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## Migration among the First Nations: Reflections of inequalities

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***Migration among the First Nations:***

***Reflections of inequalities***

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## ***Migration among the First Nations: Reflections of inequalities***

### **KEY FINDINGS**

The following points apply to First Nations members as a whole, but are not necessarily representative at the community level.

- The First Nations are a heterogeneous group, in terms of the geographical distribution of their members, their diversity, and also the possession of the legal status of Registered Indian.
- The perception that reserves are being depopulated is mistaken. Reserve populations are increasing, and their net migration is positive. The Indian urban population is also increasing, because those who are acquiring the status of Indian, or who newly self-identify as such, are mainly located here.
- Registered Indian men are more inclined to migrate from urban centres to reserves than vice versa. However, women migrate more from reserves to urban centres, and at younger ages than men.
- Numbers of Indian migrations are low (for example, net migration by Registered Indians, over a five year period, represents about 3% of the total Registered Indian population). The majority of migrations are in fact cases of residential mobility between communities, and (by contrast with the non-Aboriginal population) there are few migrations between provinces or internationally.
- Propensity to migrate is highest in early adulthood (from 20 to 29 years old), and then declines with age.
- Among adult migrants, work and education are the main reasons cited for moving to live outside one's community, according to the First Nations Regional Health Survey (2008).
- Connection with the community is a reason given for returning to one's place of origin.
- Migration has created urban communities which constitute a bridge between tradition and modernity. These communities are the source of cultural events, collective involvement and innovative forms of solidarity.
- Migrations involving reserves are mainly by Registered Indians.
- Policies aiming to reduce socio-economic inequalities within First Nations and between First Nations and non-Aboriginals need to take account of the values of each population.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The subject of this review is the migration dynamics of the First Nations (Registered and non-registered Indians), seen in the light of inequalities of various kinds. Individuals who undertake a migration are attempting to find a balance between their current situation and the situation they would like to be in, with a view to a better life. Analysing these situations implies making decisions which lead them to opt for the type of migration likely to bring them most benefit.

The First Nations are a distinct population group in Canada. As well as being heterogeneous, they also have their own socio-demographic, cultural and political characteristics, and these lie behind some types of migration flows which are unique to Canada. The different inequalities the First Nations experience also need to be better understood, if they are to be more effectively reduced. The nature, intensity and direction of the migration flows of the First Nations (Registered and non-registered Indians) reflect these inequalities, both between their communities, and also between them and the non-Aboriginal population. The most common form of First Nations migration is residential mobility, either within the same community or within an urban centre, whereas inter-provincial and international migration is rare. The net effect of the migration among Registered Indians is mainly towards the reserves, rather than to other rural or urban areas. The quest for better living conditions and the feeling of belonging to a community are the most frequent explanations for Indians deciding to migrate. These migrations may benefit Indian communities in some cases and in others may disadvantage them.

### **Canada's First Nations: two populations and two different realities**

The Canadian First Nations are made up of 617 First Nations communities. The members of this Aboriginal group are North American Indians, some of whom have Registered Indian status while others do not. A Registered Indian is a person who is officially recognised by the Federal Government as Indian under the terms of the Indian Act. All Registered Indians are recorded in the Indian Register, an administrative directory held by the Canadian Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. A non-registered Indian, also known as a "non-status" Indian, is a person who declares him or herself to be Indian but who is not officially recognised as such. Many such persons do not qualify for inclusion in the Register under the terms of the Indian Act, because they are descended from two or more successive generations of exogamous unions. Some non-registered Indians would qualify to be included in the Register, but are not because they have not applied for registration.

### **Majority of First Nations people reside west of Quebec**

Within the First Nations, there are 637,660 Registered Indians (74.9%) and 213,900 non-registered Indians (25.1%). According to the 2011 Census, about one fifth of Registered Indians are resident in Ontario (19.7%) and over four out of ten in the Prairies provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta (46.6%). Just less than one Registered Indian in six resides in British Columbia (17.6%). The majority of non-status Indians are resident in Ontario (35.3%), Quebec (13.9%), British Columbia (19.9%) and the Atlantic Provinces (12.6%).

### **Half of Registered Indians live in a reserve, but non-registered Indians are more urbanised**

Half of Registered Indians live in a reserve. Three quarters of non-registered Indians live in urban

areas, especially in CMAs, while a minority (less than 25%) lives in rural areas, according to the 2006 Census. Inequalities between Registered and non-registered Indians vary with geographical location. Although the former have certain rights and privileges (in most cases linked to residence in a reserve), half of them live in these reserves, which are not always close to urban areas. But it is in urban areas that many services are available. By contrast, non-registered Indians do not have the same rights and privileges, but three quarters of them reside in large or small urban centres. Registered Indians living outside reserves, even without the privileges attached to residence there, are on average better off than registered Indians living in reserves.

### **Residential mobility or long distance migration?**

A “migrant”, for the purposes of measuring migration, is defined as a person who has changed community or region. Those who have changed home within the same community or place of residence are defined as “persons who have moved house” and count towards measuring residential mobility. Migration is generally measured over a five year observation period, and residential mobility over a one year period.

Residential mobility within the same community or place of residence generally represents more than half of changes of residence among the First Nations, with the exception of rural areas. The proportion of the non-Aboriginal Canadian population which is recorded as having changed region of residence (i.e. having migrated) was 16.5% according to the 2001 Census. The proportion was 18.8% for Registered Indians and 23.7% for non-registered Indians. So the First Nations, and in particular non-registered Indians, make more changes of area of residence than non-Aboriginal Canadians. Inter-provincial and international migrations are, however, rare. The multiplicity of migration movements among members of the First Nations, which are often linked to cultural attachment, means that the migration profile of the First Nations is different from that of non-Aboriginal Canadians.

### **To migrate, or not to migrate?**

Migration is moving from one place to another. It also means making a transition to a new life. For the First Nations, migration goes to the heart of identity. For some communities, migration is a stage in the life cycle, an experience which is enriching on both the personal level (relating to marriage, family, friendship networks, and the discovery of a different way of life) and professionally (education, employment, income). The knowledge and experience of the migrant may later be of benefit to the community of origin as a whole. For these reasons, migration is encouraged in some communities. For others, leaving represents a risk of acculturation or even assimilation. Older people may have a disapproving view of non-Aboriginal society, whose values and workings they see as a potential threat to aboriginal traditions. Migration by First Nations to towns and cities has given rise to urban communities which have become a bridge between tradition and modernity and which are the source of cultural events, collective involvement, and innovative forms of solidarity.

### **The myth of depopulation of the reserves**

The perception that reserves are becoming depopulated is mistaken. Reserve populations are rising, and their net migration is positive. The urban Indian population is also increasing, mainly because those who are acquiring Indian status, or who are self-identifying as Indian for the first time, are mainly urban residents.

## **Differences between men and women in migration destinations and motivations**

Among First Nations, and in particular among Registered Indians, men are more likely to migrate from urban centres to reserves. Such movements may be explained by having had a number of disappointing urban experiences (involving precarious housing and employment, low incomes, discrimination and cultural value conflicts). However the opposite trend is seen for women, who make more journeys, at younger ages than men, and mainly towards urban centres. Family-centered motivations are the most cited by Registered Indian women. In fact, age at marriage, age of entry into the labour market or age of becoming a single parent, which are all earlier for women than for men, partly explain this. Better access to educational and health services is also likely to be a reason for young single mothers to leave their communities. Single parent families are more mobile than married couples, and are also more inclined to leave their communities. Return to the place of origin is often motivated by the link with the community there.

## **Inequality and difference**

Disparities in the proportions of those who have college or university diplomas and degrees still exist, and are even growing wider, between First Nations and non-Aboriginal Canadians. Compared with non-Aboriginal Canadians aged 25 to 35, 9 out of 10 of whom have a post-secondary diploma, only 5 out of 10 Registered Indians aged 25 to 35 and 7 out of 10 non-registered Indians have such a qualification. The lowest proportions of diploma-holders are found on reserves among Registered Indians.

