

Policies for Other People: Reflections from an Economist on Research and Federal Policy Regarding Indigenous Nations in Canada Post-1975*

Donn. L. Feir[†]

November 12, 2023

Abstract

How do settler colonial governments make policies related to Indigenous nations and peoples? One way is by responding to research. However, research is also influenced by public policy and its underlying social stories. In this article, I reflect on the literature published in Canada's premier public policy journal since 1975, *Canadian Public Policy* (CPP) and the work published in economics journals to understand the current state of academic policy dialogue in Canada, as constructed by this journal and economists. Less than 3% of all articles in the CPP from inception to this issue focused on Indigenous contexts. A much lower percentage of papers were published in the top 400 ranked economics journals, with 21 articles identified. Most of this literature focuses on education and labour markets or Indigenous rights and self-government, with the former notably more prominent post-2000. I discuss these two streams of literature and confirm findings from the labour market literature with more recent data. In reviewing the literature, it becomes clear that there is still much to be done for research to reflect the full economic realities of Indigenous nations and for policy to make space for Indigenous economic life.

Keywords: Canadian public policy, Indigenous, education, labour markets, self-government, Indigenous rights, research methods, history of thought

JEL classification: A10, A11, A13, B20, B40, J15, H80, Z13

*I am grateful for the many conversations that have shaped my thinking in Treaty Seven territory and in Musqueam, Dakota, and Lekwungen territory. This work has also benefited from thoughtful comments from Randall Akee, Flavie Dupont-Fournier, Kelly Foley, Robert Hancock, Mike Janes, David Green, Andre Le Dressay, Ravi Pendakur, Colette Salemi, David Scoones, Andrew Sharpe, Susanne Thiessen, Justin Wiltshire, and Michael Veall. I am thankful for the valuable research assistance of Sam Shipley.

[†]University of Victoria and the IZA. Email: dfeir@uvic.ca

I. INTRODUCTION

Many Canadians would like to think that today, we, as a political collective, are taking political and economic actions that are less restricting of Indigenous lives than in the past. As an academic economist of settler¹ descent, I want to believe the work of academics and social scientists, both Indigenous and not, can and has played a constructive role in achieving better relations and improving well-being. However, as someone who also studies economic history, I am acutely aware that research has not always played this role. In this article, I reflect on the state of knowledge constructed by the articles in the journal *Canadian Public Policy* (CPP) and the top 400 economics journals relating to Canadian Indigenous policy to think about moving forward. The CPP is the primary Canadian academic outlet that has offered academics, including myself, an opportunity to publish research relevant to Canadian public policy. I also assess the literature in the top 400 economics journals since I am an academic economist and because of economists' influence on shaping public policy. I offer some critical reflections and consider how social science academics and public policymakers might proceed constructively.

This article reflects my own grappling with how to move forward as an academic of settler descent who wants to leave the world better than they found it, with the awareness that many before me have had the same intention and did not succeed. I hope this article supports the building of new knowledge and policy-making that enables as many people to live personally fulfilling lives as free from scarcity as possible. I also hope it supports achieving this while honouring the importance of belonging to collectives with a shared understanding, history, and purpose.

To understand where we have been and where to go next, reflecting on the collective stories settler Canadians tell themselves about Indigenous public policy in Canada is potentially useful. To avoid *assuming* Canadians' standard story, particularly given the diverse set that may exist,

¹Throughout, I will use the term "settler" here to label anyone who does not identify as Indigenous in Canada while acknowledging the language is problematic in several ways. I prefer "settler" to non-indigenous because it centres historical processes in a way that "non-indigenous" or "Indigenous" does not. I also acknowledge that this dichotomy doesn't always reflect the reality of many Indigenous people with settler and Indigenous ancestry who identify with both histories nor does it well represent the histories of enslaved people. I also acknowledge that many people who fall under the broad classification "Indigenous" prefer other terminology. However, given the lack of a universal preferred term, I use Indigenous here. It should be understood as effectively synonymous with the term "Aboriginal" in Canadian law.

I elected to ask ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence program that draws on a wide variety of internet sources. While by no means definitive, it might be expected to give an idea of what might be generally thought to be true about Indigenous Canadian public policy. I present this exercise in the online appendix. The story ChatGPT told aligned with my priors, and thus, I am willing to state that the story generally goes something like this: “Policy was assimilationist and economically destructive through the 1960s but started to improve in the 1970s with the initial groundwork laid by Indigenous advocates and their allies. Today, things are imperfect, but getting better with the Canadian government supporting self-determination for Indigenous nations, a nation-nation relationship, supporting Indigenous languages, addressing historical wrongs, and economically empowering Indigenous people.”

There are reasons to believe that this story about improvement is correct. Canada has committed to implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People in 2016; the Supreme Court has recognized the existence of Aboriginal title (Borrows, 2015), and there is now the legal duty to consult and potentially accommodate if Aboriginal or treaty rights may be infringed upon by economic development projects (Brideau, 2019). There have been numerous monetary settlements for historic wrongs, including payments to the survivors of residential schools, day schools, the sixties scoop, and the under-funding of Indigenous child welfare. The 1980s saw a reduction in gender discrimination in the Indian Act and the late 1990s until today have seen a wave of First Nations-led modern agreements and legislation and Métis and non-Status First Nations have been recognized as having rights that they were long denied.

Indigenous policy also seems to be receiving attention in government debates like never before. Consider some estimates using the Canadian Hansard Dataset on parliamentary debates from 1900 to 2019 collected as part of the Linked Parliamentary Data Project, presented in Figure 1. In Panel A, I present the number of speaking instances² with language referencing Indigenous people or nations. In Panel B, I scale this number by the total number of speaking

²I define a “speaking instance” as any time one person begins speaking after another has stopped or at the very start of the debate. To construct this figure, I first identify all “speaking instances” in a given year. I exclude all speaking instances not associated with some main topic of debate (this excludes procedural discussions). Of those speaking instances, I then make all words lowercase and search for the terms connected to Indigeneity today and historically. “Indigenous”, “Aboriginal”, “First Nations”, “Indian”, “Native American”, “Inuit”, “Eskimo”, “Métis”, “Metis”, and “half-breed”. For the word “Indian,” I exclude all instances of a reference to India in the same speech. I then aggregate the number of these instances by year.

instances in a year and present a proportion.

The data in this figure seems to confirm that Indigenous policy in Canada is increasingly salient. From about 1900 until 1960, about 2% of all speaking instances contained a word related to Indigenous people, after which the number of these instances grew dramatically. Since 2010, about 8% of all instances include a reference to Indigenous people. These numbers are likely an upper bound given the possibility of false positives, specifically related to the word “Indigenous,” but their pattern is potentially informative regarding political attention. The occurrence of focused debates related to Indigenous policy topics has also increased (although less dramatically). In Figure 2, I present the percentage of all *separate topics of debate* where an Indigenous topic was the main or sub-topic at hand. It fluctuated below 1% before 1960 (with the exception of a few years during 1930), then began to rise to over 2% post-2010. Once again, this suggests Indigenous policy is receiving more attention than in the past.

Public investment also seems to be increasing. The most recent estimates of federal government expenditure suggest significant public investments focused on Indigenous people and nations. The expected expenditure of Indigenous Services Canada alone is roughly \$39 billion in 2023-2024, which the government of Canada has indicated is historically large and is 9% of total planned expenditure.³ For context, the Department of National Defence has estimated expenditure of \$26 billion, and the Office of Infrastructure of Canada \$9.6 billion. Aside from the Department of Finance, which is arguably not comparable to other departments because of debt servicing, only Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) has expected expenditures greater than Indigenous Services Canada during 2023-2024. Both departments provide services to Indigenous people, with ESDC devoting significant resources to Indigenous programming.⁴

However, there are reasons to be less optimistic. While \$39 billion is the highest nominal dollar estimated expenditure by Indigenous Services (or historically connected departments) in history, this is not adjusted for inflation and does not consider that the Indigenous population has reached its highest numbers since the confederation. In addition, over \$21 billion of the expenditure by Indigenous Services in 2023-2024 is related to two class action lawsuits related

³Numbers from Government Expenditure Plan and Main Estimates (Parts I and II) 2023-2024.

⁴For example, the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy funded by ESDC between 2010 to 2018 was on the order of \$2.4 billion (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2018). For more on this program and its effects, see Feir et al. (2022).

to the government's failure to meet its legal obligations to Indigenous children and families and the mercury poisoning of another community, Grassy Narrows, which are one-time budget expenditures. Another \$10 billion was transferred from Health Canada, which had been earmarked for Indigenous health and therefore doesn't reflect a real increase in overall spending. Thus, any real increase in service expenditure per person is much smaller than it may appear. In addition, how much of the total estimated expenditure by Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Canada is spent litigating against Indigenous nations is also unclear.

If one is cynical, one could interpret the increasing frequency of Indigenous mentions in Federal debates with smaller increases in focused policy topics as meaning there is more rhetoric but not much more serious consideration of reform. Perhaps more optimistically, however, this could imply that Indigenous voices are being heard on issues that affected them before, and their perspective was not being considered. Distinguishing between these two possibilities is obviously important for whether actual progress is being made. Finally, it is not clear that more expenditure, talk, or policy debate represents a movement toward a future that is better for Indigenous-Crown relations and Indigenous well-being.

Thus, to grapple with whether Indigenous-Crown policy is improving and how research may play a role, I begin by offering some background on Indigenous-Crown contexts for the less familiar reader. I then summarize the work published in the CPP since 1975 and in the top 400 economics journals related to Indigenous experiences and government policy relevant to Indigenous nations in Canada in Section III. I identify the two dominant trends in research: (1) education and labour markets and (2) self-governance and Indigenous rights. I summarize the key findings from these two strands of literature. In Section IV, I reflect on the literature and consider where Canada stands in terms of Indigenous policy from a historical perspective and how it influences research as it stands. Nothing in this section should be read as suggesting that well-being in labour markets and educational systems are not important areas of policy and research or are not desired. Arguably, these areas have not received the attention they deserve. I conclude thoughts for researchers moving forward in Section V.

II. BACKGROUND

Canada is a settler-colonial country. This means the legal and political institutions currently in place were imposed here by a foreign powers' government, the government is controlled by the ancestors of that foreign power or associated ones, and the population is now predominantly of people with ancestry different from the original peoples of this region (Cornell and Jorgensen, 2022).⁵ There was settler-Indigenous contact in what is now the Dominion of Canada for over 200 years before Canada was formally established in 1867. Indigenous nations influenced the development of Canada in critical ways, not least through the fur trade, the survival of early colonists, and military alliances. The colonial process also deeply influenced Indigenous nations: new nations emerged, and others were nearly eradicated. Canada's foundation as a state is rooted in its relationships and agreements with Indigenous people. The 1763 Royal Proclamation clearly articulated the principles of treaty-making and acknowledged Indigenous jurisdiction by the Crown. These principles were extended to land brought under the Dominion of Canada in the Northwestern territory and British Columbia. For a more detailed but concise discussion of this history by an economic historian, see Redish (2019). For those looking for more extensive histories, volumes have been written by historians, anthropologists, and Indigenous studies scholars. For histories of treaty-making, books include but are not limited to Miller (2009), Asch (2014), and Krasowski (2019). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples of 1996 offers a wide-ranging history with many valuable citations.

Indigenous peoples are private citizens like others in Canada, but as collectives, Indigenous peoples hold distinct political status with unique relationships to the Crown. Treaty relationships were a critical part of Canada's jurisdictional expansion and, in part, define ongoing rights and obligations today. Indigenous nations hold rights within and outside of historic treaty regions. The 1982 Canadian Constitution recognises the rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada: section 35(1) states, "The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed."

However, the historical and modern legal, political, and economic relationships between Canada and Indigenous nations are fraught. There have been hundreds of cases of the Canadian

⁵For a theoretical discussion of settler colonialism, see Veracini (2010).

state not delivering on its promises to Indigenous nations, settlements over wrongful acts on the part of the state, and continued struggle for rights and recognition. There also exists a fundamental tension in Canadian law: while Canada recognizes Indigenous nations as nations given the treaty relationship, Indigenous people have also been treated as wards of the state in legislation (Feir and Scoones, 2024).

Subsection 91(24) of the Constitution Act of 1867 grants the Federal Government jurisdiction over “Indians and land reserved for Indians.” The Indian Act has legislated nearly all aspects of life and government for those it governed. The Indian Act historically, very explicitly, required individuals to choose between political rights in their communities and economic determination through the process of “enfranchisement,” prohibited raising funds for lawyers to fight for legal rights without approval,⁶ forced attendance at residential and day schools,⁷ and banned important economic and cultural practices, including the potlatch. It wasn’t until 1960 that Indigenous people covered by the Indian Act were granted the right to vote in federal elections. The Indian Act still restricts basic economic choices available to Indigenous nations (some of which are discussed below), regulates band governments, and determines Indigenous nations’ citizenship by default. A timeline of selected important legal and political junctures, particularly those related to economic realities, is offered in the online appendix in Table A1.

