THE WELL-BEING OF COMMUNITIES WITH SIGNIFICANT MÉTIS POPULATION IN CANADA

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ABSTRACT / RÉSUMÉ

This paper examines the Community Well-Being of Métis Census Subdivisions in Canada. Theses communities are identified based upon population size, geographic location and change over 1991 to 2001 Census years. This is an initial attempt at analyzing Métis communities in a similar fashion that other aboriginal communities in Canada have. It compares the educational levels, labour levels, income and housing quality and quantity levels.

Cet article examine le bien-être communautaire des subdivisions de recensement métisses au Canada. Ces communautés sont identifiées d'après la taille de leur population, leur emplacement géographique et les changements survenus entre le recensement de 1991 et celui de 2001. Il s'agit d'une première tentative en vue d'analyser les communautés métisses comme on l'a fait pour les autres communautés autochtones au Canada. L'étude porte sur les niveaux de scolarité, d'emploi, de revenu et de qualité et quantité de logements.

INTRODUCTION

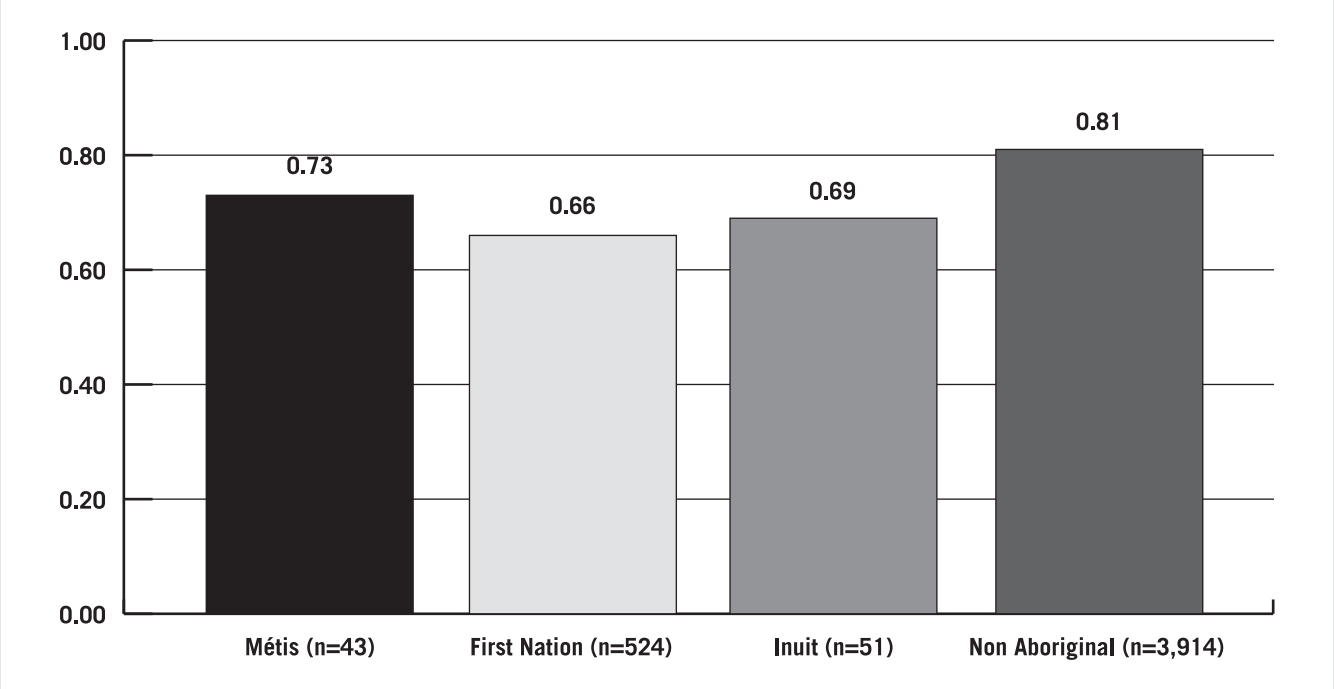
There have been a number of examinations of the living conditions and well-being of Aboriginal communities in Canada. Recently, researchers with the Strategic Research and Analysis Directorate (SRAD) at Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) introduced the Community Well-Being (CWB) index methodology as one way of quantitatively measuring socio-economic well-being at the community level. This index has been applied to measurements of the conditions of First Nation and Inuit communities.[1]

This paper marks a new phase in the analysis of Aboriginal community well-being via the CWB methodology by examining communities with significant Métis population in Canada. This will provide an opportunity to compare the well-being of such communities to that of other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Canada.