Disparities in salaries for the same job also continue to exist between First Nations and non-Aboriginals, even in urban centres. First Nations are more likely to be unemployed or to have lower skilled, part-time, or low-paid jobs.

Access to hospitals and doctors is not the same for all First Nations members. Communities which are located nearer to large urban centres have access to a wider range of health services.

## **Implications for the future**

This is a complex area of research in which the lack of precise data and of regular surveys which are comparable over time remains an obstacle to better understanding. However, we can say that the appearance of a population, which in the case of the First Nations is made up of many different facets, is always altered by the migration of its members. Migration flows, however large or small, impact on all the groups of individuals involved.

Different levels of government listen to the voices of the First Nations, and are engaged in sustained efforts to reduce the socio-economic inequalities between them and the non-Aboriginal population, through large-scale programmes of education, employment, income support and health, while respecting the collective values of each of these groups. This is a major challenge which has to be met while at the same time ensuring that new divisions are not created.

# *Migration among the First Nations: Reflections of inequalities*

## **Introduction**

In Canada the Aboriginal population is made up of First Nations (or *North American Indians*), Métis, and Inuit peoples. The subject of this review is migration among the Registered and Non-registered Indians who together constitute the First Nations<sup>1</sup>. Migration is a complex demographic phenomenon. For the purposes of this review it involves two population groups, at different levels (individuals, families, Aboriginal community, Canadian society) and in varied settings and circumstances. There are also two main types of migration (temporary and permanent). Within these types, some migrations are multiple, others single, and they may be forced or voluntary. Movement of people brings into play a geographical dimension, which can be further categorised (into Indian reserves, areas outside reserves, rural and urban areas, provinces within Canada, and international destinations). Finally the decision to migrate or not to migrate is determined by a number of individual socio-demographic characteristics of an individual, and by his or her motivations).

There are many approaches to analysing migration. Here we aim to present the main aspects and issues in migration as it affects this particular population, within a general framework of inequalities. The presentation has three parts. In the first we introduce the socio-geographical heterogeneity of the First Nations population. To analyse the migration flows of this population we need to define more precisely who belongs to it, and what are the implications of the possession of the legal status of Registered Indian. In the second part we present the major determinants of migration among the First Nations, from the level of the individual to that of Canadian society, by way of the family structure and the aboriginal community. We pay particular attention here to socio-economic inequalities such as in education, employment, incomes and access to health care services. The third part compares myths about migration with the realities of the First Nations. There is not enough quantitative scientific research on First Nations migration to be able to provide reliable estimates of the scale of the phenomenon and describe it systematically. This is why we have adopted a qualitative approach in this review of the state of knowledge on the subject

## **The First Nations: the many faces of a population**

### *Definitions*

Who are the First Nations? There are 617 First Nations communities in Canada. The members of this aboriginal group are North American Indians, some of whom have the status of Registered Indians, while others do not. A Registered Indian is a person recognised by the Federal Government as registered in

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<sup>1</sup> The majority of Registered Indians are members of one of the First Nations communities, but not all. These communities manage their own lists of members. For ease of understanding we use the term “members” to refer to people who are covered by the general definition of “First Nations”.

terms of the Indian Law. The status of registered Indian is inherited according to clearly defined rules<sup>2</sup>. Two successive generations of exogamous unions between a registered Indian (male or female) and a non-Indian (male or female) mean that the status can no longer be transmitted. All registered Indians are recorded in the Indian Register, an administrative database managed by the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development<sup>3</sup>. A non-registered Indian (or “non-status Indian”) is a person who declares him or herself to be Indian but without official recognition. Some of these individuals do not qualify for registration in the Indian Register in terms of the Indian Law<sup>4</sup>, because they are descended from two or more successive generations of exogamous unions. Some may be Indians who have the right to be registered but have never applied for registration, and who declare themselves Indians at the time of the national census.

### ***Population numbers***

The distinction between registered and non-registered Indians based on ethnic origin has only been made since the 1981 census (Guimond, 2009; Norris and Clatworthy, 2011). The number of non-status Indians was previously very difficult to estimate, because it depended on a measure of intensity of feeling of belonging (Fernandez et al., 1981). The 2011 census enumerated 851,560 members of the First Nations, or 60.8% of all Aboriginal people<sup>5</sup>. The total population of Registered Indians was 637,660 (74.9% of the First Nations). Non-registered Indians in total were 213,900 (25.1%). The census undercounts the number of Status Indians compared with the total provided by the Indian Register<sup>6</sup>. The census enumeration is done using self-declaration by respondents. The census also does not include persons residing in institutional establishments, and is affected by the partial or total refusal of some Indian reserves to take part in the census (Guimond et al., 2008). The Indian Register for its part suffers from under-declaration and late declaration of births and deaths of registered Indians. Under-enumeration of status Indians in the census is bound to have repercussions on the data on migration,

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on this topic see Éric Guimond, Norbert Robitaille et Sacha Sénécal, "Les Autochtones du Canada : une population aux multiples définitions", *Cahiers québécois de démographie*, vol. 38, n° 2, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> The Indian Register contains certain information about each individual entry, including the date of birth, date of inclusion in the register, dates of marriage and death, sex, province of residence at the time of registration, band affiliation and registration category (6[1] or 6[2])

<sup>4</sup> Official definitions of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development (consulted 7 May 2015) :

<https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100032374/1100100032378>

<https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014433/1100100014437>

<sup>5</sup> In May 2013, Statistics Canada published the first findings on the Aboriginal population from the Household Survey carried out as part of the 2011 Census. The comparability of the results of this survey with those of the preceding census has not yet been established. The results are presented with caution for the moment. Statistics Canada, *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit, National Household Survey year 2011*, Catalogue no. 99-011-X, 2013. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.cfm>

<sup>6</sup> According to the Indian Register, 868,206 persons had Registered Indian status in 2011. Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, *Registered Indian population by sex and place of residence, 2012, 2013*.



particularly those which concern Indian reserves. On the other hand, the Indian Register, which is an administrative listing, provides no information on migration.

### *Rights and privileges*

Registered Indians are entitled to certain rights and privileges which are attached to their status, and which are laid down in the Indian Law. A Registered Indian is entitled to tax exemptions and also to access to a number of programmes and services provided by federal and provincial governments in the domains of education and health care. The reserves are territories for the exclusive use of Indian bands<sup>7</sup>. Residents of reserves are exempt from tax on incomes earned on the reserve, and from taxes on products and services delivered within a reserve. In January 2013, the Federal Government legally recognised Métis and non-registered Indians as Indians in the terms of the Constitutional Law of 1867, paragraph 91 (24). However such persons are not entitled to the privileges available to Registered Indians.

### *Geographical distribution*

In the same way as non-Aboriginal people, the members of the First Nations are not evenly distributed between the provinces and territories of Canada (Table 1). Over 80% live in Ontario, the Prairies and British Columbia, with about a quarter of First Nations people (23.6%) resident in Ontario, nearly four out of ten (39.2%) in the Prairies provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta), and just under one Indian in five living in British Columbia (18.2%). The geographical distribution of Registered Indians is similar to that of First Nations members as a whole. By contrast, most non-status Indians are resident in Ontario (35.3%), Quebec (13.9%), British Columbia (19.9%) and the Atlantic Provinces (12.6%). Fewer than one Indian in six lives in the three Prairies Provinces. In these provinces between seventy and over ninety percent of members of the First Nations are Status Indians. In terms of numbers and proportions, most non-Registered Indians (from 45.7% to 27.5%) are to be found in Ontario, Quebec, the Atlantic Provinces and British Columbia.

