



ABORIGINALS IN CONSTRUCTION

Listed in Statistics Canada's 2006 census were 108,425 people with an Aboriginal identity in Québec, 76,995 of whom belonged to 11 recognized nations; most of the others were Métis. Innu (20%), Crees (18%), Mohawks (15%), and Inuit (13%) were the four most populous First Nations, accounting for 66% of the total Aboriginal population in the province.

Since 2004, a process of identifying Aboriginals in the labour force in the construction industry covered by Act R-20 has been underway at the CCQ. New workers are asked to specify their Aboriginal status in the competency certificate application form. In the case of workers already in the industry, specific steps are being taken in Aboriginal communities or directly with the workers. The Cree, Innu, and Inuit nations in particular have been the subject of the first identification measures, and currently 63% of identified Aboriginals are members of these nations.

The information gathered to date has enabled us to build a useful database on Aboriginal workers active¹ in construction, even though it is impossible today to know with certainty the scope of Aboriginal presence in construction. Identification measures are still underway and identifications are being made on a voluntary basis.

This document therefore presents statistical data for Aboriginals identified since 2004. The data deal with different aspects of the situation of Aboriginals in construction, and a parallel is made with non-Aboriginal workers. Given that identification is more advanced among the Cree, Innu, and Inuit nations, the data are coloured by the situation of these workers, who are present mostly on the Baie-James and La Romaine sites.

¹ For statistical purposes, workers are considered "active" when they have worked at least one hour during the year in a construction trade or occupation.

A slight rise in the proportion of entries in 2011

During the period from 2004 to 2011, 1,286 Aboriginals joined the construction industry, or 1.1% of total entries.² The proportion of Aboriginals who joined the industry remained relatively constant from 2005 to 2008, whereas it progressed in ensuing years and was at 1.4% in 2011. The proportion of Aboriginals joining the industry rose for these years, whereas total entries remained relatively stable. The start-up of the La Romaine hydroelectric project in 2009, which is a major source of employment for Aboriginals, probably explains a good part of this increase in entries.

Labour force entries, 2004–11

Year	Aboriginals	Total	Share of Aboriginals (%)
2004	190	15,731	1.2
2005	132	14,081	0.9
2006	100	12,172	0.8
2007	138	13,914	1.0
2008	165	15,805	1.0
2009	176	11,808	1.5
2010	185	14,441	1.3
2011	200	14,573	1.4
Total	1,286	112,525	1.1

Source: CCQ.

The majority of Aboriginals are integrated into the industry as apprentices (57% of entries). Only 8% entered as journeymen, a proportion comparable to the labour force as a whole. The proportion of entries by people working in an occupation is, however, higher among Aboriginals: 35%, compared to 24% for the total labour force.

² Entries are defined as people having worked at least one hour during the year and who had never done so before, which excludes returning workers.

Worker entries by status and holding of a vocational studies diploma, cumulative, 2004–11

	Aboriginals		Total		Proportion of Aboriginals (%)
	Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion	
Status					
Journeyman	100	8%	9,177	8%	1.1
Apprentice	739	57%	76,765	68%	1.0
Occupation	447	35%	26,583	24%	1.7
Total	1,286	100%	112,525	100%	1.1
Apprentices holding a diploma					
With diploma	229	31%	33,373	43%	0.7
Without diploma	510	69%	43,392	57%	1.2
Total	739	100%	76,765	100%	1.0

Source: CCQ.

Among the new Aboriginal apprentices during this period, 31% had a diploma, a lower proportion than total labour-force entries (43%). However, this seven-year average attenuates the fact that the share of Aboriginal graduates more than doubled over the period, from 16% in 2004 to 37% in 2011.

A low proportion of the labour force

There were a total of 1,097 Aboriginals active in construction in 2011, out of a total population of 159,166 workers. Aboriginals thus represented 0.69% of the total labour force. It should be noted that women represent 2.3% of the Aboriginal labour force, whereas they form 1.3% of the non-Aboriginal labour force.

Workers active in construction, 2004–11

Year	Aboriginals	Total	Proportion of Aboriginals (%)
2004	763	128,411	0.59
2005	745	133,395	0.56
2006	657	134,080	0.49
2007	739	138,132	0.53
2008	845	144,991	0.58
2009	961	145,857	0.66
2010	1,008	153,289	0.66
2011	1,097	159,166	0.69

