

# 2016 Census of Canada

## Aboriginal People

### Introduction

*This release examines the demographic and geographic aspects of the Aboriginal identity population in Alberta from the 2016 Census. The Aboriginal population is relatively young and growing at a fast rate. The majority of Aboriginal people lived in urban areas of the province.*

### Aboriginal Identity Population

#### Aboriginal population in Alberta the third largest among the provinces

Overall, there were 1,673,780 Aboriginal people who self-identified in the 2016 Census in Canada, accounting for 4.9% of the total population of Canada (Table 1). Out of these, 15.5% (258,640) people with an Aboriginal identity lived in Alberta. In terms of population counts, the third largest Aboriginal population resided in Alberta, behind Ontario (374,395) and British Columbia (270,585). The Aboriginal identity population accounted for 6.5% of the total Alberta population, giving Alberta the fourth largest proportion of Aboriginal people among the provinces, following Manitoba (18.0%), Saskatchewan (16.3%) and Newfoundland and Labrador (8.9%).

All provinces had a larger proportion of First Nations than Métis or Inuit (Figure 1). Prince Edward Island, followed by Saskatchewan and British Columbia, had the highest proportion of First Nations in the Aboriginal population, while Alberta had the third lowest proportion. In contrast, Alberta (44.2%) had the second highest proportion of Métis, behind Nova Scotia (45.3%).

### Population Growth

#### Aboriginal identity population is growing at a fast rate

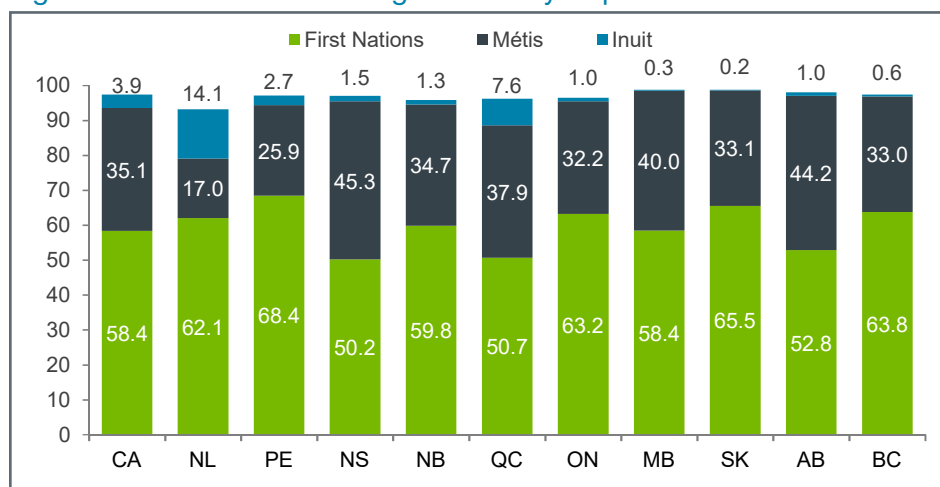
In general, the Aboriginal identity population is growing at a fast rate. In Canada, the Aboriginal population grew by 42.5% since 2006, while in Alberta it grew at a slightly lower rate of 37.1%, or 3.2% annually on average. By comparison, the non-Aboriginal population in Alberta grew by 22.3% over the same period (Table 2).

**Table 1. Aboriginal Identity Population as a % of the Total Population, 2016**

	CA	NL	PE	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC
Aboriginal Identity	4.9	8.9	2.0	5.7	4.0	2.3	2.8	18.0	16.3	6.5	5.9
First Nations	2.8	5.5	1.3	2.8	2.4	1.2	1.8	10.5	10.7	3.4	3.8
Métis	1.7	1.5	0.5	2.6	1.4	0.9	0.9	7.2	5.4	2.9	2.0
Inuit	0.2	1.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0
Non-Aboriginal	95.1	91.1	98.0	94.3	96.0	97.7	97.2	82.0	83.7	93.5	94.1

**Note:** Single response categories do not sum to the Aboriginal Identity, as that also includes multiple response categories, which are not included in this table.