Given that residence on a reserve is a privilege available only to Registered Indians, it is interesting to analyse their distribution by this place of residence (Table 2.) While one fifth of all censused Registered Indians live in Ontario (19.7%), almost two thirds of these are resident outside reserves. At the other extreme, Quebec has the highest proportion of Registered Indians living in a reserve (72%). In general terms, half of Registered Indians live in reserves, excluding Yukon, the North West Territories and Nunavut, regions which account for less than 3% of the total Registered Indian population.

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<sup>7</sup> Persons who do not have registered Indian status are permitted to reside on a reserve with the approval of a band council. However these cases are few (less than 4% of all reserve residents). Guimond, Robitaille et Sénécal, *loc. cit.*

**TABLE 1** Distribution of First Nations by status – Registered or Non-registered Indian. Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2011

Province	First Nations						Total		
	Registered Indians			Non-registered Indians					
Atlantic	31 965	5.0	54.3	26 880	12.6	45.7	58 845	6.9	100.0
Québec	52 645	8.3	63.9	29 775	13.9	36.1	82 420	9.7	100.0
Ontario	125 560	19.7	62.4	75 540	35.3	37.6	201 100	23.6	100.0
Manitoba	105 815	16.6	92.6	8 410	3.9	7.4	114 225	13.4	100.0
Saskatchewan	94 160	14.8	91.2	9 045	4.2	8.8	103 205	12.1	100.0
Alberta	96 730	15.2	82.9	19 945	9.3	17.1	116 675	13.7	100.0
British Columbia	112 400	17.6	72.5	42 615	19.9	27.5	155 015	18.2	100.0
Yukon	5 715	0.9	86.7	875	0.4	13.3	6 590	0.8	100.0
North West Territories	12 575	2.0	94.2	775	0.4	5.8	13 350	1.6	100.0
Nunavut	90	0.0	69.2	40	0.0	30.8	130	0.0	100.0
Canada	637 655	100.0	74.9	213 900	100.0	25.1	851 555	100.0	100.0

Source: Statistics Canada (2013, Tableau 3)

**TABLE 2** Distribution of Registered Indians by residence in and outside reserves. Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2011

Province	Registered Indians						Total		
	In reserves			Outside Reserves					
Atlantic	18 220	5.8	57.0	13 745	4.3	43.0	31 965	5.0	100.0
Québec	37 904	12.1	72.0	14 741	4.6	28.0	52 645	8.3	100.0
Ontario	46 457	14.8	37.0	79 103	24.8	63.0	125 560	19.7	100.0
Manitoba	61 267	19.5	57.9	44 548	14.0	42.1	105 815	16.6	100.0
Saskatchewan	53 954	17.2	57.3	40 206	12.6	42.7	94 160	14.8	100.0
Alberta	45 753	14.6	47.3	50 977	16.0	52.7	96 730	15.2	100.0
British Columbia	49 681	15.8	44.2	62 719	19.7	55.8	112 400	17.6	100.0
Yukon <sup>1</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-	5 715	0.9	-
North West Territories	264	0.1	2.1	12 311	3.9	97.9	12 575	2.0	100.0
Nunavut <sup>2</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-	90	0.0	-
Canada	314 366	100.0	49.3	323 294	100.0	50.7	637 655	100.0	100.0

Note: <sup>1</sup> No Indian establishment or Indian reserve in Yukon is included in the definition of the term “reserves”.

<sup>2</sup> There are no Indian reserves or establishments in Nunavut.

Source: Statistics Canada (2013, Table 3)

By convention, four mutually exclusive areas of residence are referred to in research on Aboriginal people’s migration. Because of the existence of the legal status of Registered Indian, researchers usually employ the *In Reserves* and *Outside Reserves* dichotomy, which is also the most informative in terms of migration among Registered Indians. Although reserves are located both in rural areas and on the fringes of urban areas, they are a distinct entity different from other places of residence. The urban area

is divided into two categories, the Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs or large urban centres) and urban areas outside CMAs (small urban centres) (Clatworthy, 1996; Norris & Clatworthy, 2003; Norris, Cooke, et al., 2004). According to the 2006 Census, Non-registered Indians were the most urbanised members of the First Nations (74.5% compared with 40.6% for Registered Indians) (Table 3). Over half this group was resident in a large urban centre (50.2%), and just under a quarter in a small urban centre (24.3%). Just over one Registered Indian in ten was resident in rural area outside a reserve<sup>8</sup>.

**TABLE 3** Distribution (%) of First Nations by status and area of residence, Canada, 2006

First Nations	Areas				Total
	Census Metropolitan (CNA)	Urban non CMA	Reserves	Rural	
Registered Indians	23.3	17.3	48.1	11.3	100.0
Registered Indians	50.2	24.3	3.5	22.0	100.0

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census.

### *Migration and Residential Mobility*

The total mobility of a population is defined by the movements of individuals from their former habitual place of residence to another place, as recorded on the day of the census. It is measured by means of five yearly censuses, through a question which asks about movement in the preceding five years or one year. In research on migration among Aboriginal peoples, persons who have changed community or area of residence are called “migrants”, and are counted towards total migration. Those who have moved house within the same community or the same place of residence are defined as “people who have moved house” and their numbers go to make up residential mobility. As a general rule, migration is measured over a five year observation period, and residential mobility over a one year period. Research studies distinguish between these two types of migratory movements (Clatworthy & Cooke, 2001; Clatworthy & Norris, 2007; Norris & Clatworthy, 2003, 2011; Norris, Cooke, et al., 2004), on the grounds that they are the products of different causes.

The boundaries of communities do not always correspond geographically to a single census subdivision. A census subdivision is more easily reconciled with a reserve. A single Aboriginal community may thus be represented in a number of reserves and may cover several enumeration districts. Migrations within a community but between reserves may therefore not be counted. In the same way, migration movements from an adjacent place of residence into a reserve or into a community are not always counted as movements into reserves. These omissions lead to errors - essentially under-estimates - in measuring migration flows, especially as regards return migrations (Cooke, 2002; Norris & Clatworthy, 2003; Norris, Cooke, et al., 2004).

Stewart Clatworthy and Mary Jane Norris have made a number of investigations of the migration profiles of the four groups of Aboriginal people: Registered Indians, Non-registered Indians, Métis and

<sup>8</sup> Registered Indians living in a reserve located in a rural area are counted in the Reserves category. This classification has the effect of reducing the proportion of Registered Indians living in rural areas. Migration data resulting from analysis using this geographical classification are also affected.

Inuit. Their researches are based on the 1996 and the 2001 censuses and present results on those aged 5 and over. Migration and residential mobility do not play an equal part in total mobility. Among the First Nations, residential mobility within a single community or a single place of residence generally represents over half of all changes of residence, except in rural areas (Norris & Clatworthy, 2003).

The proportion of the non-Aboriginal Canadian population which declared a change in area of residence (a migration) in the 2001 Census was 16.5%. For Registered Indians the proportion was 18.8%, and 23.7% for Non-registered Indians. First Nations people, and in particular Non-registered Indians, thus make more changes of area of residence than non-Aboriginal Canadians (Clatworthy & Norris, 2013). At the same time, net migration by Registered Indians, over a five year period, represents about 3% of the total population of Registered Indians.

Table 4 is taken from the study by Clatworthy and Norris (2013), and shows the distribution of migration flows by origin and destination, for persons aged 5 and over for the period 1996-2001. It illustrates for each type of migration the differences in geographical distribution and degree of urbanisation between Registered and Non-registered Indians. It also provides an idea of the numbers of people involved in these migration flows.

