

The Métis in the 21st Century Conference

June 18-20, 2003

Saskatoon

Day 3 – Tape 1

Start Clip: 00:10:36:21

Andy Siggner: The next chart actually starts to look at the current data. As I just mentioned, there were about 1.3 million people who reported at least one Aboriginal ancestor. That meant they could have said anything in combination, but they would have had to have said at least a Métis response or a North American Indian and/or Inuit response to that question. The count of people reporting an Aboriginal identity—that is, they said, “I am Aboriginal,” and then they listed, checked one of the three boxes, North American Indian, Métis, Inuit, was roughly 976,000. And for those of you who have the binder, all of these slides are in there, so you don’t have to write down every number you see. And I’m hoping the organizers will somehow make this available in, in some way. The North American Indian count was about 609,000 and the Métis count this time was 292,000. And we’ll talk about the growth of that population in a minute. There were 45,000 who said they were Inuit, and then there were multiple responses. And we actually, there were only about 5, 6, 6,000 or so multiple responses, but we also add in those people who say they have registered Indian status but no Aboriginal identity, or they have band membership and they have no Aboriginal identity. So there’s about another twenty-five or so thousand that said that, so they’re also included in the identity population count.

Let’s, this, this looks at the growth of the Aboriginal population from 1996 to 2001, and as you can see, the demographic story here is the Métis population growing by 43% in five years. That’s huge demographically speaking. And so we’ll talk a little bit about why that has happened, but certainly you’re aware of a number of events that have been affecting Métis, the Métis population. And we’ll look at their fertility in a moment because fertility is not explaining all of this. And while the Métis population has a high

fertility rate, this is births per, per woman, it's called the total fertility rate. This is based on a colleague of mine, recently, who used census data to tease out the fertility rates of each of the Aboriginal groups. As well as, we have the Canadian rate there, just as a benchmark, but you can see the Métis birthrate at between the '96 -2001 period was averaged at 2, 2.15 births per, per woman, about 50 % higher than the Canadian rate. But it has been, in fact, more or less declining in the last ten or fifteen years, as has the Inuit, and as has the Indian population birthrates. So, while it's high, it is declining.

So, and in fact, to, to account for a growth of the population—which I'll take you folks, no, not yet—the growth of the population of 43 %. There's, there's no way demographically. The maximum growth rate that demographers think is theoretically possible is five and a half percent per year. The Métis population between 1996 and 2001 was growing at 7% per year, so what's going on here? Well, if you look around the room, I did a little, a little check on how many, first of all, the overall growth was about 92,000 people between 2000, and between '96 and 2001, 90,000 people increased in the Métis population. There are only about 80,000 Métis women in the childbearing ages. So that's a lot of births in five years, so that's not what is explaining this. People are changing their ethnic or their identity affiliations from one census to the next. People are, are suddenly identifying where they haven't maybe identified before. That's the conclusion we came to. Let me show you why.

In this chart—I gotta do this sort of one, one graph at a time. What I've done here in this chart is I looked at five-year age cohorts. I'm gonna turn you guys into demographers. Demographers love looking at age groups and how they age over time. So this is looking at the five-year age cohorts, '96 to 2001. So what should happen if, if once a cohort is born and the population isn't, isn't affected by external migration from other countries, which the Aboriginal population isn't. It's very minor change due to immigration and emigration. Population could only, should only change by fertility and mortality, which means that once a cohort is born, the only thing that should happen to it is it should decline over time, because there's,

there's nothing else to increase that population, fertility already having happened, right? So what you would expect that once a given age group is born, that it should decline by, over the next five years.

Well, let's see what happens in certain groups. I hope this works. Yeah. This is the registered or status Indian growth in the cohorts. We get a bit of growth in the younger age groups, probably due to late reporting of births to the register. That's a whole other issue I won't bore you with today. But essentially it's behaving reasonably normally. Most of the age groups are, in fact, below zero growth. That means they've declined in the five years. There's a little bit of increase in the older age groups, might be some left over C-31s who are gaining status, etc., and now are declaring themselves. Let's look at the next one. This is the Inuit population. Again, a fairly closed population looking like the registered Indians. So basically it's, most of the cohorts are declining over time. But look at the Métis. This is, this is the Métis population, where you have a growth in the cohort, which should be declining—that is, being less than 0% over time—growing at between 20 and 30+% in five years, so people are clearly, there's a, either our coverage of census has improved a lot, which it may have done with the Métis population, especially given the interest in the data for the Aboriginal peoples survey, where we had a Métis supplementary survey, which I'm sure many of you know about, but I don't think improving coverage would have covered this kind of growth. So it suggests that people are, in fact, declaring themselves from, differently than what they did in the last census.

End Clip: 00:17:32:13