THE COMMUNITY WELL-BEING (CWB) INDEX

The Community Well-Being Index is a method of examining the relative well-being of communities within

FIGURE 1: Average Community Well-Being Score by Community Type, 2001 n = 4,685



Source: Special calculations based on the 2001 Census.

Canada. An in-depth explanation of the CWB Index and its methodology is provided by Mindy McHardy and Erin O'Sullivan in their 2004 report;[2] briefly, the Index is a composite of four equally weighted key indicators all derived from the Census: education, housing, labour, and income. They are combined to create a score ranging from 0 and 1. The resulting scores highlight the well-being of communities as a whole, as opposed to a specific sub-group within the community; however this does not prevent us from deriving conclusions about a sub-group from community-level findings, provided the sub-group in question (in this case, self-identified Métis) makes up a significant percentage of the community population.

Comprehensive understanding of CWB scores requires that one take into account trends in CWB level over time. By looking at overall CWB levels and CWB component scores over time, certain factors can be identified to explain potential changes in CWB levels. Factors such as demographics, migration to and from communities and fluctuating economic indicators can have an effect on the CWB of communities. This paper examines change in CWB scores through three censuses, in 1991, 1996 and 2001.[3]

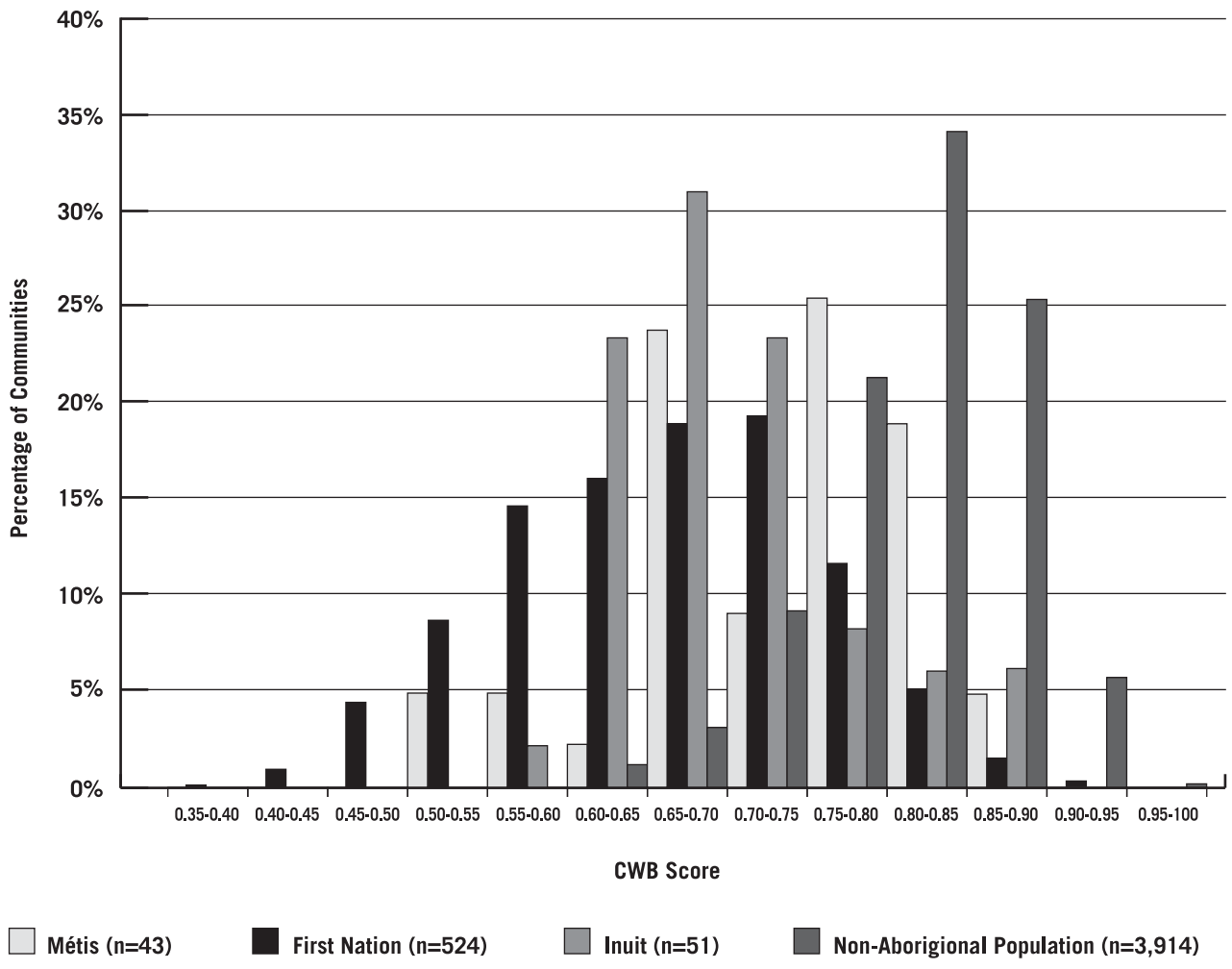
MÉTIS COMMUNITIES IN CANADA

There has been a consistent increase in the number of people who have self-identified as Métis in the last decade. From 1996 to 2001, the percentage of Métis population within the overall Aboriginal population increased from 25.6% to 33.2% respectively; whereas the percentage of First Nations of the overall Aboriginal population decreased from 66.2% to 59.5%.[4] When looking at the Métis share of the total Aboriginal population at the provincial level, Alberta (43.0%), Manitoba (38.9%), Saskatchewan (34.2%), Ontario (29.4%) and British Columbia (27.6%) all have significant Métis populations.

The definition of who the Métis people are, what constitutes a Métis community, and where these communities are historically located has been and remains the focus of much discussion. This report does not attempt to address these issues. Rather, we rely solely on Census data, and use self-reported Métis identity as the population base.

For the purposes of this study, Métis communities were defined as those CSDs with a total population of 65[5] or more, of which the self-identified Métis population makes up at least 25%. Forty-three communities were identified

FIGURE 2: Distribution of Métis, First Nations, Inuit and Non-Aboriginal Communities by Community Well-Being Score, 2001

