

Review of Current Approaches to Canadian Aboriginal Self-Identification

FINAL REPORT

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, Statistics Canada, or the Canadian Education Statistics Council

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BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The release of Statistics Canada's 2006 Census data on Aboriginal people brings increased attention to the issue of Aboriginal self-identification. These Census data showed that Canada's Aboriginal population grew 45 percent in the past decade and now exceeds one million people, comprising 3.8 percent of the nation's population. This population surge can be accounted for in two ways: the high birth rates of Aboriginal people and a population that is increasingly choosing to self-identify as Aboriginal.¹ Analyzing these numbers, the *Globe and Mail* described the situation as "a policy time bomb," and called for Canada to provide a commitment to making the necessary social and educational improvements "that governments have only flirted with so far."²

Pre-empting this imperative, the Canadian Education Statistics Council (CESC), a partnership between the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) and Statistics Canada, has already spearheaded a national effort to prioritize Aboriginal education in order to improve their success, learning experiences, well-being and entrance into the labour market, recognizing that a new form of Aboriginal identification can become the common denominator for increased service delivery to this expanding population. As the legality and legitimacy of federal systems of service delivery based exclusively on Registered Indian Status is increasingly challenged, the importance of understanding self-identification practices across policy fields and jurisdictions cannot be underestimated. In addition to these emerging concerns, existing service delivery systems based on self-identification also demand improved self-identification practices to ensure expanded delivery.

This study addresses the identification and self-identification of Aboriginal people within the educational context across Canadian jurisdictions.

DEFINITIONS

When discussing Aboriginal people, it is important to understand that the word Aboriginal denotes various groups of people, including First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Generally, the term First Nation refers to the Indian peoples in Canada, both Status and non-Status. Separate from this all-encompassing definition are the Métis and Inuit peoples who define themselves outside the scope of the term First Nations. The Métis are described as a "people of mixed First Nation and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis, as distinct from First Nations people, Inuit or non-Aboriginal people. The Métis have a unique culture that draws on their diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish,

¹ Curry, Bill. "Rising Numbers of Natives Creates 'Policy Time Bomb.'" *Globe and Mail*. January 16, 2008. A10 and "Aboriginal Stats." Editorial. *Globe and Mail*. January 16, 2008.

² Ibid.

French, Ojibway and Cree.”³ Inuit refers to “an Aboriginal people in Northern Canada, who live in Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Northern Quebec and Northern Labrador.”⁴

Throughout this paper, we also discuss various Aboriginal identity groups, which can be geographic, linguistic or culturally based. We will discuss these forms of identification within the context of their use as necessary.

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

The importance of obtaining a quality education at the primary, secondary and post-secondary levels is widely acknowledged. Educational attainment is a major tool in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. Amongst Canada’s Aboriginal peoples, educational attainment levels remain a persistent source of concern. According to an analysis by the Caledon Institute, 2001 Census numbers showed that nearly 59% of on-reserve Aboriginal people and 44% of off-reserve Aboriginal people have not graduated high school, compared to 31% of the population as a whole. Four percent of Aboriginals have a university degree, compared with 15.4% of all Canadians (Mendelson, 2004).

While the above numbers are reflective of the educational reality for First Nation, Inuit, and Métis peoples as Aboriginals, specific challenges often hinge on factors such as the legal status and geographic location/dispersion of these specific Aboriginal peoples. Legal status has been a challenge to Métis seeking financial support for post-secondary studies. According to the 2004 report of the Millennium Scholarship Foundation, *Aboriginal Peoples and Post-Secondary Education: What Educators have Learned*, “many people believe Métis have fallen through the cracks of the federal system, because they are not eligible for band funding.”

In addition to the educational challenges that Inuit share with other Aboriginals such as low high school completion rates, for Inuit, the issue of geography poses a special problem. The Canadian Council on Learning reports that “Few courses at the college level and limited courses at the University level are offered in the [Inuit] land claims areas...Those wishing to undertake skills training, career development courses, or trades training are still frequently compelled to travel away from their home communities.” Family commitments, lack of funds, and cultural barriers often stand in the way of such relocation (Ibid).

The barriers to educational success and skill development that different Aboriginal groups face are similar, but certainly not homogenous.

A recent report from the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program (PCEIP) notes similar trends, but different numbers, also based on 2001 Census numbers:

³ http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/info/tln_e.html

⁴ Ibid.

- the proportion of Aboriginal people with less than a high school education was 39%, those with a high school diploma was 23%, while those with post-secondary education qualifications was 38%.
- 8% of Aboriginal people ages 25 to 64 had a university education, compared with 23% in the non-Aboriginal population.
- The highest percentages the Aboriginal working-age population that had postsecondary qualifications were found in Newfoundland and Labrador (48%), Prince Edward Island (51%), Nova Scotia (48%), and Yukon (48%). Aboriginal people were least likely to have postsecondary qualifications in Quebec (33%), Manitoba (32%), and Nunavut (31%) (PCEIP, 2007).

