

ELECTION '06 - SPECIAL EDITION

Aboriginal vote matters!

With a population already at 1.3 million and rapidly growing – especially in urban centres – the federal election is crucial to the future of Aboriginal peoples, and to Canada.

There are some 26 Aboriginal candidates running for office in this election – 16 Liberals, five each for the New Democrats and the Green Party, while the Conservatives do not seem to be able to identify how many they have in the race when the Forgotten People went to press. As well, there are numerous constituencies throughout the country, where the Aboriginal vote could be an important contributing factor in deciding the victor.

- ▲ There are 45 ridings with Aboriginal voting age populations that make up more than 5 per cent of the total vote;
- ▲ There are 32 ridings where the Aboriginal voting age population numbers more than 5,000;
- ▲ There are 8 ridings with Aboriginal voting age populations of 10,000 or more.

These ridings are located from Yukon and British Columbia, to Alberta and the Northwest Territories, through to Manitoba, but also have significant numbers in Ontario, Quebec and Labrador.

Aboriginal Ancestry Population Size in Canada

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census*

Total Aboriginal Population:

- **1.3 million** (Represents 4.4% of total Canadian population)
- Number off reserve 1,045,675
- **Percent off reserve 79%**

Composition:

- Indian 957,645 (includes Status and non Status Indians)
- Metis 266,020
- Inuit 51,020

Status Indian Population:

- Total 558,175
- Number on reserve 274,215
- Number off reserve 283,960
- **Percent off reserve 51%**

Size Off Reserve Aboriginal Population of Interest to CAP:

- Non Status Indian 399,470
- Off reserve Status Indian 283,960
- Metis 266,020
- **Total 949,450** or 72% (excluding Inuit) of the Aboriginal population of Canada

Summary Note:

Contrary to public perception only 1 out of 5 Aboriginal persons lives on reserves in Canada. Additionally, it is not generally realized by the public that almost the entire 7 billion or so dollars of the federal budget for Aboriginal affairs goes to this small minority. Current federal practice assumes all Aboriginal persons, whether registered Indians or not, living away from reserves to be the responsibility of the provinces, Territories and municipalities in which they reside.

*Source: Statistics Canada 2001 Census, 97F0011XCB01003 and 97F0011XCB01005
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Candidates running for office in these ridings need to pay strong attention to their Aboriginal constituents, and the issues of concern to them no matter where they live. In smaller provinces, such as in Atlantic Canada, the same urgent issues impact Aboriginal peoples living there every bit as much as provinces and territories with larger populations.

| | Aboriginal Population Size | OFF Reserve |
|--------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| Canada | 1,319,890 | 78% |
| NL | 28,065 | 98% |
| PE | 2,720 | 86% |
| NS | 33,415 | 78% |
| NB | 28,465 | 79% |
| QC | 159,905 | 80% |
| ON | 308,105 | 87% |
| MB | 160,250 | 68% |
| SK | 135,035 | 65% |
| AB | 199,015 | 81% |
| BC | 216,110 | 80% |
| YT | 6,990 | 72% |
| NT | 18,955 | 30% |
| NU | 22,665 | 100% |

Source: Statistics Canada 2001 Census

So regardless of region, Aboriginal voters should be demanding that local candidates in all parties provide their Aboriginal platforms that include issues of concern such as health care, including diabetes, HIV/Aids, SIDS, drug and alcohol programming; lifelong learning for Aboriginal peoples on and off-reserve, from early childhood development through to post-secondary education and skills development; employment creation and economic development, accessible and affordable housing

Off-reserve agendas

Since the vast majority of Aboriginal peoples - Indians, Metis and Inuit - do not live on First Nations reserves, they should be asking candidates about their parties' plans for Aboriginal people living in urban, rural and remote areas. That's because the vast majority of Aboriginal peoples do not live on reserves, but in cities, towns, villages and out on the

land, and that's because far too many Aboriginal peoples in these locations face the same grave problems as those living on reserve.

They should be asking their candidates to press their leaders to redress the grossly unfair imbalance in federal spending on Aboriginal peoples, which runs at an 9 to 1 ratio - \$8 billion directed to less than 300,000 First Nations people living on reserves, with the

balance distributed among more than 1 million Aboriginal peoples living throughout the country.

That is not an adequate nor an equitable distribution of resources to deal with problems - some of which have reached pandemic proportions - in Canada's urban centres. Off-reserve Aboriginal peoples need better educational opportunities from pre-school to post secondary education and skills development, along with better access to health services and safe, affordable housing, and career opportunities from entry level to managerial positions, and in the professions.

