Chapter Five

Unreached People Groups In Canada

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In the mid-1980s, when I first heard the phrase "unreached people," I thought of the "countless millions," ***out there***. Over the next two summers I led Jesus Film teams, first to the central Amazon basin, and then to Northern Thailand. People who had neatly fit into the category of unreached people became friends, and some also became "reached." Back in Canada, my evangelism now focused on new immigrants. I did not say it out loud, but I began to realize that many of these people had never heard the Gospel in a way that made sense to them. It hit home— Canada was a country made up of reached and unreached people groups.[1]

This chapter identifies 82 unreached people groups in Canada, both from among the 2.5 million who have immigrated in the past 12 years—as well as others who have been part of Canada since its conception as a nation. The goal is to identify unreached groups, explain some of the barriers that retain them, identify needs within our evangelistic strategies and encourage the "adoption" of unreached people groups by churches so that spiritual, financial and manpower resources begin to reach these unreached people.

Unreached people are: *"A people for whom there is no viable indigenous church movement with sufficient strength to sustain and ensure the continuous multiplication of churches."* The group of researchers processing the raw data for this book further defined "Unreached People Groups" as: *"any group of more than 5,000 people around the world, whose makeup reflect less than 2% evangelical."* Canadian populations, even among First Nations figures, may be far less. We have defined "evangelical" by a New Testament theology of the Church in which Christians participate in redemptive worshipping communities and are involved in evangelizing the world.

What makes unreached people difficult to reach for Christ? Ethnicity, culture and language are certainly three non-spiritual elements that separate us. Prejudice and religion are issues that the empowerment of God's Spirit can help us overcome. Another issue here in Canada, and around the world, is urbanization. How do Christians reach people they refuse to live among?

To cluster the information on these people groups who are without the Good News, there are five tables in this chapter, indicating unreached peoples in Canada. Each is accompanied by an issues sheet. These tables show population statistics from Statistics Canada 1996 publications, which are then compared with *Joshua Project 2000* data, as well as the listing given from the Southern Baptist Convention (with 1991 data) in the table at the end of this chapter.[2]

The issue sheet that accompanies each chart asks questions which may: a) define plans to minister to people within the area, b) understand prayer and mobilization needs and, c) help your church see the value of adopting one or more of these people groups as a focus of your outreach, giving and prayer.

Table 24
Unreached People Groups In Canada of African Origin

	Canadian Population		Canadian Population
Algerian Arab	6,830	Ghanaian	14,925
Berber	2,425	Moroccan Arab	14,605
Burundi	680	Nigerian	6,215
Egyptian Arab	35,560	Other Arab	48,925
Ethiopian	14,960	Somali	30,180
Eritrean	6,220	Sudanese	2,640
		Tunisian	3,825

Issues on Reaching Africans In Canada

?*The African Christian diaspora has not found its way into Canadian churches and lack church leadership. Only about 1,200 are attending African churches.*

?*The majority of Africans who are moving to Canada—those listed above—come from north of the equator and are firmly Muslim.*

?*Ethiopian, Ghanaian and Nigerian have many people groups within their respective countries—some reached and others unreached in Canada.*

Ethnicity

Ethnicity makes clear delineations, even in small geographical areas. It is unwise to confuse a Norwegian with a Swede, an Armenian with an Iraqi or a Korean with a Japanese. Ethnicity determines how we respond to someone from another ethnic background, based on historic treatment, either positive or negative.

On a vacation to Cape Cod I met a Catholic student from Northern Ireland working on the ferry to Nantucket. I mentioned my Protestant faith and he eagerly began to try to understand the differences. As an experiment, I mentioned a student from England, curious how these different students had received work visas. He shared how he received his own visa but wouldn't mention the other student. He couldn't tell me the difference between the Protestant and Catholic faith, yet he had set his mind against a student from England whom he'd never met. This student was not responding to a religious difference, but an ethnic one.

