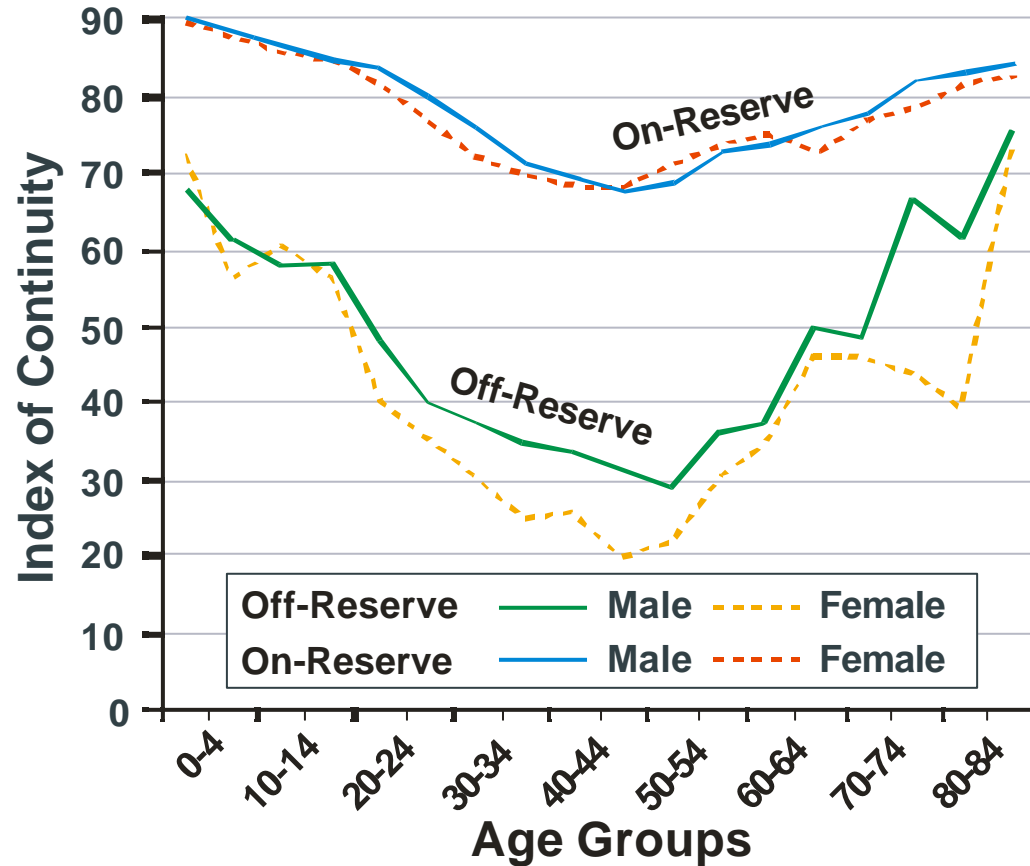
- Aboriginal language continuity is strongest in Inuit communities and among Registered Indians on-reserve.



Canada, 1996 Census

Index of Aboriginal Language Continuity by On- and Off-Reserve

- Erosion of Aboriginal home language use is most pronounced off-reserve, especially among the working age population and women in these age groups.



Canada, 1996 Census

For sake of simplicity, the term “cities” is being used interchangeably with the Statistics Canada definition of Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) and Census Agglomeration (CA) (see: Data Sources and Definitions). However, it should be noted that in some cases the term city is not necessarily the best characterization of a CA (e.g. Cape Breton).

- **Compared to the Aboriginal population overall, the off-reserve Aboriginal population, particularly in “cities”, does not fare well in its language use.** About 1 in 5 people (19%) with an Aboriginal mother tongue reside in cities, while only 1 in 10 people (10%) with an Aboriginal home language reside in cities. According to the 1996 Census:
- Within cities, **10%** of people reporting an Aboriginal Identity indicated an Aboriginal mother tongue; while for Canada overall 26% of the Identity Population indicated an Aboriginal mother tongue; similarly,
- **4%** of Aboriginal people in cities reported an Aboriginal home language, compared to 18% overall; and
- **14%** of Aboriginal people in cities reported knowledge of an Aboriginal language, compared to 29% overall.

Distribution of Aboriginal Identity Population by Language Indicators by Place of Residence

	Canada Total	On Reserve		Off Reserve		Cities – CMA/CAs (includes reserves within CMA/CA boundaries)		Cities – CMA/CAs adjusted (excludes reserves within CMA/CA boundaries)	
		Number	% of Canada	Number	% of Canada	Number	% of Canada	Number	% of Canada
Total Aboriginal Population	799,000	232,145	29%	566,865	71%	381,645	48%	360,600	45%
Mother Tongue	207,045	118,105	57%	88,940	43%	39,600	19%	31,600	15%
Home Language	145,390	94,120	65%	51,270	35%	15,200	10%	9,500	7%
Knowledge	233,900	128,135	55%	105,765	45%	52,500	22%	43,400	19%

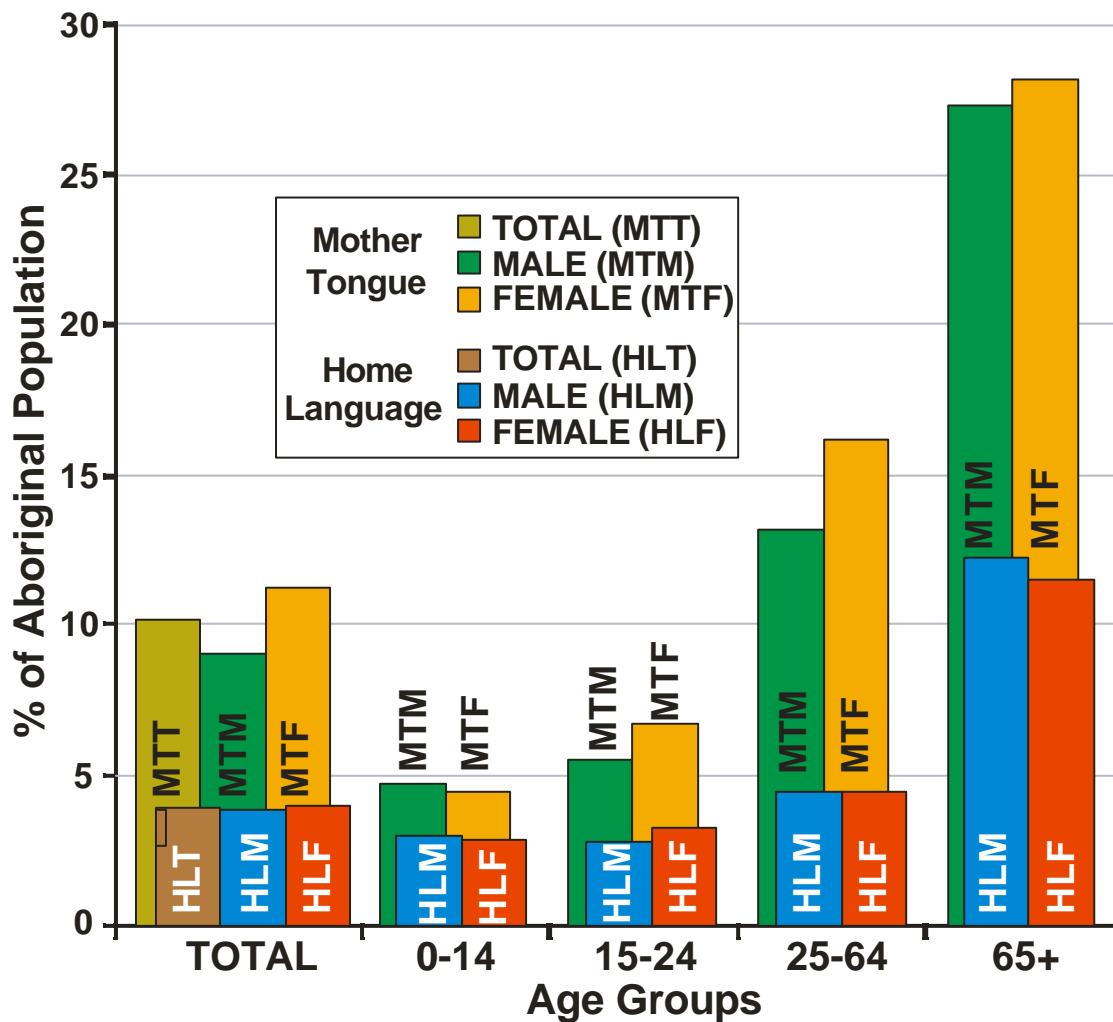
Canada, 1996 Census

Compared to Aboriginal Communities, the Aboriginal population located in cities is less likely to use an Aboriginal language at home and more likely to learn it as a second language.

