INTRODUCTION

ABORIGINAL POPULATIONS: SOCIAL, DEMOGRAPHIC, AND EPIDEMIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

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In this collection, we attempt to provide an up-to-date account of the social demography of the Canadian Aboriginal population based on historical and recent data, including information from the 2006 Census. Our main goals are as follows: (1) to review and extend the existing literature on the social demography of Aboriginal peoples in Canada so as to identify major demographic, sociological, and health trends in this population; (2) to examine how the Aboriginal population has been changing; (3) to point to relevant research and policies that might be required to meet the challenges Aboriginal peoples are likely to face over the course of the twenty-first century; (4) to present comparative selected research on Aboriginal peoples, including those of Australia, New Zealand, the United States, the Russian Federation, and Scandinavian countries.

DATA AND CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Much of what is known about the social demography of Aboriginal peoples has been derived from Canadian censuses. Many of the works presented in this book rely on this important source. While censuses represent the most complete and consistent set of data concerning the Aboriginal peoples, it

must be mentioned that such data have some limitations. For example, some Indian reserves refused to participate in various censuses, and in other cases a particular census was interrupted before completion. In 2006, there were 22 incompletely enumerated reserves, down from 30 in 2001 and 77 in 1996 (Gionet, 2008a). Another complexity inherent in the census data pertains to changes introduced over the years in defining Aboriginality in the census and the consequent difficulty in establishing who is an Aboriginal. In all censuses, except that of 1891, the Aboriginal population was counted through a question on ethnic origin, ancestry, or race. As a way to cover ambiguities arising out of potential inconsistencies with these practices, since 1996 the census has included questions on both identity (i.e., self-identity with respect to which group one identifies as being a member) as well as ancestry (i.e., ethnic origin). Since the 1986 Census, there has been a question included on multiple ethnic origins, allowing respondents to state more than one origin. Changes in the definition and methods of enumeration between censuses have introduced discontinuities in the time series that are difficult to explain.

These changes in the Canadian census mean that there are now different ways to count Aboriginals (i.e., Aboriginal identity; member of an Indian band/First Nation; Registered or Treaty Indian; and ethnic origin, including Aboriginal ancestries). Depending on which definition one uses, the numbers can vary considerably. In many statistical analyses, investigators focus on the Aboriginal identity variable alone, that is, on individuals who identify themselves as belonging to one or more of the following groups: North American Indian, Métis, or Inuit; Treaty Indian or Registered Indian as defined by the Indian Act; or members of an Indian band or First Nation. According to the 2006 Census, the Aboriginal identity population numbered 1,172,790, of which 698,025 were First Nations people, 389,780 were Métis, and 50,485 were Inuit. An additional 34,500 included multiple and other Aboriginal responses (i.e., persons who reported more than one Aboriginal identity group and those who reported being a Registered Indian and/or band member without reporting an Aboriginal identity).

Closely linked to these changes is the phenomenon of "ethnic mobility." In this introduction we limit ourselves to a description of the essential features of this concept, leaving the bulk of the details to the authors in this volume who concern themselves with this topic (see the chapters by Romaniuk; Guimond, Robitaille, & Senécal; Goldmann & Delic; and

Andersen). This term, ethnic mobility, refers to the tendency of persons to shift their identification from one ethnic category to another, such that when the question on ethnic identification in a census is observed over successive periods, there is either a decline or increase in the numbers of individuals who declare a given ethnic identity. Between 1986 and 2006, the Aboriginal identity population grew from 464,655 to 1,172,790, for an annual average rate of growth of 7.62% over this period. This large growth cannot be attributed to natural increase alone (excess of births over deaths), nor net international migration; therefore, ethnic mobility must be a key underlying factor.

An important sociological question is what determines ethnic mobility. Intermarriage is clearly important. Increased rates of exogamy among Aboriginals over time must account for a growing number of descendants of mixed Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal unions, many of whom identify with an Aboriginal group. Other sociological factors may come into play. There is now a renewed sense of pride in Aboriginality. Undoubtedly, this has likely stimulated a growing number of Canadians, perhaps even those with distant Aboriginal roots, to declare an Aboriginal identity in the census. Legalistic changes affecting First Nations persons have also contributed to the growth of the Aboriginal population. In particular, the passage of Bill C-31 in 1985 has allowed the reinstatement of First Nations women who had lost their Registered Indian status as a result of marriage to a non-Aboriginal man.

Some of the works in this volume consider the total Aboriginal population as the focus of analysis while others are based on one or more specific Aboriginal subgroup. In this context, throughout the chapters, the reader will come across the term "Aboriginal peoples," "indigenous peoples," and "First Peoples" as descriptors of this population. While desirable, the authors could not always separate the Aboriginal population into its component subgroups because of lack of access to the appropriate data at a lower level of aggregation.

The Aboriginal population of Canada comprises three major subgroups: North American Indians, Métis, and Inuit. The North American Indians (also referred to as First Nations) consist of "Registered Indians," or Status Indians (legally recognized under the Indian Act) and "non-Registered Indians," or non-Status Indians. Members of the latter subgroup are not entitled to be registered under the Indian Act but do self-identify as North

American Indian. The Métis are descendants of mixed couples formed when European explorers had children with Aboriginal women. A significant proportion of those descendants integrated neither in the Indian group nor in the non-Aboriginal group and instead developed their own cultural identity. The Inuit includes populations originating from the Arctic region and thus remains highly isolated from mainstream Canada.