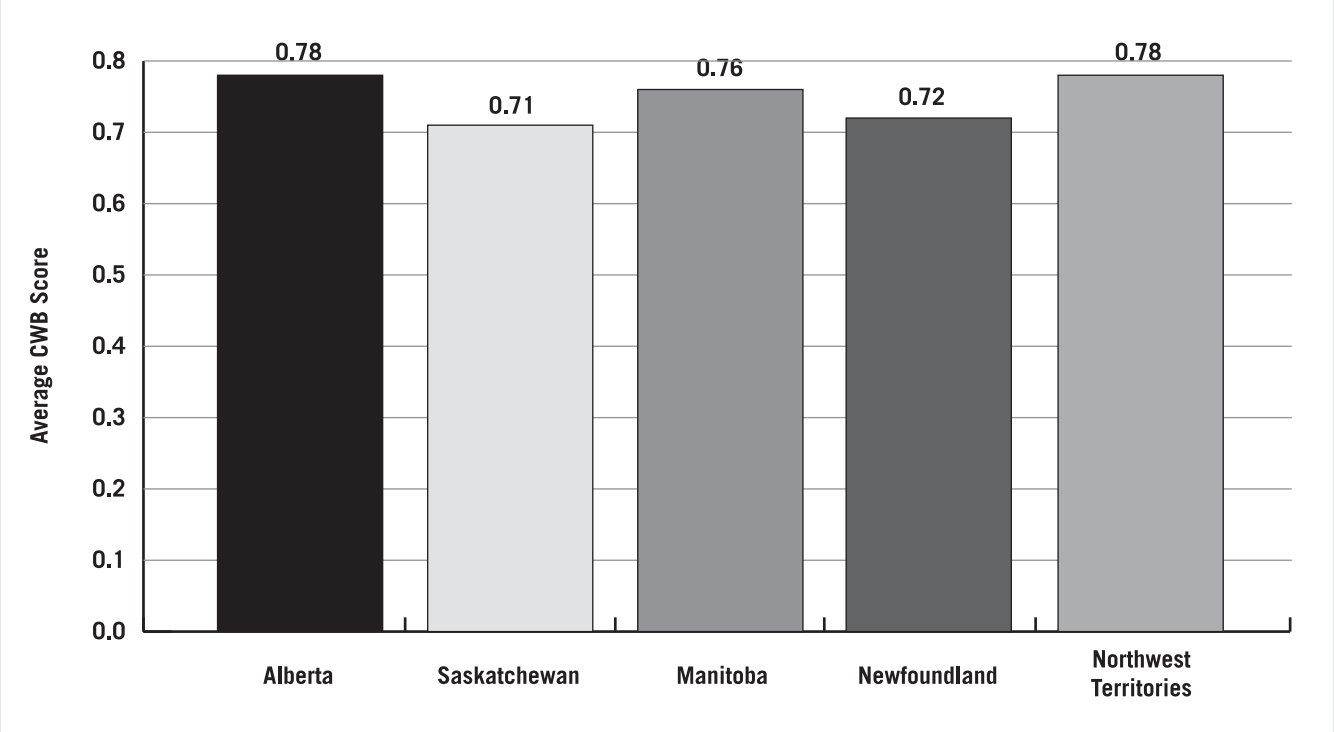


Source: Special Calculations based on the 2001 Census

TABLE 1: Community Well-Being (CWB): Distribution of Métis Communities by Province and Territory, 2001

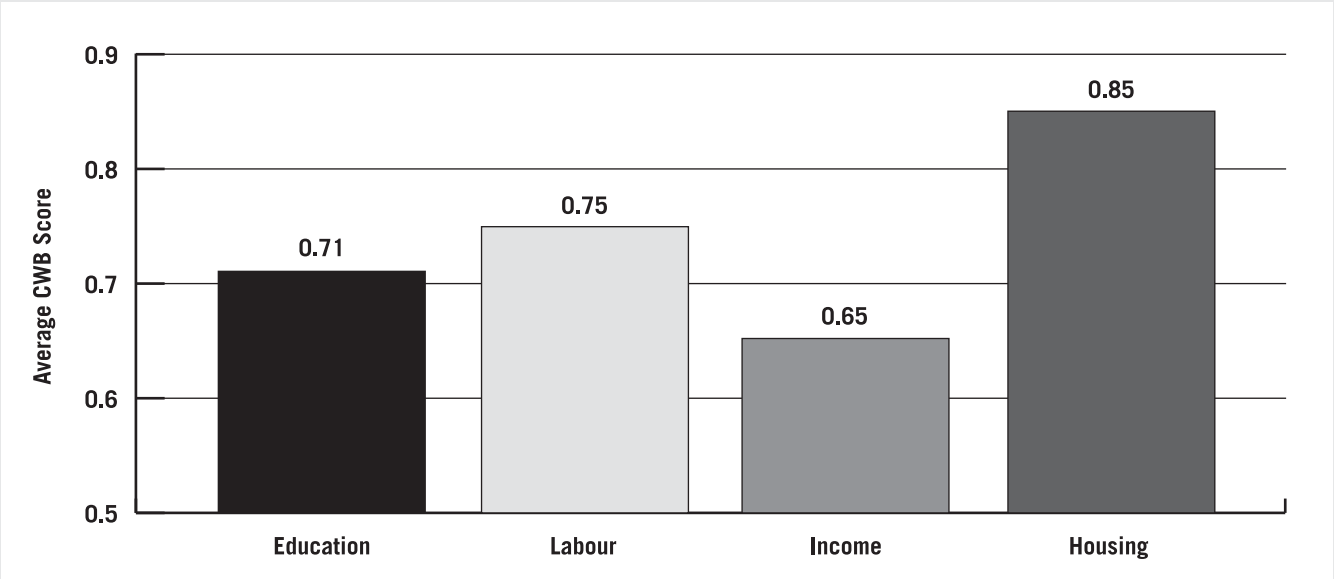
PROVINCE	CWB SCORE RANGE								
	0.50.- 0.55	0.55 - 0.60	0.60 - 0.65	0.65 - 0.70	0.70 - 0.75	0.75 - 0.80	0.80 - 0.85	0.85 - 0.90	TOTAL
Alberta	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	0	5
Manitoba	0	0	0	1	2	2	4	0	9
Newfoundland	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	4
Northwest Territories	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
Saskatchewan	2	2	1	6	2	6	3	1	23
Total	2	2	1	9	6	12	9	2	43

