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**ABSTRACT**

The study examined the economic development of British Columbia (B.C.) Indians who have moved off-reserve. The discussion included: (1) obtaining the sample, (2) sample description, (3) reasons for living off-reserve, (4) employment opportunities, (5) income and poverty line, and (6) academic achievement. A total of 1,095 persons interviewed constituted a 1-in-6 sample of B.C. status Indians (age 16-55) who reside off-reserve. A total of 54 towns were represented in the survey. It appeared that, until high school graduation is achieved, additional years of education have little effect in reducing the Indian unemployment rate. There is a significantly lower unemployment rate among Indians who were members of a union. Some 58.2% of non-metro families and unattached individuals had incomes of less than \$4,000, while 39.5% of the metro families and unattached individuals had a range of \$4,000-\$7,999. The poverty rate of B.C. Indians off-reserve in 1970 was 2-1/2 times the rate for all Canadians. One quarter of the sample had completed the 6th grade or less and only 1/6 completed high school or better. Some reasons for living off-reserve were employment, housing shortage on reserve, and preferring living off-reserve. Findings were also presented in tables. (FF)

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B.C. INDIANS LIVING OFF RESERVE:  
SOME ECONOMIC ASPECTS\*

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## Introduction

While this session of the Conference is being devoted to a discussion of the economic development of Indian reserves in British Columbia I have chosen to describe briefly some of the aspects of the alternative to reserve life - participation in the social, cultural and economic opportunities of the "dominant society" off the reserve. I do this for three reasons:

- (a) I am not an "expert" on the economic development of B.C. Indian reserves.<sup>1</sup>
- (b) Currently one-third of the 49,000 B.C. Indians live off reserves. Between 1962 and 1972 the proportion living off reserves increased from 14.2% to 33.5%.<sup>2</sup>
- (c) During the summer of 1971, with a colleague<sup>3</sup> I obtained a large body of data on a sample of 1095 B.C. status Indians living off reserve in B.C. which I believe contains much information of interest to all B.C. Indians.

Before vigorously pursuing the economic development of their reserves it may be useful for Indian people in B.C. to have a more detailed picture of life off the reserve. Examination of this alternative in no way implies that it should be the direction in which Indian people should go in the future. I would simply urge that information on all feasible alternatives be gathered and assessed before large scale commitments of resources are made.

The discussion which follows is divided into several sections:

- Obtaining the Sample
- Description of the Sample (location, age, sex, time off reserve)
- Reasons for Living Off Reserve
- Off Reserve Employment and Occupations
- Income and the Poverty Line
- The Level of Education and Training

### Obtaining the Sample

Very little is known about the life circumstances of B.C. Indians who do not live on reserves. In its annual population census, officials of the Indian Affairs Branch review the Band Lists and determine as of January each year, for each person listed, whether or not his place of residence is on or off reserve. The Band Lists, as you know, also contain the following information: year of birth, sex, marital status, religion and "apparent family size". In order to obtain information on a number of the aspects of the total off reserve population from which we were to sample we obtained copies of the Band Lists as of January 1, 1970.

For each person on the list who was born before 1956 (age 16 or greater in the summer of 1971)<sup>4</sup> and who was indicated to be living off reserve we asked the thirteen Agency Superintendents to supply the following additional information: location off-reserve, occupation, industry and length of time living off reserve.

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adjustment to life off-reserve, knowledge of government programs, and "open-ended" questions on a number of topics. Consequently, the results reported in this paper represent only a small proportion of the information gathered.

#### Description of the Sample

Our total of 1095 persons interviewed constitutes a one-in-six sample of B.C. status Indians (age 16-65) who live off reserve in B.C. The sample was composed of 601 males (55%) and 494 females (45%). If we omit the prison sample of 61, which includes 53 men, the sample is quite evenly balanced with 548 men and 486 women.

A total of fifty-four towns are represented in our survey (in addition to those travelling and in prison). Seven of the 54 towns represent two separate municipalities combined for the purpose of the survey. Five towns (excluding prison) supplied 40 or more respondents: Vancouver (266), Victoria (41), Port Alberni (47), Prince Rupert (108) and Prince George (62). A total of 10 towns supplied from 20 to 39 respondents, nine towns accounted for from 10 to 19 respondents each, 10 towns provided from five to nine respondents each and a total of 20 towns were represented by from one to four respondents. Additional details may be found in Table 1.

By size of town, 16% of the non-prison sample resided in towns of less than 2500 population, 18% in towns of population 2500 to 9,999, 23% lived in towns of 10,000 to 24,999 persons, 13% resided in towns of 25,000-99,999 population and 24% of the sample lived in Vancouver (100,000 and over).

The age distribution of our sample was very close to that of the total off reserve population:<sup>7</sup>

age	16-19	12%
	20-29	42
	30-39	23
	40-49	13
	50 and over	10

Note that over one half of the sample was under 30 years of age and less than one quarter was age 40 or greater.

With respect to marital status, 36.7% of the persons interviewed were single and 36.5% were married. Some 8.5% indicated they were living in a common-law relationship. We note that three-quarters of those stating they were living in a common-law relationship were females. This should not be too surprising when we consider the consequences which ensue from the marriage of a legal or status Indian woman to a non-Indian. The Indian woman loses her status i.e. she is no longer a registered Indian under the Indian Act. The children of such a marriage are not legal Indians.

Only 1.5% of our sample were divorced but 10.3% were separated. An additional 6.5% of the persons in our sample were widowed.

We found that 18% of our sample had lived in the town of interview from 1 to 4 months, and 15% had lived in there 5-12 months. Some 28% had lived in the town of interview from one to four years. Sixteen percent had lived in the town we interviewed them in for 10 years or more.