ANALYTICAL APPROACH

Of concerns to this volume are the dichotomies of macro versus micro and quantitative versus qualitative in regard to level and type of analysis. Some social science disciplines give preference to the micro and qualitative approaches (for instance, anthropologists mostly study small groups and make inferences about larger universes—cultural areas, ethnicity, nation). In many of the other social sciences—more notably economics and demography—analytical emphasis is often on the macro level (i.e., population level). To a large extent, this orientation is facilitated by the availability of huge amounts of statistical data on populations (e.g., census, large sample surveys). The predominant approach of this book is macro; therefore, most of the studies are confined to major subdivisions, such as provinces, rural versus urban, and ethnic categories (e.g., Amerindian, Status and non-Status, Métis and Inuit, etc.) We do not see this as a weakness. The authors are very clear in their specification of the underlying social demographic *processes* and *mechanisms* that are assumed responsible for observed phenomena reflected in the statistical findings. Consequently, inferences are grounded in theory consistent with the established literature, thus helping to minimize the ecological fallacy—i.e., the drawing of false inferences about lower level (e.g., individual) processes from aggregate level correlations. This potential problem is non-existent in those works in this volume that are based on individual-level data (taken from either surveys or censuses) and properly aggregated to the population or group level. (This is a common approach in the sciences, which is also adopted by major statistical organizations such as Statistics Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada before their publications are released in the public domain.)

In a number of cases, authors present evidence based on small groups and communities. For example, the chapter on counting Aboriginals through censuses by Goldmann and Delic discusses historical cases of small area Aboriginal populations; Chandler's study on Aboriginal suicide

reveals interesting insights owing to the stratification of Aboriginal groups (reserves) according to the degree to which they preserve traditional values; Romaniuk reports on the fertility increase during the early stage of modernization among the James Bay Indians based on a 1968 survey of this group.

DEMOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES

After a long period of depopulation that lasted almost three centuries following the arrival of Europeans, the Aboriginal population of Canada reached its nadir of about 100,000 inhabitants by the turn of the twentieth century, at which time a slow journey toward demographic recovery began. But it was only after the end of World War II, and especially as of the 1970s, that Canadian Aboriginals witnessed major population growth and significant improvements in the area of medical services and education in a context of rapid economic growth in the country. Aboriginal people underwent what demographers call a demographic transition, that is, a shift in reproductive patterns and mortality from a traditional high regime to an eventual modern situation characterized by reduced fertility and mortality rates. Even though the Aboriginal population is still trailing in both these demographic dimensions in comparison to the nation, eventual completion of the demographic transition is well underway.

Declines in birth and death rates are by no means the only changes of wide importance. Contemporary Aboriginal people are witnessing changes in other aspects of their demography. These include later age at entry into sexual unions for women; increased rates of cohabitation and single parenting; steady growth of the elderly population notwithstanding a high percentage of Aboriginal youth (due to high fertility in the past); increased rates of internal migration, often of a circular nature between reserves and cities; and the growth of urban Aboriginal populations. All of these trends signal challenges and opportunities for the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.

Anatole Romaniuk's chapter, "Canada's Aboriginal Population: From Encounter of Civilizations to Revival and Growth," examines the long-term demographic history of the Aboriginal peoples. In early history, prior to and during the initial stages of contact with the Europeans, this population experienced a "regime of precarious stationary population," primarily caused by the Europeans having introduced infections to which Aboriginals lacked immunity and thereby raising mortality to very high levels, leading to a protracted period of depopulation. This was followed by demographic

recovery starting at around 1900 as the epidemics receded due to antivirus inoculations and reduced death rates, the rise in fertility associated with early modernization as traditional fertility-inhibiting factors (e.g., breast-feeding) weakened before large-scale adoption of birth control. Romaniuk embarks on an elaborate exploration of the anthropological, medical, economic, social, and political contexts underlying these historical changes. In doing so, he presents a version of demographic transition theory that is more in tune with Aboriginal historical experience, departing in several respects from the classical version of transition theory. While taking stock of the past, Romaniuk's analysis also delves into the possible future and speculates on the kinds of demographically driven policy issues regarding Canadian Aboriginal population over the twenty-first century. The author sees significant room for improving the "demographic quality" of the Aboriginal population through the enhancement of "human capital"—namely, investments in education, job skills, and health promotion.

Romaniuk concludes that, over the long run, the future of Aboriginal people as an ethnic entity will depend on their fertility rate. For the time being, their childbearing performance is high enough to ensure their sustained growth in numbers. And that is going to last for a while. But in the longer term, Romaniuk sees the prospect of Aboriginal peoples entering a stage of demographic maturity and thus joining the growing number of nations that no longer reproduce themselves as very likely. This raises some important questions for policy analysts to ponder: What will be the place of the First Peoples in twenty-first century Canadian society? How will an expanding and increasingly ethnically diverse population (due to increased immigration) ultimately impact the Aboriginal settlement patterns and treaty rights? Will the emerging new Canada remain fully committed to the special status the First Peoples have enjoyed historically as a distinct society?

