

**MENDING FENCES:  
INCREASING ABORIGINAL REPRESENTATION IN CANADA**

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## Introduction

For multicultural, multinational countries, the representation of minority interests within a state's legislative body is crucial to ensure the legitimacy of these institutions. Around the world, there are few countries where Indigenous peoples represent a majority of the population, either nationally or sub-nationally<sup>1</sup>. Given their historical experiences of oppression and marginalization, it is of significant concern that these interests be effectively represented within the institutions that once (or still, in some cases) oppressed them. While many authors have explored Indigenous representation within legislative bodies, much of this work has not been recent.<sup>2</sup> Given the nature of parliamentary democratic systems of government, and the fact that they often represent a minority of the population, Indigenous peoples tend to be disproportionately elected to institutions of government.

There are several ways that individuals can participate in the electoral politics of a country; such as voters or as candidates for political parties. We would expect that with universal suffrage, people would involve themselves in such political processes at the same rate as their proportion of the population. In countries where they do not form the majority population however, Indigenous peoples tend to have lower than average political participation rates. In particular, Indigenous peoples tend to have lower than average voter turnout rates and fewer elected representatives than their proportion of the populations might suggest (Guerin, 2003: 1; Schouls, 1996: 730). What accounts for these lower levels of participation vis-à-vis majority populations? In seeking to answer the problem presented above, the following research is unique in that no attempts have been made either at either the national or sub-national level to inquire into the reasons for Indigenous under-representation in Canada. The case of Canada's Aboriginal<sup>3</sup> population (a group traditionally underrepresented in both federal and provincial legislatures) will be examined within two specific contexts.

This paper examines the number of Aboriginal candidates who sought election in the 2004 and 2006 federal general elections. The focus of this study is limited to these two elections for several reasons, stemming from the nature of data maintained by political parties in Canada. Traditional approaches to the under-representation of particular groups often include analyzing what percentage of card-carrying members, or who participate in local constituency associations or who run as candidate in elections.<sup>4</sup> While this provides crucial insight for those who study the under representation of women, parties do not keep similar data with respect to their respective Aboriginal participation. The focus on elections federally since 2004 is because that is when data first became available for this research, as parties prior to this date did not keep records. During the time span of this study (2004 to 2006) only two elections occurred within Canada, both of which are discussed in this research. This lack of data kept by parties prior to 2004

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<sup>1</sup> In the countries of Greenland and Papua New Guinea for example, Indigenous peoples form the majority of the population nationally. Similarly, Indigenous peoples form the majority of the population subnationally in the territory of Nunavut (Canada), and the states of Chiapas and Oaxaca (Mexico).

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Tim Schouls's "Aboriginal peoples and electoral reform in Canada: differentiated representation versus voter equality" in *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 29, 1996; the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples' *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, Vol. 1. Part 1. Chapter 5, 1996; and Augie Fleras' contribution "Aboriginal Electoral Districts for Canada: Lessons from New Zealand". *Aboriginal Peoples and Electoral Reform in Canada* in Robert Milen (Ed.) Volume 9 of the Research Studies of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, 1991.

<sup>3</sup> The terms "Aboriginal" and "Aboriginal peoples" are used interchangeably to identify First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, consistent with the definition included in section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

<sup>4</sup> Traditional studies of women's participation in Canadian politics often include such analyses. See for example O'Neill (2002) and Young (2002).

provides challenges to the study of Aboriginal under representation, which leads to the narrow focus of this research.

The research in this study reveals that Aboriginal peoples do not run as candidates in proportion to their population, and are under-represented in the candidate pool. Six related hypotheses are examined in this research. The first is that Aboriginal candidates receive less funding than non-Aboriginal candidates and as a result are unsuccessful in seeking election. The second is that political parties endorse Aboriginal candidates in places deemed to be non-winnable ridings based on the electoral history of that district. The third hypothesis suggests that Aboriginal peoples will run more at local levels of government (either provincial or municipal) because it is less of a personal sacrifice (closer to family, less traveling, less time consuming) than running for federal government. In testing this hypothesis, data gathered from the 2005 provincial election in British Columbia is used. The fourth hypothesis is the theory that Aboriginal peoples do not see any level of the Canadian government as legitimate, and therefore will not seek out candidacy in what they deem to be an illegitimate process. The fifth hypothesis is that Aboriginal peoples do not have the appropriate educational or professional background to succeed in conventional Canadian politics. Finally, the sixth hypothesis tests Canada's electoral process itself. It asks whether the single member plurality electoral system prevents Aboriginal peoples from being elected in proportion to their share of the total population. Perhaps analyzing the experiences of Aboriginal candidates at the federal level of government might shed light on the problems of Aboriginal participation in electoral processes.

## **Analysis of Data**

The data collected from the 2004 and 2006 federal general elections and the 2005 British Columbia provincial election were analyzed according to the following series of steps. First, representatives from the Bloc Québécois, Conservative party of Canada, Green party of Canada, Liberal party of Canada, and the NDP were contacted between June 22 – 26, 2004 and January 18 – 23, 2006. Each was questioned regarding its endorsement of Aboriginal candidates. Second, representatives from the BC Liberal party, Green party of BC, and the BC NDP were contacted on May 16, 2005. Each was questioned regarding its endorsement of Aboriginal candidates during the 2005 British Columbia provincial election. Based on this information obtained, the characteristics of Aboriginal candidates endorsed in the 2004 and 2006 federal general elections were determined with respect to: (1) aggregate numbers; (2) province of representation; and (3) rate of success. Based on the information obtained in the second step, the characteristics of Aboriginal candidates endorsed in the 2005 British Columbia provincial election were determined with respect to aggregate numbers and rate of success only.

## **Aboriginal Candidacy**

This section analyzes the datasets from the 2004 and 2006 federal elections. It specifically looks at the rates of success for Aboriginal candidates, and tests several hypotheses related to their success: (1) Level of campaign funding; (2) Sacrificial lamb hypothesis; (3) Propensity to run at more local levels of government; (4) Illegitimacy of the elected forum; (5) Insufficient qualifications; and (6) Electoral process.

### ***2004 Federal Election***

As a recent study showed, twenty-seven candidates who are self-identified as Aboriginal persons ran for the five political parties in twenty-five ridings during the 2004 general election. Table 1 shows the Aboriginal candidates in the electoral districts where they sought election. Of the 25 ridings, 23 had only one Aboriginal candidate, one had two Aboriginal candidates (Athabasca), and Churchill River had three Aboriginal candidates (including Rick Laliberte, who ran as an independent and is therefore not included in the tables). The candidates identified in bold and italics were elected.