The Indian Act, in practice, has only governed a subset of Indigenous people - specifically, members of federally recognized Indian bands who are eligible for coverage under the act who exhibit particular patterns of Indigenous descent. However, there are many more Indigenous people in Canada who haven’t historically been governed by the Indian Act, but are considered under federal jurisdiction.⁸ The 1982 Constitution of Canada recognizes three distinct Indigenous peoples in Canada: Indians (more often now called First Nations), Métis and Inuit. At the risk of oversimplifying, “Indians” are people who have a community connection to one of the original nations that existed in what is now Canada before contact and are considered “Indian” for the purposes of the Indian Act for most of Canadian history if they descend in a particular fashion from persons on the original band enrollment lists kept by the federal agency responsible

⁶Passed in 1927, with rights restored in 1951.

⁷Schooling made mandatory in 1921 with no decolonial alternative.

⁸The Daniels Decision in 2016 determined that to Métis peoples and non-Status First Nations classify as “Indian” for purposes of subsection 91(24) of the 1867 Constitution Act. In 1939, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the Inuit were also “Indians” in this sense.

for Indigenous affairs. The Métis are descendants of the communities generated by intermarriage between European fur traders and First Nations women during the original exploration and settlement of Canada from the Great Lakes region into western Canada (see Vowel (2016) for more details regarding the Métis). The Inuit are Indigenous people of the Arctic regions, including northern Quebec and Labrador.⁹ These categories exhibit large heterogeneity within and between them, both in historical experiences and legal status. For example, an “Indian” may or may not be covered under the Indian Act and may or may not be a member of a specific, federally-recognized Indian Band (as defined under the Indian Act) depending on their pattern of ancestry.¹⁰ In addition, an individual Indigenous person may have a complex set of personal identities and family relationships that intersect with their status as an Indigenous person. Many people identify with multiple Indigenous nations and also have ancestral connections with and share cultural communities with settlers. For more details on these points, see Feir and Hancock (2016), which summarises some of the complexities and cites other relevant literature.

However, regardless of the complexity surrounding Indigenous identities, the Canadian Census offers population estimates of the three constitutionality-recognized groups. As of the 2021 census, there are 1.8 million people who self-identify as Indigenous, which accounts for 5% of the Canadian population. There are over 1 million First Nations people, over 800,000 of whom have status under the Indian Act, and of which 40% live in reserve jurisdictions (Statistics Canada, 2022). There are more than 630 federally recognized Indian bands across Canada, and over 70 language groups (Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2022). There are over 600,000 people who identify as Métis, with over 160,000 of them being members of one of the five signatories of the Métis Accord of 2017 (see Gaudry (2018) for more details on the Métis Accord). Over 70,000 people identify as Inuit, with over two-thirds living in Inuit Nunangat, the homeland of the Inuit in Canada. Roughly 45% of Indigenous people live in large urban centres while about 75% of non-Indigenous Canadians do (Statistics Canada, 2022). While the highest number of Indigenous people live in Ontario, followed by British Columbia, as a proportion of the overall population, only 3% and 6% of their populations are Indigenous, respectively. Nunavut (86%), the Northwest Territories (51%), the Yukon (23%), Manitoba

⁹Some First Nations peoples share geographic regions with the Inuit.

¹⁰Being a member of a band was synonymous with being covered under the Indian Act and visa versa until 1984.

(18%) and Saskatchewan (16%) have the highest proportions of their population identifying as Indigenous. Newfoundland and Labrador follow with 9%, Alberta with 7%, Nova Scotia with 3%, Quebec and New Brunswick with 2%, and Prince Edward Island with the lowest proportion with under 1% of their population identifying as Indigenous.

III. THE WORK PUBLISHED IN INDIGENOUS CONTEXTS IN *Canadian Public Policy* AND IN TOP 400 ECONOMICS JOURNALS

III.A A Broad View

Now, with some shared context, I summarise the state of knowledge as constructed by the work published in the CPP since 1975 up to its most recent volume and the literature published in the top 400 economics journals as ranked by REPEC's simple impact factor ranking as of June 2023. I do this with an eye towards understanding where research and policy may productively go in the future.

Let's begin by considering the work published in the CPP. Using the University of Toronto's portal, I conducted a keyword search on all volumes of the CPP that included the words "Indigenous", "Aboriginal", "First Nations", "Indian", "Native American", "Inuit", "Eskimo", "Métis", and "Metis". I acknowledge that some of these words are generally unacceptable for settlers to use now, but were in use during the period relevant to the search; hence I have included them.

Upon receiving the search results, I reviewed them and selected the papers that explicitly focused on Indigenous experiences or connected public policy. Out of a minimum of 960 regular articles, and 380 special issue articles, there was a total of 36 articles published in the CPP fitting my criteria (<3%). I then categorize these papers based on focal population, method, and theme.

Table 1 summarizes these papers with their citation (with full reference provided in the references section) in chronological order and identifies their main topic, methodology used, and the population focus. In terms of population focus, most papers either focused on Indigenous peoples as an undifferentiated population group (labelled "all grouped" in the table) or focused on all Indigenous peoples but made empirical or important methodological choices for particular

groups of people, either differentiating on “degree of ancestry” or by constitutional distinction group (“all distinguished”) with 18 of the 36 being of this type. It became more common for groups to be distinguished rather than grouped together over time. This may be partly because of increased awareness, but also due to Census data differentiating Indigenous identities starting in the 1990s. Ten papers focused explicitly on First Nations peoples, and seven focused on Northern Indigenous peoples (who include the Dene, Inuit, and Northern Métis and are always treated as a unified population group). Only two papers had ever been published focusing solely on the Métis, and both those papers were published the year after their rights were acknowledged in the Canadian Constitution in 1983, and one of them was titled “The Case Against Métis Rights”.

The methods in these papers become increasingly quantitative over time: While less than 20% of the articles were quantitative before 2000, 40% were between 2000 and 2010, while post-2010, over 66% of the articles were quantitative. From a sub-sample of 40 other CPP articles randomly chosen over time, these trends in Indigenous-focused articles mirror the overall methodological representation in the CPP.

After reviewing all papers, I grouped them into the most common topics I observed. The most common topics were (1) self-government and Indigenous rights (14 papers) and (2) education and labour markets (14 papers). The eight other articles in the CPP span various topics and are primarily one-time occurrences of a given topic. Examples of these topics include the economic impact of casinos in Alberta (Belanger and Williams, 2012), the potential of Aboriginal Financial Institutions to become full-service financial providers such as credit unions (Ketilson, 2014), and Métis housing (Bone and Green, 1983). Two of the eight papers are related to research methods and directions (Cooke and McWhirter, 2011; Feir and Hancock, 2016). While this classification is admittedly subjective, with some papers classified as education, which could be labour market papers or visa versa, and some of the Indigenous rights papers classified as natural resource papers, I believe the classification is reasonable.

Figure 3 displays the cumulative summary of main topics over time. For this purpose, I group the articles into self-governance and rights, education and labour markets, and “other”. The patterns in this figure suggest papers related to Indigenous self-government and rights became less prevalent over time, with an increasing number of papers focusing on education and labour

markets. While this classification is admittedly subjective, any reclassification I could imagine would amplify these trends. Specifically, while the papers labelled as “migration”, “housing”, or “economic change” could alternatively be seen as labour market papers (published in 1981, 1983, and 1990), the papers I have classified as Indigenous rights papers could also be grouped under “other” as having topics related to “natural resources” (published in 2004, 2021) “specific land claims” (published in 2021). This reclassification would increase the number of education and labour market topics pre-2010 but would only leave one self-government and rights topic paper published post-2010.

Attributing these trends to changes in the relative importance of Indigenous self-government and rights as policy topics is difficult. Indigenous self-governance and rights are not less important Canadian public policy issues today than historically and are not settled. If anything, they strike me as increasingly important, given the broad trajectory of Canadian rhetoric and legal decisions and how they shape Indigenous and settler lives. There are at least three plausible alternative explanations for this trend. First, it could be that settlers are more likely to publish in the CPP, and settlers are increasingly unsure how to engage productively with topics related to Indigenous self-government and rights. Of the 47 authors with an online presence, only two of the 53 authors who published in the CPP on these topics are identifiable as Indigenous. Second, the trend could reflect that article methodologies are increasingly quantitative over time, and data related to self-governance and rights are harder to obtain than data on education and labour markets. Finally, there could be just as many or more papers on self-governance and rights, but they are being published in alternative outlets. This is plausible given the number of Indigenous-focused academic outlets has been growing: *The Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* has been operating since 1999 and the *International Indigenous Policy Journal* since 2010, both of which are Canadian-origin outlets. In addition, perhaps other journals that are not Indigenous focused are increasingly attracting work related to Indigenous self-government and rights.

Given economists are frequent contributors to the CPP, to get a sense of whether the relative lack of recent scholarship in the CPP on Indigenous self-government and rights reflects the fact that economic outlets other than the CPP may be more likely to publish these sorts of articles, I performed a Google Scholar search along similar terms as that conducted with CPP articles and

identified 21 articles published in top 400 economic journals on Indigenous policy in Canada, which are summarized in Table 2. All the papers are quantitative, and most argue from some form of causal identification. Of these papers, seven are published in the *Canadian Journal of Economics*, seven in top field journals and two in the 2021 edition of the *American Economics Association Papers and Proceedings*.

The domain of these articles has been heavily dominated by education and labour markets papers, with 10 of these articles in this space. Five papers were published on Indigenous self-governance and rights, all post-2015. The remaining papers are split on health or broad history.¹¹ Given the dominance of articles and their increasing publication rate in education and labour markets, publication in economics journals is unlikely to explain the trends in the CPP. Thus, while there is more recent quantitative work on self-government and Indigenous rights than represented in the CPP alone, the topics related to education and labour markets dominate post-2010.

Due to the dominance of the focus on education and labour markets and issues related to self-governance and governance over lands and resources in the CPP and economics literature, and how they interact with policy, I focus on the literature in these areas, starting with labour markets and education.

III.B On Labour Markets and Education

The most common form of articles in this literature establishes an income or employment difference between Indigenous and settler people. These differences are often referred to as “gaps.” After establishing gaps, authors evaluate whether differences in age, education, or other geographic or economic characteristics can explain them. Articles related to income or earnings have largely been conducted using public or restricted-use census data in 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2005, and the National Household Survey in 2011 (De Silva, 1999; Feir, 2013; George and Kuhn, 1994; Lamb et al., 2018; Pendakur and Pendakur, 2011). Generally, these studies find those living in reserve jurisdictions and those who report solely Indigenous ancestry earn much less than those living outside of reserve jurisdiction and report non-Indigenous ancestry. Post-1991 Census studies have also distinguished between constitutionally recognized identity

¹¹One paper speaks to education, health and history, which I have counted as education.

groups (Inuit, Métis, and First Nations). While studies vary on the precise controls and settler comparison group, they show consistent differences in income over this time. I summarize the findings of this literature broadly by updating estimates of disparities using 2016 restricted-use Census data. I focus on the 2016 Census because of the complexities that the pandemic may introduce in 2021 data that warrants separate research. The patterns I find here reflect those of past studies; however, I provide more details on each of these studies' contributions in the online appendix for the interested reader. I follow Pendakur and Pendakur (2011) and Feir (2013) and focus on total individual income.¹²

In Figure 4, I present the unadjusted total average individual income by group and sex for men and women for people between 25 and 64 years of age. I include all non-positive values for total income. Figure 4 suggests the existence of average total income differences as in past years. Métis men make 88% of settler men's income, while Inuit men and First Nations men living outside reserve jurisdictions make 69% and 72.5% of settler men's income, respectively. First Nations men living in reserve jurisdictions have a total income of 35.8% that of the average settler men's total income. These unadjusted income differences are comparable to previous studies, specifically those that included non-positive values for income, such as Feir (2013). The reserve area gap was notably larger in 2016 than in other past estimates, potentially due to the inclusion of non-positive income values and the focus on total income rather than earnings. However, even taking the more conservative estimates from National Indigenous Economic Development Board (2019), excluding non-positive incomes, suggests that the income difference for those in reserves between 15 to 65 was 48%, comparable to the differences in 2011. It is worth noting that, in general, these total income differences are largest at the bottom end of the income distribution (Pendakur and Pendakur, 2011) and smaller for women.

As others have done in the past, I examine how differences in averages can (or cannot) be explained by differences in other characteristics such as age, education, part or full-time work, and industry of work in Tables 3 and 4. I also demonstrate the effect of accounting for differences in geographic space on estimated differences between Indigenous and settler populations at a finer level than previous studies, controlling in the most restrictive specification for census

¹²See the census documentation for further details of what is included in total income: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/ref/dict/az/Definition-eng.cfm?ID=pop123>. Last Accessed August 31, 2023.

subdivision fixed effects in Table 3. Census subdivisions are units akin to municipal governing units such as towns, reserves or cities. When comparing First Nations in and outside reserve areas in Table 4, I control for Census division effects since they are a finer unit of geography than provinces that allows one to account for local conditions, but not so fine that they would be perfectly collinear with reserves. I don't control for census subdivision fixed effects since this would effectively control for any "on-reserve" differences.

