



Profiles of the region

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OBSERVATOIRE DE L'ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE

First Nations

Since long ago, First Nations have been occupying the Abitibi-Témiscamingue territory. In spite of this, their reality remains unrecognized by the white populations. The present document quickly summarizes several aspects pertaining to the lives of this People. Their demography, language, schooling, activities and employment, income, health and social services as well as housing are outlined in this document. There are also passages regarding culture and the Algonquin communities in the region.

The Algonquin communities situated in Abitibi-Témiscamingue represent 4 % of the region's total population and 9 % of the Aboriginal population in the province of Quebec. In fact, 5,890 First Nations persons lived in Abitibi-Témiscamingue in 2004. Contrary to the non-Aboriginal population of the region, this population is in rapid growth. Since 1986, it has practically doubled. However, this growth rate has been decreasing to a certain extent. The population variation which was of 20 % between 1991-1996, decreased to 13 % between 1996-2001. It is noted that in the region, the number of women is somewhat greater than the number of men in all the communities except for Lac Simon. In all, 2,971 women were counted and 2,805 men. The community with the highest population is Timiskaming, followed by Lac Simon. The region of Témiscamingue has the highest population; approximately 1 out of 5 persons are Aboriginal.

Residents and non-residents

More than one person out of two live on reserves or Algonquin settlements in the region, this represents approximately 3,200 individuals. Kitcisakik and Lac Simon have the highest concentration of residing population. Half of Winneway's First Nation members reside outside the settlement. As for Hunter's Point, it is characterized by the highest proportion of non-residents, almost the totality of its members live in Témiscamingue.

In the Vallée-de-l'Or, the majority of the population who identify themselves as Aboriginal live in rural areas; they reside in the communities of Kitcisakik and Lac Simon as well as in the parish of Senneterre. The majority of the populations situated in the regions of Témiscamingue and Abitibi-West also live in rural areas. In the

MRC Abitibi, the majority of individuals with Aboriginal origins live in urban areas; some 100 individuals live in Amos and 425 live in the community of Pikogan. The few Aboriginal persons who live within the Rouyn-Noranda territory choose to live mainly in the urban areas of Rouyn-Noranda or Évain.

Age structure

The Algonquin communities are young. According to Census 2001, one-third of the population is in the age group of 25 to 45 years, while 18 % is part of the 15-24 age groups and a proportion of 28 % is aged 14 years and under. More than one Aboriginal person out of two is less than 30 years old while this proportion is equivalent to two out of five for the overall Abitibi-Témiscamingue population. The elders, namely, those persons who are 65 years of age and over, represent 5 % of the population of the Algonquin communities situated in Abitibi-Témiscamingue while 16 % of the population is in the 45 to 64 age group. Kitcisakik and Lac Simon count almost 4 youth out of 10 aged 14 years and under. Kitcisakik has the highest proportion of persons in the 15-24 years age group (24 %). Timiskaming lodges the highest rate of elders (8 %).

Population of Algonquin communities in the region according to residence, 2004

	Total	Residents		Non-residents	
		Number	%	Number	%
Pikogan (r)	823	546	66.3	277	33.7
Eagle Village - Kipawa (r)	686	263	38.3	423	61.7
Kitcisakik (e)	377	329	87.3	48	12.7
Winneway (e)	703	355	50.5	348	49.5
Lac Simon (r)	1,482	1,207	81.4	275	18.6
Timiskaming (r)	1,555	544	35.0	1,011	65.0
Hunter's Point (e)	264	11	4.2	253	95.8
Total	5,890	3,255	55.3	2,635	44.7

(r) : reserve; (e) : settlement. Source : DIAND, Indian Register, 2004.

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Socio-Economic Outline

Education

In Abitibi-Temiscamingue, a number of 2,040 Aboriginal persons of ages 15 and over do not have a high school diploma; this corresponds to more than six persons out of ten. In the province of Quebec, five Aboriginals out of ten are in the same situation. As for the region's non-Aboriginal population, the rate of lower education levels is a little higher than four persons out of ten. In the region, the rate is slightly higher than one person of ten who have a high school diploma (22 % for the non-aboriginal population). The proportion for Aboriginal persons with a college diploma is 11 %. The rate is not much higher for the non-Aboriginal population of the region. Less than 2 % of the Aboriginal population has a university degree while the rate for the region's non-Aboriginal population is 8 %. A study carried out by Statistics Canada in 2003 shows that the education level of Aboriginal youth living off reserve and settlements has progressed. There are fewer and fewer drop-outs; 52 % of the youth dropped out of high school in 1996, 38 % did the same in 2001. One-third completed postsecondary studies in 1996; this proportion increased to 37 % in 2001.

