First Nations and Métis People and Diversity in Canadian Cities

In the 1940s, relatively few First Nations and Métis people lived in cities in Canada. Since then, the urban First Nations and Métis population has increased steadily. According to the 2001 Census, 49.1 percent of First Nations and Métis people lived in urban areas; about one-quarter of the First Nations and Métis population lived in 10 of Canada's metropolitan areas (Statistics Canada 2003).[1] First Nations and Métis populations comprise the largest minority group in many Prairies cities, and their social and economic conditions are central to the future of these cities. Programs and services available to urban First Nations and Métis people most often define them in terms of their social and economic needs (Peters 2000). However, many First Nations and Métis people arrive in cities expecting their histories and cultures to make a difference. This poses unique challenges with respect to First Nations and Métis people and diversity in cities.

Before we talk about ways of recognizing and accommodating First Nations and Métis diversity in cities, we need to have some understanding of the characteristics of this diversity. This means that we need to address two common themes in writing and research about First Nations and Métis populations. The first theme is that First Nations and Métis people are economically and spatially marginalized in urban areas, and this has separated them from the rest of urban society and created a social divide that continues to grow. The second theme is that First Nations and Métis people have been unable to establish an urban culture and community. As a result, it is difficult for us to think about First Nations and Métis people as part of the cultural diversity of urban areas. Together, these themes can create a sense of paralysis with respect to positive policy responses to the situation of urban

First Nations and Métis people. They create the impression that urban First Nations and Métis people are disconnected from any community, either mainstream or cultural, through which positive change could emerge. In this chapter, I attempt to evaluate critically the assumptions underlying these patterns of thinking about First Nations and Métis people in cities.

I begin by emphasizing the heterogeneity of First Nations and Métis populations and of cities. This is an acknowledgement that, even though I base much of my analysis on aggregate data, there are local differences that need to be taken into account. I go on to address each theme separately, summarizing background materials and providing some data that will help us to interpret the arguments. I conclude by listing the implications of addressing the issue of First Nations and Métis people and diversity in Canadian cities.

Heterogeneity of Cities and Populations

The urban First Nations and Métis population is heterogeneous in terms of history, legal rights, socioeconomic status and cultural identity. Although the Canadian *Constitution Act, 1982* defined "Aboriginal people" as including the Indian, Métis and Inuit people, Aboriginal people living in Canadian cities are subjected to a complicated legal regime. Many people identified in the census and the Constitution as "Indian" prefer the term "First Nations" because of the colonial associations of the term "Indian." First Nations people include both individuals who are registered under the *Indian Act* (registered or status Indians) and individuals who identify as First Nations people but who do not have the rights, benefits or status associated with registration. The federal government has maintained that it is responsible only for registered Indians on reserves, regarding nonregistered Indians and Métis as a provincial responsibility.[2] These categories are further complicated by Bill C-31, passed in 1985, which separated registration and band membership. It's important to remember, then, that the aggregates I present here can hide some important variations.

Moreover, many First Nations and Métis people identify with their cultural community of origin rather than with the legal categories established by the

Canadian state. For example, one Toronto inhabitant interviewed by researcher Kathleen Wilson highlighted the difficulty of accessing ceremonies that reflect the cultural values and beliefs of individual First Nations cultures.

> [T]here are all three [Cree, Mohawk and Ojibway] different nations. Now we all believe in the Creator and we all believe in the medicine wheel and each one is a little different and each one has a different slant on it. But we are all clumped together here in one pot and so…As well we have MicMac and we have Bella Coola. We have Salish. We have all the other…Inuit. We have Plains Cree. We have Northern Cree. We have Algonquin. We have…pick one and they are all here in one place and it is difficult.
>
> Not politically…um, not so much with the politicians but politically within all of the different nations all coming together…and we can't always give a ceremony open to the immediate world. It can't always be Ojibway. Sometimes it has to be Mohawk and sometimes it has to be MicMac and sometimes it has to…It depends on who is in the circle and so you have to respect all the other nations and where they come from too. Whereas back on the reserve everything is Ojibway and visitors to the reserve will adapt to our way. (Wilson 2000, 245-6)

Cities vary substantially in terms of their cultural composition of First Nations and Métis populations and in terms of their socioeconomic status. Table 1 shows the size of the First Nations and Métis populations in large Canadian cities, the proportion they comprise of the total city population and the change in the size of this population since 1981. Clearly, there are considerable variations between cities. Table 1 also shows the proportion of the population in large Canadian cities who identified themselves as either North American Indian or Métis.[3] Métis people comprise a much larger component of the urban Aboriginal populations in Prairies cities than in large cities elsewhere in Canada. The column that describes the largest First Nations population in each city in 1991 demonstrates that in some cities a large majority of the population came from a single nation of origin, while in other cities the population was extremely diverse. The last two columns describe a different facet of heterogeneity. First Nations and Métis poverty levels are different in different cities, and cities with the highest non-Aboriginal poverty levels do not have the highest First Nations and Métis poverty levels. In other words, the relationships between city economies and urban First Nations and Métis economies are complex and variable. Analyzing differences between cities is beyond the scope of this chapter. Table 1 shows, though, that initiatives have to be designed for particular locations and circumstances.

	Aboriginal population (2001) (*n*)	Proportion of CMA (2001)	Change 1981-2001	Proportion of Aboriginal population that is North American Indian[1] (2001)	Proportion of Aboriginal population that is Métis (2001)
Halifax	3,525	0.1	--	72.6	22.7
Montreal	11,275	0.3	--[3]	61.9	33.9
Ottawa-Hull	13,695	1.3	213.4	60.9	35.4
Toronto	20,595	0.4	52.6	72.1	25.7
Winnipeg	55,970	8.1	237.8	43.2	56.4
Regina	15,790	8.3	140.2	61.2	38.4
Saskatoon	20,455	9.1	370.2	57.9	41.5
Calgary	22,110	2.3	202.5	50.3	48.5
Edmonton	41,295	4.4	200.3	47.0	51.8
Vancouver	37,265	1.9	131.7	64.6	34.6

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1991; Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 1991 (catalogue # 94-327); Statistics Canada. Special Cross Tabulations; Statistics Canada, Table 97F0011XCB01047, http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/demo43b.htm; Canadian Census Tract Profile, 2001 (custom tabulation), Beyond 20/20 ed; *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, 1996, p. 592-7.

[1] The census does not collect information on First Nations. The census category "North American Indian" comes closest to the category "First Nations."

[2] These data come from the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. They are not available for 2001.

[3] It is impossible to compare change because the reserves are unenumerated.

Selected Characteristics of First Nations and Métis Populations in Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs), 2001 (percent)

	Proportion in largest First Nation (1991)[2]	Proportion of population that is poor (2001)	
		Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal
	79.0 (Mi'kmaq)	34.2	15.3
	33.9 (Mohawk)	35.4	22.2
	29.0 (Algonquin)	24.1	14.9
	55.0 (Ojibwa)	26.3	16.6
	70.0 (Ojibwa)	47.7	16.6
	67.3 (Cree)	52.3	12.1
	n/a	51.5	14.6
	26.2 (Siksika)	28.8	13.7
	63.0 (Cree)	34.7	15.2
	13.7 (Halkomelem)	37.1	20.4

Economic and Spatial Marginalization

While there has long been concern about social cohesion in urban areas, in much of contemporary urban theory, the problems of poor people — and especially poor people in poor urban neighbourhoods — are central. Loïc Wacquant, who has written extensively about "new forms of inequality and marginality [that] have arisen and are spreading throughout the advanced societies of the capitalist West" (2001, 479), attributes this inequality to several structural factors: the rise of postindustrial economies that increase inequality even in the context of economic prosperity; the elimination of low-skilled jobs and the degradation of employment conditions; and the retrenchment of the welfare state. The result is a growing social divide that leaves many citizens unable to participate fully in their communities and societies (see Wacquant 1996, 1997, 1999, 2001).

In the US, the concept of the underclass was developed to describe the connections between intense poverty, its prevalence over very large areas and its effect of isolating the poor from mainstream society and values (Hughes 1990; Wilson 1987). William Julius Wilson has described how the movement of employment opportunities to suburban locations drew away working and middle-class families, leaving behind an increasingly isolated and politically powerless underclass (1987, 1996). Inner-city disinvestment and growing welfare and illicit economies — which arose in response to the lack of employment opportunities — resulted in the collapse of public institutions and the development of a set of attitudes and practices that isolated populations from the rest of urban society (Hughes 1989; Jenson 2000; Putnam 1996; Wacquant 1999). Other work has explored neighbourhood effects, suggesting that concentration itself can create negative effects, such as the development of antagonistic cultures and isolation from the rest of urban society (Buck 2001; Mohan 2002). Clearly, these perspectives have their critics.[4] My purpose here, though, is to determine whether the urban First Nations and Métis population undergoes a process of isolation that creates an urban underclass.

There is a literature beginning in about the 1940s that suggests that First Nations and Métis migration to cities would not only pose challenges for migrants but also create poverty-stricken ghettos in the inner cities (Braroe 1975;

Decter 1978; Lithman 1984; Melling 1967; Stymeist 1975). These concerns are echoed in some contemporary research (Drost 1995; Kazemipur and Halli 2000) and supported by a variety of media accounts (Polèse 2002; Stackhouse 2001). Most recently, Hayden likened inner-city US ghetto conditions to those experienced by First Nations and Métis residents of Saskatoon: "Like urban natives in Saskatoon's dilapidated core, working-class blacks in Washington, [American lawyer and journalist] Ms. Dickerson says, 'are living in a different city and a different reality.' A reality that white residents like me rarely visit. Like Washington's primarily black South East quadrant, which I've seen only from the safety of a Habitat for Humanity work site, I pass through Saskatoon's largely aboriginal west-side neighbourhoods only to visit St. Paul's Hospital" (2004).

Recent federal government reports have also raised concerns about urban First Nations and Métis concentration (Canada, Privy Council Office 2002, 8; Sgro 2002, 21). Most researchers argue that Canadian cities do not exhibit the same degree of deprivation, or spatial concentration of poverty, as US cities (Kazemipur and Halli 2000; Ley and Smith 2000; Oreopoulos 2005; Séguin and Divay 2002). However, all of the work on poverty in Canadian cities shows that First Nations and Métis people are overrepresented among the urban poor (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996; Drost and Richards 2003; Graham and Peters 2002; Jaccoud and Brassard 2003; Lee 2000). The urban First Nations and Métis population is also more likely than the non-Aboriginal population to live in poor urban neighbourhoods (Darden and Kamel 2002; Hajnal 1995, 510; Heisz and McLeod 2004, 7; Kazemipur and Halli 2000, 129; Richards 2001, 13). Some authors have drawn on the US underclass literature to argue that living in poor neighbourhoods affects First Nations and Métis people's life changes (Drost 1995, 47; Richards 2001).

