

January 15, 2008

Introduction

“Aboriginal Peoples” (Inuit, Métis and First Nations) is the fifth of eight releases from the 2006 Census of Canada, taken on May 16, 2006. Highlights for Alberta and Canada are included in this report.

Aboriginal Peoples over 1 Million

The aboriginal population in Canada has increased by 45% in the past decade and now exceeds the one-million mark. This is nearly six times faster than the 8% increase for the non-Aboriginal population. In 2006, a total of 1,172,790 people (or 3.8%) out of Canada’s 31 million population identified themselves as Aboriginals, up from 3.3% in 2001 and 2.8% in 1996 (Table 1). This includes: 698,025 First Nations people (or North American Indian), 389,785 Métis (mixed native-European descent), 50,485 Inuit, and 34,495 Multiple and Others Aboriginals.

Alberta Métis Fast Growing

In 2006, Aboriginal peoples made up 5.7% of Alberta’s 3.3 million population. In the 2006 Census, 188,365 Albertans reported Aboriginal identity, an increase of 20% since 2001, compared to 10% for non-Aboriginals. The fast growth of the Aboriginal population in Alberta and across Canada is due mainly to high birthrates, and more individuals are identifying themselves as Aboriginals.

Of the 188,365 Aboriginals enumerated in Alberta, 97,275 (or 51.6%) were First Nations people, 85,500 (or 45.4%) Métis, and 1,605 (or 0.9%) Inuit. Over the past decade, the Métis population (about 3% of Alberta’s total population) was the fastest growing aboriginal group, up 72% in Alberta and almost doubled (+91%) in Canada. Alberta also had the biggest share (22%) of all 389,785 Métis population in the nation. This is followed by Ontario with 73,605 (or 19%) and Manitoba with 71,805 (or 18%).

TABLE 1: ABORIGINALS, FIRST NATIONS & MÉTIS POPULATION BY PROVINCE & TERRITORY, 2006*

	NFLD	PEI	NS	NB	QUE	ON	MAN	SASK	ALTA	BC	YUK	NWT	NVT	CANADA
ABORIGINALS	23,450	1,730	24,175	17,655	108,430	242,495	175,395	141,890	188,365	196,075	7,580	20,635	24,920	1,172,790
FIRST NATIONS	7,765	1,230	15,240	12,385	65,090	158,395	100,645	91,400	97,275	129,580	6,275	12,640	100	698,025
Métis	6,470	385	7,680	4,270	27,980	73,605	71,805	48,115	85,500	59,445	805	3,580	130	389,785

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Canada.

* Note: Inuit and Multiple/Other Aboriginal Peoples are not included in this table.

Aboriginals, Young and More Urban

According to the 2006 Census, the median age for the Aboriginal population was 27 in Canada compared to 40 for non-Aboriginals. In Alberta, the median age was 25 for Aboriginals and 36 for non-Aboriginals.

More Aboriginal peoples choose to live in cities instead of remote rural areas. In 2006, 54% of Aboriginals lived in urban centres, up 4% since 1996. In Alberta, nearly 61% of the Aboriginal peoples were urban dwellers, behind only Ontario (62%). Edmonton was ranked the second highest among Canadian cities with 52,100 Aboriginals (or 5% of the Edmonton population), after Winnipeg (Table 2). Calgary, tied with Toronto for the fourth place, had 26,575 Aboriginals, or 2% of the Calgary population.

TABLE 2: ABORIGINALS BY SELECTED CITY, 2006

Selected Cities	Aboriginal Population	% in city’s Population
Winnipeg	68,380	10%
Edmonton	52,100	5%
Vancouver	40,310	2%
Toronto	26,575	0.5%
Calgary	26,575	2%
Saskatoon	21,535	9%
Ottawa - Gatineau	20,590	2%
Montreal	17,865	0.5%
Regina	17,105	9%
Prince Albert	13,565	34%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Canada

Languages

According to Statistics Canada, over 60 different Aboriginal languages are spoken by First Nations in Canada. Aboriginal languages remain strong on reserve. In the 2006 Census, 51% of the First Nations people living on reserve could speak an Aboriginal language well enough to carry on a conversation, compared to 12% for off-reserve First Nations people. Cree was the most widely spoken First Nations language. The Inuktitut language stays strong overall with 69% of Inuit speaking Inuktitut, though knowledge and use are declining.