Culture

Culture is the everyday unwritten and written rules that a group of people use in order to live in harmony with each other, show respect, develop moral codes, build leadership, eat, sleep and dress. All are a part of culture. Leo Driedger, in his book, *Multi-ethnic Canada: Identities and Inequalities,* says that these rules exist so that we "feel at home in a culture… because humans want to live by habit rather than decide constantly what to do next. It is comfortable to sense a "consciousness of kind" where you are accepted as you are."[3]

Cultures can be similar without being synonymous. Canada and the United States have, by virtue of ethnic background, religion, economy and geography, chosen *some* of the same rules. In other distinctions, they have chosen not to be the same. Guns as personal property have not been a major issue in Canada, whereas U.S. citizens have demanded the right to bear arms since the establishment of their country. Lack of refuse on our streets and orderliness of crowds in major Canadian cities waiting for mass transit are far different from most of our U.S. cousins. Response to crowds, humour and world view all force us to say that Canadians do not act the *same* as Americans.

Culture should not only play a part in evangelism but also in discipleship. People from a Catholic background may leave the Catholic Church to explore a more personal relationship with Christ, but what will they look for in a church—probably high structure and a clear order of worship. It must also meet social needs, such as family, friendship, humour and moral code.

Some practices within any culture are sinful. People harden their hearts within a culture and no longer have the same guidelines for moral values that God placed there at creation, and in that sense no culture is "Christian" (Romans 2). Therefore people must be redeemed out of a culture and into His kingdom. But we must recognize that they, as well as we ourselves, will struggle far deeper with the systemic sin within the culture of our birth than others from another culture do. The unreached peoples to whom we are instructed to bring the Good News all live within cultures, many quite diverse from our own. As we disciple them, we must distinguish between a Biblical and a cultural message. Otherwise they may reject the message of the Gospel in response to our rejection of their culture.

Language

We do not speak the language of most first-generation immigrants today. If culture is a barrier based on "the way things are," then language is an audible barrier of that culture which forms a measurable, technical difference. These differences are based on the sounds and meanings of words, sentence structure, thought development and interpretation. There are different "mom and apple pie" words in each culture that have little to do with the technical structure of words. So language is a measurable, technical difference, but it also punctuates or influences a culture.

Table 25
Unreached People Groups In Canada of
Asian Origin

	Canadian Population		Canadian Population
Afghan	13,230	Japanese	77,120
Pashto	1,885	Laotian	17,305
Burmese	2,100	Malay	8,165
Cambodian	21,440	Mongolian	1,200
Chinese (Hokkien)	23,455	Nepal	540
East Indian	548,080	Pakistani	38,635
Bengali	10,645	Urdu	27,085
Gujurati	2,755	Palestinian	11,440
Hindi	28,945	Sri Lankan	46,565
Marathi	1,125	Sinhalese	3,085
Punjabi	154,480	Syrian	19,385
Telugu	965	Thai	5,015
Iranian	64,390	Tibetan	780
Kurdish	3,115	Turk	18,135
Iraqi	10,785		

Issues Relating to Asian Unreached Peoples in Canada

⁂*Our new Asian neighbours are urban people. What urban methodologies are in place to reach them?*

⁂*All people of India, though divided by primary language and ethnicity, have a national language of Hindi.*

⁂*Beyond ethnicity and language, the Asian people are often divided by religion—even within a major religious group.*

⁂*The Southeast Asians (Burmese, Khmer, Lao, Malay, Thai) are animists as well as being either Hindu, Buddhist or Muslim.*

Linguistic differences can be overcome. I have a snapshot of two young women walking down a muddy road in the jungle of Brazil. Their arms are over each other's shoulders and they are laughing heartily. They have become friends, *but they don't speak each other's language.* One is from Washington D.C., a professional nurse of some capability—the other from a tribal background in Western Brazil—new even to an urban centre. They spent time together, listened to the tone of the other's voice, watched the other's body language and listened as they prayed or read the Bible. In essence they became friends. Later, they learned each other's language. In the same way, language may be a temporary barrier as you reach out to new people groups and the language of love overcomes it.