Table 1

Number of Respondants by Town, Region and Sex

Region	Town	<del>Sum</del> Total	M	F
Vancouver		266	171	95
	Vancouver	266	171	95
Vancouver	Island	190	88	102
	Nanaimo	28	18	10
	Victoria	41	20	21
	Campbell River	21	7	14
	Alert Bay	14	4	10
	Courtenay	12	6	6
	Port Alberni	47	22	25
	Duncan	14	5	9
	Ladysmith	7	4	3
	Ucluelet	6	2	4
Okanagan		79	42	37
	Kelowna	27	15	12
	Penticton	5	4	1
	Vernon/Oyama	20	12	8
	Rutland	4	4	0
	Armstrong/Enderby	5	3	2
	Princeton	3	1	2
	Oliver/Osoyoos	2	0	2
	Salmon Arm	12	3	9
	Oroville (U.S.A.)	1	0	1
Travelling		4	4	0
North Coast		131	75	56
	Kitimat	1	0	1
	Prince Rupert	108	64	44
	Port Edward	22	11	11
Prison		61	53	8
Lower Fraser		45	23	22
	Chilliwack	4	2	2
	Mission/Agassay	15	7	8
	Richmond/Steveston	4	3	1
	White Rock	3	1	2
	Abbotsford	5	2	3
	Port Coquitlam	2	1	1
	Langley	1	1	0
	North Vancouver	7	5	2
	Sardis	4	1	3
Southern Interior		148	63	85
	Hope/Yale	17	5	12
	Lac LaBache	2	0	2
	Lytton	9	4	5
	Williams Lake	36	20	16
	Clinton	7	1	6
	Ashcroft	3	0	3
	Merritt	25	12	13
	100 Mile House	3	2	1
	Lillooet	17	8	9
	Kamloops	29	11	18
Northern Interior		171	82	89
	Willow River	1	1	0
	Telegraph Creek	1	0	1
	Vanderhoff	2	1	1
	Burns Lake	6	3	3
	Fort Fraser	2	1	1
	Dawson Creek	1	1	0
	Houston/Topley	12	5	7
	Prince George	62	24	38
	Smithers	33	22	11
	McLeod Lake	1	0	1
	Ft. St. James	26	13	13
	Terrace	8	3	5
	Hazelton	16	8	8

For 9.3% of our sample, it had been from one to four months since they had lived on a reserve for at least one month. Seventy-eight percent of our respondents had not lived on a reserve for more than one year. For over one half of our respondents it had been at least four years since they had lived on the reserve for at least one month.

#### Reasons for Living Off Reserve

With respect to the total sample we found that for 13.8% of our respondents their parent's home at the time of their birth was off reserve. This compares to one-third of all B.C. Indians who were living off reserve in 1971. The proportion who's parents were living off reserve at the time of the respondents birth is inversely related to the age of the respondent. The major difference is between respondents under 20 and those over 20. We found that for 86.2% of those age 20 and over their parents' home at the time of their birth was on reserve. For those age 16-19 the comparable proportion was 72.5%.

Table 2 summarizes the responses to the question "Why do you live off reserve?"

**TABLE 2**  
Responses to the Question,  
"Why do you live off reserve?"

Response	number*	%
"No job on reserve/Distance to job"	276	28.4
"Generally prefer life off reserve"	276	23.2
"No house on reserve"	117	12.0
"With parents/guardian"	95	9.8
"At School/Children's Schooling"	86	8.8
"Bad conditions/Many Drunks"	44	4.5
"No friends on reserve"	49	5.0
"Personal Reasons"	40	4.1
"Medical care"	20	2.1
"Dislike Indian Affairs/Prefers Welfare"	20	2.1

\* omits those in prison and those who have never lived on reserve.

Some 28.4% of the respondents indicated that they live off reserve in order to obtain employment or because the distance to their job is too great to permit them to live on reserve. We found that 23.2% stated that life off reserve was "generally preferable" to being on reserve and they were not more specific. For 12% of our sample the lack of a house on the reserve was the reason they lived off reserve. In a subsequent question asked of those persons indicating they would return to the reserve to live the response "If there is a house on the reserve", accounted for 30% of the stated reasons for planning to return to the reserve to live.

The response categories "Bad Conditions on reserve/Many drunks", "No friends on reserve", "Medical care" and "Personal reasons" can probably be described as push forces in inducing people to live off reserve. Collectively these categories account for 15.7% of the total responses.

In reply to the question "Will you return to live on the reserve?" 43% replied "Yes", 44% replied "No" while 13% replied "Don't know". The four most important reasons given for returning to the reserve to live were: "If there is a house on reserve" (30%), "To retire" (20%), "It's my home" (16%) and "If there is a job on the reserve" (9%).

Each respondent was asked "Since you were born, how many years altogether have you spent living on a reserve in B.C.?" Dividing this number by the respondents age we obtained an estimate of the proportion of their lifetime spent living on reserve in B.C. Sixteen percent of the sample had spent less than one-fifth of their life on reserve, 19% had spent between 21% and 40% of their life on reserve, 22% had spent 41 to 60%, 23% had spent 61 to 80% and 21% had spent more than four fifths of their life living on a B.C. reserve.

