



TASC *Fact Sheet*

The Alliance of Sector Councils

Aboriginal Peoples and the Workforce: A Statistical Snapshot of the Aboriginal Population in Canada

This fact sheet is jointly published by The Alliance of Sector Councils (TASC) and the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada (AHRDCC).



meaning they are not registered with a particular band

- **Métis** are considered those who are descendents of usually French Canadian fathers and Cree or Ojibway mothers from the fur trade era in Western Canada. Today, Métis are generally considered any combination of mixed racial heritage which includes a First Nation.
- **Inuit** live mostly in the Far North, particularly Nunavut, NWT and the northern areas of Quebec and Labrador.

National Demographics

	No.	% of Cdn Population	% of Aboriginal Population
Aboriginal	976,310	3.25	
First Nation			62
Inuit			5
Métis			30

- **First Nations** are considered those who are registered with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and belong to a particular community or reserve. Individuals can be registered with a community but reside elsewhere. There are also a number of people who consider themselves Aboriginal but are non-status,

Province	# of Aboriginal people	% of province
BC	170,025	4.3
AB	156,225	5.25
SK.	130,190	13.29
MB	150,040	15.7
ON	188,310	1.65
PQ	79,400	1.09
YK	6,545	22.8
NWT	18,730	50.1
NT	22,720	84.9

Nearly half of the Aboriginal population live in urban areas, 30% live on reserves or settlements and 20% live in rural, non-reserve areas.

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Local Demographics

Selected Cities	# of Aboriginal people	% of general population
Vancouver	36,855	1.8
Edmonton	40,930	4.3
Calgary	21,910	2.3
Regina	15,685	8.1
Winnipeg *	55,760	8.3
Toronto	20,300	.43
Ottawa	13,485	1.2
Montreal	3555	.3
Halifax	3520	.9
Whitehorse	3305	15.4
Yellowknife	3640	22
Iqaluit **	3065	58.5

* 56% of Winnipeg's Aboriginal population is Métis

** More than 80% of the Aboriginal population in Iqaluit is Inuit.

Employment figures

	Non Aboriginal Population	Aboriginal Population (off reserve)	Aboriginal Population (on reserve)
Aboriginal	6.8	18.9	29

Selected cities – average employment income

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	Non Aboriginal Population	Aboriginal Population (off reserve)	Aboriginal Population (on reserve)
Thunder Bay	27,600	18,500	--
Edmonton	26,000	17,900	--

There is a high concentration of Aboriginal people living in low income, particularly in urban centres. The low-income rate for urban Aboriginal people is 42%, compared with approximately 17% for other Canadians.

Education¹

	Aboriginal population (%)	Total population (%)
Less than high school graduation	48	31.3
High school graduation only	9.9	14.1
Trades	12.1	10.9
College	11.6	15.1
University (below bachelor's)	1.4	2.5
University degree	4.4	15.4

Projections

Aboriginal people, in general, are younger than their Canadian counterparts. Aboriginal youth, under the age of 24, represent nearly half of the entire Aboriginal population in Canada. In some regions and communities, this number is even higher. Over the next 20 years, these children and youth will be moving into a new phase of the demographic cycle. As a result, there will likely be increasing pressure for employment, housing and other services aimed at the labour force.

While there is a small increase in the number of Aboriginal people moving from reserves and settlements into urban areas, there are also more people living on reserves who may have Aboriginal family members but who themselves are not a registered Indian. This will have an impact on the operation of communities as well as the services the community can provide. And for those who move to urban centres, there will need to be

¹ Michael Mendelson, Caledon Institute of Social Policy. *Aboriginal People in Canada's Labour Market: Work and Unemployment, Today and Tomorrow*. March, 2004, p. 16.

more strategies and partnerships aimed at an urban Aboriginal population.

Aboriginal Human Resource Issues

Looking at the Aboriginal labour force, it is clear that Aboriginal people are over represented in certain occupations and under represented in others. 13% of Aboriginal people are employed in public administration (which includes band administration), compared to only 5.8% in the total labour force. On the other end of the spectrum, barely 2% work in professional, scientific and technical services, compared to 6.3% of the total labour force.

