

The Indian population in each province is classified by age group and sex in Table 3. The rapid growth of that population in recent years is indicated by the fact that in 1964 approximately 58 per cent of the Indians were under 21 years of age compared with 42 per cent of the population of Canada as a whole. Religious denominations of the Indian population are given in Table 4.

Administration

Pursuant to the British North America Act, the administration of Indian affairs, which had been under the management of several provinces, came under the jurisdiction of the Government of Canada. Since January 1950, Indian affairs have been the responsibility of a Branch of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

The Indian Affairs Branch is composed of a headquarters staff at Ottawa, eight regional offices, two district offices in the Province of Ontario and 87 field agencies. Specialists in such matters as education, economic development, community development, resource management, social welfare, and engineering and construction are attached to headquarters and regional staffs. Liaison is maintained with the Indian and Northern Health Services of the Department of National Health and Welfare, the federal agency concerned with the medical care of Indians.

It is the primary function of the Indian Affairs Branch to administer the affairs of Indians in a manner that will enable them to participate fully in the social and economic life of the country. To this end, the Branch has brought into effect a wide range of programmes in the fields of education, economic development, social welfare and community development. Underlying administrative duties of the Branch include the management of Indian reserves and surrendered lands, the administration of band funds, estates management, enfranchisement of Indians and the administration of treaty obligations.

Welfare

Welfare services and social benefits available to Indians at present include those administered and financed by the Indian Affairs Branch and Indian bands, those developed through co-operative cost-sharing arrangements with provincial, municipal and private organizations, and programmes conducted by other federal and provincial government departments.

Indians are eligible for family allowances, youth allowances and old-age security administered by the Federal Government, as well as for old-age assistance and blind and disabled persons' allowances administered by provincial governments. In the Province of Ontario, Indian women may receive mothers' allowances and assistance to widows and unmarried women on the same basis as non-Indian women; indigent Indian mothers in Quebec are eligible for needy mothers' allowances and, upon application, abandoned children and adult Indians in Nova Scotia receive certain benefits in accordance with the Nova Scotia Social Assistance Act.