- For every 100 persons with an Aboriginal mother tongue in cities 132 persons reported knowledge of an Aboriginal language, compared to just 117 persons for Canada overall. The contrast is even sharper if we consider that the ability index for Registered Indian population on-reserve is close to 100, indicating that practically all of those with a knowledge of an Aboriginal language learned it as a mother tongue.
- For every 100 persons with an Aboriginal mother tongue in cities only 40 persons spoke an Aboriginal language at home, compared to 70 persons for Canada overall. Again, the contrast is even sharper if we consider that the continuity index for Registered Indians on-reserve is 80 indicating that a significant majority of those with an Aboriginal mother tongue also speak it at home.
- Therefore, in cities a greater proportion of the population reporting an ability to conduct a conversation likely learned it as second language either in school or later in life.

% of Aboriginal Identity Population in Cities (CMA/CAs) with an Aboriginal Mother Tongue or Home Language

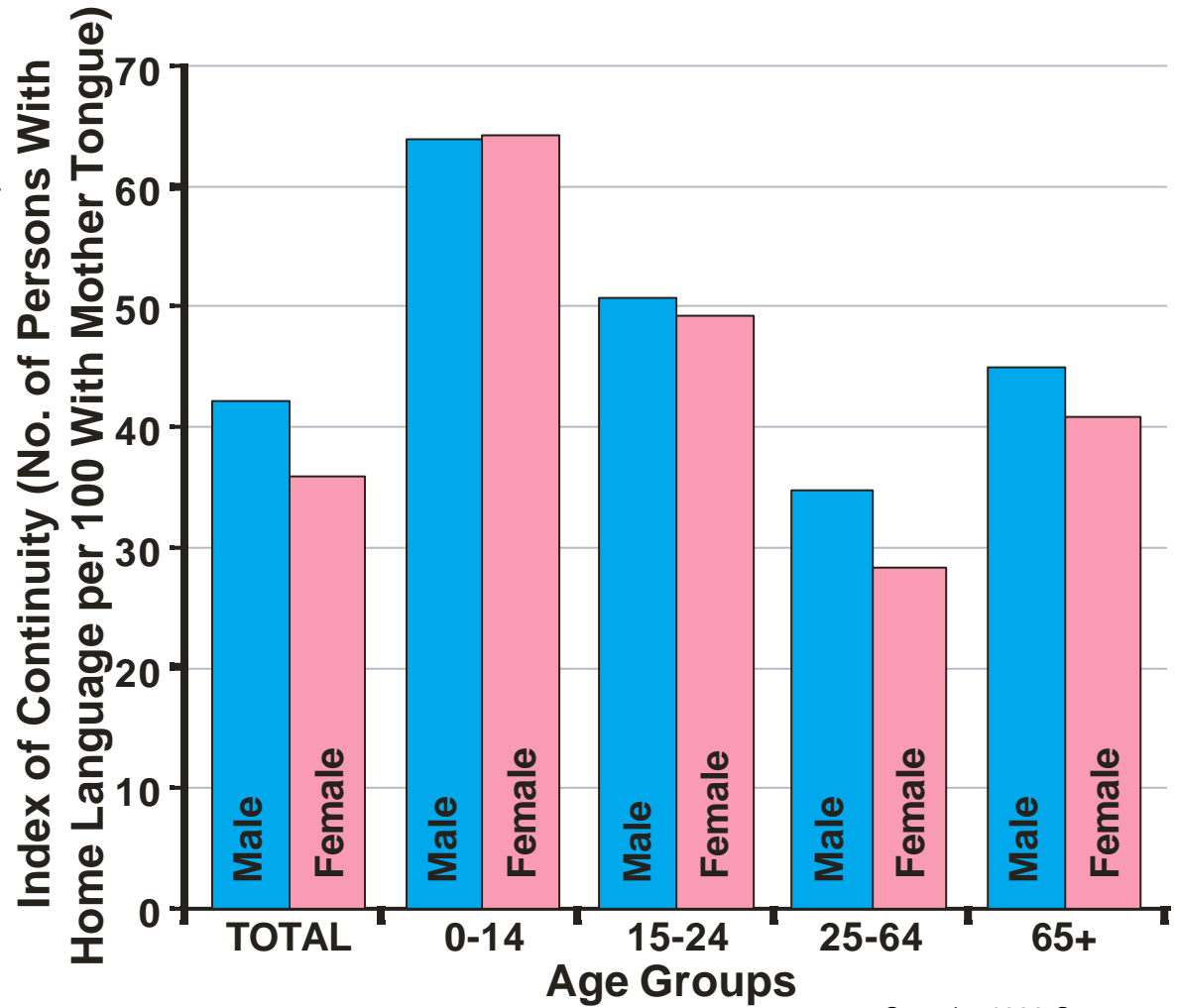
- As for Canada overall, much higher proportions of the older generations of Aboriginal people residing in cities report an Aboriginal mother tongue or home language compared to younger generations.



Canada, 1996 Census

Index of Continuity for Aboriginal Identity Population in Cities (CMA/CAs)

