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THE INDIANS OF CANADA

(Reprinted from the Canada Year Book 1966.)

More than 210,000 Canadians are registered as Indians by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. Registered Indians include all persons descended in the male line from a paternal ancestor of Indian identity, who have chosen to remain under Indian legislation. They are grouped, for the most part, into 558 bands and occupy or have access to 2,267 reserves or settlements having a total area of 5,975,647 acres.

Some 26 per cent of the registered Indians reside away from reserves. This portion includes those in the Yukon and Northwest Territories, for whom reserves have not been set aside. Many Indians, both on and off reserves, have specialized in various professions, trades and agricultural pursuits and others have found employment in a wide range of occupations and fitted into the economy of the areas in which they live. Some 290 Indians are employed by the Indian Affairs Branch of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, 109 of them as teachers. In the northern and other outlying areas, hunting, fishing and trapping remain an important means of livelihood for Indians.

Apart from special provisions in the Indian Act, Indians are subject to all laws of general application. They are liable for taxation of property held off a reserve and for any income they earn off a reserve. They may vote in federal elections on the same basis as other citizens and in provincial elections where the electoral laws of the province permit. Indians are free to enter into contractual obligations and may sue and be sued. However, their real and personal property situated on a reserve is exempt from seizure except on suit by another Indian.

A Departmental census of Indian population is taken every five years and the numbers recorded at the three latest censuses - 1949, 1954 and 1959 - are given in Table 2; the figures for 1960-64 are taken from band membership lists kept for administrative purposes by the Indian Affairs Branch.

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