It is far easier to reach a self-contained group. That certainly describes most first-generation immigrant groups. We must either pay the cost of learning their language or we must disciple people who do speak both languages. We must disciple to full Christian maturity and capability of church planting. But to complete the picture, we must send enough resources for them to finish the job.

Religion

David Lyon speaks of the different religions existing in Canada as groups. The "other" (than Christian) main groups may be numbered in thousands.

Table 26
The "Other" Main Groups

Jews	318,000
Muslims	253,000
Buddhists	163,000
Hindus	157,000
Sikhs	147,000
(Statistics Can. 1991	

Religion is another way of subdividing the unreached people groups, yet in surveys many people do not want to indicate their religion because in their own country people were persecuted for religion other than the predominant faith. So these figures from Statistics Canada about religion are incomplete.

Table 27
Unreached Newcomer People Groups In Canada of European Origin

	Canadian Population		Canadian Population
Albanian	4,140	Italian	1,207,475
Basque	2,645	Jewish	351,700
Bosnian	9,010	Maltese	29,815
Bulgarian	12,370	Romani, Sinte (Gypsi)	1,320
Croatian	84,485	Serbian	40,170
Cypriot	2,540	Slovenian	25,860
French	5,597,830		

Issues of European Unreached Peoples

✍*If a people have ignored the Gospel for two thousand years, some may say God has hardened their heart. But this is a new opportunity.*

✍*Ignoring these people would be just as dangerous for Christians as ignoring other unreached peoples.*

✍*Messianic Jews across North America are making headway toward the Gospel. But it is not only prayer that they need from us, it is the Good News in "lives lived out" form.*

✍*Many "secondary" cultures like Basque and Serbian are war shocked. What helps and ministries are available for them?*

✍*The Italian evangelical population desperately needs a focused boost to reach second- and third-generation populations.*

Religion exists in every culture. When the truth is unknown or rejected, people, out of desperate need to see beyond themselves, create a religion—a connection with God. These are a complex sets of moral structures created to explain why people are the way they are, why they are not happy, how they are supposed to deal with the world around them and what makes a person admirable or despicable. Because the majority of people in a given culture see things in the same way, it is obviously difficult to begin to penetrate the culture with a new idea, unless God steps in, in a way that makes sense to a few of the gifted communicators from that culture.

Prejudice—the Silent Sin

Prejudice is made up of generalizations that bring about a negative response toward a group of people. Although we clump our cultural values together because we do not understand the other person's culture, we do not know whether he is violating a cultural value. Therefore we must get to know more than just a few people from that background before we can understand their culture. To be prejudiced is not a neutral act. *Judging is an action of the mind.* Pre-judging is judging without all the data available. Spiritually, prejudice is our sinful response toward God's initial division of the nations at Babel.

When somebody from our own culture has a lesser "garbage or yard ethic" than our own, we may think, "that person disgraces our neighbourhood." But in prejudice, if someone from another culture, skin colour or ethnicity in our neighbourhood has that same "garbage or yard ethic," we place a label on *them* along with *all the other people in that group.*

Of course that is a very simplistic example, but it illustrates the problem we face—pre-judging many individuals in a "group" based on one person's behaviour.

In one ethnic church, a missionary named John met a leader who was obstinate, mistreated people and twisted truth for his own good, rather than God's. John fought constantly not to pre-judge this ethnic group based on his opinion of that one person. Since he worked for some time at this church and met other leaders who were upright, devoted men and women of God who gained his respect, he was able to overcome his prejudice of that people group. There is one overriding rule in breaking the power of prejudice—prejudice is overcome through *relationship*.

Jesus makes it clear in His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount that if we as Christians judge others by the colour of skin, the language that is spoken or the dress that is worn, then we stand in judgement before God. We stand in judgement because the Bible's teaching clearly defines our responsibility to love all humanity as He, for God's sake, loved us. And we have the ability to overcome this sin, just as we have the ability to overcome any other sin, because the Spirit of God resides within us (Romans 8:13).

