

No Special Relationship: Non-Status Indians And Metis

Over 1,000,000 Native persons are either *Non-Status Indians*, those not covered by special agreements, and *Metis*, who are of mixed blood, that is, descended from a marriage where at least one person was a Non-Status Indian. Although persons from both of these Native groups frequently have strong cultural, historical, and biological ties with Status Indians, they are almost entirely dependent upon provincial governments for services.

Contentious Issues: Gaining, Retaining And Losing Status

There are contentious issues which underscore the difference between Status, Non-Status and Metis persons. A Status Indian who marries a Non-Status woman (either Indian or not) retains his status, and the woman gains status. Children born from such a marriage are considered Status Indians. But if a Status Indian woman marries a Non-Status man, she loses her status as do the children from such a marriage. In losing her status, the woman is ineligible for the special services which are provided by the Federal Government to Status Indians. These facts of differentiation are a source of difficulty both for the Native people involved and the Federal Government. That an Indian person gains, retains or loses status is a complex historical development. There is no easy path for improving the situation in the future, because improvement involves a fundamental review of the relationship between all Native people and the Federal Government. The Federal Government now is committed to reviewing criteria for status in order to end discrimination. Indian leaders would like to use this opportunity to review and amend the Indian Act in light of the movement for self determination. This is a process which has already begun, but which may take many more years of consultation.

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Jurisdictional Disputes Between Governments

The Federal Government delivers services to Status Indians on reserves, and is willing to pay for services for the first year for those individuals who leave the reserve. In recent times, because of greatly increased migration of Status Indians from the reserves to urban centres, a dispute has developed between the Federal and Provincial Governments regarding the responsibility for delivering services to those individuals who are away from the reserve for more than a year. Some provinces, for their part, are reluctant or unwilling to foot the bill for a service that they consider to be the responsibility of the Federal Government. If the provinces do provide services to these individuals, they will frequently bill the Federal Government for having done so. This is a practice which in essence constitutes a double billing for a single service, since transfer payment arrangements between the Federal and Provincial Governments for social services are based on a population analysis which includes the Indian population. The dispute over this matter of service to Status Indians away from the reserve leaves the Indians themselves confused since they are frequently left without any services while the two Governments are arguing over ultimate responsibility.

New Development: The Friendship Centres

Traditionally, the Federal Government has provided services to Inuit and to Status Indians living on lands exclusively reserved for them. With the increasing migration of Native people (including Inuit and Status Indians) to urban centres, however, the Government has supported the development of special referral or liaison facilities called Friendship Centres. These are described in detail in Recommendation #4 of this report. The Centres provide advice to Status and Non-Status persons, who are living in an urban centre or who are migrating, on matters of employment, housing, education, health and other community services that are available to them. These Friendship Centres are