**Table 1: Aboriginal Candidates by Electoral District & Political Party – 2004 General Election**

Electoral district	Liberal	NDP	Green	Conservative	BQ
Kelowna		Starleigh Grass			
Skeena–Bulkley Valley	Miles Richardson				
Athabasca		Robert Cree	Ian Hopfe		
Calgary West		Tim Patterson			
Macleod	Chris Shade				
Westlock–St. Paul	Joe Dion				
Wild Rose		Jeff Horvath			
Churchill River	Al Ducharme	Earl Cook			
Saskatoon–Wanuskewin		Priscilla Settee			
Yorkton–Melville	Ted Quewezance				
Churchill	Ron Evans				
Winnipeg North				Kris Stevenson	
Winnipeg South				Rod Bruinooge	
Brant			Helen-Anne Embry		
Hamilton Centre				Leon O'Connor	
Kenora			Carl Chaboyer		
Middlesex–Kent–Lambton		Kevin Blake			
Niagara West–Glanbrook		Dave Heatley			
Simcoe North	<i>Paul DeVillers</i>				
Louis-Saint-Laurent					<i>Bernard Cleary</i>
Pontiac	<i>David Smith</i>				
Miramichi			Garry Sanipass		
Labrador	<i>Lawrence O'Brien**</i>				
Western Arctic	<i>Ethel Blondin-Andrew</i>				
Nunavut	<i>Nancy Karetak-Lindell</i>				

\*Candidates identified in bold and italics were elected.

\*\*Candidate subsequently replaced by Todd Russell elected in by-election held May 24, 2005

Of the 27 Aboriginal candidates who sought election for the five leading parties, only six were successful: five represented the Liberals, while one represented the BQ. Voters did not elect Aboriginal candidates from the other three parties (Smith 2005: 17-22).

Table 2 highlights the number of Aboriginal candidates compared to the total number of candidates for the five parties, by province/territory. It also suggests what might be considered an

ideal number of Aboriginal candidates, based on the Aboriginal population in that province or territory. In only 4 of the 13 provinces and territories did the number of Aboriginal candidates closely resemble the Aboriginal proportion of the population.

**Table 2: Aboriginal Candidates by Province/Territory - 2004 General Election**

Province	Total # of Candidates	# of Aboriginal Candidates	Ideal # of Candidates	% of Aboriginal Candidates	% of Aboriginal Population
BC	144	2	6	1.39	4.43
AB	112	6	6	5.36	5.35
SK	56	4	8	7.14	13.61
MB	56	3	8	5.36	13.64
ON	424	5	7	1.18	1.68
QC	375	2	4	0.53	1.12
NB	40	1	1	2.50	2.38
NL	28	1	1	3.57	3.73
NS	44	0	1	0	1.90
PE	16	0	1	0	1.01
NT	4	1	2	25	50.96
NU	4	1	3	25	85.22
YT	4	1	1	25	23.28
<b>Total</b>	<b>1307</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>2.07</b>	<b>3.30</b>

Voters did not elect any Aboriginal candidates in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island or Yukon. This is of particular concern given the very high proportion of Aboriginal people in Yukon, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and the significant proportion of Aboriginal people in Alberta and British Columbia (Smith 2005: 17-22).

As this study showed, six of 27 Aboriginal candidates for the five parties were elected, representing only 1.9 per cent of the seats in the House of Commons – shy of the 3.3 per cent Aboriginal share of the Canadian population. This number would remain unchanged until late December 2004. On May 24, 2005, electors in the district of Newfoundland and Labrador found themselves returning to the polling stations as a result of the passing of Liberal member of Parliament Lawrence D. O'Brien in December 2004. With the election of Todd Russell, the only self-identified Aboriginal candidate, to the House of Commons the balance of Aboriginal members remained the same as prior to the passing of Lawrence O'Brien (Smith 2005: 17-22).

### ***2006 Federal Election***

The Liberal minority government elected in 2004 fell in late 2005, forcing another election in 2006. Thirty candidates who self-identified as being Aboriginal persons ran for the five political parties in twenty three ridings. Like the 2004 federal election, the BQ, Conservatives, Greens, Liberals and NDP endorsed a total of 1,307 candidates in 308 electoral districts. Of their 75 candidates, the BQ endorsed one Aboriginal candidate (1.33%) (Official

with Bloc Quebecois, personal communication, January 20, 2006. The Conservatives endorsed five self-identified Aboriginal candidates of their total 308 (1.62%) (Official with Conservative party of Canada, personal communication, January 19, 2006). The Greens endorsed three Aboriginal candidates out of 308 (0.97%) (Official with Green party of Canada, personal communication, January 18, 2006). The NDP had the same number of Aboriginal candidates as the Conservatives, with five of their 308 candidates (1.62%) self-identifying (Official with New Democratic party, personal communication, January 18, 2006). Again, the Liberals had the largest number of Aboriginal candidates with 16 of their total 308 (5.19%) (Liberal party of Canada, 2006). Table 3 briefly summarizes the differences between the 2004 and 2006 federal general elections.

**Table 3: Number of Aboriginal Candidates in 2004 and 2006 General Elections**

<b>Political Party</b>	<b>BQ</b>	<b>Conservatives</b>	<b>Greens</b>	<b>Liberals</b>	<b>NDP</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2004</b>	1	3	4	11	8	27
<b>2006</b>	1	5	3	16	5	30
<b>Difference</b>	-	+2	-1	+5	-3	+3

Table 4 shows the electoral districts in which Aboriginal candidates received endorsement, and also reflects who of the 30 candidates were successful.

**Table 4: Aboriginal Candidates by Electoral District and Political Party – 2006 General Election**

Electoral District	Liberal	NDP	Green	Conservative	BQ
Burnaby-New Westminster				Marc Dalton	
Cariboo-Prince George		Alfred Trudeau			
Pitt Meadows-Maple Ridge-Mission	Keith Henry				
Prince George-Peace River	Nathan Bauder				
Vancouver East	Dave Haggard				
Edmonton-Spruce Grove	Brad Enge				
Fort McMurray-Athabasca	Mel Buffalo		Ian Hopfe		
Peace River	Tanya Kappo				
Battlefords-Lloydminster	Dominic Laplante				
Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River	<b><i>Gary Merasty</i></b>	Anita Jackson			
Brandon-Souris			Brad Bird		
Churchill	<b><i>Tina Keeper</i></b>				
Portage-Lisgar	Garry McLean				
Winnipeg Centre	Ray St. Germain				
Winnipeg South				<b><i>Rod Bruinooge</i></b>	
Eglinton-Lawrence		Mauganne Mooney			
Lambton-Middlesex-Kent		Kevin Blake			
Niagara West-Glanbrook		Dave Heatley			
Louis-Saint-Laurent	Isa Gros-Louis				Bernard Cleary
Pontiac	David Smith				
Labrador	<b><i>Todd Russell</i></b>			Joe Goudie	
Western Arctic	Ethel Blondin-Andrew			Rick Edjericon	
Nunavut	<b><i>Nancy Karetak-Lindell</i></b>		Feliks Kappi	David Aglukark	

\*Candidates identified in bold and italics were elected.