Urbanization

Recently, CBC radio reported that the 1996 census indicates that over 75% of our population live in urban areas with populations of over 100,000 people. Now that does not include places like Cornerbrook, Cape Breton or Charlottetown...nor places like Shawinigan, Stratford, Grand Prairie or Gander. No! Contained within nine small urban corridors across Canada are 75% of our approximately 32 million people! Virtually all of Canada, despite its huge geographical area, is an urban country.

According to 1981 figures, 43% of the population of Metro Toronto were born outside Canada. That is just within the metro limits. By 1996, 47% of the new *"Greater Toronto Area"* was made up of people born outside Canada.

In 1990, less than 2% of the core of our cities were made up of evangelicals attending church on a regular basis. Less than 2% had even the possibility of being able to share their faith with these urban, immigrant newcomers.

Although many parts of the suburban and rural church are growing, much of this is simply a regrouping, a fortress mentality revisited. Very few groups in Canada—some would argue none—are doing well in true urban ministry or church planting. We are largely running from the opportunity of bringing Christ to the city and the newcomer.

Denominations, churches and seminaries all need to rededicate themselves to work in the city, develop new methodologies for the city and stimulate vision for the city among their youth. In short, we need to love, work and pray for our cities, for Christ's sake.

Aboriginal Peoples of Canada

My first job after university was in an inner city school in Edmonton. Fifty-six mother tongues were represented in that single middle school. Several students came from six or seven Cree tribes, each speaking a different dialect. They arrived in class in the city in mid- to late October and returned to their reservations in late May.

As I got to know two students with Biblical names, I realized one student represented his Biblical namesake. He was wise, hardworking and would become a prophet for his people. His godly grandmother taught him to love Jesus

Christ, and pray and learn from other godly people. The other student was late, got into trouble and wore dirty clothes. One very cold day in January, when he did not show up, the vice principal visited his tiny, shabby house. He noticed a spot under the porch where someone had spent the night. The boy's mother arrived at the door wearing a dirty, torn T-shirt that was too short to cover her. The student, finally awakened, said he had spent until 6:00 a.m. under the porch because the man who had been with his mother the night before beat him, causing him to grab his coat and run out. That is where he drifted off to sleep most nights.

These two young men became a spur to my prayer life. As I prayed, God forced me to examine my prejudice toward aboriginal people. One godly grandmother, who had been discipled by a believing nun—one poor mother caught in prostitution, old at 25. Both were from the same reserve. How did these lost people find hope? How can they have hope without Christ? Who will reach them?

Yet, the job of evangelizing Canada's aboriginal peoples is really in its birth stages. Prayer will be an important component of reaching these first nations. Personal friendship is what will break down the barrier of prejudice that keeps us from reaching the North American native.

Table 28
Canadian First Nations

First Nation members by Tribe/Nation	Population	On Reserve	Off Reserve
Total First Nations	486,790	227,955	258,840
Algonquin*	9,375	3,640	5,735
Blackfoot*	13,395	8,480	4,910
Carrier*	8,815	4,310	4,500
Chipewyan*	11,830	5,900	5,930
Coast Tsimshian*	5,575	2,235	3,340
Cree**	168,670	90,225	78,445
Dakota*	12,330	7,580	4,755
Dogrib*	3,505	10	3,495
Gitksan*	5,595	2,860	2,735
Gwitch'in (Kutchin)*	2,540	10	2,535
Haida*	3,200	1,265	1,935
Halkomelem*	12,385	7,405	4,980
Iroquois	15,320	80	15,245
Kwakiutl*	4,875	2,180	2,700
Lillooet*	3,260	1,430	1,835
Malecite	4,215	2,325	1,890
Micmac*	20,830	12,140	8,690
Montagnais-Naskapi*	14,215	8,430	5,785
Nishga*	4,985	1,865	3,120
Nootka*	4,975	1,880	3,095
Ntlakapamux*	4,915	2,345	2,565
Ojibway*	102,910	41,240	61,670
Shuswap*	6,395	3,255	3,140
Slave*	6,665	1,925	4,740
Squamish*	2,615	1,210	1,410
Other Nations	24,285	9,880	19,030
Population By Aboriginal Groups			
Aboriginal Origins	799,005		
Metis*	204,115		
N.A. Indian	529,040		
Inuit	40,220		

* Indicates unevangelized people

** The Cree stretch from Quebec to Alberta. There are several subgroups—some reached, while others are totally unreached. For more information see the table at the end of this chapter.