#### Off Reserve Employment and Occupations

Determining the unemployment rate is apparently a simple matter - it is the ratio of the number of persons who are unemployed to the sum of the number who are employed and the number who are unemployed. The Monthly Labour Force Survey states:

"The employed includes all persons who, during the reference week:

- (a) did any work for pay or profit;
- (b) did any work which contributed to the running of a farm or business operated by a related member of the household; or
- (c) had a job, but were not at work, because of bad weather, illness, industrial dispute, or vacation, or because they were taking time off for other reasons."<sup>8</sup>

The unemployed includes all persons, who, "through the reference week:

- (a) were without work and seeking work, i.e. did no work during the reference week and were looking for work; or would have been looking for work except that they were temporarily ill, were on indefinite or prolonged layoff, or believed no suitable work was available in the community; or
- (b) were temporarily laid off for the full week, i.e., were waiting to be called back to a job from which they had been laid off for less than 30 days."<sup>9</sup>

The heart of the matter in terms of counting the number unemployed for any disadvantaged minority group (including Indians) lies in the fact that in our sample over one-half of those who indicated they were without work were not looking for work. Are such people to be counted as "unemployed" in the official statistics? If these people are without work and would have been seeking work except that they "believed no suitable work was available in the community" then they are officially counted as "unemployed".

But this definition can result in a great deal of disguised unemployment in the form of discouraged workers.

Discouraged workers are those who are without work, but are not actively seeking work because of prolonged periods of unemployment and the futile search for suitable employment they have experienced. These workers would have actively entered the labour market if suitable job opportunities were available. The result is that discouraged workers are not included in the labour force and the unemployment rate is understated.



We agree with Professor Peitchenia who states that:

"perhaps a more accurate rate of unemployment would be obtained if account were taken of all those who are able and willing to work but are not working, rather than those only who are without work and are looking for work. After all, from an economic standpoint our primary concern is with the waste of potential productive manpower."<sup>10</sup>

The importance of the definition is this:

- if we include "discouraged workers" the overall unemployment rate among B.C. Indians living off reserve in the summer of 1971 was 46.5%. This measure is called U1.
- if we exclude "discouraged workers" from the calculation as is done in the official statistics then the overall unemployment rate was 27%. This measure we call U2.

By comparison the average unemployment rate for all B.C. residents was just over 6% in the summer of 1971.<sup>11</sup> The estimate for non-status Indians (U1) was 50%.<sup>12</sup>

#### The Dimensions of Unemployment<sup>13</sup>

Unemployment by age was as follows:

<u>M+F</u>	<u>U1</u>	<u>U2</u>
16-19	59%	46%
20-24	50	38
25-44	39	21
45-64	55	16
Total	47	27

Except for the age group 45-64 the unemployment rate among women was several percentage points higher than that among men.

Unemployment by region was as follows:

	<u>U1</u>	<u>U2</u>
Lower Fraser Valley	23%	14%
Vancouver	51	31
North Coast	28	11
North Interior	56	31
South Interior	50	28
Vancouver Island	45	25
Okanagan	58	42

Unemployment by level of education was as follows:

<u>Highest Grade Completed</u>	<u>U1</u>	<u>U2</u>
0-6	59%	30%
7-9	54	32
10-11	49	36
12+	16	11

It seems clear that until high school graduation is achieved additional years of education have little effect in reducing the Indian unemployment rate.

There seemed to be a significantly lower unemployment rate among Indians who were members of a union:

	<u>U1</u>	<u>U2</u>
Union member	21%	14%
not a union member	59%	36%

In our sample we found that 32% of the labour force (broad definition) were members of unions. If the narrower definition is used then the

proportion of B.C. Indians living off reserve and in the labour force who were members of unions was 40% Overall in B.C. about 42% of the labour force is unionized.

#### Occupations

The distribution of those employed in the summer of 1971 by occupational grouping is as follows:

<u>OCCUPATION GROUP</u>	<u>MEN (272)</u>	<u>WOMEN (102)</u>
<u>Managerial/Professional/Technical</u> (lawyer, teacher, rentier, technician, contractor, administrator, researcher, social worker, nurse, artist.)	53 19.5%	17 16.7%
<u>Clerical/Sales</u> (office worker, retail store clerk, salesman,)	15 5.5%	28 27.5%
<u>Service/Recreation</u> (domestic worker, restaurant worker, waiter, roadgang, equipment operator, construction worker, hospital worker, gas station attendant, tourist services, custodian, laundry worker, camp worker, armed forces)	21 7.7%	28 27.5%
<u>Transportation/Communication</u> (cab-truck driver, r.r. worker, longshoreman, postal worker, telephone worker, seaman, deckhand)	45 16.5%	3 2.9%
<u>Primary</u> (farm labor, farmer/rancher, logger, fisherman, miner, hunter/trapper, forest fire worker, treeplanter, net repairman)	80 29.4%	7 6.9%
<u>Production/Craftsmen</u> (sawmill worker, cannery worker, machine operator, skilled labour, factory worker)	43 15.8%	14 13.7%
<u>Labour (n.e.s.)</u> (odd jobs, labourer, other)	15 5.5%	5 4.9%

#### The Distribution of Income and the Poverty Rate

One of the principal criteria by which the dominant majority judges the socio-economic performance of a minority is the ability of minority group members to sustain themselves (at whatever level of comfort) independently of the income transfers financed primarily by the dominant society.

In our survey we concentrated our efforts on ascertaining earned income from employment rather than total income, a significant proportion of which, for low income groups, is made up of government transfer payments. If we wish to measure the economic performance of a minority group in the context of the dominant society then earned income from employment is preferable to total income.