**Figure 1: Breakdown of Aboriginal Identity Population**



**Table 2. Population Growth in Alberta, 2006 - 2016**

	2006	2016 <sup>5</sup>	Growth (%)	Average Annual Growth (%)	Doubling Time (Years)
Aboriginal Identity	187,940	258,640	37.1	3.2	21.6
First Nation	97,130	136,585	39.6	3.4	20.4
Métis	85,240	114,375	34.1	3.0	23.3
Inuit	1,600	2,500	55.6	4.5	15.3
Non-Aboriginal	3,040,130	3,719,505	22.3	2.0	34.1

The First Nations population experienced the largest increase at 39.6%, while the Metis population grew by 34.1% since 2006. Although the Inuit population made up only 1.0% of the population in Alberta, that group had the highest relative increase at 55.6%. To put this into perspective, if growth continued at the current rates into the future, the Aboriginal identity population would double in size within 21.6 years, whereas First Nations would double within 20.4 years, Metis within 23.3 years and the Inuit population would double in size within 15.3 years.

## Sex Ratio

### Aboriginal females outnumber males in Alberta

In the total Aboriginal identity population in Alberta, there were 125,440 males and 133,200 females, a sex ratio of 94.2 males per 100 females. For First Nations, the sex ratio was 92.8 males per 100 females, while the Metis ratio was 96.5 (Table 3). By comparison, the non-Aboriginal population in Alberta had 101.4 males per 100 females. Alberta and Saskatchewan were the only two provinces to have more males than females in the non-Aboriginal population. This phenomenon is probably due to a higher proportion of working age male migrants seeking employment in the resource-based industries.

In all provinces, there were a larger number of First Nations females in the population. The Metis populations followed a similar trend with the exception of New Brunswick and Québec; in those provinces, there were more Metis males than females. This pattern also accounts for the larger sex ratio in the overall Aboriginal identity population in these two provinces. In general, the sex ratio reflects the poorer survival outcome of males over the age span. Males tend to have a higher risk of dying from external causes of death (e.g. accidents and violence) in the younger ages and this is where most Aboriginal populations begin having a larger number of females (i.e., after around 15 to 20 years of age).

**Table 3. Number of Males per 100 Females**

	CA	NL	PE	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC
Aboriginal Identity	94.6	93.5	90.9	93.6	100.0	101.0	92.6	94.5	93.8	94.2	92.8
First Nations	93.2	92.2	93.3	93.2	94.9	96.5	91.1	93.2	93.2	92.8	94.1
Métis	97.1	94.9	86.8	94.5	111.1	109.6	95.9	96.5	95.9	96.5	91.5
Non-Aboriginal	97.2	96.3	94.7	94.3	95.8	97.9	95.7	98.9	100.4	101.4	96.6

**Table 4. Age Structure of Population in Alberta, 2006 & 2016**

		%				
		Aboriginal	First Nations	Métis	Inuit	Non-Aboriginal
2006	0-14	31.2	34.7	27.5	32.2	18.7
	15-24	19.2	19.2	19.2	24.1	14.7
	25-44	29.3	28.1	30.5	32.2	30.1
	45-64	16.5	14.5	18.6	10.9	26.1
	65+	3.8	3.5	4.1	1.3	10.5
2016	0-14	29.1	32.2	25.3	30.6	18.7
	15-24	17.7	18.1	17.3	15.6	12.1
	25-44	28.4	27.7	29.0	33.2	30.7
	45-64	19.7	17.6	22.3	17.2	26.6
	65+	5.2	4.4	6.1	3.4	11.8
	Avg. Age	29.8	28.1	31.8	28.5	37.8

## Age Structure

### The Aboriginal population in Alberta was young

The Aboriginal population in Alberta was young compared to the non-Aboriginal population. This was generally the case for Aboriginal people in the rest of Canada, as well. In Alberta, close to half of the Aboriginal population was under the age of 25 (46.7% compared to 30.8% in the non-Aboriginal population), while over two-thirds of the non-Aboriginal population was over 25 years of age (69.2% compared to 53.3%). The youthfulness of the Aboriginal population was also evident in the average age, which was 29.8 years in 2016. By comparison, the average age of the non-Aboriginal population in Alberta was 37.8 years.