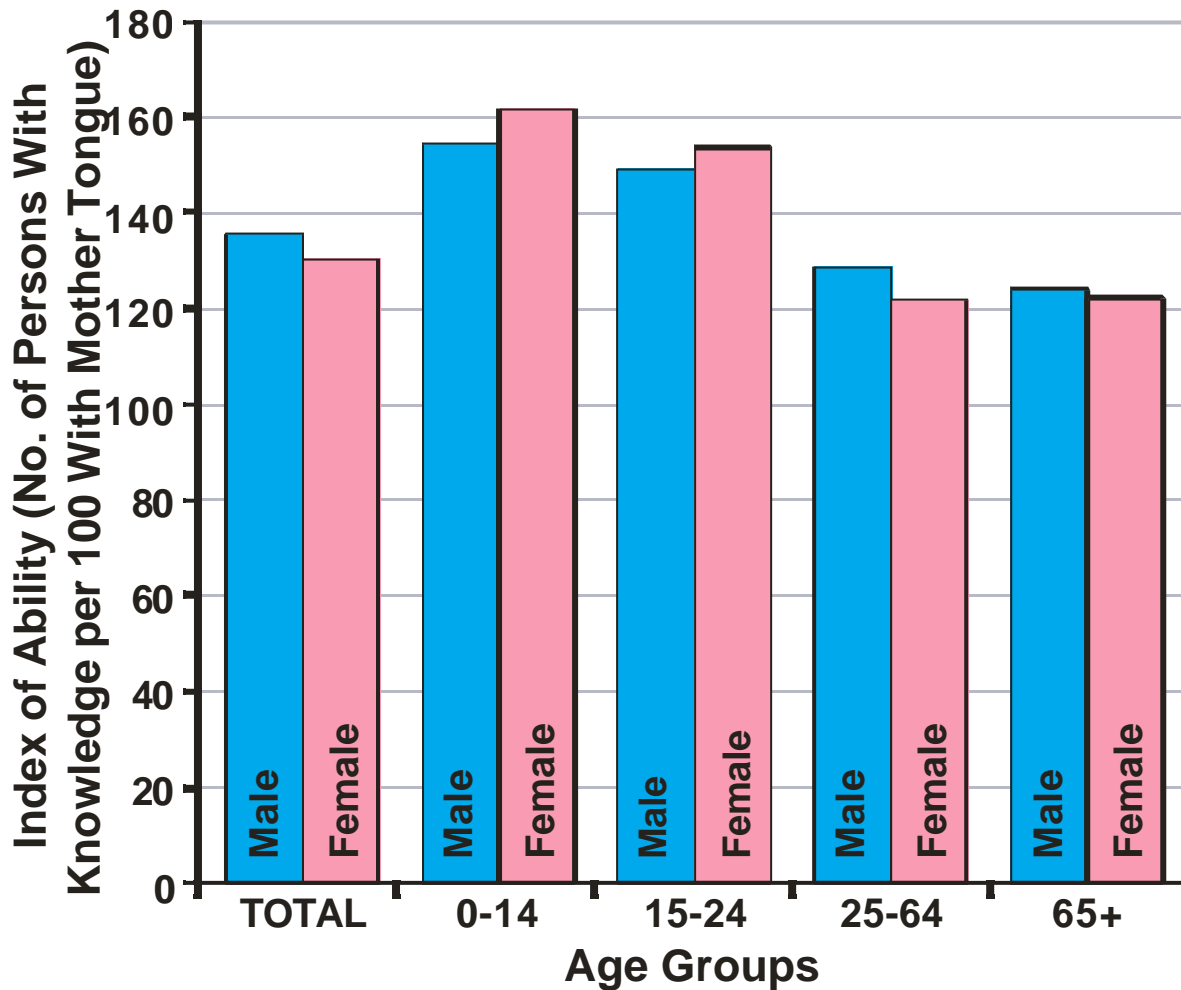
- The continuity of Aboriginal languages in cities is lowest among the working age population, as people shift from an Aboriginal to a non-Aboriginal home language.



Canada, 1996 Census

Index of Ability for Aboriginal Identity Population in Cities (CMA/CAs)

- Children and youth in cities are more likely to learn an Aboriginal language as a second language compared to older generations, as evidenced by the high ratio of speakers to the mother tongue population.



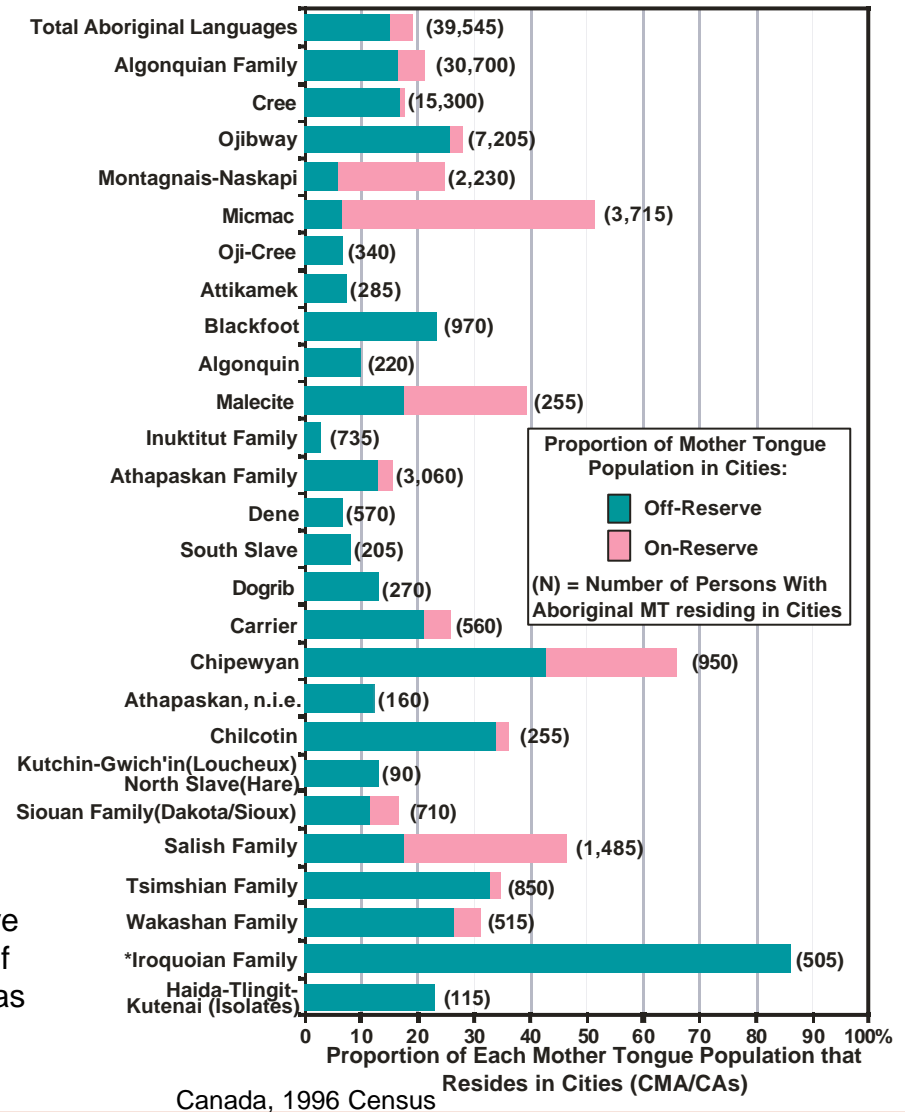
Canada, 1996 Census

Specific Languages and Cities

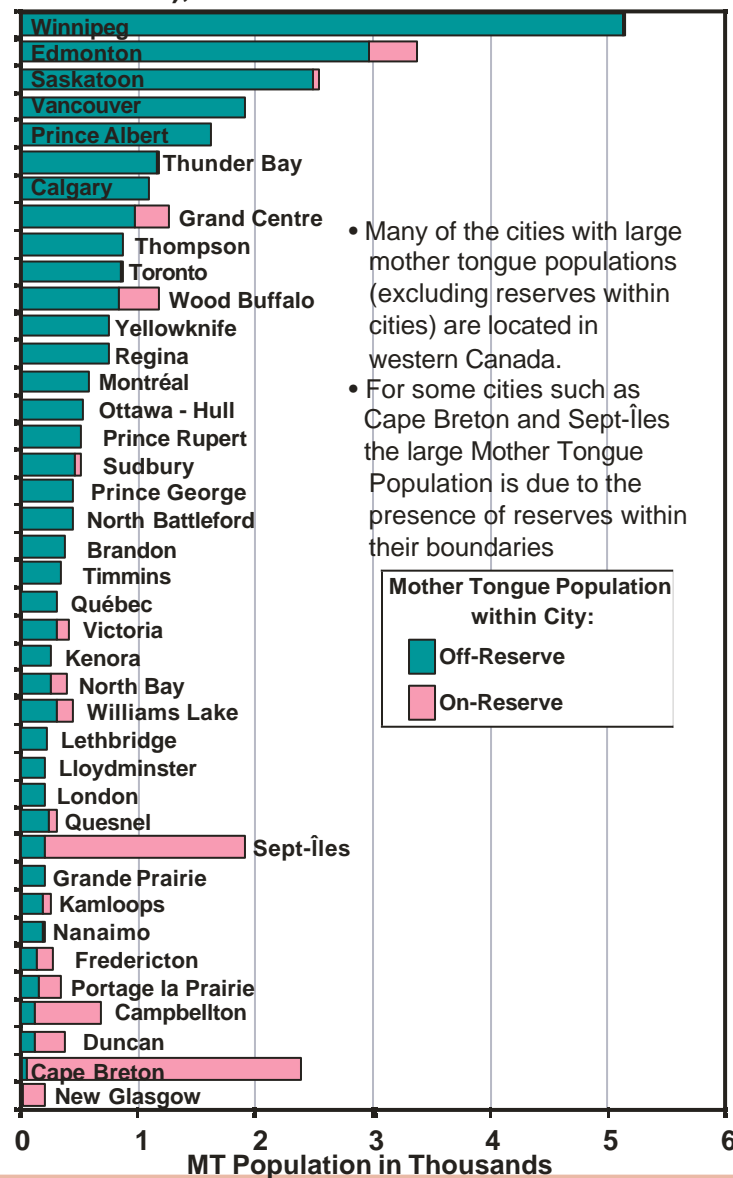
- Language groups with higher continuity tend not to be concentrated in cities (e.g. 3% of people with an Inuktitut mother tongue reside in cities); when a high proportion of First Nations language groups live in cities there is usually a reserve within the city (e.g. Montagnais-Naskapi in Sept-Îles). Note: The on- and off-reserve distinction does not apply to Inuktitut languages nor to Inuit communities which are not reserves.
- Some of the more endangered languages, particularly the smaller ones in British Columbia, appear to have relatively high concentrations in cities (e.g. 35% of people with a Tsimshian mother tongue reside in cities).