Of the 30 Aboriginal candidates who sought election for the five leading parties, only five were successful: four received endorsement from the Liberals and one received endorsement from the Conservatives.

Table 5 highlights the number of Aboriginal candidates compared to the total number of candidates for the five parties, by province/territory. It also indicates what might be considered the ideal number of Aboriginal candidates, based on the Aboriginal population in that province or territory. In only 6 of the 13 provinces and territories did the number of Aboriginal candidates closely resemble the Aboriginal proportion of the population. These are British Columbia, Alberta, Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. Among the areas showing the greatest disparity are Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

**Table 5: Aboriginal Candidates by Province/Territory - 2006 General Election**

Province	Total # of Candidates	# of Aboriginal Candidates	Ideal # of Candidates	% of Aboriginal Candidates	% of Aboriginal Population
BC	144	5	6	3.47	4.43
AB	112	4	6	3.57	5.35
SK	56	3	8	5.36	13.61
MB	56	5	8	8.93	13.64
ON	424	3	7	0.71	1.68
QC	375	3	4	0.80	1.12
NB	40	0	1	0	2.38
NL	28	2	1	7.14	3.73
NS	44	0	1	0	1.90
PE	16	0	1	0	1.01
NT	4	2	2	50	50.96
NU	4	3	3	75	85.22
YT	4	0	1	0	23.28
<b>Total</b>	<b>1307</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>2.30</b>	<b>3.30</b>

Although five Aboriginal candidates were successful in 2006, 25 were not. The number of Aboriginal members of Parliament has now decreased by one from the six at the dissolution of Parliament. It is also noteworthy that like the case in 2004, voters did not elect any Aboriginal candidates in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. This is of particular concern given the very high proportion of Aboriginal people in these provinces and territories.

### **Hypotheses**

In light of the analysis above, six hypotheses are discussed in turn. These are (1) lack of campaign funding; (2) sacrificial lamb hypothesis; (3) greater propensity to run at more local levels of government; (4) illegitimacy of the elected forum; (5) exceptionalism hypothesis; and

(6) the electoral process.

### *Level of campaign funding*

One hypothesis that attempts to explain why certain groups are under-represented as candidates suggests that these candidates have less access to funds for their campaign than the successful candidates. The following table shows the total amount of contributions received by each candidate in the 2004 federal general election including the percentage of the total contributions each candidate received from both their party and their local riding association.

**Table 6: Contributions Received by Registered Party & Riding Association - 2004 Federal General Election**

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Total Contributions</b>	<b>Total from Party/RA</b>	<b>% from Party/RA</b>
Grass, Starleigh (NDP)	\$12,143	\$12,143	100
Richardson, Miles (Lib)	\$106,545	\$73,238	69
Hopfe, Ian (Green)	\$1,250	\$500	40
Cree, Robert (NDP)	\$6,665	\$5,183	78
Patterson, Tim (NDP)	\$4,040	\$2,700	67
Shade, Chris (Lib)	\$41,685	\$9,533	23
Dion, Joe (Lib)	\$79,813	\$410	1
Horvath, Jeff (NDP)	\$6,145	\$2,325	38
Evans, Ron (Lib)	\$85,504	\$55,235	65
Stevenson, Kris (Conserv)	\$18,860	\$2,179	12
Bruinooge, Rod (Conserv)	\$76,623	\$17,444	23
Sanipass, Garry (Green)	\$2,544	\$39	2
O'Brien, Lawrence (Lib)	\$57,667	\$10,419	18
Blondin-Andrew, Ethel (Lib)	\$91,510	\$39,000	43
Karetak-Lindell, Nancy (Lib)	\$63,067	\$50,800	81
Embry, Helen-Anne (Green)	\$2,289	\$400	17
O'Connor, Leon (Conserv)	\$39,120	\$21,580	55
Heatley, Dave (NDP)	\$9,220	\$4,025	44
Chaboyer, Carl (Green)	\$1,815	\$43	2
Blake, Kevin (NDP)	\$16,195	\$4,400	27
DeVillers, Paul (Lib)	\$74,105	\$48,200	65
Cleary, Bernard (BQ)	\$30,285	\$28,985	96
Smith, David (Lib)	\$91,306	\$82,415	90
Ducharme, Al (Lib)	\$66,223	\$16,800	25
Cook, Earl (NDP)	\$5,730	\$6,373	100
Settee, Priscilla (NDP)	\$42,865	\$42,865	100
Quewezance, Ted (Lib)	\$39,457	\$11,287	29

**Source: Elections Canada [http://www.elections.ca/scripts/webpep/fin/summary\\_report.aspx](http://www.elections.ca/scripts/webpep/fin/summary_report.aspx)  
Accessed March 31, 2006.**

Based on the information in Table 6, all of the Aboriginal candidates received some funding from their party and local riding association. The rates of contribution by each of the parties and their related constituency associations to their Aboriginal candidate's campaigns appears to be consistent with their rate of funding to non-Aboriginal candidate's campaigns (Elections Canada, 2006: 1).

In consideration of the aforementioned data, it appears that the Conservatives and the Liberals offer their Aboriginal candidates comparable levels of funding, both averaging over \$25,000 per candidate. With respect to either of these two parties, one cannot immediately draw the conclusion that their Aboriginal candidates are "token" candidates, endorsed in a district with little money to fund their campaign. Nor can one make this generalization about Aboriginal candidates endorsed by the NDP, although they do receive on average significantly less funding than the two major parties. Moreover, with respect to the amount of funding Aboriginal candidates endorsed by the Greens receive, it is unknown whether their average of only funding 12 per cent of their Aboriginal candidates' campaigns is attributable to "tokenism" or to the fact that they have significantly less money available to them than the other parties. It is possible that, with the introduction of electoral and party financing legislation in 2001, the average amount contributed by parties and their riding associations to their candidates (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) will level out over time.

An alternate method of examining the role money plays in the rate of Aboriginal election is to examine the expenses Aboriginal candidates have relative to the winning candidate. In the six electoral districts where Aboriginal candidates were successful federally in 2004, four spent more than their next closest competitor. In the remaining two districts, the successful Aboriginal candidates spent less money on their campaign yet still won their respective contests.