However, there are also perspectives that emphasize the socioeconomic progress of First Nations and Métis people — the emerging middle class, lower dropout rates, higher education and income (Wotherspoon 2003). For example, Clifford Krauss recently wrote in the *New York Times* about a Statistics Canada study on urban Aboriginal people: "Canada's native peoples are often depicted in the news as suffering an array of social afflictions: broken families, glue-sniffing children, violent gangs, alcoholism and homelessness. But a new federal government report comparing census data in 1981 and 2001 shows considerable improvement in the social conditions of…those who live in cities, a growing

category that already represents half of the country's one million indigenous peoples" (2005). The questions I wish to address here, then, are: In large Canadian cities, are First Nations and Métis people increasingly marginalized economically? In urban areas, are First Nations and Métis people increasingly marginalized spatially?

First Nations and Métis people and economic marginalization

In order to address issues of economic marginalization, it is important to look at change over time. Moreover, because structures of income and employment shifted in non-Aboriginal as well as in First Nations and Métis populations, it is important to provide a comparative analysis. Comparing the nature of change in non-Aboriginal and First Nations and Métis populations provides an indication of whether the gap is widening or narrowing. Table 2 describes income and labour force characteristics of First Nations and Métis as well as non-Aboriginal populations in large Canadian cities in 1981 and 2001.[5] It is important to note that these data may not fully capture First Nations and Métis perspectives on what constitutes success or progress in urban life (Ten Fingers 2005). Unfortunately, there are relatively few alternative measures that we can employ to compare change over time, and there are few data to help us determine which more culturally appropriate measures we could employ in the case of urban First Nations and Métis people. I argue that these statistics provide a useful foundation for analysis.

If we compare the economic and labour force characteristics of First Nations and Métis people and non-Aboriginal people in 2001, we see clearly that First Nations and Métis people are socioeconomically disadvantaged. A larger proportion of First Nations and Métis people are poor, a smaller proportion earn good incomes, unemployment rates are much higher even though participation rates are similar, and a smaller proportion are in managerial, supervisory and professional occupations. If we look at the change between 1981 and 2001 for First Nations and Métis people, however, it is evident that there have been improvements in their economic and labour force positions. The proportion living in poverty decreased slightly, the proportion earning good incomes increased, unemployment rates decreased slightly, and there were increases in the proportion in managerial, supervisory and professional occupations and in tertiary employment.

An important question, though, is whether the gap between First Nations and Métis people and non-Aboriginal people in cities is narrowing over time. Is there evidence that First Nations and Métis people are part of the new poor, who are increasingly marginalized in urban areas, or is the gap between them and non-Aboriginal people narrowing? A comparison of the changes for both populations between 1981 and 2001 suggests that the gap is not growing, but neither is it shrinking rapidly. The proportion of poor individuals decreased very slightly among First Nations and Métis people, while it increased among non-Aboriginal people. The increase in the proportion of people who earned good incomes was slightly more among First Nations and Métis people than among non-Aboriginal people. The change in unemployment and participation rates was slightly more positive among First Nations and Métis people than among non-Aboriginal people between 1981 and 2001. Both populations saw an increase in managerial, professional and supervisory occupations, but on this measure the increase was larger among non-Aboriginal people than First Nations and Métis people.

Both populations showed an increase in tertiary employment, but the increase was greater among First Nations and Métis populations than non-Aboriginal populations.[6] An interesting trend has to do with changes within the tertiary sector — in business services; finance, insurance, real estate (FIRA); and government and community services. These areas of employment are the most likely to produce good incomes. When the tertiary sector is disaggregated, the statistics show that most of the rise in employment in this sector among First Nations and Métis people came from increasing employment in government and community services. In contrast, most of the employment increase among non-Aboriginal people came from business services and FIRA.[7] The government and community services sector is a rich source of good jobs for urban Aboriginal people (table 2).

Aggregate statistics suggest that the First Nations and Métis population is not increasingly marginalized in urban areas; in fact, there has been some improvement since 1981. However, changes in patterns of self-identification must also be taken into account in interpreting these patterns. The population that newly identified itself as Aboriginal in 2001 (compared to 1981) is disproportionately represented in higher socioeconomic status categories (Siggner and Hagey 2003). As a result, some of the improvements in the situation of urban First Nations and Métis people may reflect changes in patterns of self-identification. Taking this into account, it is

Socioeconomic characteristic	First Nations and Métis		
	1981	2001	Change
Individuals in private households who are poor[2]	37.4	37.3	-0.1
Individuals with good incomes[3]	12.3	14.9	2.6
Unemployment rate[4]	18.8	17.9	-0.9
Labour force participation rate	65.2	67.3	2.1
Managerial, supervisory or professional occupations[5]	16.2	23.4	7.2
Tertiary sector employment	71.2	79.7	8.5
Business and FIRA[6]	9.4	11.2	1.8
Government and community services	20.6	27.3	6.7

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Census Tract Profile, 2001 (custom tabulation), Beyond 20/20 ed.
[1] The cities are Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa-Hull, Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary, Edmonton, and Vancouver.
[2] Poverty is defined as incomes below the Statistics Canada low-income cutoff (LICO). The definition of household is based on 1971 measures to facilitate comparison over time.
[3] A good annual income is defined as $40,000 or more in 2000, and adjusted for inflation for 1981.
[4] Unemployment and participation rates are based on 1971 definitions.
[5] The proportion in particular occupations and sectors is based on individuals who indicated their position.
[6] Finance, insurance and real estate.

Socioeconomic Characteristics of First Nations and Métis and Non-Aboriginal People in Canada's Large Cities,[1] 1981-2001 (percent)

	Non-Aboriginal		
	1981	**2001**	**Change**
	14.7	15.8	1.1
	24.4	26.6	2.2
	7.8	7.6	-0.2
	70.5	69.8	-0.7
	26.6	37.2	10.6
	73.8	80.0	6.2
	13.0	18.3	5.3
	22.0	22.7	0.7

clear that the gap between First Nations and Métis people and non-Aboriginal people is not narrowing quickly. And, given the disadvantaged situation of this population to start with, this slow improvement is cause for serious concern.

First Nations and Métis people and spatial marginalization

We can also address the question of marginalization by examining First Nations and Métis settlement patterns in cities. Here there are two dimensions of interest: whether First Nations and Métis people are increasingly confined to a limited number of census tracts; and whether First Nations and Métis people are increasingly found in poor neighbourhoods.

Settlement patterns have most often been measured by five indices proposed in the classic paper by Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton (1988). However, these indices are relative measures, and they depend on a group's absolute and relative size within the city or area employed (Poulsen, Forrest and Johnston 2002). Comparisons are more accurately made by using measures that focus on the absolute percentages (Johnston, Forrest and Poulsen 2001; Peach 1996, 1999; Poulsen and Johnston 2000). An analysis of all large cities would be too complicated for this chapter, so the focus here is on four cities with either the largest absolute number of First Nations and Métis people (Winnipeg and Edmonton) or the largest population proportion of First Nations or Métis people (Regina and Saskatoon). If there are trends toward segregation, they would be found in these cities.

Tables 3 and 4 describe two aspects of segregation: the extent to which neighbourhoods in these cities have mostly First Nations and Métis populations; and the extent to which the First Nations and Métis population is found in only a limited number of neighbourhoods. I use census tracts as a measure of a neighbourhood.[8] Table 3 shows the proportion of census tracts and the proportion of the First Nations and Métis population that fall into different categories of concentration — for example, census tracts where less than 10 percent of the population is First Nations and Métis, census tracts where from 10 to less than 20 percent of the population is First Nations and Métis, and so on. In 1981, First Nations and Métis people comprised less than 10 percent of the population in over 90 percent of census tracts in all of the cities listed. The majority of the First Nations and Métis population in all four cities lived in tracts where they made up less than 10 percent of the overall population, with a range of between

70.6 percent of the First Nations and Métis population living in low-concentration tracts in Winnipeg, and 99.7 percent of the First Nations and Métis population living in low-concentration tracts in Edmonton

By 2001, there were more census tracts containing higher proportions of First Nations and Métis people. In Winnipeg, the First Nations and Métis population of one census tract was slightly higher than 50 percent; and in another tract, First Nations and Métis people comprised between 40 and 49.9 percent of the population. There were also some census tracts with concentrations of 20 to 29.9 percent and 30 to 39.9 percent First Nations and Métis people. However, two-thirds of First Nations and Métis people lived in areas where they comprised less than 20 percent of the population. Saskatoon and Regina distributions were similar to each other, with about two-thirds of the First Nations and Métis population in tracts where they comprised less than 20 percent of the population. There were no census tracts in either Regina or Saskatoon where First Nations and Métis people made up more than 39.9 percent of the population. In Edmonton, almost all of the First Nations and Métis population lived in tracts where they comprised less than 20 percent of the population. There was one tract where First Nations and Métis people comprised between 40 and 49.9 percent of the population, but its total population was only about 50. In other words, although the size of the First Nations and Métis population in these cities increased substantially between 1981 and 2001, and although First Nations and Métis people were more likely to live in census tracts with higher proportions of First Nations and Métis residents, their overall levels of segregation still appeared to be low.

Table 4 measures whether the First Nations and Métis population is limited to a few tracts in the city. It shows the proportion of the total First Nations and Métis population that is found in each census tract. In 1981, Saskatoon had the fewest tracts containing very small proportions of the total city First Nations and Métis population and the most tracts containing relatively larger proportions. Regina was next, followed by Winnipeg and then Edmonton. Nevertheless, even the tracts in Saskatoon with the largest share of the First Nations and Métis population contained only 6.9 percent of the total First Nations and Métis population. In Regina, the census tract with the largest share of the total city First Nations and Métis population contained 14.7 percent of the population. By 2001, the First Nations and Métis population was more dispersed in all of these cities. More cen-

City (total number of tracts)		Concentration of First Nations and Métis population	
		0-9.9%	10-19.9%
	1981		
Winnipeg (*N* = 130)	% of tracts in each category	90.7	7.8
	% of Aboriginal population by category	70.6	20.6
Saskatoon (*N* = 34)	% of tracts in each category	94.1	2.9
	% of Aboriginal population by category	95.3	4.7
Regina (*N* = 36)	% of tracts in each category	94.4	5.6
	% of Aboriginal population by category	79.3	20.7
Edmonton (*N* = 125)	% of tracts in each category	99.2	0
	% of Aboriginal population by category	99.7	0
	2001		
Winnipeg (*N* = 154)	% of tracts in each category	72.4	15.6
	% of Aboriginal population by category	42.0	24.5
Saskatoon (*N* = 43)	% of tracts in each category	65.1	18.6
	% of Aboriginal population by category	36.5	30.6
Regina (*N* = 47)	% of tracts in each category	68.1	23.4
	% of Aboriginal population by category	39.3	31.0
Edmonton (*N* = 161)	% of tracts in each category	87.5	11.2
	% of Aboriginal population by category	70.4	29.5

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Census Tract Profile, 2001 (custom tabulation), Beyond 20/20 ed.