A more detailed look at the age structure of the population in Alberta shows some interesting patterns (Table 4). The largest proportional differences between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations were among children under 15 years of age and with those 45 years of age and older. In 2016, the Aboriginal population had a much higher proportion of children (29.1% compared to 18.7%), while the non-Aboriginal population had over double the percentage of seniors (11.8% compared to 5.2%). Both Metis and First Nations in Alberta followed a similar age pattern, but the differences were more pronounced among the First Nations.

### The Aboriginal population is aging faster than the non-Aboriginal population

Despite the relative youthfulness of the Aboriginal population in Alberta, it is aging at a modest rate. This is evident in the shifting age structure, as the share of the population below 45 years of age has declined by 5.9% since 2006, while the proportion aged 45 and older has increased by 23.1%. This trend was apparent for the First Nations and

Metis populations, as well as for non-Aboriginal population, but the pace of aging is much slower for the non-Aboriginal population.

Although Aboriginal seniors make up a smaller proportion compared to non-Aboriginal seniors (5.2% compared to 11.8%), the proportion of Aboriginal seniors increased at a faster rate between 2006 and 2016; 37.5% compared to 13.2% for the non-Aboriginal senior population. The Metis population was responsible for much of this growth, as the proportion of Metis seniors grew by 48.1% between the two censuses, while growth among First Nations was 24.5% (or from 3.5% to 4.4% of the population).

#### **A greater ratio of dependents overall in the Aboriginal population, due to the higher proportion of children**

The dependency ratio (DR) also reflected the relative youthfulness of the Aboriginal population, as the child dependency ratio (CDR) was much higher (44.2 children per 100 people of working age (15 to 64 years) compared with a ratio of 27.0 children for the non-Aboriginal population. At the same time, the senior dependency ratio (SDR) was much higher for the non-Aboriginal population (17.1 seniors per 100 working age population compared to 7.9 seniors). Similar to the previous comparison, the First Nations overall dependency ratio was higher than for the Metis population (57.6 dependents per 100 working age population compared to 45.7 dependents). This was largely due to the child dependency ratio, while the senior ratio was only slightly higher among the Metis. The largest component of overall dependency in the Aboriginal population was child dependency; the opposite was the case among the non-Aboriginal population, where senior dependency was the most important driver of the overall rate.

**Table 5. Dependency Ratios (DR) in Alberta, 2016**

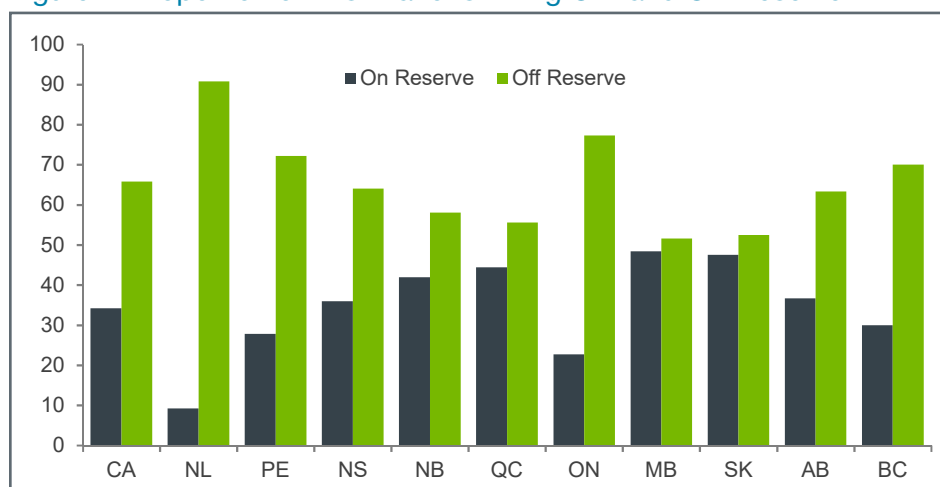
	/100 Working Age Population (15 to 64 years)				
	Aboriginal	First Nation	Métis	Inuit	Non-Aboriginal
Dependency Ratios	52.1	57.6	45.7	51.8	44.1
Child Dependency Ratio	44.2	50.7	36.8	46.6	27.0
Senior Dependency Ratio	7.9	6.9	8.9	5.2	17.1