**Table 7: 2004 Federal General Election Expenses**

Candidate	Election Expenses				Difference
	< \$10,000	\$10,001-\$25,000	\$25,001-\$50,000	\$50,001>	
Grass, Starleigh (NDP)		\$11,556			-\$47,185
Richardson, Miles (Lib)				\$102,743	+\$25,829
Hopfe, Ian (Green)	\$1,250				-\$78,776
Cree, Robert (NDP)	\$6,654				-\$83,606
Patterson, Tim (NDP)	\$3,076				-\$64,645
Shade, Chris (Lib)			\$41,698		-\$3,579
Dion, Joe (Lib)				\$79,419	+\$54,165
Horvath, Jeff (NDP)	\$6,138				-\$36,652
Evans, Ron (Lib)				\$84,282	+\$16,250
Stevenson, Kris (Conserv)		\$11,407			-\$39,188
Bruinooge, Rod (Conserv)				\$74,622	+\$3,757
Sanipass, Garry (Green)	\$2,544				-\$29,939
O'Brien, Lawrence (Lib)				\$50,715	+\$19,407
Blondin-Andrew, Ethel (Lib)				\$88,870	+\$19,278
Karetak-Lindell, Nancy (Lib)				\$52,771	+\$1,197
Embry, Helen-Anne (Green)	\$2,289				-\$68,812
O'Connor, Leon (Conserv)			\$27,254		-\$49,039
Heatley, Dave (NDP)		\$9,220			-\$63,300
Chaboyer, Carl (Green)	\$1,815				-\$65,093
Blake, Kevin (NDP)		\$15,673			-\$28,624
DeVillers, Paul (Lib)				\$74,273	-\$2,673
Cleary, Bernard (BQ)			\$30,236		-\$37,182
Smith, David (Lib)				\$90,853	+\$6,603
Ducharme, Al (Lib)				\$66,185	+\$25,492
Cook, Earl (NDP)	\$5,719				-\$18,189
Settee, Priscilla (NDP)			\$38,635		-\$29,082
Quewezance, Ted (Lib)			\$32,520		-\$28,961
Russell, Todd (Lib)*				\$62,063	-\$12,860

\*ByElection – Labrador May 24, 2005

Source: Elections Canada [http://www.elections.ca/scripts/webpep/fin/select\\_election.aspx?entity=1&lang=e](http://www.elections.ca/scripts/webpep/fin/select_election.aspx?entity=1&lang=e)

Accessed December 13, 2005

In the remaining 19 electoral districts where Aboriginal candidates were unsuccessful, five candidates had more funding than the successful candidate. The remaining 16 candidates had less funding than the successful candidates in their respective districts. Therefore, given this information, it cannot be argued with any certainty that the lack of success of particular

Aboriginal candidates is related solely to inadequate campaign funding, although the funding mechanisms of the endorsing party may play a role in the success of the candidate. Furthermore, with the introduction of changes to campaign and party financing that came into force for the 2006 general election, data may again differ significantly given the restrictions introduced with this legislation.

### ***Sacrificial lamb hypothesis***

Another hypothesis that attempts to explain the numeric under-representation of Aboriginal peoples is that they seek election in 'unwinnable' ridings based on the likelihood of their party's winning that seat based on its electoral history. As shown in Table 8, in 7 of 25 electoral districts the Aboriginal candidate endorsed in the 2004 federal general election had a strong possibility of success based on the electoral history of that district. This accounts for 8 of the 27 Aboriginal candidates endorsed in this election. For the remaining 19 candidates in the remaining 18 electoral districts, it is unlikely that the Aboriginal candidate would have been successful based solely on the history of the parties who were successful in those districts between 1993 and 2000.

**Table 8: Electoral History for Districts with Aboriginal Candidates in 2004<sup>5</sup>**

<b>Electoral District</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2004</b>
Kelowna	Reform	Reform	CA	CPC
Skeena-Bulkley Valley	Reform	Reform	CA	NDP
Athabasca	Reform	Reform	CA	CPC
Calgary West	Reform	Reform	CA	CPC
Macleod	Reform	Reform	CA	CPC
Westlock-St. Paul	Reform	Reform	CA	CPC
Wild Rose	Reform	Reform	CA	CPC
Churchill River	NDP	NDP*	Liberal*	CPC
Saskatoon-Wanuskewin	Reform	Reform	CA	CPC
Yorkton-Melville	Reform	Reform	CA	CPC
Churchill	Liberal*	NDP	NDP	NDP
Winnipeg North	Liberal	NDP	NDP	NDP
Winnipeg South	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal
Brant	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal
Hamilton Centre	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	NDP
Kenora	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal
Middlesex-Kent-Lambton	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal
Niagara West-Glanbrook	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	CPC
Simcoe North	Liberal*	Liberal*	Liberal*	Liberal*
Louis-Saint-Laurent	BQ	BQ	BQ	BQ*
Pontiac	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal*
Miramichi	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal
Labrador	Liberal	Liberal*	Liberal*	Liberal*
Western Arctic	Liberal*	Liberal*	Liberal*	Liberal*
Nunavut	N/A	Liberal*	Liberal*	Liberal*

\* MP elected in this electoral district self-identified as Aboriginal

Source: Parliament of Canada, "History of Federal Ridings Since 1867"

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/process/house/hfer/hfer.asp?Language=E&Search=R&Source=parlinfo>

Accessed: December 13, 2005

In 2006, 7 of 23 electoral districts could be said to be potentially winnable ridings for their respective Aboriginal candidates. This represents 13 of the 30 Aboriginal candidates endorsed in this election, up five from the 2004 election. Based on the electoral history of the riding, Table 9 shows the electoral history of each district where an Aboriginal candidate received endorsement in 2006, and the ultimate winner for that riding. The seven electoral districts where it was plausible for the Aboriginal candidate to win were Desnethé–Missinippi–Churchill River, Churchill, Louis–Saint–Laurent, Pontiac, Labrador, Western Arctic and Nunavut.

<sup>5</sup> As used in this table, the following names of political parties were abbreviated: Canadian Alliance (CA), Conservative party of Canada (CPC), and the New Democratic party of Canada (NDP).