[1] A census tract is a unit of between 4,000 and 6,000 people. It is widely recognized as an approximation for a neighbourhood.

Concentrations of First Nations and Métis Populations in Four Prairies Cities, Measured in Census Tracts, 1981 and 2001[1]

	20-29.9%	30-39.9%	40-49.9%	50% and over
	1.8	0	0	0
	8.8	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0
	0	0.9	0	0
	0	0.3	0	0
	5.9	5.3	0.7	0.7
	16.7	11.2	3.2	3.2
	7.0	9.3	0	0
	7.2	25.6	0	0
	4.3	4.3	0	0
	11.2	18.5	0	0
	0.7	0	0.7	0
	< 0.1	0	0.1	0

City (total number of tracts)		**Proportion of total urban Aboriginal population per tract**		
		0	**0.1-0.9%**	**1.0-1.9%**
	1981			
Winnipeg (N = 130)	% of tracts in each category	7.7	70.0	11.5
	# of tracts in each category	10	91	15
Saskatoon (N = 34)	% of tracts in each category	2.9	14.7	23.5
	# of tracts in each category	1	5	8
Regina (N = 36)	% of tracts in each category	5.6	22.2	19.4
	# of tracts in each category	2	8	7
Edmonton (N = 125)	% of tracts in each category	3.2	60.0	22.4
	# of tracts in each category	4	75	28
	2001			
Winnipeg (N = 154)	% of tracts in each category	0.7	72.4	14.9
	# of tracts in each category	1	121	23
Saskatoon (N = 43)	% of tracts in each category	0	27.9	34.9
	# of tracts in each category	0	12	15
Regina (N = 47)	% of tracts in each category	0	31.9	25.5
	# of tracts in each category	0	15	12
Edmonton (N = 161)	% of tracts in each category	0.6	74.5	15.5
	# of tracts in each category	1	120	25

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Census Tract Profile, 2001 (custom tabulation), Beyond 20/20 ed.

Proportion of Total Aboriginal Population in Four Prairies Cities, by City, 1981 and 2001

	2.0-2.9%	3.0-3.9%	4.0-4.9%	5.0-5.9%	6.0% and over	Non-residential tracts
	3.9 5	4.6 6	1.5 2	0 0	0 0	0.8 1
	5.9 2	17.6 6	8.8 3	11.8 4	11.8 4	2.9 1
	25.0 9	5.6 2	2.8 1	8.3 3	11.1 4	0 0
	6.4 8	0.8 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	7.2 9
	3.9 6	0.7 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	1.3 2
	14.0 6	4.7 2	9.3 4	2.3 1	7.0 3	0 0
	25.5 12	10.6 5	2.1 1	0 0	4.3 2	0 0
	3.7 6	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	5.6 9

sus tracts held smaller shares of the city's total First Nations and Métis population, and fewer tracts held larger shares. Regina, with one tract that held 14.7 percent of the city's total First Nations and Métis population, had the highest concentration measured by this statistic. However, this level of concentration had not increased since 1981. In Saskatoon, the tract with the largest share held 8.5 percent of the city's total First Nations and Métis population. In other words, most census tracts in all of these cities contained a relatively small portion of the city's total population, and the pattern is that urban First Nations and Métis populations in all of the cities were distributed across more census tracts in 2001.

Together, these tables show that the urban First Nations and Métis population is not highly segregated. The growing First Nations and Métis population is spread over a number of neighbourhoods, and there are almost no neighbourhoods where First Nations and Métis people are in the majority.

First Nations and Métis people and areas of concentrated poverty

While there are debates about how to measure areas of concentrated poverty, one commonly used method defines these as areas where 40 percent or more of the population have incomes below the federally defined poverty line (Jargowsky 1997; Jargowsky and Bane 1991; Ricketts and Sawhill 1988). Geographers and others have also emphasized the importance of the spatial extent of areas of poverty in creating the isolation effects of concentrated poverty (Hughes 1990).

Again, the analysis focuses on four Prairies cities. In Edmonton in 2001, there were only four census tracts in which 40 percent or more of the residents had incomes below the poverty line (table 5). While these tracts were in the same general area of the city (north of downtown), they shared only two boundaries. None of the tracts were areas with relatively high proportions of First Nations and Métis people. First Nations and Métis people made up only 11.5 percent of the population of these tracts, and only 8.1 percent of the total city First Nations and Métis population lived in them. There is little evidence to suggest the emergence of areas of concentrated poverty associated with First Nations and Métis populations in Edmonton in 2001.

Regina had five tracts where more than 40 percent of inhabitants had incomes below the Statistics Canada low-income cutoff, but only one tract shared more than one boundary with another high-poverty tract. Slightly more than 30 percent of the population living in high-poverty census tracts were First Nations

Poverty among First Nations and Métis Populations in Four Prairies Cities, 2001

Tracts with 40% or more individuals with incomes below low-income cutoff[1]

City (total number of tracts)	# of tracts	% who are First Nations and Métis	% of total First Nations and Métis
Winnipeg (*N* = 130)[2]	18	26.6	31.5
Regina (*N* = 36)	5	30.8	28.6
Saskatoon (*N* = 34)	3	33.5	17.0
Edmonton (*N* = 161)	4	11.5	8.1

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Census Tract Profile, 2001 (custom tabulation), Beyond 20/20 ed.

[1] Statistics Canada's definition of poverty.

[2] Total number of census tracts in urban areas.

and Métis people, and about the same proportion of the total Regina First Nations and Métis population lived in these areas.

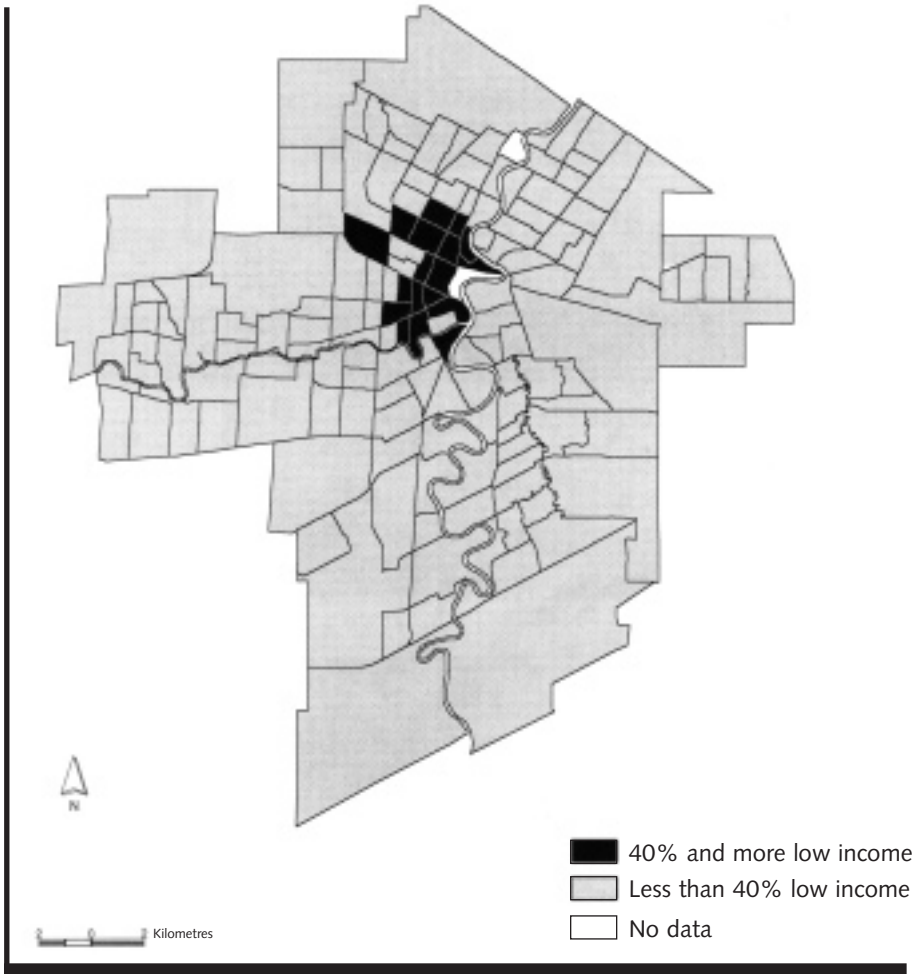
Saskatoon and Winnipeg had the highest levels of concentrated poverty, although the configuration of this poverty differed slightly between the two cities. In Saskatoon, three tracts had 40 percent or more of residents with incomes below the poverty line. However, these tracts contained a smaller proportion of the city's total First Nations and Métis population than in either Winnipeg or Regina. In Winnipeg, there were 18 census tracts that had 40 percent or more of residents with incomes below the poverty line. In one census tract, 79.1 percent of inhabitants had incomes below the poverty line in 2000. These tracts formed an almost continuous area south and north of Winnipeg's central business district (figure 1). Slightly more than one-quarter (26.6 percent) of the population in these high-poverty tracts was First Nations and Métis, and 31.5 percent of the city's First Nations and Métis population lived in these areas.

The concern about isolation caused by concentrated poverty emerged in US cities, where between 30 and 40 contiguous census tracts were characterized by extremely high poverty levels (Hughes 1989). The large scale of these areas of concentrated poverty ensured that many of their residents would have very little contact with less disadvantaged populations. This situation is not reproduced in the cities described here. Clearly, the poverty of First Nations and Métis people is something to be concerned about. However, First Nations and Métis people are in a minority in areas of concentrated poverty, and most of the First Nations and Métis population lives outside these areas. In other words, this is not a situation in which there is an underclass First Nations and Métis population isolated from the rest of urban society by virtue of concentration in areas of high poverty.

There was considerable improvement in the labour force characteristics and incomes of urban First Nations and Métis people between 1981 and 2001. The statistics show some evidence of movement into the middle class. However, the gap between First Nations and Métis people and non-Aboriginal people is narrowing very slowly. Given the intense poverty of much of the urban First Nations and Métis population to begin with, this is an issue of grave concern. With respect to settlement patterns, the trend is one of dispersion rather than segregation. There is no evidence that First Nations and Métis people as a group are producing the conditions that isolate them from mainstream culture and society through the creation of areas of concentrated poverty.

Figure 1

Proportion of Population in Private Households with Low Incomes, Winnipeg, 2000



Source: Oksana Starchenko, Department of Geography, University of Saskatchewan, based on data from Statistics Canada, Canadian Census Tract Profile 2001 (custom tabulation), Beyond 20/20 ed.