Employment and Income

According to Census 2001, nearly 3,300 persons of ages 15 and over constitute the Aboriginal labour force in Abitibi-Temiscamingue; this signifies the persons who are employed or actively seeking employment. Among them, 1,270 have a job. The Temiscamingue region alone registers 40 % of the Aboriginal labour force. The employment rate of First Nations members in the region is situated at nearly 39 %, 8 points behind those living elsewhere in the province. As for here, the Aboriginal participation rate is 49 %. The unemployment rate of Aboriginal people in the region is 22 % while it is situated at 18.5 % for the province of Quebec. Finally, it must be stated that the unemployment rate for Aboriginal men in this region is superior to that of Aboriginal men on the provincial scale (29 % as opposed to 22 %). The women in the region, however, have a similar unemployment rate as the Aboriginal women in the province of Quebec (15 %). These facts illustrate the difficulties that First Nations members experience on the labour market.

The region's Aboriginal labour force is present in the following industries : government services, health care and social assistance, manufacturing, teaching and construction. First Nations members stand out among the global labour force of Abitibi-Temiscamingue since retailing occupies first rank, followed by manufacturing and teaching services. The Aboriginal men in the region are more concentrated in trades related to transportation and machinery (33 %), in professions unique to the primary sector (17 %) as well as processing, manufacturing and public utilities (14 %). Aboriginal women are positioned in three main fields : sales and services (more than 40 %), business, finance and administration (18.5 %) and social sciences, teaching, government services and religion (16.5 %).

In Abitibi-Temiscamingue, the average employment income among First Nations is \$20,941 (\$21,231 for the province of Quebec). Here, the average employment income for men is superior to that of the provincial (\$26,428 as opposed to \$23,618). However, the average employment income for

Aboriginal Labour Force, 15 years and over, Abitibi-Temiscamingue and the province of Quebec, 2001

	Region	Province of Quebec
Population of ages 15 years and +	3,280	55,890
Labour force	1,620	32,260
Employed Persons	1,270	26,300
Unemployed Persons	355	5,960
Not in the labour force	1,655	23,630
Participation Rate (%)	49.4	57.7
Employment Rate (%)	38.7	47.1
Unemployment Rate (%)	21.9	18.5

Source : Statistics Canada. Census 2001 : Profile of the Aboriginal communities in Abitibi-Temiscamingue.

women in the region is inferior to the provincial level (\$15,391 to \$18,667). Finally, it may be noted that among the First Nations members in the region, women earn just a slightly more than half of what men earn in employment income.

As for the total income for the Aboriginal population of Abitibi-Temiscamingue, it is situated at \$21,229 for men and \$14,870 for women. This corresponds to revenues inferior to those of the overall Aboriginal population in the province of Quebec, this being the case for both men (\$22,332) and women (\$17,889). Among the First Nations members in the region, seven men out of ten and eight women out of ten earn, according to Census 2001, a total income which is inferior to 25,000\$. Income gained from employment is established at 65 %.

Health and Social Services

In the region, six health centres are situated in Algonquin communities; three are located in Temiscamingue (Eagle Village - Kipawa, Winneway and Timiskaming), three others operate in Abitibi and in the Vallée-de-l'Or (Pikogan, Kitcisakik and Lac Simon). Val-d'Or is an important service delivery point with respect to health care and social services beneficiaries from the Cree communities of Northern Quebec. In 2002-2003, more than 4,500 patients and escorts traveled to Val-d'Or for various services. Almost all the Cree babies from Northern Quebec are born in Val-d'Or. The Timiskaming First Nation *CHSLD* - Anishnabe Long Term Care Centre operates in Notre-Dame-du-Nord. This private establishment houses twenty beds.

The *Agence régionale de santé et de services sociaux de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue* published some disturbing information regarding Aboriginal youth. In the region, registered data shows 27 % of youth from ages 15 to 24 consume alcohol heavily on a weekly basis. Reporting received at the *Centre jeunesse de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue* at the Aboriginal level is increasing; reports increased from 124 to 333 between 1999-2000 and 2002-2003. The data includes the clientele from Matagami, Lebel-sur-Quévillon, Valcanton and Villebois. From this number, 97 of the retained reports are related to negligence, 34 refer to sexual molestation, 24 to behavior problems and 5 to physical abuse. It is also noted that there is an increase in the number of child placements in foster families in the region between 1998-1999 and 2002-2003. The number of clients has increased from 209 to 252.

Housing

In the region, nearly 8 % of private dwellings occupied by the population of Aboriginal identity, count more than one person per room; this proportion is slightly higher than the overall Aboriginal population of the province (6 %). Generally, "crowding" is noted when the results of the division of the number of persons by the number of rooms is superior to 1. This is not the case for the region; this ratio is 0.6.