### **Regional Distribution**

#### **The majority of First Nations lived off-reserve**

In Alberta, the percentage of First Nations living on a reserve fell from 41.3% in 2006 to 36.6%, or 50,045, by 2016. This means that the majority (63.4%) of First Nations in Alberta were living off-reserve (Figure 2), a pattern that was consistent with the other provinces. Manitoba (48.4%) had the largest on-reserve population, followed by Saskatchewan (47.5%) and Quebec (44.4%). In Alberta, First Nations males were more likely than females to live on a reserve (38.5% compared to 34.9%). At the national level, 35.7% of First Nations males lived on reserve, compared with 32.9% of females.

**Figure 2. Proportion of First Nations Living On- and Off-Reserve**



#### **Population shares of Aboriginal people highest in some northern regions of the province**

The Aboriginal identity population was widely distributed throughout the province (Map 1). Aboriginal people made up the largest proportion of the total population in Census Division (CD) 17 (Slave Lake) at 40.7%, followed by CD 18 (Grande Cache) at 23.2%, CD 12 (Cold Lake) (22.7%) and CD 3 (Pincher Creek) (22.1%). Despite having populations with large proportions of Aboriginal people and covering a large area of the province, the four CDs combined were home to only 50,750 Aboriginal people, accounting for around one-fifth of the Aboriginal population in Alberta.

#### **The largest Aboriginal population lived in the Edmonton region**

Census Divisions 11 (Edmonton) and 6 (Calgary) were home to the largest number of Aboriginal people (Figure 3); in 2016, 32.4% (or 83,750) of Aboriginal people lived in CD 11, followed by CD 6 (46,280 or 17.9%). Together, these two

CDs accounted for half of the Aboriginal population (43.5% of First Nations, 57.7% of Metis and 67.6% of Inuit) in the province.

### First Nations were the majority in some regions, the Metis in others

The three CDs where First Nations made up the largest proportion of the Aboriginal population were CD 3 (Pincher Creek) (90.7%), CD 15 (Banff) (86.7%) and CD 17 (Slave Lake) (75.6%). The CDs with a larger proportion of Metis were CD 14 (Edson) (67.5%), CD 4 (Hanna) (67.3%) and CD 1 (Medicine Hat) (64.2%).

### In many CDs, the majority of Aboriginal people lived in urban areas

In many CDs, the majority of the Aboriginal population lived in the more populous census subdivisions (CSDs), or municipalities (Map 2). For instance, of the total Aboriginal population in CD 1, 84.2% resided in Medicine Hat (86.9% of First Nations and 82.8% of Metis), while in CD 2, 69.3% (78.1% of First Nations and 55.7% of Metis) lived in Lethbridge. In CD 16, 74.1% resided in Wood Buffalo (63.6% of First Nations and 95.0% of Metis).