* Note: Data for the Iroquoian Family is not representative due to the significant impact of incomplete enumeration of reserves for this language family. Other languages such as those in the Algonquian Family may be affected to some extent by incomplete enumeration.

Proportion and Number of People with an Aboriginal Mother Tongue, Who Reside in Cities (CMA/CAs) by On- and Off-Reserve



All Cities With Mother Tongue Population Over 200, Ranked by Aboriginal MT Population (Outside of Reserves), Show On-/Off-Reserve Distribution



- Many of the cities with large mother tongue populations (excluding reserves within cities) are located in western Canada.
- For some cities such as Cape Breton and Sept-Îles the large Mother Tongue Population is due to the presence of reserves within their boundaries

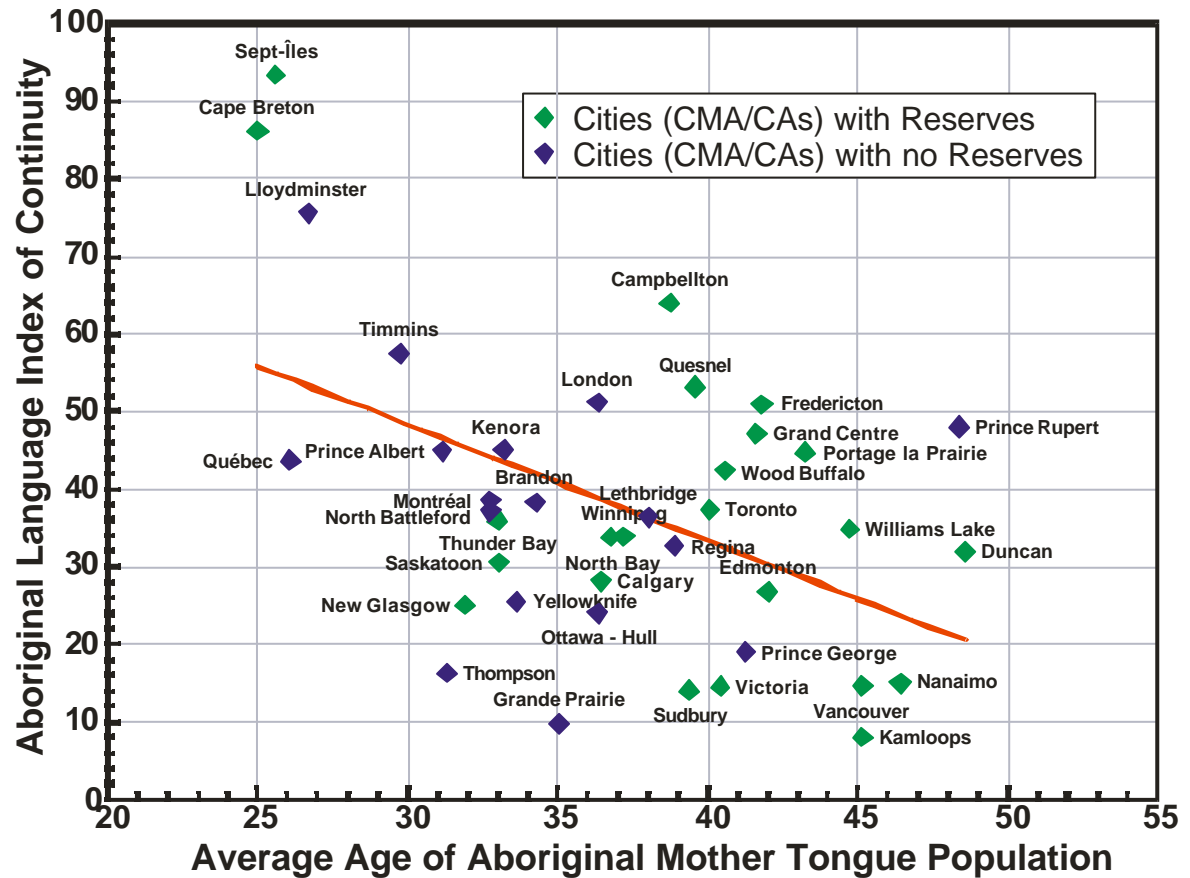
Mother Tongue Population within City:

- Off-Reserve
- On-Reserve

Canada, 1996 Census

Language Continuity by Average Age of Mother Tongue Population for Selected Cities

- As the Continuity Index increases, the average age of the Aboriginal mother tongue population decreases.
- The population with an Aboriginal mother tongue is significantly older than the Aboriginal population reporting an English or French mother tongue. For example in Vancouver the average age of the population with an Aboriginal mother tongue is 45 years, much older than the average age of 27 years for the Aboriginal population with an English or a French mother tongue.



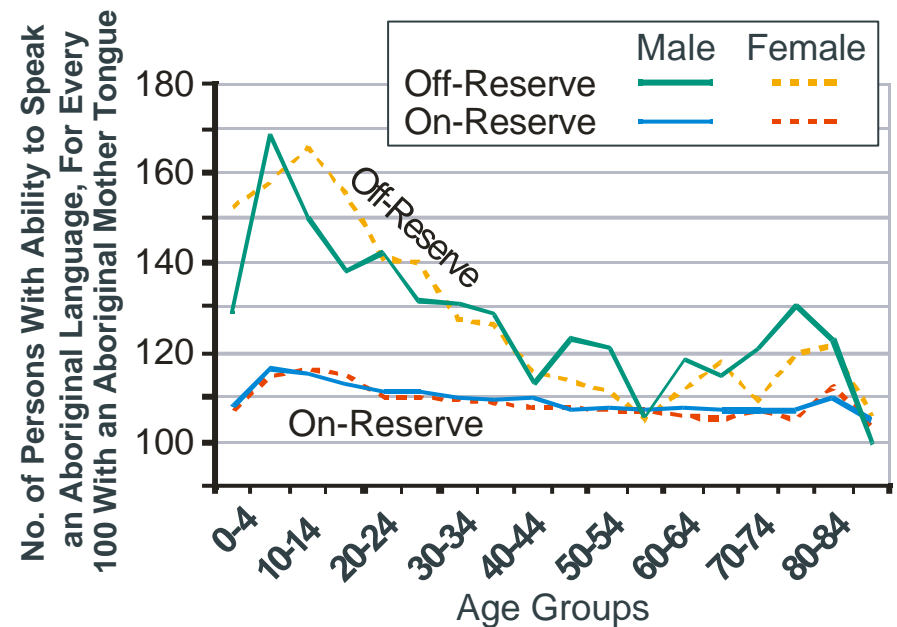
Canada, 1996 Census

SIGNS OF LANGUAGE REVIVAL?

