

# LOOK NORTH

**Indigenous Economy Report**  
Contributions of Northern Indigenous  
People to the Manitoba Economy



RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
INSTITUTE



BRANDON  
UNIVERSITY



Manitoba Keewatinowik  
Okimakanak Inc.



# LOOK NORTH

## Indigenous Economy Report

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## Message from Look North Steering Committee Co-Chairs

On behalf of the Look North Steering Committee, we are pleased to present the Look North Indigenous Economy Report, a document that both reveals and affirms the substantial contributions of northern Indigenous enterprises and communities to the Manitoba economy. This summary is complementary to the full report, Indigenous Contributions to the Manitoba Economy, which documents the contributions of all Indigenous people in Manitoba, north and south.

For the first time, we are able to gain a better understanding of the economic contributions of Indigenous people in the north. We

can state with pride and confidence that Indigenous people have a significant impact on the provincial economy. More importantly, it is through this knowledge and awareness that relationships and partnerships with Indigenous communities can flourish, leading to increased economic opportunities.

As a place of natural and cultural riches, northern Manitoba is well-positioned as an opportunity for investment. As co-chairs of Look North, we are proud to support this initiative and the movement to grow the economy in the north. Together we can unleash the economic potential of northern Manitoba for generations to come.



A blue ink signature of Christian Sinclair, written in a cursive style.

Christian Sinclair  
Look North Co-Chair  
Onekanew (Chief)  
Opaskwayak Cree Nation



A blue ink signature of Chuck Davidson, written in a cursive style.

Chuck Davidson  
Look North Co-Chair  
President & CEO  
Manitoba Chambers of Commerce



Manitoba Keewatinowi  
Okimakanak Inc.

## Message from Grand Chief Settee

On behalf of the MKO First Nations, I am pleased to share the outcomes of the Look North Indigenous Economy Report. The findings of this project looked at collecting publicly available data on First Nations economic activities, First Nations' information related to employment, expenditures at the band, business, and household levels, investments in First Nation infrastructure, and financial support to Indigenous communities. The research report highlighted.

- The importance of on-reserve infrastructure investment to MKO First Nations' ability to participate in the wider economy, and;
- How expansion of MKO urban economic development zones is critical to community well being and prosperity for Manitoba in general.

The report helps to frame discussions and initiatives by providing a baseline for Indigenous contributions to the economy, labour force data and future trends that can be used for capacity building and investment planning. I am optimistic for the future as our First Nations utilize the economic analysis contained in this report when they meet with their counterparts within the municipal, provincial and federal governments to discuss our equal and full participation within the economies of Manitoba and Canada.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge and thank the MKO First Nations who participated, and who shared their experiences through guided discussions to profile the Urban Reserves in Manitoba and across Canada as an economic development tool that benefits all parties involved. I would like to thank our federal and provincial partners who provided the financial support for this research project. And, finally, thank you to the academic staff and researchers who developed the research parameters and compiled the report. Ekosani.

Sincerely,



Grand Chief Garrison Settee

Manitoba Keewatinowi  
Okimakanak Inc.



# Introduction

Northern Manitoba has a 10,000-year legacy of adventure and trade. It is a place where canoe and sled still run, where story and tradition is alive, where people's lives and livelihoods depend on working with, not against, Mother Nature.

With 67% of Manitoba's land area and 6% of its population, northern Manitoba has been a long-term net contributor to the economic prosperity of all Manitoba, as the source of some of the province's richest natural resources and tourism icons.

In northern Manitoba, 73% of the population self-identifies as Indigenous and 52% of the population lives on a First Nation. And yet, little is known about how and how much Indigenous people are contributing to the economy of the North and to all of Manitoba.

While learning about Maori successes in New Zealand, the Look North Steering Committee realized that the role Indigenous people play in the Manitoba economy must be measured. Through hundreds of conversations with northerners, the hunger for knowledge about the role of Indigenous people in Manitoba's North, in particular, became clear. This desire for knowledge became the catalyst for this research project.

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## PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

- to quantify spending amounts by Indigenous people in northern Manitoba in order to calculate their contributions to the provincial economy and the economy of the North

## SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

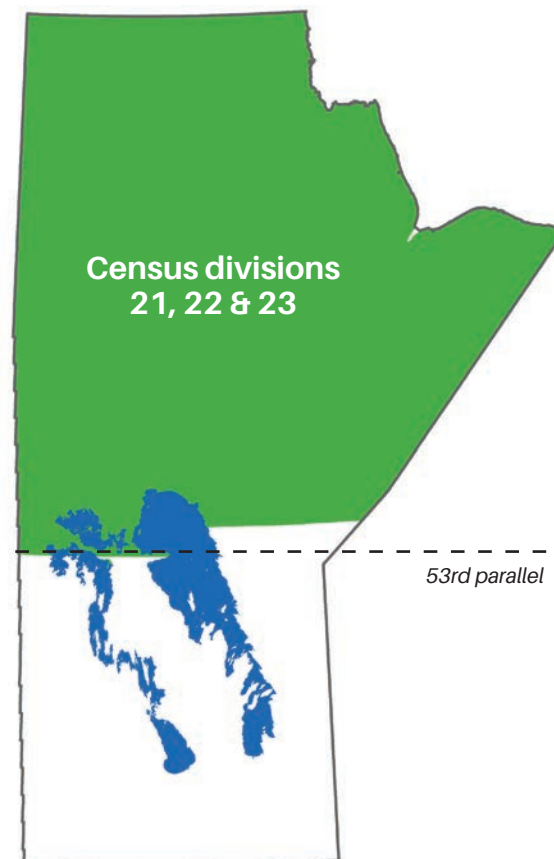
- to calculate the GDP of northern Manitoba
- to examine northern Manitoba's existing urban reserves, which are growing in importance as a revenue source for First Nations
- to create projections for First Nations population and labour force in the North

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Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO) and Look North partnered with Brandon University's Rural Development Institute (RDI) to research and document Indigenous economic contributions in Manitoba's North.