Aspects of Language

Census statistics help to portray the aspect of mother tongue regarding persons who belong to First Nations living in the region. The French language dominates among the individuals who speak one language (1,825 individuals). English is also very present (1,500 individuals). As for unofficial languages, approximately 200 persons mention speaking Cree. More than 1,100 individuals state that they can communicate in another unofficial language, certainly Algonquin for the majority.

In examining the data related to knowledge of the official languages across the MRC region, it is noted that more than 1,000 persons speak only English; the majority live in Temiscamingue. Nearly 2,100 can only communicate in French. The majority is located in the Vallée-de-l'Or. More than 1,800 others can converse in one or the other of the official languages.

Aspects of Culture

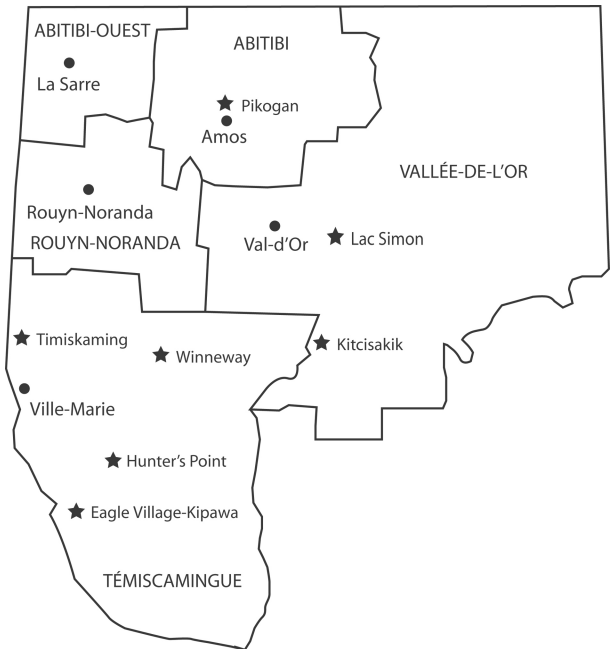
For Algonquins, there are six seasons : fall, pre-winter, winter, pre-spring, spring and summer. Each month of the year has its signification. January is the month of the "long moon", February is groundhog month, March is the goose month, April is the month when the snow glitters on the lake, May is the month of flowers, June is the month of strawberries, July is the month of raspberries, August is the month of blueberries, September is the month for husking corn, October is the trout month, November is the whitefish month and December is the beginning of winter.

The Algonquin infant carrier is called a "tikanagan". A frontal hoop protects the baby from scratches of branches on narrow paths. The board and the protective hoop are often painted in dark green or blue, these colors represent plants and air. Among Algonquins, man is an integral part of nature. Thus, they feel linked to their natural environment. For them, balance and harmony between animals, humans, plants and minerals is necessary.

Algonquins are mostly known for their crafts made from moose leather and birch bark. Formerly, captured animals were used mainly for food and the hides were saved for fabricating clothing, among other uses. They were tanned and smoked by the women; this helped to protect against the weather and mosquitoes.

Algonquins consider animals as man's brothers. In that respect, the Algonquin people are represented by the bear; the bear is peaceful and respected and has human-like behaviors at times. One legend says that the bear was once a man, at the beginning of the Anishnabe people, but was it later transformed into a bear.

Algonquin Communities of Abitibi-Temiscamingue



The Correct Terms ...

Aboriginal : Descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people : Indians (now known as First Nations people), Métis and Inuit. These are three distinct peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs.

Band : A group of First Nation people for whom lands have been set apart and for whom money is held in trust by the Crown or has declared to be a band under the *Indian Act*. Each band has its own governing band council, usually consisting of a Chief and Councillors. Today, many bands prefer to be known as First Nations.

Settlement : Territory which does not have a reserve status and was not officially set apart for the use and benefit of the community.

Aboriginal identity : notion used in a question by Statistics Canada during the Census whereby respondents are asked how they identify themselves. A person who reports Aboriginal identity may belong to at least one Aboriginal group, band or First Nation and/or is a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian as defined by the *Indian Act*.

Indian : One of three peoples recognized as Aboriginal in the *Constitution Act, 1982*: Indian, Inuit, and Métis.

First Nation : A term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word "Indian". This is no legal definition of this term. The expression "First Nations peoples" refers to the Indian peoples in Canada, both Status and Non-Status.

Reserve : A territory which is set apart by the Federal Government for the use and benefit of an Aboriginal group or band. An Indian registered as a band member may live on the reserve, as well as non-status Indians (example: a Métis). The land is owned by the Crown and is managed by the Government.