The report also showed that Aboriginal people are increasingly completing K-12 and that the proportion of Aboriginal people with postsecondary credentials was also noticeably higher among the younger cohorts, as compared with Aboriginal people aged 55 to 64. Similar trends were observed in the North American Indian, Métis and Inuit populations (Ibid.).

The 1996 report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) recommended investments in education and training to improve the employability of Aboriginal people and to address the shortages of trained Aboriginals in many fields. The recommendations of RCAP included training Aboriginal people in work necessary to self-governance, and collaboration between employers and Aboriginal organizations to forecast vacancies and then train Aboriginal people to fill them.

Strategies that target Aboriginal people directly to support employment and self-governance by empowering Aboriginals to design and deliver programming to their own people are tied to the willingness of Aboriginal people to self-identify as Aboriginals. The ability of governments to reach Aboriginal people with funding for enhanced programs and services, and to evaluate the results of these efforts, is dependent to some extent on the availability of information about Aboriginal self-identification.

ABORIGINAL IDENTIFICATION/SELF-IDENTIFICATION

Aboriginal identification and self-identification are complicated and have a complex history in Canada. Historically, Aboriginal identity has been defined and redefined by the Canadian government through revisions to the Indian Act and through treaties which imparted official status to some Aboriginal peoples and not to others.

The Indian Act has been the source of many problems in the history of Aboriginal survival. It has been the legal support for violence enacted against Aboriginal peoples in the form of regulations imposed on personal mobility, language use, and participation in cultural activities. (Restoule, 2000)

Some have said that the “invention” of Aboriginal identity by the state has produced exclusions as well as divisions among Aboriginal peoples (Restoule, 2007). Doing so has led to the creation of a litany of terms such as Indian, Native, Status Indian, Aboriginal, Treaty Indian, Non-treaty, Registered Indian, Non-status, Métis, all of which are seemingly arbitrary, “About the only thing these different terms have in common is the unilateral manner in which they were imposed on the original inhabitants of Turtle Island, resulting in one of the most arbitrary yet oppressive classifications ever devised by a government to categorize and control” (Fleras and Elliott, 2007).

Others have said that the construction of Aboriginal identity as an inferior racial category rooted in blood lines or Aboriginal ancestry was tied to strategies of colonial absorption (Fleras and Elliott, 2007; Stonechild, 2006).

Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs (from 1913 to 1932), Duncan Campbell Scott, declared:

I want to get rid of the Indian problem [...] Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada who has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department and that is the whole object of the bill [Bill 14] (cited in Stonechild, 2006).

Bill 14, which was passed in 1921, permitted the forcible enfranchisement of Indians. Enfranchisement refers to the legal entitlement of Aboriginals under the Indian Act to give up their Indian status. In doing so, Deputy Superintendent General Campbell Scott and others hoped to shrink the Aboriginal population by getting as many individuals as possible to opt out of their status in exchange for certain fundamental rights such as suffrage. In addition, enfranchisement became mandatory for Aboriginal individuals who became doctors or lawyers. Considering their history, it is easy to understand why Aboriginal people would find it problematic to identify with particular terms created by the Canadian government.

In 1969 the federal government’s White Paper on Aboriginal policy proposed the elimination of the status of Aboriginal peoples, liquidation of collective Aboriginal land holdings, and a transfer of responsibility from the federal government to the provinces (Fleras and Elliott, 2007). Demands for Aboriginal self-determination came to the fore at this time and resistance to this policy paper prevented its adoption. It was the beginning of the National Indian Brotherhood, later called the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). This was the beginning of gains in jurisdictional authority by Aboriginal peoples, and perhaps the taking back of their labels and status.

Bill C-31, *An Act to amend the Indian Act*, passed in 1985. These new amendments were intended to remove discrimination, restore status and membership rights, and increase control by Bands over their affairs (Furi and Wherrett, 2003). The bill represented a compromise between the positions of Aboriginal women and non-status Indian groups, and the national status Indian organization, the AFN.

The assertion of national identity has served as a basis for rights and equality claims by the pre-colonial peoples of Canada (Fleras, 1992). Jean-Paul Restoule (2000) discussed the difference between the static notion of Aboriginal identity, which was historically defined externally and the act of personally identifying as Aboriginal. Against the backdrop of assimilationist strategies and sustained colonization by Canadian lawmakers, identifying as Aboriginal implies a shift of control to Aboriginal individuals (Restoule, 2000).

On a collective level, national identity claims have provided a basis for effective organizing by First Nations peoples, organizing which has won commitments from the Canadian government, including the following:

- increased access to post-secondary schooling for Aboriginal people;
- funding for Aboriginal education;
- support for Aboriginal language education;
- support for culturally appropriate education;
- increased Aboriginal control of schooling and education; and
- increased participation by Aboriginal families and communities in educational program planning and decision-making.

Whereas in the past the Canadian state actively sought the disappearance of Aboriginal peoples (Restoule, 2000), visibility and self-identification by Aboriginal people is now being supported and encouraged by the Canadian Government and Canadian jurisdictions. This is part of ongoing efforts to increase Aboriginal Canadians' access to education and to support "the empowerment potential of First Nations education" (Stonechild, 2006).