The application of concepts of descent and racial/ethnic classification in the census has evolved quite substantially since the early pre- and post-Confederation censuses in the face of changes in immigration and corresponding shifts in the ethnic distribution of the nation. In "Counting Aboriginal Peoples in Canada," Gustave Goldmann and Senada Delic delve into an informative account of the treatment of the Aboriginal question dating as far back as the first census of New France in 1666 by Jean Talon. A variety of terms has been applied when counting the Aboriginal population over the censuses. Witness, for example, the designations of "American

Indian" and "Native Indian." The Métis population was at one time referred to as "Half-breeds," and the Inuit as "Eskimo." As well, the classifications of subgroups and the application of descent rules in the censuses have not been uniform. As a case in point, although the ethnic origin of the European population was determined along patrilineal lines for most censuses between 1871 and 1971, the rules for descent for the Aboriginal population have varied among tribes between matrilineal and patrilinial affiliation.

To arrive at some understanding of the possible demographic future of a population, demographers often rely on population projections. Demographer Ravi Verma, in his "Population Projections for the Aboriginal Population in Canada: A Review of Past, Present, and Future Prospects, 1991 to 2017," undertakes a careful review of several population projections of the Aboriginal population and its main subgroups—Registered Indians, Métis, and Inuit. As Verma explains, usually, evaluation of projection results is done by *ex-post facto* examination, whereby the analyst checks the accuracy of projected population numbers against the numbers observed by age and sex in the census taken at a later date in relation to the base year of the projection. Verma applies this approach in his investigation. Verma concludes that there is much uncertainty in the projected population figures for the total Aboriginal population because some of this growth may have resulted from changes in reporting patterns of Aboriginal identity—namely, ethnic mobility. This remains the most difficult and elusive factor in forecasting the future Aboriginal population, according to Verma.

To what extent the inaccuracy in projections may have affected the programs that these projections were purported to serve is difficult to say. Although not necessarily precise, population projections, in combination with other variables, may be useful in planning for the future in a constantly changing world. Stated differently, population forecasts and projections may be viewed as part of the "anticipatory management" toolbox of government bureaucracy. That it is not to say that any projection is acceptable. The methodology, and, even more importantly, the assumptions that form the base of the projections, must be sound in order to enhance the credibility of the results.

According to Eric Guimond, Norbert Robitaille, and Sacha Senécal in their "Another Look at Definitions and Growth of Aboriginal Populations in Canada," Aboriginal affiliation is not necessarily permanent and is not automatically transferred to the next generation. As a consequence, group

boundaries are becoming increasingly fuzzy, and statistical definitions of Aboriginal populations in Canada are increasingly divergent with respect to the related population counts. Ethnic mobility is the main component of the recent demographic explosion of North American Indian and Métis populations. Therefore, excluding ethnic mobility from the analytical framework of the demography of Aboriginal populations prevents an accurate understanding of Aboriginality.

Stewart Clatworthy and Mary Jane Norris examine another important social demographic topic concerning Canadian Aboriginal population. In their chapter on "Aboriginal Mobility and Migration in Canada: Patterns, Trends, and Implications, 1971 to 2006," it is noted that a commonly held view in the literature is that there has been a mass exodus by First Nations people away from reserves in favour of cities. A movement of this nature did take place shortly after World War II that continued through the 1960s and the 1970s; however, this type of movement has leveled off considerably since the 1980s. Recent statistical evidence, including the data from the 2006 Census is consistent with this (see also Taylor & Bell, 2004, for a similar situation for Australia, New Zealand, and the United States). When Clatworthy and Norris compared different combinations of origin and destination settlement areas for the Registered Indians (i.e., reserves, rural, urban non-Census Metropolitan Areas, urban Census Metropolitan Areas) with respect to in-, out- and net migration flows, they found that the settlement area of major growth was not urban centres but reserve communities.

Unlike other Aboriginal groups, those registered under the Indian Act have certain rights and benefits, especially if they live on reserves, including taxation exemptions, access to funding for housing and post-secondary education, as well as land and treaty rights. Aboriginal populations living off-reserve, including those in Métis and Inuit communities, do not have legal access to these rights and benefits. Therefore, the varying landscape of rights and benefits that exists between on- and off-reserve communities and between those Registered and non-Registered is important to understanding the recent pattern of migration among the different Aboriginal groups in Canada.

Clatworthy and Norris also find that there is a high level of circular migration among First Nations to and from reserves. Often, this is dictated by the variable nature of seasonal labour outside the reserve areas, as well as by the proximity of many reserve communities to cities, which reduces

the costs of relocation for migrants. Social networks play a part in this by facilitating movement and resettlement of migrants; the presence of family and friends in the city and on reserve promotes the intensification of circular migration between the reserve and the city (Denton, 1972).

As well, there is an unusually strong tendency among Aboriginals to move residentially within the city. This phenomenon is often associated with poor housing, substandard and unsafe neighbourhood conditions, and poverty. An unfortunate outcome of this type of frequent mobility for Aboriginals is that, for the children, this often results in an unstable education experience, poor grades, and high dropout rates.

Many social programs that provide services to urban Aboriginals, such as health care, family support and counselling, and education, are designed on a neighbourhood basis to ensure a co-ordinated response to multi-faceted family and individual needs. Frequent moves result in the disruption of services provision to families. High needs families would be particularly disadvantaged by this, most especially lone female parents with children. These types of families are among the most mobile and yet often in the most need for assistance. The frequent movement of Aboriginals may serve to limit opportunities for individuals and their families to establish meaningful and lasting social relationships within both the Aboriginal and broader communities. In this sense, high frequency of moving may translate into high levels of social isolation and a barrier to social cohesion in the urban Aboriginal communities and neighbourhoods.

EPIDEMIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

We can identify four important features pertaining to Aboriginals health and mortality conditions. First, the Aboriginal peoples find themselves in the midst of an epidemiological transition, a situation opposite to that of advanced societies, which have long completed this transition (Omran, 1971; Olshansky & Ault, 1986). Second, infectious and parasitic diseases associated with poverty maintain a pernicious grip on Aboriginal populations; all the while, a new wave of diseases associated with socio-economic progress—i.e., the degenerative diseases, including cancer and cardiovascular ailments—is growing in prominence. Third, Aboriginal death rates exceed those of non-Aboriginal Canadians by a notable margin. Consequently, Aboriginal life expectancy lags well behind that of others in Canada.
A fourth feature is the relatively high incidence of premature death by

traumatic causes to Aboriginal Canadians (injuries and poisonings), these being of two types: intended (i.e., suicide and homicide) and unintended (i.e., motor vehicle accidents and other forms of injuries).

The root causes of high death rates among Aboriginals are social, which means that many of the deaths (especially to infants and children) are preventable (Gracey & King, 2009; King, Smith, & Gracey, 2009; Waldram, Herring, & Young, 2006; Adelson, 2005; Wilkinson, 2005; Marmot & Wilkinson, 2003). Public programs and policies must be tailored specifically to eliminate the social conditions that promote high death rates. Much personal suffering could be eliminated through programs tailored at reducing—and hopefully eliminating—personal conflict and aggression within communities. This would have the desirable effect of reducing personal trauma and the incidence of suicide, homicide, and injuries. Programs must also be directed at lifestyle modification to reduce the incidence of morbidities closely connected with health eroding behaviours (e.g., alcoholism, tobacco use, physical inactivity, poor diet, etc.).

In "Alcoholism and Other Social Problems in Canadian Aboriginal Communities: Policy Alternatives and Implications for Social Action," Paul Whitehead and Brenda Kobayashi delve specifically into the problem of alcohol in First Nations communities, which these authors consider to be the leading epidemiological problem for this population. Much of their focus is on what types of interventions are necessary to combat this long-standing problem. In developing their argument, the authors contrast the dominant view exemplified in the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* with a more action-oriented perspective that emphasizes proximate causes of the problem rather than distant determinants such as colonialism and racism (which they see as embodying more of a rhetorical approach that doesn't present real solutions). Their "proximate causes model" places emphasis on the implementation of solutions that, on the whole, would have a more immediate effect in engendering positive change. The key intervention is to reduce access to alcohol, to reduce consumption as much as possible. According to the research cited by Whitehead and Kobayashi, there is now sufficient empirical proof for the efficacy of this proximate approach as validated by the experiences of many international settings and also across some Aboriginal communities. The alternative of doing nothing is clearly unacceptable.

The problem of suicide among Aboriginals is addressed by Michael Chandler in his chapter, "Cultural Continuity and the Social-Emotional Well-Being of First Nations Youth." Suicide is a pernicious problem that has plagued Aboriginal communities in Canada and in other parts of the world, such as in Australia and the United States (Trovato, 2001). The suicide problem is particularly pronounced among the youth. In Canada, First Nations youth suicide rates are five to seven times higher than among non-Aboriginal youth. Among Inuit youth, suicide rates are among the highest in the world, at 11 times the national average (Health Canada, 2008).

From a collectivist perspective, the incidence of suicide can be viewed as a mirror of the socio-emotional health of a community. This is a central assumption of Chandler's chapter. Grounded on the idea of "cultural continuity," Chandler's conceptualization of the problem allows for a clear understanding of the "why" aspect of the suicide problem. On the basis of his observations of British Columbia First Nations communities, Chandler determined that variations in communities' degree of cultural continuity—that is, a community's ability to maintain sameness (i.e., Aboriginal culture rooted in established traditions) all the while embracing positive change—explains community differences in suicide incidence. In settlements with higher levels of cultural continuity, individuals are firmly connected to others and the community at large. In such contexts, the youth are less likely to experience confusion about who they are, and they are sheltered from psycho-emotional conflict that can often lead to suicide.

The challenge to overcome this social calamity is to find and then implement suitable interventions. The usual top-down approach, of outsiders telling Aboriginals what to do, will most certainly not prove successful, according to Chandler, as most Aboriginals would find this approach demeaning. A "lateral transfer" approach is advocated, whereby Aboriginals from successful communities that have high levels of cultural continuity would pass on their knowledge to those communities in need of help.

Malcolm King approaches the broader question of Aboriginal health. In his chapter, "Addressing the Disparities in Aboriginal Health through Social Determinants Research," King reiterates the point that, for the most part, health problems in a population emanate from conditions in the social environment of the individual and the community. This perspective to the investigation of health inequities is often referred to as the "social

determinants of health" approach. King opines that increased government spending on health care would do little to eliminate health disparities by race, ethnicity, or social class. He advocates the importance of reducing unemployment and poverty and improving access to higher education to help improve the health of disadvantaged groups such as Aboriginals. The epidemiological literature has firmly established that persons with higher levels of education enjoy lower risk of premature mortality as compared to those who have low education, and that the more socio-economically privileged do better in terms of physical and mental health (Kunitz, 2007; Wilkinson, 2005; Marmot & Wilkinson, 2003; Berkman & Kawachi, 2000).