**TABLE 4** Distribution of migration flows by origin and destination, Registered and Non-registered Indians, Canada, 1996-2001

Origin - Destination	Registered Indians		Non-registered Indians	
	No.	%	No.	%
Urban to urban	31 885	34.3	13 365	59.7
Urban to rural	8 490	9.1	3 385	15.1
Urban to reserve	16 940	18.2	515	2.3
Rural to rural	3 080	3.3	1 240	5.5
Rural to urban	12 365	13.3	3 255	14.6
Rural to reserve	5 355	5.8	155	0.7
Reserve to urban	9 960	10.7	345	1.5
Reserve to rural	1 565	1.7	40	0.2
Reserve to reserve	3 240	3.5	70	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>92 880</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>27 370</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Clatworthy and Norris (2013), 2001 Census.

The number of Registered Indian migrants was 3.4 times greater than that of Non-registered Indians. But in proportion to the total migrant population of each group, Registered Indians are less mobile than the Non-registered. 60% of cases of Non-registered Indian migration involve leaving one urban area to go to live in another, reflecting the higher degree of urbanisation among this group compared with Registered Indians (Table 3). The same type of migration represents only 34% of cases among Registered Indians, whereas 30% of the migrations of this group take place between urban areas and reserves (18.2% and 10.7%), with a net migration gain of about 11,000 individuals in favour of reserves. Non-

registered Indians are little involved in migration flows to and from reserves, where residence is linked to possession of registered status.

### *Comparability of data over time*

The main sources of data which enable the two groups within the First Nations to be analysed are not identical (the Indian Register and the Census for Registered Indians, and the Census for Non-registered Indians). In addition, being registered or non-registered are concepts whose definitions have changed over time, according to the demands of First Nations people and the legal recognitions granted by the federal government. Any change in the system of rights to registration implies a parallel re-definition of the non-registered Indian population (Guimond, 2003; Norris & Clatworthy, 2009, 2011; Norris, Cooke, et al., 2004; Peters, 2004; Robitaille & Guimond, 1994; Siggner, 1977; Trovato et al., 1994). In 1985 and 2011, the Indian Law was amended so as to make possible the reintegration of individuals who had lost their registered status, and the registration of their descendants<sup>9</sup>. Those who were re-registered or registered for the first time as a result of these changes generally continued to reside outside reserves (Norris, Beavon, et al., 2004; Norris, Cooke, et al., 2004; Trovato et al., 1994).

The partial or total refusal by some reserves to participate in the census results in failure to enumerate completely all individuals residing in these geographical areas or to record their socio-demographic characteristics and migration movements. Furthermore, the number and identity of reserves refusing to participate are not the same from one census to another (Cooke, 2002; Norris & Clatworthy, 2003, 2011; Norris, Cooke, et al., 2004; Trovato et al., 1994). Their exclusion from research leads to biased measures of migration flows. Finally, a number of small urban centres have developed over time to become large urban centres. This has had the effect of enhancing the impression that Indians have become more urbanised (Norris, Cooke, et al., 2004). So in theory all the Indians living in a non-urban community in one census may find themselves within an urban community at the next census, without a single individual having moved.

### *Impacts*

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<sup>9</sup> Since 1985, Registered Indian status has been inherited according to two rules based on the registration or right to registration of an individual's parents. Two Registered Indian parents, possessing their status by virtue of paragraph 6(1) or 6(2), pass on type 6(1) status to their children. A union between an Indian parent with 6(1) status and a non-Indian parent (N) gives rise to a type 6(2) status. Children of two successive generations of mixed unions do not have the right to appear in the register. Before 1985, an Indian male marrying a non-Indian female kept his status, and his spouse obtained the right to Registered Indian status. Their offspring had the right to the legal status of Registered Indian. But under the Indian Law an Indian female marrying a non-Indian male lost her Registered Indian status, and their offspring were ineligible for registration as Indians. After 1985, Indian women married to non-Indians recovered or maintained their status (of type 6[1]), and their offspring were given the right to inclusion in the Indian Register by virtue of paragraph 6(2). First generation descendants, who had 6(2) status before the passing of the 1985 law, were thenceforth able to obtain 6(1) status on application. In 2011, Law C-3 eliminated discrimination based on sex in relation to inclusion in the Indian register, in particular in the case of the offspring of two generations of women married to non-Indian men.

The First Nations are not a homogeneous group, in terms of the geographical distribution of their members, the diversity of their constituent communities, and also the possession of the legal status of Registered Indian. Their geographical areas of residence do not all offer their populations the same rights and access to resources, in terms of housing, education, employment opportunities or access to health care services, information and social programmes (P. Bernier & Rigaud, 2009). At the same time, the strength of the sense of belonging to an Aboriginal community, and its mode of expression, take different forms depending on the place of residence and the possession or not of legal Indian status (Environics Institute, 2010). But these aspects are not necessarily related to economic success or friendly relations with non-Aboriginal people. Urbanisation of Aboriginal culture also carries with it a certain creative dynamism and a new social cohesion (Peters, 2004), which can work in favour of First Nations members. All these differences create social divides which determine the nature, direction and intensity of migrations undertaken by individuals with the aim of mitigating them.

### **To stay or to migrate: a conflict of inequalities and differences**

Migrating means moving from one place to another. It also means making one or more transitions between one given situation and another. Three elements are at work in the decision to migrate or not to migrate, and are configured by the particular circumstances of the decision. Firstly, each person has his or her own subjectivity, perception, experience of life, deep motivations, but also the strength and the expression of his or her feelings of belonging to a community or a place (Environics Institute, 2010; Peters, 2004). The decision to migrate also takes place within the framework of norms of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups, or frees itself from that framework. This is particularly true of members of the First Nations. Secondly, each individual possesses individual characteristics (age, sex, matrimonial status, registration status), of which some are interdependent with the socio-cultural and economic circumstances shaping him or her (schooling, professional experience, linguistic aptitudes etc.) and which appear, as the third element, at the structural level. This takes a number of forms: social organisational (access to information and culture, education, employment, health and social services), geographical (distance from urban centres) and political (in terms of government and Indian band institutions). Disparities between services available at the structural level create socio-economic inequalities between populations and individuals. Different levels of government put in place a range of programmes to remedy these, while trying not to create new ones.

### *Motivations*

These three groups of factors appear, interact, and condition the individual at different moments of the life cycle. The search for personal equilibrium is the ground for the motivation orienting the individual towards taking action. In 1972, Denton highlighted the human factors (family pressures, changes in marital status) among the reasons for leaving reserves or Indian communities (Denton, 1972). In 1991 the Aboriginal Peoples Survey investigated empirically the motivations of Registered Indian migrants. Securing better housing, raising their level of education, improving the lot of their families all featured among the most often cited reasons for men to migrate, and, in the reverse order, for women also. In 2008, in the First Nations Regional Health Survey and among those who had already migrated, work and further studies were cited by adults as reasons for migrating outside of their communities, (First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2012). A recent study analysed the motivations of

members of the First Nations coming to live in towns and cities for the first time<sup>10</sup> (Environics Institute, 2010). Family reunion, further schooling or escape from problematic family situations were the main reasons given by women, and finding work by men. The results of the APS carried out in 2012 will provide more information about the current motivation of Aboriginal Peoples migrants,

### *Strength of feelings of belonging: Aboriginal pride*

Among Aboriginal Peoples, and particularly among the First Nations, the social setting is shaped by the cultural norms of the group. These are not uniform from one community to another. In addition, members of the same community may not perceive, interpret or apply these norms in the same way in their daily lives, and the feelings they inspire do not remain the same from one generation to another. For some groups, migration represents a stage in the life cycle, an enriching experience in both personal (marriage, family, friendship networks, discovery of another way of life....) and also professional terms (education, employment, income...). The skills and capacities gained by migrants may be beneficial for their communities at a later stage. In this sense, migration is recommended by some communities. For others, the departure of an Indian represents a risk both to him or her and to the community. Elders may have a negative view of non-Aboriginal society, whose functioning and values appear to be a threat to the continued existence of Aboriginal traditions (Denton, 1972; Gerber, 1984; Trovato et al., 1994). Migration thus represents either an gain or a potential loss to the group.