FIGURE 3: Average Métis Community Well-Being Score by Province and Territory, 2001



Source: Special calculations based on the 2001 Census.

FIGURE 4: National Métis Component Scores, 2001 (n=29)



Source: Special Calculations based on the 2001 Census.

using this rule: twenty-three in Saskatchewan, nine in Manitoba, five in Alberta, four in Newfoundland and Labrador and two in the Northwest Territories.

RESULTS

OVERALL COMMUNITY WELL-BEING SCORES

The overall CWB score for the Métis communities examined was higher than those of other Aboriginal CSDs, but lower than that of Non-Aboriginal communities, as Figure 1 shows. These findings reinforce findings from population-level analysis of Métis well-being.

Further dividing communities to examine the number of communities with certain CWB scores it can be seen that Métis community CWB scores range from .53 to .87. As seen in Figure 2, there are two peaks along the range of Métis communities' scores: the first peak occurs in the .65 to .70 range with 10 communities; the second falls in the .75 to .80 range with 11 communities.

None of the other categories of communities have the same pattern. The scores of First Nation communities are spread out from .35 to .92 with the number of communities peaking in the .70 to .75 range at 100 communities. For Inuit communities CWB scores of most communities clustered between the .60 and .75 ranges. The majority of the non-Aboriginal communities ranged between .75 to .95 ranges. Table 2 also reveals the range of CWB levels of the 43 communities by the province/territory in which they are located. The range of scores shows that only in Saskatchewan does one find Métis communities with CWB score less than 0.65.

In comparing the average CWB scores for the 43 Métis communities across the provinces and territory, there are no large differences between them except in Saskatchewan, where the variance of scores ranges from 0.53 to 0.80. As Figure 3 demonstrates, averages CWB scores in the provinces and territories vary between .71 and .78.

COMPONENT SCORES

The individual component scores provide a deeper understanding of the patterns observed in the overall CWB score. As noted above, CWB component scores are only calculated for CSDs with a population of 250 or more.

Average component scores for the 29 Métis communities for which component score analysis was possible are shown in chart 4. Regionally, housing rated the highest everywhere except in the Northwest Territories, where housing was second to the Labour component. The Labour component score is the second highest score in all the provinces, except for Newfoundland and Labrador were it is the lowest. The Education and Income components ranked third and fourth respectively in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the Northwest Territories. The most significant gap between these components occurs in Saskatchewan where the Income component score is .58 but the housing is at .82.

When the Métis CWB component scores are examined against those of other community types, clear differences are highlighted. As can be seen in Table 2, Métis communities show much higher component scores than First Nation communities in the areas of income and housing. The non-Aboriginal communities place first in all categories with the Métis communities placing second in all the categories except labour where it was third behind Inuit communities.

COMMUNITY WELL-BEING TIME SERIES

One of the key challenges in analysing the well-being of Métis communities over time is the changing composition of communities – specifically, the fact that the Métis identity population has grown rapidly during over the past 3 Census periods can have implications for interpreting Métis CWB scores. As Guimond has shown elsewhere in this journal , ethnic mobility is a significant factor driving Métis identity population growth over the past 15 years. Self-identification as Métis for the Census is inherently subjective, and not comparable to self-identification as a First Nations or Inuit person where parameters for Registered Indian status or Inuit landclaim membership are relatively firmly established. With relatively unclear parameters for determining who is Métis,decisions made when self-identifying can be more easily affected by external factors, such as court decisions, during intercensal periods. This phenomenon alters the natural progression of the population base which makes analysis of socioeconomic trends problematic.

