



Aboriginal Peoples of Ontario: A Statistical Overview

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Introduction

Aboriginal Apprenticeship Board of Ontario

The Aboriginal Apprenticeship Board of Ontario (AABO) is an organization whose services benefit all three Aboriginal groups in Ontario. AABO is the embodiment of the Ontario-based Aboriginal Apprenticeship Strategy. Its purpose is to ensure that the seven components of the Strategy are well articulated through a plan of action, which will have measurable and positive results throughout the province.

As part of AABO's research and development objectives, this report endeavours to assist employers and employment and training organizations in understanding the current state of Métis, Inuit and First Nation people as it relates to apprenticeships in Ontario.

The profile of Aboriginal People in Ontario is changing and we have more statistical information than ever before. How does this knowledge affect our approach when analyzing Aboriginal statistics? This report discusses information collected through the 2006 Census of Population, the 2006 Aboriginal People's Survey, and the 2007 Labour Force Survey as it relates to employment and training. Population characteristics, data collection methods, and political issues are some of the factors used to put Aboriginal employment statistics into context.

For more information about the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Board of Ontario please visit www.aabo.ca.

Data Sources

2006 Census of Canada

The 2006 Census of Canada was taken on May 16, 2006. First Nation reserves and settlements as well as northern areas (except Whitehorse and Yellowknife) were given Form 2D: Northern and Reserves Questionnaire. This was a long questionnaire that asked about the individual's ethnic origins followed by a series of more specific questions. Individuals were asked to self-identify as Métis, North American Indian, or Inuit (Eskimo), if they were a Treaty Indian or Registered Indian, and if they were a member of an Indian band/First Nation. Of the remaining households in Canada, 20 per cent were administered Form 2B, which was nearly identical to Form 2D with variations on examples. The remaining 80 per cent of households received Form 2A, a short questionnaire with no reference to ethnic origin.

The census collected data on 242,490 Aboriginal peoples in Ontario however 22 First Nations in Canada were not completely enumerated on the 2006 census; the majority of these (17) were in Ontario and Quebec. This is an improvement over the 2001 census in which 30 reserves were not completed. The following First Nations in Ontario were not completely enumerated: Fort Severn 89, Attawapiskat 91A, Factory Island 1, Bear Island 1, Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, Wahta Mohawk Territory, Six Nations (Part) 40, Oneida 41, Akwesasne (Part) 59. Since 98 per cent of people living on reserves are status Indians, this significantly affects the First Nations statistics. Of the three primary information sources used in this report, only the census collected data on reserves.

2006 Aboriginal People's Survey

The Aboriginal People's Survey is a post census survey that followed up with approximately 62,000 people who self-identified as Aboriginal or as having Aboriginal ancestry (a relative more distant than a grandparent), on the 2006 Census. The survey was not administered on reserves. The intent of the Aboriginal People's Survey was to provide additional data on the social and economic conditions of Aboriginal people. It focused on issues such as employment, health, schooling, language, mobility and housing.

“Of the three primary sources used in this report, only the census collected data on reserves.”

2006 Aboriginal Population Profiles for Selected Cities and Communities: Ontario

The Aboriginal Population Profiles for Selected Cities and Communities: Ontario is a series of reports published by Statistics Canada. The reports examine the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the Aboriginal population living in the census metropolitan areas of the following eight cities and communities in Ontario: Kenora, Thunder Bay, Timmins, Sudbury, Sault St. Marie, Ottawa, Toronto, and London. Data used in the report is derived from the 2006 Census and 2006 Aboriginal People's Survey.

FIGURE 1
SELECTED METROPOLITAN AREAS
USED IN THE 2006 ABORIGINAL
POPULATION PROFILES



2007 Labour Force Survey

The Labour Force Survey is administered to approximately 50,000 households in Canada each month and collected in an annual report. The survey started collecting data on Aboriginal people in Ontario in January 2007. The Labour Force Survey does not include individuals living on-reserve. Although data is collected through the Labour Force Survey for the territories (which are areas known to have high concentrations of Aboriginal people) estimates are not included in national totals due to a difference in methodologies.

Unlike the census, individuals are not asked about Aboriginal ancestry and are asked only to self-identify as Aboriginal. The advantage of the Labour Market Survey is that data is collected over the course of an entire year rather than the snapshot provided by the census.