Aboriginal pride always reasserts itself in the wake of political events, such as the amendments passed to modify the Indian Law in 1985, the Oka crisis in 1990, or more recently the recognition of Non-registered Indians and Métis as Indians in 2013. The strength of ties of belonging to the First Nations is expressed in Aboriginal pride, development of cultural heritage and defence of ancestral rights. After the Second World War, large numbers of members of the First Nations left their communities to live in towns (Newhouse, 2003). Mobility which is too great weakens social cohesion and obliges the group to adjust its needs, both in originating and destination areas (Norris & Clatworthy, 2003; Trovato et al., 1994). The establishment of several generations of Indians in urban areas has gradually contributed to the development of a particular form of Aboriginal community in a different environment. However this specific phenomenon takes many different forms, being made up of a large number of separate identities. Nevertheless it does encourage the development of new social and information networks, centres of friendship and mutual help, and cultural associations to respond to the needs of First Nations members already established in the urban areas as well as of new arrivals. This social organisation builds bridges between tradition and modernity, out of which grow new cultural expressions, a collective involvement and an innovative solidarity. It also enables Aboriginal peoples to introduce and present their heritage to non-Aboriginal people. Migration is behind a new expression of First Nations culture, thanks to the dynamism of an urban community spirit (Cooke & Bélanger, 2006; Environics Institute, 2010; Peters, 2004).

### *Non-comprehension of differences*

Above and beyond the attachment to one's own culture and family, it is normal for an individual to seek to better his or her condition, including through migration. Whether to get away from strict social

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<sup>10</sup> The study does not always distinguish between registered and non-registered members.

norms, an abusive conjugal relationship or poverty, to find better housing or health care, to go to school or simply to get a job, the city lights may shine brightly for those dreaming of better living conditions, in a setting poles apart from the familiar and the day to day. The will to succeed leads to happy endings for some Indians, while for others excitement slowly gives way to apathy, because they are not ready or prepared to withstand the shock of cultural difference. Prejudices, entrenched attitudes, or simply a lack of communication between Aboriginal and Non-aboriginal people can produce antipathy and mistrust which undermine any effective cooperation. The feeling of personal failure sometimes overcomes the will to succeed, whether the migration is a single or repeated experience (Cooke & Bélanger, 2006; Trovato et al., 1994). In the literature about Aboriginal peoples, the idea of failure usually refers to poverty, instability, criminality, alcoholism, prostitution, unemployment or major recourse to social assistance. These attributes, attached to Aboriginal peoples, add to the negative perceptions of them by non-Aboriginal people. In return, fear and mistrust on the part of Indians (irrespective of registration status) towards non-Aboriginal people are exacerbated by the individualism of western society, social exclusion, and discrimination as they encounter them. Some members of First Nations thus return to their communities (or to reserves in the case of Registered Indians), as refuges in which they rediscover their cultural values (Cooke, 2002; Cooke & Bélanger, 2006; Denton, 1972; Norris, Cooke, et al., 2004; Peters, 2004; Trovato et al., 1994).

### *Individual, family, community and Canadian society*

The socio-demographic characteristics of individuals are linked to the phenomenon of migration. Some are acquired, such as age and sex, others will be achieved during the course of the life cycle, such as changes in marital status, level of education, professional experience or indeed possession of the status of registered Indian. Individual pathways are realised within the setting of the Aboriginal group or, more generally, within Canadian society. On the other hand, there are also individuals who create their own structure of social functioning. Migration is a response to a disequilibrium between four entities, namely the individual, the family, the community and Canadian society, which are indissociable from each other. However the migrant and the non-migrant populations select themselves according to the socio-demographic characteristics of individuals, places of residence or legal Indian status. These differences determine the different types of movement involved (definitive migration, temporary or return migration, and circular migration), and these in return may act to accentuate the differences.

Age is the variable involved in migration which has been most studied. Propensity to migrate is highest in early adulthood (age 20 to 29), and then diminishes with increasing age. Young Aboriginal families with children aged under 10, who are looking for suitable housing, are also very mobile. Some Indians also return to their communities as they approach retirement age, or settle near health facilities (Clatworthy, 1996; Clatworthy & Cooke, 2001; Clatworthy & Norris, 2007; Cooke, 2002; Norris & Clatworthy, 2003, 2009; Norris, Cooke, et al., 2004; Trovato et al., 1994).

Among First Nations people and especially among Registered Indians, for whom the literature is fuller, men appear more inclined to migrate from urban centres to reserves. These migration movements can be explained by their having experienced disappointment during their lives in urban areas (because of precarious housing and employment, low incomes and discrimination, or a conflict of cultural values). The reverse is true of women, who make more migration journeys, starting at younger ages than men, and mainly towards urban centres (Meloche-Turcot, 2013). For Registered Indian women it is the family context which is most decisively influential (Clatworthy, 1996; Clatworthy & Cooke, 2001; Cooke, 2002; Norris & Clatworthy, 2003, 2009; Norris, Cooke, et al., 2004; Trovato et al., 1994). So we find that age at



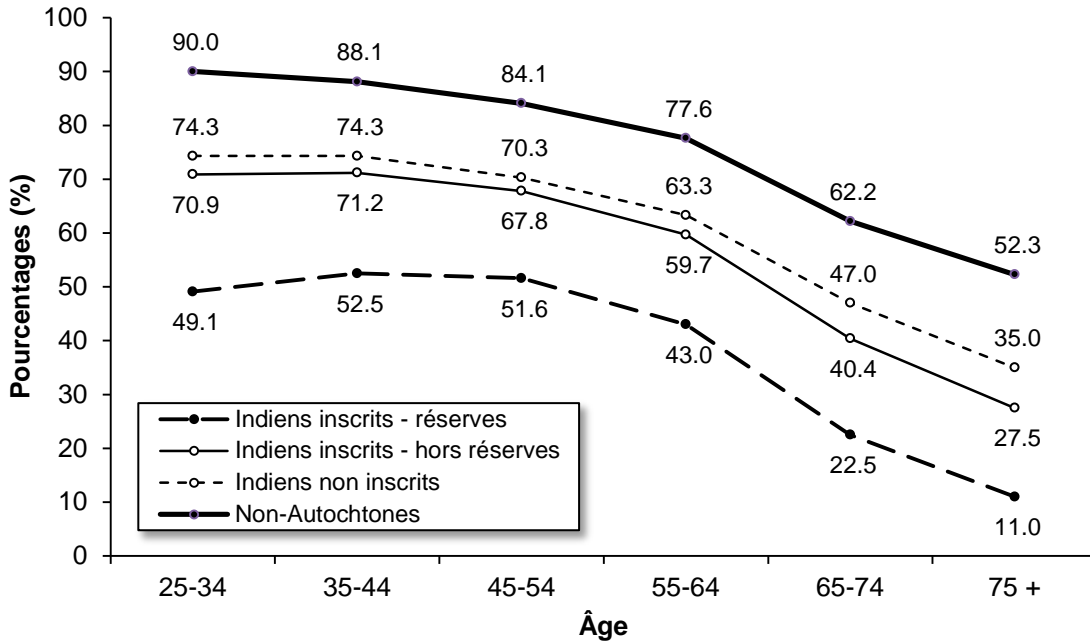
marriage, age of entry into the labour market, or age of single parenthood, all of which are younger for women than for men, partially explain these findings. Access to educational services or to health care services is also likely to motivate young single mothers to leave their communities. Single parent families are more mobile than married couples. They are also the most liable to leave their communities (Clatworthy & Cooke, 2001).

