The Aboriginal Population and the Census
120 Years of Information - 1871 to 1991

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The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of
Statistics Canada.
1. Introduction

The history of census-taking in Canada began in 1666 when Jean Talon conducted the first full enumeration of the colony of New France. However, long before Jean Talon's census the indigenous population of the territory we now know of as Canada maintained approximate counts of their communities through oral tradition. The earliest recorded count of the aboriginal population conducted by the Jesuit missionaries in 1611 also pre-dates the first census. The context for classifying aboriginal origins and for counting the aboriginal population in early Canadian censuses was shaped during the period between the first recorded count and the Report to the Special Committee of the House of Commons prepared by Sir George Simpson in 1857. The evolution of the definitions and nomenclature as it pertains to counting the Aboriginal population is described in detail in an earlier paper, *The Aboriginal Population and the Census: An Evolving Relationship* (Goldmann 1991). That work deals with the pre-confederation attempts at counting Canada's native population and then jumps to the current census. In this paper I attempt to bridge that gap by tracing the collection of data on the aboriginal population from 1871 to 1991.

The primary statistical vehicle for obtaining the counts and characteristics of the subgroups who make up Canadian Society is the census of population. In this context, subgroups includes the Aboriginal population as well as all other ethnic, racial or cultural groups in Canada. It is also true that, with the possible exception of the special Census of the North-West Territories conducted in 1885, and the post-censual survey conducted in 1991, no separate enumeration the Aboriginal population has been produced. Therefore, in order to discuss how the counts of Canada's native communities have evolved since 1871 to the present it is appropriate to focus on the censuses over that period.

The application of concepts of descendence and racial/ethnic classification of Canadian society has evolved over the period between 1871 to 1991 according to the legislative and social imperatives of the day. Furthermore, the classification of sub-groups and the application of descent rules were not uniform for all groups in society. For instance, 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 varied from tribal to matrilineal to patrilineal. The impact of these differences on the reported counts has been the source of debate and discussion among Aboriginal communities, Federal departments and agencies and social scientists. This paper will attempt to shed some light on the debate.

The paper begins with a brief description of a census, including how it is conducted, how the content is determined and how the results are presented. Although many documents exist which describe the census in detail (see any of the administrative reports which accompany each census), I assume that few readers of this paper will be entirely familiar with all the terms and concepts that are used. Therefore, specific terminology as it is used to describe the counts and how they are taken, is defined.
in the next section. The definitions are followed by a presentation of the counts of aboriginal people in Canada from 1871 to 1991. The variances, anomalies and discontinuities are highlighted and some explanation is provided of the factors which may have influenced the counts. This is followed by a brief outline of the significant features of each Census, including, where appropriate, the major methodological and definitional changes from the immediately preceding census which were introduced. I conclude with an assessment of some of the factors which may have had an influence on the concepts and definitions and with some questions which may form a future research agenda.

2. Definitions
At present, in Canada, the decennial Census is conducted during the first full year of every decade (i.e. the year 1951, 1961, 1971, etc.). Prior to the repatriation of the Constitution the decennial Census was conducted under that authority of the British North America Act, 1867. More recently it has been conducted under the authority of the Constitution Act, 1982. National quinquennial censuses began in 1956 and have been collected every 10 years from that time (i.e. 1966, 1976 and 1986) under the authority of the Statistics Act.

Until 1971, census data were collected by a trained enumerator who directly interviewed at least one person in every household and soliciting proxy information for the others. This is referred to as 

anvasser collection methodology. Beginning in 1971 self-enumeration was introduced in the Census for most of the population in Canada. This collection methodology relies on the respondent completing the questionnaires. Since consistency, completeness and accuracy are important in a census, the introduction of self-enumeration brought with it a requirement for thorough testing of the collection vehicles as well as the methods for distributing and retrieving the census forms.