Aboriginal People in Ontario

Métis

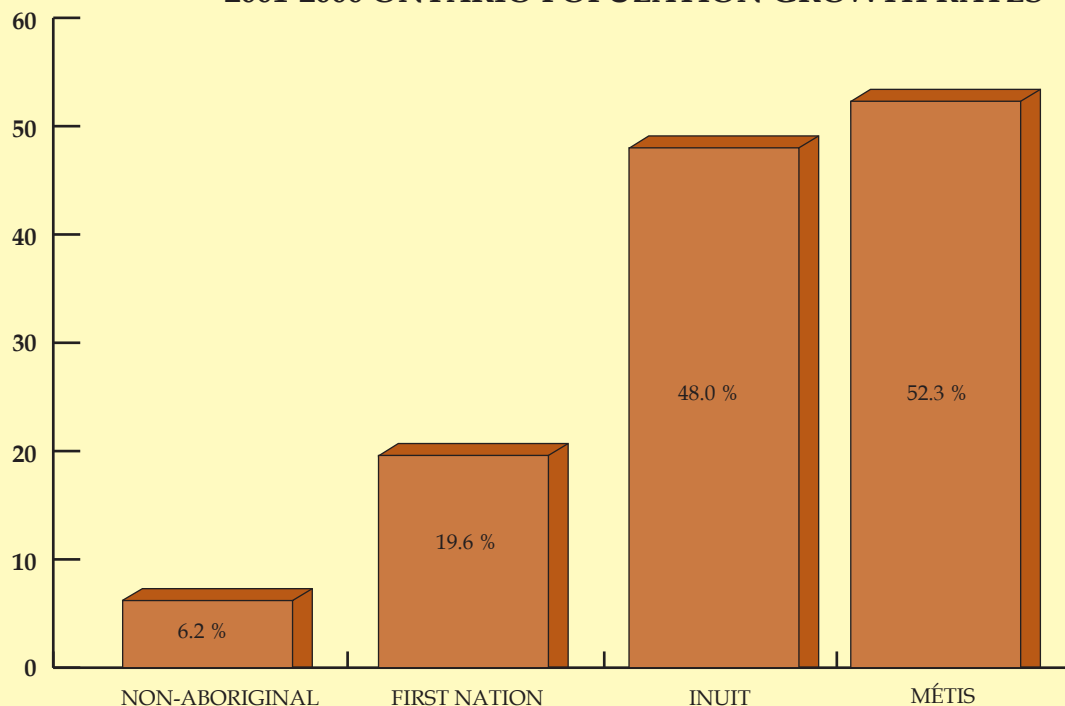
The Métis are a people descended from European men (fur traders) and First Nation women. Over time, and through generations of intermarriage, these descendants formed communities with a distinct culture complete with song, dance, language and other unique traditions. The Métis were officially recognized as one of Canada's three Aboriginal peoples in the Canada Constitution of 1982.

The Métis are located primarily in Western Canada with 19 per cent of their population located in Ontario. Ontario however, has the highest Métis growth rate in the country. Between 1996 and 2006, the Métis population in the province grew by 242 per cent. Ontario communities with the highest concentration of Métis include Midland where nine per cent of the population are Métis and Kenora with eight per cent.

The traditional language of the Métis is Michif, a language descended primarily from Cree and French. In 2006, four per cent of Métis enumerated on the census could converse in an Aboriginal language however less than 1000 people reported the ability to converse in Michif. The most common language spoken was Cree with 9,360 speakers.