#### Ability to be Self Supporting

Before we examine the data on the distribution of income we will indicate the results obtained from a more general question stated as follows:

"During 1971 (1970, 1969) in which months were you or your wife/husband able to support yourself and your family with money from your job?"<sup>14</sup>

We found that 28% of the individuals and families in our sample were not self-supporting in even one month in the two and one-half year period upon which we obtained data. However, the distribution is bipolar - 24% of the sample were self-supporting for the entire period January 1969 through summer 1971. We found that 48% of the families and

unattached individuals were self-supporting for one-half or more of the two and one-half year period. Some 39% were self-supporting (at whatever level of income) for one-quarter or less during the period January 1969 through summer 1971. As we shall see, being self-supporting (i.e. not receiving social welfare or unemployment insurance payments) does not imply that B.C. Indian families enjoyed a level of income sufficient to reach above the poverty line.

#### Distribution of Income in 1970

In 1970 some 54% of B.C. Indian families and unattached individuals had incomes from employment of less than \$2000. Seventy-six percent had incomes of less than \$6000 in 1960. The income cohort "under \$2000" hides the important fact that 34.7% of the families and unattached individuals in our sample had no income from employment in 1970. If we measure the "success" of Indians in an urban environment by their ability to sustain themselves with their earnings from employment then a significant fraction could not be described as economically successful. As Table 3 indicates, only one-eighth of all Indian families and unattached individuals living off reserve received \$8000 or more in earnings from employment in 1970.

For comparative purposes we derived estimates of total income for B.C. Indians by adding to income from employment estimates of transfer payments received by each family or unattached individual.

This was done by utilizing other information we obtained on size of family, number of months on welfare (social assistance) and the provincial social assistance, federal family allowance, and old age pensions we imputed total government transfer payments to each family or unattached individual. The resulting distribution of total income is also contained in Table 3.

The inclusion of transfer payments sharply reduces the proportion of Indian families and unattached individuals with incomes of less than \$2000 from 53.7% to 28.1%. However, for all Canadian families and unattached individuals the comparable proportion is 12.3%. While 52.9% of Indian families and unattached individuals had incomes of less than \$4000 in 1970 only 27.6% of all of B.C. is in this income class (in 1969). Just over one-quarter (27.1%) of Indians had incomes of \$6000 or more as compared to three-fifths (60.1%) of all B.C. families and unattached individuals had incomes in 1969 of 10,000 or more, but only 6.2% of B.C. Indians enjoyed a five-figure income.

The metro/non-metro distributions of total income of B.C. Indians are noticeably different. Some 58.2% of non-metro families and unattached individuals had incomes of less than \$4000. In comparison for metro areas the proportion was 46.0%. The proportion of metro families and unattached individuals in the range \$4000-7999 was 39.5% while that for the non-metro group was 26.8%. The difference in the proportion with total incomes of \$10,000 and over was not significant.

**Table 3**  
**Distribution of Income of Families and Unattached**  
**Individuals, Canada, B.C., B.C. Indians**

	Total Income <sup>5</sup>						Income from Employment only					
	CANADA 1969			BRITISH COLUMBIA 1969			B.C. Indians Living Off Reserve <sup>3</sup> 1970			B.C. Indians Living Off Reserve 1970		
	Total	Metro <sup>1</sup>	non- metro	Total	Metro	Non- Metro	Total	Metro <sup>2</sup>	non- metro	Total	Metro <sup>2</sup>	non-metro
≤\$1,999	12.3	10.0	15.9	12.9	11.1	15.5	28.1	22.1	31.4	53.7	51.4	53.8
\$2000-3999	15.8	13.0	20.3	14.7	16.0	13.1	24.8	23.9	26.8	10.8	10.1	12.2
\$4000-5999	15.6	14.3	18.8	12.0	10.4	14.4	19.9	23.6	16.5	11.5	13.2	10.0
\$6000-7999	16.3	16.5	16.1	16.1	17.0	14.9	13.1	15.9	10.3	11.1	12.5	10.0
\$8000-9999	13.6	14.7	11.9	17.1	15.9	19.0	8.1	7.6	9.5	7.6	7.1	9.2
\$10,000-11999	9.9	11.2	7.8	10.4	11.2	9.4	3.2	3.3	3.5	2.6	2.5	3.0
\$12000 & over	16.6	20.3	10.4	16.5	18.5	13.8	2.7	3.1	2.4	2.6	3.1	2.2
Sample size with income known							970 <sup>4</sup>	552	370	970 <sup>4</sup>	552	370
number with income not known							111	68	39	111	68	39
Total sample size	100.0	56.0%	44.0%	100.0%	57.8%	42.2%	1081 <sup>6</sup>	620	409	1081 <sup>6</sup>	620	409

**Notes:**

- centres with population of 30,000 and over, remainder of country is classified as non-metropolitan.
- centres with population 25,00 and over, all other towns (approximate population 500 to 24999) were classified as non-metropolitan.
- for B.C. Indians families and unattached (individuals is equal to the total size of the household minus persons other than spouse and dependent children - this is a narrower definition than that employed by Statistics Canada which is "a group of individuals sharing a common dwelling unit and related by blood, marriage or adoption."
- Includes persons not in prison during 1970 but whose residence in 1970 was not known.
- Income includes income from wages and salaries, self employment, investment.
- income, government transfer payments and miscellaneous of persons age 14 and over, excludes persons in prison during 1970.

Sources: - Statistics Canada, Income Distributions by Size in Canada, 1969, Ottawa, 1972, Table 22, p. 40.  
 authors survey.

### The Poverty Rate

"Poverty is enormously wasteful of human and material resources; it creates social and psychological problems not just for the poor but for the entire society."<sup>15</sup>

One of the more notable achievements of the past decade has been the rediscovery (and extensive description and analysis) of "poverty in the midst of plenty". Economists can also be acknowledged for their role in pointing out that not only is poverty bad for the poor, but it is also bad for the rich. This is when all the externalities, and presumably the effect on one's ethical sensibilities, are taken into account. However, our concern for poverty has not gone so far as to introduce into public policy measures designed to significantly alter the distribution of income - let alone the distribution of wealth - in Canadian or U.S. society.