Early censuses covered a full range of social, demographic, agricultural and economic themes. They generally included a range of questionnaires (referred to as schedules before 1951) which contained hundreds of questions in total. In fact, the 1941 Census had 8 schedules with a total of 1,128 questions (DBS 1941, 13). With advances in statistical methods, sampling was introduced in an effort to minimize respondent burden and to reduce costs. This entails administering questions to a sample of the population and using statistical techniques known as weighting to attribute the results to the entire population. Ironically, the first application of sampling methodology was in 1941, the largest census.

The collection and processing of census data are extremely complex operations which are very well documented in the administrative reports produced for each census. Therefore, they will not be described here. However, reference will be made to the instructions to the enumerators and, where applicable, to the respondents and coders as well. This is particularly relevant in the discussion of the rules that govern how descent is to be applied in specific instances since they appeared either as
part of the instructions to the enumerators or explanatory notes to the respondents. Hence they are very significant in describing the evolution of concepts and definitions as they apply to data on the aboriginal population.

Clients for information from the census come from every sector of activity. "Their needs are as varied as their interests." (Goldmann 1993) What they have in common is a requirement for information which is geographically detailed or which identifies small population groups that might be missed in a sample survey (i.e. small area data) and which cross-classifies a number of key characteristics, such as age, sex, marital status and ethnic origin. Census data are used in a variety of applications including determining trends in the socio-demographic, economic and social development of the population, assessing the effect of government policies, planning for the needs of communities and locating potential markets for goods and services. To some extent the requirements for the information influence how the data are presented and, in some instances, which data are collected. This is particularly true for data on the Aboriginal population. The requirements of the original Indian Act, 1876 and all its subsequent revisions and The Constitution Act have had considerable impact of the classifications of Aboriginal people in the census. More recently, in addition to assessing the legal and policy requirements, consultations with Aboriginal leaders were conducted prior to the 1986 and 1991 Censuses to determine which categories should be included in the questionnaire.

In counting the Aboriginal population, officials used a variety of terms which reflect the legislation and common understanding at the time of the particular census. Indians have been referred to as North American Indian and Native Indian (North American). They have been further classified by band membership (or lack thereof), tribal affiliation, treaty status, whether they lived on and off reserve and, in more recent censuses, by their status with respect to the Indian Act. The Métis population was referred to as Half-breeds, Breeds and Indian. The Inuit people were referred to either as Inuit or Eskimo.

In all censuses, except 18913, the Aboriginal population was counted through the question on ethnic origin/ancestry/race. The ambiguities of the concept of ethnicity have been addressed by a number of scholars in sociology and anthropology (for some examples, see Ryder 1956; Cohen 1993; Goldscheider 1993; Isajiw 1993; Pryor et al 1992). This issue is further complicated by the tension which exists between the concepts of ancestry and identity. Evidence during the testing of the questions for the 1991 Census suggests that respondents do not necessarily distinguish between the two concepts. In fact, the results of the 1991 Census show that some may have been drawn to respond based on their identity, in spite of the caveats and explanatory notes included with the question. (Pryor et al 1992)

Another factor which complicates how the ethnicity of an individual is determined is the rate of intermarriage between ethnic and racial groups in Canadian society. In the case of marriages
between members of the Aboriginal population and non-Aboriginal the situation is somewhat more complex since "the distinction between Indian and non-Indian is strictly a legal one". (Frideres 1988,11) Before the passage of Bill C-31 (An Act to Amend the Indian Act) in 1985 any Indian woman who married a non-Indian man lost status with respect to the Indian Act for herself and for her off-spring. Conversely, if a non-Indian woman married an Indian man she gained Indian status as did their off-spring. (Frideres 1988, 4) With the passage of Bill C-31 many of these Indian women and their children are eligible to apply to regain their status.

