Urbanization and Migration Patterns of Aboriginal Populations in Canada: A Half Century in Review (1951 to 2006)

By
Mary Jane Norris and Stewart Clatworthy

Based on paper prepared with the support of the Office of the Federal Interlocutor

Presented at:
Reframing the Issues: Emerging Questions for Métis, non-status and urban Aboriginal Policy Research

Hosted by: CFHSS; Faculty of Native Studies, University of Alberta; and, the Office of the Federal Interlocutor (OFI) for Métis and Non-Status Indians in conjunction with:

The 79th Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences
Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec
Wednesday, June 2nd, 2010
Urbanization and Migration Patterns of Aboriginal Populations in Canada, 1951 to 2006: Discussion

- Overview of urbanization and migration: population and migration data from the census for twelve major urban areas, selected censuses - 1951 to 2006

- Three key areas:
  - Long-term patterns and trends in growth of Aboriginal populations in urban areas;
  - Role of migration as a factor in the urbanization of Aboriginal populations; and,
  - Components of recent growth of Aboriginal populations in urban areas.

- Preliminary typology of Aboriginal populations in urban areas based on:
  - population size, long-term populations trends and components of growth

- Implications of long-term patterns and components of population growth for:
  - characteristics, trends, needs, services of Aboriginal populations in different cities

- Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS), operating in thirteen key urban centres: this study includes nine of the thirteen “UAS cities”
Urbanization of Aboriginal Populations in Canada: A Half Century of Trends - Significant growth after 1951

- In 1951, Census indicated that few Aboriginal people resided in urban areas, numbering only in the hundreds in most cities.

- Between 1951 and 1961, Census reflected increases in Indian urban population of over 50%.

  “Census figures reveal that growth in the Indian urban population is substantial. ...Indians are entering urban areas at an unprecedented rate.” (Nagler, 1973)

- By 1971 the numbers of Aboriginal people living in urban areas increased significantly:

  "The 1971 Census indicated that there were 1,000 or more Indians in twelve urban centres in Canada. In seven of these cities there were more than 2,000 Indian residents." (Stanbury, 1974 based on Statistics Canada, Perspective)

- The share of Registered Indians living off reserve increased significantly over the 1960s, from 17% in 1959 to 28% by 1972.
Urbanization of Aboriginal Populations in Canada: Exceptional and Rapid Growth observed over the decades

- Growth in Aboriginal populations in urban areas continued over the 1970s and 1980s, and in the following decades, numbers increased significantly, especially for some prairie cities
  
  “By 1991, several prairie cities had very substantial populations of Aboriginal people, and it is likely that for many cities, the absolute increase between 1981 and 1991 was greater than the increase between 1971 and 1981.” (Peters, 2000)

- Aboriginal populations experienced dramatic growth in their numbers from 1981 on as highlighted in “Aboriginal Conditions in Census Metropolitan Areas, 1981-2001”

  “The Aboriginal population in these cites has grown dramatically over the 20-year period. .. The Aboriginal population in the selected CMAs more than doubled in 20 years and in some cities quadrupled, such as in Saskatoon.” (Siggner and Costa, 2005)

- Between 1986 and 1991, the Aboriginal identity population experienced exceptional growth overall, most notably in urban areas

  “The overall exceptional growth of Aboriginal identity populations during the period 1986-91 occurred off Indian reserves, especially in urban areas: 6.6 and 9.4 percent per year respectively in rural and urban areas.” (Guimond, 2003)
Urbanization of Aboriginal Populations in Canada, 1951 to 2006 Censuses

- Selected Census years
- Aboriginal populations: census definitions, Aboriginal Identity -1996 on
- Census geography: urban areas; census metropolitan areas (CMAs)
- Limitations: coverage, comparability across Censuses
- Does not address “Urbanization” of areas with existing Aboriginal populations

M.J. Norris and S. Clatworthy, June, 2010
From 1961 to 2006, the proportion of the Aboriginal population residing in urban areas has increased steadily, from just 13% to 53%; as well, increases in proportion residing in large metropolitan areas (CMAs) from 7% to 31%.
Aboriginal groups differ in their trends and degrees of urbanization although all have experienced increasing urbanization.

M.J. Norris and S. Clatworthy, June, 2010
Twelve Canadian Cities / CMAs with Significant Aboriginal Identity Populations in 2006

- Winnipeg: 68,385
- Edmonton: 52,100
- Vancouver: 40,310
- Calgary: 26,575
- Toronto: 26,575
- Saskatoon: 21,535
- Ottawa-Gatineau: 20,590
- Montreal: 17,865
- Regina: 17,105
- Thunder Bay: 10,055
- Sudbury: 9,970
- Hamilton: 8,890

M.J. Norris and S. Clatworthy, June, 2010
Total Aboriginal Population of Twelve Selected Cities and Census Metropolitan Areas, Canada, 1951 to 2006

These cities account for vast majority of Aboriginal residents in large urban areas. The proportion of the Aboriginal population residing in these twelve urban areas (Cities / CMAs) has increased steadily over the past fifty-five years, from just 2% in 1951 to 27% by 2006.
Canada’s urban areas vary significantly across regions in the growth of their Aboriginal populations over the past 50 years

In reference to the twenty years up to 1981:

“The past two decades have witnessed the movement of increasing numbers of native persons from rural areas and reservations to urban centres. Although this phenomenon has occurred in all regions of Canada, it has been especially pronounced in Canada’s western provinces and has led to the very rapid growth of native populations in major prairie cities....”