We have, however, managed to define a poverty line and to count the poor in a recent Senate Report.<sup>16</sup> Be that as it may we will now proceed to describe and to measure the incidence of poverty among B.C. Indians living off reserves.

Table 4 gives a number of measures of the poverty line for various family sizes. We have adopted the Senate Report poverty line and made interpolations for family sizes of eight and nine. Note that both the Senate Report poverty line and that of the authors of The Real Poverty Report is somewhat above that of the Economic Council/Dominion Bureau of Statistics - particularly when families of more than five persons are considered. It is interesting that a public opinion poll conducted during the course of the Senate investigations places the poverty line about 50% above the Senate Report line.<sup>16a</sup> Perhaps we could define the "hypocrisy gap" as the difference between Canadian social assistance payments and the amount sufficient to ensure that all Canadians achieve an income above the poverty line set out in the public opinion poll.

Before we move to the summary calculations in Table 5 we should note that, over all, 58.6% of those below the poverty line in terms of income from employment only were dependent on welfare for 12 months in 1970. Sixty-nine percent were dependent on welfare for 9 months or more in 1970. Only 14% were not dependent on welfare at any time during 1970. These data suggest that in terms of earned income from employment that a high proportion of B.C. Indian families living off reserve are not simply "below the poverty line". They are far below the poverty line. And as we shall see from Table 5 this fact coupled with the inadequacy of government transfer payments to the poor means that even after transfers they are well below the poverty line.

The principal conclusion to be drawn from Table 5 is clear: the poverty rate (the proportion of all families below the poverty line) of B.C. Indians living off reserves in 1970 was two and one-half times the rate for all Canadians. For families of three or four the poverty rate among B.C. Indians is over three times that of all Canadians. In 1970 two thirds had total incomes which placed them below the poverty line defined in the Senate Report.<sup>17</sup> This proportion is hardly affected by the panoply of government transfer payments - the proportion is reduced from 67.5% to

Table 4

Estimates of the Poverty Line by  
Family Size in Canada

Number of persons in family	ECC-DBS 1970 (1)	Real Poverty Report 1970 (2)	Opinion Poll 1970 (3)	Senate Report 1969 (4)	Stanbury, Fields, Stevenson 1970 (5)
1	\$1900	\$2100	\$3200	\$2140	\$2140
2	3200	3400	4900	3570	3570
3	3900	4100	5700	4290	4290
4	4500	4800	6500	5000	5000
5	5200	5500	7400	5710	5710
6	5200	6200	8200	6430	6430
7	5200			7140	7140
8	5200				7900
9	5200				8600
10	5200	8900	11,500	9290	9290

Sources: (1)(2)(3) Ian Adams, William Cameron, Brian Hill, Peter Penz, The Real Poverty Report, Edmonton, M.G. Hurtig, 1971, p. 15.  
(4) Report of the Special Senate Committee on Poverty, Poverty in Canada, Ottawa, Information Canada, 1971, p. 8.

Table 5

The Poverty Rate: B.C. Indians Living Off-Reserve  
1970 and All Canadians 1969

Family Size	Senate Report	B.C. Indians Living Off-Reserve 1970		Ratio of B.C. Indian to Canadian Poverty Rate
	% of families below poverty line 1969	% of families below Poverty Line, Earned Income only	% of families below Poverty Line, Earned Income + Transfers <sup>3</sup>	
1	38.7%	64.9%	60.3%	1.56 to 1
2	28.4	73.9	72.3	2.55 to 1
3	16.8	55.1	53.4	3.18 to 1
4	15.6	54.1	49.5	3.17 to 1
6.2 <sup>1</sup>	28.5			
7.1 <sup>2</sup>		79.7	76.4	2.68 to 1
all families	25.1	67.5	62.8	2.50 to 1

## Notes:

- (1) estimate of average family size of families with 5 or more persons in Canada.  
(2) estimate of average family size of B.C. Indian families with 5 or more persons.  
(3)

Using the data our survey collected on family income from employment and the number of months in 1970 that the family received social welfare payments we were able to compute (applying the Provincial social assistance rates) total earned income plus welfare transfers to make our data closely comparable to the definitions employed in the Senate Report... In addition we included Family Allowances in our estimate of earned income plus transfers.

Sources: - Senate Report ... op. cit. p. 12  
The author's survey.

62.8% when we add government transfer payments to income from employment only. In summary we can state:

- (a) B.C. Indians families living off reserve are far below the poverty line
- (b) In terms of the Senate Report poverty line existing government transfer payments make only a small contribution toward closing the poverty gap between earned income and the stated poverty line.<sup>18</sup>

#### Level of Education

One of the principal promises held out by the dominant society to members of minorities is that if they acquire the level of education and training comparable to members of the dominant society then their upward mobility is assured. This section of the paper will examine the level of educational achievement of B.C. Indians living off reserves.

One quarter of our sample have completed the sixth grade or less and only one-sixth have completed high school or better. In fact only 2.3% of our sample had completed one or more years of university, and four out of the total sample had acquired a university degree. Over three-fifths (62.1%) have completed the ninth grade or less.

The level of education varies considerably by region of residence in 1971. For example no one in our prison sample of 61 has completed high school, where 32.3% of persons resident in Vancouver have done so. Only 5.1% of Okanagan residents have achieved high school graduation or better. Since the variation in the proportion who have high school graduation is much less among the various Cultural/Linguistic Groups than by region there is some reason to believe that the more highly educated Indian people gravitate toward the metro Vancouver area. While 58.6% of our Vancouver sample had completed Grade 10 or better only 30.0% of the sample of residents of Vancouver Island had achieved this level. In the Northern Interior the proportion was 24.5% and in the Okanagan it was only 19.0%.