Consider first Table 3. Column (1) presents the mean income differences between the Indigenous population groups considered relative to settlers. Column (2) controls for a quadratic in age; column (3) adds controls for western¹³ educational credentials, including an indicator for completing high school and an indicator for completing post-secondary; column (4) includes indicators for whether the individual worked part-time or full-time during the previous year and twelve industry indicators; and column (5) includes census subdivision fixed effects. The first panel presents the results for men and the second for women. Aligning with previous findings, as of 2016, roughly half of the income difference between First Nations and settler men is explained by differences in characteristics, with educational differences contributing a notable amount (again about 25% of the total difference). The same amount of the difference in total income between Métis and settler men is "explained" by endowments. Comparing the income differences between Inuit peoples and settlers in columns (1) and (3) suggests that differences in educational attainment are also important for income differences between Inuit peoples and settlers. Comparing columns (4) and (5) suggests that controlling for differences in geography is particularly important for understanding income differences between Inuit peoples and settlers. In line with previous estimates, the differences between settler women and Indigenous women are smaller, but the patterns are largely similar to men. The results in Table 4 suggest that differences in total income between First Nations people living inside of and outside of reserve jurisdictions are less explained by educational differences than between Indigenous and settler populations, but it still explains at least as much as full and part-time work, industry and even broader geography. This aligns with past findings by other authors that differences in education, either measured by western credentials (De Silva, 1999; Feir, 2013; George and Kuhn, 1994; Pendakur and Pendakur, 2011) or literacy, numeracy, and technological knowledge

¹³I am aware any definition of "western" is fraught. In general, I am attempting to refer to educational systems that were generated largely by settlers in North America.

(Hu et al., 2019), suggesting these differences explain between 20%-40% of income differences.¹⁴

Thus understanding differences in educational outcomes, given their potential importance for labour market outcomes later in life, is critical to reducing income and earnings disparities, even if it is insufficient. The existing literature provides some insight into this. First, conventional achievement gaps, as measured by differences in test scores, suggest that school quality matters. Friesen and Krauth (2010) estimate that about half of the test score gap by grade seven in British Columbia can be explained by differences in school quality as measured by the total value added of the school. They provide suggestive evidence that more Indigenous peers may positively influence Indigenous student achievement, conditional on the school's overall quality. Thus ensuring Indigenous students are in schools that are generally successful at improving outcomes, and the more Indigenous peers they have, the more likely they are to experience reduced test score differentials. In addition, in the context of British Columbia, Battisti et al. (2014) demonstrates that English as a second dialect funding may have had a sizable positive effect on seventh-grade reading scores for Indigenous students.

Additional literature provides associative evidence that a culturally supportive environment matters for credential achievement among Indigenous youth. For example, O'Gorman and Pandey (2015) demonstrates that among Northern Indigenous communities, individuals are more likely to graduate high school if they have Indigenous teachers, are taught about Indigenous peoples in school, and can attend school within their communities. Jones (2022a) suggests that access to cultural supports such as community cultural centres may mitigate the negative intergenerational impact of residential schools on educational outcomes. However, revising school curriculum to be more focused on Indigenous views of history may be politically difficult in some contexts. Wotherspoon and Milne (2020) presents survey evidence in Alberta and Saskatchewan to examine how settlers view policies aimed at reconciliation in the public schooling system. They suggest that schooling initiatives in Alberta and Saskatchewan may

¹⁴Maslov and Zhong (2022) also demonstrates even within job type, Indigenous people have fewer job-relevant skills than settler people. While the authors find that this doesn't explain wage differences, it may make Indigenous peoples more vulnerable to employment loss during economic downturns (Feir and Gillezeau, 2018; Lamb, 2015). In addition, while there may be low returns to western credentials for those living in reserves before 1996, there is substantially less evidence that this continues to be the case. Pendakur and Pendakur (2011) suggest relatively small differences in education returns for Indigenous and settler people. There is some evidence that at the post-secondary level, conditional on the type of degree and major, Indigenous people may have a higher return to education in terms of earnings (Drost, 1994; Walters et al., 2004). This is less true for employment (Walters et al., 2004).

have reinforced counter-productive settler perceptions related to Indigenous peoples.

Credit constraints that affect Indigenous students are also potentially important hurdles to western educational credentials. Jones (2022b) provides causal evidence that financial support for Indigenous students is important: effective cutbacks around Indigenous student post-secondary funding not only lower post-secondary success, but the cutbacks also negatively affect high school graduation rates. Focusing on adults, Feir et al. (2021) studies the impact of the largest federal active labour market program for Indigenous people in Canada, which was designed to be culturally responsive by funding Indigenous Service providers to provide training and other employment support services. We find, on average, that Indigenous peoples experience higher earnings when they receive more extensive active labour market program interventions than when they receive less extensive ones. These more extensive interventions were largely skill-building programs, while the less extensive interventions were resume advice and employment counselling. Again, this suggests reducing differences in education is important for closing labour market gaps.

However, differences in education or skills are not the only barriers to income parity between Indigenous and settler people, as the decomposition literature suggests. Feir et al. (2022) find that the more extensive interventions do not result in earnings returns relative to less extensive ones if a Status First Nations person had worked in a reserve before the intervention. This result potentially suggests that other demand-side labour market factors significantly determine total earnings differences.

Another large government intervention that was intended to reduce labour market patterns studied in this literature and not directly connected to education was the provision of formal childcare services. Feir and Thomas (2019) study this intervention among Northern Indigenous communities. While providing formal childcare services may have been successful on many fronts, it did not result in substantive increases in labour force participation among Northern Indigenous households, except for in Quebec. We take this as suggesting that while access to childcare may be important, levels of labour market engagement were not dominantly influenced by access to this form of childcare.

Overall, this empirical literature documents consistent differences between the labour market and educational outcomes of settler and Indigenous people. Those groups that have been

arguably the most subject to explicit institutional segregation, Status First Nations people living in reserves, tend to have the largest income and educational differences with settler people. While the empirical evidence in these journals is still relatively nascent, the literature suggests that Indigenous-focused educational and skill building, with access to Indigenous cultural support, can improve measured economic outcomes. However, reducing differences in credentials or labour market skills will only go so far in reducing the income gap, according to the earnings decomposition literature. In addition, while there is evidence supply-side interventions aimed at increasing skills have positive effects on earnings, they don't seem to have earnings returns in reserve jurisdictions which face labour demand constraints.

III.C On Self-Government and Rights

The legal and practical recognition of Indigenous self-government and rights has changed continuously since the formation of Canada, and there is a growing empirical literature on the impacts of these changes. However, unlike the labour market and education literature, much of the work is more qualitative. In this section, I focus on both the qualitative and empirical literature in the CPP and the empirical literature in economics.

To understand the literature, I will provide some brief context around the evolution of Indigenous rights post-1970 with the acknowledgement this fight has been going on long since before then. Perhaps the most well-known changes today began with the decision in *Calder vs. British Columbia* ([1973] SCR 313). It was the first time the Supreme Court of Canada recognized that “Aboriginal title”, the inherent collective Indigenous right to a territory, may potential exist in Canada and was not extinguished simply by settlement or the creation of Canadian state.

In 1982, with the repatriation of the Constitution, “Aboriginal rights” were explicitly enshrined in Canadian law. Section 35(1) states: “The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.” This constitutional clause did not define those rights, and a series of Supreme Court decisions followed. In these decisions “Aboriginal rights” have been defined as collective rights inherently tied to the land that derive from pre-European contact practice.

The Supreme Court decisions related to Indigenous rights and their potential re-distributional

and aggregate impacts have been a significant concern for provinces and natural resources sectors. Keay and Metcalf (2021) cite these concerns and, in response, study the effect of six of these landmark Supreme Court decisions using data on over 2,000 natural resource firms' shares from the Toronto Stock Exchange. The impact of the Supreme Court decisions on stock prices depended heavily on the exact nature of the rulings. The market value of resource firms tended to fall in response to court decisions that either expanded the scope of Indigenous claims to land and resources or if the decision increased legal uncertainty over economic rights. However, when Supreme Court decisions precisely delineated potential Aboriginal rights or generally reduced uncertainty around rights or processes, Keay and Metcalf (2021) find significant positive responses in natural resource firms' stock prices. When they aggregated the abnormal returns across all six decisions and all firms, a measure of the economic impact of new information embodied in the six landmark Supreme Court decisions, they estimated a net increase in Canadian natural resource firms' market capitalization of 7.6 billion dollars or 0.3% of the total market capitalization of the Toronto Stock Exchange in 2015. One way to understand the overall positive effect of these Supreme Court decisions is to see them as reducing the uncertainty introduced by *Calder v. British Columbia* in 1973 and Section 35(1) of the Constitution in 1982, discussed earlier.

To fully contextualize this finding, it is important to realize that many of the post-Constitution Supreme Court decisions are not as supportive of Indigenous rights as many Canadians may believe them to be. For example, in the *Calder* case, the decision rejected the claims of the Nisga'a, and it also made clear that Aboriginal title could be *unilaterally extinguished by the Crown* and surrendered only to the Crown. As put by Metcalf (2017), "Although *Calder* had strengthened Aboriginal title as a legal right, it continued to embed a particular relationship between the Crown and Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples and the Crown were locked into a power dynamic because of the restraint on alienation of title except through surrender to the Crown and because of the Crown's unilateral ability to extinguish title," Metcalf (2017, p. 170).

Avio (1994) discusses the *R. v Sparrow* [1990] court decision, which was the first Supreme Court decision to start to define the scope of "Aboriginal rights" after the passing of the Constitution. While Avio (1994) is attempting to fit Aboriginal rights into a standard positivist,

economics and law paradigm and was not offering a critique of the Sparrow decision, his account of the ruling is useful. They summarize the Sparrow ruling in relation to Aboriginal rights in the following way: Aboriginal rights “accrue only to organized aboriginal communities, requires historical grounding, are inalienable except to the Crown, are subject to extinguishment by abandonment, and are accompanied by a fiduciary duty on the part of the Crown” (Avio, 1994, p. 425). Given the history of displacement of Indigenous people from their lands, “extinguishment by abandonment,” it may strike some, as it does me, as a reassertion of power based on past acts of power. It is also worth noting that Aboriginal rights do not extend to commercial exercises of these rights, which is arguably inconsistent with the historical grounding principle.

The Sparrow case also outlined the conditions under which the Canadian government can “justifiably infringe” on an Aboriginal right: (1) the infringement achieves some “valid legislative objective”; (2) there is as little infringement as necessary to achieve the legislative objective; (3) “fair” compensation was provided; and (4) Aboriginal groups were consulted, or, “at the least... informed.”¹⁵

The 1997 Supreme Court *Delgamuukw* decision went further to define legitimate infringement. The Supreme Court decision reiterated that Aboriginal title exists at the will of the Crown, stating that legitimate government reasons for infringement included “the pursuit of economic and regional fairness and the recognition of the historical reliance upon, and participation in, the fishery by non-aboriginal groups.” [para 161], as well as “the development of agriculture, forestry, mining, and hydroelectric power, the general economic development of the interior of British Columbia, protection of the environment or endangered species, the building of infrastructure and the settlement of foreign populations to support those aims” [para. 165]. As pointed out by Borrows (1999, p. 537), the decision’s “acceptance of Crown sovereignty places Aboriginal title in a subordinate position relative to other legal rights.” Dacks (2002) has also argued that the *Delgamuukw*’s main effects were not to speed the settling of land claims in British Columbia, an area largely not covered by historical treaties, but rather to encourage the province to take steps to integrate First Nations into economic life in an effort to redirect attention away from land claims.

When Aboriginal title is proven, its actual power has been limited by the Supreme Court.

¹⁵See https://Indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/sparrow_case/. Last accessed August 4, 2023.

This is reflected specifically in the 2014 ruling in *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia*, in which, for the first time, Aboriginal title was ruled to exist in a specific case. Borrows (2015) points out that the decision clearly states that while Aboriginal title conferred basically all the same rights as private property in Canada, the decision did not apply to land privately owned by Canadian individuals or underwater lands, even in the area of question.

Despite the limits of Aboriginal title, the acknowledgement of its existence by the Supreme Court has paved a path for expanding Indigenous jurisdiction and rights to land. In response to *Calder vs. British Columbia* in 1973, as discussed earlier, the federal government established the Comprehensive Land Claims Policy to deal with Indigenous land claims and, as part of this process, set the foundation for negotiating self-government agreements. These agreements supersede any governance provisions of the Indian Act. The settlement of a comprehensive land claim, which may include a self-government agreement, is often called a modern treaty. The first modern treaty, the James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement, was signed in 1975.

As of January 2022, First Nations and the Government of Canada have signed 26 comprehensive land claim agreements. Of these agreements, 18 have self-government provisions. It is also possible for nations to negotiate a self-government agreement independent of settling a comprehensive land claim agreement, and the self-government agreements may be overarching or sector-specific. First Nations with comprehensive self-government agreements attain a broad range of decision-making and fiscal powers within their territorial jurisdiction, and the Indian Act no longer governs their nations. These agreements allow for expanded taxation powers, including personal income tax, property tax, setting of their own election structures, land codes, education, health care, and other public services. A self-governance agreement that includes a land claim settlement also clarifies the jurisdiction and rights over formally contested lands.

Work by Aragón (2015) examines the effects of the settlement of modern comprehensive land claims. In this careful, theoretically motivated empirical analysis, Aragón studies the impact of signing a comprehensive land claim agreement with a self-government agreement on the economic outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people after their signing. They find that locations subject to a resolved comprehensive land claim experience an increase of 13% in real income six years post-treaty implementation relative to comparable control groups. This real income increase occurs for Indigenous people and settlers in the affected regions. Aragón's

results are consistent with the clarification of property rights creating a positive demand shock that affects the local economy when there is limited mobility. While this work cannot disentangle the impact of Indigenous governance from the resolution of land claims and the fiscal packages that accompany them, they document that there was an increase in the number of mining firms operating in modern treaty regions after treaty implementation, which is potentially suggestive of clarification around processes and rights to production driving part of the real income growth.