Before the 1985 amendments to the Indian Law, mixed marriages with non-Indian men meant that Indian women lost their Registered status and were deprived of the right to live in their reserves, which created a gender imbalance there. Looking for a spouse outside one's community becomes a reason to migrate, temporarily or not (Denton, 1972; Norris & Clatworthy, 2009; Norris, Cooke, et al., 2004; Trovato et al., 1994). We do not know what were, and what are now, the migration pathways of mixed couples, or couples from two different communities. Moving house is also a response to the consumption needs of the members of the family as a whole (housing, education....) or to a plan for a larger family (Denton, 1972; Norris & Clatworthy, 2009). Changes of residence, within a single community for example, are frequent among First Nations people. Push and pull factors between reserves and areas outside reserves, particularly towns, thus have a different incidence on men and women (Norris & Clatworthy, 2003). More recent and more precise data would enable us to monitor the trends in this phenomenon and to gain a better idea of its underlying causes and consequences.

The improvement in educational levels and qualifications among First Nations people in recent decades is encouraging. However there are still wide gaps in the proportions of those who have a college level diploma or a university degree, and these are even tending to widen between different population groups over time (Graphs 1 and 2). Proportionally fewer Indians aged 25 to 35 have college or university level qualifications (5 and 7 out of 10 for Registered and Non-registered respectively) than non-Aboriginal people (9 out of 10) (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Canada, 2009).

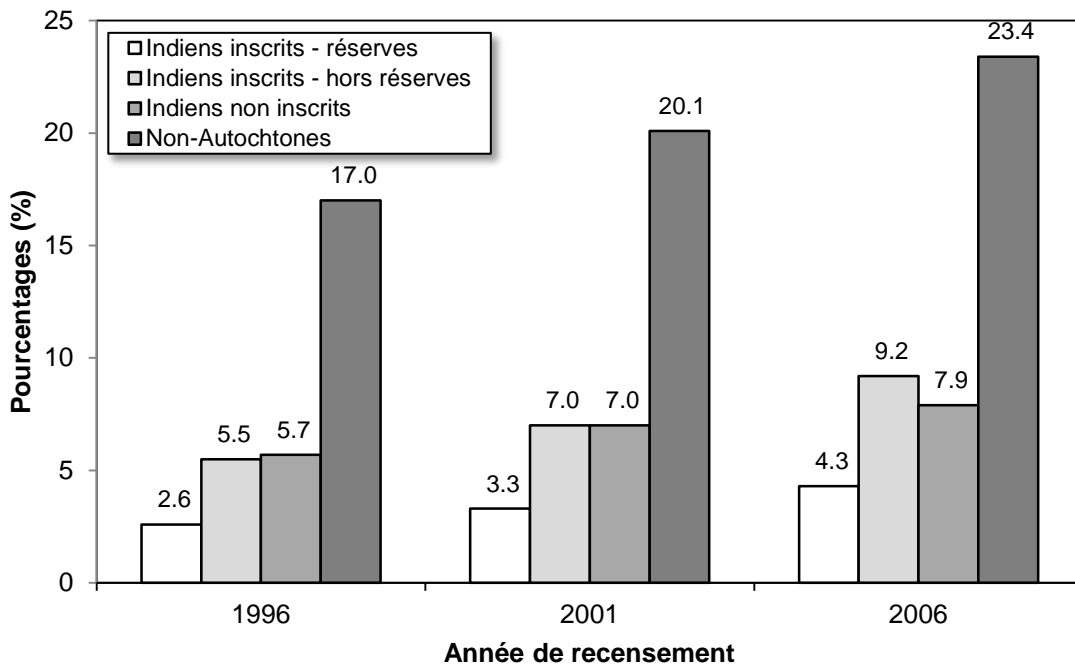
The lowest proportions of persons with diplomas are found among Registered Indians living in reserves. Outside reserves, Registered and Non-registered Indians have at least a college diploma in more or less equal proportions, controlling for age and time. There are therefore disparities between First Nations members depending on their place of residence. To be more precise, Registered and Non-registered Indians living outside reserves are more likely to be in Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA) or in smaller non-CMA urban areas (Table 3), in which there is a wide range of school and professional education establishments. Despite the fact that Registered Indian status gives privileged access to post-secondary and higher education, geographical distance means that these are out of reach. The distance to be travelled to attain an objective is a basic determinant in the evaluation of the costs of migration. Distance is an obstacle which may often be decisive in dissuading potential migrants. Many remote First Nations communities have no educational institutions to offer their members more advanced educational opportunities. But some of these members prefer to stay in their own community. Here is more evidence that migrants are more educated than non-migrants. Migrants grow and diversify their knowledge and skills, and are also capable of passing on a more complete education to their children (Clatworthy & Cooke, 2001; Cooke, 2002; Cooke & Bélanger, 2006; Norris, Beavon, et al., 2004; Trovato et al., 1994).

**GRAPH 1** Proportion (%) of those with a college diploma by age, status and area of residence, Canada, 2006



Source : AADNC (2009)

**GRAPH 2** Proportion (%) de those with a university degree by status and area of residence, Canada, 1996-2006



Source : AADNC (2009)

A higher level of schooling opens up access to jobs associated with the new middle classes, and to higher incomes. Nevertheless, pay gaps still exist today between Aboriginal and Non-aboriginal people for the same jobs. Aboriginal people are also more likely to be jobless or to have less specialised jobs which are part time and more poorly paid (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2009; R. Bernier, 1997; First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2012; Meloche-Turcot, 2013). Meloche-Turcot (2013) shows that national identity, area of residence, and variables linked to employment such as years of schooling, employment status and specialisation, work against Registered Indians obtaining better incomes. Even where there is professional success, a feeling of discrimination persists, leading to interpersonal tensions (Wotherspoon, 2003).

When an Indian leaves his group for good in search of a job, the group loses a certain intellectual capital. Women leaving their communities to go into towns also become more educated. They acquire a degree of independence which, for some, leads them to attempt to become entrepreneurs, showing determination but also encountering great difficulties (restricted access to credit, market expansion). These women bring considerable help to their communities in return by creating businesses<sup>11</sup>. Leaving one's community may be disapproved of by one's family, but coming back with professional baggage and new ideas contributes to the community's socio-economic development through collective participation and encourages the spirit of enterprise (Trovato et al., 1994; Wotherspoon, 2003). In the long term this contribution could make up for the gaps caused by departures and enable the community to carve out a place for itself in the market. But education and opportunities for professional self-accomplishment remain factors of division between geographical areas and populations which have unequal service provision.

Access to hospitals and doctors is not the same for all First Nations members. Communities nearest to large urban centres enjoy a wider range of health services<sup>12</sup>. Nursing stations and health centres exist in most remote First Nations communities, employing male and female nurses. These nurses are the contact points between communities and the health care system. The type of care offered is sometimes adapted to conform to the socio-cultural norms of the First Nations.<sup>13</sup> For some groups, the traditional approach to medicine is an important element of cultural identity (particularly for older people), and this is not always made available in health centres. The 2008 Regional Health Survey reports that adult First Nations members consider their access to health services to be inferior to that of the Canadian population in general. The main access problems referred to concern difficulty in receiving traditional treatments, inability to afford the costs directly linked to health care provision, the cost of transport, child care charges, or refusal by the Non Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) system to pay for treatment.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The same scenario can be seen to apply to men. The number of Aboriginal business owners is increasing (Wotherspoon, 2003). The emergence of a class of Aboriginal business women is less well known. See on this topic the Aboriginal Women's Business Planning Guide (January 2004).

<sup>12</sup> Health care service provision is a responsibility of Province and Territory level government.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/services/nurs-infir/index-eng.php> (accessed 16 December 2014).