The unemployment rate is also a concern for Aboriginal people. For different reasons, Aboriginal people are not being hired at the same rate as other Canadians. This is despite the gains in education that Aboriginal people have made over the years. The unemployment rate on reserves is more than four times the average Canadian rate.

The explosion of an Aboriginal youth demographic points to a large pool of future workforce participants. On the other hand, there are severe skill shortages in many sectors. Working to develop ways to recruit and retain Aboriginal people can be part of the solution.

A number of challenges and barriers exist to successful recruitment, retention and promotion of Aboriginal people in the workforce. While each sector has particular issues, there are a few key areas where more work needs to be done:

- lack of understanding of Aboriginal culture and language,
- Aboriginal students and potential employees unaware of job opportunities

- misunderstanding and misconceptions about Aboriginal workers,
- training and job availability in rural and remote regions of Canada,
- little coordination between sectors and Aboriginal HR practitioners (AHRDA holders)

The Canadian Labour and Business Centre did a study asking business leaders if they consider the Aboriginal labour market a solution to solving their skills needs. Only 13% of business leaders and 21% of labour leaders said it was very important. This suggests “a disconnect exists between the potential skills contribution to be made by an increasingly educated and mobile Aboriginal workforce, and the perception of some business and labour leaders on this contribution.”²

Sector Council Partnerships and Aboriginal Engagement

A number of sector councils, in partnership with AHRDCC, have successfully implemented initiatives to increase Aboriginal involvement in the labour force. Below are a few examples.

- a) **ECO Canada.** BEAHR (Building Environmental Aboriginal Human Resources) is an extensive and comprehensive initiative providing career awareness programs, training and employment resources and recognition of environmental excellence among Aboriginal organizations. It was created in 2001 and has successfully launched both an internship program and a speaker program. This BEAHR program provides opportunities and resources for practitioners, employers, educators and students.

² Francois Lamontagne, Canadian Labour and Business Centre. *The Aboriginal Workforce: What Lies Ahead*. September, 2004, p. 6.

- b) **Construction Sector Council.** The CSC/AHRDCC partnership developed the Ironworkers Aboriginal Career Awareness project. Building upon a history of Aboriginal ironworkers, this program encourages Aboriginal youth to consider construction as a career. The program is: marketing the ironworker trade to Aboriginal youth, helping to facilitate training, identifying job opportunities, linking youth with employment through mentorships, internships, etc., as well as providing role models.
- c) **Mining Industry HR Council.** The Council recently released a new sector report *Prospecting the Future: meeting Human Resources Challenges in the Canadian Minerals and Metals industry* which specifically identifies Aboriginal people as an important source of labourers. This report outlines the importance of engaging Aboriginal communities and involving the Aboriginal sector.
- d) The **Petroleum Human Resources Sector** published a similar sector report. In that report, Aboriginal engagement is one of the top five key issues. The report recommends further outreach projects to reach this demographic.
- e) **Canadian Trucking Human Resources Council.** The Council partnered with AHRDCC to organize two industry roundtables in Ontario and Alberta in 2004. The roundtables brought industry and AHRDAs together to find innovative ways to recruit Aboriginal people into the trucking industry and look at ways to use the existing Occupational Standards to attract more Aboriginal people
- f) **National Aboriginal trades project.** With funding from HRSDC, the AHRDCC is coordinating a three-year Aboriginal trades initiative. This is a new initiative that will bring together AHRDAs, sector councils, colleges and unions, as well as provincial/territorial governments. The goal is to build linkages between the groups to ensure Aboriginal people and Aboriginal issues are included in the trades agenda for Canada. The Council will be working with five sector councils (Construction, Mining, Automotive Repair, Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, Petroleum) on a number of initiatives to help increase Aboriginal participation in trades and apprenticeships. One element of this initiative is Workplace Connex; a series of private sector engagement forums to link employers and the Aboriginal workforce. Also, AHRDCC will work with each of the five sector councils to develop sector-specific initiatives to reach Aboriginal people.

Please note that all statistics are from the 2001 Statistics Canada Census or reports based on the Census, unless otherwise indicated.

This report was prepared for The Alliance of Sector Councils by Debwe Communications Inc.

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