3. The Counts

It is difficult, if not impossible, to present the data on the aboriginal population as a continuous time series from 1871 to the present day. In addition to the methodological and administrative changes discussed in this paper, the capturing of responses to the question on ethnic origin underwent a fundamental transformation in the 1981 Census. From that point in time the question and the data began to reflect more precisely the multi-cultural nature of Canadian society by including multiple responses for ethnic origin. Therefore, the counts of the Aboriginal population are presented in two tables. Table 1 presents counts for each decennial census from 1871 to 1971. Table 2 shows the counts for single and multiple Aboriginal origins for 1981, 1986 and 1991. Both include a more detailed classification of the aboriginal population where those exist. However, these numbers require extensive explanatory notes. For instance, major geographic changes occurred in Canada between 1871 and 1881, 1891 and 1901, 1901 and 1911 and in 1947 when Newfoundland joined confederation. Therefore, the average rates of growth for both the aboriginal and total populations represent both normal population increases and increases due to the changes in Canada's geo-political boundaries. In examining the tables it also becomes evident that the definition and application of descent rules had an impact on the specific category by which people were classified.

Table 1: Census Counts of Aboriginal Origins (single origins only) - 1871 to 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CENSUS YEAR</th>
<th>INDIAN</th>
<th>HALF-BREED MÊTIS</th>
<th>ESKIMO/INUIT</th>
<th>TOTAL ABORIGINAL</th>
<th>TOTAL CANADA</th>
<th>AVG. ANNUAL GROWTH RATE ABORIGINAL (%)</th>
<th>AVG. ANNUAL GROWTH RATE CANADA (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>23,035</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>23,037</td>
<td>3,485,761</td>
<td>15.50</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>108,547</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>108,547</td>
<td>4,324,810</td>
<td>15.50</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>93,460</td>
<td>34,481</td>
<td></td>
<td>127,941</td>
<td>5,371,315</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>105,611</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>105,611</td>
<td>7,206,643</td>
<td>-1.92</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>110,814</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>110,814</td>
<td>8,788,483</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>112,911</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>112,911</td>
<td>10,376,786</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>118,316</td>
<td>35,416</td>
<td></td>
<td>153,732</td>
<td>11,506,655</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>165,607</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>165,607</td>
<td>14,009,429</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>208,286</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>208,286</td>
<td>18,238,247</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>295,215</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>295,215</td>
<td>21,568,310</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Census Counts of Aboriginal Origins (single and multiple) - 1981 to 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CENSUS YEAR</th>
<th>RESPONS E TYPE</th>
<th>INDIAN</th>
<th>HALF-BREED</th>
<th>MÉTIS</th>
<th>ESKIMO</th>
<th>INUIT</th>
<th>TOTAL ABORIGINAL</th>
<th>TOTAL CANADA</th>
<th>AVG.ANNUAL GROWTH RATE ABORIGINAL (%)</th>
<th>AVG.ANNUAL GROWTH RATE CANADA (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19814</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>313,655</td>
<td>76,520</td>
<td>23,200</td>
<td>413,375</td>
<td></td>
<td>24,083.49</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>26,280</td>
<td>49,610</td>
<td>2,190</td>
<td>78,085</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>491,460</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19864</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>286,230</td>
<td>59,745</td>
<td>27,290</td>
<td>373,265</td>
<td></td>
<td>25,022.01</td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.04</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>262,730</td>
<td>91,865</td>
<td>9,175</td>
<td>338,460</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>711,725</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19914</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>365,375</td>
<td>75,150</td>
<td>30,085</td>
<td>470,610</td>
<td></td>
<td>26,994.04</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>418,605</td>
<td>137,500</td>
<td>19,170</td>
<td>532,060</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,002,670</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the caveats listed above, and the footnotes which accompany many of the numbers in these tables, the reader must be conscious of the fact that the counts are affected by the following factors:

- changes in the formulation of the questions which dealt with ethnic/racial origins;
- changes in the instructions given to the enumerators (and/or respondents);
- differences in the socio-political climate at the time the census was conducted; and
- the number of incompletely enumerated Reserves.

It is difficult to quantify the impact of any or all of these factors on the counts. However, they clearly have an impact on how the enumerators and the respondents perceived their ancestries. For instance, the disappearance of a reference to Métis or Half-Breed between 1911 and 1931 is due to the lack of reference to any specific instruction to the enumerators on how to classify this segment of the population. Also, as the nature of the question on ethnic origin was modified between 1981 and 1991 to reflect the multi-cultural character of Canadian society, the incidence of respondents reporting more than one ethnic origin increased. The increase in the reporting of multiple origins, as indicated by the counts in Table 2, attest to the increased complexity of measuring Aboriginal origins.