It may be that these data are describing a First Nations and Métis urban population that is becoming increasingly polarized over time — a population that includes some individuals who are successful in the labour force, who have good incomes and live in good neighbourhoods; and others who live in poverty, who are unemployed and who inhabit poor neighbourhoods. An analysis of this possibility is beyond the scope of this chapter. The existence of poverty and socio-economic improvement combined with dispersion and overrepresentation in poor neighbourhoods suggests that we need more sophisticated ways of thinking about urban First Nations and Métis people and should not merely consider them as homogeneously disadvantaged.

Urban First Nations and Métis Culture and Community

The second main theme of this chapter relates to First Nations and Métis culture and community in urban areas. The early academic attitude toward cultural identity was that there was a close relationship between place and identity and that cultural identity gradually changed when people migrated to new places. Since the early decades of the 1900s, though, social theorists have recognized that migrants combine cultural repertoires from their places of origin with influences from their destinations to reassemble their cultural identity (Hall 1995; Gilroy 1987). These ideas are not often found in work on urban Aboriginal people. Perhaps this is because the ways First Nations and Métis people have been defined in Western thought have set up a fundamental tension between the idea of First Nations and Métis culture and the idea of modern civilization (Berkhoffer 1979; Francis 1992; Goldie 1989). Terry Goldie points out that in non-Aboriginal writing, authentic Aboriginal culture is seen to belong either to history or to places distant from urban centres (1989, 16-17, 165).

These ideas were reflected in writings that attempted to understand the significance of increasing First Nations and Métis urbanization at the turn of the century. The decision of First Nations and Métis people to migrate to cities was interpreted to mean that these people rejected their traditional cultures and wished to assimilate. In fact, a common theme in the literature on First Nations and Métis urbanization, even

in the 1970s, was that First Nations and Métis culture presented a major barrier to successful adjustment to urban society. It was assumed that, upon migration, the "cultural values from Native culture" would remain only "until the values of the larger culture" could be adopted (Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada 1962, 13). As a result, government organizations with a mandate to address the situation of urban First Nations and Métis residents emphasized integration (Peters 2002).

Ideas about the incompatibility of urban culture and First Nations and Métis culture have had a long life. Presenters at the urban round table of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples talked about the challenges First Nations and Métis people face in urban areas because cities are "an environment that is usually indifferent and often hostile to Aboriginal cultures" (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1993, 2). The commission itself has been criticized for associating Aboriginal cultures and rights primarily with reserves and rural areas and for viewing cities as places where First Nations and Métis culture and community are lost (Andersen and Denis 2003; Cairns 2000), although I think this view overstates the commission's perspectives. Writings about First Nations and Métis people in Canada most often associate the idea of First Nations and Métis community with rural and reserve First Nations and Métis settlements. In the city, First Nations and Métis populations are seen as heterogeneous, individual and isolated. David Newhouse notes that "the idea of Aboriginal community has been little explored in the literature…Urban Aboriginal research has tended to focus upon the experiences of individuals and their adjustment to urban life, paying only incidental attention to community" (2003, 247).

Assumptions about the incompatibility of urban culture and First Nations and Métis culture, and the focus in research and policy primarily on First Nations and Métis socioeconomic characteristics, make it important to examine the role of culture and community for urban First Nations and Métis people. In the following paragraphs, I address this issue in three ways. First, I examine some material from presentations to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and other sources that outlines the role of First Nations and Métis cultures in urban areas. Second, I summarize a recent survey that asked urban First Nations people about their sense of belonging to their Native group in the city. Third, I describe some characteristics of First Nations and Métis institutions in two urban areas as an example of a growing infrastructure that emphasizes the importance of culturally specific programs and services.

The role of culture: First Nations and Métis perspectives

Against notions of the incompatibility of urban culture and First Nations and Métis culture, First Nations and Métis have argued that strong cultures are a prerequisite for success in urban areas. Some quotations from the presentations made to the public hearings of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples illustrate the general thrust of their argument. For example, Nancy Van Heest, working in a pre-employment program of First Nations women in Vancouver, told the commissioners: "Today we live in the modern world and we find that a lot of our people who come into the urban setting are unable to live in the modern world without their traditional values. So we started a program which we call 'Urban Images for First Nations People in the Urban Setting' and what we do is we work in this modern day with modern day people and give them traditional values so that they can continue on with their life in the city" (1993, 14).

David Chartrand, president of the National Association of Friendship Centres, had this to say: "Aboriginal culture in the cities is threatened in much the same way as Canadian culture is threatened by American culture, and it therefore requires a similar commitment to its protection. Our culture is at the heart of our people, and without awareness of Aboriginal history, traditions and ceremonies, we are not whole people, and our communities lose their strength…Cultural education also works against the alienation that the cities hold for our people. Social activities bring us together and strengthen the relationship between people in areas where those relationships are an important safety net for people who feel left out by the mainstream" (1993, 565).

Instead of seeing First Nations and Métis cultures and urban life as incompatible, presenters to the public hearings of the Royal Commission saw vibrant urban First Nations and Métis cultures as important elements of First Nations and Métis people's success in cities. Reflecting the message of these presentations, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended that all levels of government initiate programs to increase opportunities to promote Aboriginal cultures in urban areas (1996, 537). Some of the particular areas that the commission identified included support for urban Aboriginal institutions, initiatives concerning Native languages, and access to land and elders.

David Newhouse, head of Native studies at Trent University, argued that the urbanization of the Aboriginal population is occurring in tandem with the reinforcement of cultural identities (2000). In other words, these phenomena are

not mutually exclusive. At the same time, First Nations and Métis cultures in urban areas were not simply transplanted nonurban cultures. Newhouse noted that First Nations and Métis people were reformulating Western institutions and practices to support their cultures and identities and to ensure their survival as distinct people in contemporary societies. This suggests that while moving to cities poses a challenge to Aboriginal cultural identities, it also presents an opportunity for dynamic and resilient innovations. These themes are found in US research as well (see Danziger 1991; LaGrand 2002).

Sense of belonging to a community in the city

Unfortunately, the recent Statistics Canada General Social Surveys that focus on volunteering and social cohesion do not support a separate analysis for First Nations and Métis participants. A 2003 EKOS Research Associates survey of over 600 First Nations and Métis people living in urban areas was commissioned by eight federal government departments; it examined impressions of the performance of the federal government and assessed opinions about various issues. The survey did not use a random sample, and First Nations and Métis residents in Prairies cities were overrepresented. Nevertheless, it provides some interesting information about the respondents' sense of community ties.

One set of questions explored participants' sense of belonging to various groups and entities. The results were compared to answers from individuals living on reserves and to responses to similar questions from another study of the general population. Table 6 presents the proportion of individuals who indicated that they felt a strong sense of belonging to particular groups. The results show that while attachment to family is high across all groups, First Nations and Métis participants generally felt less attachment to Canada and to their home provinces than did participants in the general population. Fewer First Nations and Métis participants in urban areas felt a strong sense of belonging to their Native group than reserve residents felt to their First Nation. However, the proportion of urban First Nations and Métis residents who felt a strong sense of belonging to a Native group in the city is quite similar to that of the general population with respect to ethnic group. In other words, while movement from rural to urban locations may reflect or cause a decrease in sense of belonging to a cultural group of origin, there is not much difference between First Nations and Métis people and other urban residents.

Sense of Belonging among the First Nations and Métis Population and the General Population (percent)

	Urban First Nations and Métis[1]	On-reserve First Nations population[2]	General population[1]
Your family	85	87	91
Canada	62	56	81
Your province	54	46	71
Your First Nation	n/a	69	n/a
Other Aboriginal people in your city	49	n/a	n/a
Your Native group in your city	48	n/a	n/a
Your ethnic group	n/a	n/a	51
Your town	47	n/a	n/a

Source: EKOS Research Associates Inc. (2003, 41)
[1] Data were collected in 2003.
[2] Data were collected in 2002.

Institutions

Research in US cities suggests that urban Aboriginal institutions are an important mechanism with which Aboriginal people negotiate a collective identity. After interacting for 19 years with Los Angeles Indian organizations, Joan Weibel-Orlando argued that institutions are "structural indicators of community cohesiveness, completeness and inclusiveness, and are characterized by regular, repetitive, grounded activities invoked as cultural tradition…[They are] the social mechanism that binds the otherwise heterogeneous and dispersed Los Angeles Indians into an entity they recognize as community" (1999, 80).

In his recent study of Prairies cities, Calvin Hanselmann reported that many urban Aboriginal people wished to receive programs and services from fellow First Nations and Métis people (2002, 6). Aboriginal-controlled social services generally have greater success in delivering programs that incorporate First Nations and Métis principles, beliefs and traditions. The development of urban institutions enhances the ability of First Nations and Métis people to make significant choices about their own political, cultural, economic and social affairs.

The following paragraphs summarize some of the results of a 2002 study that documented the evolution of First Nations and Métis service organizations in Winnipeg and Edmonton.[9] The study compared selected characteristics of these organizations to the results of a similar study conducted almost a decade earlier, in 1993 (Clatworthy, Hull and Loughren 1995).[10] Both studies described organizations that focused primarily on urban First Nations and Métis populations, that were owned or controlled by First Nations and Métis people, and that had substantial autonomy from governments and provincial and other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations.[11] Because the focus of the study was on identifying institutions of self-government, the study excluded First Nations and Métis businesses. However, the results provide a glimpse of the characteristics of First Nations and Métis organizations in urban areas.

Clearly, there has been growth in urban First Nations and Métis organizations in Winnipeg and Edmonton since the early 1990s (table 7). The number of organizations in Winnipeg increased from 24 in 1993 to 28 in 2002, and the number in Edmonton increased from 7 to 15 during the same period. Organizations also grew in terms of the number of clients they served. In 1993, Winnipeg organizations served 5,563 clients monthly — approximately 15.8 percent of the city's 1991 First Nations and Métis population. In 2002,

Profiles of Winnipeg and Edmonton Urban First Nations and Métis Organizations, 1993 and 2002 (percent)

	Winnipeg		Edmonton	
	1993	**2002**	**1993**	**2002**
Age of organization at time of interview				
Less than 3 years	13.6	3.6	0.0[1]	6.7
3-5 years	18.2	10.7	28.6	20.0
6-9 years	36.4	14.3	28.6	13.3
10-19 years	18.2	39.3	14.3	33.3
20 or more years	13.6	32.1	28.6	20.0
Main type of service provided[2]				
Adult education/employment training	11.9	13.0	22.5	11.6
Religious/cultural/spiritual	19.3	20.5	12.5	11.6
Housing	11.9	11.1	10.0	4.7
Economic/community development	4.8	5.6	7.5	9.3
Youth programming/counselling	16.6	14.8	17.5	16.3
Child and family services	7.1	13.0	10.0	19.9
Health services/substance abuse	11.9	13.0	17.5	16.3
Child care	4.8	3.7	2.5	2.3
Correctional services/programs	7.1	5.6	5.0	2.3
Political advocacy	4.8	1.9	0.0	0.0
Street patrols	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Seniors services	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.7
Type of organization(s) that assisted with formation[3]				
Other urban Aboriginal	31.8	34.4	28.6	33.3
Provincial Aboriginal political	18.2	15.6	42.9	33.3
National Aboriginal NGO	4.5	6.3	0.0	0.0
Non-Aboriginal NGO	4.5	6.3	0.0	13.3
Non-Aboriginal government	9.1	0.0	14.3	6.7
Individuals not representing an Aboriginal organization	31.8	37.5	0.0	20.3
Number of organizations	24	28	7	15

Source: Author, unpublished study, 2003.