This summary is primarily based on a report entitled "Indigenous Contributions to the Manitoba Economy." The Southern Chiefs' Organization was a partner for the full report, which addresses the North and South of Manitoba.

This report defines the North as Statistics Canada census divisions 21, 22, and 23, which roughly correspond to the area north of the 53<sup>rd</sup> parallel.



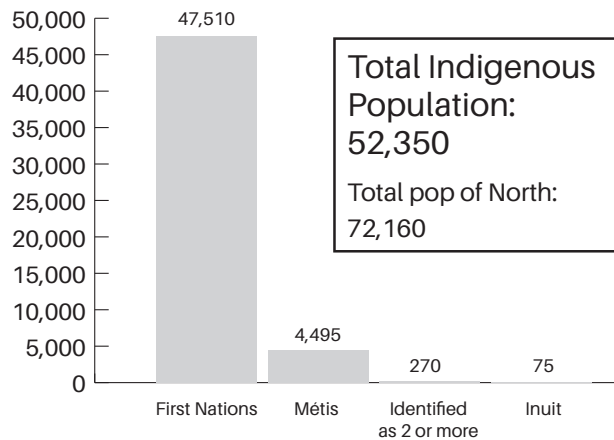
# Indigenous People in the North: snapshot

Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Population Profile, 2016

## POPULATION

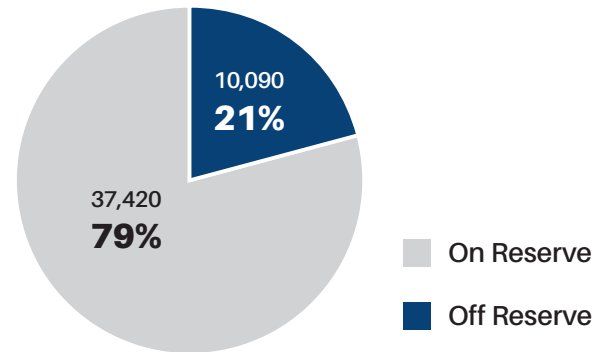
**73%** of northerners are Indigenous.

### Indigenous population in Manitoba's North, 2016



## ON OR OFF RESERVE

### First Nations population living on or off reserve in the North, 2016



**52%** of northerners live on a First Nation.



Approximately 6% of Metis people in the North live on reserve.



69% of Metis people and 100% of Inuit people in Manitoba's North live in Thompson, The Pas, Flin Flon, and Churchill.

Northern Manitoba is a sparsely populated landscape that includes four off-grid First Nation communities and many remote, fly-in communities.

**15**  
Fly-in  
Communities

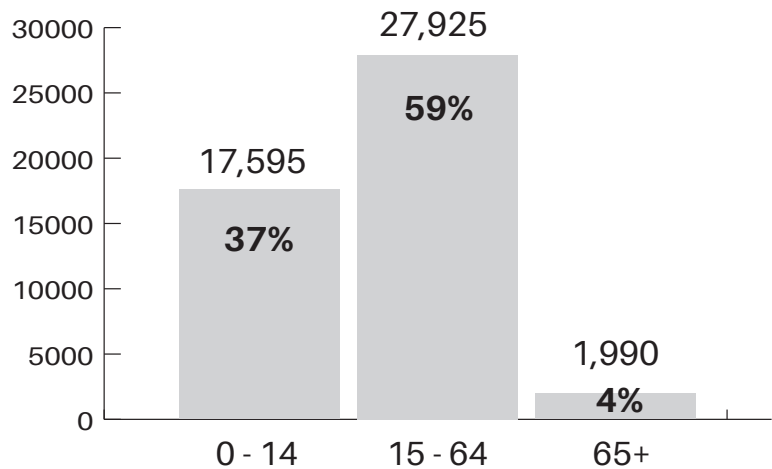
Higher cost of living, traditional lifestyles, hunting, gathering, trapping, fishing



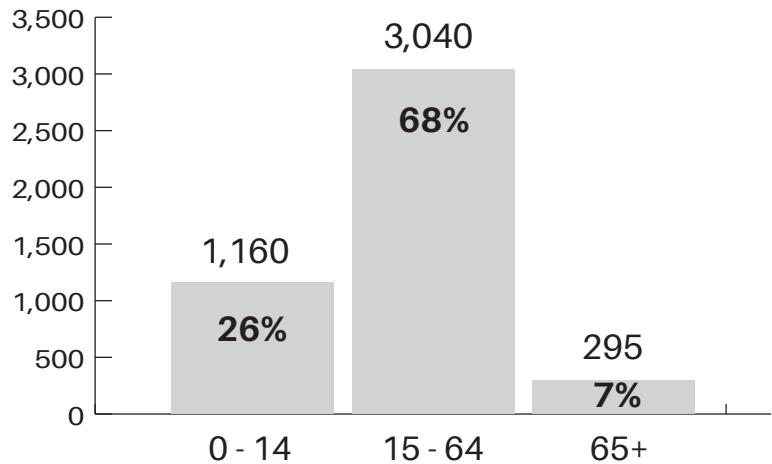
Norway House Cree Nation Pow Wow, Photo by Travel Manitoba