Table 3 provides a summary of the descent rules which were applied to the ancestry data for each of the census years considered in this paper.

Table 3: Descent Rules by Census Year by Ethnic/Racial/Tribal Origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CENSUS</th>
<th>WHITE/EUROPEAN</th>
<th>INDIAN</th>
<th>MÉTIS</th>
<th>ESKIMO</th>
<th>OTHER NON-WHITE</th>
<th>OTHER MIXED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The descent rules which were de rigueur up to 1941 appear to have been influenced by the evolutionary theory. According to the nineteenth century evolutionary schemes, societies were classified on a scale that, based on Lewis Henry Morgan's interpretation, spanned a continuum from "savagery" to "barbarism" to "civilization". (Zeitlin 1990, 119) It was commonly believed by evolutionists that descent among civilized societies was promulgated along patrilineal lines. They also believed that among barbaric societies descent was matrilineally based and among the savages it was based on tribal affiliation. It is interesting to note that according to this logic the Aboriginal population "evolved" from savagery to barbarism between 1901 and 1911.

The rules also reflect legislative and policy imperatives of the government of the day. For example, the revisions of the Indian Act in 1924 and 1951 had an impact on how the Aboriginal people were classified in the census. The current Indian Act and the Constitution Act, 1982 provide the fundamental impetus for the definition of the Aboriginal people to be included in the 1986 and 1991 Censuses. However, it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss these changes and their impact.

4. From 1871 to 1991

The common and distinctive features of each decennial census conducted in Canada from 1871 to 1991 are briefly described below. I have chosen to use standard headings in order to simplify inter-censal comparisons. Some of the information presented in this section focuses primarily on those factors which may serve to explain some of the differences and peculiarities in the data presented in Table 1 and the descent paradigms shown in Table 3. All direct quotations are taken either from the administrative manual, the general report or the publication containing the tabulations for the respective census. Therefore, they are not directly referenced. However, all relevant documentation is included in the list of references at the end of this document.

### Census Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Descent</th>
<th>Indigenous Category</th>
<th>Place of Residence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>Patrilineal</td>
<td>Tribal</td>
<td>Complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Patrilineal</td>
<td>Matrilineal</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Patrilineal</td>
<td>Matrilineal</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Patrilineal</td>
<td>Matrilineal</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Patrilineal</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Half-Breed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Patrilineal</td>
<td>Patrilineal</td>
<td>Place of residence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Patrilineal</td>
<td>Patrilineal</td>
<td>Place of residence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Patrilineal</td>
<td>Patrilineal</td>
<td>Patrilineal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Ambilineal</td>
<td>Ambilineal</td>
<td>Ambilineal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Ambilineal</td>
<td>Ambilineal</td>
<td>Ambilineal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Ambilineal</td>
<td>Ambilineal</td>
<td>Ambilineal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Principal Features
This Census established the de jure tradition in Canada. The distinction between origin and place of birth was recognized.

"What is given in previous returns under the head origin, was simply the enumeration of people by their place of birth. But a moment's reflection shows at once that these two subjects of information are as different as they are important."

Collection Methodology
Canvasser
Sampling Methodology
None
Geographic Coverage
Ontario, Québec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia
Scope of the Content
Population (including Socio-demographic and economic), Housing and Families, Health, Vital Statistics, Agriculture, Economic, Primary Industries.
Instructions to Enumerators/Respondents
Enumerators were instructed to record the answers given to them. Where no definite answer was given they were to record not given. This was used to explain, in part, why there are only 2 half-breeds recorded. An other reason for this is that this census did not cover the territories west of the Provinces - where most of the "half-breeds" lived. No specific instructions were given with respect to collection or coding of aboriginal origins.
Output/Tabulations
No counts reported for the Eskimo. In all likelihood there weren't any in the geography enumerated.