But the key to making a difference for Aboriginal peoples in this election is to exercise the franchise. Every Aboriginal vote counts.

Not voting counts for nothing!



Young and Restless: The Importance Of The Youth Vote

*By Patrick Brazeau
Vice-Chief, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples*

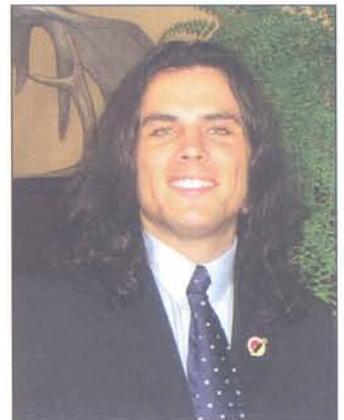
As the fastest-growing segment within Canada's population, we can have a lot more impact and clout than you might imagine. There's no way around it – in the years ahead, Aboriginal youth and young adults will soon make up the lion's share of the workforce, and become one of the country's biggest consumer groups. Many of us may wind up as leaders.

Yet, as a growing force in Canada, we've a lot to do to ensure that we take advantage of opportunities, apply ourselves and mobilize our place in society. One of the first and most important things to do in order to help make this happen is to vote. Traditionally, the statistics clearly demonstrate that not very many of us choose to do this. Anyone's reason for deciding not to vote is their own – and as a personal choice, it's entirely valid.

But as one of the youngest Aboriginal leaders in the country, I want to tell you that becoming involved – in my community, in lifelong learning and in politics was one of the best decisions I'd ever made in my life.

As a member of the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, I felt much the same as many of you had likely

felt: Canada didn't understand me; the Government's record of really helping our people was dismal; and, there was the overwhelming feeling that it was all so futile – what difference could I make?



Then, it dawned on me: Perhaps the game of life may have odds that are fixed, but I'm sure not going to win if I don't play. With that view in mind, I started making changes and decided to try and make things a bit better wherever I could.

Deciding to attend university was the first step. It was a long hard climb but it was through this that I got a glimpse into what goes on in the Aboriginal affairs world. Working at Indian and Northern Affairs Canada showed me how the wheels of Government turn – and also led me to want to change things so that Aboriginal peoples are treated as more than a "target audience" for programs and services.

We all know what our peoples needs are: **CONSULTATION** – in the development of programs, services and strategies for Aboriginal



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peoples; **ACCOMMODATION** – by ensuring that our voices are heard, and our rights and traditions are respected; and, **INCLUSION** – meaning that when programs, services and strategies are developed and launched, they reflect the needs and aspirations of off-reserve Indians and Métis.

It's a known fact that in many communities, the teachings of our elders and community leaders do not focus on elections or the need to vote. In fact, in most cases, our teachings focus on our own communities, and see non-Aboriginal governments as something foreign to us. I respect and believe in our teachings and the views of our elders very much. But, it is my personal view that if we are gain control of our destinies and stake our rightful claim in Canada's prosperity, we must become fully involved in its election process. By deciding to vote, you are not "*supporting*" a foreign government and you are by no means "*selling out*".

What you are deciding to do is making a strong statement that you have a right to vote, that you want to be a part of this society and that you are equal to any other citizen in this great land we call "Kanada".

It is time we stop playing the victim and begin controlling our own destinies. The first step we can take is to vote and hold these representatives fully accountable for their actions. This is how we will "*move the sticks*" and gain ground.

There are many things you can do to become involved: Ask the candidates in your area what the position of their party is on Aboriginal affairs, and specifically, have them explain what their party is prepared to do to help off-reserve Indians and Métis? If you have access to the Internet, search the websites of the main federal parties and look for information on their Aboriginal platforms. You can also look to see what the party positions are on other key areas that affect us as Aboriginal peoples: healthcare, education, childcare, economic opportunities and self-government. Also important is the need to learn which of the parties have Aboriginal candidates.

Most importantly, if you choose to become informed and active, the best return on your investment in the time you have spent to learn about the issues before us is to cast your vote on Election Day. Our numbers are growing, and if our voice is heard at the ballot box, we can have a significant effect on the make-up of the next Parliament – and its willingness to address the pressing needs of our people.

Casting a vote does not just help an individual, – it helps a Nation. Hence, it sends a clear signal that discrimination and racism against Aboriginal people is over – your vote positions you as an equal and as a citizen involved in your country.