AGE

Size of age groups, First Nations population in the North, 2016

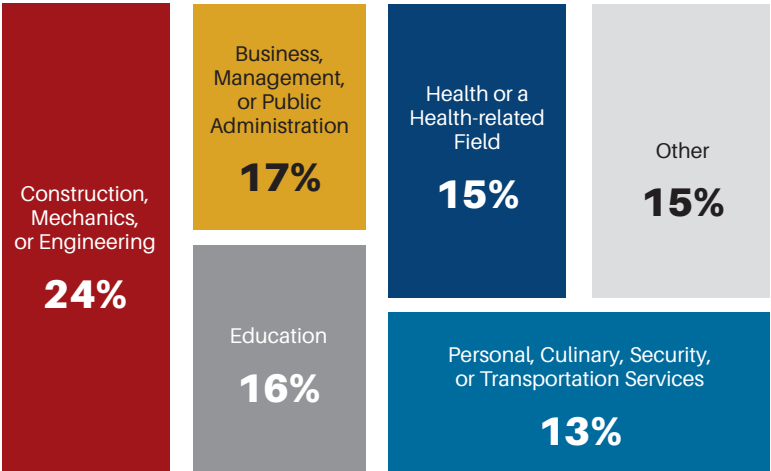


Size of age groups, Métis population in the North, 2016

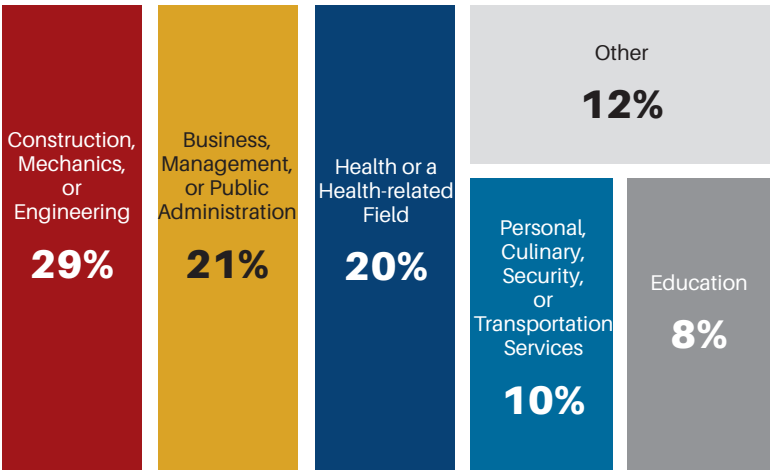


EDUCATION

First Nations people in the North with post-secondary education, area of study, 2016



Métis people in the North with post-secondary education, area of study, 2016



INCOME

Median employment income for full-year, full-time workers in the North, 2015

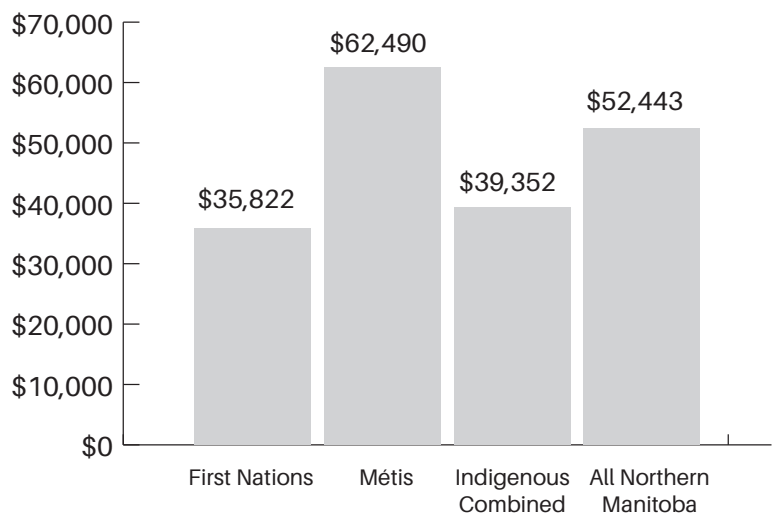
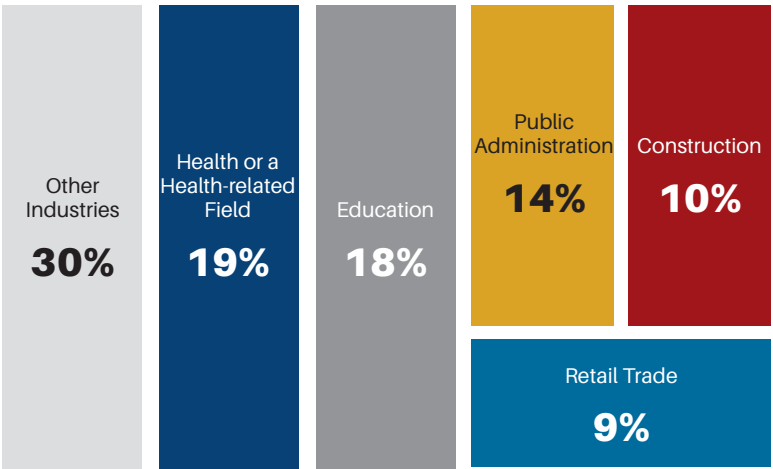