Census Year
1881

Principal Features
Estimates of the Aboriginal population in the unorganized territories was based on the 1871 enumeration. Reference is made to the classification of a dwelling type of shanty used "to designate dwellings hurriedly put up, or the moveable lodges of nomadic populations."

Collection Methodology
Canvasser
Sampling Methodology
None
Geographic Coverage
Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Québec, Ontario, Manitoba, British Columbia, The Territories
Scope of the Content
Population (including Socio-demographic and economic), Housing and Families, Health, Vital Statistics, Agriculture, Economic, Primary Industries.
Instructions to Enumerators/Respondents
Although the instructions state that "origin is to be scrupulously entered, as given by the person questioned," no specific directions were given for the Aboriginal population. In fact, this type of instruction required that there be some form of direct contact and communication between the enumerator and the respondent. Where this was not possible, either due to language difficulties or to access, I suspect that the enumerator relied on the local authorities (either the constabulary or the Indian agent) or institutions (generally the clergy) for the information.
Output/Tabulations
Counts provided detail only under the heading Indian. Eskimo and half-breeds were either included in that count or were included in the count of Various Other Origins.

Significant Differences from Previous Census
Greatly expanded geographic coverage.

Census Year
1891
Principal Features
This Census was essentially a repeat of the 1881 Census without a question dealing with racial or tribal origins.

Collection Methodology
Canvasser
Sampling Methodology
None

Geographic Coverage
Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Québec, Ontario, Manitoba, British Columbia, The Territories

Scope of the Content
Population (including Socio-demographic and economic), Housing and Families, Health, Vital Statistics, Agriculture, Economic, Primary Industries.

Instructions to Enumerators/Respondents
Not applicable

Output/Tabulations
Not applicable

Significant Differences from Previous Census
Not Applicable

Census Year
1901
Principal Features
This is the first post-confederation Census which makes specific reference to the Aboriginal population in the instructions to the enumerator.

Collection Methodology
Canvasser
Sampling Methodology
None

Geographic Coverage
Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Québec, Ontario, Manitoba, British Columbia, The Territories (Alberta, Assiniboia East, Assiniboia West, Saskatchewan, Unorganized)

Scope of the Content
Population (including Socio-demographic and economic), Housing and Families, Health, Vital Statistics, Agriculture, Business, Primary Industries.

Instructions to Enumerators/Respondents
Enumerators were instructed to record the names of the tribes in the case of the Indians. Special instructions on how to code the various combination of "persons of mixed white and red blood - commonly known as breeds" were also included. The rules for descent are clearly patrilineal for the white population. Any mixture including some Aboriginal origin was classified as "other breed", regardless of which parent was Indian.

Output/Tabulations
Counts were reported only for Indian and half-breeds.

Significant Differences from Previous Census
More detailed geographic breakdowns.

Census Year

1911

Principal Features
Not applicable

Collection Methodology
Canvasser

Sampling Methodology
None

Geographic Coverage
Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Québec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon, The Northwest Territories

Scope of the Content
Population (including Socio-demographic and economic), Housing and Families, Health, Vital Statistics, Disability, Agriculture, Economic, Primary Industries.

Instructions to Enumerators/Respondents
Racial or tribal origin was to be derived along patrilineal lines except for the Indians where "... the origin is traced through the mother, and names of their tribes should be given, as 'Chippewa,' 'Cree,' etc."

Output/Tabulations
No separate counts for Indian, half-breeds and Eskimos. These are either subsumed in the count of Indian or in the category various.

Significant Differences from Previous Census
Expanded geography to include the new provinces.
Official sanction to use the Royal North West Mounted Police or other agents to collect the data on reserves and in the Northwest Territories.

Census Year

1921

Principal Features
First post-war census.

Collection Methodology
Canvasser

Sampling Methodology
None

Geographic Coverage
Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Québec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon, The Northwest Territories

Scope of the Content
Population (including all characteristics), Housing and Families, Agriculture.