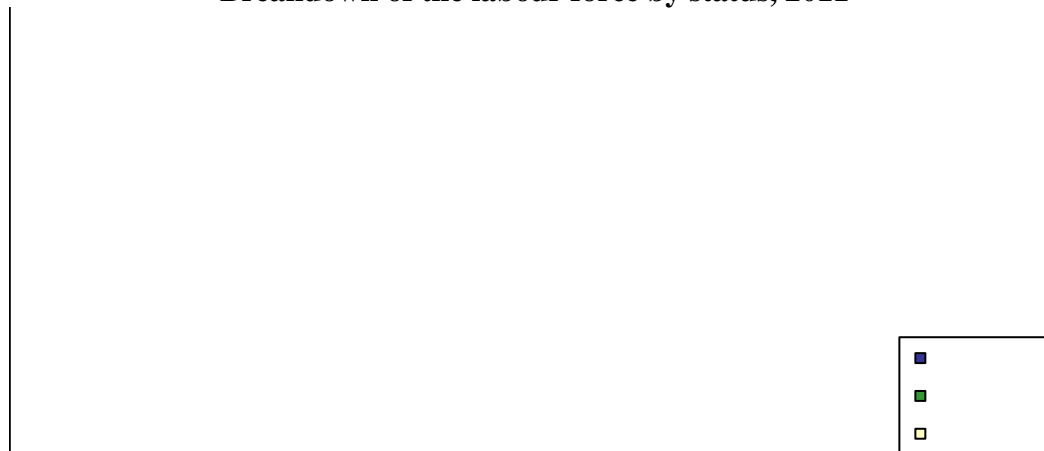
Source: CCQ.

The average age of the Aboriginal labour force is 38 years, which is similar to that of non-Aboriginals (39 years). Among Aboriginal journeymen and occupation workers, the average age

is comparable, whereas the average age of Aboriginal apprentices is higher: 35 years, compared to 31 years among non-Aboriginal apprentices. Among Aboriginal apprentices, 20% are 45 years or older, compared to 13% among non-Aboriginals.

The experience profile of active Aboriginals in 2011 is different from that of non-Aboriginal workers. Aboriginals have an average of six years' activity, compared to twelve years for non-Aboriginals. With regard to status, 48% of Aboriginals are apprentices, compared to 33% among non-Aboriginals. Only 26% of Aboriginals are journeymen, whereas the proportion is 49% for non-Aboriginals. Finally, 48% of Aboriginals have occupation status, compared to 18% among non-Aboriginals. It is possible that the low proportion of Aboriginal journeymen is explained in part by better identification of workers who are joining the industry than of those who are already working in it.

Breakdown of the labour force by status, 2011



Source: CCQ.

Aboriginals	Non-Aboriginals
Apprentice	
Journeyman	
Occupation	

Several preferred trades

Among apprentices, the presence of Aboriginals is proportionally higher in the trades of heavy equipment mechanic (6%) and heavy equipment operator (5%). Among journeymen, the proportion of Aboriginals is highest in the trade of structural steel erector (4%). In term of occupations, Aboriginals are found in the highest proportion as truck drivers (8%) and storemen/clerks (4%).

Number of active Aboriginals by trade and occupation, 2011

Trade/occupation	Aboriginals			Proportion of Aboriginals (%)		
	Apprentice	Journeyman	Total	Apprentice	Journeyman	Total
Bricklayer-mason	3		3	0.1	0.0	0.1
Insulator	3		3	1.1	0.0	0.3
Tile setter	5		5	0.4	0.1	0.3
Carpenter-joiner	307	71	378	1.5	0.3	0.9
Boiler maker	1	1	2	0.8	0.2	0.3
Cement finisher	5		5	0.4	0.0	0.2
Roofer	14	5	19	0.5	0.2	0.4
Electrician	34	27	61	0.6	0.3	0.4
Tinsmith	1	3	4	0.1	0.1	0.1
Reinforcing steel erector	4	4	8	0.6	0.3	0.4
Refrigeration mechanic	2	1	3	0.2	0.0	0.1
Crane operator		4	4	0.0	0.3	0.2
Elevator mechanic		1	1	0.0	0.2	0.1
Millwright	1	6	7	0.6	0.6	0.6
Heavy equipment mechanic	6	3	9	6.1	0.7	1.8
Fire-protection mechanic	1		1	0.3	0.0	0.1
Structural steel erector	6	60	66	1.3	3.7	3.1
Erector mechanic (glazier)	4	2	6	0.4	0.2	0.3
Shovel operator	24	37	61	1.9	0.7	0.9
Heavy equipment operator	58	41	99	4.9	0.7	1.4
Painter	14	6	20	0.5	0.2	0.4
Plasterer	15	1	16	0.9	0.1	0.5
Resilient flooring layer		1	1	0.0	0.1	0.1
Interior systems installer		1	1	0.0	0.1	0.0
Ornamental iron worker		1	1	0.0	0.1	0.1
Pipe fitter	15	6	21	0.5	0.1	0.2
Total, trades	523	283	806	1.0	0.4	0.6
Blaster-driller			4			0.6
Truck driver			76			8.1
Storeman/clerk			1			3.7
Labourer			174			0.8
Line worker			16			0.7
Surveying clerk			2			0.2
Welder			8			0.9
Other occupations			10			1.0
Total, occupations			291			1.0
Total			1,097			0.7

Source: CCQ.

Aboriginals do not work in the same sectors as do non-Aboriginals. They work mainly in the civil engineering and roadwork sector, in which 45% of hours are worked, compared to 23% for non-Aboriginals. It must be said that Aboriginals are concentrated in the regions where this sector is predominant. They work only 27% of their hours in the institutional and commercial sector, whereas this sector accounts for almost half of the hours worked by non-Aboriginals. On the other hand, the proportion of hours worked in the industrial and residential sectors is comparable, particularly for the trades.