If not for the candidate, do it for your country. If not for your country, do it for the benefit of your people. If not for your people, do it for your own empowerment.





Canada Votes 2006: National Chief Calls For Aboriginal Outreach and Action

As the 2006 Federal election looms days away, Dwight Dorey, National Chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) is urging Aboriginal peoples to mobilize their considerable numbers and vote. He is doing so in recognition of the troubling absence of focus upon Aboriginal issues in the campaign thus far.

"It seems incredible that despite the election call coming only four days after an historic First Ministers Meeting in Kelowna, at which over \$5 billion in investments for Aboriginal programs and services were announced, that there has been virtually no campaign around the pressing issues confronting Canada's first peoples," said Chief Dorey.

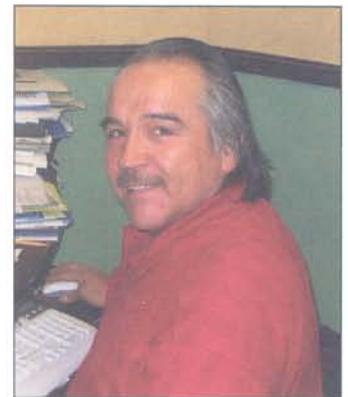
The National Chief added, "Nothing has changed since Kelowna. The machinery that would have brought about any implementation of the investments ground to a halt with the calling of the election. The First Ministers Meeting left us with a sense of optimism that politicians of all stripes across the federal, provincial and territorial landscape had put aside partisanship and were finally prepared to work together to bring about real solutions to real issues affecting real families. I know longer feel this is the case. I'm frankly disturbed that none of the mainstream federal

parties has yet to address the needs of our peoples", said Chief Dorey.

As part of its outreach program around the 2006 federal election, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples is engaging the

mainstream federal parties. In letters to Paul Martin, Stephen Harper and Jack Layton, the Congress has posed a series of ten questions regarding their positions and platforms in respect of Aboriginal public policy, and specifically focusing upon the degree to which they are prepared to recognize and embrace the needs of off-reserve and non-status Indians, and Métis.

On the basis of our analyses of these responses, CAP hopes to be in a position to offer its public endorsement to the party whose platform best recognizes and seeks to address the needs and aspirations of off-reserve and non-status Indians, and Métis. More importantly, Chief Dorey asserted the need for Aboriginal peoples to apply their significant numbers in ensuring that Aboriginal concerns are addressed by the simplest yet most effective means – voting.



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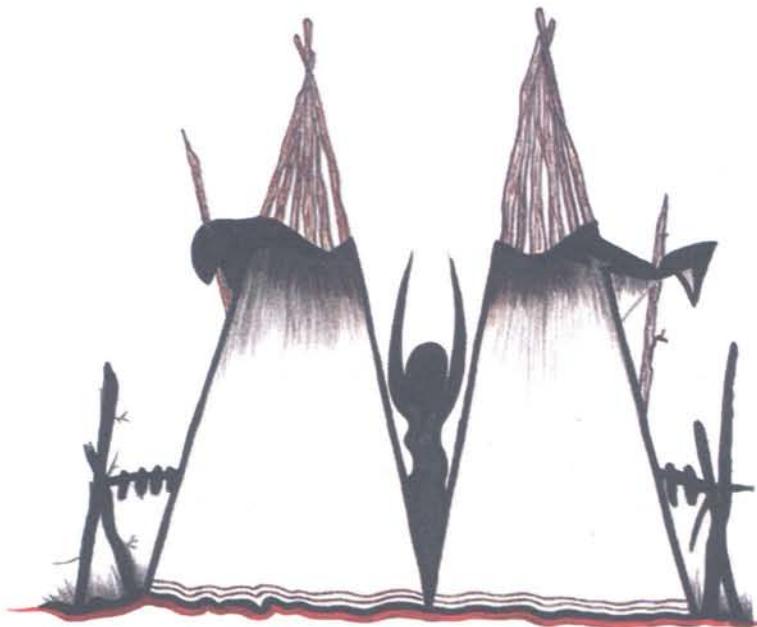


"There are many compelling reasons for our people to take advantage of their vote and make a difference," said Chief Dorey. "We're the fastest growing demographic in Canada. If we apply our vote and purposefully endorse those candidates who are sensitive to the needs of Aboriginal peoples, we make a real difference in several key ridings. The result is greater support for Aboriginal issues in the House of Commons," said the National Chief.

