

Case Study Number: 01

System Type: Relational Database

Title: The Indian Registration System, Department of Indian Affairs and Development, Government of Canada

Institution or Agency: Government of Canada

Unit: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND)

Case Study Conducted by: Catherine Bailey, Yvette Hackett, Jay Gilbert

Duration of Study: July 6, 1999 to March 16, 2000 (Round 1 of Case Studies)

Functional Responsibilities of Respondent(s):

1. Providing statistical information (other than year-end) and other answers regarding the Indian Registration System (IRS) and status Indians.
2. Contributing to the production of ad hoc reports (for court cases etc.).
3. Correcting original data inputs prior to the publishing of Indian Register at the end of the month.

Summary of System Information

Business Context: Section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act of 1867* rules that the Canadian federal government has jurisdiction for "Indians and lands reserved for Indians." The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) -created by the *Government Organization Act* in 1966- fulfils the legal obligations of the federal government to aboriginal people arising from treaties, the *Indian Act* and approximately 30 other pieces of legislation. DIAND has the primary federal mandate to provide basic services to registered Indians living on reserve, (funding of First Nations for education, schools, housing, roads, and water and sewage systems, and family and social services). The *Indian Act* also assigns specific trust responsibilities to DIAND with respect to Indian moneys, estates, and reserve lands, and creates responsibilities for elementary and secondary education and for band government. The department also negotiates and oversees the implementation of comprehensive and specific claims settlements, promotes economic development, and implements practical forms of self-government. The function of registering Indians, as required and defined by the *Indian Act*, is integral to the delivery of programmes and services by DIAND to its clients. It is carried out in the Indian Registration and Band Lists Directorate, which is part of the Registration, Revenues and Band Governance Branch, Lands and Trusts Services Sector.

The Indian Registration System is used: to maintain an official record of each person who is registered as an Indian; to maintain and produce certain Band Lists; to maintain information on the status of applications from individuals wishing to be registered; to maintain information on the status of applications from bands wishing to take control of membership; to maintain information on the status of official protests of Registrar decisions; and to produce a variety of statistical summaries of IRS data.

The official responsible for the business activity and with the authority to issue records is the Registrar.

Description:

Form, Content, and Requirements: The relational database is composed of the following tables: Region, Responsibility Centre, Secondary Group, Registry Group, Administrator Code, Province, Research Officers, Entitlement. From these are generated the register of status Indians; band lists; population statistics (tables) by age, sex, residence etc.; registry group lists; nominal rolls (used for education funding); and reports of status Indians produced for Health Canada (Medical Services Branch). The content is based on information that has been input into the system from application forms, and also from supporting vital statistics documents.

Records are used by all organizational levels of DIAND, Indian Bands and Tribal Councils, and Health Canada. Erroneous entries are corrected by an addition to the record. A security matrix determines what a user is entitled to see: while it is very difficult to alter records without leaving a trace, the system cannot guarantee that anyone who has authorized access to the records does not alter them. The existence of the record is sufficient for DIAND to consider it certified, or complete. The Registrar decides which information to include in the record and how it is

presented. The records in the system are subject to records management standards and policies. All records are kept indefinitely, and most textual records are transferred to the National Archives of Canada after thirty years for permanent retention. The terms "active" and "inactive" are not used in the archival or records management sense, but to designate the operational status of the individual. If the person to whom the record relates is alive, the record is "active"; if they are deceased or adopted, the record is "inactive". A copy of the data is given annually to the National Archives of Canada.

Characteristics and Appearance: Content is alpha-numeric, with no graphics. The languages used are English, French, and alphabetical, alphanumeric and numerical coding. Information can be displayed electronically or rendered in hardcopy printouts. No special presentation features are required for records to achieve their purposes.

Records do not indicate the name of the originator (DIAND). Date of compilation is included, and it is captured automatically by the system. The name of the addressee can be inferred from information held separately from the system, or from certain elements in the record such as the "creator code" in the attached event record. The place of creation is not indicated, but can be inferred from the "session ID". The name of the receiver is not included. An indication of subject matter (an individual) is not displayed, but "Indian Registry System" and the name of the individual are displayed, and these can provide indications of the subject. No "creator code" is attached to the individual record itself. Standardized data entry forms and a manual govern how information must be entered; standard phrases are used when creating remarks attached to an individual record. No encrypted signatures are used, but a "session ID" is recorded automatically for each event that is entered, based on the unique user access ID. Different types of annotations in the form of event/remark records are added as the record is updated, indicating all changes or additions to the record. There are approximately 60 codes covering specific events, one of which is attached to each event record. The eventual recording of a "death" event is the only event common to all records. There are no special signs or seals.

Technical Information: The hardware used to support the electronic system is a Hewlett Packard 3000 (992/200) minicomputer. The IRS uses MPEX as the operating system, Reflections for terminal emulation, and Powerhouse for the front-end presentation and report generation. The database itself uses Image 3000 and Interbase software. Data is stored on hard disks within the HP 3000 itself. Off-line storage, limited to backups, is done on 4 mm DAT cartridges. Random access is possible on the hard drive, and sequential access on the magnetic tapes.

The IRS runs on the DIAND network where each user has an individual account maintained by system administrators. Security access to IRS is controlled physically (access to the HP 3000 itself is limited to operations personnel), and also controlled in part by a security matrix, which defines user profiles and access limitations. System administration includes audit trails (which note who is accessing what records at what time) and log files (which track all activity on record transactions).

Supporting documents used for the IRS are maintained in hardcopy in the DIAND records classification system.

Overview compiled by:
Francesca Marini

Date:
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Reviewed by:
Catherine Bailey

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