### Almost half of Aboriginal people in Alberta lived in the Edmonton and Calgary CMAs

The pattern was similar in the two most populous CDs, 76.0% of Aboriginal people in CD 6 lived in the City of Calgary (78.3% First Nations, 74.4% of Metis), while in CD 11, 60.0% lived in the City of Edmonton (57.7% of First Nations and 61.8% of Metis). Nearly one in five of all Aboriginal people in Alberta lived in the City of Edmonton (50,280 or 19.4%), while 13.6% or 35,195, lived in the City of Calgary. If the surrounding CSDs that make up the census metropolitan areas (CMAs) of Edmonton and Calgary are also included, 29.5% of the total Aboriginal population in Alberta lived in the CMA of Edmonton, whereas 16.1% lived in the Calgary CMA. Almost half (45.6%) lived in those two CMAs (38.0% of First Nations and 53.9% of Metis).

### In some CDs, most of the First Nations population lived on-reserve

In some CDs, the majority of First Nations were living on reserves in 2016. In CD 3 (Pincher Creek), for example, 63.0% of First Nations lived on Blood 148 and 20.9% resided on Piikani 147, while in CD 5 (Drumheller), 80.8% of First Nations lived on Siksika 146. In CD 9 (Rocky Mountain House), the majority lived on O'Chiese 203 (37.6%) and Sunchild 202 (35.0%). Further, 91.6% of First Nations in CD 15 (Banff) lived on Stoney 142, while 61.1% in CD 18 (Grande Cache) lived on Sturgeon Lake 154. In CD 17 (Slave Lake), however, 67.2%, or 12,555, of First Nations were dispersed in the 27 reserves in that division, with the largest populations on Fox Lake 162 (1,980) and John d'Or Prairie 215 (1,160). Together, these reserves accounted for over a half (57.0% or 28,515) of the First Nations population living on a reserve in Alberta. Several reserves in CD 11 (Edmonton) and CD 8 (Red Deer) were also home to large First Nations populations.

1. **Aboriginal Identity Population** - Persons who reported identifying with at least one Aboriginal group, that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit, and/or those who reported being a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian, as defined by the Indian Act of Canada, and/or those who reported they were members of an Indian band or First Nation. In general, the category includes:

**Single Aboriginal responses** – persons who are in only one Aboriginal group, that is First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit); Multiple Aboriginal responses – persons who are any two or all three of the following: First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit) and; Aboriginal responses not included elsewhere – persons who are not First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit), but who have Registered or Treaty Indian status and/or Membership in a First Nation or Indian band.

2. For **First Nations**, users should be aware that the estimates associated with this variable are more affected than most by the incomplete enumeration of certain Indian reserves and Indian settlements in the 2016 Census of Population. For additional information, refer to the Aboriginal Peoples Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2016.
3. 'Population' in this highlight refers to the non-institutional population i.e. excludes people living in an institutional collective dwelling, like a hospital, nursing home or a jail. All data in this publication is from the Censuses of Canada, conducted by Statistics Canada.
4. Following the Fort McMurray wildfires, Statistics Canada took steps to make sure residents of Wood Buffalo were included in the 2016 Census. Many residents responded over the usual collection period. Statistics Canada returned to Wood Buffalo in August 2016 to follow up with households that had not yet responded. If direct responses could not be obtained, administrative data was used. For more information see: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/98-304/app-ann1-4-eng.cfm>
5. 2016 counts are unadjusted for incompletely enumerated Indian reserves and Indian settlements, and other changes to reserves. Other figures in this table use adjusted counts

### Recent 2016 Census of Population Releases

November 29, 2017

Education, Labour, Journey to work, Language of work, Mobility and Migration

### Contact

[Ryan Mazan](#)

780.643.1074

Map 1. Aboriginal Population Distribution  
(% of Total Population in Each CD)