<sup>14</sup> According to the Health Canada website, the Non Insured Health Benefits program (NIHB) is "a national, medically necessary health benefit program that provides coverage for benefit claims for a specified range of drugs, dental care, vision care, medical supplies and equipment, short-term crisis intervention mental health counselling and medical transportation for eligible First Nations people and Inuit". (<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/nihb-ssna/index-eng.php>, (page accessed 16 December 2014).

Others cite long waiting lists or lack of infrastructure, doctors or nurses in their region (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2011; First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2012). Migrating to urban centres thus becomes a way of obtaining adequate or specialised health care.

Some First Nations families change their place of residence frequently. Housing is often unsanitary, uninhabitable or in some way dangerous to the occupants' health (being in need of major repairs, lacking facilities and insulation, subject to damp). In 2012, a study of the health of First Nations children (outside reserves) and of Métis children aged under 6 found that the probability of being in excellent or good health declined with increases in the size of the family or in the number of moves. This finding is based on parents' perceptions of the health of their children, the state of their housing and of community health establishments (Findlay & Janz, 2012). Housing remains a social determinant of health, and becomes a motive for moving when it is inadequate (overcrowded or insanitary). High residential mobility is however not ideal, and may make access to some types of health care more difficult, even in urban areas (Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2002).

## **Migration flows: myths and realities**

Research on migration flows among members of the First Nations has been sporadic. In general researchers have found it easier to focus on the Registered rather than the Non-registered population. Because these publications have been irregular, they do not enable us to trace an accurate chronological profile of migration trends according to a number of demographic characteristics (possession of Registered Indian status, age, sex, marital status, regional classification etc.). Changes in laws and in the definitions of Aboriginal sub-groups for census purposes add an extra dimension of difficulty to the problem of comparability over time. However the main outlines can be deduced from the observations made in these research studies. The demographic realities demonstrated in these studies which have been subject to loose interpretation that has given rise to a number of myths. These myths still persist today despite having been frequently disproved.

### *Depopulation of reserves and rural areas, and First Nations urbanisation*

Since the 1950s, many studies have highlighted the rapid growth of various Aboriginal populations in the urban centres of Canada (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, 2011; Kalbach, 1987; Norris & Clatworthy, 2011; Peters, 2004). The urbanisation of the Aboriginal population, and particularly of Indians with legally registered status, has attracted special attention<sup>15</sup> (Cooke, 2002; Environics Institute, 2010; Guimond et al., Winter 2009; Norris & Clatworthy, 2011; Norris, Cooke, et al., 2004; Siggner & Costa, 2005). In anthropological studies carried out in the 1960s and 1970s, these phenomena were explained as resulting from high fertility among First Nations<sup>16</sup>, especially for the Registered Indian population, but mostly from migration (Nagler, 1970).

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<sup>15</sup> It is not possible from the available data to determine the numbers of Registered Indians in urban areas before 1981, because the term "Registered Indian" was used in the Canadian Census only from that date. In 1981, 33.5% of Registered Indians were resident in small or large urban centres. The proportion appears to have remained stable since 1996 at just over 40%.

<sup>16</sup> The total fertility rate of Registered Indian women in Canada fell from 6.1 to 3.2 children per woman between 1968 and 1981, and stabilised at 2.4 in 2004. Shirley Loh et M.V. Georges, "Estimating the Fertility Level of Registered Indians in Canada: A Challenging Endeavour", *Canadian Studies in*

A lack of empirical confirmation of migration movements during this period created the myth of depopulation of the reserves in favour of urban centres. Some reserves were even said to be about to disappear (Hawthorn, 1966). As early as 1977, Siggner showed that, like the cities, reserves showed net positive migration. The same was true in 2006 (Norris & Clatworthy, 2011). Since that time, empirical research has continued to refute the perception that reserves are losing population. How can simultaneous growth of the Registered Indian population in both cities and reserves be explained? Migration should not be considered to be the sole factor. Demographic studies have contributed two other explanatory factors: re-integrations into the Indian Register, and ethnic mobility.

The first of these is a consequence of the 1985 amendments to the Indian Law, which enabled the reintegration of over 115,000 individuals (between 1985 and 2005) who had previously lost their status as a result of mixed marriages, and the registration of their offspring. The majority of those re-registered or newly registered after 1985 continued to reside outside reserves, mainly in urban areas; and this reinforced the impression that Registered Indians had become more urbanised (Clatworthy, 2009; Guimond, 1999; Guimond et al., Winter 2009; Norris & Clatworthy, 2003, 2009; Norris, Cooke, et al., 2004; Robitaille & Guimond, 1994). However, others decided to settle in reserves, increasing the flow from towns and cities towards reserves. In 2011, the Law C-3 ended discrimination against the descendants of two generations of women married to non-Indian men. In the same year, the federal government officially recognised the First Nations band the Mi'kmaq Qalipu of Newfoundland and Labrador Province, and its members, as Indians by virtue of paragraph 6(1) in conformity with the Indian Law<sup>17</sup>. These legal changes had the effect of increasing the number of Registered Indians living outside reserves, which in turn altered the geographical distribution of the Indian population.

The second factor, ethnic mobility, concerns First Nations members who do not have the right to registration in the Indian Register. By definition, these individuals do not have the right to reside in reserves<sup>18</sup>. Large numbers of people who are the product of generations of mixed unions between Registered Indians and others (non-Aboriginals, Non-registered Indians, Métis, Inuit) identify themselves, justifiably, as members of the First Nations. However this identification is subjective and cannot be changed throughout the life cycle of an individual. Some individuals, of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal origins, who did not previously identify themselves as members of a First Nation, have succeeded in becoming members of this group through a change of identity at some point in their lives. Ethnic mobility, from one census to another, thus partly explains the increase in the overall numbers of First Nations people (Boucher et al., 2009; Guimond, 1999; Guimond et al., 2008).

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*Population*, vol. 30, n° 1, 2003; Bali Ram, " New Estimates of Aboriginal Fertility, 1966-1971 to 1996-2001", *ibid.*, p. Cited Pages|. vol. 31, n° 2, 2004; Victor Piché and M.V. Georges, "Estimates of Vital Rates for the Canadian Indians, 1960-1970", *Demography*, vol. 10, 1973; Éric Guimond and Norbert Robitaille, "Mères à l'adolescence : analyse de la fécondité des indiennes inscrites âgées de 15 à 19 ans, 1986 à 2004", *Cahiers québécois de démographie*, vol. 38, n° 2, 2009.

<sup>17</sup> In July 2013, a press release from the Canadian Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development announced that between September 2011 (when the Qalipu band was created) and November 2012, the number of applications for registration was about 70,000. Of these, 46,000 were received between September and November 2012 : <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1372944491755/1372944531399> (page accessed 27 November 2014).

<sup>18</sup> Unless specifically permitted by the band council of a community.

The frequency of mixed unions, between Registered Indians and non-Aboriginals, has implications for the composition of First Nations populations, depending on the possession of legal status and the type of status (see note 9). In 2009, Clatworthy showed that the incidence of mixed descent<sup>19</sup> is higher among Indians living outside reserves in Canada. In the long term, the frequency of mixed unions will reduce the size of the population with rights to registration and, by extension, increase the size of the ineligible population. This phenomenon will be accentuated outside the reserves. Possession of registered status is a factor for geographical mobility. It also confers access to rights, privileges, and resources. So it is to be expected that changes in the composition of the First Nations populations will have an impact in the long term on the migration flows of their members.

