

BC's Aboriginal Population

Who are the Aboriginal people of British Columbia?

Each of Canada's indigenous population groups has a distinct history, culture, language, environment, and legal entitlement under the Canadian Constitution (1982) and the Indian Act (1876). Section 35 of the Constitution Act recognizes three distinct groups: Indian, Inuit, and Métis.

First Nations

Although 'First Nations' is not a legally defined term, it is used to describe members of a First Nations band or tribe. First Nations can be either **Status** or **Non-Status** Indians.

Status Indians are registered under the Indian Act and entitled to rights and benefits under the law. Status Indians can be Treaty or Non-Treaty Indians.

Non-Status Indians are not registered or governed by the Indian Act.

In BC, most First Nations did not sign treaties with the exception of Treaty 8 and the Douglas Treaties. The first modern-day treaty, the Nisga'a Final Agreement, was ratified in 2000. In 2007, the Tsawwassen and Maa-nulth First Nations ratified Final Agreements.

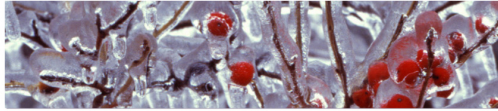
Inuit

Inuit are a distinct population of Aboriginal peoples that reside primarily in the Canadian North including Nunavut,



Image: Aboriginal Tourism Association of BC





fact sheet

the Northwest Territories (Inuvialuit), northern Quebec (Nunavik), and Labrador (Nunatsiavut). The word Inuit means 'the people' in Inuktitut, the Inuit language. Inuk is the singular form of Inuit. Inuit should not be confused with Innu who are the Naskapi and Montagnais First Nations of Quebec and Labrador.

Métis

Métis means a person of mixed First Nations and European ancestry who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples and is accepted as such by the Métis nation. Métis is a French word meaning 'mixed.' Unlike Status Indians and Inuit, Métis people are not entitled to the provisions of the Indian Act.

Demographics

British Columbia is home to the second largest Aboriginal population in Canada. According to the 2006 Aboriginal Census, there are 196,075 Aboriginal people in BC, which is roughly 5% of the total population of the province.

First Nations constitute the vast majority of BC's Aboriginal population (129,580 or 66%), followed by Métis (59,445 or 30%), Inuit (795 or 0.4%), multiple Aboriginal identity (1655 or 0.8%), and other Aboriginal peoples not included in the other categories (4605 or 2.3%).

BC's Aboriginal population increased by 15% between 2001 and 2006, which is more than three times the rate of BC's non-Aboriginal population. The median age of Aboriginal people in BC is 28 years old, compared to 41 years of age in the non-Aboriginal population.

There are over 200 urban, rural, remote/isolated Aboriginal communities in BC. In 2006, 60% of the Aboriginal population in BC lived in urban areas, while 26% lived on reserves.

According to the 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, the Northern Health Authority has the highest percentage of Aboriginal peoples in BC (15.6%), followed by the Interior HA (5.7%), Vancouver Island HA (5.1%), Fraser HA (2.5%) and the Vancouver Coastal HA (2.4%). (BC Stats, 2001)

For More Information

- Aboriginal Canada Portal www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca
- BC Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation www.gov.bc.ca
- BC Vital Statistics www.vs.gov.bc.ca
- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada www.ainc-inac.gc.ca
- First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (RHS) 2002/03 www.naho.ca
- Statistics Canada www.statscan.ca



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