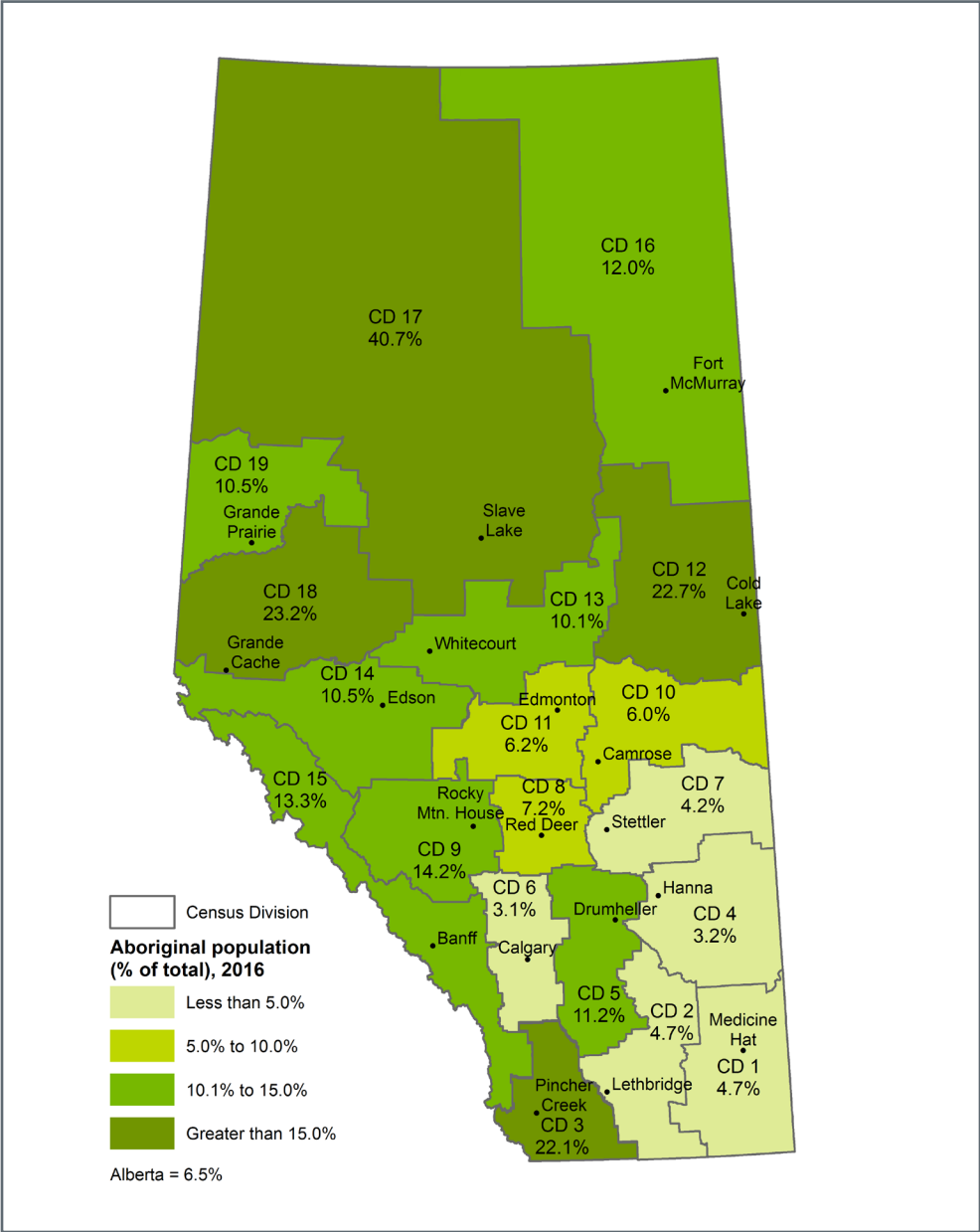
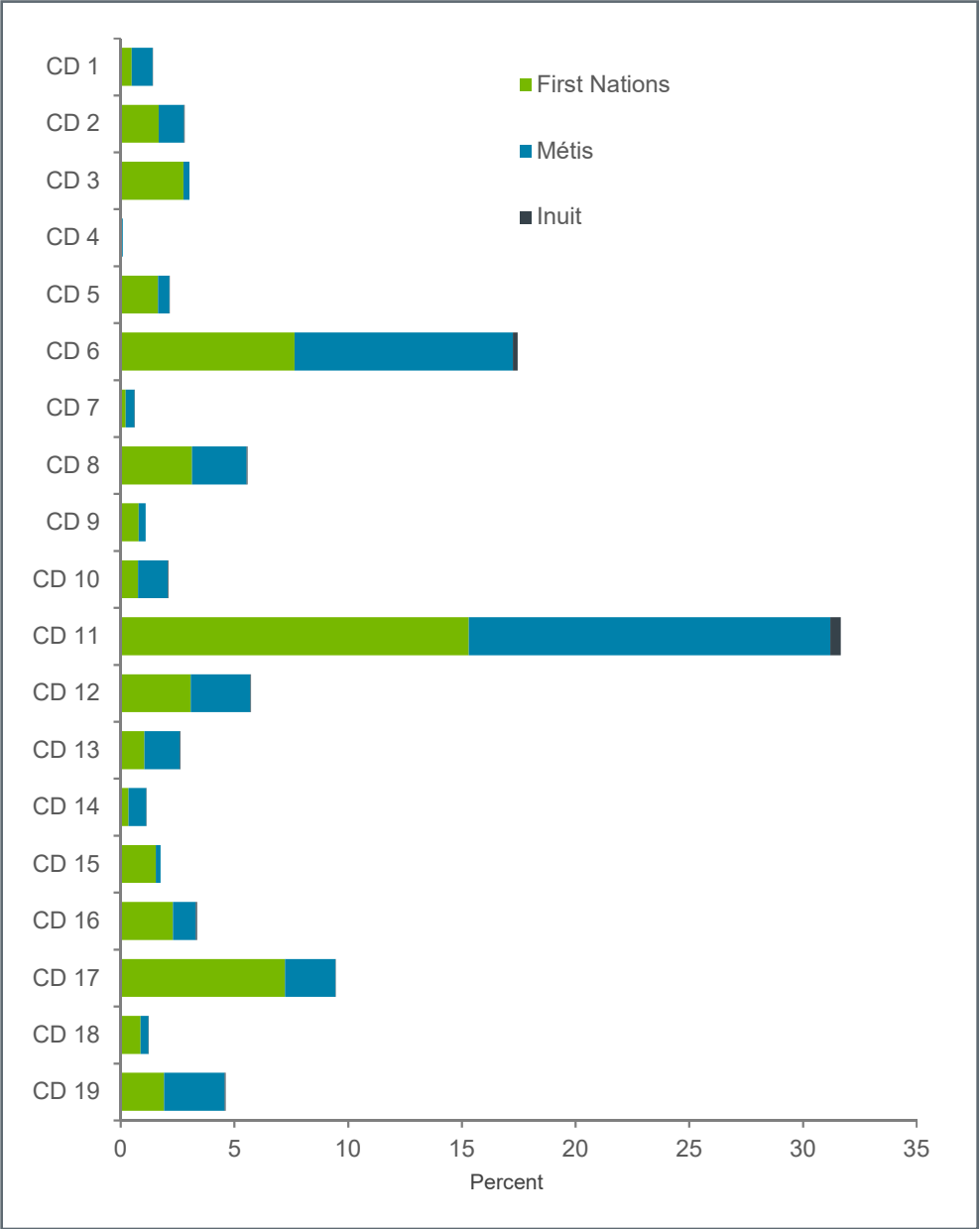


Figure 3. Distribution of Aboriginal Population and Identity Group by  
Census Division, 2016





Map 2. Census Subdivision (Municipal) Distribution of Aboriginal Population in Each Census Division (%)