Issues Raised from the Aboriginal Peoples List

?100,000 of Canada's 799,000 aboriginal peoples are among unreached people groups.

?The majority of the language groups among Inuit population are "reached."

?North Eastern peoples, the majority of the language groups are "reached."

?Therefore, those who are furthest from the majority of Christian population are the most reached.

?Effect on strategies to reach unreached people groups:

> *? It is easier to target someone who is isolated, yet urban non-isolated groups have larger populations.*

> *? What is close seems more "common," and therefore without need of the Gospel.*

?Less than a third of those indicating home language, indicated their own historical language or French. English is their language.

?Giftings in leadership, education and business lead people to greater contact with more people in urban settings. This creates new developments in culture, sets them apart from others of their people and creates new hope for youth. It also sets a false hope for those who come to cities without those giftings.

?There are few Christian outreaches to aboriginal peoples in urban settings.

?As believers, how can we help these people retain their ethnicity, while discovering a true spirituality in Christ (and this without restricting them to reservation life)?

Québec

In the province of Québec, according to *Christian Direction's* figures, there are approximately 5.5 million francophones. Only 0.54% of these people have an affiliation with a Protestant church, certainly not enough to be self-sufficient in reaching this vast unreached people group. This is the largest unreached people group in Canada, and in all probability in North America.

Table 29
Is Québec Reached?

Is Québec Reached?	French	English
Total Religious Responses	5,556,215	599,345
Protestant Affiliates	101,835	224,585
Protestant Churches	369	408
Churches per total Population	1:15,060	1:1469
Sources: Statistics Canada 1991, Religious Affiliation		

Issues In Reaching Québec

?Anglo Christians ignore Québec as much as the secular Anglo population.

?The Catholic Church has been denigrated by evangelicals. Why have we been unwilling to bring the Gospel to people who affiliate with this religion? Do we need an object to hate? Is that why we will not share with a fracophone from Québec or an Italian from Toronto?

?Are Christians unconvinced that there is any real need to bring the Gospel to those who have the same or greater economic standing than ourselves?

We must bring whatever resources we have to bear on reaching Québec with the Gospel. These people need to be reached, not for the sake of evangelical positioning in the unity of Canada, but for the sake of the Kingdom of God. As people of that Kingdom, we have a great responsibility in the spiritual future of Québec. Surely there is an immediacy needed in our response, but what is it?

One Québécois pastor interviewed about French Canada as an unreached people group noted, "There's a need for new models of ministry that are fitting for Québec and that originate in Québec, not western Canada. These existing methods haven't worked in Anglo-Canada, and they don't work in Québec." We must look realistically at our efforts in urban centres in English Canada and develop new methodologies that work here, before, as a Church movement, we try to import ministries that "should work in Québec." About 80% of Québec's population live in urban areas. To reach Québec we need effective urban methodologies.

I asked those same pastors what the Anglo-Canadian church can do to help reach the Québec people. At first they said there is not much they can do. However, when asked whether an "adopt-a-people" strategy would be feasible, where Anglo-Christians began to pray, not in big rallies, but one by one, or in one church at a time, on an ongoing basis, one pastor's eyes lit up, and he said, "If even one person prayed for me, and got in touch with me by phone or e-mail and really prayed on a regular basis, God would change my church." The other pastor's eyes lit up with hope as well. "Now that would change things," said another pastor. "In fact that might even change the outcome of Québec, especially if teams from churches began to come out to work with us to evangelize and pray for our province." We as Anglo-Canadians need to adopt a people—our own people in Québec—and pray and communicate with individual leaders and pastors and go as churches to Québec.