Chief Dorey also emphasized that the Aboriginal right to vote was something that only came to pass a mere forty-six years ago. "I consider the right to vote a leveling of the playing field between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. The more we can do to overcome voter apathy among our peoples, the better the odds we have of sending MPs to Ottawa who

can speak for our peoples and ensure that injustices to Aboriginal peoples become a thing of the past," urged the National Chief. There are a number of websites available to persons to help them become familiar with how the federal election works, with advice on how to become involved and learn more about how to make their vote work. Elections Canada has a great deal of information at the following location: <http://www.elections.ca> As well, CBC has a good site at www.cbc.ca/canadavotes.

Chief Dorey offered Aboriginal persons the last word on the value of voting in the January 23rd election: "In the final analysis, it really is all about staking your claim on Canada's future – and through this, making sure your own interests are protected as well.





THE CONGRESS OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

The National Voice of Off-Reserve Aboriginal People Throughout Canada

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, (CAP), is the national voice of off-reserve Aboriginal people throughout Canada. We are a grassroots-driven, national voice for our communities, advocating for the rights and interests of off-reserve and non-status Indians and Métis people, living in urban, rural and remote areas of Canada. The Congress is at the leading edge of issues and opportunities that impact Aboriginal peoples across Canada.

Founded in 1971 as the Native Council of Canada, our initial goal was to re-establish recognition of our constituents as Aboriginal people, and to obtain fundamental Aboriginal and human rights for them. Our work continues today as the effects of urbanization and globalization are increasingly felt in social and economic trends that have direct bearing on off-reserve Aboriginal peoples.

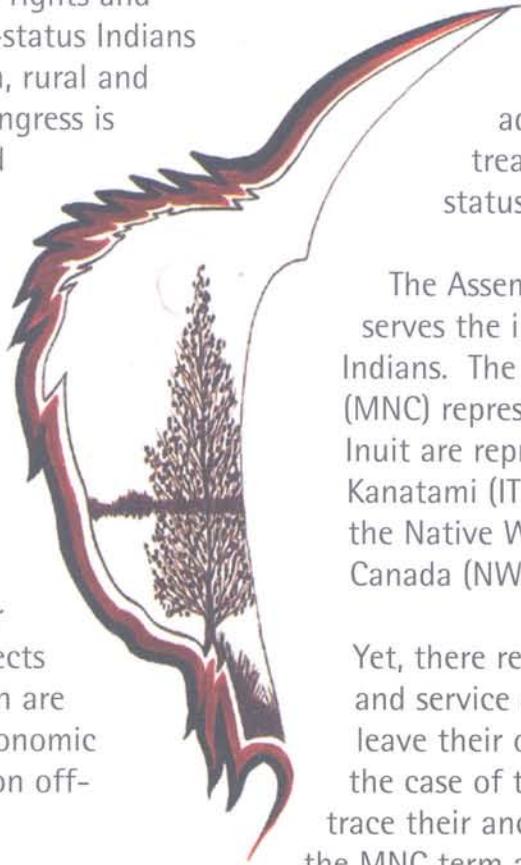
Seventy-nine per cent of Aboriginal people live away from Indian Reserves, while Aboriginal policies and programming in Canada is directed to on-reserve "First Nations" people at a ratio of over 8:1.

The goals of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples are targeted to achieving social and economic equity for its constituents in housing, health care, education, employment and economic development. A key component of CAP's mandate continues to be advocacy for Aboriginal and treaty rights for Métis and non-status Indian people.

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) serves the interests of on-reserve Indians. The Métis National Council (MNC) represents some Métis people. The Inuit are represented by the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), and Aboriginal women, by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC).

Yet, there remains a large gap in program and service delivery once individuals leave their on-reserve communities, or in the case of the Métis, if they cannot trace their ancestral lineage back to what the MNC term as the "Métis homelands" in Western Canada.

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples is the organization that advocates on behalf of the "Forgotten People", those who are otherwise voiceless at the National level. We have a



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distinguished thirty-five year history of undertaking research and program/service delivery, as well as carrying out ongoing government relations. All these efforts seek to build mutual understanding and broader acceptance of the off-reserve and non-status constituency. The Congress is also a recognized non-governmental organization (NGO) with the United Nations.

We are here to amplify the voice of our people at all levels, from local to global. We are committed to ensuring that Aboriginal people attain a standard of living equitable to all Canadians. We seek to engage others – to participate, contribute and to gain benefit – to consider and influence the effects of our collective decisions on behalf of future generations, so that our children and grandchildren can inherit healthy and sustainable communities and enjoy the prosperity they so richly deserve.

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples



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