(Clatworthy, 1981, from Sharzer, p. 556)
Aboriginal Population Counts, 1951 to 2006, in CMAs with an Aboriginal Identity Population of at Least 40,000 in 2006

M.J. Norris and S. Clatworthy, June, 2010
Urban Aboriginal population growth over the past half century: occurred at varying rates among different cities

For example, while Montreal and Regina have Aboriginal populations of similar size, of about 17 to 18 thousand, in 2006, their long-term patterns and trends in growth rates tend to differ:

- Over the 1981-96 period Regina saw sharp increases in its numbers of Aboriginal residents, at 104%, compared to 27% for Montreal;

- Whereas over the most recent 2001-2006 period the population reporting an Aboriginal identity in Montreal increased by 60%, from 11,085 to 17,865, while the Aboriginal identity population in Regina increased by 9% from 15,685 to 17,105.

M.J. Norris and S. Clatworthy, June, 2010
Migration as a Factor in the Urbanization of Aboriginal Populations

To what extent has migration contributed to the rapid increase in the Aboriginal population living in large urban areas?
Recent 2006 Registered Indian net migration patterns for reserves are generally consistent with longer-term trends, such that:

- Reserves continued to gain population through migration as since 1966.
- Rural areas and small urban centres continue to post net outflows of migrants.
- Major urban areas have experienced more recently relatively smaller impacts of migration; especially in contrast with the larger net inflow to cities observed over the 1966-1971 period.

*M.J. Norris and S. Clatworthy, June, 2010*
Migration as Component of Growth over period of Aboriginal Urbanization: Major factor at beginning, but declining thereafter

At beginning of urbanization, migration significant component of urban growth

- Over the 1961–71 period, migration possibly accounting for about a quarter of growth of Registered Indian population in large urban areas
  
  “Clearly, the vast increases in the urban Indian population cannot be attributed to any other factor than migration from reserve areas.” (Nagler, 1973)

Migration not a major factor over later periods, with large urban areas experiencing either small net inflows or net out-flows of migrants*

- Net in-migration of Aboriginal migrants to large urban CMA areas accounted for just 7% and 4% of the growth of Aboriginal populations in urban CMAs over the 1986-1991 and 2001-2006 periods respectively, and;

- Net out-migration, losses of Aboriginal migrants from urban areas overall during 1986-1991 & 1991-1996 periods, even though large increases in urban populations
  
  *(Guimond, 2003 a and b; Norris and Clatworthy 2003; Clatworthy and Norris, forthcoming)
Indirect Contribution of Migration to Aboriginal Urbanization through Natural Increase

Even though direct effects of net migration may be small, the impact of migration on age-gender composition of urban population could affect growth in urban areas through natural increase (births minus deaths):

The inflow to cities of young adult Aboriginal migrants of child-bearing ages could contribute to growth in urban areas through natural increase.
Components of Aboriginal Population Growth in Urban Areas

Migration, Natural Increase, Legislative changes (Indian Act), Ethnic Mobility ...

Ethnic mobility (i.e. changes in self-reporting of identity over censuses) has been identified as the most important factor in explaining the relatively recent dramatic growth of Aboriginal populations in urban areas... not the migration from reserves to cities.

Census-based demographic research demonstrates the extent of ethnic mobility among Aboriginal populations overall, especially in urban areas, as highlighted in Guimond et al. “Aboriginal Populations in Canadian Cities: Why are They Growing so Fast?”:

“Estimates produced for the 1986-2001 period show that nearly 42,000 Indians living off-reserve in 2001 did not self-report as Indian in 1986, or one off-reserve Indian in eight (13%), and over 101,000 Métis in 2001 did not report as Métis in 1986, which amounts to four Métis in ten enumerated in 2001 (Guimond 2009). Moreover analysis reveals that over 90% of ethnic transfers took place in urban areas.”

(Guimond, Robitaille and Senécal, 2009, pp. 15-16)
Ethnic Mobility, Natural Increase & Migration Share (%) of Aboriginal Population Growth*, Selected Major CMAs, 1996 -2001

- For most cities migration tends not to be the major contributor to growth
- Cities vary in significance of ethnic mobility to growth
- For some cities natural increase also important factor

*Note: Estimates take into account growth due to differential net under coverage (not shown).