One issue we cannot ignore is leadership. The future of Québec's Church depends on its leadership and the training of future leaders. Glenn Smith and Wesley Peach both develop this theme well in their chapters. We must invest in the training of young Québécois leaders. Returning to the conversation with Québécois pastors, one said, "Discipleship of young leadership is key to the future of the Church in Québec." When asked, "Is God raising up an evangelist for the people of Québec?" one pastor talked about a young man in Montreal (from another denomination) pastoring a church of 700. He started it as a youth ministry that grew to 200 in a very short time.

Finally, we need to prepare quality people with the right abilities to go to Québec. Those needed for this task are not our average missionary candidates. Specific skills are essential. Pre-proven cross-cultural abilities are necessary and speaking the language is imperative. Given the character of the ministry to Québec, we need to pray that God will raise up some from within and some from without. It is He who raises up the "right stuff."

Conclusion

Canadian churches need to adopt one of these people groups and begin to pray for them, get to know them and understand the things that keep them from accepting the Gospel. As a church, we need to begin to consciously focus on that people group in terms of financial, personal and prayer investment.[5]

God has chosen to use Christians to accomplish His task of helping the world respond to His love for them. One hundred and eighty-six nations are recorded as sources for people groups living in Canada. It is both a tremendous opportunity and a terrible burden of responsibility. Only with commitment to obedience and God's help can we fulfil it.

We can no longer ignore the unreached people groups of Canada. We need to review the problems, seek solutions that work and mobilize our churches for action. Crossing these boundaries is difficult; comfort zones will be stretched by ethnic identities, cultural differences, language hurdles and religious understandings. We need to teach how to overcome prejudice in our churches, through authentic relationships over time. Ministering in an urban context is certainly something few evangelical leaders understand and must be addressed, or else our whole country will be unreached. Love, understanding and adoption of other cultures are ingredients that must be taught in seminaries and pulpits and demonstrated throughout the Church.

Looking at a country that had become urban, multi-cultural, divided and distracted spiritually, the prophet Isaiah did not lose hope. He urged the country to bring true justice and hope through God's love, message and standard to the disparate parts of the society. That caused their own spirituality to blossom. He issued a prophetic challenge applicable to us:

"Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings" (Isaiah 58:12).

Table 30
Ethnolinguistic Peoples[6]

165

Table 30, Cont'd

166

Table 30, Cont'd

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Table 30, Cont'd

Table 30, Cont'd

Table 30, Cont'd

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Action Points

?Unreached peoples are defined as, "any group of more than 5,000 people whose makeup reflects less than 2% evangelical." Were you surprised to find so much of the "mission field" (so defined) in Canada?

?Would you consider Canadian groups of 5% evangelical as "reached?" What about 10% or 25%? How does this affect the way you see Canada and your calling to disciple our nation?

?How could your congregation "adopt" a Canadian unreached people group for church planting?

?Who are your neighbours? Do you have the opportunity to get to know, on a personal basis, a family or household from an unreached people group?

Chapter Notes

[1] Brian Seim, *Canada's New Harvest—Helping Churches Touch Newcomers*, SIM Canada, Vision Canada, 1997.

[2] Charting the work of small ethnic churches is sometimes difficult, and if you have data in this area, please contact me.

[3] Leo Dreidiger, *Multi-Ethnic Canada—Identities and Inequalities*, Oxford University Press Canada, 1996.

[4] Edward Opuku-Dapaah, *Somali Refugees in Toronto—A Profile*, York Lanes Press, Toronto, 1995.

[5] Churches wishing to participate in such a French-English church prayer partnership may contact Suzanne Morin-Mackenzie who has agreed to serve as communication coordinator: 1773 Dansey Avenue, Coquitlam, B.C. V3K 3J4, or by email: smackenzie@bc.sympatico.ca. Suzanne is a nineth generation Québecois "beauceron" married to an English husband, Stephen, both of whom share in a ministry of intercession. Their children are fluently bilingual.

[6] Integrated Strategic Planning Database - Global Research, Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention