



First Nations

The First Nation people living in Abitibi-Témiscamingue today include some 6 300 members, mostly Algonquins. A profile of this people's characteristics who, despite the difficulties they face in terms of educational attainment and income, demonstrate a strong determination to improve their situation.

In 2007, according to the data from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, First Nations in Abitibi-Témiscamingue accounted for 4 % of the regional population and 9 % of Québec's Aboriginal population. The Témiscamingue region is the home base of 53 % of the respondents, the rest being located in Abitibi. The communities with the largest population are Timiskaming and Lac Simon.

A majority of First Nation members live in the communities. Kitcisakik and Lac Simon have the highest rate of resident population. Eagle Village and Timiskaming have a majority of members living off reserve. There is often part of the population that lives in the vicinity of the established communities.

Between 1997 and 2007, the regional First Nation population increased by 24 %, which is the opposite trend experienced by the non Aboriginal population. The variance can be especially observed among the resident population (27 % compared to 11 % for the off-reserve population).

Population, Algonquin communities, Abitibi-Témiscamingue, 2007

	Total	Resident		Off reserve		Variance 1997-2007
		Total	Part	Total	Part	
Pikogan (Abitibiwinni)	870	570	65.5 %	300	34.5 %	20.2 %
Eagle Village - Kipawa	807	274	34.0 %	533	66.0 %	38.2 %
Kitcisakik	437	368	84.2 %	69	15.8 %	32.0 %
Winneway (Long Point)	715	377	52.7 %	338	47.3 %	19.2 %
Lac Simon	1 620	1 318	81.4 %	302	18.6 %	32.5 %
Timiskaming	1 630	593	36.4 %	1 037	63.6 %	16.1 %
Hunter's Point (Wolf Lake)	209	---	---	---	---	-3.7 %
Total	6 288	3 500	55.7 %	2 579	44.3 %	23.7 %

Source: Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Indian Register, 2007.

About the data

The data from the Indian Register of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada are used as a reference on demography issues. However, the Register has some data gaps due to delays in registering births, deaths or changes of address. If, in Canada, many Aboriginal persons refused to take part in the last census, the overall communities in our region did participate. However, the data for Hunter's Point are not published for lack of sufficient participation.

Did you know...

► There are eleven Algonquin communities in Canada; seven are located in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, two in the Outaouais region (Kitigan Zibi and Barriere Lake) and two in Ontario (Pikwakanagan near Pembroke, and Wahgoshig, near Lake Abitibi).

► In Québec, two political structures represent the interests of the Algonquins. The Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Council includes Eagle village, Kitcisakik, Pikogan, Lac Simon, Winneway and Kitigan Zibi, and the Algonquin Nation Secretariat represents Hunter's Point, Timiskaming and Barriere Lake. A project is under way to bring all the communities together under one council, which would add political weight to their claims towards the provincial and federal governments.

► Each community's Band Council delivers educational and social services, including social assistance, as well as health, housing, recreational and development services (economic, community, cultural and public). They must therefore assume more responsibilities than municipalities do. In most cases, they act as the community's main employer. For fiscal year 2007, the federal government allocated a total amount of nearly 41 M\$ to the seven communities in Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

What the 2006 census shows

In terms of identity, Statistics Canada's 2006 census reports that 6 500 Aboriginal persons live in the region. Nearly 75% of them identified themselves as North American Indian (4 800 individuals). About 1 600 other persons identified themselves as Métis, i.e. the second most important identity in the region. Finally, about 100 people reported various or off-category Aboriginal identities as well as some ten Inuits.

Among the municipalities, the town of Val-d'Or accounts for the largest number of persons with an Aboriginal identity in Abitibi-Témiscamingue (805 individuals). Rouyn-Noranda comes second (765), then Témiscaming (325). However, on a prorata basis, Notre-Dame-du-Nord and Témiscaming account for the largest number of persons declaring this identity in comparison with their total population (13 % and 12 %). As for the town of Senneterre, it comes in third position (8 %).

The ethnic origin refers to the ethnic or cultural origin of the respondent's ancestors. More than one origin may be declared by a person. At the last census, the "North American Indian" origin was reported 9 125 times by the whole population of Abitibi-Témiscamingue, including 5 245 Aboriginals. This makes it the third most important origin in the region, behind those who stated they were from French and Canadian origin.

A young population

The First Nation members in the region are relatively young, and even younger than the non Aboriginal population. Those under 15 years of age account for one third of the Aboriginal population while this segment represents only 18 % in non Aboriginals. They are also younger when compared to Québec, where those under 15 make up 25 % of the population. As for the persons aged 65 and over, they represent 5 % of the region's First Nation members against 12 % in the non Aboriginal population.

The mean age is 30,5 in the region's First Nations while it is 39,0 for the regional population. The median age divides the population into two equal groups. It is in the Vallée-de-l'Or that the median is the lowest (20,8 years) while in the Témiscamingue region, it is higher (34,2 years).