Indigenous nations may also be able to claim a larger share of returns from such mining projects given their existing rights. The theme of legal rights being essential tools for Indigenous nations in negotiation with governments and industry is illustrated clearly by McCreary et al. (2016). They study three cases where Indigenous nations in different legal contexts could more or less leverage environmental assessment processes to obtain employment or other economic benefits from development in their territories. Modern treaties may allow a powerful claim to land.

However, whether the modern treaty process will leave First Nations more empowered at the end than at the beginning is a matter of debate. Alcantara (2009) points out that in the process of negotiating comprehensive land claim agreements, the federal government is primarily interested in certainty and finality for the purposes of encouraging economic development and that lawyers in the process of negotiation will only accept alternatives that apply the same sort of legal certainty on the part of the Canadian state as the extinguishment clause in historical treaties. As pointed out by Asch (1989), modern agreements may also impose western understandings of the world onto Indigenous peoples and constrain their freedom to interact in the world according to their worldview.

Thus, in part because of concerns around signing modern treaties, and the expense in terms of time and real resources of negotiating them, First nations have pushed for legislative changes outside of modern treaties for greater control over their lands and self-governance capacity. This has led to First Nations “opt-in agreements” which are sometimes called Indian Act opt-out agreements. Some of these opt-in arrangements build on the municipal-like powers given to some First Nations in the Indian Advancement Act of 1884. In 1951, the Indian Act was updated to expand the more limited powers in the Indian Advancement Act to all band governments, but they still came with major restrictions and heavy federal government involvement. In order to

allow for greater autonomy for First Nations in governing their land, finances and resources, the First Nations Land Management Act (FNLMA) was passed in 1999, and the First Nations Financial Management Act (FNFMA) in 2005.

Both of these pieces of legislation were First Nations-led initiatives. The FNFMA increases First Nations' ability to manage their finances, access capital markets, and implement their taxation jurisdiction in their territories. Over 300 First Nations have signed on to the FNFMA since its passage. The FNLMA provides a mechanism for First Nations to opt out of roughly 40% of the clauses in the Indian Act (Feir and Scoones, 2022) and side-step the lengthy federal government approval process around land zoning and management. Over a hundred nations have operational land codes under the FNLMA at the time of writing.

Pendakur and Pendakur (2018, 2021) study the effect of self-governance agreements, comprehensive land claim agreements, and Indian Act opt-in arrangements over land and finance on both the level of income (Pendakur and Pendakur, 2018) and income inequality (Pendakur and Pendakur, 2021). They find that if a nation has a comprehensive land claim, whether or not it has a self-government agreement, it increases the average income of Indigenous and settler households in the area. Implementing both the FNFMA and FNLMA also raises average income. Self-governance agreements, comprehensive land claims and opt-ins can also decrease community inequality, as measured by the Gini index, up to 3.3 to 3.5 percentage points. Given the difference in the Gini index is only about ten percentage points between Canada and the United States, this is a relatively meaningful effect. These results suggest that increasing a community's ability to manage their lands and finances with greater autonomy decreases inequality within groups. However, Pendakur and Pendakur (2018) also shows that the income gains to these agreements are significantly larger for settler households in affected areas than Indigenous households. In addition, Pendakur and Pendakur (2021) demonstrates that while inequality may be reduced between Indigenous people within communities, inequality between Indigenous and settlers may actually widen.

There is evidence that other current policies that seemed to be designed to support Indigenous people and their rights might benefit settlers even more than Indigenous people. For example, Aragón and Kessler (2020) study the impact of increased use of land tenure forms meant to give greater control to First Nations people over the use of their lands, specifically

lawful possession, designated land and permits. These land rights regimes are used to create individual landholdings and grant secure and transferable rights of use of reserve land to Indigenous owners and are not transferable to non-bandmembers but can be used to lease land to non-bandmembers. These legal claims to land were argued for on the basis that they would empower individual band members and nations to use their lands more flexibly. Aragón and Kessler (2020) focuses on the intensive margin of the use of these claims and relies on the expansion of lawful possession acres being conditionally exogenous from the outcomes of interest in the study. They examine outcomes that include measures of housing quality, income, employment, and measures of band government capacity since much of the revenues from these land tenure forms flow to band governments. They find that increased use of these land tenure forms improves measures of housing quality for band members (measured by dwelling age and whether someone lived in a dwelling in need of major repair) and measures of government capacity (measured by water quality, chief salary, and government spending). However, band members experience no positive impact at the extensive margin of increased use of these land tenure forms on income or labour market outcomes, but *non-band members* do. Aragón and Kessler provide evidence that the use of these land tenure forms is not associated with an increase in the number of band members living in reserves, but there is a substantial increase in the number of higher-income, non-band members living in reserve jurisdictions, and while there is no increase in the number of houses built in the last 10 years for band-members, there is a large increase in the number of houses built for non-band members. Specifically, the doubling of the reserve area under certificates of possession for the average band would increase the non-band-member population by almost 40%. Roughly a 1% change in the reserve area under certificates of possession would result in a 0.6% increase in the number of new houses built in the last ten years going to non-band-members.

Another example of policies that may be intended to support Indigenous people that may actually significantly benefit local settlers include compensation packages for historic wrongs. Specifically, when federal or provincial governments provide cash compensation to Indigenous people for a historical wrong, a significant proportion of this compensation may flow to settlers near the Indigenous recipients. Mirzaei et al. (2021) provides some evidence regarding this in collaboration with Little Red River Cree Nation (LRRCN) whose reserve is located in Alberta.

The LRRCN received a settlement from Canada under Canada’s specific claim process. The specific claims process is separate from the comprehensive land claims process and is devised to address specific violations of treaty obligations, broken promises, or wrongful actions by Indian Agents, such as embezzlement. Since 1973, 535 specific claims have been settled between the Government of Canada and First Nations governments and are valued at more than \$6 billion current dollars. Mirzaei et al. (2021, p. 497) assess the contention of some critics who argue that First Nations gain little in the long run from these settlements at a high cost to “taxpayers.” The authors provide some evidence the first concern may be, at least in part, true. Leveraging data provided by LRRCN, they estimate that the economic leakage rate for the settlement from the reserve of the \$239 million settlement was 83.5%. In other words, 83.5% of the settlement was spent outside of the reserve boundaries. Thus, the local reserve economy received little investment in additional business activity. On the other hand, the province and settlers gained substantially: Mirzaei et al. (2021) estimate that the \$239 million dollar settlement contributed between \$275 to \$339 million in provincial output and between \$110 to \$127 million in labour income and well over 2,000 jobs. Thus, the settlement payment acted as a fiscal multiplier to the province and its local economy. So, while Indigenous community members received the consumption benefit of the settlement, one might also argue that the settlement acted more broadly as a transfer for the local Alberta economy.

Overall, the relatively new and growing literature on the impact of self-governance agreements, comprehensive land claims, and opt-in arrangements suggests that increased self-governance and access to land and resources can increase real income and reduce inequality within Indigenous nations. An important message from the literature is that legal rights translate into economic rights. However, the literature also suggests that these rights may be more limited than at first glance and settlers may also substantially benefit from these changes.

IV. CONSIDERATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

In this section, I offer some thoughts on the state of the literature within the CPP and the top 400 economics journals. Here, I will focus on the empirical literature, given my own research expertise and its increasing importance as a method used in the CPP and dominance in economics generally. I then offer some thoughts on where Canada is right now regarding Indigenous

policy in Canada in its history and specifically the stories Canadians tell themselves. I argue these two issues are connected in part because of the political nature of data construction and the questions researchers are able to, and think to, ask.

IV.A Reflections on the State of the Literature

The literature at this time of writing has largely focused on measuring and explaining “gaps” or the effect of governance institutions on market income. On average, Indigenous people have lower total income, income from employment, employment rates, high school graduation rates, and measured literacy, numeracy, and skill interacting with technology than settler people. This form of research has been powerful in Canadian public policy and highlighted social inequities facing Indigenous people in Canada. The Assembly of First Nations used the phrase “Close the Gaps” as a rallying cry in the 2015 election, and this language has been adopted in following Federal Government mandate letters to ministers, including the 2021 mandate letter to the minister of Indigenous Services Canada. There have also been substantial investments in response.

Differences in income and measured educational outcomes have meaningful consequences for well-being, given that most goods and services must be acquired through the market economy. This is true for most people, including urban Indigenous communities and those Indigenous communities whose traditional lands have been dispossessed or diminished and whose traditional skills are not valued by the market economy. Acknowledging this last piece is critical: accessing labour market income is necessary, and income gaps are a problem because of the destruction of alternative ways of life. The current importance of education and employment “gaps” for well-being have been constructed by both histories of assimilation and dispossession and Canada’s current form of economic organization. If history had been different, and settlers either arrived at slower rates and were integrated into Indigenous nations or if settlers and Indigenous people formed more equitable common, co-governance institutions, I suspect there would still be wage labour markets, but how they functioned would likely look significantly different.

Of course, many communities still have access to non-market forms of production and goods and/or have high enough revenues to offer alternative ways for people to have income outside of labour markets. Still, given current data limitations, it is difficult to know how many Indigenous

communities have these options and how labour market policies affect them. Data limitations on this point are consequential because so much of the current economics research, and thus our picture of economic life in Canada, hinges on access to data. The focus on education and labour markets in the Canadian public policy literature could be driven by the fact that economists and other quantitative social scientists tend to be drawn to research questions that can be answered using clean, well-documented, accessible data sets with sample sizes large enough to make statements with statistical precision. This naturally means the Canadian Census or other Statistics Canada data sets are what researchers turn to.

A pressing challenge related to comprehensive data for Indigenous populations exists because the information contained within Statistics Canada data sets is designed broadly for the purposes of Federal and provincial governments' policy-making and implicitly embeds ideas of what social objectives are and should be. This restricts the forms of questions researchers using them could anticipate answering, and thus, the sorts of stories you can tell with them are relatively limited (Feir and Hancock, 2016; Walter and Andersen, 2016). As an explicit example of how data construction is political in nature, consider Figure 5. This figure contains the counts of the number of times a selected set of statistics was collected by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the USA and reported in the United States Annual Reports to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1870 to 1900. While the most commonly collected statistic reported was the total population, the second most frequently reported statistic was the number of missionaries in an "Indian agency", and the third most common statistic reported was the number of Indigenous people wearing "civilized dress." Only a few times were reports on violence and Indigenous wealth included, and they never reported statistics on Indigenous language use or Indigenous life satisfaction. In equivalent Canadian reports from 1880 to 1900, the most common statistical tables were "number of acres of Indian lands sold during the year," population counts from Census returns, agricultural productivity for a subset of nations, and number of children enrolled and attending day, industrial, and residential schools by school. Imagine being a quantitative social scientist at that time. What were the questions you may be able to ask? What stories would you be able to tell? Could you say anything about the rate of Indigenous language loss? Could you say anything about the health of traditional ecosystems and what that implied for Indigenous economic systems and well-being? What about mental health? What about the

number of children who died at school? We have no quantitative way to address any of these questions because these data were not viewed as important enough by the federal government to collect at the time. While there is increasingly more data available from Indigenous perspectives, there is arguably still much work to be done, and many of the social stories formed by research in Canada as of this writing rely on federal government-generated data.

The stories we tell ourselves about society and each other have consequences, even if one accepts one is measuring some welfare-relevant outcome. Tuck (2009), in their influential piece “Suspending Damage”, argues that these gap-based, or “deficit narratives”, result in communities internalizing stereotypes, making it harder to move forward. Tuck argues instead for desire-based research, research that documents “not only the painful elements of social realities but also the wisdom and hope” (Tuck, 2009, p. 415). Tuck (2009) also argues that researchers who engage in gap-based work are often well-meaning but have a misguided theory of social change. They suggests that pointing out gaps will not result in action and that the research reinforces a status quo and a damaging public narrative.

Tuck’s work has deeply influenced my thinking. Still, it does seem that the “gap-based” research has supported political change. Specifically, the Assembly of First Nations’ use of the gap literature, as well as the use by other Indigenous organizations such as the National Indigenous Economic Development Board, has been powerful. My concern is whether federal and provincial governments are responding to the work generated by academics with the optimal kind of policy change. While the Assembly of First Nations and the National Indigenous Economic Development Board present statistics across multiple levels of well-being in their reports and advocate on multiple political fronts, much of the academic literature I am reviewing does not nor does it offer contextual understanding. Let’s say this research increases federal public investment to close the education and income gap on average and is successful, so Indigenous people in Canada look on average the same as settlers on *measured* economic terms. Given current data deficits, it is hard to know at what cost this occurred. Were Indigenous languages, cultures, and feelings of connection to community and their personal sense of well-being improved as well? If the Canadian state “closes the gaps” and academics only measure it by one standard of well-being that presumes an economic system as it currently exists, which settler people have heavily shaped, I have a hard time seeing how this would be any different than the

policies of the past generally critiqued as harmful acts of assimilation.