### *Multiple movements: a First Nations reality*

The five yearly census remains the most widely used tool for studying migration. But in addition to the problem of coverage, the census does not always capture effectively the different types of movement such as return migration, repeated migrations or changes in residence within a single locality. Migrants who have died before being censused are also not counted (Norris & Clatworthy, 2011). These types of migration are however characteristic of the Indian population, both Registered and Non-registered. In 2002 Cooke used the individual migrant, rather than the migration movement, as the unit of analysis. This meant that multiple migrations were counted as only one movement, which led to an under-estimate of the scale of the migration phenomenon (Cooke, 2002; Cooke & Bélanger, 2006; Norris & Clatworthy, 2011). Observed migration was thus effectively the resulting and still extant migration, with previous migrations unknown and therefore unable to be analysed for their causes and characteristics.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the anthropological approach was the main route to understanding of Aboriginal migration, without systematic distinctions of national identity or registration status. Proponents of this theoretical approach attempted to conceptualise migration by focusing their enquiries and reflections on the pre- and post-migration phases and on the push and pull factors operating in places of origin and destination of migrants. These dichotomies set up a uni-directional conception of migration, a movement from reserves to urban areas (Cooke, 2002; Cooke & Bélanger, 2006; Norris, Beavon, et al., 2004; Norris & Clatworthy, 2011; Norris, Cooke, et al., 2004; Trovato et al., 1994), and presented urbanisation of registered Indians as a social problem (Peters, 1996). The importance and the role of culture, and the issues at stake, in the migration process of Aboriginal people were not much considered. At most they were adduced as obstacles to migrants' integration (Nagler, 1970; Peters, 1996). In 2006, Cooke and Bélanger adopted a systems theory approach to First Nations migration, integrating a consideration of bi-directional and multiple movements and of different types of migrants into their analysis, which corresponded more closely to the Aboriginal reality. These same authors also dealt with inter-relations between the factors involved, at the micro and the macro level (Cooke & Bélanger, 2006).

Registered Indians living outside reserves are more mobile than those living inside them (66% compared with 38% in 1991-1996 according to the study by Norris and Clatworthy in 2003). Of these proportions, those who have changed community represented, at that time, 29% and 12% for the two

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<sup>19</sup> This is the probability that a child born to a Registered Indian will have a mother or a father who is not eligible for registration.

geographical categories. Residential mobility and migration among the Registered Indian population are higher in large urban centres than in small urban centres or rural areas. The motivations involved in these short distance movements are not known with precision, which constrains our understanding of the phenomenon. The 2008 First Nations *Regional Health Survey* shows that over 59% of First Nations adults have lived outside their communities at one time in their lives. Almost 75% of them have been living outside their community for at least one year, 38% for over five years (First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2012). The RHS makes clear that during the 12 months preceding the survey, 19.2% of respondents who had left their community came home to it at least once, and 12.9% at least twice. These proportions are similar for both women and men, at all levels of school education. By contrast, the proportion of those who have made multiple moves of home (at least two) diminishes with age (23% of those aged 18 to 29; 9.2% of those aged 30 to 59; and 5.4% of those 60 or over).

Return migration is often associated with a failure by Aboriginal people to adapt to urban life. Living far from one's family and community carries an emotional and financial cost, in addition to the burden of difficulties encountered at the destination. But returning to one's place of origin may also be a result of deliberate choice for an individual (for example when approaching retirement), because the original objective has been achieved or because the socio-economic circumstances in the destination location (the labour market for example) do not favour its achievement. A change in circumstances may motivate a migrant to repeat the experience again. In such cases return is only temporary, and moving is part of a circular process. The 2008 First Nations Regional Health Survey investigated reasons why adults (those over 18) returned to their communities. Taking all ages and sexes together, family reasons were cited in 59.9% of cases, links with the community or the household in 31%. 21% cited offers of employment, 16.4% the availability of housing as reasons for returning. Knowledge of the culture or making the culture of the community better known accounted for 16.8% of responses. These proportions did not vary much with sex, but more so with age. Older people (over 60) were more inclined to refer to the link with the community (38.8%) than were those aged 18 to 29 (26.7%). On the other hand, family was more cited by young adults (69.6%) than by older people (52.9%) (First Nations Information Governance Centre).

### *Interprovincial and international migrations*

Here again, a lack of recent studies of this topic is a problem. Clatworthy and Cooke have analysed interprovincial and international migration flows of Registered Indians for the five year periods 1986-1991 and 1991-1996 using data from the Aboriginal People's Survey of 1991 and the 1996 Census. Interprovincial migration involved a few tens of thousands of people who moved between neighbouring provinces (Clatworthy, 1996; Clatworthy & Cooke, 2001; Norris & Clatworthy, 2009). According to the RHS (2008), over half of First Nations respondents who had migrated had left their communities to go to urban areas within the same province. Only one in ten had moved to a city (8.6%) or small municipality (2.9%) in a different province (First Nations Information Governance Centre). On the international level, between one and two thousand Registered Indians were going backwards and forwards between Canada and the United States in the same period. These international arrivals had a negligible effect on Registered Indian population growth and did not alter its geographical distribution. It is not possible to measure emigration from the Census data. The international net migration of the First Nations is not known with exactitude, but is generally thought to be nil (Clatworthy & Cooke, 2001; Guimond, 2003; Robitaille & Choinière, 1987). These multiple movements, often linked to cultural attachment, make the First Nations' migration profile unlike that of non-Aboriginal Canadians.

## Conclusion

The First Nations are not a homogeneous group. Registered Indians have rights and privileges which Non-registered Indians do not, creating a division based on legal status. Being a Registered Indian means having access to an exclusive geographical area of Canada, the reserves. Other things being equal, these two features imply a different geographical distribution for each of these two populations, and these give rise to differing migration behaviours. Non-registered Indians are more urbanised (75%) than Registered Indians (41%). Half of the latter live in reserves, which is the case for only 3.5% of the Non-registered. At the same time these reserve areas are not distributed throughout Canada, nor within provinces, in a homogeneous way. Opportunities and service provision in the different geographical zones (reserves, rural areas, small and large urban centres) vary from one province to another, depending on their geographical position (remoteness from or proximity to economic centres), and their available natural resources. Non-existent or deficient infrastructure such as housing, schools, health care establishments, businesses, social and cultural services gives rise to a multitude of migratory movements.

There are many cultural differences within the First Nations, and these involve variations in values, motivations, and attachments to community. Migration affects the age and sex structure of the population, and also its ethnic composition. There are twin impacts on communities, cities and regions of inward and outward migration, in that they bring both benefits and losses. It is communities in rural areas which are the most negatively affected. In some reserves and communities, isolation implies fewer opportunities and restricted possibilities for marriage. Mixed marriages imply, in the long term, the loss of a community's members, both reducing it in size and affecting its socio-economic composition. Migrants leaving the community are generally young and educated. Older people are deprived of their support and their dynamism. Areas receiving First Nations migrants also have to adapt in terms of housing, employment, health care and school places, and cultural and social support.

Over the long term it is clear that the implications of generations of Registered Indians settling in cities are not all negative. Of course these individuals become urbanised and no longer develop in an environment like that of their community of origin. They create a particular Aboriginal identity in a particular urban setting. But they also support new arrivals and are more likely to develop a whole institutional and organisational structure which is more effective in terms of meeting their needs, such as friendship and community centres for example.

Migration is one of the phenomena which contributes to the growth and evolution of a population. In this case, migration was quickly assumed to be unidirectional, and to be explained by First Nations urbanisation. Empirical studies have shown that the myth of depopulation of reserves is unfounded, but also that First Nations people do not share the same migration profile as non-Aboriginals. Residential mobility is higher among First Nations, whether within a single community or within an urban centre; on the other hand, interprovincial and international migration is of minor importance.

The absence of precise data and of regular and comparable studies over time remains an obstacle to the understanding of this complex field. The face of a population, which in the case of the First Nations has many different facets, changes with the migrations of its members. Migration flows, whatever their scale, have impacts on all the groups of individuals involved. The various layers of government listen to what the First Nations have to say. They make it their business to steadily reduce the socio-economic inequalities between these groups and the non-Aboriginal population by establishing a wide array of



programs in education, employment, incomes and health, while respecting the values of each population. This is a major challenge, which has to be met without creating new divisions.

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