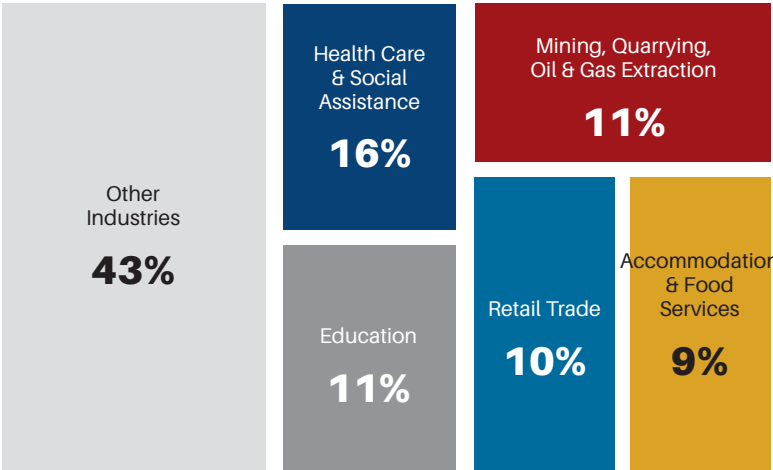
Photo by Travel Manitoba

LABOUR

Industries of employment, First Nations population in the North, 2016

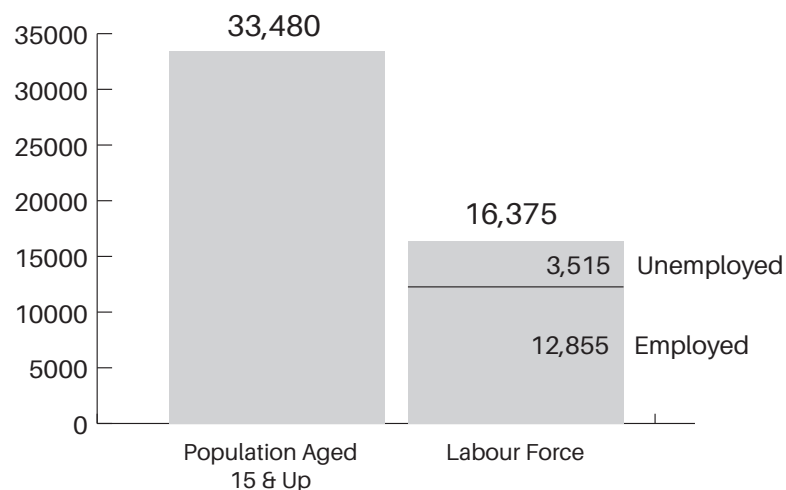


Industries of employment, Métis population in the North, 2016



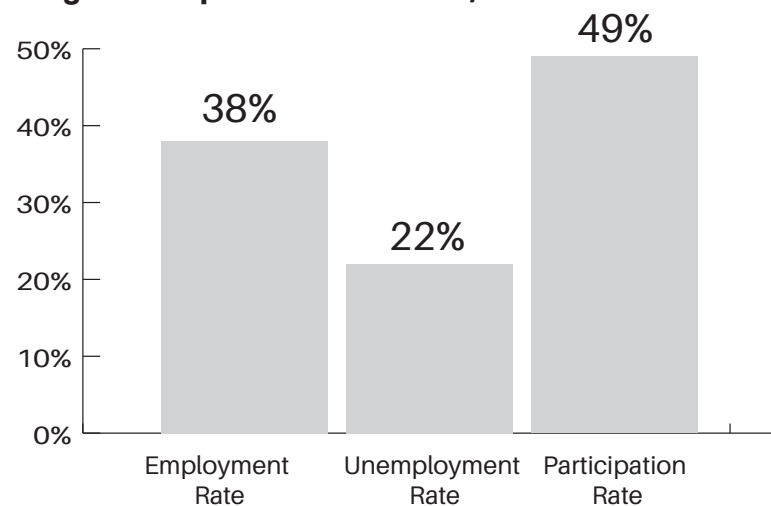


## Population & Labour Force, Indigenous population in the North, 2016



**Labour force:** those employed or unemployed but looking for work

## Employment, Unemployment, and Participation rates, Indigenous Population in the North, 2016



**Employment rate:** the percent of people aged 15 and up who are employed

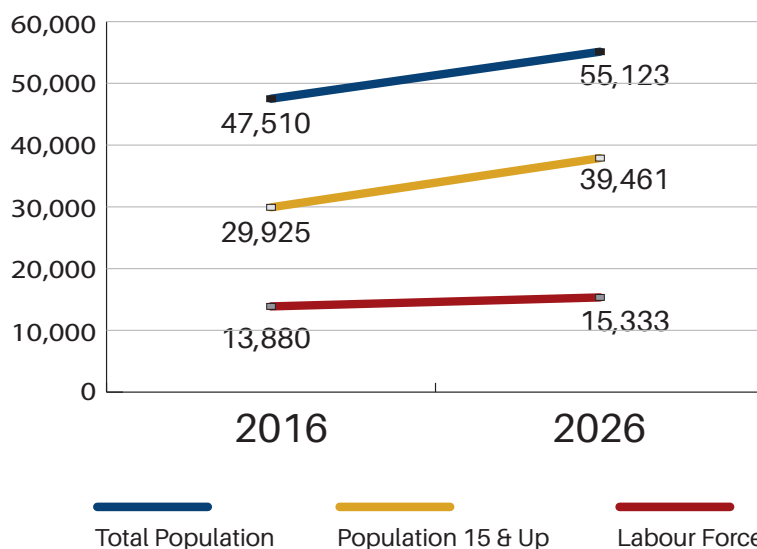
**Unemployment rate:** out of all the people who are employed or unemployed (but looking for a job), the percent that are unemployed

**Participation rate:** the percent of the population aged 15 & up that is either employed or unemployed but looking for work.