M.J. Norris and S. Clatworthy, June, 2010
Typology of Aboriginal Population Growth Patterns and Components in Urban Areas

Not only has Aboriginal population growth among different urban areas occurred at varying rates, growth among these urban areas has also resulted from different processes or components.

Suggests that Aboriginal populations can differ significantly across urban areas with respect to their:

- Long-term patterns and components of growth;
- Size and age-gender composition;
- Generations of urban residents;
- Aboriginal Group composition (First Nations, Métis, Inuit); and,
- Socio-economic composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rapid growth at beginning; differentials between past &amp; recent growth; significant increases in absolute numbers over 1981-96</td>
<td>Natural increase is a major component, accounts for at least practically half of growth in prairie cities</td>
<td>At Least 40,000</td>
<td>Winnipeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally highest growth at beginning; some cities differentials over time, and ‘81-'96 increases less pronounced; recent high growth</td>
<td>Both natural increase and net in-migration contributors to growth</td>
<td>At Least 40,000</td>
<td>Edmonton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing and continued growth – some cities with recent high growth</td>
<td>Ethnic mobility accounts for at least 80% of growth; negative net migration (net outflow of migrants)</td>
<td>At Least 40,000</td>
<td>Vancouver</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

M.J. Norris and S. Clatworthy, June, 2010
Implications of long-term growth patterns, components and size of Aboriginal populations in major urban areas

Cities with long established and large Aboriginal populations reflecting significant past growth, like Winnipeg, perhaps more likely to have:

- Third, fourth successive generations of urban residents: born & raised in city
- Urban Aboriginal community/neighborhood organizations, services, infrastructure
- Reduced migration to/from reserves as urban Aboriginal communities develop
- Programming requirements for older, as well as younger, generations

Urban areas experiencing more recent growth and gains of Aboriginal populations through migration perhaps more likely to have:

- Newcomers from non-urban Aboriginal communities (Reserves; settlements)
- Requirements for infrastructure, service delivery, housing
- Ongoing migration to/from communities of origin

In case of smaller (non-CMA) cities - continued long-term net out-migration may reflect less availability for new infrastructure, services, organizational capacity

M.J. Norris and S. Clatworthy, June, 2010
Implications of components of growth for Aboriginal populations in major urban areas

Migration: apart from direct impact of net gain or loss of migrants:
- Indirect effects on urban population growth through natural increase due to impact on age-gender composition from influx of youth, young adult migrants
- Effects of “Churn” high rates in / out migration and residential mobility
- Implications needs / services of young families (e.g. housing, health, education)

Ethnic mobility: factors/consequences for population growth and composition:
- Regional variations in Aboriginal origin /identity populations; cultural, historical, political
- Earlier generations of migrants to cities indicating their Aboriginal identity at a later time (e.g. 1986 to 2001)
- Could shape demographic and socio-economic composition and trends of Aboriginal populations in different cities - implications for interpretation:

“High rates of change in ethnic affiliation can affect not only the size of a population but also its composition, particularly if the socio-demographic characteristics (e.g. educational attainment, employment earnings, family size) of the pool of ethnic drifters are markedly different from those of the base population”. (Guimond, Robitaille and Senécal, 2009)

First Nation, Inuit, Métis composition of different urban populations
- Variations in composition, levels and trends of urbanization outcomes of different processes of growth (e.g. reinstatements - 1985 legislative changes to Indian Act)

M.J. Norris and S. Clatworthy, June, 2010
Conclusion and considerations

Patterns and trends of Aboriginal urbanization and migration over past 50 years still hold considerable relevance for the characteristics and state of Aboriginal populations in urban areas today, including UAS cities.

For cities across Canada this analysis suggests not only has urban Aboriginal population growth occurred at varying rates among different urban areas, but that growth among these urban areas has also resulted from different processes.

Typology of urban Aboriginal populations:

Identifies different patterns and processes shaping growth across different cities.

Could serve to help better interpret /understand effects of various components (e.g. ethnic mobility) on Aboriginal populations in different cities in relation to:

- composition and trends in socio-economic and demographic characteristics;
  implications for needs and services of Aboriginal populations

Could be extended to incorporate other dimensions:

- age-gender structure, generations of urban residents; Aboriginal group (First Nation, Métis, Inuit) composition; socio-economic characteristics and trends

M.J. Norris and S. Clatworthy, June, 2010
References

- Clatworthy, S.J. 1994 The Migration and Mobility Patterns of Canada’s Aboriginal Populations, INAC.
References, continued

- Sharzer, Stephen. “Native People: Some Issues” in Commission on Equality,…
- Statistics Canada, 1971 Census of Canada, Ethnic groups, Catalogue no. 92-723 Volume 1 – Part: 3
For More Information

Mary Jane Norris  
E-mail: mjjnorris@videotron.ca

Stewart Clatworthy  
E-mail: sclat@mts.net