**Table 9: Electoral History for Districts with Aboriginal candidates in 2006<sup>6</sup>**

<b>Electoral District</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>
Burnaby-New Westminster	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	NDP
Cariboo-Prince George	Reform	Reform	CA	CPC	CPC
Pitt Meadows-Maple Ridge-Mission	Reform	Reform	CA	CPC	CPC
Prince George-Peace River	Reform	Reform	CA	CPC	CPC
Vancouver East	Liberal	NDP	NDP	NDP	NDP
Edmonton-Spruce Grove	Reform	Reform	CA	CPC	CPC
Fort McMurray-Athabasca	Reform	Reform	CA	CPC	CPC
Peace River	Reform	Reform	CA	CPC	CPC
Battlefords-Lloydminster	Reform	Reform	CA	CPC	CPC
Desnethe-Missinippi-Churchill River	NDP	NDP*	Liberal*	CPC	Liberal*
Brandon-Souris	Liberal	PC	PC	CPC	CPC
Churchill	Liberal*	NDP	NDP	NDP	Liberal*
Portage-Lisgar	Reform	Reform	CA	CPC	CPC
Winnipeg Centre	Liberal	NDP	NDP	NDP	NDP
Winnipeg South	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	CPC*
Eglinton-Lawrence	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal
Lambton-Middlesex-Kent	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	CPC
Niagara West-Glanbrook	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	CPC	CPC
Louis-Saint-Laurent	BQ	BQ	BQ	BQ*	CPC
Pontiac	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal*	CPC
Labrador	Liberal	Liberal*	Liberal*	Liberal*	Liberal*
Western Arctic	Liberal*	Liberal*	Liberal*	Liberal*	NDP
Nunavut	N/A	Liberal*	Liberal*	Liberal*	Liberal*

\* MP elected in this electoral district self-identified as Aboriginal

Source: Parliament of Canada, "History of Federal Ridings Since 1867"

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/process/house/hfer/hfer.asp?Language=E&Search=R&Source=parlinfo>

Accessed: December 13, 2005

Of the 13 candidates who sought election in those seven districts, four were successful. In the remaining 16 electoral districts, the majority were won in accordance with that district's electoral history. This represents the remaining 12 of 19 Aboriginal Liberal candidates, 4 of 5 Aboriginal NDP candidates, 2 of 3 Aboriginal Green party candidates, and 2 of 5 Aboriginal Conservative candidates.

Given the results of these two elections, it is likely that the electoral history of a district plays a significant factor in the outcome of that particular election. A definitive conclusion cannot be drawn from the limited data presented in this section, however it appears that Aboriginal candidates are more likely to win in what can be considered "winnable" ridings. Indeed, Aboriginal candidates are being endorsed in such districts. It cannot be concluded that Aboriginal candidates are being endorsed in districts where they have no chance of winning, or termed differently, acting as a "sacrificial lamb".

<sup>6</sup> As used in this table, the following names of political parties were abbreviated: Canadian Alliance (CA), Conservative party of Canada (CPC), the New Democratic party of Canada (NDP), and the Progressive Conservatives (PC).

### *Propensity to run at more local levels of government*

Another hypothesis presented to explain the disproportional number of particular groups in a federal legislature vis-à-vis their proportion of the population is Aboriginal peoples may choose not to run in federal politics because they are either more interested in local politics and/or they view national politics as too much of a personal sacrifice. This hypothesis suggests that members of these groups will instead seek out election at a more local level of government (provincial or municipal) as it is deemed to be less of a personal sacrifice (for example, having to commute or leave friends and family). To test this hypothesis, I determined the number of Aboriginal candidates who received endorsement from the BC Liberals and the BC NDP in the 2005 provincial election in British Columbia. I also examined the number of Aboriginal peoples currently elected to the local level in eight municipalities. These eight municipalities were chosen based on the eight federal electoral districts identified by the Liberal party's Aboriginal Peoples' Commission as having Aboriginal populations in excess of 10,000 or more. The municipalities examined are Chibougamou, Kenora, Churchill, La Ronge, Wood Buffalo, Prince Rupert, Yellowknife and Iqaluit.

### *2005 British Columbia Provincial Election*

During the 2005 provincial election held on May 17, 2005, a total of 237 candidates received endorsement by the BC Liberals, BC NDP, and the BC Greens. Table 10 details the electoral districts in which Aboriginal candidates (endorsed by the Liberals, NDP, or Green party) ran.

**Table 10: Aboriginal Candidates by Electoral District and Political Party – 2005 Provincial Election**

<b>Electoral District</b>	<b>BC Liberals</b>	<b>BC N.D.P</b>	<b>BC Greens</b>
Cariboo South			Ed Sharkey
Peace River North			Clarence G. Apsassin
Saanich North & the Islands		Christine Hunt	
Victoria – Beacon Hill		Carole James	

\* Candidates identified in bold and italics were elected.

Table 10 shows that of the 237 candidates who received endorsement by the aforementioned parties, only four were of Aboriginal origin. This represents a mere 1.69 per cent of the total number of candidates, shy of the Aboriginal share of provincial population (4.39%). Both the BC NDP and the BC Greens represented Aboriginal people equally, each with two candidates of their total 79 representing 2.53 per cent of their candidates who declared Aboriginal identities (Official with the British Columbia Liberal party, personal communication, May 16, 2005; Official with the Green party political association of British Columbia, personal communication, May 16, 2005; and Official with the New Democratic party of British Columbia, personal communication, May 16, 2005). Ideally, Aboriginal candidates should number ten (all parties combined), as this would be more proportional to their share of the population. In sum, only one Aboriginal candidate was successful in the 2005 provincial election in British Columbia, Carole James, leader of the BC NDP. Aboriginal peoples now account for 1.27 per cent of the seats in the provincial legislature, still disproportionate to their share of the provincial population.



## Aboriginal Representatives at the Municipal Level

The second method of testing this hypothesis required examining the composition of municipal governments to determine whether Aboriginal peoples tend to seek election there more than at the federal level. Of the eight municipalities studied, three have self-identified Aboriginal representatives, as outlined in Table 11. Aboriginal people account for 6 of 63 elected officials, representing 9.52 per cent of the total number of representatives.