Instructions to Enumerators/Respondents
Patrilineal descent to be applied for the white population. Matrilineal descent for the Native population. In the case of mixed races the instructions forces a non-white classification, regardless of which parent was non-white.

Output/Tabulations
Eskimo was reported as part of the count of various. No separate count of half-breeds was published. They were included among the Indians.

Significant Differences from Previous Census
It was explicitly mentioned that a response of Canadian or American was not appropriate (not allowed) for the question on Racial or Tribal Origin.

Census Year

1931
Principal Features
Full series of monographs.

Collection Methodology
Canvasser

Sampling Methodology
None

Geographic Coverage
Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Québec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon, The Northwest Territories

Scope of the Content
Population (including all characteristics), Housing and Family, Agriculture, Merchandising & Services.

Instructions to Enumerators/Respondents
Patrilineal descent to be applied for the white population. Matrilineal descent for the Native population. In the case of mixed races the instructions forces a non-white classification, regardless of which parent was non-white.

Output/Tabulations
The output from this census included the first extensive series of monographs. Counts were provided for Indian and Eskimo. Half-breeds were included in either the count of Indian or the various category.

Significant Differences from Previous Census
The monograph series.
No specific mention was made of excluding Canadian as a response.

Census Year
1941

Principal Features
This census was conducted during the Second World War. Therefore, a significant proportion of the population of prime age was overseas. This affected collection staff as well the content and counts. This was also the first census where major investments were made into the use of automation.

Collection Methodology
Canvasser

Sampling Methodology
A 10% sample on the housing questionnaire.

Geographic Coverage
Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Québec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon, The Northwest Territories

Scope of the Content
Population (including all characteristics), Agriculture, Merchandising.

Instructions to Enumerators/Respondents
Patrilineal descent was applied to the white population. "Aborigines" were to be classified either as Indian, Eskimo or Half-Breed. People of mixed blood were imputed the non-white racial category, regardless of which parent was white.

Output/Tabulations
Separate counts were published for Indian, Half-Breeds and Eskimo. These were also included in a monograph by Burton Hurd.

Significant Differences from Previous Census
References to tribal origins were dropped from the question and from the instructions. The question referred only to racial origin.

Census Year
1951

Principal Features
Post-war census - it reflected the strong immigration from Europe.

Collection Methodology
Canvasser

Sampling Methodology
20 % sample for the housing questionnaire.

Geographic Coverage
Canada as we know it today.

Scope of the Content
Population (including all characteristics), Housing and Family, Agriculture, Retail and Wholesale Trade, Fisheries.

Instructions to Enumerators/Respondents
Patrilineal descent was the dominant rule for determining origin. Mother tongue of the father was used to determine the respondent's origin.

Output/Tabulations
Eskimo and Half-Breed were not reported separately. Their counts were included in the count of Indians.

Significant Differences from Previous Census
Newfoundland was added to the geographic coverage. This was the first instance of the use of the term Native Indian (North American) in the Census.

1961

Principal Features
This was the first census in which 2 questionnaires, a short form (2A) and a long form (2B), were used to enumerate the population.

Collection Methodology
Canvasser

Sampling Methodology
The 2B questionnaire was administered to one in every 5 households in urban areas and to every household in remote areas and on reserves.

Geographic Coverage
Canada as we know it today.

Scope of the Content
Population (including all characteristics), Housing and Families, Agriculture.

Instructions to Enumerators/Respondents
Descent was to be determined along patrilineal lines. Mother tongue of the respondent, or the respondent's "ancestor on the male side", was to be used to determine ethnic or cultural group. For Native Indians the enumerators were instructed to determine whether or not they were Band members. Treaty Indians were to be coded as band members. Respondents of mixed white and Indian parentage were coded as Indian if they lived on reserve. If they lived off reserve they were coded according to patrilineal lines.

Output/Tabulations
The tabulations provided detail only for Indian and Eskimo. Half-breeds were classified either as Indian or non-Indian during collection and processing. Therefore, they don't appear separately in the counts.