Because the educational attainment of B.C. residents is significantly greater than that of Canada as a whole we prepared Table 6 to compare our sample to both B.C. residents and all Canadians. As we shall see the Indian - non-Indian "educational gap" depends strongly on the age group being considered. In the age cohort 20-24 we find that the proportion of B.C. Indians living off reserve with a secondary education (67.6%) is slightly above that of all B.C. residents (66.0%) and all Canadians (63.0%). However, we find that 29.2% of Indians in this age cohort have only an elementary education as compared to 10.7% for B.C. and 19.6% for Canada. The difference is even greater at the upper end of the distribution. Only 3.2% of Indians (n=8) in our sample have obtained some University education while 23.3% of all B.C. residents have done so.

Note in Table 6 that in all age groups the educational attainment of B.C. non-status Indians is below that of Indians living off reserves.

When we compare the non-status Indians level of education to that of status Indians living off reserves we find that the education gap has apparently increased over time. In the 45-64 age group the average number of grades completed by non-status Indians is slightly above that of status Indians living off reserve (5.36 vs 5.26). In the age cohort

	B.C. Indians Off Reserve 1971		B.C. 1966	Canada 1966	B.C. Non- Status Indians 1971	
	n	%	%	%	n	%
Age 20 & over	963	100.0	100.0	100.0	1192	100%
Elementary <sup>†</sup>	530	55.0	31.0	42.0	806	67.6
Secondary	408	42.3	55.4	47.5	380	31.9
University	25	2.6	13.6	10.5	6	0.5
Age 20-24	253	100.0	100.0	100.0	238	100%
Elementary	74	29.2	10.7	19.6	114	47.9
Secondary	171	67.6	66.0	63.0	121	50.8
University	8	3.2	23.3	17.4	3	1.3
Age 25-44	538	100.0	100.0	100.0	556*	100%
Elementary	301	55.9	20.2	34.7	342	61.5
Secondary	220	40.9	64.7	54.0	213	38.3
University	17	3.2	15.1	11.3	1	0.2
Age 45-64	164	100.0	100.0	100.0	317*	100%
Elementary	147	89.6	39.0	50.8	266	83.9
Secondary	17	10.4	49.6	40.6	49	15.5
University	0	0.0	11.4	8.6	2	0.6

<sup>†</sup> Elementary is Grades 1-8 for all provinces except Quebec where there are 7 years in the primary division - see Source pp. 34-35.

\* Age 25-39, \* Age 40-59

- Sources: - The authors' survey.  
 - Michel D. Lagacé. Educational Attainment in Canada: Some Regional and Social Aspects, Special Labour Force Studies No. 7, Ottawa, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1968, p. 8.  
 - W.T. Stanbury "Summary of Major Results, B.C. Association of Non-Status Indians Survey, Summer, 1971", Vancouver, Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration, University of B.C., 1972, (unpublished paper).

TABLE 7  
Comparative Levels of Indian  
Education

Highest Grade Completed	B.C. Indians Off Reserve 1971	B.C. Non Status Indians 1971	U.S. Indians on 5 South-west Reserves 1968	U.S. Indians off reserve in 5 Minnesota Cities 1967	Canada Age 14 and over 1967
0-4	11.6%	18.3%	14.3%	4.0 <sup>†</sup> %	18.6% <sup>‡</sup>
5-6	13.6	13.7	9.6	20.2*	18.3 <sup>‡</sup>
7-8	26.8	33.4	19.7		
9-11	31.0	28.9	37.1	50.8	35.8
12	14.7	5.3	16.3	21.5	17.9
13+	2.3	0.5	3.0	3.6	9.4
Sample size	1095	1309	1730	1272	n.a.
% male	54.9%	41.2%	48.3%	64.3%	50%
median no. of grades	7.86	7.32	8.49	9.56	n.a.
average no. of grades of those age 16 & over	8.15	7.17	8.37	n.a.	n.a.

<sup>†</sup> Grades 0-5, \* Grades 6-8, <sup>‡</sup> Grades 1-7, <sup>°</sup> Grade 8

- Sources: - The authors' survey  
 - W.T. Stanbury "Summary of Major Results, B.C. Association of Non-Status Indians Survey, Summer, 1971", Vancouver, Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration, University of B.C. 1972, (unpublished paper).  
 - Benjamin Taylor and Dennis J. O'Connor. Indian Manpower Resources in the Southwest: A Pilot Study, Tempe Arizona, Arizona State University Press, 1969, (derived from Tables on pp. 39, 108, 173, 233, 292).  
 - Laverne Drilling, Arthur M. Harkins and Richard G. Woods, The Indian Relief Recipient in Minneapolis: An Exploratory Study, Training Center for Community Programs, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1969, p. 11, and Richard G. Woods and Arthur M. Harkins. Indian Employment in Minneapolis, Training Center for Community Programs, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1968, p. 20.  
 - Michel D. Lagacé, Educational Attainment in Canada: Some Regional and Social Aspects, Ottawa, Queens Printer, 1968, pp. 42-43.



35-44 they are virtually identical (6.44 vs. 6.46). However in the cohort 25-34 the gap in the average level of education is almost one grade i.e. non-status was equal to 7.94 compared to 8.86 for status Indians off reserve. For the cohort 20-24 the gap is just over one grade as we found that the average number of grades completed by the status Indians was 9.72 and that for the non-status sample was 8.70. However, in the age group 16-19 years we find that the gap is not so great - 9.34 grades completed for the latter as compared to 9.00 for the former group. The difference is not statistically significant. The differences between the mean level of education of the two groups in the age cohorts 20-24 and 25-34 years were significant at the .01 level.

