

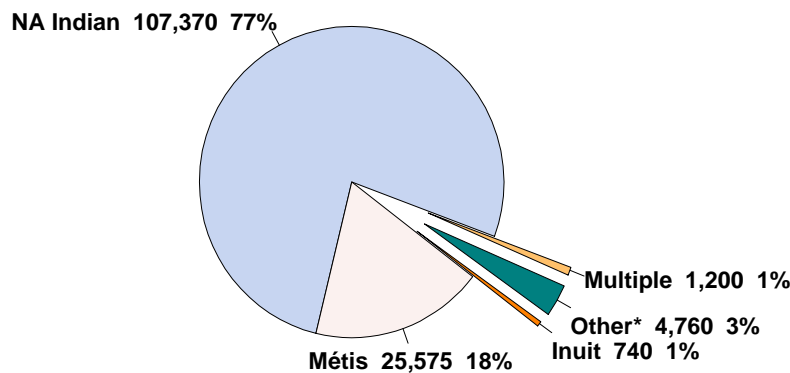
Focus on BC Aboriginals: *Aboriginal Identity*

A New Question on Aboriginal Identity Was Added to the 1996 Census

Is this person an Aboriginal person, that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit (Eskimo)?

- No
- Yes, North American Indian
- Yes, Métis
- Yes, Inuit (Eskimo)

Of the 139,655 Persons in BC Who Identified as Aboriginal¹, 3 out of 4 were North American Indian



* Other includes persons who did not directly identify as Aboriginal but were either a Registered Indian or a Member of an Indian Band/First Nation.

In 1996, there were 134,890 persons in BC who directly identified themselves as aboriginal, another 4,235 who did not identify as aboriginal but were “registered Indians” and then a further 525 who were neither of the above but were members of an Indian Band, for a total of 139,655 persons in BC who are considered to have Aboriginal Identity. This number represents 3.8 per cent of the total BC population.

In previous censuses, the identification of Aboriginal persons was derived from a question on ancestry, namely “*To which ethnic or cultural group(s) did this person’s ancestors belong?*”. (A similar question was

also asked in the 1996 Census.) Anyone who claimed at least one ancestry of either North American Indian, Metis, or Inuit was considered Aboriginal. Using this definition, in 1991 there were 172,475 Aboriginal persons in BC which represented 5.3 per cent of the total population. This number has been the official count of Aboriginals in the province—the associated data are used extensively for determining and evaluating aboriginal public policy.

Statistics Canada stipulates that the 1996 “Aboriginal Identity” data should not be compared to the 1991 “Aboriginal Ancestry” data. However, in February 1998, the “Eth-

nic Origin” data will be released which will provide a roughly comparable number to the 1991 “aboriginal ancestry” concept.

This means that from the 1996 Census, there will be two different sets of data available on Aboriginals—one covering the population with any “Aboriginal Ancestry” and the other covering the population who have “Aboriginal Identity”. Which set of data to use depends on the purpose of the research. The current opinion in Ottawa is that Indian and Northern Affairs Canada will refer primarily to the “ancestry” data and Human Resource Development Canada, with its mandate for Employment Equity programs, will utilize the “identity” data.

BRITISH COLUMBIA SELF-IDENTIFIED ABORIGINAL POPULATION CENSUS 1996			
	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Population</u>	<u>% of Aboriginal Population</u>
Total Population	3,689,755	100.0	
Aboriginal Population	139,655	3.8	100.0
Registered	93,835	2.5	67.2
Band Members	94,870	2.6	67.9
<u>Those Who Identify as Aboriginal</u>	134,890	3.7	96.6
Registered/Band Member	87,105	2.4	62.4
Registered/Not Band Member	2,495	0.1	1.8
Band Member/Not Registered	3,460	0.1	2.5
Total Registered	89,595	2.4	64.2
Total Band Members	90,565	2.5	64.8
Not Registered or Band Member	41,830	1.1	30.0
<u>"Other" Aboriginal</u>	4,760	0.1	3.4
Registered/Band Member	3,770	0.1	2.7
Registered/Not Band Member	465	0.0	0.3
Band/Member/Not Registered	525	0.0	0.4

**Other includes persons who did not directly identify as Aboriginal but were either a Registered Indian or a Member of an Indian Band/First Nation.*

1. Two sub questions were asked alongside the Identity question as to whether the individual was a member of an Indian Band/First Nation and whether he/she was a “Registered Indian”. If any one of this set of three questions was “Yes”, the individual is considered to have Aboriginal Identity.