Languages

Regarding the mother tongue, 6 330 persons indicated that they had learned one of the two official languages spoken in Québec. French ranked first (46 %), followed by English (27 %). It is to be noted that among non official mother tongues learned and still understood, 1 710 individuals mentioned the Algonquin, Atikamekw, Cree or

Montagnais-Naskapi languages. This statement must however be qualified with regard to the language most spoken at home as only 385 individuals use one of these languages at home. Concerning the knowledge of official languages, 46 % of people speak only French against 15 % communicating in English only. First Nation members are more bilingual than non Aboriginal people: 38 % of them speak both French and English against 26 % for non Aboriginals.

Education: slow progress but hope for the future

The data on First Nation members' formal education in Abitibi-Témiscamingue show a lower educational attainment as compared with the regional non Aboriginal population and the Québec Aboriginal population. However, the data concerning the regional Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64 indicate that 54 % of them hold a certificate, a diploma or a degree. They are broken down as follows: 20 % hold a certificate or an apprenticeship or trade school diploma, 16 % hold a high school certificate or equivalent, 11 % have a college, CEGEP or non-university certificate or diploma, and 7 % hold a university certificate, diploma or degree. The major fields of study are architecture, engineering and related technologies (25 %) as well as business, management and public administration (20 %). Finally it is to be noted that 16 % of the individuals in this age group and holding a post-secondary degree have studied in Ontario.

Throughout the years, the UQAT and the Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue have developed training programs to meet First Nations' needs, thus stimulating the pursuit of post-secondary education, for instance through short programs or training delivered in the communities. The construction of the First Nations Pavilion in Val-d'Or adds more training opportunities, thus helping this clientele to feel at home within the institution. However, the housing shortage faced by the town slows down the arrival of additional clients.

The analysis of the Québec First Nations' training needs conducted by the UQAT in 2008 focuses on five priorities. The order of priority of the training targets is as follows: administration, teaching, health, social work as well as forestry and mining. The UQAT already offers programs in these training fields. The research also showed the First Nation members' increasing interest for graduate studies.

IN A NUTSHELL

- ▶ A young population that, despite an education delay, can demonstrate perseverance and school success.
- ▶ Among the 20 to 64 year-old Aboriginal people having completed their schooling, a majority live in reserves and settlements, regardless of the level of the highest degree obtained. The others live elsewhere in Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

Difficult access to labour market

In the region, 1 860 Aboriginals aged 15 and over are employed. Their employment and labour force participation rate reflect the difficulties facing them when compared to Aboriginal people in the province. These rates are lower than that of their fellow citizens in Québec with each rate showing a variance of 10 points of percentage. This is also the case for the variances between them and the region's non Aboriginal population, the latter's employment and participation rates being respectively 58 % and 63 %. The women are in a more difficult situation than men, their employment and participation rates being lower.

The region's Aboriginal working population is found mainly among the following professional groups: sales and services (23 %), trades, transport and equipment operators (16 %), business, finance and administration (14 %) as well as social science, education and public administration (13 %). Sales and service also stand as the most popular occupations in the reserves and settlements that participated in the census.

Limited income

For the year 2005, 3 930 persons declared a total average income estimated at \$20 400, which is \$3 800 less than that of Aboriginal people in Québec and \$9 900 less than the income of the regional non Aboriginal population. Women face a more difficult situation than men, their average income being lower (\$18 800 against \$22 200). As for the median income, it was established at \$15 500. Half of the region's First Nation members earned more, the other half earned less. In the reserves and settlements, the median income is lower, varying from \$10 900 (Lac Simon) to \$14 400 (Timiskaming).

The average employment income is also lower than that both the provincial Aboriginal population and the region's non Aboriginal population (\$21 900 against \$24 800 and \$31 000). This can be partly explained by the fact that First Nation members in Abitibi-Témiscamingue having exercised an occupation on a part-time basis or have worked only part of the year.

In a nutshell

Between 2001 and 2006, the employment rate and the participation rate of the region's First Nation members have both increased, although modestly. This translated into a slight increase of the mean employment income.

In 2006, some 750 employed persons lived in six of the seven reserves and settlements that participated in the last census.

Pikogan and Eagle Village enjoy the highest employment and participation rates while Lac Simon has the lowest.

Indicators for Abitibi-Témiscamingue's First Nations education, labour market and income