For the purposes of this study, it must be noted that some of the 43 communities identified as having significant Métis population in 2001 did not meet the Métis population density criterion established above in 1996 and/or 1991. (See Table 3). Only 27 of the 43 communities identified met both the 25% Métis population density threshold and 250 minimum population in both 1996 and 2001.

Since 1991, the average CWB score of Métis communities has increased (Table 4). There was an increase in the average CWB score for Métis communities from 1991 to 1996 and then to 2001 as it jumped .12 points overall. The increase from 1991 to 1996 was twice as great as from 1996 to 2001. The minimum CWB Score also increased by 0.10

TABLE 2: National Average CWB Component Score and Ranking by Community Type, 2001

COMMUNITY TYPE	EDUCATION	LABOUR	INCOME	HOUSING
Non-Aboriginal Community (n=3501)	0.77(1)	0.82(1)	0.73(1)	0.93(1)
Métis (n=29)	0.71(2)	0.75(3)	0.65(2)	0.85(2)
Inuit (n=45)	0.64(4)	0.80(2)	0.60(3)	0.71(3)
First Nation (n=314)	0.68(3)	0.69(4)	0.50(4)	0.70(4)

Note: numbers in brackets indicate the ranking across types of communities

Source: Special Calculations based on the 2001 Census.

TABLE 3: Number of Métis Communities that meet the CWB Criteria for Measurement

	1996	2001
Métis CSDs with CWB Scores only (Population greater than 65)	39	43
Métis CSDs with CWB components Scores (Population greater than 250)	27	29

TABLE 4: Descriptive Statistics of the CWB Index Across Time for Métis Communities (n=27), Canada

	AVERAGE CWB SCORE	STANDARD DEVIATION	MINIMUM CWB SCORE	MAXIMUM CWB SCORE
1991	0.66	0.086	0.39	0.82
1996	0.70	0.092	0.49	0.85
2001	0.72	0.103	0.53	0.86

Source: Special Calculations based on the 2001 Census

points from 1991 to 1996 with a more modest increase of .4 points in the 1996 to 2001 period .These increases in CWB levels are similar to those of Inuit and First Nations communities during the same period (Senécal and O'Sullivan, 2006 and O'Sullivan and McHardy 2004).

The increase in well-being scores for Métis communities parallels that of other community types from 1991 to 2001. As can be seen in Figure 5, all Aboriginal communities experienced similar increases from 1991 to 1996 and from 1996 to 2001, but the rate of the increase was not as great in the later period compared to the first. All four community types in Figure 5 were weighted by population size and this calculation lead to the reduction of the number of CSDs for all community types because these communities did not make the 25 percent ratio in all three years indicated.

Table 5 shows how individual community CWB scores changed from 1991 to 2001. In all categories, most CSDs saw positive changes in their CWB scores; however Métis communities were less likely to experience a negative change than First Nation, Inuit or non-Aboriginal communities. In fact, it was among non-Aboriginal communities that the highest rate of negative CWB score change occurred.

Of the four community types shown in Table 6, the largest average variation occurred in the First Nation communities followed by non-Aboriginal communities and then Métis. The Minimum Variation of the communities follows a similar pattern except with the Métis Community and the Inuit Community trading places with the former scoring -0.04 and the later scoring -0.07.

TABLE 5: The Percentage of Positive, Negative and No Change for all Community Types of CSDs that were Weighted over the Census Years 1991 to 2001

	POSITIVE CHANGE	NO CHANGE	NEGATIVE CHANGE
Métis n=39	89.7%	5.1%	5.1%
Inuit n=51	90.2%	2.0%	7.8%
First Nations n=386	86.5%	4.4%	9.1%
Non-Aboriginal n=3359	79.2%	6.8%	14.0%

Source: Special Calculations based on the 2001 Census.

The number of CSDs for each of the communities measured here is dependent upon the ability of each individual CSD achieving the criteria of 25 percent of the total population of the CSD in each of the three years measured.