Significant Differences from Previous Census
The question used to determine ancestry was the first to refer to ethnic and cultural origins. In essence, this Census "fathered" a tradition for wording the question and the concept. Different descent rules were applied for the métis population living on reserve and those living off reserve. Specific mention is made of band membership.
Census Year
1971
Principal Features
A mark-sense technology (FOSDIC) developed at the United States Bureau of the Census was used to capture the data from the census questionnaires. Advanced statistical methods were introduced to correct for errors and non-response.
Collection Methodology
Self-enumeration was used except on reserves and remote regions. Questionnaires were delivered and picked up by the enumerators.
Sampling Methodology
½ sample was used for the 2B questionnaire. However, all canvasser areas were administered a 2B questionnaire.
Geographic Coverage
Canada as we know it today.
Scope of the Content
Population (including all characteristics), Housing and Families, Agriculture.
Instructions to Enumerators/Respondents
The instructions were extended to apply to respondents and coders as well. The focus for descent was still along patrilineal lines.
Output/Tabulations
Separate counts were produced for Indians and Eskimo. An extensive monograph series was published.
Significant Differences from Previous Census
Hot deck methodology was introduced to impute for non-response and response error. First Census to use self-enumeration.

Census Year
1981
Principal Features
All canvasser areas (i.e. reserves and remote areas) were administered a 2B questionnaire.
Key entry at Revenue Canada-Taxation was used to capture the data.
Collection Methodology
Self enumeration except in canvasser areas. Questionnaires were dropped off by the enumerators and mailed back in most parts (urban areas) of the country.
Sampling Methodology
Sampling ratio was 20% for the 2B questionnaire.
Geographic Coverage
Canada as we know it today.
Scope of the Content
Population (including all characteristics), Housing and Families, Agriculture.
Instructions to Enumerators/Respondents
No specific rules were imposed on how ancestry was to be established. Although multiple responses were not encouraged, they were captured when present. Also, Canadian was accepted as a response when written in by the respondent. The question included four categories for the Aboriginal people; Status Indian, Non-status Indian, Métis and Inuit.
Output/Tabulations
Counts were provided for all four categories of Aboriginal people.
Significant Differences from Previous Census
This Census presented a major departure from the past with respect to the descent rules that were to be applied for ethnic origin. In addition, major new systems and methodologies were introduced to process the data.
**Census Year**

1986

**Principal Features**
All canvasser areas (i.e. reserves and remote areas) were administered a 2B questionnaire. Key entry at Revenue Canada-Taxation was used to capture the data.

**Collection Methodology**
Self enumeration except in canvasser areas. Questionnaires were dropped off by the enumerators and mailed back in most parts (urban areas) of the country.

**Sampling Methodology**
Sampling ratio was 20% for the 2B questionnaire.

**Geographic Coverage**
Canada as we know it today.

**Scope of the Content**
Population (including all characteristics except religion), Housing and Families, Agriculture.

**Instructions to Enumerators/Respondents**
No specific rules were imposed on how ancestry was to be established. Multiple responses were encouraged and they were captured when present. Also, Canadian was accepted as a response when written in by the respondent. The question included four categories for the Aboriginal people; Status Indian, Non-status Indian, Métis and Inuit.

**Output/Tabulations**
Counts were provided for all four categories of Aboriginal people. In addition, detailed breakdowns were published for multiple responses to ethnic origin and for on and off-reserve populations.

**Significant Differences from Previous Census**
This was the first quinquennial Census which included comprehensive content. In most other respects it was a repeat of the 1981 Census. In addition, major new initiatives were introduced to assist the Aboriginal population to make use of the data.

**Census Year**

1991

**Principal Features**
A special version of the long questionnaire, the 2D questionnaire, was administered to all households on reserves. Two post-censal surveys were conducted in conjunction with the Census. One dealt with the Aboriginal population. The other dealt with disabilities. Special programs were introduced to induce the aboriginal population to participate in the Census. Major public consultations were conducted to determine the content of the Census.

**Collection Methodology**
Self enumeration except in canvasser areas. Questionnaires were dropped off by the enumerators and mailed back in most parts (urban areas) of the country.