**Table 11: Aboriginal Representatives at the Municipal Level – 2005**

Electoral District	Municipality	Municipal Government		Aboriginal Identity
<b>Nunavik-Eeyou</b>	Chibougamau	One Mayor	Six Councilors	None Aboriginal
<b>Kenora</b>	Kenora	One Mayor	Six Councilors	One Aboriginal Councilor (Colin Wasacase)
<b>Churchill</b>	Churchill	One Mayor	Five Councilors	One Mayor (Michael Spence)
<b>Churchill River</b>	La Ronge	One Mayor	Six Councilors	None Aboriginal
<b>Athabasca</b>	Wood Buffalo	One Mayor	Ten Councilors	None Aboriginal
<b>Skeena-Bulkley Valley</b>	Prince Rupert	One Mayor	Six Councilors	None Aboriginal
<b>Western Arctic</b>	Yellowknife	One Mayor	Eight Councilors	None Aboriginal
<b>Nunavut</b>	Iqaluit	One Mayor	Eight Councilors	Four Aboriginal (Elisapee Sheutiapik – Mayor; Annie Gordon; Simanuk Kilabuk; Simon Nattaq)

Source: Various Municipal Websites, see note.<sup>7</sup>

What appears to be troubling is that no self-identified Aboriginal representatives are currently elected to municipal councils in the remaining five municipalities. This is particularly concerning given the significant number of urban Aboriginals<sup>8</sup>, and the significant Aboriginal

<sup>7</sup> The profiles of mayors and councilors elected in these municipalities were accessed online December 27, 2005 at the following URLs: <http://www.ville.chibougamau.qc.ca/site.asp?page=element&nIDElement=384>  
[http://www.woodbuffalo.ab.ca/municipal\\_government/mayor+regional\\_council/regional\\_council\\_profiles.asp?subnav=15](http://www.woodbuffalo.ab.ca/municipal_government/mayor+regional_council/regional_council_profiles.asp?subnav=15)  
[http://www.townofchurchill.ca/cim/75C122\\_207T8481T278T8360T413T16705.dhtm](http://www.townofchurchill.ca/cim/75C122_207T8481T278T8360T413T16705.dhtm)  
<http://www.laronge.ca/Personnel/Council.php>  
<http://www.kenora.ca/portal/city/council/councillors/councillors.aspx?id=64>  
<http://www.princerupert.ca/cityhall/index.html>  
<http://www.city.iqaluit.nu.ca/members.html>  
[http://www.yellowknife.ca/City\\_Hall/City\\_Council/Council\\_Members.html](http://www.yellowknife.ca/City_Hall/City_Council/Council_Members.html). As with candidacy at the provincial and federal levels, the analysis in this section relies on mayors and councilors self-identifying their Aboriginality in their respective profiles.

<sup>8</sup> In 2001 almost one-half (49%) of the population who identified themselves as Aboriginal lived in urban areas, according to Statistics Canada. Nearly 25% of all Aboriginal people, lived in 10 of the nation's 27 census metropolitan areas in 2001 (Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Saskatoon, Regina, Ottawa-Gatineau, Montréal and Victoria (Statistics Canada, 2003: 1).

populations in these areas, particularly in Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories. Based on the information included in this section, the hypothesis that Aboriginal peoples would tend to seek out election more at the local level than the federal or provincial level can neither be supported nor refuted. Further research is certainly required using a larger sample size, and using alternate methods of testing the same hypothesis.

### *Illegitimacy of the elected forum*

An alternative hypothesis that might explain the disproportionately low numbers of elected Aboriginal peoples to Canadian legislatures is that they actively choose not to participate in the electoral politics of what might be termed “foreign” governments. It is argued by some scholars (such as Taiiaki Alfred, Patricia Monture-Angus, and Kiera Ladner) that the nature of relations between Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian government must proceed on a nation-to-nation basis. Such a relationship would suggest that Aboriginal peoples would not seek out candidacy in what might be deemed an illegitimate process. Although there are many ways to test this hypothesis, this study considered whether Aboriginal peoples seek election, and if Aboriginal organizations endorse or advocate against electoral participation.

In respect to the first part of the test, whether Aboriginal peoples seek election, the presence of Aboriginal members of Parliament since 1874 clearly reflects that some members of the Aboriginal community view Canada’s government as legitimate. Since 1984, there have been at least three Aboriginal candidates elected to Parliament at each election (Hunter, 2003: 31). As this study has shown, Aboriginal peoples are interested in seeking office at the federal and provincial levels of government. Moreover, the First Peoples National party of Canada endorsed five candidates in the 2006 election. Specifically created to address the numeric under-representation of Canada’s Aboriginal peoples in Parliament, the First Peoples National party of Canada has resolved to make increased representation a reality (First Peoples National party of Canada, 2006: 1). This appears to suggest that some Aboriginal peoples are indeed interested in seeking election to Canadian governments, thus suggesting little support for the first assumption of this hypothesis.

The second assumption of this hypothesis suggests that Aboriginal organizations would not endorse involvement in the Canadian political process. The five main organizations responsible for advocating on behalf of Aboriginal peoples nationally are the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the Métis National Council (MNC), the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC), the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP). In the 2004 federal election, both the AFN and the MNC both issued press releases endorsing the Liberals and specifically advocating against support of the Conservatives (AFN, 2004: 1; MNC, 2004: 1). Similarly, during the 2006 federal election, the AFN and MNC continued their endorsement of the Liberals, and the CAP chose to endorse the Conservatives (Ryan, 2006: 1). The AFN’s national chief Phil Fontaine issued a joint press release with Jean-Pierre Kingsley (Chief Electoral Officer of Canada) encouraging Aboriginal peoples to vote (AFN, 2006: 1-2). The voices of the ITK and the NWAC were visibly absent from discussions around party endorsement.

Given that Aboriginal candidates are seeking election, that Aboriginal peoples have created their own national political party, and that national Aboriginal organizations are endorsing political parties and encouraging Aboriginal voters to vote, it appears that the “illegitimacy of the forum” hypothesis cannot be supported, although alternative methods of

testing this hypothesis may prove otherwise. Certainly, further investigation is required.

### ***Exceptionalism Hypothesis***

In a study conducted by Linda Trimble and Manon Tremblay, it was shown that women elected and appointed to Canada's Parliament and legislatures have more in common with their male colleagues than they do with Canadian women (2003: 17). Table 12 tests this hypothesis with respect to Aboriginal legislators, noting their age at first election, their highest level of education, and their occupation prior to becoming a member of Parliament.

**Table 12: Selected Characteristics of Aboriginal Members of Parliament 1993-2006**

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Age at Election</b>	<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Prior Occupation</b>
Elijah Harper	44	University*	Consultant, policy analyst
Jack Iyerak Anawak	38	University*	Business person, consultant
Ethel Blondin Andrew	37	University	Educator, public servant
Lawrence O'Brien	44	University	Adult education instructor, public servant, teacher
Rick Laliberte	48	University*	School administrator
Nancy Karetak-Lindell	39	University*	Financial comptroller
Paul DeVillers	47	University	Lawyer, solicitor
David Smith	40	University	Business manager, public servant
Bernard Cleary	67	University	Chief negotiator, journalist, professor
Gary Merasty	42	University	Aboriginal leader
Tina Keeper	44	University	Activist, actress
Rod Bruinoooge	33	University	Entrepreneur, film producer
Todd Russell	39	University	Aboriginal leader

\*University level education is likely based on the prior occupation, but is not specified.