Comparative Levels of Education: B.C. Indians Living Off Reserves, B.C. Non-Status Indians, Indians on five U.S. Southwest Reservations, and Indians Living in Urban Centers in Minnesota.

During the summer of 1971 the B.C. Association of Non-Status Indians conducted a survey of 1309 non-status Indians in British Columbia. While methodologically it was not as well prepared as our own study of status Indians living off reserves in B.C. it does provide some comparative data on the level of educational achievement.<sup>19</sup> During 1968 Higgins and O'Connor collected almost 1800 detailed interviews on the Fort Apache, San Carlos, Acoma, Laguna and Papago reserves in the U.S. Southwest.<sup>20</sup> A number of studies of Indians living in cities in Minnesota have been done by researchers associated with the Training Center for Community Programs of the University of Minnesota.<sup>21</sup> We will make comparisons with the educational attainment of U.S. Indians living in Minneapolis, St. Paul and Duluth and with those living on reserve in the U.S. Southwest.

Table 7 summarizes some of the data from the various studies. While 4.3% of our respondents had no formal education 7.9% of the B.C. non-status Indians and 3.1% of the U.S. Southwest sample had no formal schooling. Just over seven percent of persons in our survey had completed Grades 1-4, 11.2% of the U.S. Indians and 10.4% of the B.C. non-status Indians were in this category. At the other end of the distribution we found that 17.0% of our sample of B.C. Indians living off reserves had high school graduation or better. Only 5.3% of the non-status Indians surveyed had achieved this level of education. For the on reserve Indians in the U.S. Southwest the proportion was 19.3%. Only 35% of the non-status Indians living off reserves had done so and 56% of the U.S. Indians living on reserves in the Southwest had completed Grade 9 or beyond.

The educational achievement of U.S. Indians living in urban centers in Minnesota is substantially greater than that of U.S. Indians living on reserve in the Southwest and that of B.C. Indians living off reserve and of B.C. non-status Indians. This is clear when we refer to the data in Table 7. While 43.6% of Indians in the Southwest sample, 52.0% of B.C. Indians living off reserve and 65.4% of B.C. non-status Indians have completed Grade 8 or less only 24.2% of the Indians living in Minnesota cities have a Grade 8 education or less. Over one-half (50.8%) of the Indians in the three Minnesota cities have completed Grades 9 to 11 while only 28.9% of the B.C. non-status sample, 31.0% of the B.C. off reserve

sample and 37.1% of the Indians living on reserve in the U.S. Southwest have achieved this level of education. One-quarter of the sample of 1272 Indians in Minnesota cities have completed high school or additional years of higher education. One-fifth of the Southwest sample achieved this level; one-sixth of B.C. status Indians living off reserve and less than one B.C. non-status Indian in seventeen graduated from high school or beyond.

The median<sup>22</sup> number of grades completed for the non-status samples (M+F) was 7.32, for the U.S. Southwest sample it was 8.49, for the Minnesota sample it was 9.56 and for B.C. Indians living off reserves it was 7.86.

#### Closing the Gap

Given the rapid increase in the level of educational achievement of B.C. Indians living off reserve it may be possible that in another decade the gap will be closed. However to do this it will be necessary to ensure that more Indians attend university. Of the 875 persons in our sample who answered the question "How much schooling do you want your children to have?", the proportion specifically replying "University" was 13% for those with 0-8 grades completed, 20% for those with 9-11 grades and 33% for those with high school graduation or better. The proportions replying "High School" by level of education were 56% for those who had completed Grade 9 or less, 45% for those who had, themselves, completed Grades 9-11 and 22% for those who had achieved high school graduation or beyond. It is evident that if the expectations of the younger and better educated Indians are rising. The question now becomes one of the level of sustained motivation of the individuals concerned and the availability of resources to fulfill the rising expectations.

#### Vocational Training

Of our total sample of 1095 we found that 385 or 35% had taken a total of 559 special courses or vocational training courses of various duration. We found that 125 people had taken two or more courses and 36 had taken three or more courses.

Some 231 of the 385 persons had taken one or more full-time trade courses. In all, three quarters of all special courses taken could be fairly described as vocational training. Adult Education and Upgrading courses together accounted for one-fifth of the persons who had taken one or more special courses. While 55% of the total sample were males 65% of those who had taken one or more courses were males. Some 65% of all the courses lasted six months or more and 69% of the vocational training courses were of six months duration or greater. Just less than one-half of all the courses were between six and twelve months duration.

Perhaps the most striking finding elicited from our questions about special courses and vocational training is that 92% of persons reporting one or more courses stated that they have completed the course or were in the process of so doing. This figure contrasts sharply with Sorokin's analysis of the drop-out rate among U.S. Indians receiving on-the-job training. He found that for all such training programs operated from 1958 to 1967 the average dropout rate was 49%.<sup>23</sup>

Two important characteristics of persons in our survey who have taken one or more special courses is that they are younger and better educated than the average of the Indian population. While 54% of our sample were aged 16-29 we found that 67% of those who had taken one or more courses were in this age group. Only 16.3% of persons age 45 and over in our sample had taken one or more courses as compared to 42.8% of those in the age group 16-29. Interestingly 70.5% of those taking Correspondence, Adult Education or Upgrading courses were in the 16 to 29 age cohort. We would have thought that persons over 30 would predominate in these type of courses.

