

KEY FACTS: NOVA SCOTIA'S ABORIGINAL POPULATION

The Mi'kmaq are the founding people of Nova Scotia and remain the predominant Aboriginal group within the province. The Mi'kmaw nation has existed in what is now Nova Scotia for thousands of years, and is made up of thirteen Bands/First Nations, each of which is governed by a Chief and Council. All thirteen Chiefs in Nova Scotia come together on a regular basis as the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs. The Assembly plays a significant role in the collective decision making for the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, particularly on issues pertaining to Mi'kmaq rights, negotiations, consultation and governance.

In Nova Scotia, as in the rest of Canada, the Aboriginal population is much younger than the rest of the population. The median age of the First Nation population in Nova Scotia is 25.4 compared to 41.6 for the population as a whole. The Aboriginal population is also increasingly inclined to live off-reserve and in urban areas of the province. While the accuracy of current national statistics is not accepted by all groups, the current estimate is that nearly half of all Aboriginal people in the province live off-reserve.

The 2011 census (National Household Survey) and the December 31, 2013 AANDC Indian Registry System provide us with an overview of the population today.

The People

- The majority of the First Nation people in Nova Scotia are from the Mi'kmaw nation. Based on the 2011 census, there are 21,895 First Nations people living in Nova Scotia (or 2.7% of the total population).
- The same 2011 census revealed that there are 33,845 people of Aboriginal identity in Nova Scotia. This population makes up 2.7% of the total population of Nova Scotia.
- There are 15,972 Status Indians registered to Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw bands – 10,160 of this total population live on reserve in Nova Scotia (63%).
- The First Nation population is much younger than the general population with a median age of 25.4 versus 41.6 for the total population.

Communities

- There are 13 First Nation communities in Nova Scotia - the largest being Eskasoni (4,231) and Sipekne'katik (2,519).
- There are 42 reserve locations across Nova Scotia.
- A growing proportion of the Mi'kmaw population resides in Halifax (5,666).

Education

- Responsibility for on-reserve education has been delegated to the Mi'kmaq through a self-government agreement. High school graduation rates in Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK) schools continue to improve, reaching 87% in 2012-13.
- A total of 27% of the Aboriginal identity population 25-64 did not complete high school compared to 19% in the general population.
- 12% of the Aboriginal population 25-64 had a university degree versus 20% in the general population.

Labour Force Activity

- The unemployment rate for people living on reserve in the 2006 census was 24.6% versus 9.1% for all Nova Scotians. The unemployment rate for the Aboriginal identity population was 15.5%.
- In addition, only 50% of people living on-reserve participated in the labour force.
- This compares to 63% for the total Aboriginal identity population. This rate was the same as the general population.