IV.B Reflections Broadly and the Stories We Tell Ourselves

Has Canada moved beyond past attempts at assimilation? An article published in the precursor to the *Canadian Journal of Economics*, *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* in 1946 is potentially instructive. It was titled “The Goal of Indian Assimilation,” and although it was in reference to Indigenous policy in the United States, it likely echoes sentiments in Canada at the time, given its location of publication. The article glowingly describes a “new type of Indian assimilation” as “education, credit, self-government, and constitutional freedom of conscience” (Beatty, 1946, p. 400). To gain perspective, consider the following text from the article:

“I hope I have said enough to paint the picture of assimilation as many of us in the United States now view it. An opportunity for a practical education, which will lead to abilities to exploit the resources still in possession of the Indians; training for Indians who may wish to leave their ancestral home, and enter into the competition of American life; college education for those with the aptitude and the ambition. An opportunity for increasing self-government...many of the more experienced tribes may be, within another ten years, almost as independent of the government as any rural county....as each of these problems nears solution, the Indians are more secure in their share in America; and what is equally if not more important, their acceptance by their white fellow Americans is more wholehearted. They are beginning to talk the same language, approaches the same living standards, and compete economically (p.403).

If you stripped the above statements of the language of assimilation and the importance of acceptance of “whites” these statements strike me as quite similar to modern Canadian policy statements, minus the explicit use of the word ‘assimilation’. Improved income, education, and self-government are promoted explicitly. One could quibble by stating that the author shouldn’t be naming their proposal ‘assimilation’ because they are allowing for self-governance and freedom of conscience. But weren’t the 1940s a time of assimilationist policy according to

the common story of North American Indigenous public policy? Perhaps this common understanding is incorrect, but it should at least make us stop and reassess what has really changed in Canadian public policy fundamentally over time and how research has both reinforced policy positions along these objectives and also been influenced by them.

One might respond, “But what about the political rhetoric around reconciliation?” The word “reconciliation” seemed to enter public dialogue as a result of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action to address the lasting harms of residential schools, and now seems to dominate political discourse. However, for me, after reading through numerous court decisions, the word reconciliation suddenly seems much more ominous. In these decisions, the word reconciliation is used to reference the reconciliation of the continued existence of Indigenous nations and the assertion of Crown sovereignty over them. It seems important to ask ourselves on what ethical grounds Canada has asserted this sovereignty and by what right it can continue to assert it. If, as Asch (2014) suggests, it is really just because of the political ability to dominate by force or majority rule, I think most Canadians would find this unsettling. When Canadian politicians use the word “reconciliation”, I have started to wonder whether it is a mildly veiled threat that Indigenous rights lawyers hear but most settler-decent Canadians do not.

What does this all have to do with research that identifies social injustices related to access to employment and income? Without minimizing the real struggles that people experience and social injustices, when we observe “gaps,” how much are social scientists just measuring differences in economic choices that produce the same welfare, but just with alternative, unmeasured production or economic systems? The on-reserve income gaps are perhaps a case of this. It is not clear how much these reported dollar value income differences actually reflect production and consumption possibilities, particularly for communities that can still access traditional resources and community systems of support. Again, I do believe there are substantial social inequalities, but I am becoming increasingly concerned about how we (social scientists) measure them and what we fail to account for.

V. MOVING FORWARD

Many Indigenous advocates and political actors have had hard-won victories in creating policy change and increasing the available resources, at least in principle. What they're trying to achieve is of critical importance: increased well-being for Indigenous people. But Indigenous advocates are also constrained by Canadian political realities and strategically may be making trade-offs in what is advocated for and who they work with. What is achieved may also not match what was envisioned by Indigenous leaders and settler allies. Those wishing to act as allies may also not be fully informed or bring their own pre-existing biases that are so dominant that Indigenous political leaders may see no other option than to work within those constraints. Given the diversity among Indigenous people and interests, it is possible that the Indigenous voices that are heard in the halls of Canadian federal power may be the ones that most play into settler priors, beliefs, and economic interests.

Thus, it is worth pausing to ask ourselves if Canadian government policies are leading Canada down a path to mutual economic well-being, co-existence and good relations with Indigenous people now and in the future. Given how past policies are so often critiqued as assimilationist at best and genocidal at worst, it is also worth asking whether our policies today are fundamentally different from the past. Do they operate on different principles or lead to a different future vision?

Despite my arguments and questions in the last section, I believe positive changes have occurred over the last 150 years. Some are obvious, like the right to vote, reduced gender discrimination in the Indian Act, increased support for Indigenous language revitalization, and the legal recognition of the existence of Aboriginal rights and title. There are also, I believe, sincere efforts towards consultation with Indigenous organizations in Canadian government policy and representation in Government. Some changes are less well-known, and I believe research has also played some positive roles in affecting change. The literature that has called attention to social injustices in the current allocation of society's resources, specifically around education and labour markets, despite my critique, has had value. Many Indigenous leaders advocate for economic equality and access and sincerely value this form of research and engage in it themselves. Even if Indigenous leaders have different beliefs about achieving it, there is a

shared vision of increased well-being, belonging, and dignity.

Access to market income can generate all these things (even a sense of belonging if income is shared or used to acquire things necessary for community rituals, events and practices). For this reason, I believe continued research in this space is important. However, measured income is clearly only part of the story. When social scientists and government bodies measure differences in income, they generally do not account for differences in the real costs of living, home production, exposure to environmental hazards, and what different people have to give up to acquire it. We need to consider these factors and trade-offs to inform policy in a way that will ultimately lead to increases in well-being.

Once clear goals are identified, government policy can focus on achieving them. One of the goals articulated by both Indigenous actors and the Canadian state has been to “close the gaps” in education and labour market outcomes. Despite critiques, this is a research area of continued importance. One way social scientists may productively move forward in this space is to explicitly acknowledge what we are missing when working on educational or labour market disparities and what such work is useful for. As suggested by Tuck (2009), we can also focus on desire and aspirations and what mechanisms achieve those aspirations. Research may also benefit public policy by shifting away from focusing on individual “determinants” of well-being differences and focusing more on how the context and policy affect access to resources and what can be done to change the context. Specifically, rather than focus on individual labour force or education decisions holding the rest of economic life constant, it would be useful to consider how labour demand or educational institutions impact Indigenous options. It may be that “gaps” exist because educational systems or labour market institutions are simply not serving the interests of many Indigenous people. But somewhat more simply, while research has provided income disparity estimates from past studies, and I have provided some updated results here, there are no good estimates of whether income disparities are actually closing over time. Comparing across studies only gives a vague sense of whether things are improving, given the differences in sample and census coverage over time. It would be useful to have a plausibly consistent time series to know whether income outcomes are improving and whether they are improving at the expense of cultural connection.

As researchers and policymakers, we also need to ask how settler society can change and

adapt beyond investing more in Indigenous people having access to the same form of economic opportunity as the average settler. The new vision within many university contexts suggests that to truly support Indigenous students, institutions should “Indigenize.” If this concept could be usefully extrapolated to promote a different vision of Canadian public policy, perhaps settlers should ask whether “Indigenizing” the economy, education, and culture of Canada should be the goal and how we could constructively contribute to this conversation. For the unfamiliar reader, I have come to understand Indigenization as the integration and prioritization of Indigenous experiences, ways of knowing, and worldviews. “Ways of knowing” regard how we come to understand the world. Worldviews are the assumptions we make about the world and what is desirable behaviour. I am very hesitant to make generalizations about Indigenous experience, worldviews, and ways of knowing, but everyone would benefit from each of us realizing social diversity in both these things and not ranking them in hierarchical fashions.

What would Indigenization of Canadian economic life look like? This is not something I feel qualified to offer guidance on. However, I do think settlers should consider what can be learned from Indigenous laws and structures when revising Canadian economic systems and how current systems can adapt so they meet the aspirations of diverse peoples. For example, there is literature that can be turned to in order to understand how to make workspaces more supportive spaces for Indigenous workers (MacKinnon, 2015; Thiessen, 2023) which does involve, at least by some conceptualizations, “Indigenizing” workplaces. This literature could inform employers on what to change, as could listening carefully to Indigenous and other employees. From my reading and experience, the sort of changes advocated for would likely improve outcomes for everyone, not just Indigenous people.

For those researchers who wish to produce work that increases Indigenous well-being but don’t feel qualified to speak to Indigenization, I think the first thing we can do is think about the methodologies we use and how we generate the questions we ask. As Robert Hancock and I have argued elsewhere, it is critical new data is created and researchers exercise humility around what current data sources can and cannot offer (Feir and Hancock, 2016). Canada has recently put effort into constructing data sets that aim to centre Indigenous priorities even if they suffer from coverage and consistency limitations. The first is the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS), which, in modern iterations, has focused on off-reserve Indigenous populations. The second

is the surveys housed by the First Nations Information Governance Center (FNIGC). FNIGC focuses on creating and holding data for on-reserve First Nations communities. The FNIGC process for data access emphasizes the principles of ownership, access, possession, and control and seeks to ensure approved projects pose maximal benefit and limited risk. For an example of work collaborative work published by an economist, see O’Gorman (2021), which focuses on water quality and mental health.

There are also opportunities to create new data in collaboration with Indigenous partners to tell new stories that could influence the policy dialogue in important ways. Collecting historical data may also allow for the re-telling of the history of Canada in ways that allow for real change and strengthen our ability to learn from the past. I think learning from historical policies and events is important for conducting research that will result in better public policy moving forward. While the CPP is not a history journal, having a better sense of the history of Indigenous rights (and settler privileges) would also go a long way to advancing the conversation in Canada by providing a more accurate understanding of our collective past and putting our modern stories in context.

Theory and qualitative work are critical in telling new stories because data and quantitative work cannot do everything. Eswaran (2023) provides an excellent example of rethinking the implications of private property on well-being in the presence of a collective cultural good. Turning to the work by Indigenous economists and economic thinkers, such as Troster (2022), Kelly and Kelly (2015) and Kelly and Woods (2021), or Indigenous-led institutions, such as Tulo (2014), can provide guidance on what important topics might be or offer a better sense of community aspirations. Of course, no one Indigenous scholar or institution represents “Indigenous thinking” so scholars seeking to write in this space should do their best to read and engage broadly.

Asking ourselves how there can be an authentic increase in the diversity of voices heard in the CPP, economics, and public policy generally is something we also must do. The necessity of a diverse set of Indigenous voices is critical not just because of cultural diversity but economic diversity. As shown in Figure 4, there are very different economic experiences across constitutionally recognised Indigenous groups. Even within constitutionally recognized groups, there is substantial economic heterogeneity. More fully accounting for this diversity is another

important future direction for research. Given the complex realities of Indigenous experiences, it would be useful to start pointing to differences generated by specific structures and economic constraints that affect specific people rather than differences based on simplified constructions of Indigeneity that are independent of the legal and social treatment.

Scholars writing in Canadian Public Policy and economics journals who engage with Canadian public policy topics could also gain immensely by working with Indigenous communities, given both the need for inclusive data and to understand diverse realities. Communities have been keeping records for thousands of years in oral histories and stories and have questions they wish answered, stories they want settlers to hear, and policy objectives they want to become realities. While it is true that this form of work isn't always possible or desirable given the many demands and pressures facing communities, and is not a panacea given the term "community" is often not well-defined and easily abused, community collaborations will likely result in innovative research.

But even if one is still building relationships and figuring out the best questions to ask, researchers interested in public policy research can at least start by trying to understand Indigenous policy in Canada as it stands. A non-trivial number of dollars is allocated not just by Indigenous Services Canada and Indigenous Crown Relations but across nearly all federal government departments, provincial governments and local governments. But does anyone understand the broad policy landscape and how policies interact to improve Indigenous lives? I, as an economist, believe that in any given moment, we face constrained resources and fear that by simply not understanding how policies interact with each other or how dollars are being spent, we are burning real resources that otherwise could just be transferred to Indigenous people and nations for a direct, immediate, impact on well-being.

There are many specific open policy questions that could benefit from research that I have not referred to here, given the limited space. I encourage readers to see the research questions posed by the National Indigenous Economic Development Board in their publications, the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the many other reports published by Indigenous organizations and governments.

VI. CONCLUSION

How do settler governments make policies that affect Indigenous peoples? These governments have legal and moral obligations to Indigenous nations but are not held accountable by current election systems unless enough settler Canadian voters care about the issues, link arms with their Indigenous relations, and recognize diversity. A clear view of the effects of historic and modern policies, court decisions, and the conceptual and practical constraints we operate under as researchers and policymakers are critical for moving forward. We must also challenge ourselves to broaden our conceptual framework, construct new data sources and remain humble about our knowledge and ability to understand others. What it means to be an Indigenous person in Canada is incredibly complex and inter-sectional. Rather than focusing on individual identities and ancestry and how those are associated (or not associated) with “gaps” to point out injustices, I think we may get further by thinking about how social context and history, legislation, public policy, and systems affect people based on whom they have descended from and whose communities they are part of now. Characterizing “Indigenous interests” as looking one way or another, particularly as a settler, is absurd given the complexity of experiences and cultural distinctions. But we can read Canadian legislation, the history of court cases, measure dollars flowing, mortality, and factors related to social goals, and create more inclusive data. We can listen and try and ask better questions.