Because of the close inverse relationship between age and the level of education we find that those with a superior academic education are disproportionately represented among those who have taken one or more special courses. While 17% of our sample have completed Grade 12 or better 34% of the persons having taken a special course already have Grade 12 or better. Clearly academic and vocational training reinforce each other. Over three-fifths of those with one or more special courses have completed Grade 10 or better.<sup>24</sup>

Additional evidence in support of the proposition that both the level of education and expectations about the desired level of education are rising can be gained from examining the responses to the following question: "Do you have any definite plans or arrangements for any more schooling, training or special courses in the next twelve months?" A total of 198 men and 114 women responded affirmatively - representing 28.5% of the total sample. We found that 21.5% of those who had not taken any special courses replied "Yes", 42.0% of those who had already taken one special course replied "Yes" and 48.5% of those who had already taken two or more special courses indicated that they planned to take another course in the 12 month period following the summer of 1971.

While no comparable data are available for the total B.C. population, one cannot help but be impressed by the high proportion of B.C. Indians living off-reserve who have acquired vocational training and special courses designed to improve their employability in the dominant society which places a considerable weight on the economic independence of minority groups. This is reinforced by the high proportion who at the time planned additional training or education within the next year.

Footnotes

1. Some aspects of the economic development of reserves can be found in D.B. Fields and W.T. Stanbury, The Impact of the Public Sector Upon the Indians of British Columbia: An Examination of the Incidence of the Revenues and Expenditures of Three Levels of Government, A report submitted to the Dept. of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Ottawa, September, 1968 (pp. 422, typescript) See also the Vancouver Province, April 1, 1972, p. 5 for a summary of four chapters of this study.
2. W.T. Stanbury, D.B. Fields and D. Stevenson, "Unemployment and Labour Force Participation Rates of B.C. Indians Living Off Reserves", Manpower Review, Pacific Region, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1972, Table 1.
3. Professor D.B. Fields, Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration, University of B.C., Professor D. Stevenson, University of Victoria, participated in the project at an earlier stage.
4. The age "cut-off" was used because we were interested in the "economically-active" population. It should be pointed out that 48% of the B.C. Indian population is age 15 or under and only 4.1% is age 65 or older.  
  
We wish to acknowledge the extensive assistance of the staff of the B.C. Region, Indian Affairs Branch, Vancouver for the provision and analysis of the Band Lists.
5. This number omits two Bands in the Terrace Agency for which we were unable to obtain data.
6. Before we began the field work we obtained a substantial list of contacts in various communities from a number of Indian organizations. Particularly helpful was a letter of introduction from the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs who supported the project.
7. See Stanbury, Fields and Stevenson, op.cit., Table 2.
8. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, The Labour Force, Ottawa, Queen's Printer, p. 3.
9. loc. cit.
10. Stephen G. Peitchenis, Canadian Labour Economics, Toronto, McGraw-Hill, 1970, p. 238, (italics in the original).
11. We are indebted to Mr. S.L. Young, Regional Economist, Manpower Information and Analysis Branch, Department of Manpower and Immigration, Pacific Region, Vancouver for unpublished data on B.C. unemployment rates.
12. Stanbury, Fields and Stevenson, op.cit., Table 7.
13. More detailed data may be found in Stanbury, Fields and Stevenson, op.cit. pp. 37-45.
14. If there was two or more earners in the family (man, wife and dependent children) support was based on family income in total. In order to ensure reliability of the data obtained we asked the following question later in the interview: "During 1971 (1970, 1969) in which months did you have to get help to support yourself/family from Welfare, friends, etc.?"
15. Poverty in Canada, A Report of the Special Senate Committee on Poverty, Ottawa, Information Canada, 1971, p. (xxix).
16. ibid.
- 16a. Ian Adams et.a. The Real Poverty Report, Edmonton, Hurtig, 1971, p.
17. Using the poverty levels established by the Social Security Administration Alan L. Sorkin reports that in 1966 only 26% of all U.S. Indians on reservations were above the poverty line. See Alan L. Sorkin, American Indians and Federal Aid, Washington, Brookings, 1971, p. 116.

18. For example the Province of B.C.'s scale for social assistance in 1970 provided for a maximum payment (including the special rent supplement) of \$95 per month or \$1140 per year to a single person. The Senate Report places the poverty line at \$2140 per year for a single person. For a family of four the B.C. scale provided for a maximum of \$238.50 per month or \$2862 per year while the Senate Report places the poverty line at \$5000. A more comprehensive discussion is contained in Section Two of Poverty in Canada op.cit. and Ian Adams et.al. The Real Poverty Report, Hurtig, Edmonton, 1971, pp. 167-187.
19. W.T. Stanbury, "Summary of Major Results, B.C. Association of Non-Status Indians Survey, Summer 1971", Vancouver, Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration, University of B.C., 1972 (unpublished paper).
20. Benjamin Higgins and Dennis J. O'Connor. Indian Manpower Resources in the Southwest: A Pilot Study, Temple Arizona, Arizona State University Press, 1969.
21. The two studies from which the data on educational attainment were drawn were Laverne Drilling, Arthur M. Harkins and Richard G. Woods, The Indian Relief Recipient in Minneapolis: An Exploratory Study, Training Center for Community Programs, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1969 and Richard G. Woods and Arthur M. Harkins, Indian Employment in Minneapolis, Training Center for Community Programs, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1968.
22. The median is the value which divides the group in half i.e. 50% of the sample achieved a higher level of education and 50% have completed a lesser number of grades.
23. Alan I. Sorkin, op.cit. p. 20.
24. The same conclusion can be ascertained from Mark Nagler, Indians in the City, A Study of the Urbanization of Indians in Toronto, Ottawa, Saint Paul University, 1970, Ch. 3 and from Sorkin op.cit. p. 200.