[1] Date of formation was not available for one organization.

[2] Many organizations indicated they offered services in more than one area. Figures are proportions of all services offered.

[3] Many organizations mentioned more than one assisting organization. Figures are proportions of all organizations mentioned.

9,948 clients were served monthly, representing almost one-fifth (17.8 percent) of the Winnipeg 2001 First Nations and Métis population. Since we were unable to obtain client numbers for some organizations, these statistics underestimate Winnipeg First Nations and Métis community participation in these organizations.[12] In Edmonton in 1993, First Nations and Métis organizations served 3,056 clients, or approximately 10 percent of Edmonton's First Nations and Métis population. In 2002, they served 9,465 clients, representing almost one-quarter (23.1 percent) of the Edmonton First Nations and Métis population. These estimates are similar to Weibel-Orlando's finding that approximately 20 percent of the Los Angeles Aboriginal community regularly participated in Aboriginal institutional life in that city (1999, 41).

The majority of institutions in both cities were less than a decade old in 1993; by 2002, the majority were 10 years old and older. Winnipeg had more older organizations, with the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre established in 1959 and two housing corporations and four other organizations established in the 1970s. Edmonton had the Canadian Native Friendship Centre, which was established in 1962, but none of the organizations established in the 1970s were in operation in 2002.

The range of services provided in both cities was extensive in 1993, and it had expanded by 2002. In other words, First Nations and Métis organizations in the two cities are providing services in an increasing number of policy sectors. What is particularly interesting is the emergence in Winnipeg of organizations that focus on advocacy, political representation and community development rather than on service delivery alone. The Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, formed in 1991, is a political organization dedicated to improving the lives of all Aboriginal people in the city (Munroe 2002). The council played a central role in the purchase of the CPR station in the heart of the core area, and thus it helped to bring under one roof a variety of Native organizations. The Aboriginal Centre, housed in the station, provides a focal point for the urban First Nations and Métis community. The council was also instrumental in building the Circle of Life Thunderbird House across the street from the centre — a striking building that acts as a cultural and spiritual facility. These are important developments, since they indicate that urban First Nations and Métis organizations have moved beyond simply providing services to members and have begun to address issues of political representation.

While the Friendship Centres played a central role in developing programs and organizations in the early years, these functions have recently been taken over by others. There are differences between the cities, though. In Winnipeg, the Aboriginal Council played a particularly influential role. While provincial First Nations and Métis political organizations — particularly Métis ones — were important in both cities, they played a larger role in Edmonton than in Winnipeg. In Edmonton, the Métis Nation of Alberta had the highest profile, but several organizations also developed from a cooperative initiative between the Métis Nation of Alberta and representatives of provincial Treaty 6 and Treaty 8 organizations.

A core of active First Nations and Métis people living in Winnipeg seems to have been instrumental in the establishment of a wide variety of organizations over several decades (see Loxley 1994). In Edmonton, individuals establishing organizations were more likely to be First Nations and Métis professionals responding to recent government programs developed to meet the needs of urban First Nations and Métis people. In Winnipeg, then, the development of urban First Nations and Métis institutions has been more of a local, grassroots phenomenon. In Edmonton, urban First Nations and Métis institutions have closer connections with government and provincial First Nations and Métis organization priorities. These differences emphasize the importance of taking local circumstances into account in policy initiatives.

The view that strong First Nations and Métis culture facilitates success in urban life, the sense of belonging to one's Native group in the city, and the emergence and growth of urban First Nations and Métis organizations contradicts the long-standing notion that this culture (along with the First Nations and Métis values and sense of community) is incompatible with, or inappropriate in, the urban industrial milieu. Since the 1950s, when First Nations and Métis people began migrating to urban areas in increasing numbers and governments felt a responsibility to respond to this population movement, First Nations and Métis people have emphasized the need for services provided by First Nations and Métis people for First Nations and Métis people (Peters 2002). The growth of urban First Nations and Métis organizations not only reflects government concerns about a marginalized urban population but also the activism of urban First Nations and Métis people. This is not to say that First Nations and Métis institutions exist without government funding. In fact, most depend heavily on government

funding, and this creates concerns about sustainability and the ability to shape aspects of programming to reflect cultural needs (Graham and Peters 2002; Opekokew 1995; Prince and Abele 2003). However, the active involvement of urban First Nations and Métis people in defining ways to meet the needs of migrating populations underlines the importance of First Nations and Métis culture and community in urban areas.

Conclusion

In November 2005, First Ministers and national Aboriginal leaders met in Kelowna, British Columbia, to discuss ways to improve the lives of Aboriginal people in Canada. The federal government announced a 10-year plan, with over $5 billion to be invested within five years to close the gap between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians. However, relatively little of this was directed toward urban Aboriginal populations. For example, of the $1.8 billion for investment in education, less than $200 million was targeted on urban areas, and most was focused on reserves.

In the first part of this chapter, I asked whether First Nations and Métis people were economically and spatially marginalized in urban areas, creating a growing social divide. The data suggest that the trends are complex. While averages and proportions show that the socioeconomic conditions of First Nations and Métis people are improving, the gap between them and the non-Aboriginal population is being eroded very slowly. Some individuals are having economic success, but a large proportion is extremely poor. The statistics suggest that while there is evidence of positive change in this population, there is also a strong need for initiatives to increase the rate of socioeconomic improvement for urban First Nations and Métis people. In other words, there is a strong need for investment in urban areas in order to improve the lives of Aboriginal people in Canada.

However, public policy for urban First Nations and Métis people cannot be a simplistic adaptation of strategies designed to address underclass situations in the US. While proportionately more First Nations and Métis people than non-Aboriginal people live in poor neighbourhoods, they are not the majority in these areas, and there is no evidence that urban First Nations and Métis people are creating the conditions of isolation associated with the US inner-city underclass populations. Urban

initiatives will likely require strategies that are targeted on poor neighbourhoods and that address the needs of First Nations and Métis residents along with other residents, as well as strategies that address First Nations and Métis residents alone, no matter where they live in cities.

Both sets of strategies must endorse the legitimacy of urban Aboriginal institutions by involving them in planning and policy-making processes. At the same time, innovative approaches to the challenges involved must be developed. For example, Ryan Walker has discussed an approach used by a neighbourhood corporation to involve Winnipeg Aboriginal residents in community planning through the institution of a First Nations advisory council (2003). This was done in recognition of the fact that the local Aboriginal population was not present in large numbers at mainstream neighbourhood consultation venues and that this segment of the community did nonetheless have ideas and perspectives to share. Recent studies of community dynamics in inner-city Winnipeg suggest that it is important to incorporate Aboriginal understandings of community in creating strategies for economic development in these neighbourhoods (Silver et al. 2006). Urban Aboriginal organizations can provide a link with Aboriginal communities for this type of research, and these organizations can be important participants in making programs and policies real on the ground.

In the second part of the chapter, I suggested that First Nations and Métis cultures are dynamic and innovative in cities and can provide an important foundation for social and economic innovation and success. First Nations and Métis institutions create significant economic benefits for First Nations and Métis communities in urban areas (Hylton 1999, 85-6). Labour force data show that much of the increase in tertiary employment for First Nations and Métis people occurred in the government and community services sector. Besides offering greater scope in providing culturally appropriate programs and services, these organizations offer First Nations and Métis people the chance for good jobs. Wotherspoon identifies the importance of employment in government and community services for Aboriginal movement into the middle class, noting that "the rise of the new middle classes historically has accompanied the expansion of state functions to train and maintain a healthy population, manage the marginalized segments of the population, and administer public services" (2003, 156). Support for employment in this sector can begin to address the pressing poverty of many First Nations and Métis people living in cities (Cornell and Kalt 1992; Kalt 1993; Rothney 1992).

At the same time, the analysis of organizational development in Winnipeg and Edmonton suggests that the history and characteristics of organizational development vary substantially, and this has implications for policy development and administration. For example, the focus of some of the proposed expenditure for Aboriginal peoples announced in Kelowna was to be negotiated with Aboriginal organizations, presumably at the national level. Urban First Nations and Métis organizations are not well linked to national-level organizations, so it is not clear how these initiatives will trickle down to urban populations. While many of the Edmonton organizations are linked to provincial political organizations that could exert some influence on national organizations, many Winnipeg organizations are linked to the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, which is not affiliated with any provincial Aboriginal political organizations.

In conclusion, there are some real challenges associated with addressing First Nations and Métis diversity in cities. One challenge is to recognize the social and spatial complexity of First Nations and Métis residents' economic position and to explore the characteristics of this particular population instead of adopting perspectives designed to explain the situation of populations in other areas, notably US inner cities. Another challenge is to support urban First Nations and Métis cultures, because they provide an important foundation for positive change. Finally, it is important to recognize the varied histories and characteristics of urban First Nations and Métis populations in particular cities and the need to take these into account in policy development.

Notes

1 For Statistics Canada, urban areas are centres with at least 10,000 residents. A census metropolitan area (CMA) is a very large urban area that encompasses adjacent urban and rural areas that have a high degree of economic and social integration with that urban area. A CMA is delineated around an urban area that has a population of at least 100,000.

2 Some federally funded services are available to registered Indians generally, no matter where they live. The most notable of these are noninsured health benefits and post-secondary educational assistance.

3 The census uses the term "North American Indian" instead of "First Nation." Inuit are omitted because they represent a very small proportion of the population in these urban areas.

4 Some researchers focusing on social cohesion see the dissolution of community bonds and the irrelevance of institutions as being associated with urban life as a whole, and not only with marginalized communities (Castells 1997; Fukuyama 1999). Other scholars have found evidence that rich informal networks and exchange systems take shape as individuals find innovative ways of coping with unemployment (Stack 1974; Williams and Windebank 1998). Still others have pointed out that the neighbourhood effects can be positive as well as negative (Séguin and Divay 2002). For example, if there is a significant concentration of people from a given background (ethnocultural, linguistic or indigenous) in a particular part of the city, then residents benefit from public services that are better suited to their needs.