## LOOKING FORWARD, 2016 TO 2026

The First Nations population in the North is projected to

- increase by 16% over the ten-year period,
- see an increase of 32% in those aged 15 and up, and
- see an increase of 10% in the labour force.



The unemployment rate of First Nations in the North is projected to decrease slightly from 24% to 22% by 2026.

# Economic Impact Analysis: Input-Output Model Method

A standard economic input-output model inventories Indigenous spending and calculates impacts on the overall Manitoba economy. In this report, data is analyzed for Indigenous spending in northern Manitoba.

## INPUTS

Spending by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit for one year (2016). The spending is by

- Indigenous governments,
- federal and provincial governments and First Nations bands on infrastructure,
- Indigenous businesses, and
- Indigenous households.

## OUTPUTS

The economic model calculates the impacts of this spending on the overall Manitoba economy. The impacts are calculated in terms of

- gross domestic product (GDP),
- employment (jobs), and
- labour income (wages, salaries paid).

**GDP** - measures the monetary value of all final goods and services produced in Manitoba as a result of spending by Indigenous people.

**Employment** - the number of jobs maintained or created in the Manitoba economy, including a mix of full- and part-time positions.

**Labour income** - includes wages (e.g. hourly), salaries, and employer benefits paid out to those employed as a result of Indigenous spending.

## INPUTS - Spending, 2016



by Indigenous Governments



on First Nations Infrastructure

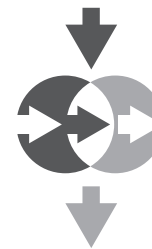


by Indigenous Businesses



by Indigenous Households

Spending for the North, and on and off reserves



## Input-Output Calculations

Like other economists, including those in the federal and provincial governments, we use the input-output model to inventory spending and calculate impacts on the Manitoba economy

## OUTPUTS - Impacts, 2016



Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (\$)



Employment - Jobs Created & Maintained (#)



Labour Income - Wages, Salaries (\$)



Government Revenues - Taxes Paid (\$)




Impacts for the North


# Key Findings


## \$1.9 billion

is the total spending associated with the northern Manitoba Indigenous economy.

### SPENDING BREAKDOWN

 **\$682 million** from First Nations bands and other Indigenous governments

 **\$533 million** from Indigenous businesses

 **\$493 million** from Indigenous households

 **\$187 million** from spending on infrastructure

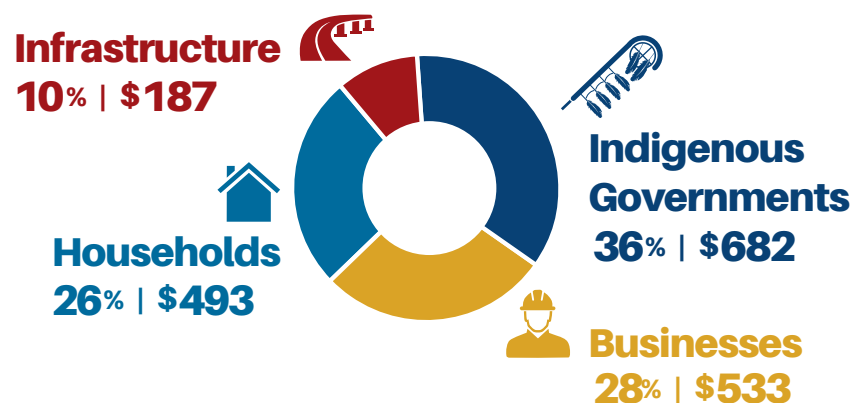
### IMPACTS

Indigenous spending in Manitoba's North has a significant impact on the entire province.

Northern Indigenous spending of \$1.9 billion in 2016 contributed

- **\$565 million** to Manitoba's GDP,
- **\$378 million** in labour income in the province, and
- **11,066 jobs** (maintained or created).

### SPENDING BY TYPE, % OF TOTAL SPENDING - 2016 (\$ MILLION)







### SPENDING BY INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN NORTHERN MB, ON AND OFF RESERVE - 2016 (\$ MILLION)

**ON RESERVE**  
82% | \$1,553

**OFF RESERVE**  
18% | \$342

### IMPACTS FROM SPENDING - 2016

Spending Source	GDP (\$ Million)	Employment (Positions)	Labour Income (\$ Million)
 Indigenous governments	\$432.3	9,442	\$304.0
 Infrastructure	\$56.7	648	\$36.7
 Businesses	\$65.7	851	\$30.8
 Households	\$9.8	125	\$6.4
<b>Total Impacts</b>	<b>\$564.5</b>	<b>11,066</b>	<b>\$377.9</b>

# Comparisons to Provincial Indicators

Indigenous spending of **\$1.9 billion** in 2016 accounted for an estimated

- **\$565 million, or 0.94%** of the GDP of Manitoba,<sup>1</sup> and
- **11,066, or 1.75%** of employment positions in Manitoba.