According to the 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey:

- 9 in 10 Aboriginal adults would like to relearn the Aboriginal language they once knew.
- The great majority of Aboriginal adults who never spoke an Aboriginal language would like to learn one (nearly three-quarters of urban residents).
- Among some endangered languages, and off-reserve, there are indications (index of ability) that younger generations are more likely to learn an Aboriginal language as a second language than as a mother tongue.
 - e.g. Off-reserve, for every 100 Registered Indian children — aged 10 to 14 — with an Aboriginal mother tongue, there are 165 children who have the ability to speak an Aboriginal language. This suggests that many members of this group learned it as a second language.
- Nevertheless this may signal an interest for the language (e.g. Off - Reserve Head Start Program).
- Growing awareness of Aboriginal culture and identity may be partly responsible for second language patterns.

Index of Aboriginal Language Ability



Registered Indians, Canada, 1996 Census

CONCLUSION

- Canada's Aboriginal languages are among the most endangered in the world (UNESCO).
- Only 3 of some 50 Aboriginal languages are considered viable with large population bases; however some small languages are also viable.
- **Viable** languages: young speakers, successful in passing on language, spoken in isolated and/or well-organized communities.
- **Endangered** languages: small populations, older speakers, lower rates of transmission.
- Reserves and northern communities serve as linguistic enclaves in the maintenance of Aboriginal languages.
- The use of Aboriginal languages extends beyond Aboriginal communities into cities, reflecting their composition and diversity across Canada.
- Intergenerational transmission is a major challenge, especially for endangered languages in general and also for Aboriginal populations off-reserve in cities.
- Language maintenance and revival are critical for the transmission of currently viable languages to the next generation and to saving endangered languages from extinction.
- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommendation: language use in home and community is critical for intergenerational transmission and acquiring language as mother tongue.

“Languages embody the intellectual wealth of the people that speak them. Losing any one of them is like dropping a bomb on the Louvre.”

Kenneth Hale, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

DATA SOURCES AND DEFINITIONS

Data sources, quality and comparability:

- **This study uses data from the 1981 to 1996 Censuses as well as the 1991 post-censal Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) conducted by Statistics Canada.** Because of changes in concepts and measures of the Aboriginal population over time, the time-series analysis is restricted to language-based data only, such that Aboriginal language data are reported for the total population. Prior to 1981, detailed data on individual Aboriginal languages were not available – the only distinctions made were between First Nations People and Inuit (referred to as “Indian” and “Eskimo” respectively prior to the 1981 Census).
- To ensure comparability over time (since changes in census questionnaire wording and design can affect comparability), this study controlled for incomplete enumeration of reserves between 1981 and 1996, and recoding of languages in the 1986, 1991 and 1996 censuses to correspond to the 1981 classifications. Generally, the level of detail in terms of individual languages increased with each census. However, some of the smaller languages coded separately in earlier censuses were collapsed into broader groupings because of declining numbers.
- The study of the transmission of language from parent to child was based on 1996 Census data from the Family file. These data permit the comparison of the language characteristics of children age 5 to 14 with those of their parents – yielding an assessment of the extent to which languages are passed from one generation to the next, either as the mother tongue or as a second language. Language outcomes of children are analyzed by husband-wife and lone-parent families where at least one of the parents has an Aboriginal mother tongue. Endogamous couples are defined in relation to both the husband and wife having the same Aboriginal mother tongue; practically all of the exogamous couples were comprised of Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal language combinations.

Language Indicators Used in This Study

Mother tongue: refers to the first language learned in childhood and still understood by the individual.

Mother tongue population (MT): in this study, the population whose first language learned at home, and still understood, is an Aboriginal language.

Home language population (HL): the population whose language spoken most often at home is an Aboriginal language.

Knowledge or ability population (Kn): the population who report speaking an Aboriginal language well enough to conduct a conversation.

Index of continuity (HL/MT): measures language continuity, or vitality, by comparing the number of those who speak a given language at home to the number of those who learned that language as their mother tongue. A ratio of less than 100 indicates some decline in the strength of the language (i.e., for every 100 people with an Aboriginal mother tongue fewer than 100 use it at home). The lower the score, the greater the decline or erosion.

Language Indicators Used in This Study

Index of ability (Kn/MT): compares the number of people who report being able to speak the language with the number who have that Aboriginal language as a mother tongue. If for every 100 people with a specific Aboriginal mother tongue, there are more than 100 persons (from the overall population) able to speak that language, then some clearly learned it as a second language either in school or later in life. This may suggest some degree of language revival. Harrison, B. 1997

Single response: occurs when the respondent is providing one language only as his or her mother tongue, home language or language known. In this study, time series data (1981-1996) are based on single responses.

Multiple response: occurs when respondent reports two languages that he or she uses equally often as mother tongue, home language or language known. Data for 1996 are based on multiple responses.

* Unless otherwise noted all language measures in tables and graphs are based on single and multiple responses combined.

Aboriginal Populations

- For this study, the Aboriginal population has been classified into four major groups: Registered (or status) Indians, who are registered under the *Indian Act* of Canada; Non-Status Indians, who have lost or never had status under the *Indian Act*; Métis, who are of mixed Indian and non-Indian origins/identity; and Inuit, who reside mainly in two of Canada's Arctic territories (Northwest Territories and Nunavut), but also in northern Quebec and Labrador.
- Based on 1996 Census counts, those persons who consider themselves to be Aboriginal - that is, who self-identified with an Aboriginal group (North American Indian, Métis, or Inuit) or who reported themselves as registered under the *Indian Act* or as a member of a First Nation – numbered some 799,000. Of these, the Registered Indian population (488,100) represents the largest of the four groups, followed by Métis (210,000), Non-Status Indians (90,400) and Inuit (41,100). (Group figures do not sum to total since separate counts include multiples.)
- About 99% of populations with Aboriginal mother tongue, or home language, or knowledge of Aboriginal language (98%) report an Aboriginal identity.