5 An important focus of this chapter is addressing change over time. Finding data for this comparison is challenging. Most of the data on ethnic and cultural origins in Canada rely on a question that asks individuals about their ancestry. The wording of this question and instructions to enumerators on its administration have changed over the years (Goldmann and Siggner 1995). Beginning in 1991, Aboriginal people were also counted through a question that asked individuals if they identified with an Aboriginal group — North American Indian, Métis or Inuit — but these data are not available at the census-tract level in that year. Kerr, Siggner and Bourdeau found that, with the exception of the nonstatus Indian population, the populations identified by the 1981 Native peoples census question and the 1991 question on Aboriginal identity appeared to be sufficiently similar to support a comparison of some characteristics (1996). Because nonstatus Indians represent a minority of the Aboriginal population, this chapter compares responses to the 1981 ethnic origin question to responses to the 2001 Aboriginal identity question in order to address questions of change over time.

At the same time, it is important that we recognize that comparability is affected not only by the wording of census questions. Between 1981 and 2001, the Aboriginal population grew at a rate that cannot be explained only by population measures such as fertility, mortality and migration (Guimond 2003). Part of the increase was due to the fact that individuals who did not identify as Aboriginal people in previous census years now chose to do so. There is some evidence that individuals who are in higher socioeconomic status groups are disproportionately represented among individuals newly identifying as Aboriginal people in the census (Siggner and Hagey 2003). Where there are comparisons between urban Aboriginal conditions in 1981 and 2001, the analysis in this chapter attempts to account for inaccuracies created by changes in self-identification.

6 First Nations and Métis and non-Aboriginal people experienced a slight decrease in proportion in primary and secondary industry sectors and a slight increase in proportion

in the tertiary sector. In an attempt to simplify the analysis, table 2 describes only the tertiary sector, which employed approximately four-fifths of both populations.

7 In 1981, 9.4 percent of the urban Aboriginal population worked in the business and FIRA sectors, 20.6 percent worked in government and community services and 41.1 percent in other tertiary sectors. The proportions for 2001 were 11.2, 27.3 and 41.2, respectively. In 1981, 13 percent of the urban non-Aboriginal population worked in the business and FIRA sector, 22 percent in government and community services and 38.7 in other tertiary sectors. The proportions in 2001 were 18.3, 22.7 and 39.

8 Census tracts typically have between 4,000 and 6,000 people, and they are widely recognized as approximations for neighbourhoods. Data are also available for smaller areas, but suppression of data makes the analysis less reliable.

9 The Social Planning Council and the Aboriginal Council in Winnipeg, and the Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee and the Edmonton Aboriginal Coalition provided assistance. Katherin McArdle, Pamela McCoy-Jones and Richard Thompson conducted the interviews for this project. Chris Andersen, School of Native Studies, University of Alberta, and Ryan Walker, Queen's University, managed the study in these two locations. All of these contributions are gratefully acknowledged.

10 Organizations that potentially met the criteria were identified from a variety of lists and with the assistance of key individuals knowledgeable about Aboriginal organizations in the city. A telephone call confirmed which organizations met the screening criteria, and key representatives from these organizations were interviewed. We were unable to interview representatives from several organizations and so attempted to obtain missing information from published materials.

11 This definition excluded organizations that provided services to Aboriginal people as part of a broader mandate to serve urban populations. It also excluded urban offices of provincial or national Aboriginal organizations that were located in the city but that had as their constituency provincial or national Aboriginal populations. However, some provincial organizations had created institutions that attempted to meet the needs of their urban members, and these were included if they met the criteria I have listed here.

12 It is also important to recognize that some organizations are not service organizations (for example, the Aboriginal Centre, the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg and the Manitoba Métis Federation-Winnipeg Region), and therefore there are no client figures for these organizations.

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Culture Matters, but... Explaining Trends among Urban Aboriginal People

Commentary

There is much on which Evelyn Peters and I agree. There are also some things on which we disagree. First, that on which we agree.

Appropriately, Peters sets the context by pointing out how dramatic the rural-to-urban migration among Aboriginal people has been over the last half-century. At the end of the Second World War, less than 10 percent of the Aboriginal population was urban. By the time of the 2001 Census, fully half lived in an urban area. A quarter lived in just 10 cities — the 10 with the largest Aboriginal populations. Since nearly two-thirds of Canada's Aboriginal people live in one of the four western provinces, it is not surprising that seven of these ten cities are western. Among the seven are the four that Peters examines in detail: Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon and Edmonton. Between the 1981 and 2001 Censuses, Winnipeg's Aboriginal population increased by 247 percent, Regina's by 145 percent, Saskatoon's by 382 percent and Edmonton's by 205 percent (Siggner and Costa 2005).[1]

The obvious reason for this migration is economic. Like other groups that initially settled in rural areas, Aboriginal people are migrating in search of better economic prospects for themselves and their children. Off-reserve, Aboriginal people face many problems — including a sense of cultural loss — but, in general, their education levels, employment rates and incomes are considerably higher than they would be on a reserve.

Schools Matter

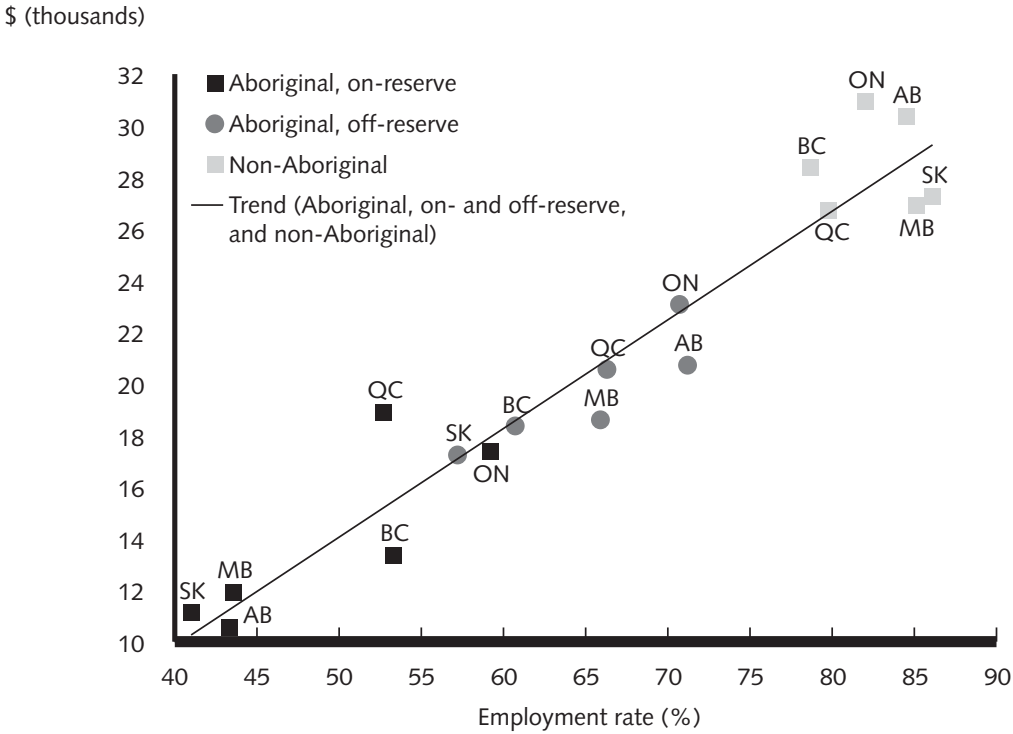
Peters emphasizes the value of Aboriginal cultural organizations in easing the rural-to-urban transition for Aboriginal people. I think she is right to do so. But cultural organizations are not enough. An important measure of the advances made by any Aboriginal community is employment at good wages, and the key to good wages is formal education.[2]

Figure 1 draws from the 2001 Census to illustrate the link between median income and employment among selected groups of Aboriginal people in their prime earning years, ages 25 to 44. Those in this age group are old enough to have completed their education and training, and young enough to have benefited from the emphasis on formal education over the past four decades; the oldest entered school in the early 1960s, the youngest in the early 1980s. The figure plots the relationship across the six provinces with substantial Aboriginal populations. (Seven of eight Aboriginal people live in one of these provinces.) The on-reserve cohorts are overwhelmingly nonurban; the majority of those living off-reserve are urban. Statistics for non-Aboriginal cohorts are included for comparison. The poorest group is on-reserve Aboriginal people living in the Prairies, where in 2000 median annual incomes were less than $12,000, and employment rates were below 45 percent.[3] The employment rate and median incomes among the wealthiest Aboriginal group, those living off-reserve in Ontario, were nearly twice those of people on Prairie reserves.

The link between employment and formal education has become stronger in recent decades: there are few jobs available for those without at least a high school graduation certificate, and such jobs as exist offer low wages. Figure 2 shows the link between education (measured by the proportion of each group that has completed high school) and median income. The link between education, employment and higher income exists among Aboriginal people as it does among non-Aboriginal people. The explanation for the positive link is essentially twofold. First, higher education levels increase the employment rate; they lead to better-paying jobs, the rewards of which exceed those of nonemployment options, such as social assistance. Second, higher education levels increase earnings among the employed. The slope of the trend line among the 12 Aboriginal groups implies that a 10 percentage point increase in the high school completion rate of Aboriginal people increases annual median income by $2,900. Admittedly, a satisfactory explanation of comparative incomes requires a far more complex

Figure 1

Median Annual Aboriginal Income On- and Off-Reserve and Non-Aboriginal Income, Ages 25 to 44, Selected Provinces, by Employment Rate, 2000



Source: Author's calculations based on *Aboriginal Peoples Survey (2001)* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2003), accessed September 19, 2006, http://www.cbsc.org/servlet/ContentServer?cid=1081944198231&pagename=CBSC_ON%2Fdisplay&lang=en&c=InfoResources
Note: $y = 418.75x-6795.2$; $R^2 = 0.9229$

approach than reference to high school completion. Among the on-reserve populations, in particular, there are outliers.

Urban Aboriginal people remain substantially poorer, on average, than their non-Aboriginal urban neighbours, and racial discrimination figures in the explanation. But urban Aboriginal people have made gains, both absolutely and relatively. In the 10 cities of her study, Peters found an increase between 1980 and 2000 in the proportion of the Aboriginal population with annual incomes above $40,000. In their study of 11 cities with large Aboriginal populations, Andrew Siggner and Rosalinda Costa provide additional supporting evidence (2005). Overall, in these 11 cities, the median market earnings of Aboriginal people were about two-thirds those of non-Aboriginal people in 1980, and nearly three-quarters those of non-Aboriginal people in 2000 (see figure 3).

