



The Plains Cree of Canada

The Plains Cree are one of the larger First Nations people groups in North America. They live throughout the prairies of Western Canada in the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan with a few in the U.S. in Montana. Some also live in the boreal forests of Alberta. Their communities are scattered throughout the area in a loose network of reserves and nonreserve settlements, as well as in larger towns and urban centers.

Most of the Plains Cree are professing Christians belonging to a variety of denominations, though predominantly Catholic, Anglican, or Pentecostal. However, traditional spiritual beliefs and practices remain strong, even among Christians. Many see Christianity as dealing with the afterlife, whereas traditional ways deal with the issues and problems of daily life.

Faced with such challenges as high levels of poverty and unemployment, the Plains Cree have made some gains in raising their economic status. Cree language instruction has been established in some schools and colleges, and efforts to encourage higher education among young people have raised the level of education in recent decades. However, in spite of these gains, Plains Cree continue to lag far behind the majority of Canadians in economic status. High rates of alcoholism and suicide and the breakdown of traditional cultural values have weakened family ties and the underlying cultural fabric. A revived sense of cultural identity is evident in the resurgence of cultural ceremonies such as the Sun Dance, as well as the revival of traditional religion, and a small but growing corpus of language materials and published texts.

Primary Religion:

Christian

Disciples (Matt 28.19):

<10%

Churches:

Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):

Bible

Population (date):

34,000 (1982)



PLAINS CREE HOMELAND



The Plains Cree of Canada

Item Name	Item Note	
Have They Heard The Gospel?		Profile Summary
Call Themselves Christian (%)	>95%	
Believe In Jesus As God & Only Savior (%)	<10%	
Number Of Pastors	170	
Comment (Pastors)	Estimated	
Response To The Gospel	The vast majority of Plains Cree people belong to a church of some sort or at least attend church for special occasions, such as Christmas and Easter, but many of these still continue to hold to their traditional beliefs and practices.	
Is The Word Of God Translated?	Yes. Bible 1861, 1904. New translation in progress.	
Translation Medium	Printed	
Any Hinderance To Scripture Distribution?	Literacy Rate:75+% in English The earlier Cree translation of the Bible is not widely used today. The translation is in many ways inadequate and the language has changed in the past 100 years. Even though most Cree speakers can read, many cannot read Cree. Scripture recordings will likely be necessary in order to promote the use of the Scriptures.	
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available (Summary)	Recordings: Some Scripture portions from the earlier translation are available. Christian teaching tapes on a variety of topics are available. There is some recorded Christian music and hymns. Literature: There are Cree and English/Cree hymn books in use. There is a testimonial tract written by a Cree woman and some translated Christian growth material. Films/videos: Jesus film Radio: No known Cree Christian radio broadcasts	
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	It seems that the Cree church has sufficient human resources to reach (evangelize and disciple) their own people without much outside assistance from missionaries. However, the worldwide church can be of assistance in providing resources, technical expertise, and encouragement to the Cree church. Cross-cultural missionaries can play a role in Bible translation, Scripture and other Christian recordings, and vision-building.	
Population All Countries		Group Description
World Population For This People	53,000	
World Population (Date)	1982	
Countries Where People Group Lives		Group Description
Country Name	Canada	
Country Name	USA	
Geography & Environment		Group Description
Location	The Cree people are located in Alberta and Saskatchewan provinces of Canada.	
Ecosystem Type	Savannahs	
Geological Type	Plains	
Elevation	1,468 meters	
Longitude	100 - 115 W	
Latitude	50 - 55 N	
Climate	Subarctic and continental with hot, dry summers and long, cold, dry winters.	
Comments (Geography & Environment)	Fresh water occupies 12.5% of the total area.	
Economics		Group Description
Subsistence Type	Industrial	
Occupation	Varies widely, but many work for native-run or native-focused operations like the band offices, casinos, bingo halls, Wanuskewin Heritage Park, schools on reserves, or colleges for native students.	
Modernization / Utilities	: Plains Cree have access to most modern utilities and conveniences	
Community Development		Group Description

The Plains Cree of Canada

Item Name

Item Note

Health Care (Quality)	Good
Water (Quality)	Very good
Electricity	Close to 100%
Clothing	Western clothing with some traditional garments
Transportation	Automobiles

Society & Culture

Group Description

Family Structures	Nuclear family with strong ties to extended family, grandparents are often involved in raising their grandchildren
Authority / Rule	Elected chief and band council
Social Habits/Groupings	: Social ties are ranked from nuclear family, to extended family, to community, to band, to native group.
Cultural Change Pace	Medium
Identification With National Culture	Distinct
Celebrations	Powwows, round dances, Aboriginal Day, Easter, Christmas.
Recreations	Hunting, visiting family, youth hockey, sports, board games, watching TV.
Art Forms	Painting, beadwork, dreamcatchers.
Media	Cree have access to radio, TV, newspaper, and other English media. There are some Cree radio broadcasts.
Local Language Broadcasting	> 1 hour daily
Comment (Local Language Broadcasting)	Limited broadcast area.
Attitude To Outsiders	Somewhat resistant
Attitude To Change	Somewhat receptive

Youth

Group Description

Youth Problems (Teens)	Alcoholism and other addictions, suicide, domestic violence.
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Education

Group Description

Language Of Instruction Early Years	English
Language Of Textbooks Early Years	English
Comment (Language Of Instruction)	One school has a Cree immersion program through grade 3.
Comment (Language Of Textbook)	Some Cree language material used.

Church Growth

Status of Christianity

Reached Status	Engaged
Reached Classification	Evangelized
Bible Schools	1
Comment (Bible Schools)	Keywaytin Bible College

Religion & Response

Status of Christianity

Religious Practices & Ceremonies	Christian ceremonies include baptism, mass/communion, weddings, and funerals. Traditional ceremonies include Sun dances, sweat lodges, and pipe ceremonies.
Resistance / Receptivity	Somewhat receptive to belief in Jesus, but somewhat resistant to abandoning traditional spirituality
Spiritual Climate And Openness	While most Cree have become church members, in some ways they remain a very difficult people to reach. Traditional beliefs and practices are still strong, even among Christians. Many see Christianity as dealing with the afterlife, whereas traditional ways deal with the issues and problems of daily life.
Items For Prayer	Pray for the completion of the new Scripture translation and for the process of recording it. Pray for God to raise up dynamic Cree Christian leaders with a vision for reaching their own people.

History Of Christianity In Group

Status of Christianity

The Plains Cree of Canada

Item Name

Year Began

Item Note

Early 1800s

Scripture

Status of Christianity

Translation Status

In Progress

Available Scripture

Bible

Form Of Scripture Available

Printed

Comment (Form of Scripture Available)

Reprint of 1904 edition New Testament available in syllabics and diglot (syllabics and Roman orthography). New Testament in print, some OT and NT portions available on cassette.

Scripture Published When

1861, 1904.

Scripture Use

Hardly at all

Comment (Scripture Use)

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Comment (Scripture)

Bible 1861, revised 1904, New translation of the New Testament and portions of the Old Testament is in progress.

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Literature

No

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Recordings

Yes

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Film/Videos

Yes

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Radio

No

Missions and Churches

Status of Christianity

Organization Name

Roman Catholic Church

Organization Name

Baptist

Organization Name

United Church of Canada

Organization Name

Methodist

Organization Name

Christian and Missionary Alliance

Organization Name

> UNLISTED Organization #2

Organization Name

Pentecostal

Organization Name

Anglican

Organization Name

Northern Canadian Evangelical Mission

Organization Name

> UNLISTED Organization #1