Proportion of hours worked by sector, 2011 (%)

Sector	Aboriginals			Non-Aboriginals		
	Trades	Occupations	Total	Trades	Occupations	Total
Civil engineering and roadwork	34	77	45	15	60	23
Industrial	10	6	9	9	7	9
Institutional/commercial	33	11	27	52	25	47
Residential	23	6	19	24	9	21
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: CCQ.

In 2011, 2% of employers had at least one Aboriginal on their payroll, and most of these were large-size companies. Among employers with five or fewer workers, which constitute 82% of all employers, only 1% hire Aboriginals. In contrast, 40% of employers with more than 50 employees hire Aboriginals. That Aboriginals are found in large companies is not surprising, given that they work mainly in the civil engineering and roadwork sector, in which employers are larger companies.

Proportion of employers that hire Aboriginals, 2011

Average number of employees	Employers that hire Aboriginals	All employers	Proportion that hires Aboriginals
5 or fewer employees	152	20,420	1%
6 to 10 employees	79	2,369	3%
11 to 25 employees	135	1,489	9%
26 to 50 employees	74	465	16%
More than 50 employees	89	225	40%
Total	529	24,968	2%

Source: CCQ.

Competency certificates

The specific situation of the Aboriginal work force means that 18% of workers have competency certificate exemptions, compared to 5% of non-Aboriginals. Temporary administrative measures allow for rapid issuing of exemptions, and Aboriginals represent 3% of all holders of exemptions. A proportion of 9% of Aboriginals do not hold either a competency certificate or an exemption. This is explained essentially by the measures in effect from 1987 to 2007 providing for the issuance of simple hiring numbers to Inuit workers.

Proportion of workers by type of certificate, 2011 (%)

Type of certificate	Aboriginals	Non-Aboriginals	Proportion of Aboriginals
Competency certificate	72	94	0.5
Exemption	18	5	2.7
No certificate	9	1	5.9
Total	100	100	0.7

Source: CCQ.

Wages and salaries

In the construction industry, total remuneration depends on the number of hours worked, a figure that varies widely depending on the trade, the status, and the sector. Overall averages of hours worked and wages therefore reflect the fact that a higher proportion of Aboriginals work in the civil engineering and roadwork sector and that they often have the status of apprentice or occupation. In addition, average hours worked are, in general, lower in Québec's resource regions, where Aboriginals are concentrated. To have a fairer comparison of the situation between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals, average annual salary data are presented by most-worked sector and status.

The result is fairly similar average salaries between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals working mainly in the civil engineering and roadwork sector. The most notable gap concerns those who work mainly in the institutional and commercial sector: Aboriginals earn 73% of the salary of non-Aboriginals, even though Aboriginal apprentices in that sector earn a higher wage than do non-Aboriginals. The figures show that fewer Aboriginals earn a journeyman's salary and, in this case, their average hours worked are lower than are those of workers in regions such as Montréal and Québec City, where most of the activity in the sector is based.

In the residential sector, each status taken individually is doing well, even though overall the average salary among Aboriginals represents 79% of that observed among non-Aboriginals, due to a difference in distribution between the statuses. Finally, in the industrial sector, in which the fewest Aboriginals do most of their work, journeymen and apprentices do better than do occupations, with an average salary representing, respectively, 101% and 91% of that of non-Aboriginals.

**Comparison of remuneration between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals,
by most-worked sector, 2011**

Most-worked sector	Apprentice	Journeyman	Occupation	Total
Aboriginals				
Civil engineering and roadwork	\$33,860	\$44,248	\$36,272	\$38,344
Industrial	\$26,950	\$53,187	\$25,632	\$37,172
Institutional/ commercial	\$25,410	\$35,042	\$19,817	\$26,344
Residential	\$16,340	\$27,694	\$21,280	\$18,754
TOTAL	\$24,050	\$41,177	\$32,293	\$30,655
Non-Aboriginals				
Civil engineering and roadwork	\$31,616	\$51,219	\$41,480	\$44,477
Industrial	\$29,687	\$52,859	\$36,146	\$45,714
Institutional/ commercial	\$24,892	\$45,930	\$24,952	\$36,215
Residential	\$18,483	\$30,590	\$19,079	\$23,784
TOTAL	\$23,034	\$43,905	\$33,516	\$35,251
Ratio Aboriginals/non-Aboriginals				
Civil engineering and roadwork	107%	86%	87%	86%
Industrial	91%	101%	71%	81%
Institutional/commercial	102%	76%	79%	73%
Residential	88%	91%	112%	79%
TOTAL	104%	94%	96%	87%

Source: CCQ.

Conclusion

This document gives an overall picture of the Aboriginal presence in the construction industry in Québec. Although the exact number of Aboriginals is not yet known, the data available to date nevertheless enable us to discern certain specific features in comparison to non-Aboriginals. The identification process is continuing and should, when completed, enable us to form a description of the different nations that form the Aboriginal population. Currently, the Cree and Innu nations are the best represented, composing more than half of all Aboriginals identified, whereas they represent a little less than 40% of Aboriginals in Québec.