Federal governments have long made policies that affect Indigenous nations without formal processes to consult the nations they affect, but I believe this is changing, and hopefully, diverse voices will be present and listened to. Social science academics, I hope, will continue to work to do the same in their research. Hopefully, this will result in social narratives and policies that result in greater Indigenous well-being in the future.

REFERENCES

- Abele, F. and M. O. Dickerson (1985). The 1982 plebiscite on division of the Northwest Territories: Regional government and federal policy. *Canadian Public Policy*, 1–15.
- Alcantara, C. (2009). Old wine in new bottles? Instrumental policy learning and the evolution of the certainty provision in comprehensive land claims agreements. *Canadian Public Policy* 35(3), 325–341.
- Aragón, F. M. (2015). Do better property rights improve local income? Evidence from First Nations’ treaties. *Journal of Development Economics* 116, 43–56.
- Aragón, F. M. and A. S. Kessler (2020). Property rights on First Nations reserve land. *Canadian Journal of Economics* 53(2), 460–495.
- Aragón, F. M. and A. S. Kessler (2021). Custom elections and local policies: The case of Canada’s First Nations. In *AEA Papers and Proceedings*, Volume 111, pp. 238–42.
- Asch, M. (1989). Wildlife: Defining the animals the Dene hunt and the settlement of Aboriginal rights claims. *Canadian Public Policy*, 205–219.
- Asch, M. (2014). *On being here to stay: Treaties and Aboriginal rights in Canada*. University of Toronto Press.
- Avio, K. L. (1994). Aboriginal property rights in Canada: A contractarian interpretation of *R. v. Sparrow*. *Canadian Public Policy*, 415–429.
- Barber, M. and M. E. Jones (2021). Inequalities in test scores between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth in Canada. *Economics of Education Review* 83, 102139.
- Battisti, M., J. Friesen, and B. Krauth (2014). English as a second dialect policy and achievement of Aboriginal students in British Columbia. *Canadian Public Policy* 40(2), 182–192.
- Beatty, W. W. (1946). The goal of Indian assimilation. *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 12(3), 395–404.
- Belanger, Y. D. and R. J. Williams (2012). The First Nations’ contribution to Alberta’s charitable gaming model: Assessing the impacts. *Canadian Public Policy* 38(4), 551–572.
- Bone, R. M. and M. B. Green (1983). Housing assistance and maintenance for the Métis in northern Saskatchewan. *Canadian Public Policy*, 476–486.
- Borrows, J. (1999). Sovereignty’s alchemy: An analysis of *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*. *Osgoode Hall LJ* 37, 537.
- Borrows, J. (2015). Aboriginal title and private property. In *The Supreme Court Law Review: Osgoode’s Annual Constitutional Cases Conference*, Volume 71, pp. 5.
- Brideau, I. (2019). *The Duty to Consult Indigenous Peoples*. Library of Parliament. Legal and Social Affairs Division.
- Carlos, A. M. and F. D. Lewis (2001). Trade, consumption, and the Native economy: Lessons from York Factory, Hudson Bay. *The Journal of Economic History* 61(4), 1037–1064.

- Carlos, A. M. and F. D. Lewis (2012). Smallpox and Native American mortality: The 1780s epidemic in the Hudson Bay region. *Explorations in Economic History* 49(3), 277–290.
- Cooke, M. and J. McWhirter (2011). Public policy and Aboriginal peoples in Canada: Taking a life-course perspective. *Canadian Public Policy* 37(Supplement 1), S15–S31.
- Cornell, S. and M. Jorgensen (2022). Indigenous nations in post-racial America: Rethinking social inclusion. *The Review of Black Political Economy* 49(2), 111–129.
- Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (2022, 08). Indigenous peoples and communities. Available at <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100013785/1529102490303> (2023/05/22).
- Dacks, G. (1986). The case against dividing the Northwest Territories. *Canadian Public Policy*, 202–213.
- Dacks, G. (2002). British Columbia after the Delgamuukw decision: Land claims and other processes. *Canadian Public Policy*, 239–255.
- Daley, A., M. Rahman, and B. Watson (2021). A breath of fresh air: The effect of public smoking bans on indigenous youth. *Health Economics* 30(6), 1517–1539.
- De Silva, A. (1999). Wage discrimination against Natives. *Canadian Public Policy*, 65–85.
- Drost, H. (1994). Schooling, vocational training and unemployment: The case of Canadian Aboriginals. *Canadian Public Policy*, 52–65.
- Eswaran, M. (2023). The wrongs of property rights: The erosion of Indigenous communal land rights and its welfare consequences. *Canadian Public Policy*.
- Feir, D. (2013). Size, structure, and change: Exploring the sources of Aboriginal earnings gaps in 1995 and 2005. *Canadian Public Policy* 39(2), 309–334.
- Feir, D. and R. Akee (2019). First peoples lost: Determining the state of status First Nations mortality in Canada using administrative data. *Canadian Journal of Economics/Revue canadienne d'économique* 52(2), 490–525.
- Feir, D., K. Foley, and M. E. Jones (2021). The Distributional Impacts of Active Labor Market Programs for Indigenous Populations. In *AEA Papers and Proceedings*, Volume 111, pp. 216–20.
- Feir, D. and R. Gillezeau (2018). Return to the homeland? The impact of the Great Recession on employment outcomes and labor mobility for Native Americans. *Journal of Economics, Race, and Policy* 1, 60–74.
- Feir, D. and R. L. Hancock (2016). Answering the call: A guide to reconciliation for quantitative social scientists. *Canadian Public Policy* 42(3), 350–365.
- Feir, D., M. E. Jones, D. Scoones, et al. (2023). When do nations tax? The adoption of property tax codes by First Nations in Canada. *Public Choice*, 1–34.
- Feir, D. and D. Scoones (2022, January). Leading the Way: First Nations in Canadian Fiscal Federalism. Forthcoming chapter in *Fiscal Federalism in Canada* submitted to University of Toronto Press.

- Feir, D. and D. Scoones (2024, February). Leading the way: First Nations in Canadian fiscal federalism. In T. T. André Lecours, Daniel Béland and E. Champagne (Eds.), *Fiscal Federalism in Canada*, Chapter 11, pp. forthcoming. University of Toronto Press.
- Feir, D. and J. Thomas (2019). Introduction of formal child care services in Inuit communities and labour force outcomes. *Canadian Public Policy* 45(4), 428–459.
- Feir, D. L. (2016). The long-term effects of forcible assimilation policy: The case of Indian boarding schools. *Canadian Journal of Economics/Revue canadienne d'économie* 49(2), 433–480.
- Feir, D. L. and M. C. Auld (2021). Indian residential schools: Height and body mass post-1930. *Canadian Journal of Economics/Revue canadienne d'économie* 54(1), 126–163.
- Feir, D. L., K. Foley, and M. E. Jones (2022). Heterogeneous returns to active labour market programs for Indigenous populations. Technical report, National Bureau of Economic Research. Working Paper No.30158.
- Flanagan, T. (1983). The case against Métis Aboriginal rights. *Canadian Public Policy*, 314–325.
- Friesen, J. and B. Krauth (2010). Sorting, peers, and achievement of Aboriginal students in British Columbia. *Canadian Journal of Economics/Revue canadienne d'économie* 43(4), 1273–1301.
- Gardner, P. (1994). Aboriginal community incomes and migration in the NWT: Policy issues and alternatives. *Canadian Public Policy*, 297–317.
- Gaudry, A. (2018). Better late than never? Canada's reluctant recognition of Métis rights and self-government. *Yellowhead Institute*, 1–5.
- George, P. and P. Kuhn (1994). The size and structure of Native-white wage differentials in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Economics*, 20–42.
- Hossain, B. and L. Lamb (2012). The impact of human and social capital on Aboriginal employment income in Canada. *Economic Papers: A Journal of Applied Economics and Policy* 31(4), 440–450.
- Hu, M., A. Daley, and C. Warman (2019). Literacy, numeracy, technology skill, and labour market outcomes among Indigenous Peoples in Canada. *Canadian Public Policy* 45(1), 48–73.
- Jones, M. E. (2022a). The intergenerational legacy of Indian residential schools. Technical report, Emory University. <https://maggieecjones.files.wordpress.com/2021/02/intergenerationalrs.pdf>.
- Jones, M. E. (2022b). Post-secondary funding and the educational attainment of Indigenous students. Technical report, Emory University. https://maggieecjones.files.wordpress.com/2022/12/jones_pse_manuscript.pdf.
- Keay, I. and C. Metcalf (2004). Aboriginal rights, customary law and the economics of renewable resource exploitation. *Canadian Public Policy*, 1–27.
- Keay, I. and C. Metcalf (2021). Recognizing Indigenous rights in Canada: Property rights and natural resource values. *Canadian Public Policy* 47(1), 18–55.

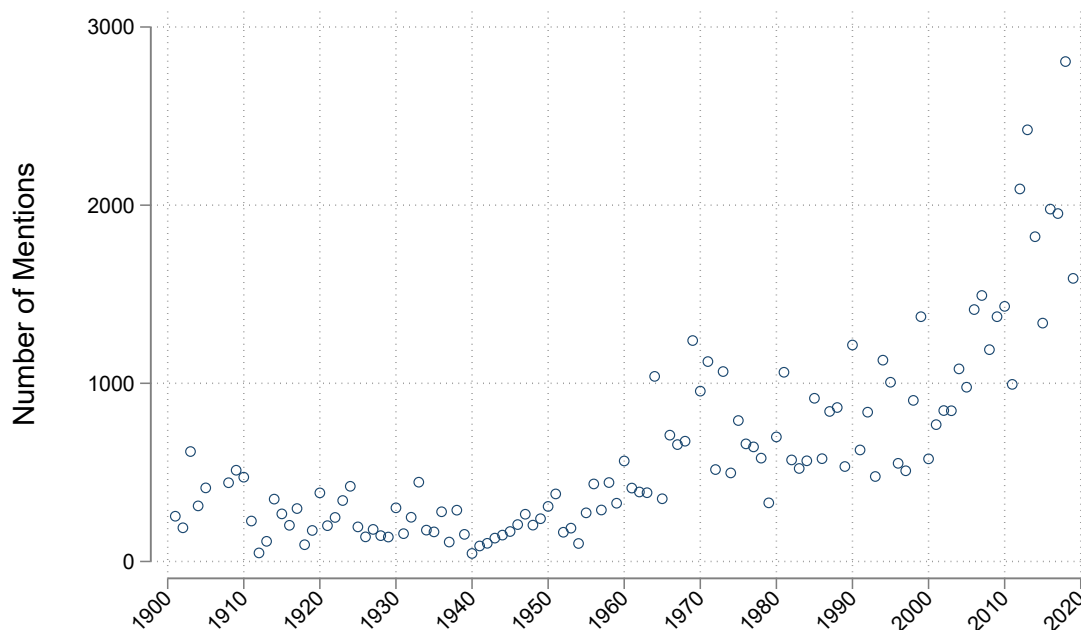
- Kelly, D. and P. Kelly (2015). An ethic of reciprocity. In C. Spiller and R. Wolfgramm (Eds.), *Indigenous spiritualities at work: Transforming the spirit of enterprise*, pp. 191–208. IAP.
- Kelly, D. and C. Woods (2021). Ethical Indigenous economies. *Engaged Scholar Journal: Community-Engaged Research, Teaching and Learning* 7(1), 140–158.
- Ketilson, L. H. (2014). Partnering to finance enterprise development in the Aboriginal social economy. *Canadian Public Policy* 40(Supplement 1), S39–S49.
- Krasowski, S. (2019). *No Surrender: The Land Remains Indigenous*. Regina, SK: University of Regina Press.
- Kuhn, P. and A. Sweetman (2002). Aboriginals as unwilling immigrants: Contact, assimilation and labour market outcomes. *Journal of Population Economics* 15(2), 331–355.
- Lamb, D. (2013). Earnings inequality among Aboriginal groups in Canada. *Journal of Labor Research* 34(2), 224–240.
- Lamb, D. (2014). Aboriginal early school leavers on-and off-reserve: An empirical analysis. *Canadian Public Policy* 40(2), 156–165.
- Lamb, D. (2015). The economic impact of the great recession on Aboriginal people living off reserve in Canada. *Relations industrielles* 70(3), 457–485.
- Lamb, D., M. Yap, and M. Turk (2018). Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal wage gaps in Canada: Evidence from the 2011 National Household Survey. *Relations industrielles* 73(2), 225–251.
- Long, J. A., L. L. Bear, and M. Boldt (1982). Federal Indian policy and Indian self-government in Canada: An analysis of a current proposal. *Canadian Public Policy*, 189–199.
- MacKinnon, S. (2015). *Decolonizing employment: Aboriginal inclusion in Canada’s labour market*. University of Manitoba Press.
- Maslov, A. and J. Zhong (2022). Skill mismatch of Indigenous peoples in Canada: Findings from pиаac. *Canadian Public Policy* 48(1), 91–107.
- Matheson, J. A. (2015). Prices and social behaviour: Evidence from adult smoking in Canadian Aboriginal communities. *Canadian Journal of Economics/Revue canadienne d’économique* 48(5), 1661–1693.
- McCreary, T., S. Mills, and A. St-Amand (2016). Lands and resources for jobs: How Aboriginal peoples strategically use environmental assessments to advance community employment aims. *Canadian Public Policy* 42(2), 212–223.
- Metcalf, C. (2017). Aboriginal title in the Supreme Court of Canada. *Supreme Court Law Review* 78(2), 161–88.
- Miller, J. R. (2009). *Compact, contract, covenant: Aboriginal treaty-making in Canada*. University of Toronto Press.
- Mirzaei, O., D. C. Natcher, and E. T. Micheels (2021). Estimating the economic impacts of specific claims settlements in Canada: The case of Little Red River Cree Nation. *Canadian Public Policy* 47(4), 497–509.

