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Title Property rights on First Nations' reserve land

Abstract

This paper examines the economic effects of existing private property rights on First Nations' reserves. We focus on three regimes of land tenure: lawful possession, designated land, and permits. These land regimes have been used to create individual landholdings and grant secure and transferable rights of use of reserve land. Using confidential Census micro-data and rich administrative data, we find evidence of a positive relationship between the use of these tenure regimes and homeownership rates, housing conditions, and band's public spending. We also observe a positive relationship with average income. However, this last result is driven by the inflow of a non-Indigenous population, not by improvements in Indigenous households' income or on-reserve employment. Our findings thus suggest that while reforms to individual property rights on reserve have some positive effects, their scope remains limited and they are unlikely to constitute a transformative tool to alleviate poverty on reserve.