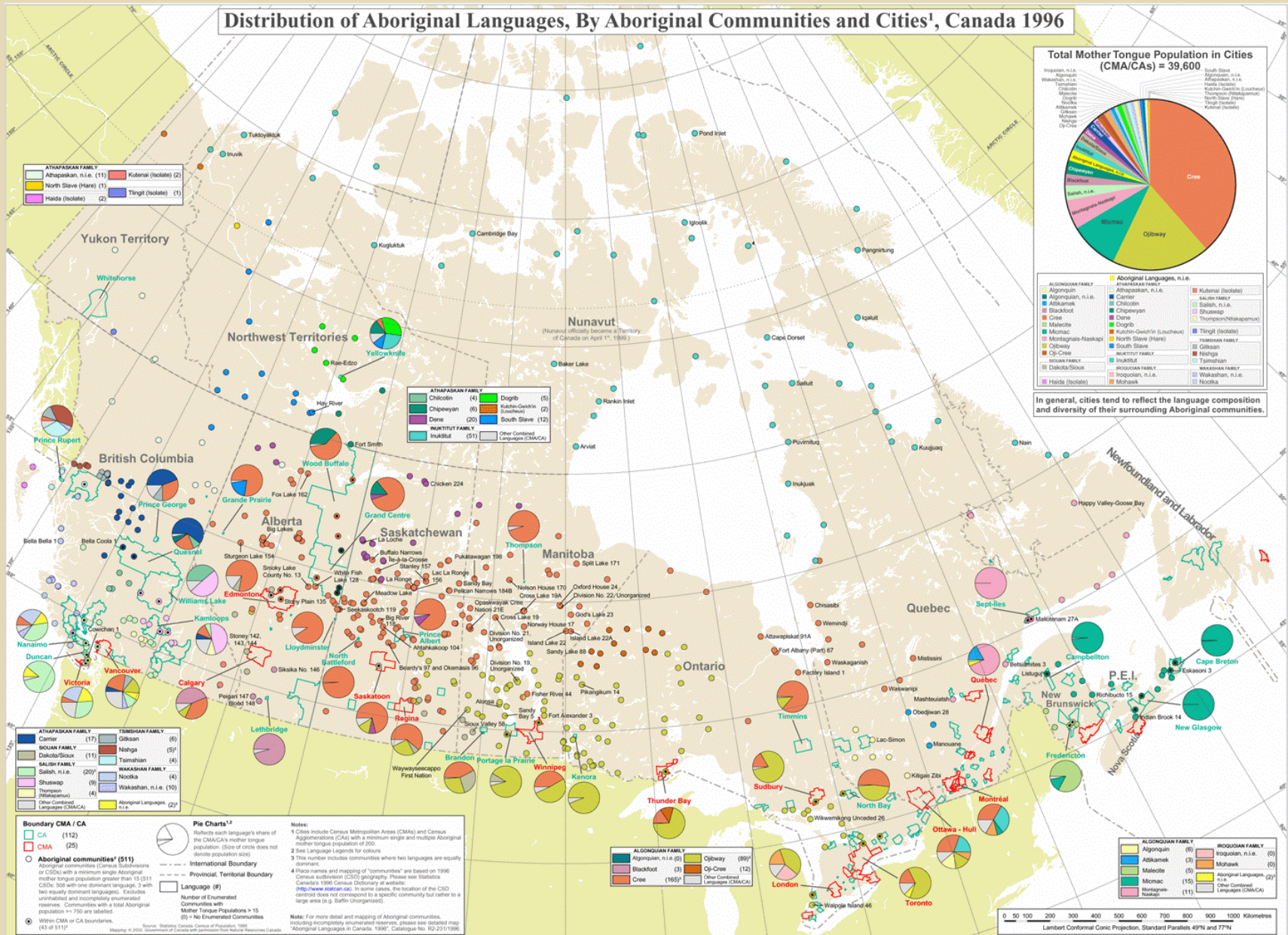
Geography, Communities and Cities:

- The following distinctions of place of residence are used in analyzing language patterns of Aboriginal populations: Reserve and Settlements; Other Aboriginal Communities, Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs); and Census Agglomerations (CAs).
- A reserve is legally defined in the *Indian Act* as a tract of land that has been set aside for the use and benefit of an Indian band or First Nation. Settlements include Crown land and other communities with Aboriginal populations as defined by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, but do not include all Métis and Inuit communities. Other Aboriginal communities, mostly in rural areas, were identified for Métis and Inuit populations.
- A CMA is a very large urban area, including urban and rural fringes, with an urban core population of at least 100,000. A CA is similar to a CMA, except the urban core is at least 10,000. In some cases, the CMA or CA includes reserves, and while both rural fringes and reserves were included in the analysis, the extent to which the population with an Aboriginal language resided in reserves within CMA/CAs was considered in the interpretation of the data.
- In this study the term “Cities” is used to refer to a CMA or CA, although for some CAs, e.g. Cape Breton, this term is not necessarily the best characterization.

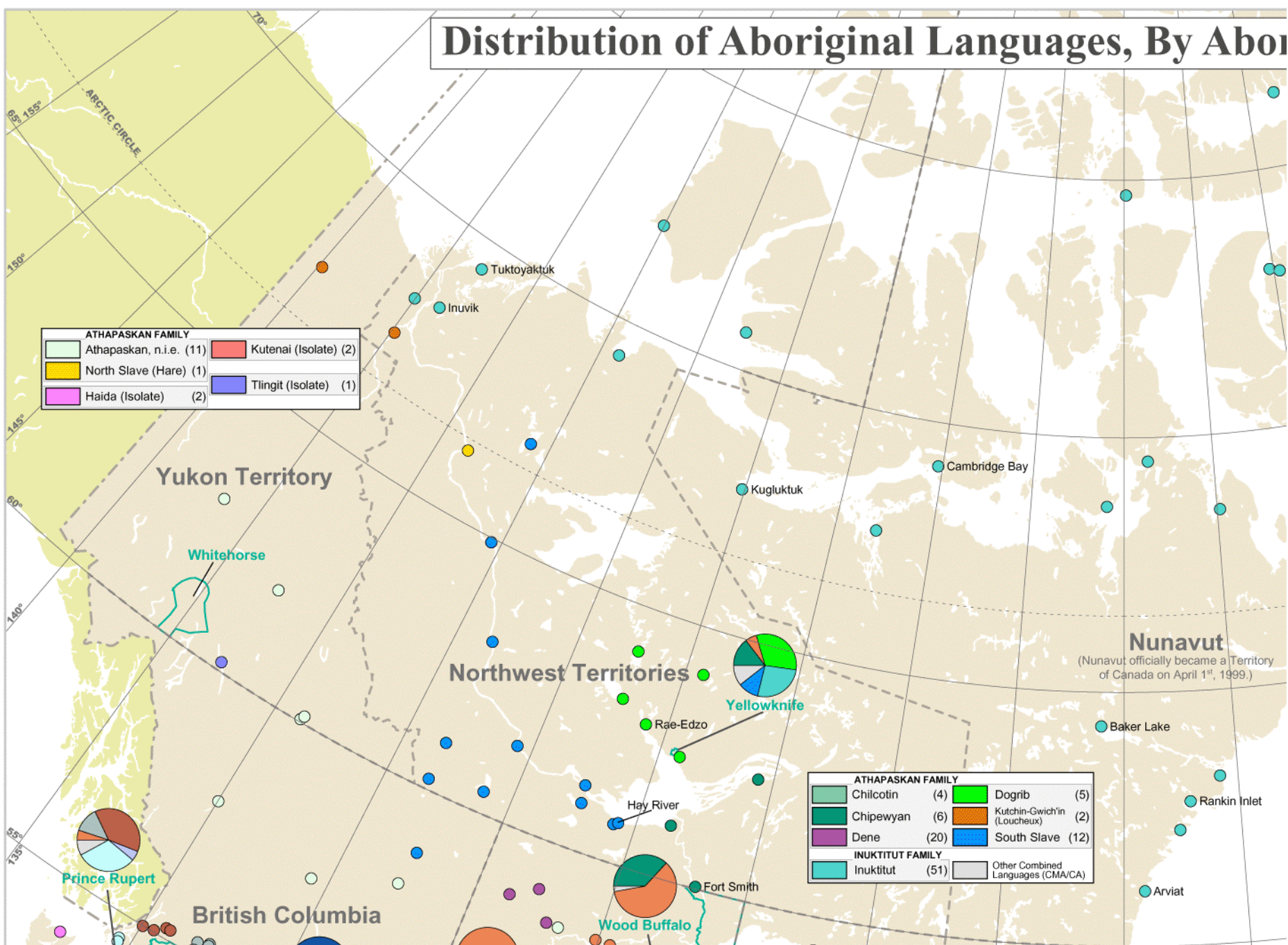
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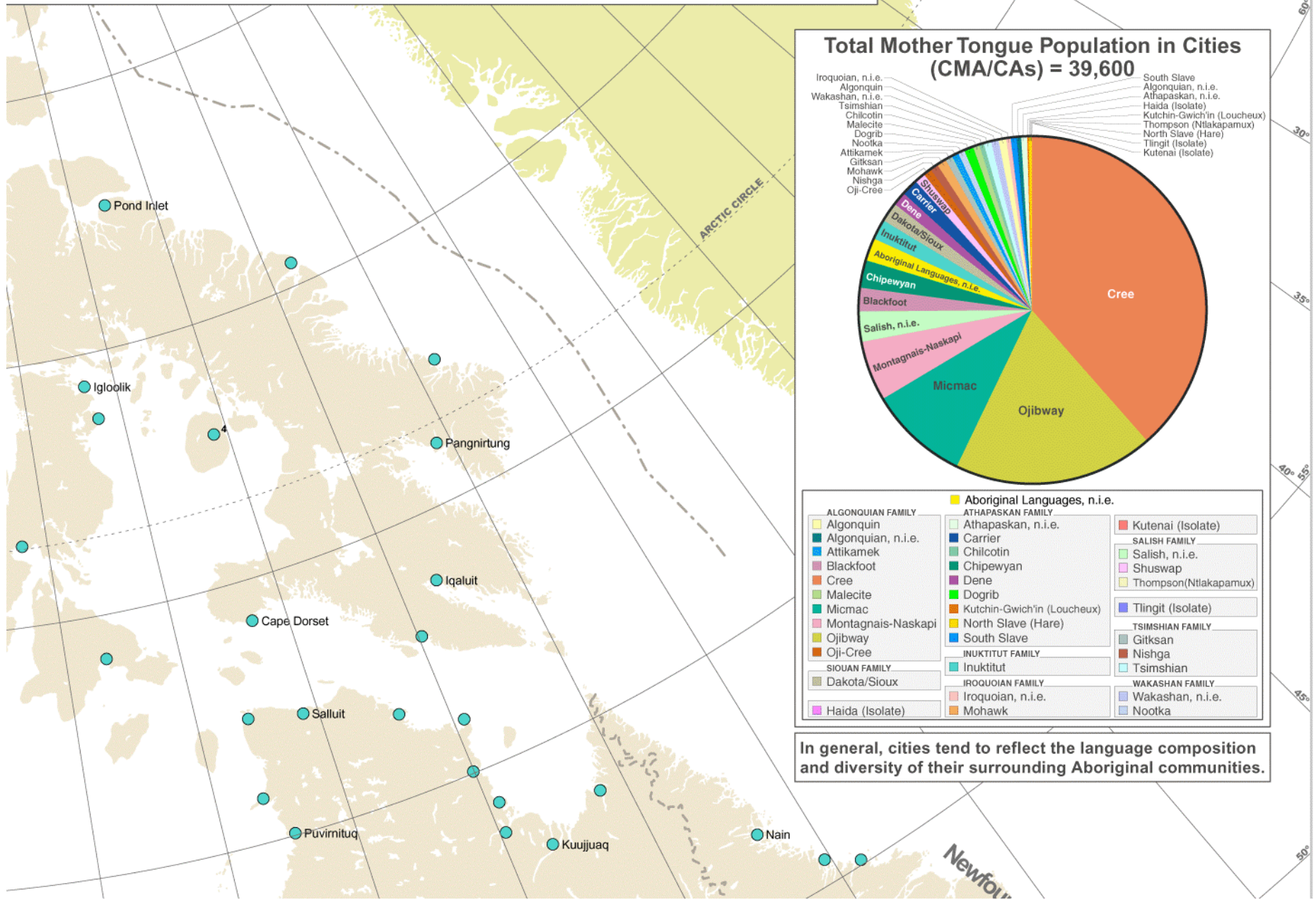
Distribution of Aboriginal Languages, By Aboriginal Communities and Cities¹, Canada 1996