- National Indigenous Economic Development Board (2019, June). 2019 Indigenous economic progress report. Available at <http://www.naedb-cndea.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/NIEDB-2019-Indigenous-Economic-Progress-Report.pdf> (2023/05/22).
- Office of the Auditor General of Canada (2018). Employment training for Indigenous people—Employment and Social Development Canada. Technical report, Ottawa, Ontario.
- O’Gorman, M. (2021). Mental and physical health impacts of water/sanitation infrastructure in First Nations communities in Canada: An analysis of the regional health survey. *World Development* 145, 105517.
- O’Gorman, M. and M. Pandey (2015). Explaining low high school attainment in northern Aboriginal communities: An analysis of the Aboriginal Peoples’ Surveys. *Canadian Public Policy* 41(4), 297–308.
- Pendakur, K. and R. Pendakur (2011). Aboriginal income disparity in Canada. *Canadian Public Policy* 37(1), 61–83.
- Pendakur, K. and R. Pendakur (2018). The effects of modern treaties and opt-in legislation on household incomes in Aboriginal communities. *Social Indicators Research* 137(1), 139–165.
- Pendakur, K. and R. Pendakur (2021). The impact of self-government, comprehensive land claims, and opt-in arrangements on income inequality in Indigenous communities in Canada. *Canadian Public Policy* 47(2), 180–201.
- Redish, A. (2019). Treaty of Paris vs. Treaty of Niagara: Rethinking Canadian economic history in the 21st century. *Canadian Journal of Economics* 52(4), 1325–1348.
- Reeves, W. and J. Frideres (1981). Government policy and Indian urbanization: The Alberta case. *Canadian Public Policy*, 584–595.
- Samuelson, L. (1995). Canadian Aboriginal justice commissions and Australia’s ‘Anunga rules’: Barking up the wrong tree. *Canadian Public Policy*, 187–211.
- Stabler, J. C. and E. C. Howe (1990). Native participation in northern development: The impending crisis in the NWT. *Canadian Public Policy*, 262–283.
- Statistics Canada (2022, 09). Indigenous population continues to grow and is much younger than the non-Indigenous population, although the pace of growth has slowed. Available at <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220921/dq220921a-eng.htm> (2023/05/22).
- Taylor-Henley, S. and P. Hudson (1992). Aboriginal self-government and social services: First Nations provincial relationships. *Canadian Public Policy*, 13–26.
- Tennant, P., S. M. Weaver, R. Gibbins, and J. R. Ponting (1984). The report of the House of Commons Special Committee on Indian Self-Government: Three comments. *Canadian Public Policy* 10(2), 211–224.
- Thiessen, S. (2023). Engaging First Nations people at work: The influence of culture and context. *Administrative Sciences* 13(8), 179.
- Trosper, R. L. (2022). *Indigenous Economics: Sustaining Peoples and Their Lands*. University of Arizona Press.

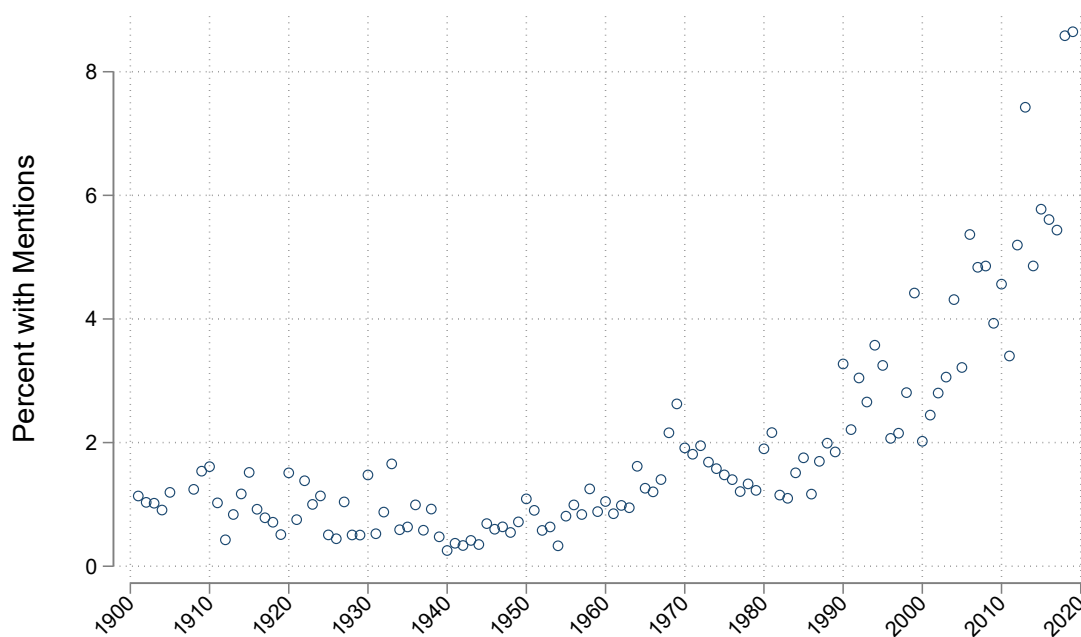
- Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending damage: A letter to communities. *Harvard educational review* 79(3), 409–428.
- Tulo (2014). *Building a Competitive First Nations Investment Climate*. Tulo Center for Indigenous Economics. Creative Commons. www.tulo.ca.
- Veracini, L. (2010). *Introduction: The Settler Colonial Situation*, pp. 1–15. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Vowel, C. (2016). *Indigenous writes: A guide to First Nations, Metis, & Inuit issues in Canada*. Portage & Main Press.
- Walter, M. and C. Andersen (2016). *Indigenous statistics: A quantitative research methodology*. Routledge.
- Walters, D., J. White, and P. Maxim (2004). Does postsecondary education benefit Aboriginal Canadians? An examination of earnings and employment outcomes for recent Aboriginal graduates. *Canadian Public Policy*, 283–301.
- Wotherspoon, T. and E. Milne (2020). Public schooling and contested public discourses concerning reconciliation. *Canadian Public Policy* 46(4), 445–457.

FIGURES

Figure 1: All Speaking Instances in Parliament



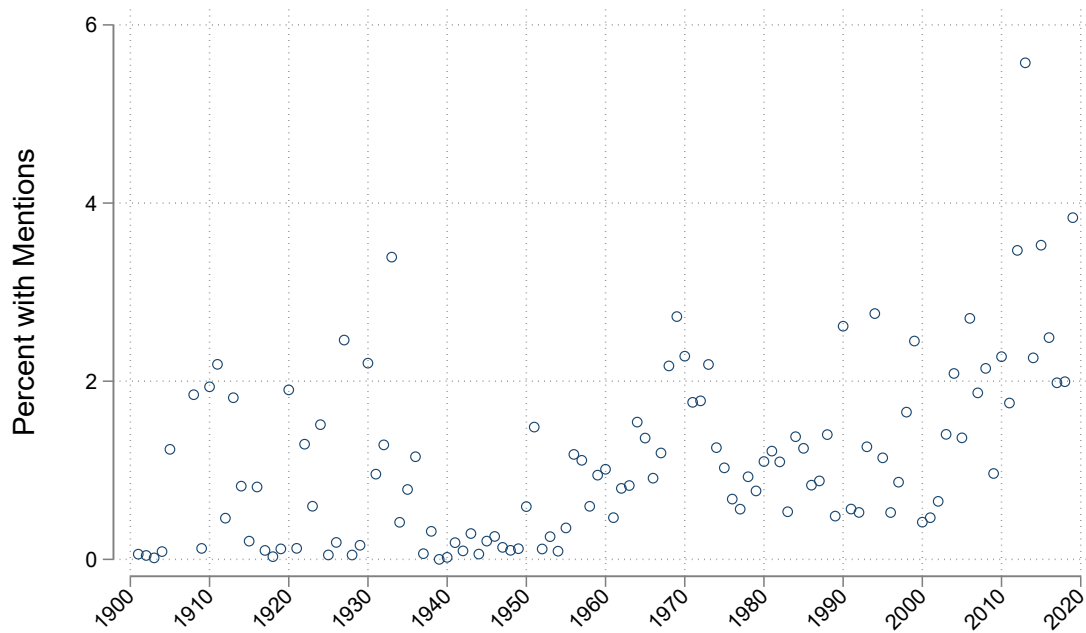
(a) Number



(b) Percent

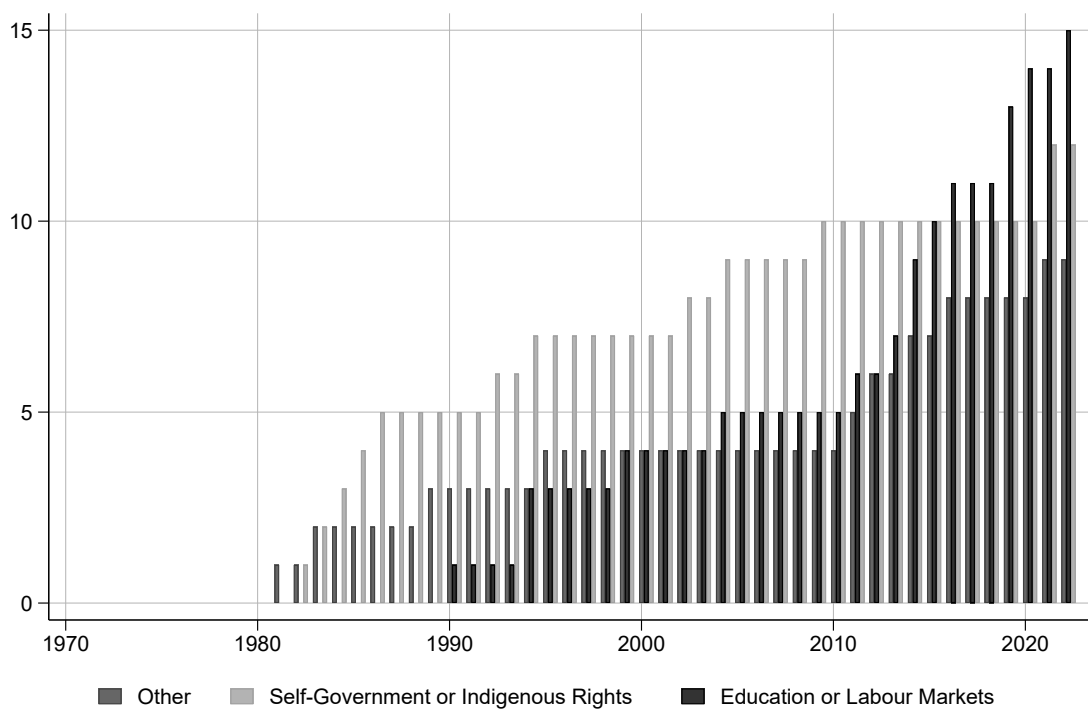
Notes: Number of separate instances of a speaker in parliament during house debates using a term related to Indigeneity. Data from The Linked Parliamentary Data Project, Canadian Hansard Dataset. A “speaking instance” is any time one person begins speaking after another has stopped or at the very start of the debate. I exclude all speaking instances not associated with some main topic of debate (this excludes procedural discussions). Terms searched for references to Indigeneity include “Indigenous”, “Aboriginal”, “First Nations”, “Indian”, “Native American”, “Inuit”, “Eskimo”, “Métis”, “Metis”, and “half-breed”. For the word “Indian,” I exclude all instances of a reference to India in the same speech.