These Indigenous contributions to the Manitoba economy are comparable to other major industry sectors. The Northern Indigenous economy contributes

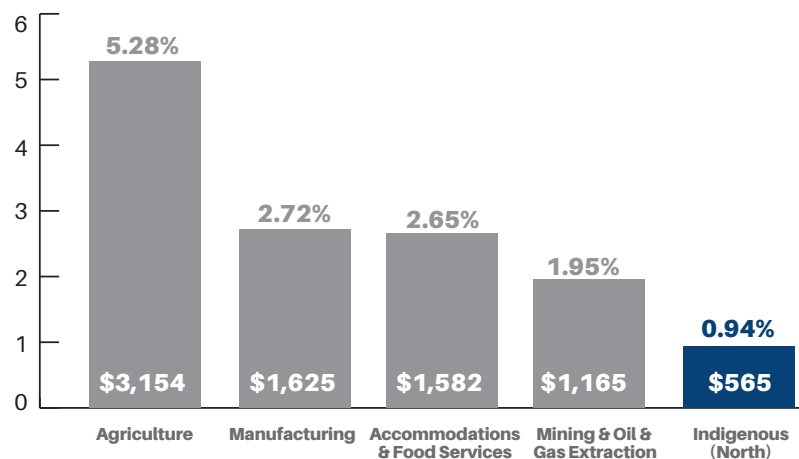
- half as much to provincial GDP as the province's entire mining and oil and gas extraction sector (which contributes 1.95% of provincial GDP), and
- about three times as much employment as the province's entire mining and oil and gas extraction sector (which contributes 0.64% of Manitoba jobs).



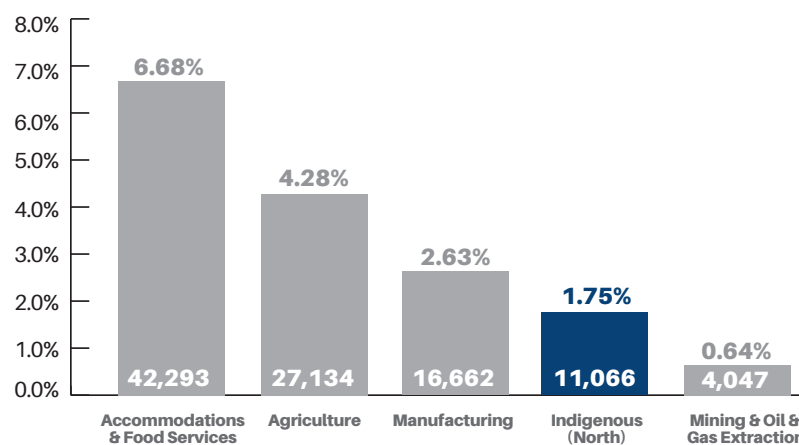
Atoskiwin Training and Employment Centre, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation

1. 2016 GDP at factor cost.

## SAMPLE COMPONENTS OF PROVINCIAL GDP: MAJOR INDUSTRIES & INDIGENOUS (NORTH), % OF PROVINCIAL GDP & IMPACT IN \$MILLION



## SAMPLE CONTRIBUTORS TO PROVINCIAL EMPLOYMENT, % OF PROVINCIAL EMPLOYMENT & IMPACT IN NUMBER OF EMPLOYMENT POSITIONS



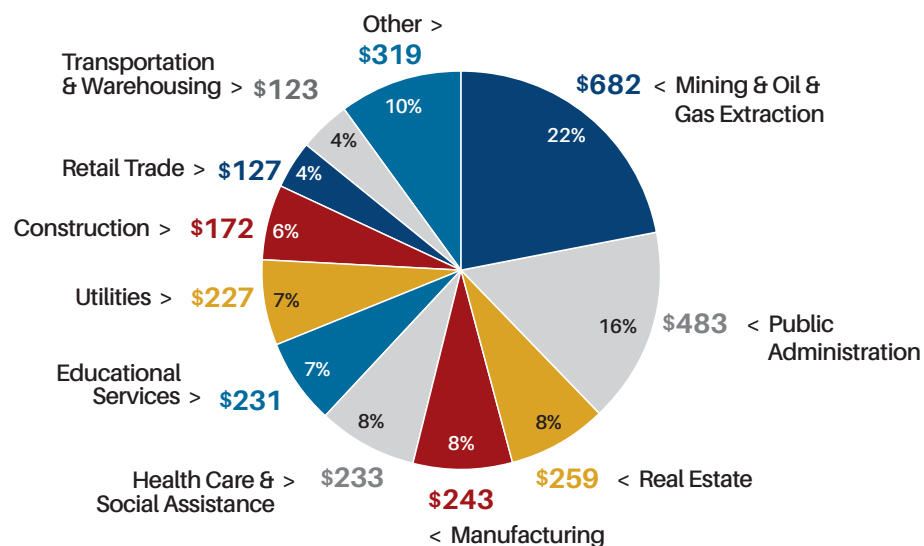
# Overall GDP for Northern Manitoba<sup>2</sup>

## \$3.1 billion

representing 5.2% of Manitoba's GDP.

Northern Indigenous spending of \$1.9 billion contributes \$565 million to GDP, which represents **18.2%** of northern Manitoba's GDP.

### Northern Manitoba GDP by industry sector<sup>5</sup> (\$million and %)



## METHOD

The estimated provincial GDP for each industry sector was pro-rated across Manitoba's census divisions (21, 22, and 23) using the level of employment in that industry in each census division, as published in Statistics Canada's 2016 Census. Following the methodology used by the Conference Board of Canada, among others, the GDP (or productivity) of each worker is considered to be the same in each census division.



Hudbay Minerals in Flin Flon

<sup>2</sup> Northern Manitoba GDP is a measure of the value of economic production generated within northern Manitoba by all industries and employees, regardless of the employees' ethnicity or the nationality of the business owner. The result is in chained 2012 dollars.

<sup>5</sup> Each slice shows the amount of northern GDP generated by that industry sector based on employment levels. These amounts cannot be directly compared to the northern Indigenous spending impact of \$565 million, which is generated by an economic impact (input-output) model.



# Northern Indigenous Spending and Impacts



## INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENTS

### SPENDING BY INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENTS IN THE NORTH

In the 2015–2016 fiscal year, Indigenous government spending in the North totaled **\$681.6 million**.