Source: Library of Parliament, "Members of the House of Commons 1867 to date",

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/people/house/mpshist.asp?Language=E>, Accessed December 18, 2005.

Studies such as the one conducted by Trimble and Tremblay (2003) reveal that the median age at first election for members of Parliament is 40, the majority have university level education, and have professional careers prior to entering politics (13-17).

For the 13 Aboriginal members of Parliament elected between 1993 and 2006, the median age was 43, whereas the median age for non-Aboriginal Parliamentarians is 40. While the difference is marginal, it might suggest that Aboriginal peoples need to be slightly older in order to achieve the same degree of electoral success found by non-Aboriginal legislators. With respect to the level of education attained by Aboriginal MPs, the trend towards having a minimum of a university degree is consistent between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal legislators. The same holds true in terms of previous employment, with the majority of Aboriginal MPs working as professionals prior to entering politics. It appears then, that for the most part Aboriginal parliamentarians and non-Aboriginal parliamentarians share similar characteristics.

What is significantly more striking is how different Aboriginal MPs are from the rest of the Aboriginal population. In the general Aboriginal population, the median age is 25 – significantly younger than the average age of Aboriginal MPs at first election (43 years of age). The difference in age between non-Aboriginal MPs (40 years of age) and the non-Aboriginal population (38 years of age) is not as striking. While the majority of parliamentarians have a

university level education, only 15.45 per cent of the total population holds this, and only 6.39 per cent of Aboriginal peoples are university educated. Furthermore, the difference in previous employment is also noteworthy, as it again reflects that Aboriginal legislators share more in common with non-Aboriginal legislators than with the Aboriginal population itself. Prior to gaining office, most Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal MPs came from professional occupations. In comparison, only 23.41 per cent of the total population are employed professionally, and only 17.48 per cent of the Aboriginal population is employed as such (Statistics Canada, 2001: 1).

Clearly, Aboriginal members of Parliament share much more in common with non-Aboriginal legislators than they do with the general Aboriginal population. This reflects the fact that politics tends to attract certain types of people; those who are well-educated and come from professional backgrounds. The exceptionalism hypothesis appears to have considerable merit, although again, further research over time and in more jurisdictions is necessary to test it further.

### *Electoral Process Hypothesis*

This hypothesis questions whether reforming the electoral system from SMP might decrease the degree of disproportional election of Aboriginal peoples to Parliament. As this cannot be tested directly in Canada without actually reforming the system itself, this section considers the experiences of other countries. The countries discussed below (Australia, New Zealand, and Norway) were selected because each has a significant Aboriginal population and, perhaps more importantly, each has made some attempt to engage its Aboriginal populations in the political process. While some have achieved this much more successfully than others, each has valuable insights to be considered when examining electoral reform in Canada – particularly in relation to Aboriginal peoples.

#### *Australia*

Australia forms a logical basis of comparison to the Canadian context as it is very similar with respect to governmental structure. Like Canada, Australia organizes itself internally in a federal manner, and at the national level has a bicameral legislature. As of 2001, Aboriginal peoples made up 2.4 per cent of Australia's total population. Of significant note is that the median age of Aboriginal peoples in Australia is twenty compared to 34 among the general population. The distribution of Aboriginal peoples in Australia is also very widespread, with a large number of Aboriginal peoples choosing to live in remote areas. A significant number of Aboriginal peoples in Australia choose to live in urban areas (30 per cent), similar again to Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2002: 1).

Aboriginal peoples in Australia do not constitute a majority in any electoral district at the national level and very few have been elected to Australia's Parliament. According to the Australian Electoral Commission, Aboriginal peoples' election outside of the Northern Territory is rare. For example in 2004, just two candidates sought election who self-identified as being Aboriginal persons. At the time, incumbent Aden Ridgeway sought re-election in New South Wales, who sat as the only Aboriginal federal politician in Australia's Parliament between 1999 and 2004. The second Aboriginal candidate who sought election in the 2004 election was Andrea Mason, seeking a Senate position in South Australia. Like Ridgeway however, she was unsuccessful in her bid for election (Australian Electoral Commission, forthcoming). Even if these two candidates had been successful in their attempts at election, they would have only

represented 1.3 per cent of the total number of seats available. This degree of representation is approximately half of the percentage of the Aboriginal population in Australia. Very few Aboriginal peoples are successful in their attempts at seeking election in Australia's legislatures, with no more than three elected at any time. In its dual role, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) provided a mechanism for quasi-representation and advocacy for Australia's Aboriginal population, however it was disbanded in June 2005. Although, Reconciliation Australia has attempted to fill ATSIC's roll, electoral reform to increase the numeric representation of Aboriginal peoples in Australia is not on the horizon.

### *New Zealand*

The experiences of New Zealand with respect to its Aboriginal population, the Māori, are particularly relevant to the analysis presented in this paper. The Māori are the Aboriginal peoples of New Zealand, and as of 2001 they comprise 15.1 per cent of the total population. In 1993, New Zealand reformed its electoral system and adopted a mixed member plurality (MMP) system of electing legislative representatives. While Aboriginal electoral districts were commonplace in New Zealand prior to 1993, part of these electoral reforms included the adoption of Māori electorates, with Māori representatives elected by those who opt to be listed on the Māori roll. Prior to 1993, there were only four Māori electorates, however with the adoption of MMP this number has steadily increased to seven in 2002. The following table highlights the number of Māori members of Parliament between the years 1993 to 2002.

**Table 13: Māori Members of Parliament, New Zealand 1993 – 2002**

	1993		1996				1999				2002			
	# of MPs	% of all MPs	# of electorate MPs	# of list MPs	Total # of MPs	% of all MPs	# of electorate MPs	# of list MPs	Total # of MPs	% of all MPs	# of electorate MPs	# of list MPs	Total # of MPs	% of all MPs
<b>Māori</b>	7	7.1	7	9	16	13.3	9	7	16	13.3	10	9	19	15.8
<b>Total MPs</b>	99	100	65	55	120	100	67	53	120	100	69	51	120	100

**Source: Electoral Commission, New Zealand**

The current New Zealand Parliament is composed of 62 members elected from General electorates (electorate MPs), 51 members elected from party lists (list MPs), and seven from Māori electorates for a total of 120 legislators (Elections New Zealand, 2004: 1). The number of Māori electoral districts depends entirely on the number of Māori who choose (during the Māori Option Period) to be on the Māori electoral roll. The increase in Māori population noted in the 2001 Census resulted in the creation of a seventh Māori electoral district.