Figure 2: Percent of All Separate Debates Where an Indigenous Topic was the Main or Sub-Issue



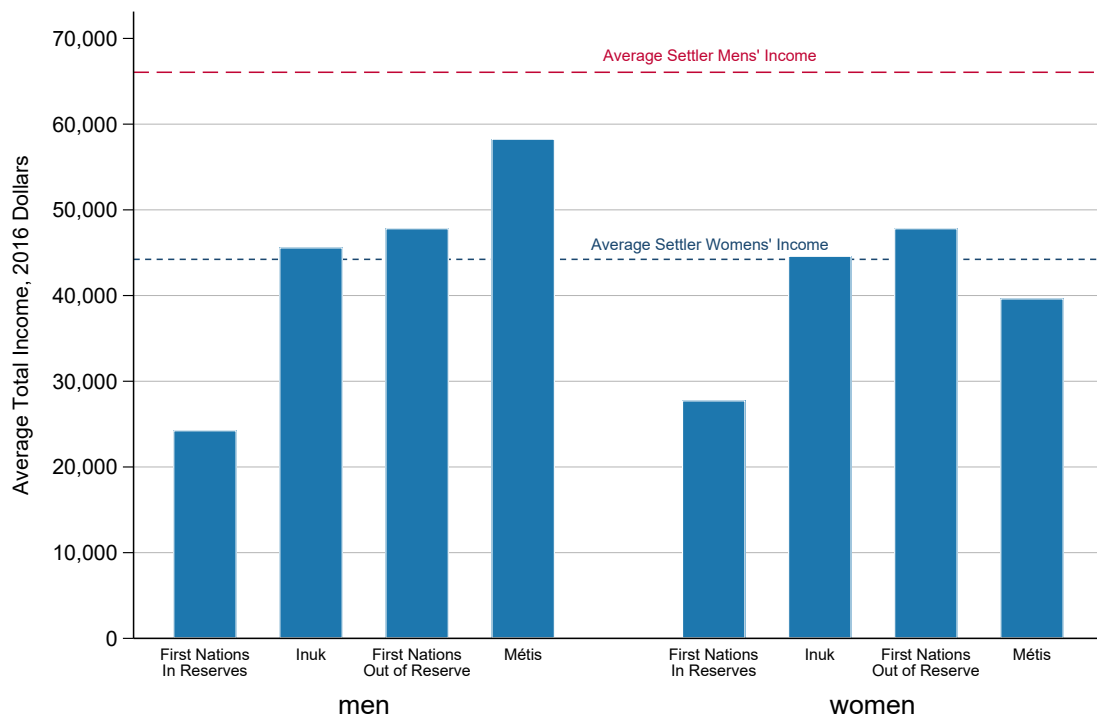
Notes: Percent of separate instances of a debate where an Indigenous topic was the main or sub-issue of all topics debated. Data from The Linked Parliamentary Data Project, Canadian Hansard Dataset. Terms searched for references to Indigeneity include “Indigenous”, “Aboriginal”, “First Nations”, “Indian”, “Native American”, “Inuit”, “Eskimo”, “Métis”, “Metis”, and “half-breed”. For the word “Indian,” I exclude all instances of a reference to India in the same topic.

Figure 3: Papers Published in the CPP by Topic as of June 2023



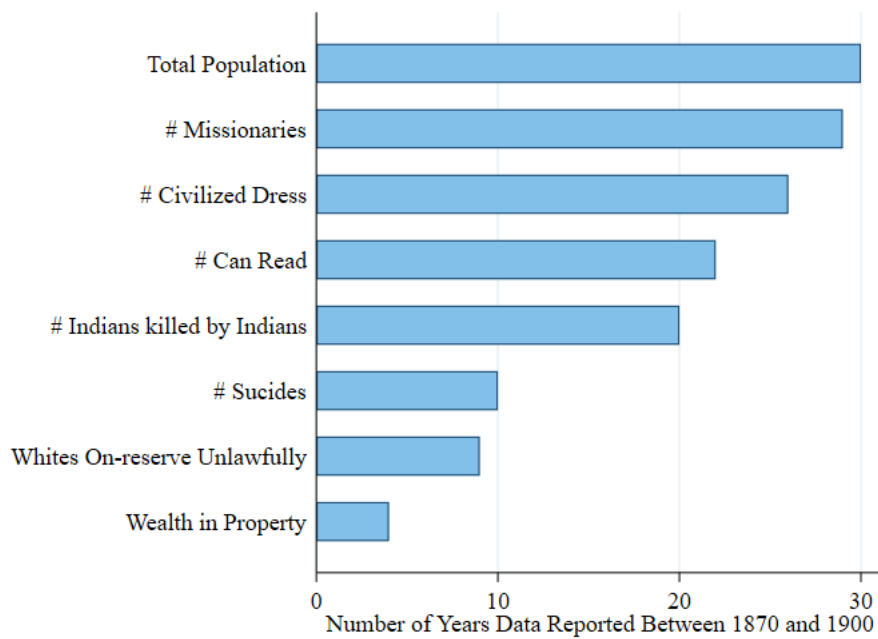
Notes: The bars are the cumulative sum of papers by topic. Author's calculations. 36 articles were published in total.

Figure 4: Average Total Individual Income of those Between 25 and 64 by Indigenous Identity and Sex in the 2016 Census



Notes: Authors calculation from the 2016 Census. Estimates are based on all values for total individual income, including non-positive values. Averages for men: settler - \$66,053, First Nations outside of reserves - \$47,860, First Nations in reserves - \$24,289, Métis - \$58,307, Inuk - \$45,627. Averages for women: settler - \$, First Nations outside of reserves - \$35,614, First Nations in reserves - \$27,776, Métis - \$39,677, Inuk - \$44,646.

Figure 5: The Number of Times a Statistic Was Reported in the Annual Reports to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs



Notes: Selected variables from the United States Annual Reports to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1870 through 1900. The number of years a statistic is reported at the statistical unit of an Indian agency. Regardless of the variables selected, the first three are the most commonly collected.

TABLES

Table 1: Articles Published in *Canadian Public Policy* Since 1975 to June 2023 by Topic and Population Focus

Citation	Topic	Methodology	Population Focus
Reeves and Frideres (1981)	migration	mixed	First Nations
Long et al. (1982)	self-government	qualitative	First Nations
Flanagan (1983)	rights	qualitative	First Nations
Bone and Green (1983)	housing	quantitative	Métis
Tennant et al. (1984)	self-government	qualitative	First Nations
Abele and Dickerson (1985)	self-government	quantitative	Northern Nations
Dacks (1986)	self-government	qualitative	Northern Nations
Asch (1989)	rights	theoretical	First Nations
Stabler and Howe (1990)	economic change	mixed	Northern Nations
Taylor-Henley and Hudson (1992)	self-government	qualitative	First Nations
Gardner (1994)	labour markets	mixed	Northern Nations
Drost (1994)	labour markets	quantitative	All grouped
Avio (1994)	rights	qualitative	all grouped
Samuelson (1995)	criminal justice	mixed	all grouped
De Silva (1999)	labour markets	quantitative	all grouped
Dacks (2002)	rights	qualitative	First Nations
Key and Metcalf (2004)	rights	theoretical	all grouped
Walters et al. (2004)	education	quantitative	all grouped
Alcantara (2009)	self-government	qualitative	First Nations
Cooke and McWhirter (2011)	research methods	qualitative	all grouped
Pendakur and Pendakur (2011)	labour markets	quantitative	all distinguished
Belanger and Williams (2012)	casinos	mixed	First Nations
Feir (2013)	labour markets	quantitative	all distinguished
Ketilson (2014)	finance	qualitative	all distinguished
Lamb (2014)	education	quantitative	all grouped
Battisti et al. (2014)	education	quantitative	all grouped
O’Gorman and Pandey (2015)	education	quantitative	Northern Nations
Feir and Hancock (2016)	research methods	qualitative	all distinguished
McCreary et al. (2016)	labour markets	qualitative	all distinguished
Feir and Thomas (2019)	labour markets	quantitative	Northern Nations
Hu et al. (2019)	education	quantitative	Northern Nations
Wotherspoon and Milne (2020)	education	quantitative	all grouped
Key and Metcalf (2021)	rights	quantitative	all grouped
Mirzaei et al. (2021)	rights	quantitative	First Nations
Pendakur and Pendakur (2021)	self-government	quantitative	all grouped
Maslov and Zhong (2022)	labour markets	quantitative	all distinguished

Notes: Topic and methodology should be taken to be the primary or main topic or methodology. “Northern Nations” refers to the northern Métis, Inuit, and other north of 60 First Nations.

Table 2: Articles Published in Top 400 Economics Journals by Topic and Population Focus Retrieved Through a Google Scholar Search as June 2023

Citation	Topic	Methodology	Population Focus
George and Kuhn (1994)	labour markets	quantitative	all distinguished
Carlos and Lewis (2001)	labour markets/history	quantitative	First Nations
Kuhn and Sweetman (2002)	labour markets	quantitative	all distinguished
Friesen and Krauth (2010)	education	quantitative	all grouped
Carlos and Lewis (2012)	health/history	quantitative	First Nations
Hossain and Lamb (2012)	labour markets	quantitative	off reserve grouped
Lamb (2013)	labour markets	quantitative	all distinguished
Matheson (2015)	health	quantitative	all grouped
Aragón (2015)	self-government/rights	quantitative	Band and non-Band members
Feir (2016)	education/history	quantitative	Status First Nations
Pendakur and Pendakur (2018)	self-government	quantitative	distinguished*
Feir and Akee (2019)	health	quantitative	Status First Nations
Redish (2019)	history	quantitative	all distinguished
Aragón and Kessler (2020)	property/self-government	quantitative	Band and non-Band members
Barber and Jones (2021)	education	quantitative	Indigenous off-reserve
Feir et al. (2021)	labour markets	quantitative	all distinguished
Feir and Auld (2021)	education/health/history	quantitative	Status First Nations
O’Gorman (2021)	health	quantitative	First Nations On-Reserve
Aragón and Kessler (2021)	self-government	quantitative	First Nations
Daley et al. (2021)	health	quantitative	off reserve grouped
Feir et al. (2023)	self-government	quantitative	First Nations

Notes: “Top 400” are taken from REPEC’s simple impact factor ranking as of June 2023 which can be found here: https://ideas.repec.org/top/top_journals_simple.html. Topic and methodology should be taken to be the primary or main topic or methodology. “Northern Nations” refers to the northern Métis, Inuit, and other north of 60 First Nations. *In First Nations/Inuit census subdivisions and First Nations, Inuit and non-indigenous.

Table 3: 2016 Average Individual Income Differences Between Indigenous and Settler Peoples in Canada

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Settler Men are the Reference Group, Average Income of \$66,053					
First Nations	-26355.6*** (1609.772) [60.0%]	-24863.7*** (1517.809) [62.4%]	-16396.4*** (1178.091) [75.2%]	-10059.9*** (790.071) [84.8%]	-6397.3*** (459.461) [90.3%]
Métis	-7745.6*** (1348.740) [88.3%]	-7210.2*** (1270.112) [89.1%]	-3171.6*** (1012.470) [95.2%]	-2842.4*** (830.993) [95.7%]	-3971.8*** (648.348) [94.0%]
Inuit	-20426.5*** (2611.352) [73.4%]	-17566.8*** (2486.335) [90.6%]	-6209.2*** (1996.483) [90.1%]	-4590.0*** (1635.959) [93.1%]	-13661.6*** (1663.214) [79.3%]
Settler Women are the Reference Group, Average Income \$44,225					
First Nations	-10990.2*** (581.245) [75.1%]	-10761.1*** (559.062) [75.7%]	-5450.6*** (429.693) [87.7%]	-3388.4*** (324.124) [92.3%]	-2026.3*** (275.562) [95.4%]
Métis	-4547.1*** (427.132) [89.7%]	-4402.4*** (420.210) [90.0%]	-2123.7*** (376.671) [95.2%]	-1780.6*** (308.918) [96.0%]	-1602.1*** (221.811) [96.4%]
Inuit	421.9 (2268.749) [100.9%]	1056.9 (2240.986) [102.4%]	10102.7*** (2178.044) [122.8%]	6389.6*** (1682.420) [114.4%]	-7944.3*** (1321.386) [82.0%]
Quadratic in Age		X	X	X	X
Education			X	X	X
Part time, Full time				X	X
Industry Indicators				X	X
Census Subdivision F.E.					X
Men Weighted N	9,258,900	9,258,900	9,258,900	9,258,900	9,258,900
Women Weighted N	9,651,100	9,651,100	9,651,100	9,651,100	9,651,100
Men Adjusted R^2	0.001	0.006	0.015	0.042	0.050
Women Adjusted R^2	0.001	0.012	0.041	0.135	0.143
Men # Clusters	4841	4841	4841	4841	4841
Women # Clusters	4835	4835	4835	4835	4835

Notes: Estimates come from the 2016 restricted-use Census datafiles. The outcome variable is total individual income, including non-positive values. Coefficients from a linear regression reported first, the standard errors clustered at the census subdivision in parenthesis second, followed by the percent of reference groups' average total income in square brackets third.

Table 4: 2016 Average Individual Income Differences Between First Nations Peoples In and Outside of Reserve Jurisdictions

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
First Nations Men Off-Reserve are the Reference Group, Average Income \$47,860					
Reserve Jurisdiction	-23570.7*** (1465.994) [50.8%]	-23627.3*** (1449.787) [50.6%]	-20286.9*** (1347.271) [57.6%]	-16947.9*** (903.853) [64.6%]	-16368.7*** (681.767) [65.8%]
First Nations Women Off-Reserve are the Reference Group, Average Income \$35,614					
Reserve Jurisdiction	-7837.9*** (674.061) [78.0%]	-7842.1*** (675.200) [78.0%]	-5006.6*** (616.981) [85.9%]	-6955.7*** (449.164) [80.4%]	-6919.7*** (320.271) [80.6%]
Quadratic in Age		X	X	X	X
Education			X	X	X
Part time, Full time				X	X
Industry Indicators				X	X
Census Division F.E.					X
Men Weighted N	213150	213150	213150	213150	213150
Women Weighted N	245,500	245,500	245,500	245,500	245,500
Men Adjusted R^2	0.048	0.061	0.092	0.217	0.240
Women Adjusted R^2	0.013	0.030	0.095	0.277	0.292
Men # Clusters	3038	3038	3038	3038	3038
Women # Clusters	3120	3120	3120	3120	3120

The outcome variable is total individual income, including non-positive values. Coefficients from a linear regression reported first, the standard errors clustered at the census subdivision in parenthesis second, followed by the percent of reference groups' average total income in square brackets third.