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## THE CANADIAN INDIAN; A BRIEF OUTLINE

(Prepared by the Indian Group, Office of the Public Information Adviser, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Ottawa.)

At the time of the first settlements in North America, the Indian population of what is now Canada was, according to the best estimates of anthropologists, about 200,000. Shortly after the arrival of Europeans, the Indian population started to decline until it became a common belief that the Indians were a dying race. The population had decreased by almost half early in this century, but after steady increases since that time, there is a total Indian population of more than 257,000 today.

There are 561 Indian communities, known as "bands". With the exception of certain nomadic groups inhabiting the outlying and northern regions, these bands are located on 2,300 "reserves"<sup>(1)</sup>, varying in size from a few acres to more than 500 square miles, set aside by the Canadian Government for the use and benefit of Indians. About 25 per cent of the total Indian population have chosen to live off reserves as members of the general community. Successful farmers, ranchers, lumbermen, doctors, dentists, lawyers, teachers, nurses, clergymen, soldiers, industrial workers, stenographers, mechanics, salesmen and tradesmen are numbered in the Indian work force -- both on and off reserves.

Although the origin of the Indians remains uncertain, anthropologists believe that they came to America in successive migrations in pre-historic times from Northern Asia, probably by way of Bering Sea.

The Indians are not a single people. They are divided into a number of basic linguistic groups that are, in turn, subdivided into language groups with many local dialects. There are ten linguistic groups, of which four are found east of the Rocky Mountains -- Algonkian, Athapaskan, Iroquoian and Siouan, and six in British Columbia -- Kootenayan, Salishan, Wakashan, Tsimshian, Haida and Tlinkit. Some Athapaskan-speaking Indian bands also live in the interior of British Columbia.

The Indians of Algonkian origin are the most numerous, covering an area from the Atlantic Ocean to the Rockies; they include such well-known tribes as the Micmacs of Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, the Montagnais of Quebec, and the Ojibway, Cree and Blackfoot of Ontario and the Prairie Provinces.

(1) The Canadian term "reserve" is nearly the exact equivalent of the United States term "reservation".

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