

# First Nations migration dynamics are shaped by socioeconomic inequalities

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Socio-economic inequalities between First Nations communities, and also between these communities and the non-Aboriginal population of Canada, determine the nature, the intensity and the direction of First Nations migration flows. Pursuing educational careers, finding work, and seeking better health and living conditions are the main reasons for First Nations migration. These are the findings of research by Marilyn Amorevieta-Gentil, Robert Bourbeau and Norbert Robitaille, of the University of Montreal, which were presented at the Conference of the Population Change and Lifecourse Strategic Knowledge Cluster, which is being held last week in Ottawa. The team of demographers analysed a number of studies of migration and socio-economic inequalities among Canada's First Nations and produced a comprehensive review of these issues.

"The first thing that struck us was that it is very difficult to get a reliable, complete and consistent view of the situation", says Amorevieta-Gentil, who has a doctorate in demography and is a researcher on this project. "Not all Aboriginal people are First Nations. Within the First Nations there are Registered and Non-Registered Indians, who do not have the same rights and privileges, and these two groups differ in their geographical distribution in Canada. The definition of migration itself also varies, and there are different kinds of migration. For Indians migration means changing one's community, or leaving it to live in a non-Aboriginal society; and this may have stronger or weaker effects on personal and social identity. We looked at the inequalities between First Nations and non-Aboriginal people through this question of migration".

These issues of socio-economic inequalities and migration among the First Nations have not been much studied by demographers; but, as the researchers make clear, they are a sensitive part of social policy formation. For some communities, migration is perceived as one of the stages of the lifecycle. For others, migrating is seen as a renunciation of one's identity. There is also a reverse form of [migration](#) among Registered Indians, which takes place from urban centres towards reserves. Connection with community is one of the reasons given for these returns to the place of origin.

**More information:** Amorevieta-Gentil, Marilyn; Bourbeau, Robert; and Robitaille, Norbert (2015) "Les mouvements migratoires des Premières Nations : Reflets des inégalités," Population Change and Lifecourse Strategic Knowledge Cluster Discussion Paper Series/ Un Réseau stratégique de connaissances Changements de population et parcours de vie Document de travail: Vol. 3: Iss. 2, Article 2. Available at: [ir.lib.uwo.ca/pclc/vol3/iss2/2](http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/pclc/vol3/iss2/2)

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