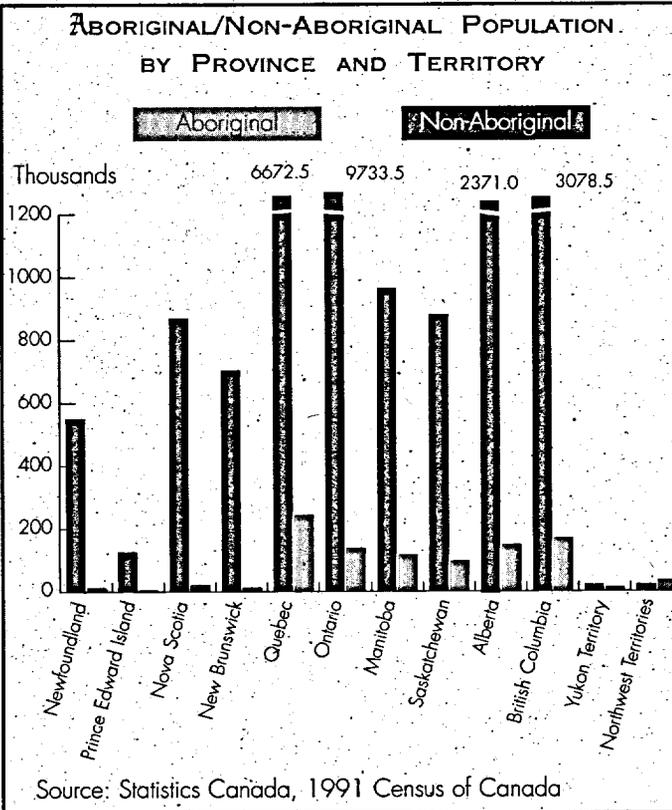


Within the Indian population, there are both *Status* and *Non-Status* Indians. Status Indians, who are also referred to as "First Nations people", are those who have been "registered" under federal legislation. Registration entitles individuals to certain benefits, including the option to live on reserves, special areas of land that have been set aside by the Government of Canada for the sole use and benefit of Indian bands (formally recognized groups of Indians). There are about 2300 reserves across Canada, comprising over 2.8 million hectares of land — an area almost as large as Belgium. About 60 per cent of status Indians live on reserves.

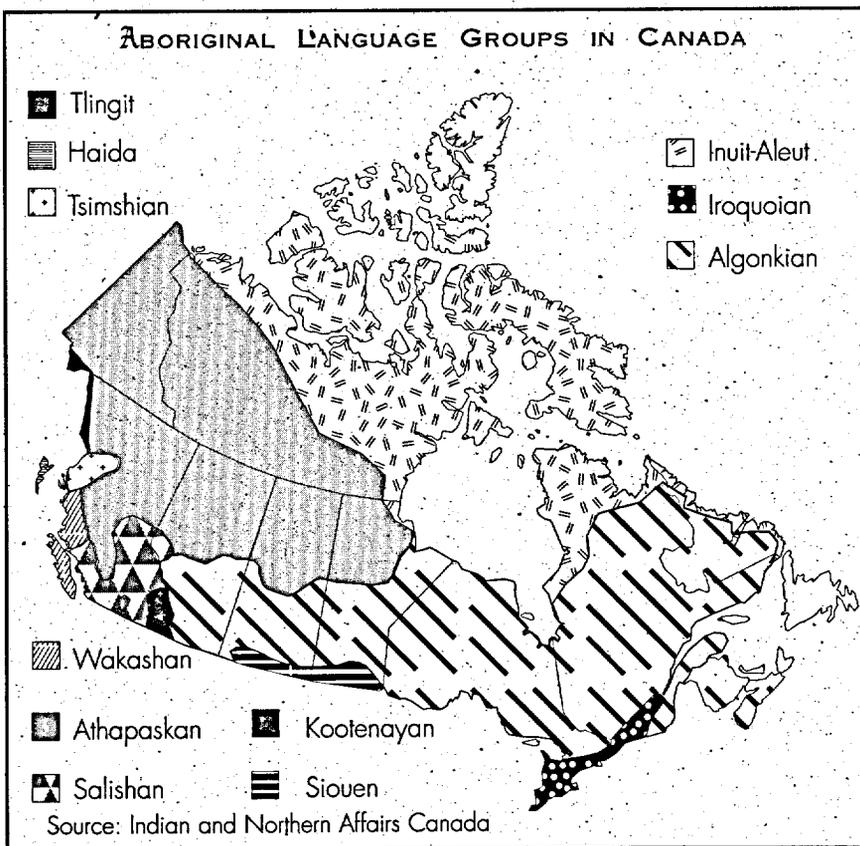
The remaining Status Indians, as well as Non-Status Indians, live off reserves, often in urban centres. In fact, a larger proportion of the overall Indian population (Status and Non-Status combined) now lives in urban centres than on reserves. The vast majority of Inuit live in small communities scattered throughout the eastern Arctic region of the Northwest Territories and along the coastlines of northern Quebec and Labrador. The majority of Métis are concentrated in the three Prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, where there are many predominantly Métis communities.

Historically, Aboriginal people were as diverse in their lifestyles, political systems, customs and beliefs as the people of the different countries of Europe, Asia and



Africa. These differences remain evident today, and are reflected in the existence of several Indian cultural areas in Canada, each composed of a number of "tribes" or "nations" that continue to have their own distinct customs, beliefs and concerns. The Inuit form a separate cultural area in the North. The Métis, who also have a unique culture, are persons of mixed Indian and European ancestry.

Further evidence of the diversity of Aboriginal people can be found in the existence of 11 major linguistic families, each consisting of individual but related languages. In total, more than 50 Aboriginal languages exist in Canada (see map).



ACKNOWLEDGING THE PAST

For Aboriginal people, one of the most important documents in Canada's history is the *Royal Proclamation of 1763*. Among other things, this Proclamation decreed that only the British Crown could deal with Indians on land matters. Since that time, governments have sought to