If the health deficit associated with being Aboriginal were to be eliminated, there would be approximately 20,000 fewer deaths annually in the Aboriginal population, according to King. Health researchers should be more actively involved in promoting this message to government officials and to the public at large. In particular, education underachievement is an important issue in matters of health and longevity. Why then, asks King, should we not spend more resources with the goal of reducing educational disparities?

Regions that comprise the circumpolar North are predominantly inhabited by indigenous peoples. Given the paucity of data on this part of the world, T. Kue Young's chapter on "North-North and North-South Disparities: A Circumpolar Perspective" is a welcome addition to the literature. His study helps to fill our knowledge gap concerning the health of Aboriginal peoples of the circumpolar North and health disparities therein. The circumpolar North encompasses several countries, including Canada, United States (Alaska), Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Russian Federation. Young examines 27 such regions of the circumpolar North in regard to various population health indicators, including infant mortality, perinatal mortality, life expectancy, incidence of tuberculosis, and cause-specific mortality rate. His main objective is to ascertain whether the people of "the North" have worse or better health than people in "the South," and whether there are significant health disparities among Nordic Peoples themselves. Statistical comparisons are made between northern regions and the nation-states these regions are part of (e.g., northern territories of Canada vs. Canada; Alaska vs. USA, etc.), and among the northern regions themselves. Young's main conclusion is that substantial disparities do exist. With regard to differences between the populations of the North and the larger

populations to which they belong (e.g., Inuit in the Arctic vs. Canada as a whole), two extreme situations are identified. In Scandinavia, the northern regions are almost indistinguishable from the country-at-large in terms of most health indicators. At the opposite end are the cases of Greenland and the northern territories of Canada, especially Nunavut, where the disparities with Denmark and Canada, respectively, are substantial. Inequalities in health are correlated with regional differences in education levels and other social factors, whereas variables such as health care expenditures per capita are found to be relatively unimportant. Thus, Young's results reinforce the idea that social determinants are substantially important in the explanation of health disparities across the populations of the circumpolar North.

SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Scholars are divided on the question of what causes social change. Some social scientists affirm that major transformations in society often result from the effects of long-term demographic change; others assert that social change emanates from technological developments that have the effect of altering how people lead their lives. One body of research in this area of sociological study concerns itself with the relationship of long-term mortality declines in society and their impacts on the family institution. On this theme, Uhlenberg (1980: 313) has written that many of the most significant changes in the American family over the course of the twentieth century (e.g., the changing status of children, the increasing independence of the nuclear family, the virtual disappearance of orphanages and foundling homes, the rise in societal support of the elderly, the decline in fertility, and the rise in divorce) cannot be adequately understood without clear recognition of the profound changes (i.e., declines) that have occurred in death rates. Since the family is one of the most important social groups in which an individual has membership and in which close relationships exist, it is precisely in the family sphere that we should expect death to have its greatest impact. The loss of a parent, a child, a sibling, or a spouse disrupts established family patterns and requires readjustment. As the experience of losing intimate family members recedes from being a pervasive aspect of life for individuals (in the past) to a rare event (in the present), there develops changes in family structure and relationships (Uhlenberg, 1980).

For Canada's Aboriginal peoples the transition from a high to a low mortality regime should imply that on average parents and their children

live longer, and, as compared to earlier generations, the family should be a more enduring entity because, in the lower mortality regime of the present, the frequency with which a person witnesses the premature death of a loved one is greatly diminished. Children would therefore have access to a larger pool of immediate and extended family members. In a low mortality context, most fathers and mothers would see their progeny reach adulthood, and there would be greater overlap in the amount of years lived across the generations. Under a high mortality regime, however, family life is frequently disrupted by death, a large proportion of children are orphaned, and many parents experience the loss of their infants.

These ideas serve the basis of Frank Trovato's study of "Death and the Family: A Half Century of Mortality Change in the Registered Indian Population of Canada as Reflected in Periodic Life Tables." Through a life table analysis covering roughly the second half of the twentieth century, Trovato outlines how survival probabilities for this population have improved and explores the interconnectedness of mortality decline with various types of family dynamics involving children and parents. For instance, since the early 1950s, the probability of a Registered Indian child becoming orphaned has dropped significantly; a greater number of First Nations children today live to celebrate their twentieth birthday in the presence of both his/her parents; and more First Nations children have all four grandparents alive. Trovato's analysis gives cautious optimism for the future of First Nations children and their families, as increased survival probabilities set the stage for a more enduring family context. However, more research is clearly needed if we are to gain a more complete understanding of the psycho-emotional correlates of mortality decline and other demographic changes.

As already noted in regard to the Aboriginal population of Canada, ethnic mobility is now recognized as a real phenomenon and not just the consequence of data errors. Notwithstanding the growing number of demographic investigations in this area, few scholars have looked at this concept critically. Chris Andersen, in his study "Ethnic or Categorical Mobility? Challenging Conventional Demographic Explanations of Métis Population Growth," presents a critical interpretation of this concept with special reference to the case of the Métis population. He distinguishes between population change due to ethnic mobility, as understood in the demographic sense, and change due to what he calls "categorical mobility." The former

refers to changes in respondents' perceptions of census classification boundaries while the latter has to do with the dichotomy of "primordialism" versus "constructivism." Primordialism is consistent with a more traditional (historical) conception of ethnicity, one based on biological rules of descent (i.e., tracing one's ethnic origin through one's male ancestor). Constructivism is diametrically opposed to this view. It is the postmodernist alternative of the conceptualization of identity, presented as a constantly modifiable (i.e., ahistorical) perception of belongingness that the individual negotiates through life depending on his/her changing circumstances.