A few words on the Anishnabe Communities

Pikogan / Abitibiwinini

The main activities of the Algonquins, who today belong to the Abitibiwinini Band, used to take place around Lac Abitibi. Shortly after Amos was founded, groups would gather from time to time around the town as they were attracted by the French Catholics and probably chased by the forestry operations. With legislation making schooling mandatory for the children, the Algonquins permanently settled near Amos. The reserve was created in 1955. For the past several years, the community has been offering canoe excursions on the Harricana. The community injects seven million dollars each year into the Amos economy. The reserve has its own band school. Police services are provided by an Aboriginal police force.

Eagle Village – Kipawa

The Kipawa Band was officially established in 1965. The reserve was built in 1974 when the Federal Government purchased some land from a company called Gordon Creek Improvement. Originally known as Kebaowek, the community is now called Eagle Village. The Band Council is known as the Eagle Village First Nation – Kipawa. Economic activities include the following: outfitting, forestry, trapping, transportation, commerce and services (arts and crafts, caterer and moccasin fabrication, gas station with restaurant, convenience store and hardware store). There is no school but a small fire station is operating. Police services are provided by the local police force.

Kitcisakik

The creation of Parc La Vérendrye, the opening of private clubs and outfitters, forestry activities and the construction of highway 117 and dams, including the Dozois, disrupted the lives of the Algonquins who traditionally occupied the Kitcisakik territory. The population of the community is the only one in the province of Quebec who is still nomadic. For some time, the band has been requesting a reserve. Negotiations are being continued for the construction of a village; the development plan was adopted by community consensus in 2003. As there is no permanent housing, the people live at summer camps situated at Grand-Lac-Victoria and winter camps situated at Lac Dozois. The oldest church in Abitibi-Témiscamingue is found on this territory. The inhabitants live in poorly insulated housing, without water, electricity nor sanitary services. They ensure the maintenance of the snowmobile trail which links Outaouais and the Laurentians to Val-d'Or. Health care and a community centre are available to the people.

Lac Simon

This band was created in 1910 by the Hudson's Bay Company and Father Blanchin who divided the Grand-Lake-Victoria Band into two groups. As some Aboriginal people were already living along the Bell River, formerly called the Nottaway, they were attached to the Lac Simon Band when it was created. By doing so, they aimed at removing these people from the harmful influence of the White people. The Lac Simon community has just begun operating a radio station (CHUT-

FM) which diffuses programming in English, French and Algonquin. The reserve was established in 1962. Four hundred students attend the band school. There is a small fire station and police services are provided by a recognized police force. Medical care is accessible at the Health Centre which is managed by the Band Council.

Winneway / Long Point First Nation

The Algonquins, who today reside in the settlement, formerly lived on a long point of land which extended towards Lac des Quinze on the northern side, facing Moffet. A Hudson's Bay trading post was constructed there as well as an Oblates mission founded in 1884. The chapel was built in 1891. The band would gather at this site each year. In the beginning of the 20th century, the community was established near Angliers, at Long Point. The erection of the generating station flooded the settlement. In 1950, the band moved near the mouth of the Winneway River, in the proximity of Lac Simard. Forestry is an important part of the Winneway people's economic activities. There is a small fire station and police services are provided by a recognized police force. A nursing station is managed by the Band Council.

Timiskaming

In the 16th century, the Timiskamings formed an important branch of the Algonquin Nation. Their bark canoes were spacious and solid and this allowed them to transport large quantities of merchandise on long distances. Some Algonquins were settled at the head of the lake in 1840. This reserve is one of the oldest in the province of Quebec and was established in 1849 by the Federal Government who set apart 40,500 acres of land at the time. The arrival of white settlers in the beginning of the 20th century led the band to surrender, sometimes involuntarily, parts of land. Today, only 1,852 acres remain. Until 1966, an Indian Affairs office serving the region of Temiscamingue and a small part of Ontario was operating in this community. Agriculture, arts and crafts, construction, forestry, trapping, tourism as well as commerce and services form the local economy. The community has access to a band school. Police services are provided by the local Aboriginal police force and a health centre is available in the community.

Hunter's Point / Wolf Lake Band Council

The Hunter's Point settlement is where the people from Wolf Lake live. At the end of World War II, young Algonquins from the Hunter's Point band returned from the war with new habits which included working at jobs in order to have an income. This had an important impact on the community who gradually left their traditional lifestyles and territory. In the 1950's, the Algonquins from Wolf Lake began moving to Hunter's Point. They were familiar with this place where a store, a school and a mission were established. Today, few families live at Hunter's Point on a permanent basis. As a reserve was never created, most of the members reside with those of Eagle Village or elsewhere in southern Temiscamingue.