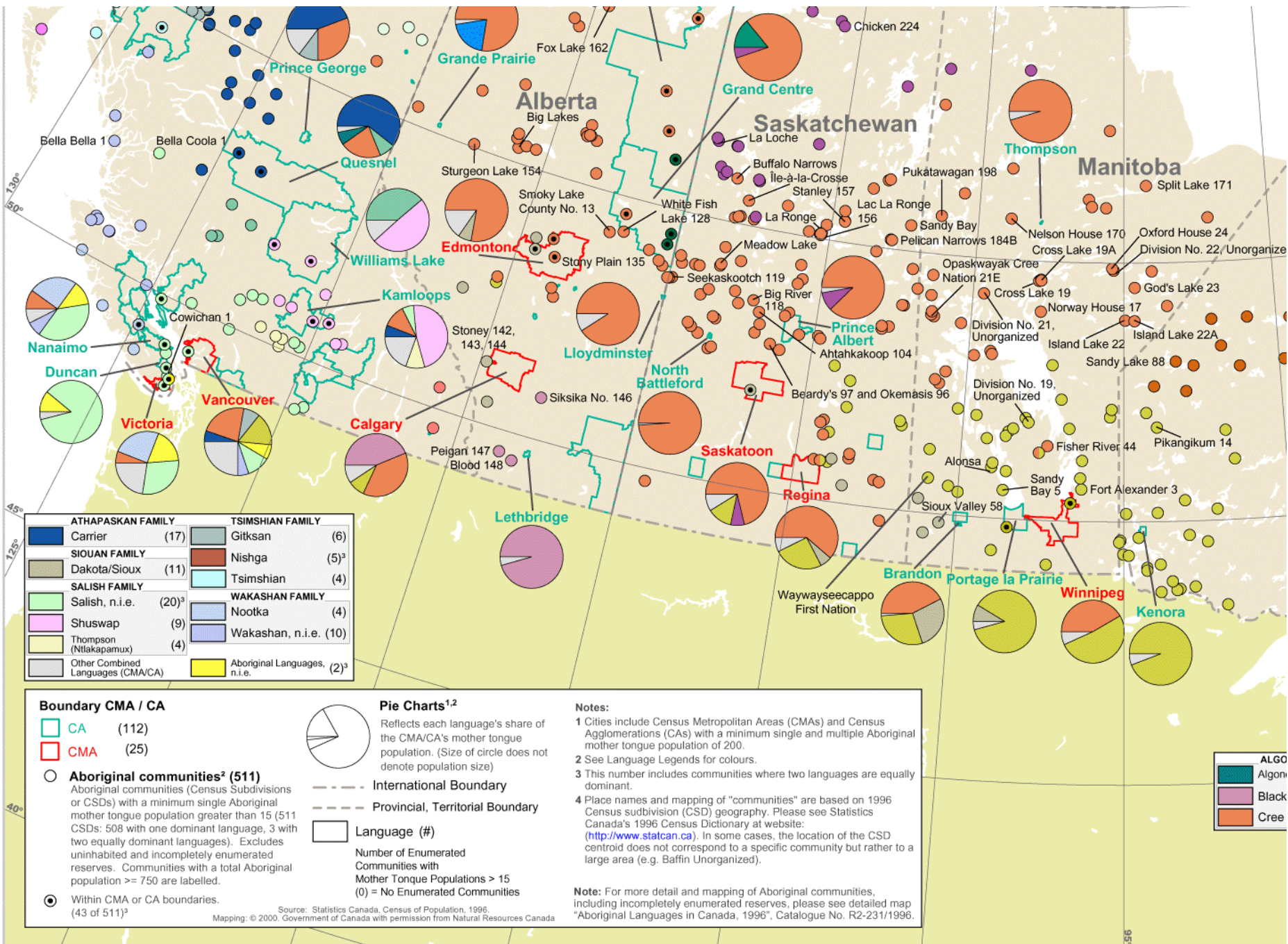
Distribution of Aboriginal Languages, By Aboi

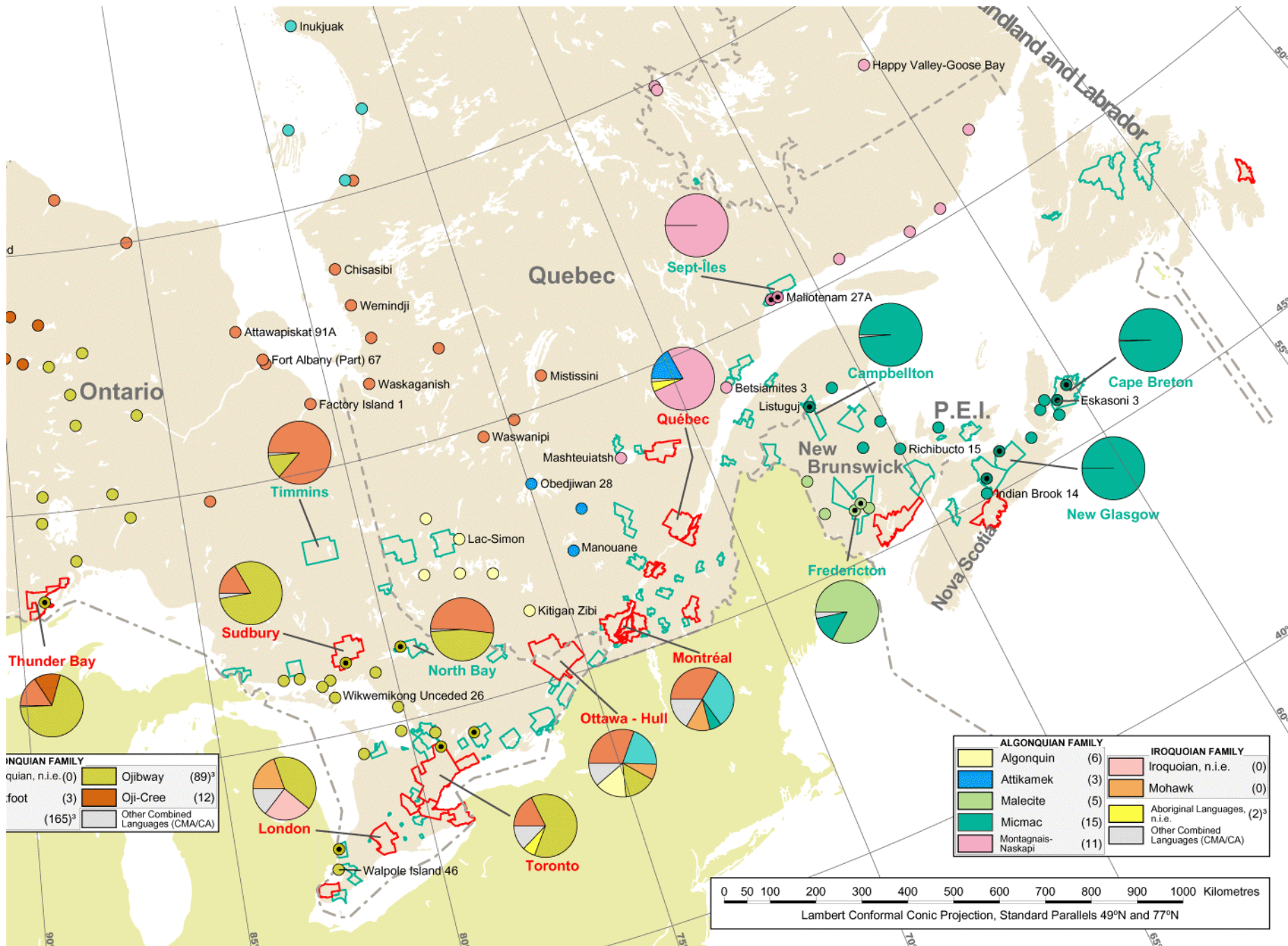


Original Communities and Cities¹, Canada 1996

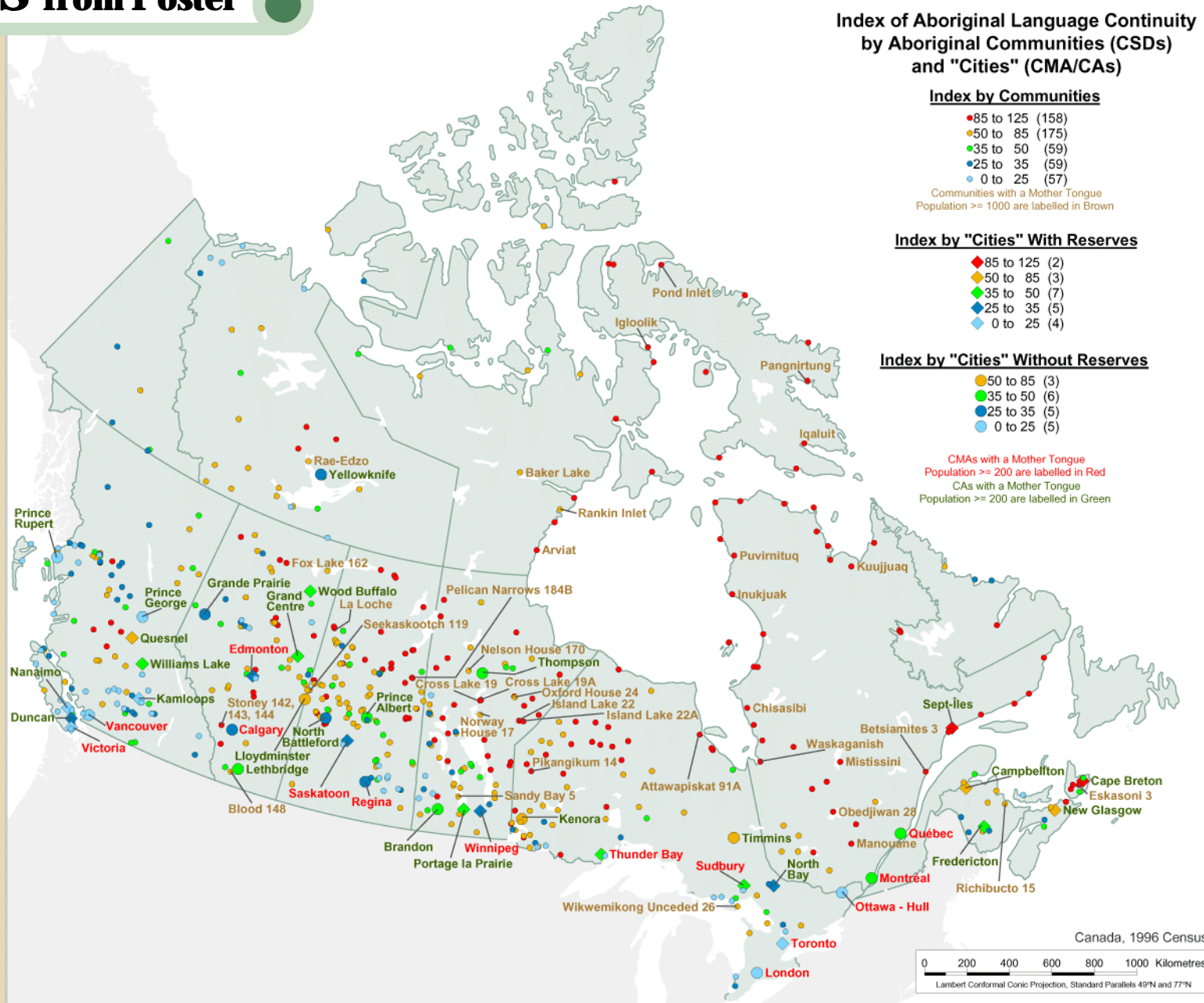


In general, cities tend to reflect the language composition and diversity of their surrounding Aboriginal communities.









Aboriginal Languages in Canada, 1996

Les langues autochtones du Canada, 1996

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