For Andersen, sustaining an argument in favour of a primordialist notion of ethnic mobility requires a rigidly positivistic understanding of indigenous identities, which is wholly at odds with what we know about how these identities have been shaped in the heat of social and political developments in Canada. The very idea of ethnic mobility in the primordialist sense requires a philosophical commitment to the categorical stability of the census category of ethnicity (e.g., Métis) that it neither possesses nor deserves. According to Andersen, it is not necessarily peoples' ethnicity that is changing in Canadian society, but their perception of categorical boundaries and where they might fit themselves into them.

Clearly, the occurrence of ethnic mobility from census to census makes it difficult to assess real trends in the Aboriginal population because "ethnic drifters" may not be at all representative of the Aboriginal population in regard to socio-economic characteristics. They may have higher levels of education and income and thus artificially inflate the quality of life indicators observed for the Aboriginal peoples as a whole. This could potentially lead to incorrect conclusions on the state of socio-economic improvements in the Aboriginal populations, and possibly lead to wrong policies (e.g., less assistance needed). This raises an important question for further research: Are the social economic characteristics of ethnic drifters different than those of the Aboriginal population in general?

Evelyn Peters, Roger Maaka, and Ron Laliberté explore the variegated nature of Aboriginal identity in their study, "'I'm Sweating with Cree Culture not Saulteaux Culture': Urban Aboriginal Cultural Identities," by examining the concept of identity from the perspective of three dimensions: (1) the theoretica/conceptual; (2) the administrative (i.e., census practices); and (3) the empirical (how the Aboriginal person actually defines him or herself in relation to the larger ethnic or cultural subgroup). At the theoretical level,

the distinction is made between the essentialist and the social constructionist perspectives. The former implies there is a stable core of the self with respect to common origin on the one hand and identity on the other. The latter perspective considers identity as a social construction (constructivist perspective). For these authors, this distinction proved useful in sorting out responses obtained in their survey of Aboriginals in the city of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. A substantial proportion of respondents identify themselves not in the generic sense of Aboriginal identity (e.g., "Indian" or "First Nations") but rather as being part of a specific subgroup (e.g., Cree, Ojibwey, Dene, etc.). This suggests that the average person on the street is more likely to identify himself with a specific tribal or ethnic affiliation that has evolved historically (i.e., primordially) rather than with artificial, socially constructed categories (by census administrators or politicians) of Aboriginalness.

Language is an important component of ethnicity and ethnic identity. The extent to which a population maintains and promotes its language will largely determine continuity of the group. Jim Frideres in "Continuity or Disappearance: Aboriginal Languages in Canada," concerns himself with the relationship of linguistic continuity and structural factors (employment, mobility, education, community size, income, intermarriage) across Aboriginal communities. The broad picture that emerges from his analysis indicates a general regression in the use of Aboriginal language in general, though less so on reserves than off reserve areas. It appears that some tribal Aboriginal languages are slowly disappearing. What is to be done about this problem remains an important question. Some First Nations communities are dealing with this problem by implementing classes to teach their Native mother tongues (e.g., Cree, Inuktitut). In some provinces (e.g., Alberta) Native language classes are being offered at the primary and secondary school levels. Sustained promotion of Native languages in the schools would seem especially important for linguistic continuity and Aboriginalness.

Much of the Aboriginal studies literature emphasizes the problematic features of Aboriginal life and precarious socio-economic conditions. Under this "deficit paradigm" more often than not Aboriginals are characterized as victims besieged by numerous problems and challenges. Over recent years, some scholars have challenged this perspective in light of new evidence concerning the Aboriginal population. They point to the achievement of

significant progress by Aboriginals toward self-government and that at the same time there has been a notable expansion of organizational capacity and socio-economic opportunities among Aboriginals, such that we are now seeing a more assertive and resilient Aboriginal community, with an increasing number of Aboriginals extricating themselves out of poverty and a marginal status (Ponting & Voyageur, 2001; Redding, 2003; Townsend & Wernick, 2008; Castellano, 2008; Jamieson, 2008).

The chapter by Cora J. Voyageur, "The Eagle Has Landed: Optimism among Canada's First Nations Community," exemplifies this new perspective. According to Voyageur, important gains have been made by First Nations, especially in the areas of communal solidarity, mutual trust, co-operative endeavours, collective interests, voluntary help associations, and social and extended family networks. These are important ingredients of "social capital," all of which are based on a deeply ingrained sense of Aboriginal culture and psychology. The First Nations population may be moving away from its "deficit" situation toward gradual socio-economic integration with the rest of Canadian society, at the same time striving to maintain its own cultural identity and traditions. First Nations may be at the cusp of a new stage of social and economic evolution, moving toward a more hopeful future.

All this optimism must be tempered by the reality that there is still a long way to go before socio-economic parity with the general Canadian population is achieved. According to the 2006 Census, there exists a wide post-secondary education deficit for First Nations adults. Only 42% of First Nations people aged 25 to 64 had completed a post-secondary education as compared with 61% of the non-Aboriginal population. In 2006, about 60% of First Nations people in the prime working ages of 25 to 54 were employed, whereas for non-Aboriginals this figure stood at almost 82%. The median income of First Nations people was $14,517, which was about $11,000 lower than the figure for non-Aboriginal Canadians. Again, according to the 2006 Census, among First Nations people living off-reserve, only about 45% owned their homes as compared to 75% among the non-Aboriginal population. Furthermore, First Nations people are more likely to live in crowded homes in need of major repairs.