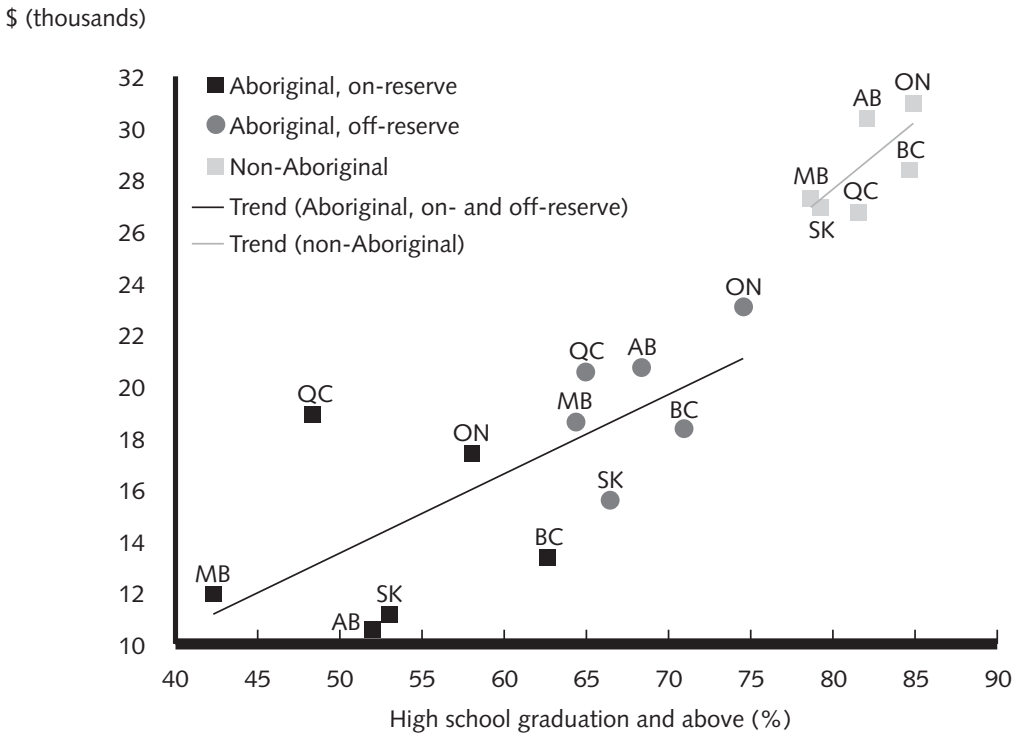
Underlying this closing of the income gap was an increase in the share of young urban Aboriginal people (ages 20 to 24) who had completed high school. Overall, in these cities, the increase in the high school completion rate among young non-Aboriginal people was about 15 percentage points between 1981 and 2001. The increase among Aboriginal women exceeded the increase among non-Aboriginal women in 9 of the 11 cities; the increase among Aboriginal men exceeded the increase among non-Aboriginal men in 6 of the 11 cities.

Are "Very Poor Neighbourhoods" Becoming Ghettos?

I AM LESS SANGUINE THAN PETERS THAT URBAN ABORIGINAL PEOPLE ARE AVOIDING THE problems of racial segregation by neighbourhood and, within certain neighbourhoods, a set of interrelated problems: high crime, low employment, high welfare dependency, poor-quality schools and absent fathers. This syndrome is indelibly associated with urban poverty in large US cities. For her part, Peters categorically concludes: "While proportionately more First Nations and Métis people than non-Aboriginal people live in poor neighbourhoods, they are not the majority in these areas, and there is no evidence that urban First Nations and Métis people are creating the conditions of isolation associated with the US inner-city underclass populations."

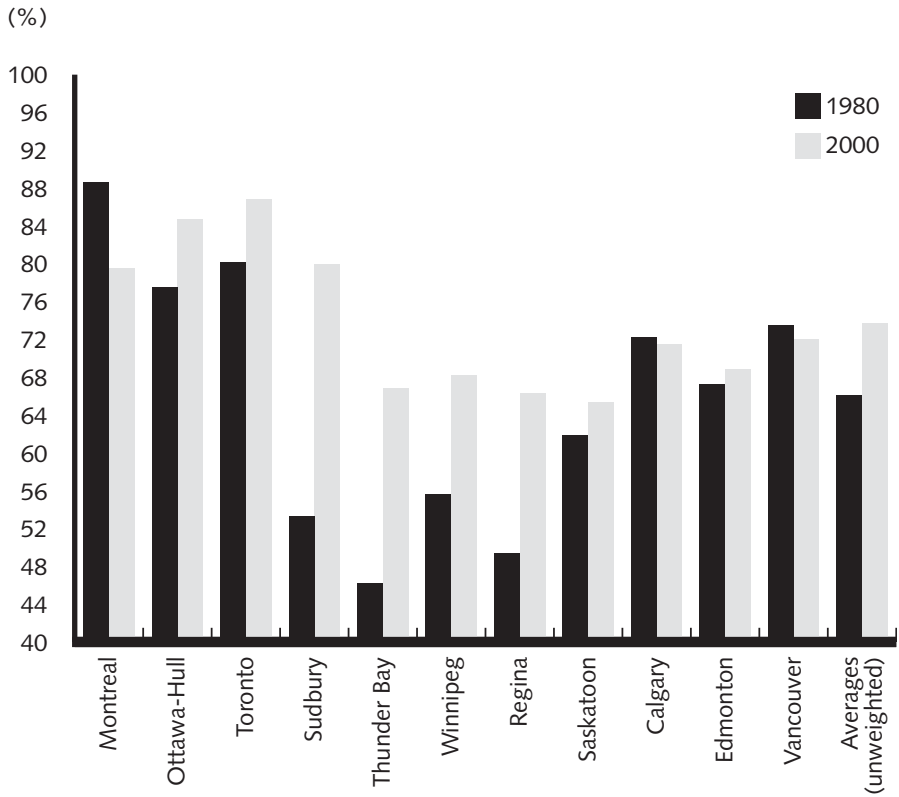
Figure 2

Median Annual Aboriginal Income On- and Off-Reserve and Non-Aboriginal Income, Ages 25 to 44, Selected Provinces, by Rate of High School Graduation and Above, 2000



Source: Author's calculations based on *Aboriginal Peoples Survey (2001)* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2003), accessed September 19, 2006, http://www.cbsc.org/servlet/ContentServer?cid=1081944198231&pagename=CBSC_ON%2Fdisplay&lang=en&c=InfoResources

Ratio of Aboriginal to to Non-Aboriginal Median Employment Income, Selected Cities, 1980 and 2000



Source: A.J. Siggner and R. Costa, *Aboriginal Conditions in Census Metropolitan Areas, 1981-2001*, Trends and Conditions in Census Metropolitan Areas, Analytical Studies Branch, cat. no. 89-613-MIE2005008 (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2005).

Our disagreement is in part a matter of semantics. When does a poor neighbourhood become a ghetto? Admittedly, no Canadian urban neighbourhood is dominated by poor Aboriginal people to the extent that some American urban neighbourhoods are dominated by poor Hispanic or African American people. But, the question of whether certain neighbourhoods are ghetto-like aside, are urban Aboriginal people concentrated in particular neighbourhoods? Peters's own data reveal a trend toward geographic segregation by race in three of the four cities she examines (see table 1, which reorganizes data from table 3 in Peters' chapter in this volume). In 1981, the great majority of urban Aboriginal people in the four cities she examines lived in census tracts in which Aboriginal people comprised less than 10 percent of the population. Virtually no Aboriginal people lived in a census tract in which the Aboriginal share of the population exceeded 30 percent.

The Aboriginal share of the population in these four cities rose dramatically between 1981 and 2001. (In 2001, the maximum Aboriginal share across these four cities was 9.1 percent — in Saskatoon.) The largest proportionate increases in the Aboriginal population may well be occurring in tracts with initially very low Aboriginal population counts, but the majority of the increase over the two decades has taken place in census tracts that now have Aboriginal population shares above 10 percent.[4] In 2001, the majority of tracts continued to have an Aboriginal population share below 10 percent, but such tracts now account for less than half the Aboriginal population in three of the four cities (all except Edmonton). In three of the four cities, the majority now live in the minority of census tracts having an Aboriginal share above 10 percent. In Regina and Winnipeg, one in six Aboriginal people now live in a census tract with an Aboriginal population share above 30 percent; in Saskatoon, one in four live in such a tract.

Another question to ask is: What is the relationship between census tracts with proportionately large Aboriginal communities and the local poverty rate? Peters's data do not allow us to answer this question, but one can be confident that the correlation is positive. Siggner and Costa provide evidence on various dimensions of ghetto "syndromes" — such as the extent of single parenthood among urban Aboriginal people — that suggests severe distress in many Aboriginal families (2005). But their monograph does not answer this question, because the data are not disaggregated by poor versus nonpoor neighbourhoods. Table 2 offers a

Geographic Segregation of Aboriginal Populations in Four Western Cities, 1981 and 2001 (percent)[1]

	Census tracts categorized by Aboriginal share of tract population			
	0-10%	**10-30%**	**Over 30%**	**Total[2]**
Winnipeg				
1981	70.6	29.4	0.0	100
2001	42.0	41.2	17.6	100
Change 1981-2001	*-28.4*	*11.8*	*17.6*	
Regina				
1981	79.3	20.7	0.0	100
2001	39.3	42.2	18.5	100
Change 1981-2001	*-40.0*	*21.5*	*18.5*	
Saskatoon				
1981	95.3	4.7	0.0	100
2001	36.5	37.8	25.6	100
Change 1981-2001	*-58.8*	*33.1*	*25.6*	
Edmonton				
1981	99.7	0.0	0.3	100
2001	70.4	29.5	0.1	100
Change 1981-2001	*-29.3*	*29.5*	*-0.2*	

Source: Author's calculation based on data in Evelyn Peters, "First Nations and Métis People and Diversity in Canadian Cities" (in this volume).

[1] Distribution of Aboriginal population by census tracts categorized in terms of Aboriginal share of census tract population.

[2] Totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

partial answer, using data from the 1996 Census — data that are unfortunately a decade old. At the time, Canada was recovering from the early-1990s recession; the 2006 Census will probably reveal less dramatic employment differences across neighbourhoods. In 1996, Aboriginal people were experiencing extremely low employment rates in "very poor neighbourhoods," relative to both Aboriginal people in nonpoor neighbourhoods and non-Aboriginal people in "very poor neighbourhoods." (A "very poor neighbourhood" is defined as a census tract where the LICO poverty rate exceeds twice the 1995 national average of 16.3 percent — that is, a rate above 32.6 percent. This is a somewhat broader criterion for "ghetto-like" tracts than the 40 percent poverty rate criterion used by Peters.)

