

## Section 2.—The Indians and Eskimos of Canada

### Subsection 1.—The Indians of Canada\*

**History.**—The Indians, it is believed, came in successive migrations in pre-historic times from North Asia. They are divided into a number of distinct linguistic stocks and many tribal subdivisions with widely differing physical and psychological characteristics.

As early as 1670, during the reign of Charles II, instructions were given to the Governors of the colonies to the effect that Indians who desired to place themselves under British protection should be well received and protected. Records exist of numerous agreements and treaties dating back as far as the year 1664, made by the British with the Indians of New England, while Canada was still under French government. Later, it was found necessary to establish an office devoted solely to the administration of Indian Affairs and, in 1755, Sir William Johnson was appointed Indian Superintendent with headquarters in the Mohawk Valley, the country of the Six Nations Confederacy, in what is now the State of New York. The establishment of this office was the genesis of future Indian administrative organization in English-speaking North America. Following the American Revolution, the British Indian Office was removed to Canada, and a similar organization was established in the newly formed United States.

Before the advent of the European, the number of Indians was undoubtedly larger, but little reliable information is available as to the aboriginal population, during either the French or the early British regimes. The best estimate, however, of the aboriginal or Indian population of what is now Canada is slightly in excess of 200,000 or about double the present figure.

Shortly after the intrusion of White settlers throughout their domains the Indian population began to dwindle. The major contributing factors for this decrease were: (1) the necessity for sudden and often complete change in habits of life caused by inevitable contact with White settlers; (2) the near extinction of the buffalo and other species of wild game as major food, clothing and shelter items in the economy of Indian life, and the adoption of White man's foods; (3) the introduction of White man's diseases, such as measles, whooping cough, scarlet fever, smallpox, tuberculosis and venereal diseases; (4) the comparative closer confinement and congestion and the adoption of houses at permanent locations as contrasted with the former nomadic life in temporary tipis; (5) slowness to comprehend and appreciate the White man's way of life, which was so completely different from their own.

Succeeding generations slowly adopted White man's ways and, during the twentieth century, the Canadian Indian population has been increasing gradually but steadily until at present it is estimated at 126,000. There are some 600 separate communities known as "bands"—the administrative unit of the Indian population.

The Indian Affairs Branch takes a quinquennial census of the Indians under its control. The results of the latest of these censuses, taken in 1944, show a total of 125,686 Indians as compared with 118,378 in 1939 and 112,510 in 1934, an increase of 11.7 p.c. in ten years. Details are given in the Annual Report of the Department of Mines and Resources for 1947. The figures given in Table 2 are those of the

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