In considering these statistics it is important to mention that there are important socio-economic variations within the First Nations population based on whether one lives on-reserve or off-reserve, and whether one is Status or non-Status Indian (Gionet, 2008a, 2008b). Undoubtedly,

the elimination of gross disparities in socio-economic conditions between Aboriginal peoples and the rest of Canada remains one of the most important challenges for policy analysts, but just as importantly we must also examine in greater detail disparities *within* the Aboriginal population.

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

The international studies included in this volume pertain to three categories of Aboriginals peoples. The first concerns American Indians, Australian Aborigines, and New Zealand Māoris. These are all indigenous peoples in English-speaking countries that share the common historical experience of colonization and similar (though not identical) socio-economic, demographic, and epidemiological patterns as the Canadian Aboriginals. The second category is the indigenous populations of the circumpolar North, encompassing the Scandinavian countries (i.e., Sami in Norway, Sweden, and Finland) and the Palio/Eskimo of Greenland. The third category is the Aboriginal populations of the Russian North and Siberia.

As is the case with the Registered Indians of Canada, American Indians (and Alaska Natives) have a special relationship with their federal government. The United States Congress has the duty to manage relations with the American Indians, and as such there are standing Senate committees in the Bureau of Indian Affairs and numerous special offices within most federal agencies. C. Matthew Snipp's chapter, "American Indian Education," is a synthetic history of education policies and their effects on the American Indians. American Indians display disadvantages in education attainment. Ironically, the goals embraced by the early assimilationists, which was to spread knowledge about Anglo-American culture through education, was best realized by giving American Indians and Alaska Natives more control over their schooling. According to Snipp, this control has been a significant factor for improved levels of socio-economic success for American Indians.

Similar to First Nations Peoples in Canada, the Australian Aborigines are often viewed as having strong mobility proneness for making frequent temporary moves, that is, movements between locales that are not of a permanent nature that usually involve durations of a few days to several months. According to Sarah Prout in "Interrogating the Image of the 'Wandering Nomad': Indigenous Temporary Mobility Practices in Australia," this type of movement by indigenous people differs radically from the common forms of movement in the general Australian population. For example,

it often involves continual returns to a "home-base" after frequent journeys away. The home-base may be a particular community, town, or settlement. And often, there are two or more home-bases, which are viewed by the individual as an extension of one another. For many indigenous people, short-term mobility in Australia is a perpetual movement between a series of locales within which an individual has family. Thus, this type of mobility involves no particular physical home-base, and "home" for the individual is embedded within a social network of "relatedness" rather than in a specific geographic region or locale. Therefore, the commonly held perception that indigenous people are naturally inclined toward frequent mobility because of an essentially nomadic history and culture is a simplification of reality. In fact, the most pervasive theme that emerges from Prout's analysis is the highly adaptive nature of indigenous mobility practices that is not simply the product of a nomadic predisposition to wander. Many factors drive and shape their movements (not often recorded in the official statistics). These include seasonal variations in availability of bush foods, cultivation of and contestation within familial networks, the advent of various sporting and cultural festivals, the need and/or desire to access social, retail, and recreational services and opportunities, market opportunities, and ceremonial activities.

Nicholas Biddle, John Taylor, and Mandy Yap in "Closing Which Gap? Demographic and Geographic Dilemmas for Indigenous Policy in Australia" address the problem of socio-economic gaps between indigenous and non-indigenous populations in Australia. In his apology to the stolen generations in early 2008, Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd outlined a "new partnership on closing the gap." These targets set for the Australian Aborigines by the prime minister focus on outcomes relative to the non-indigenous Australians in the areas of health, employment, housing, and education—to halve, within a decade, the gaps in literacy, numeracy, employment outcomes and opportunities, and infant mortality rate; and within a generation, to close the large gap in life expectancy between indigenous and non-indigenous people. According to Biddle and colleagues, the full actualization of these targets is hampered by a number of demographic factors, including the geographic isolation of indigenous people in remote Australia, their high fertility rates, and their exceptionally young age structure.

In "From Common Colonization to Internal Segmentation: Rethinking Indigenous Demography in New Zealand," Tahu Kukutai and Ian Pool

identify two conventions in the demography of indigenous populations. First, there is the tendency to focus on the routinized and unreflexive use of identity categories and labels in demographic research on indigenous populations. Second, many studies in this area are focused on patterns at the population (i.e., aggregate group) level. This, according to Kukutai and Pool, may actually obscure the complexity of the indigenous reality at a lower level of analysis (e.g., at the subgroup level). These authors find that there is in fact emerging evidence of significant socio-economic differentiation *within* indigenous populations. The evidence uncovered by these authors for the New Zealand Māori, Australian Aborigines, and North American (Canadian and American Aboriginals) is consistent with this assertion. Thus, we are seeing, in the new millennium, across these Aboriginal populations an emerging form of indigenous socio-economic differentiation. While this in no way implies having to abandon investigations of inter-ethnic differentials, the growing internal diversity within Aboriginal populations challenges researchers to pay greater attention to within-group demographic and socio-economic processes among Aboriginal peoples.

