

language or at least on a regular basis. These patterns and variations of language learning and use are explored across regions, community population size (ranging from small rural to large urban areas), by broad age groups, and gender. Special emphasis is placed on the role of second language learning and regular home use of Aboriginal languages as increasingly important components of language survival, maintenance, and revitalization. Norris clearly points out that home use is critical for younger generations that stand relatively little chance of acquiring an Aboriginal language as a mother tongue, particularly within large urban areas.

The perceptive reader will recognize that this quick overview of the chapters that follow has not mentioned any implications of the analyses. This is intentional. The editors encourage readers to take their time digesting the analytical heft of these chapters, for it is the strength of the analyses that makes the conclusions and implications so compelling.

Taken together, these chapters provide a portrait of urban Aboriginal Canadians unlike any other. There is a depth and breadth of analysis in these works that far exceeds previous efforts. Beyond that, the decision to create a custom unit of geography—the urban catchment or service area—and then to build the research on the recognition that cities and towns draw people from surrounding areas provides the reader with a unique opportunity to learn about the health of Canada’s urban Aboriginal communities and the residents that live in them. These chapters are intended to provide scholars, students, and policy-makers with a clear vision of urban Aboriginal research and policy needs.

The contributors to this volume owe a debt of gratitude to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, of which Mr. Harper would likely be very surprised to learn. This debt, however, is real, for his government’s decision to eliminate the long-form Census of Population, starting in 2011, made this collection much more important than it otherwise would have been. As 2006 will be the last time comprehensive data about Canada’s Aboriginal peoples will be collected in the census, the papers that comprise this volume provide a wealth of information that it may never be possible to replicate.

The editors also wish to acknowledge and thank Indian and Northern Affairs Canada for making a financial contribution to the development of this volume.

Endnote

- 1 In May of 2011, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada changed its name to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

References

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