**Sampling Methodology**
20% sample for the 2B questionnaire, except in canvasser areas where every household was administered a 2B questionnaire.

**Geographic Coverage**
Canada as we know it today.

**Scope of the Content**
Population (including all characteristics), Housing and Families, Agriculture.

**Instructions to Enumerators/Respondents**
Respondents were permitted to enter multiple responses for ethnic origin. In fact, they were encouraged to do so by the wording of the question. The primary question, Q15, included 3 categories for aboriginal responses; North American Indian, Métis and Inuit/Eskimo. The status was determined through a supplementary question.

**Output/Tabulations**
Counts will be provided for all aboriginal categories. However, due to rate of refusal some of the counts will not reflect the true population. In addition, a series of publications will be produced from the post-censal survey and one major monograph focusing on the aboriginal population will be produced.

Significant Differences from Previous Census
The Aboriginal Peoples Survey is a first attempt at collecting detailed information about the Native people of Canada. Special programs were introduced to encourage the Aboriginal population to participate in the Census. Some of these programs have resulted in Aboriginal communities becoming stronger users of statistical information in planning for their people and managing their affairs. Extensive consultations were conducted to help determine the content of the Census.

5. Conclusion

It has been shown that the annual rate of growth of the aboriginal population is quite dissimilar from that of the total population of Canada both with respect to the trends and the actual rates. For instance, the average annual rate of growth for the total population of Canada over the period from 1871 to 1991 has always been positive and always greater than 1 whereas the figures for the corresponding period for the aboriginal population show a decline between 1901 and 1911 (-1.92%) and growths ranging from a low of 0.29% between 1941 and 1951 to a high of 15.5% between 1871 and 1881. The following chart clearly illustrates the degree of dissimilarity between the rates of growth (and decline) for both populations.
In contrast to the dissimilarities in the rates of growth up to 1971, the proportion of the total population that is Aboriginal has, with the exception of the first 4 censuses, ranged between a low of 1.21% (in 1961) and a high of 1.47% (in 1911). The proportions for all census years are shown in Table 4. The narrow range of fluctuation is quite remarkable considering the changes that may have influenced the respondents. Focusing specifically on the period between 1981 and 1991, the results show a steady increase in the proportion of Aboriginal population in Canada, taking into account the total Aboriginal response (the sum of single and multiple responses). However, it should be noted that legislative changes, attitudinal changes and the number of Indian communities who declined to participate in the census make it very difficult to draw meaningful comparisons and conclusion about the trends in population growth and decline.

Table 4: Proportion of Aboriginal Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CENSUS YEAR</th>
<th>PROPORTION BASED ON SINGLE RESPONSES (%)</th>
<th>PROPORTION BASED ON TOTAL RESPONSES (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>No Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>No Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>No Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>No Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>No Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>No Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>No Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>No Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>No Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>No Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>No Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In a discussion of future issues for the Canadian Census, Pryor, Goldmann and Royce describe Canadian society as follows: "Constitutionally, Canada is unambiguously a multicultural society, including an important native or aboriginal component." (Pryor, Goldmann and Royce 1991)

In a mosaic such as Canada one cannot expect every group in the society to exhibit identical demographic characteristics. Neither can one expect the characteristics of a particular group to mirror those of the society at large. However, in this particular instance, the divergence between the two sets of rates are too dramatic to be explained simply by differing demographic patterns. Other factors, such as changes in how descent is defined and applied and in the definition of membership in the group must also contribute to this divergence.

This study has shown that rates of growth of the Aboriginal population of Canada between 1871 and 1991 have varied erratically and unpredictably. Furthermore it has been argued that the variances in the rates are due to factors other than demographic trends. However, some questions remain to be answered. For instance, what is the impact, if any, of legislation such as the Human Rights Act on how people perceive or identify themselves? Also, how do public discussion, both historical and current, mores and values impact upon how people were and are enumerated? Finally, have the recent constitutional negotiations affected perceptions, attitudes and definitions? The answers to these questions, and others, present an interesting and relevant research agenda which should be addressed.

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