**62%** of Indigenous government spending in the North was on wages, salaries, and supplementary labour income (employee benefits).

SPENDING 2016 (\$ MILLION)	
First Nations	\$671.2
Métis & Inuit	\$10.4
<b>Total Spending</b>	<b>\$681.6</b>

Indigenous government spending refers to remuneration, expenses, and other spending presented in financial statements by First Nations bands and Tribal Councils, and Metis and Inuit organizations. The data from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and others include audited consolidated financial statements and Schedules of Remuneration and Expenses.

Given the limited data, the research involved two assumptions:

- All First Nations government spending is considered to be on reserve, where the government operations are headquartered.
- All Métis and Inuit government spending is considered to be off reserve.

### IMPACTS FROM INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENT SPENDING

This \$681.6 million of spending contributed \$432.3 million to the GDP, created or maintained the equivalent of 9,442 jobs, and contributed \$304.0 million in labour income to the greater Manitoba economy.

IMPACTS 2016	
GDP (\$M)	\$432.3
Employment (jobs)	9,442
Labour Income (\$M)	\$304.0

When compared to total impacts from northern Indigenous spending, Indigenous government spending alone contributed 77% of the GDP impact, 85% of the jobs, and 80% of the labour income.

The impact of Indigenous government spending goes beyond these economic numbers. Indigenous governments spend money to improve the quality of life of community members via housing, job training, health services, and much more. Indigenous people are increasingly pursuing self-government to enhance their financial decision-making authority. With increased self-determination and settlement of treaty land claims, which may include land or financial compensation or both, Indigenous people can develop their lands and generate increased own-source revenues. Greater economic self-reliance is a path to increased self-determination for Indigenous peoples in Manitoba.



## INDIGENOUS BUSINESSES

### SPENDING BY INDIGENOUS BUSINESSES IN THE NORTH

The estimated spending (excluding capital spending) by 87 Indigenous businesses totaled **\$532.8 million**.

SPENDING 2016 (\$ MILLION)	
First Nations On Reserve	\$354.6
First Nations Off Reserve, Métis & Inuit	\$178.2
<b>Total Spending</b>	<b>\$532.8</b>

### IMPACTS FROM INDIGENOUS BUSINESS SPENDING

Indigenous business spending contributed \$65.7 million toward Manitoba's GDP, created or maintained 851 jobs in Manitoba, and contributed \$30.8 million in labour income.

IMPACTS 2016	
GDP (\$M)	\$65.7
Employment (jobs)	851
Labour Income (\$M)	\$30.8

There is a wide range of Indigenous businesses in Manitoba, from tourism outfitters to construction. Quality data on formal Indigenous businesses is limited. A special tabulation of business counts by location (on reserve), business activity, and employment size was acquired from Statistics Canada's 2016 Business Register.

On-reserve businesses were considered to belong to First Nations. Off-reserve business counts were conservatively estimated, based on a ratio of off-reserve to on-reserve population. The exact numbers are likely larger.

INDIGENOUS BUSINESSES IN THE NORTH	
First Nations On Reserve	58
First Nations Off Reserve, Métis & Inuit	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>

Small and medium-sized Indigenous enterprises are significant growth engines in the Indigenous economy, just as they are in the Canadian economy. These businesses can also serve as a training ground where employees and leaders gain transferable skills and knowledge. Indigenous leaders guide business development and growth while maintaining and enhancing social and cultural development in their communities.



Cannabis store, Otineka Mall, Opaskwayak Cree Nation



## INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS

### SPENDING BY INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS IN THE NORTH

Indigenous households in the North spent **\$493.4 million**, 69% (\$340.2 million) of which was spent by on-reserve households and 31% (\$153.2 million) by off-reserve households.

#### SPENDING 2016 (\$ MILLION)

On Reserve	\$340.2
Off Reserve	\$153.2
<b>Total Spending</b>	<b>\$493.4</b>

In Manitoba's North, there are an estimated **10,980** Indigenous households and about **27%** (2,955) of those are off reserve.

### IMPACTS FROM INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLD SPENDING

First Nations household spending contributed \$9.8 million toward provincial GDP, created or maintained 125 jobs, and produced \$6.4 million in labour income.

#### IMPACTS 2016

GDP (\$M)	\$9.8
Employment (jobs)	125
Labour Income (\$M)	\$6.4

Households spend to meet everyday needs, for such items as groceries, clothing, rent, energy, transport, health expenses, leisure, and miscellaneous services. Historically, Indigenous people were self-sufficient and able to live off the bounty of the land by hunting, trapping, fishing, and gathering. Today, this traditional food provisioning has decreased for many.

This report's analysis of northern Indigenous household spending is unique in acknowledging and estimating the effects of both the higher cost of living in the North and traditional lifestyles.

Due to the higher cost of living in Manitoba's North, this report assumes household spending is higher than in the South. We estimated the percentage of household income spent on consumer goods and services based on whether communities did or did not have all-season road access. Results showed that in many communities slightly more was spent by households than their income would allow. In these cases, it was assumed that households supplemented with traditional activities such as hunting and fishing or went without.

In addition, some people may partially offset high costs through the use of an informal exchange or barter economy; however, there is no data source for estimating their effects on household costs.



Photo by Travel Manitoba

## SPENDING ON FIRST NATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE NORTH

First Nations infrastructure spending in the North totaled **\$187.2 million**.