Several observations are worth making:

- Urban Aboriginal people disproportionately live in very poor neighbourhoods, particularly those in western Canadian cities. This was the case for 31 percent of Aboriginal people in the six western cities documented in table 2. By contrast, only 8 percent of non-Aboriginal people in these six cities lived in very poor neighbourhoods. This disparity is most evident in the case of the three cities in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.
- The employment rate was, predictably, lower in very poor neighbourhoods than in nonpoor ones across all eight cities. On average, taking into account both Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people, the difference was 13 percentage points.
- Among Aboriginal people, the difference in employment rates between very poor and nonpoor neighbourhoods was 25 percentage points, a gap much larger than that for non-Aboriginal people. Across the six western cities, the Aboriginal employment rate in very poor neighbourhoods was 30 percent; in nonpoor neighbourhoods, it was 55 percent.
- The most acute low employment rates among Aboriginal people were in the very poor neighbourhoods of Winnipeg, Saskatoon and Regina. There, the average rate was 27 percent; this amounted to only half the employment rate among Aboriginal people living outside these neighbourhoods.

Yet another way of approaching this matter is to consider inequality trends in the distribution of the incomes of urban Aboriginal people. As I have already mentioned, Siggner and Costa note an encouraging *decrease* from 1980 to 2000

Poverty and Employment among Urban Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal People, by Neighbourhood Category, Selected Cities, 1996[1] (percent)

	Share of the population in very poor urban neighbourhoods	Employment rate	
		Very poor neighbourhoods	Nonpoor neighbourhoods
Montreal			
Aboriginal	29.7	36.8	51.7
Non-Aboriginal	22.4	50.9	59.4
Toronto			
Aboriginal	20.8	40.1	61.9
Non-Aboriginal	13.9	50.9	62.7
Winnipeg			
Aboriginal	48.1	27.7	56.8
Non-Aboriginal	13.5	52.7	64.6
Regina			
Aboriginal	28.2	21.8	49.3
Non-Aboriginal	5.8	49.7	67.1
Saskatoon			
Aboriginal	34.1	24.8	46.5
Non-Aboriginal	7.9	54.0	66.8
Calgary			
Aboriginal	9.2	54.5	61.7
Non-Aboriginal	4.2	60.6	69.7
Edmonton			
Aboriginal	23.0	34.6	51.8
Non-Aboriginal	8.2	53.2	62.4
Vancouver			
Aboriginal	21.9	31.5	57.0
Non-Aboriginal	7.3	53.2	62.4

Source: 1996 Census master file; see J. Richards (2001).

[1] In 1995, the average national family poverty rate, according to Statistics Canada's low-income cutoff, was 16.3 percent. A "very poor neighbourhood" is defined as a census tract having more than twice the prevailing average rate — i.e., above 32.6 percent. This is a broader criterion for "ghetto-like" tracts than the 40 percent poverty rate used by Evelyn Peters elsewhere in this volume. Statistics for Aboriginal people are calculated on the basis of identity as opposed to ancestry (origin).

in the gap between Aboriginal people's and non-Aboriginal people's median annual earnings in 8 of the 11 cities they studied. But they also note a disturbing seven percentage point *increase* over the two decades in the bottom tail (defined as earnings below $20,000) of the earnings distribution of urban Aboriginal people (2005). Admittedly, their data do not refer to any geographic concentration of those in this bottom tail, and a similar if smaller increase in the bottom tail occurs among non-Aboriginal people (see table 3).

At this point, I make the usual academic recommendation: more research. When the 2006 Census data become available, it would be useful to update the evidence on neighbourhood poverty concentration.

Moving About…

I STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION OUTCOMES IN ADDRESSING URBAN ABORIGINAL poverty. But it is doubtful that problems of urban Aboriginal education can be resolved independently of problems of on-reserve education. As long as the quality of reserve-based schooling remains poor, and as long as churning between reserve and urban communities remains high, a large gap between the education levels of Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people will probably persist.

The severity of the on-reserve education problem is evident in figure 4. The evidence from the cohort ages 15 to 24 is obviously incomplete — many are still in school or receiving some form of post-secondary instruction. Among Aboriginal people, the share having completed high school is greater among those identifying as Métis as opposed to Indian. In terms of area of residence, urban results exceed those of rural areas; by far the lowest results are for Indians on-reserve.

Mobility may have positive consequences, but frequent moves are usually harmful to children's education prospects. In turn, failing to complete high school is a strong predictor of severe bouts of unemployment and poverty in adulthood. Urban Aboriginal people change residence much more frequently than do non-Aboriginal people. Many of the moves are to different addresses within the same city; other moves are between the city and a rural, often reserve-based, community. (Most of those identifying as Indian — as opposed to Métis — are registered under the *Indian Act*, and many of them move frequently between an urban

Average Annual Earnings among Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal People in Cities, by Income Category, 1980 and 2000[1] (percent)

	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal	
Annual earnings[2]	**1980**	**2000**	**1980**	**2000**
Under $20,000	51	58	38	43
$20,000-$40,000	31	27	33	29
Over $40,000	18	15	29	28
	100	100	100	100

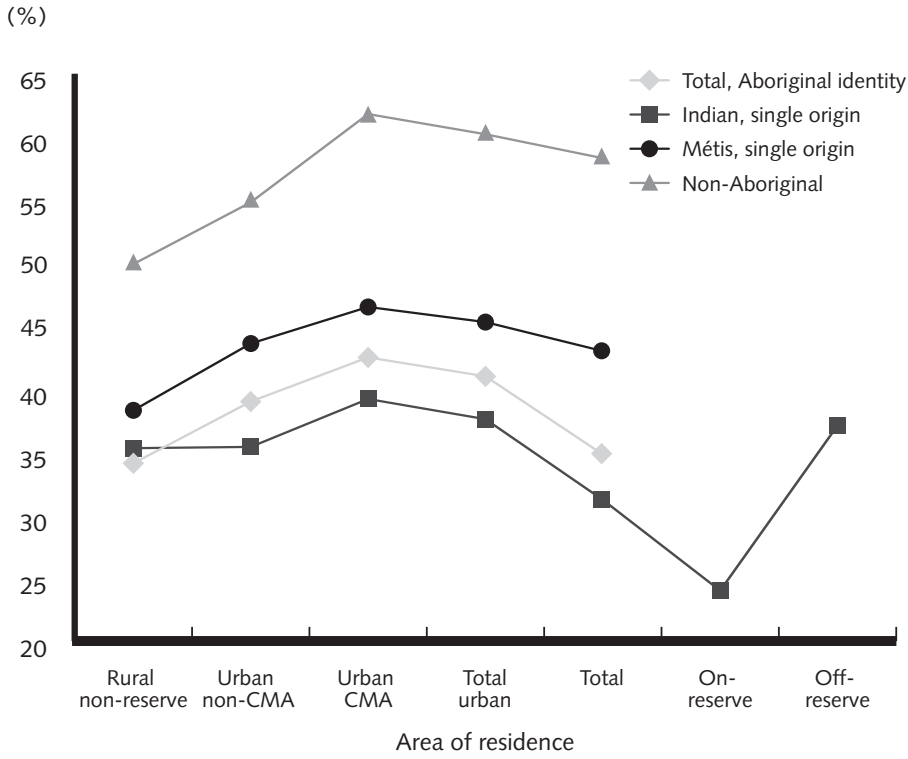
Source: A.J. Siggner and R. Costa, *Aboriginal Conditions in Census Metropolitan Areas, 1981-2001*, figure 17 (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2005), accessed October 2, 2006, http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/89-613-MIE/89-613-MIE2005008.pdf

[1] Average across 11 Canadian cities.

[2] Measured in constant 2000 dollars.

Figure 4

Share of Cohorts Ages 15-24 with a High School Certificate or Higher, Aboriginal Identity Groups and Non-Aboriginal People, by Area of Residence, 2001



Source: Author's calculations based on *Aboriginal Peoples Survey (2001)* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2003), accessed September 19, 2006, http://www.cbsc.org/servlet/ContentServer?cid=1081944198231&pagename=CBSC_ON%2Fdisplay&lang=en&c=InfoResources

residence and a reserve community.) Those in very poor neighbourhoods change residence more frequently than do those in nonpoor neighbourhoods, and Aboriginal people in very poor neighbourhoods are the most mobile of all (Richards 2001; Siggner and Costa 2005).

Conclusion

Education from kindergarten to grade 12 is about transmission of culture. Both Peters and I agree that on- and off-reserve school systems throughout western Canada — and wherever large Aboriginal communities exist — should do more to address this dimension of education. Education is also about mastery of the basic academic skills and knowledge necessary for participation in an industrial society. A relevant precedent here was the concern among francophone Quebecers in the mid-twentieth century over their schools. Although provincial schools were at the time preserving language and culture, the dropout rate was unduly high, and they were not graduating students able to match the level of anglophone students, either in Quebec or elsewhere in Canada. Quebec's Quiet Revolution closed that gap. Since that time, the link between a good education and a good job has become even stronger.

When the prime minister, premiers and leaders of the major Aboriginal organizations met in Kelowna, British Columbia, in November 2005, they agreed to address social problems and not to debate their disagreements over the respective powers to be exercised by Ottawa, the provinces and band governments. With regard to education, they committed themselves to "the goal of closing the gap in K-12 educational attainment between Aboriginal learners and other Canadians by 2016" (Canada 2005, 4). It is highly unlikely that they will realize this goal, but stating it is worthwhile. It is an implicit acknowledgement by the prime minister and Aboriginal leaders that past performance on education by both the Department of Indian Affairs and band councils has been woefully inadequate. It is also an acknowledgement by the premiers that provincial education ministries must assume major responsibilities with respect to improving Aboriginal education, and that they can no longer sidestep the difficulties by referring to federal or band responsibility.

Notes

1 Andrew Siggner and Rosalinda Costa emphasize that some portion of this dramatic increase in urban Aboriginal populations is due to "ethnic migration." With the enhanced status of Aboriginal peoples among the general population in recent decades, some who did not initially self-identify as an Aboriginal person in the census now do so. In addition, ethnic migration probably explains some portion of the dramatic improvement in urban Aboriginal education outcomes and the closing of the gap in median earnings — issues that I will discuss later.

2 This section summarizes the discussion in my study *Creating Choices* (Richards 2006).

3 Money income measures exaggerate the relative poverty of reserve-based Aboriginal groups, because the data do not include in-kind income, a category more important on-reserve than off-reserve.

4 Take the case of Winnipeg. To reconcile the 1981 and 2001 data (see table 1), roughly 30 percent of the increase in the Aboriginal population took place in census tracts that, in 2001, continued to have an Aboriginal population share below 10 percent; 45 percent in tracts that, in 2001, had an Aboriginal population share between 10 and 30 percent; and 25 percent in tracts that now have an Aboriginal population share above 30 percent.

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