CONCLUSION

Using a population density approach to define Métis communities and the Community Well-being Index methodology, this report analyzes the well-being of Métis communities in comparison to that of other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

The findings illustrate that there exist noteworthy differences in the well-being of Aboriginal communities compared to non-Aboriginal communities but also amongst Aboriginal community types. Comparisons show that Métis communities typically experience a somewhat higher level of well-being which is closer to that of non-Aboriginal communities when contrasted to both Inuit and First Nations communities. It is important to point out however that while Métis communities compare favourably to First Nation and Inuit communities in terms of CWB score, this does not mean that these communities are necessarily "well

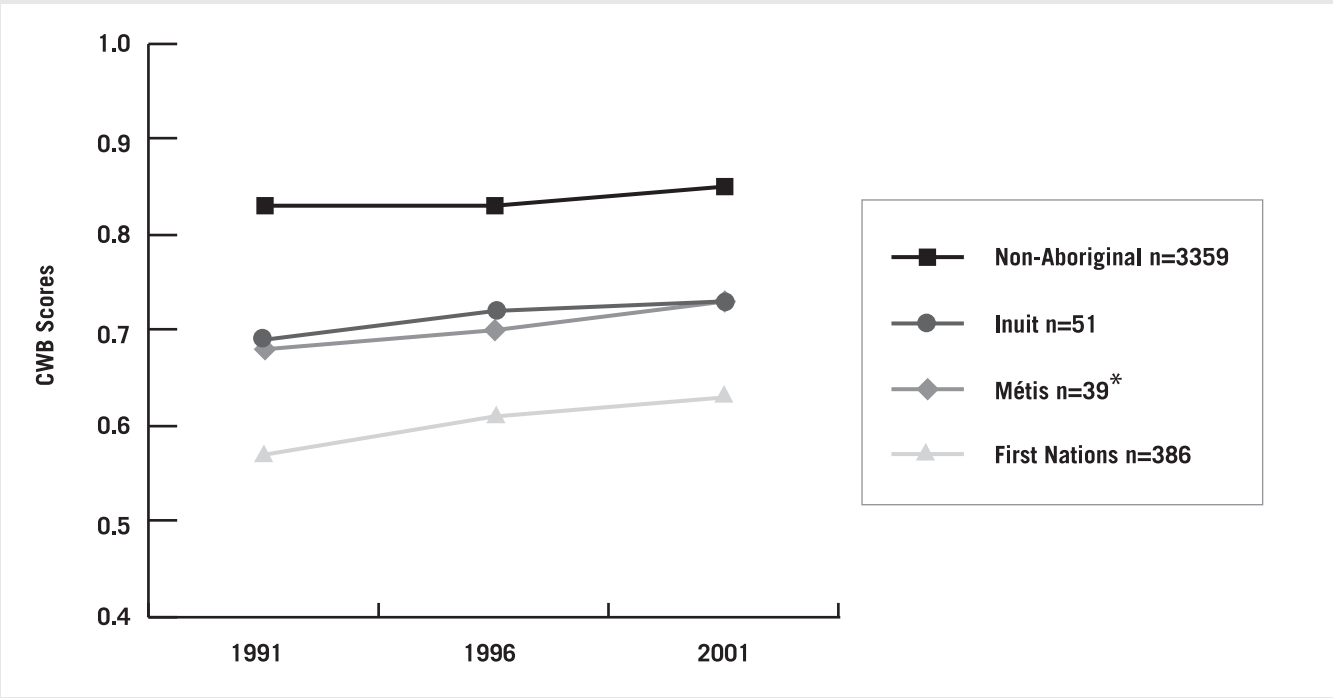
TABLE 6: Descriptive Statistics of the Evolution of Community Well-Being Scores by Community Type, Between 1991 and 2001

COMMUNITY TYPE	STANDARD DEVIATION	AVERAGE VARIATION	MINIMUM VARIATION	MAXIMUM VARIATION
Métis n=39	0.05	0.07	-0.04	0.21
Inuit n=51	0.04	0.06	-0.07	0.14
First Nations n= 386	0.06	0.07	-0.07	0.29
Non-Aboriginal n=3,501	0.04	0.03	-0.17	0.26

Source: Special Calculations based on the 2001 Census.