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### SPENDING 2016 (\$ MILLION)

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On Reserve	\$187.2
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For this report, all infrastructure spending is considered to be on reserve. No Metis or Inuit infrastructure spending data was available. This report reflects what was spent in 2016. The data does not capture soft assets, such as business knowledge, which are also vital to the economy.

## DATA SOURCES

- The National First Nations Infrastructure Investment Plan from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)
- The Province of Manitoba's Indigenous and Northern Affairs department's capital grants and community capital supports
- First Nations' audited financial statements



Environmental Remediation And Alternative Energy Systems (ERAAES) Project in Northlands Dènesyuliné First Nation

## IMPACTS FROM FIRST NATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING IN THE NORTH

The impact of this infrastructure spending on GDP totaled \$56.7 million, generated or maintained the equivalent of 648 jobs, and contributed \$36.7 million in labour income.

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### IMPACTS 2016

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GDP (\$M)	\$56.7
Employment (jobs)	648
Labour Income (\$M)	\$36.7

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Infrastructure is critical to enhance the economic health of a region on all levels. Increased infrastructure spending is generally expected to result in higher economic activity and improved quality of life—in the short term, by stimulating demand and responding to needs and in the long term, by supporting and increasing overall productivity.

In addition, Indigenous people continuously pursue opportunities that arise out of infrastructure spending, including opportunities to enhance skills training in trades and project management.



# Urban Reserves in Northern Manitoba

In the North, there are four urban reserves:

- Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN) UR in the City of Thompson,
- Opaskwayak Cree Nation (OCN) adjacent to The Pas, and
- two urban reserves in the Town of Swan River, belonging to Sopotaweyak Cree Nation (SCN).

Three more were in the ATR process by January 2018:

- Opaskwayak Cree Nation's URs in the City of Thompson and the settlement of Big Eddy and
- Wuskwi Sipihk First Nation's URs in The Pas and Swan River

Urban reserves are an important part of the Indigenous economy in Manitoba as they provide opportunities for First Nations to expand and diversify revenue sources. These revenues allow First Nations to provide support services for their members, plan for future generations, and pursue economic development opportunities.

An urban reserve (UR) is reserve land within or adjacent to an urban municipality. In most cases, urban reserves are created through the Addition to Reserve (ATR) process by which First Nations add land their existing reserve or create a new reserve. An example is Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation's UR in Thompson. In other cases, the reserve existed

first and a nearby community grew up alongside it. Opaskwayak Cree Nation adjacent to The Pas is a Manitoba example of this second type.

For the urban reserve profiles in the **Indigenous Contributions to the Manitoba Economy** report, a researcher from Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO) met and interviewed: Mr. David Kobliski from NCN, Onekanew Christian Sinclair from OCN, and Chief Nelson Genaille and Councillors Mary Lou Leask and Augustus Chartrand from SCN.

## URBAN RESERVE BENEFITS TO FIRST NATIONS

- jobs (at main reserve and at UR)
- own taxation rules and by-laws
- business operations (band-owned businesses enhanced by proximity to the urban centre)
- land-leasing revenues
- own by-laws apply in the newly converted land
- reinvestment in socio-cultural activities
- economic self-sufficiency
- stronger relationships with local governments

## URBAN RESERVE BENEFITS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

- expanded tax base (UR workers & off-reserve property owners)
- service-provision revenues, including utilities in UR, schooling, and other residential services for off-reserve residents
- Indigenous peoples' spending in urban centres
- stronger relationships with the First Nations

## URBAN RESERVE CHALLENGES TO FIRST NATIONS

- unclear and lengthy ATR process
- long length of time and frictions when negotiating Municipal Services Agreement (MSA) with municipalities
- limited financial resources to develop the UR land
- First Nations receive same yearly budget despite additional expenses on urban reserve
- fragmentation of Bands as members move to urban areas

## URBAN RESERVE CHALLENGES TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

- lengthy land price negotiations and selling process
- lengthy negotiations and frictions when negotiating MSA



# Next Steps

This report is just a starting point. It is intended to encourage partnerships and help foster collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments and businesses, for the benefit of all.

This document contributes to a better understanding of the role Indigenous people play in the economy. It provides insight into the opportunities that will lead to increased economic growth that is inclusive and promotes equality.

## THE WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

Based on population alone, Indigenous people in northern Manitoba will continue to increase as an economic force through to 2026. With a projected increase of 32% in the First Nations population aged 15 and up, northern Manitoba could become an economic growth leader in Canada by moving more youth into the workforce.

The Indigenous population of northern Manitoba, younger than the overall Manitoba population, is critical to current and future opportunities that will contribute to the overall growth and prosperity of northern Manitoba. Developing a strong workforce that matches current and future labour market needs is key to realizing this potential and will contribute significantly to building a strong, sustainable economy.

## BUILDING RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Collaboration is vital to pursuing economic development opportunities that will enhance the quality of life of Indigenous people in northern Manitoba. The creation of urban reserves in northern Manitoba not only benefits First Nations and local governments but also contributes to the overall success of Manitoba's economy. Collaborative partnerships between First Nations, municipalities, and the private sector create tremendous economic potential in the North and serve as examples for the development of urban reserves across the province.

Building positive, respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples is the foundation for prosperity in northern Manitoba, and Manitoba as a whole. Leaders—be they elected, spiritual, or community leaders—who share knowledge, experience, and vision, are well positioned to find new pathways for Indigenous communities to advance towards their desired future.

Collaborations between Indigenous people, the Government of Canada, the Province of Manitoba, and all Manitobans are key to realizing this shared future—a strong, healthy and sustainable future—for generations to come.



Northern Manitoba Trappers' Festival, Photo by Travel Manitoba