Despite the existence of Māori electoral districts, the Māori population is still numerically under-represented in its Parliament. Even with the increase in 2002 to seven Māori representatives, this only represents 5.8 per cent of the total number of seats available in Parliament. When compared to the percentage of Māori population (15.1 per cent in 2001), the degree of representation from Māori electoral districts in the New Zealand House of Representatives is disproportionate. Yet, it is important to note that Table 13 (above) identifies that Aboriginal candidates are also elected from party lists and other electoral districts outside the Māori electoral districts. In effect, Māori representation in New Zealand's legislature (with

its MMP electoral system) is nearly on par with their proportion of the population. The New Zealand case suggests that the creation of Aboriginal electoral districts can dramatically increase the number of Aboriginal people elected to a national legislature.

### Norway

Considered to be the Aboriginal populations of Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Russia, the Sámi people traditionally occupied the northern parts of these countries. In Norway, the Sámi people account for a substantial amount of the population. As of 1999, the Sámi account for approximately 18.8 per cent of the total population of Norway. (Norwegian Central Bureau of Statistics 1999; Swedish Statistics 1999; Statistics of Finland 1998; Russian Statistics Agency FS, 1998). Acting on recommendation of the Sámi Rights Commission, in June of 1987 the Norwegian government passed the *Sámi Act*. The Act recognizes that Norway is comprised of two dominant groups: the Norwegian and the Sámi. One of the key defining features of the *Sámi Act* is that it established the creation of the Sámi Parliament, the body responsible for ensuring the protection and development of Sámi language, culture, and society (Sara, 2002: 23).

The Sámi Parliament is an elected body comprised of Sámi representatives, and its mandate is to carry out administrative tasks delegated to it by the Storting (Norway's legislative body). Opened in 1989 by King Olav V, the Sámi Parliament is made up of 39 elected representatives from thirteen electoral districts. Representatives to the Sámi Parliament are elected by the Sámi on the basis of self-identification. They must either speak the Sámi language or have parents or grandparents who speak the Sámi language (Sara, 2002: 17; Brenna, 1997: 1). Several subcommittees of the Parliament function as professional organs for the Sámi Parliament and assist in the management of allocations and subsidies. The Sámi Parliament itself works in an advisory capacity to the Storting (Brenna, 1997: 1).

At the national level, Sámi people have been successful in being elected to the Storting. The Storting is elected based on proportional representation, with 165 members elected from nineteen electoral districts (Josefsen, 2003: 19). Norway employs a similar type of electoral system as does New Zealand, but without Aboriginal electoral districts. Table 14 highlights the number of Sámi elected to the Storting between 1993 and 2005.

**Table 14: Sámi Members of Parliament, Norway 1993-2005**

	1993		1997		2001		2005	
	# of MPs	% of all MPs	# of MPs	% of all MPs	# of MPs	% of all MPs	# of MPs	% of all MPs
<b>Sámi</b>	2	1.21	0	0	1	0.61	1	0.59
<b>Total MPs</b>	165	100	165	100	165	100	169	100

Source: Sámi Council, [www.Samicouncil.net](http://www.Samicouncil.net), Accessed January 30, 2006; Sámi Parliament, [www.samediggi.no](http://www.samediggi.no), Accessed February 7, 2006.

Between 1993 and 2005 a total of four people self-identifying as Sámi successfully sought election to Norway's national parliament. At best, Sámi legislators represented a maximum of 1.21 per cent of the total number of parliamentary seats, disproportionate to the Aboriginal share of the population. What is noteworthy is that this disproportional election of Sámi occurs despite using a form of proportional representation, similar to the method used in New Zealand.

Although there are a limited number of Sámi elected to the Storting, they do make their voices heard in other ways. In 1999, the Sámi's People party was recognized as an official party, with its central goal being the promotion of the Sámi's collective rights regarding land and water use. In 2005, the Sámi's People party received 660 votes (Aftenposten, 2005: 1). While there have been calls for direct Sámi representation in the Storting (e.g. in 1969, 1974, 1984), no reserved seats for the Sámi exist in Norway's Parliament (Josefsen, 2003: 21-22). Based on the Norway case, it is unclear whether electoral reform (without specific seats allocated for Aboriginal peoples) to a PR system would increase the number of Aboriginal peoples elected to a national legislature

## **Conclusion**

This paper has attempted to provide a basis for which discussion of increasing Aboriginal election to Canadian legislatures might occur. The analysis in this study showed that there appears to be mixed support for most of the hypotheses. The level of campaign funding and sacrificial lamb hypotheses do not provide convincing explanations for the disproportionate rate of Aboriginal election to Parliament. The third hypothesis appears to have mixed support, as it appears that the proportion of Aboriginal peoples elected to British Columbia's legislature (in 2005) is just as disproportionate as what occurs federally. In terms of election at the municipal level, there appears to be a possibility that Aboriginal peoples may prefer this level of government. With both points however, the sample size is very small, and may not be indicative of experiences in the rest of the country. The exceptionalism hypothesis appears to have the most support of the five discussed in this chapter. What is obvious from this analysis is that in order to test these hypotheses for greater accuracy and reliability, further research is necessary at both the federal and provincial levels.

In terms of potential reforms, the argument presented in this paper suggests four. First, it is suggested to maintain or increase the amount of funding targeted specifically to Aboriginal candidates, especially those endorsed by the Greens and NDP. The second reform consists of creating Aboriginal electoral districts. It would be imperative that traditional associations of Aboriginal persons be respected in the drawing of electoral boundaries, in addition to other concerns such as provincial boundaries and the Aboriginal populations. The number of Aboriginal electoral districts per province would vary according to each province's percentage of Aboriginal peoples; however the minimum number of Aboriginal electoral districts would be set at one. Related to this reform is the third suggestion, aimed at creating an Aboriginal electoral role similar to that which exists in New Zealand. Finally, it is suggested that a standing committee, comprised of all Aboriginal parliamentarians be created, and that substantive input from this committee be considered for all matters directly related to Canada's Aboriginal peoples.

By enhancing the representative character of legislative bodies (e.g. through the creation of Aboriginal electoral districts), a state cannot only reach out to a traditionally oppressed, under-represented segment of its population, but it can also enhance the legitimacy of its own institutions both in the eyes of the minority population it seeks to embrace, and its total population more generally. Whether or not such attempts at embracing minority populations requires dramatic electoral reform is questionable. What risks is a state willing to undertake in order to increase its legitimacy? For Aboriginal peoples in Canada, the risks taken have been negligible. For the Māori in New Zealand, the risks have paid dividends. The question remains,

do Aboriginal Canadians wish to have substantive representation? Will increasing their numeric representation lead to this? Can Canada offer them a solution that no longer lacks substance?



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