

**Estimating the Population Impacts of the
E-Dbendaagzijig Naaknigewin
(Excerpts)**

Prepared for the

Union of Ontario Indians
Nipissing First Nation

by

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Introduction

Background and Purpose of the Study

The Grand Council of Chiefs of the Union of Ontario Indians has embarked on a process of developing and implementing a law governing citizenship (the **E-Dbendaagzijig Naaknigewin**) in the Anishinabek Nation of Ontario. Although subject to further revisions and refinements, the E-Dbendaagzijig Naaknigewin differs from the existing membership rules of most Ontario Anishinabek First Nations in that it proposes to extend eligibility for citizenship to all descendants of Anishinabek First Nations band members (whether alive or deceased). This would include current band members and their descendants and former band members who lost their status as band members as a consequence of various provisions of the current and previous versions of the Indian Act and their descendants. The proposed citizenship law forms a central component of a broader initiative which seeks to develop a self-governing Anishinabek Nation.

Against this backdrop, the Union of Ontario Indians has requested consulting services to assist the organization in the process of assessing the possible social, political, economic, cultural and other impacts of the E-Dbendaagzijig Naaknigewin. Many of the impacts of the proposed citizenship law are expected to be associated with pronounced changes in the size and composition of the Anishinabek population that would result from the application of the E-Dbendaagzijig Naaknigewin. As such, a critical requirement of the process of evaluating the impacts the proposed citizenship law relates to estimating the nature and scale of demographic changes that could result from its implementation.

This report presents the results of an initial stage of research that focuses on estimating how the current and future population eligible for citizenship under the E-Dbendaagzijig Naaknigewin would differ from that eligible for First Nations membership and Indian

registration under current First Nations membership rules and the rules governing Indian registration (i.e. Section 6 of the 1985 Indian Act).¹ Population impact estimates have been developed for each of the 40 First Nations that comprise the Union of Ontario Indians as well as for the aggregate of these First Nations (hereafter referred to as the Anishinabek Nation of Ontario).

Summary and Conclusions

As part of a broader process of nation-building, the Grand Council of Chiefs of the Union of Ontario Indians is considering implementing a citizenship law that would extend citizenship to all descendants of Anishinabek First Nations band members (whether alive or deceased). The proposed citizenship law forms a central component of a broader initiative which seeks to develop a self-governing Anishinabek Nation.

The Union of Ontario Indians has requested consulting services to explore the demographic impacts of the proposed citizenship law on the populations of First Nations to support a broader assessment of its possible social, political, economic, cultural and other impacts.

Using a series of population projections developed from data contained on the Indian Register, this study explores the population changes expected for First Nations comprising the Union of Ontario Indians if the existing rules governing Indian registration and First Nations membership remain in place over the course of the next four generations. Similar projections are then used to explore the nature and scale of population changes that would occur if these First Nations were to base citizenship on the proposed law.

The key findings of the research are summarized below.

¹ It is expected that later stages of the assessment process will attempt to address other aspects of the impacts of implementing the proposed citizenship law. A second research stage planned for this study, a discussion paper (forthcoming) will outline options and approaches for conducting a broader impact assessment of the proposed citizenship law.

High rates of Indian/non-Indian parenting characterize most of the First Nations that comprise the Union of Ontario Indians. As a group, UOI First Nations display a rate of Indian/non-Indian parenting that greatly exceeds both the Ontario and national average.

High rates of Indian/non-Indian parenting, in concert with the rules governing Indian registration, will result in widespread loss of entitlement to Indian registration among descendants of UOI First Nations.

Formal projections reveal that sharp declines in the size and share of the population entitled to Indian registration can be expected in most UOI First Nations. Absolute declines in the size of the population entitled to Indian registration are expected to occur among off-reserve populations within 15 years and among populations living on reserve within 35 years.

Pronounced losses of registration entitlement are expected to occur among children. Most children born to UOI First Nations populations will not qualify for Indian registration within one generation off reserve and within three generations on reserve. Within four generations only 1 in every 12 children born to UOI First Nations populations is expected to qualify for registration.

Loss of entitlement to Indian registration is expected to become pronounced in all of the 40 First Nations that comprise the Union of Ontario Indians.

The population eligible for membership with UOI First Nations is also expected to decline, as a growing share of descendants fails to meet the eligibility criteria set out in existing membership rules. This is expected to occur in all UOI First Nations except those that follow one parent membership rules (Sheshegwaning, Serpent River, Thessalon, Whitefish River and Fort William). For other UOI First Nations, declines in the population eligible for membership are expected to become pronounced off reserve within one generation and on reserve within two to three generations.

Population changes will be most pronounced (both on and off reserve) among First Nations with the highest rates of Indian/Non-Indian parenting and among those which employ membership rules which differ from those governing Indian registration.

Quite pronounced population changes are expected to occur among the populations of Wasauksing, Moose Deer Point, Scugog Island, Alderville, Pikwakanagan, Michipicoten and Wahnapiatae. These First Nations are expected to experience very rapid declines in the population eligible for membership and in the population entitled to Indian registration.

If the existing membership rules remain in force, increasing numbers of descendants of UOI First Nations, both on and off reserve, will not qualify for membership and will lack political rights. The future populations of most UOI communities are expected to be comprised of declining and aging populations of members and growing and more youthful populations of politically disenfranchised descendants.

By extending eligibility to all descendants, the proposed citizenship law could immediately increase the eligible population by somewhere between 10,260 individuals (based on Indian Register estimates) to 152,575 individuals (based on the adjusted 2006 Census estimates). Increased populations eligible for

citizenship would occur in all 40 of the First Nations comprising the Union of Ontario Indians.

Longer term population impacts of the proposed law are projected to be quite substantial, resulting in a population eligible for citizenship that would be many (at least three) times larger than that expected under the existing rules.

In the short term, the impacts of the proposed citizenship law would be relatively small among populations living on reserve. The law would have quite large short-term impacts in terms of increasing the population eligible for citizenship off reserve. In the longer term, the proposed law would result in much larger populations eligible for citizenship both on and off reserve.

The population of citizens associated with an Anishinabek nation based on the proposed law would continue to increase in size throughout the entire four generation projection period. These increases would occur both on and off reserve.

By extending citizenship eligibility to all descendants of Anishinabek peoples, the proposed law has the potential to address many of the population pressures that are building in Anishinabek communities and would promote a stronger identity and political equality among community residents and among Anishinabek peoples. Political equality and a strong collective identity would appear to be fundamental to the process of self-governance and nation building.

References

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