

Summary of:

Selected Socio-Economic Characteristics of Aboriginal Families

Living Off-Reserve: A Case Study of Prince Albert; Kulshreshtha, S. N.;

Agyirey-Kwakye, K.; 1995; Prince Albert Model Forest Assoc. Inc., Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. 82 p.

## SUMMARY

Development of efficient and effective forest management policies requires information on all those that may be affected by the policy measure. Among one of the major objectives of the Prince Albert Model Forest is to "provide evidence on the socio-economic effects of historical and recent forest resource use and conservation on people living within and in the vicinity of the model forest." One such group of people is the aboriginal families in the city of Prince Albert. In order to provide an assessment of impact of change in forest use on such groups, their present socio-economic conditions must be known. Since such information has not been collected in the past, this study was carried out.

This study is based on 30 aboriginal families living in the city of Prince Albert. On account of non-availability of a sampling frame, a "true" random sample of families could not be drawn. However, the process adopted was to select cases at random in predominantly aboriginal areas of the City of Prince Albert. On account of funding limitations, the selected sample size, although adequate from a statistical analysis point of view, was relatively small (only 30 cases).

About one-fifth of these were Metis, while the remaining 80% were treaty Indians. Average family had 3.83 persons, of which 2.13 were children and infants. Only 4 families in the sample had six or more persons. The age distribution showed more younger people, relative to those retired (65 plus), leading to a younger dependency ratio of 0.56, which in relation to the rest of the Canadian population is high.

Average educational attainment of adults was relatively lower. More than half (39% of the total) the adults had less than grade 8, and about 90% of all adults did not have high school. Of the 20 male adults, 15% had completed high school, as against 61% for female adults. Only 6% of female adults had high school plus some form of a certificate. Most of the adults acquired skills in areas such as life skills, carpenter/mechanics, education aide, and health worker/secretary, among others.

None of the adults was employed (for wages) in traditional activities, although 13 adults did participate in such activities, and sold part of the goods harvested from them. The most popular form of traditional activities included gathering of berries (13 adults), gathering of sweetgrass/sage (9 adults), hunting (3 adults), fishing (2 adults), and trapping (1 adult). Much of the fruits of these activities were for private use, although a small portion of the total was sold. On average, this source of sales was only \$69.98 per family because of lower educational levels and lack of other skills, a high rate of unemployment prevailed. Almost 75% of adults in the community were unemployed. Of the rest, only 15.69% of the total number of adults were employed full-time.

As a direct consequence of the high unemployment rate, wage income constituted a very small proportion of total income. Average income was estimated at \$17,513 per family, which is only \$4,573 per capita. Compared to the Saskatchewan average of \$18,900 per capita, it is obvious that economic means of the aboriginal families are meagre.

As these families spent all the income, the idea of saving was almost non-existent. Only two of the 30 families had managed to save some money, while for the others borrowing was more common. Almost two-thirds of sample families had loans, many of which were for purchase of automobiles. The major item of expenditure was for shelter which claimed almost a third of the total expenses. Food and related items claimed another 28.3% of total expenses, followed by transportation, and clothing expenses.

Aboriginal families shopped within the city of Prince Albert. Only 2.2% of total expenses were incurred outside the city. Thus, a very high level of these families' expenditures support the city's economy.

The estimated family income and expenditures noted in this report are based on a relatively small sample of 30 families. Furthermore, since a true random sampling process could not be applied, results should be interpreted with care.

In conclusion, alternative forest management plans for the Prince Albert Model Forest Region should take into account present economic conditions facing aboriginal families. Exodus of these families out of the reserves has not translated into productive employment for many of them. Most families still rely upon government transfers. Average family incomes are relatively lower, even after imputation for income in kind is made. Unless better programs are designed to target this problem, economic conditions facing aboriginal families living off-reserve is likely to worsen in the future.