The chapter by Andrey Petrov looks at the indigenous peoples of the Russian North, "Indigenous Minorities and Post-Socialist Transition: A Review of Aboriginal Population Trends in the Russian North." Petrov describes the atypical demographic transition of these populations. Instead of having a fertility rate that decreases over time toward a low mortality level, mortality actually increases toward the level of fertility. Petrov also finds that there is a notable disequilibrium in the numbers of young adult males and females in the age composition of these populations (i.e., substantially fewer males than females). Although higher male mortality and emigration could account for much of this, Petrov asks whether this situation may not reflect negative ethnic mobility among young male adults in this region. By "negative ethnic mobility" Petrov means the tendency for Aboriginals to declare themselves as non-Aboriginal in the census. The extent of negative ethnic mobility in the Russian North radically distinguishes the Rusian North Aboriginals from Australian, New Zealand, Canadian, and American Aboriginal peoples.

FUTURE OUTLOOK AND CHALLENGES

In this closing section, we identify a number of research challenges and policy concerns that we see as especially important for the future of the

Aboriginal peoples over the course of the twenty-first century. The second half of the twentieth century was an eventful period in the history of Canadian Aboriginal peoples. A number of longed-for developments have occurred in unison. Along with exceptional population growth (now over one million), there has been a revival of Aboriginal culture and pride. There have been important gains in education, health, and human capital, and significant strides have been made in the struggle for recognition. These developments herald for the First Peoples a new era of promise for the future.

Social change often arises from complex interconnections across different spheres of the social world. In the demographic sphere, we may mention the near completion of demographic transition for the Aboriginal peoples. Declining fertility and increased longevity now account for unprecedented increases in population aging. The current age structure still comprises a significant proportion of children and youth, but over the course of the twenty-first century there will be a growing proportion of seniors, who will face very different needs than their youthful counterparts. For example, a growing senior population will require not only pension security but also more health care and assistance with disabilities. These eventualities will necessitate proper planning and reassessment of how resources are allocated.

Population renewal in the long term is rooted in the success with which a society promotes adequate rates of childbearing. For the Aboriginal population this is an important aspect of their future. With increased levels of urbanization and socio-economic modernization, societies shift their fertility toward what appears to be a universal norm of smaller families. Unless the Aboriginal peoples are an exception to this apparent societal tendency, their fertility rate will at some point fall to around replacement level or possibly even below replacement (i.e., less than 2.1 children per woman on average). Over the long term, this situation could translate into population decline due to negative natural increase. Unlike the rest of Canada, the Aboriginal population cannot count on immigration as a source of growth. But what may be lost in demographic quantity can be compensated to some extent with gains in demographic quality. Investing in human capital, that is, education, professional training and health, and at the same time strengthening social capital premised on the already existing ethos of co-operation and mutuality among Aboriginals, stand out as effective ways of

ensuring long-term viability of First Nations in the face of a rapidly changing Canadian society.

As noted in several chapters in this volume, ethnic mobility (or ethnic drift) has been responsible for significant population growth among Aboriginals Peoples in Canada over recent years. Demographers and other social scientists interested in the quantification of Aboriginal conditions are faced with the challenge of having to find appropriate means to adequately separate the components of population growth—i.e., fertility, mortality, and migration—from the contribution to population growth due to shifts in self-identification. Proper accounting of population growth into these separate components is especially important for government policies and programs, as well as for the preparation of realistic population forecasts and projections of Aboriginal populations in Canada.

Although the future is always difficult to predict, to some extent the future can be *made* through careful planning and action. This can only be achieved through a solid understanding of the demographic, social, epidemiological, and socio-political processes already underway in the Aboriginal population of Canada. A full understanding and appreciation of the past as well as current conditions is imperative for the formulation of positive change. We have already stated that one of the most important challenges is to improve the socio-economic status of Aboriginal peoples. Perhaps the increasing urbanization of Aboriginal will open up new socio-economic opportunities not readily available on reserves. More than half of the Aboriginal population are residents of urban centres (e.g., 60% of First Nations). Their numbers in urban areas are expected to rise steadily over the course of the twenty-first century. A policy response is needed that looks at the situation of urban Aboriginals and helps make urban areas more welcoming and prosperous for Aboriginals (D'Alesio, 2011). Although historically urban living has not been a panacea for, and may have contributed to, the development of an urban underclass, the time has come to place Aboriginal urbanization at the forefront of the research and policy agenda: How can urbanization help to maximize the socio-economic opportunities of the Aboriginal peoples?

At the same time, an ongoing challenge is how to improve the status of reserves. It is doubtful that the First Peoples can survive for long as a political and cultural distinct entity without reference to a territory (even though a micro-territory). The reserve is the land base where geography, biology,

and culture meet to preserve and perpetuate the Aboriginal ethnos. It is here that Aboriginals can best preserve their traditional identity, customs, and languages. It is from this base that Aboriginals, even those living in urban areas, stand to receive their cultural sustenance.

An issue of some importance concerns the growing diversity of Canada's population and the possible impact this might have on the Aboriginal population. Over the course of the next century, Canada's population will continue to be heavily driven by immigration policies. In the light of the immigration trends of the past half century, this will mean increasing population diversity along racial, ethnic, and linguistic lines. How will this play out in regard to the special status of the Aboriginal peoples as a distinct society?

We are struck by the many similarities among the indigenous populations of Canada, United States, Australia, New Zealand, and circumpolar regions. More cross-national comparative studies are needed to gain a more complete understanding of these similarities and to uncover the differences that may prevail among these different indigenous populations.

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