	Abitibi	Abitibi-Ouest	Rouyn-Noranda	Témiscamingue	Vallée-de-l'Or	Region
Education 2006 (25-64 years)	355	270	445	860	1 155	3 085
No certificate, diploma or degree	130	170	110	360	640	1 415
With certificate, diploma or degree	225	100	335	500	505	1 665
High school diploma	30	25	100	180	160	495
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	115	70	135	130	160	615
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma	20	10	75	130	90	330
University certificate, diploma or degree	60	0	20	50	100	230
Labour market 2006 (15 years +)	555	370	545	1 250	1 710	4 435
Working population	305	210	295	700	735	2 245
Employed persons	270	180	225	580	600	1 860
Participation rate (%)	55.0	56.8	54.1	56.0	43.0	50.6
Male (%)	64.2	71.4	60.0	60.7	42.9	55.7
Female (%)	47.5	34.4	50.8	51.8	42.8	46.4
Employment rate (%)	48.6	48.6	41.3	46.4	35.1	41.9
Male (%)	50.9	59.5	48.0	50.0	32.7	44.8
Female (%)	44.1	31.2	33.9	43.2	36.9	39.5
Total income 2005 (15 years +, \$)	20 708	20 356	25 957	21 592	17 604	20 403
Male (\$)	22 121	22 024	34 335	25 746	15 509	22 164
Female (\$)	19 316	17 709	18 232	18 097	19 441	18 763
Employment income 2005 (15 years +, \$)	19 002	19 222	29 766	24 994	18 389	21 856
Male (\$)	22 055	20 406	39 058	32 215	19 474	25 975
Female (\$)	15 597	16 481	19 672	17 943	17 474	17 585

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census.

Profile of families in reserves and settlements

In 2006, 720 Aboriginal families were enumerated in six reserves and settlements in the region. They include an average of 3,6 persons, which is higher than the regional average (2,9). The average number of children per family is also higher (1,9 against 1,0). Among the families living in the communities, 585 have children. A higher percentage of them have three children or more as compared to the region (34 % against 16 %). These percentages were similar in 2001. There are more single-parent families in First Nations than in the general regional population (30 % against 15 %), although their number has decreased from 2001 (33 %). Aboriginal families account for 1 355 children, 82 % of whom are under the age of 18. In this group, 34 % are under the age of 6 and 66 % are between 6 and 17 years old.

Challenges and issues

- ▶ Some of the issues facing the region in relation with First Nations are, among others, the reduction of social inequalities as well as responding to their increasing needs in the areas of education, health, housing or job creation.
- ▶ The region's Aboriginal people are working at taking over services and developing an expertise that will allow them to address the issues that affect them.
- ▶ Progress in educational attainment, although a slow process, as well as the development of business and other relations with the non Aboriginal population provide hope for the future.

Val-d'Or, a centre of interest

The town of Val-d'Or is an important transit centre for First Nations. As a result of the increasing presence of Cree and Algonquin people, the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre has developed various services. According to the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay, 5 500 patients and escorts came to Val-d'Or to access services in 2007. The UQAT's First Nations Pavilion was commissioned in early 2008. It provides, among others, office space for the researchers of Dialog, a network conducting studies on Aboriginal people. Other premises were designed to allow Aboriginal students to feel at home.

Understanding Aboriginal politics

The voters qualified to elect a Band Council are those who are registered in the Indian Register. Therefore, even those residing outside of their community have the right to vote. There are two different ways to elect a Band Council: following the procedures provided for by the Indian Act, as in the case of Eagle Village – Kipawa, or using the customary process, i.e. following the community's specific electoral code, which is the case for the six other communities in the region.

Income tax exemption is possible only when a person works in a reserve or when a person works off-reserve but for an employer based in a reserve. Therefore, the income of a First Nation member is taxable when he or she is employed outside the reserve by an off-reserve employer.

When Canada was created, the federal and provincial governments proceeded to a sharing of jurisdictions. The federal took the responsibility for Aboriginal peoples while the provinces were given the jurisdiction over land and resources, thus squeezing First Nations between the two levels of government. This is why certain First Nation members see the regionalisation process with mistrust, considering that it will add one more level of bureaucracy to deal with.

Looking to the future

Kitcisakik has initiated a process aimed at building a new village (Wanaki, meaning peace). This is an important step because in the past, this community has refused to be assigned a reserve status. The community members rely on this social project to access adequate housing, infrastructures and services that will improve their living conditions. Today, this community is settled around the Bourque dam at lake Dozois.

A labour market strategy for the integration of First Nation workers in enterprises located outside the communities is currently under study in the form of a pilot project in Abitibi-Témiscamingue. Information and awareness activities on the realities of First Nations are organised in various workplaces. The strategy also plans for assistance and support to labour market integration as well as support to the hiring of Aboriginal workers.

The Canada Research Chair in Aboriginal Forestry has been recently established at UQAT. Combining Aboriginal traditional knowledge with scientific knowledge, this new chair will allow among others to develop tools to facilitate the communities' participation in the management of sensitive areas such as ancestral lands.

Open for business

- ▶ The Secretariat to the Cree Nation – Abitibi-Témiscamingue Economic Alliance and the Comité de maximisation des retombées économiques de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue (committee to maximize economic spinoffs in Abitibi-Témiscamingue) periodically organise networking activities and business meetings bringing together hundreds of representatives from Cree, Abitibi-Témiscamingue and James Bay organisations and companies.
- ▶ A research conducted by UQAT estimates that the Aboriginal clientele contributed \$100 M to the regional economy in 2006, which represents an average of 15 % of the sales of business that developed relations with Aboriginal people. According to the companies surveyed, they do more business with the Cree Nation (81 %), followed by the Algonquins with 50 %.