FIGURE 2

2001-2006 ONTARIO POPULATION GROWTH RATES



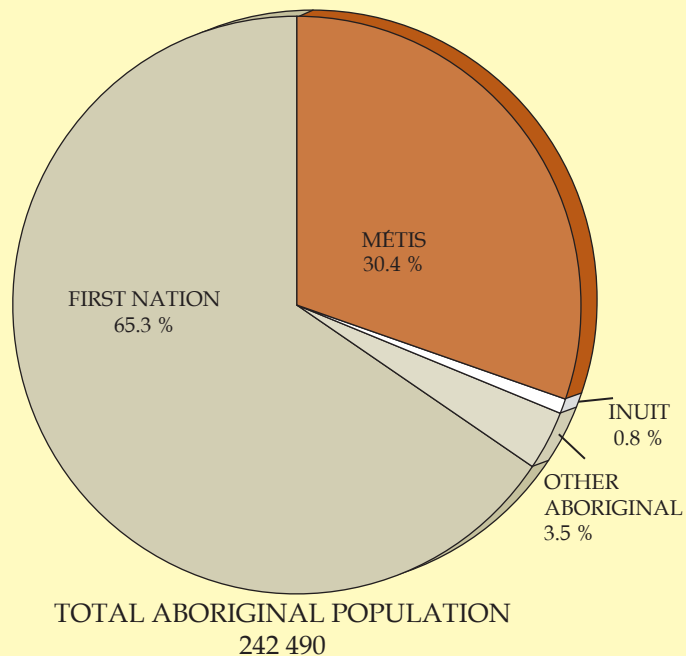
SOURCE: 2001 & 2006 CENSUS OF CANADA

The dramatic rise in Métis numbers on the 2006 census is partially due to an increase in the number of people who identify themselves as Métis. This may be the result of recent victories in the courts regarding hunting rights and other political issues which have drawn attention to the Métis in Canadian media. Another factor that influenced the number of people that self-identified on the 2006 census is the confusion surrounding the definition of "Métis". Pretesting for the census determined that no universally accepted definition of Métis existed in Canada and individuals interpreted the term in various ways ranging from a person of mixed First Nation and European ancestry to any person of mixed race. The national definition of Métis as stated by the Métis National Council in 2002 states "Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples and is accepted by the Métis Nation."

The Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) has been registering individuals as Métis citizens since 1994. According to their website (July, 2008) there are 13,755 registered MNO citizens with 5,659 applicants in the process of obtaining citizenship. The 2006 census enumerated 73,605 individuals in Ontario who self-identified as Métis.

The Métis do not have some of the benefits afforded First Nation people such as tax exemption but are entitled to rights such as harvesting and qualify for government programs such as those offered by Aboriginal Business Canada. The Métis do have representation through the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement through the Métis Nation of Ontario which is an agreement holder.

FIGURE 3
ONTARIO ABORIGINAL POPULATION 2006



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, CENSUS OF POPULATION, 2006

First Nations

The majority of Aboriginal people in Canada are First Nation people. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada recognizes 615 unique First Nations in Canada, 126 of these are located in Ontario. Ontario has the largest population with 158,395, accounting for 23 per cent of the First Nation population in Canada.

First Nation people tend to be divided statistically into two groups: status Indians and non-status Indians. They are further analyzed by their residential status of living: on-reserve or off-reserve. The majority (70 per cent) of First Nation people in Ontario live off-reserve. This number has risen slowly across Canada as the population becomes more urban.

Status Indians are First Nation people who are registered under the Indian Act. They may or may not be a member of a First Nation and are entitled to some tax exemptions and other benefits such as non-insured health benefits. The majority, 98 per cent of First Nation people living on-reserve, are status Indians compared to 68 per cent of those who live off-reserve.

Eighty-one per cent of First Nation people enumerated on the 2006 census are status Indians – a decrease from previous counts. The national growth rate of status Indians was 24 per cent, less than half the 53 per cent growth rate of non-status Indians.

First Nation people in Canada speak 60 different languages.

Non-status Indians are not registered under the Indian Act for various reasons. Indian registration requires proof of ancestry, something that is not available to many First Nation people. Other reasons may result from issues in the Indian Act which were partially rectified by Bill C-31 and are currently in the courts. Current actions taken by the courts are expected to increase the number of status Indians by thousands.

There is no clear definition of what is required (in terms of blood quantum or other characteristics) in order to be considered a non-status Aboriginal. All First Nation people receiving census forms 2B and 2D were asked to self-identify as First Nation and then as status Indians. Without a clear definition of non-status Indians on the census, the numbers on the census are somewhat uncertain.

In terms of language, 29 per cent of First Nation people enumerated on the 2006 census could converse in an Aboriginal language. The census recorded 60 different languages spoken by First Nation people in Canada with the most common being Cree.