The number of CSDs for each community is based on those who meet the criteria of a population over 250 to be able to provide scores for all components.

FIGURE 5: Weighted CWB Scores for Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal CSD for Census Years 1991, 1996 and 2001[i]



Source: Special Calculations based on the 2001 Census.

i The number of CSDs for each of the communities measured here is dependent upon the ability of each individual CSD achieving the criteria of 25 percent of the total population of the CSD in each of the three years measured (Lapointe *et al.*).

off" as indeed some do experience issues tied to poverty, unemployment and homelessness.

CWB component score analysis identifies several characteristics of communities with significant Métis population that ought to be of critical interest for policy makers. Of particular interest, there is a need to explore why Métis communities show relatively high housing scores but at the same time relatively low rates of income and education, two factors that have an influence on the ability to purchase or rent good housing.

This report only constitutes a first step in applying the CWB Index to Métis communities. Clearer definitions – both in terms of who are Métis and which communities are recognized as Métis communities – are needed to provide more reliable time series analysis. Ongoing efforts in this area will be crucial for all concerned – researchers, policy-makers, and most importantly, Canada's Métis people.

APPENDIX A

CENSUS SUBDIVISION NUMBER	NAME	PROVINCE OR TERRITORY
1010009	Port Hope Simpson	Newfoundland
1010010	St. Lewis	Newfoundland
1010011	Mary's Harbour	Newfoundland
1010013	Charlottetown (Labrador)	Newfoundland
4601075	Powerview	Manitoba
4615048	Ellice	Manitoba
4615051	St-Lazare	Manitoba
4616063	Park (North)	Manitoba
4617026	Alonsa	Manitoba
4617040	Ste. Rose	Manitoba
4618040	St. Laurent	Manitoba
4620055	Mountain (North)	Manitoba
4621025	Grand Rapids	Manitoba
4705044	Gerald	Saskatchewan
4706049	Lebret	Saskatchewan
4714091	Love	Saskatchewan
4715058	Domremy	Saskatchewan
4715059	St. Louis	Saskatchewan
4715062	Duck Lake	Saskatchewan
4716061	Leoville	Saskatchewan
4716077	Chitek Lake	Saskatchewan
4717006	Meota	Saskatchewan
4717057	Makwa	Saskatchewan
4718005	Cumberland House	Saskatchewan
4718015	Weyakwin	Saskatchewan
4718021	Green Lake	Saskatchewan
4718028	Cole Bay	Saskatchewan
4718030	Jans Bay	Saskatchewan
4718033	Beauval	Saskatchewan
4718065	Pinehouse	Saskatchewan
4718067	Île-à-la-Crosse	Saskatchewan
4718069	Patuanak	Saskatchewan
4718070	Buffalo Narrows	Saskatchewan
4718072	Michel Village	Saskatchewan
4718074	La Loche	Saskatchewan
4718075	Turnor Lake	Saskatchewan
4810032	Minburn	Alberta
4812022	Smoky Lake County	Alberta
4812035	Lac la Biche	Alberta
4813061	Whispering Hills	Alberta
4817027	Big Lakes	Alberta
6106001	Fort Smith	Northwest Territories
6106018	Fort Resolution	Northwest Territories

NOTES

[1] McHardy & O'Sullivan (2004); Senécal, O'Sullivan, Guimond & Uppal (2007).

[2] McHardy and O'Sullivan, (2004).

[3] In some cases, the boundaries of communities are changed so extensively between censuses that the communities cannot really be regarded as the same entities. All the CSDs identified as Métis for the purpose of this paper were deemed comparable overtime which was not the case for First Nations and non-Aboriginal communities. For an in-depth description of the steps taken to ensure comparability as well as details on the resulting set of communities, see O'Sullivan and McHardy, 2004.

[4] Special Calculations based on the 1996 and 2001 Censuses. The 2006 Census is not being focused on in this paper.

[5] Calculation of overall CWB scores requires a CSD population of 65 or more. Calculation of individual CWB component scores requires a CSD population of 250 or more; of the 43 Métis communities identified, 29 meet the population threshold to allow for component score analysis.

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