ABORIGINAL SELF-IDENTIFICATION AND EDUCATION RESEARCH

The issue of Aboriginal self-identification is not new to education researchers. With the increasing focus on improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal learners the need for reliable and valid data is widely recognized. An accurate assessment of the current situation is necessary to inform policy decisions. Using Census data from 1996 and 2001, Mendelson (2006) demonstrated that the issue of Aboriginal post-secondary completion rates is not isolated to the post-secondary system. The problem lies in the low rates of Aboriginal high school graduation. Clearly, to increase post-secondary completion rates of Aboriginal people, the rates of completing high school must first be addressed. This type of analysis helps to focus and direct policy discussion.

In 2004, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada identified Aboriginal education as a priority area and established an action plan to address issues relating to Aboriginal education. One of the three stated objectives of the action plan was: "To strengthen the capacity for evidence-based decision making through actions that include (a) establishing an approach to encourage Aboriginal students to self-identify, (b) coordinating common data and indicator definitions, and (c) initiating

parallel data collection procedures.” This research project represents a step towards the achievement of this goal.

In April 2006, the Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth Research and Planning Branch, on behalf of the CMEC, produced a preliminary internal survey intended to support more formal work on jurisdiction’s self-identification and data-collection practices. Twelve jurisdictions and the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada participated in this preliminary survey of practices of Aboriginal students’ self-identification and the findings showed that, for K-12, each jurisdiction collected central records, but didn’t necessarily collect the same information. In addition, only nine of the 13 entities questioned collected Aboriginal self-identification information. For those that collected the information, common identifiers based on broad Aboriginal ancestry, such as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit, were used.

At the post-secondary education level, the study concluded that the majority of Canadian institutions have individualized student databases, which collect a variety of information, but many have no Aboriginal student identifiers. Departmental databases in jurisdictions follow a similar pattern with slightly less reporting than at the institutional level. Like with K-12, the most common codes or identifiers collected are First Nation/Indian, Métis, and Inuit with some also recording additional Aboriginal identity groups such as Treaty status/non-status or Band membership.

In addition, as part of the data exploration for this current project, the CESC conducted a review of Statistics Canada’s education surveys and the Census in order to document the availability of Aboriginal self-identification data (Centre for Education Statistics, 2007). They found that although the Canadian Census provides data for educational attainment among Aboriginal people, its data provide very limited information about other education outcomes. Other national data on educational outcomes are available, but these data often do not include information on Aboriginal identity or use consistent definitions. Some data sources contain information on Aboriginal ancestry, but it is not clear whether everyone of Aboriginal ancestry identifies themselves as Aboriginal.

SUMMARY OF THIS PAPER

In order to again improve its understanding of how Aboriginal education statistics are collected, the Canadian Education Statistics Council (CESC), a partnership between the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) and Statistics Canada, contracted the Educational Policy Institute (EPI) to examine provincial/territorial experiences in collecting and using Aboriginal self-identification in education matters, including records, testing and surveying. The purpose of the research was to review current provincial/territorial and pan-Canadian approaches to self-identification issues in order to provide examples of effective practice and lay a foundation for policy recommendations for the future development of self-identification policies and pan-Canadian data collection. In particular, the aim was to identify and build up “lessons learned” in order to improve the practice of collecting Aboriginal self-identification information and increase understandings of how this information can be used to improve outcomes for Aboriginal learners.

An additional purpose of this research paper is to provide information and considerations as a basis for further action on the second objective of CMEC's Aboriginal Education Action Plan:

To strengthen the capacity for evidence-based decision making through actions that include (a) establishing an approach to encourage Aboriginal students to self-identify, (b) coordinating common data and indicator definitions, and (c) initiating parallel data-collection procedures. (CMEC, 2006)

This objective is part of the first phase of an overall plan that prioritizes Aboriginal education in order to improve their success, learning experiences, well-being and entrance into the labour market.

Per the Request for Proposal, this research project considered the following questions:

1. What approaches have been taken to the issue of self-identification across the country?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of current self-identification practices? How could the weaknesses be addressed? Are there gaps in the current practices?
3. How are the data being used? To what extent does the level of detail collected affect the data use?
4. Are the data comparable to, or adaptable for comparison with, data from other jurisdictions?
5. What impacts and outcomes, for example, in policy and program areas, can be identified from self-identification for schools/postsecondary institutions, school boards, and ministries/departments of education?
6. What are the benefits and costs of disaggregating the Aboriginal population into subgroups (e.g., linguistic, cultural, status/non-status)?
7. Are certain individuals/groups more or less likely to self-identify than others? Which groups? Why?
8. Is self-identification stable, or does it change over time? Why? What data collection processes help to support stability or effectively manage change?
9. How can the experience to date help to inform the creation or further development of Aboriginal self-identification policies?
10. What policy recommendations flow from the information gathered in the previous questions?

This research project was the result of discussions that have been taking place at the national and regional level over the past few years, beginning at a 2004 Ministers of Education decision, which identified Aboriginal education as a priority area and established an action plan to address issues relating to Aboriginal education, as noted above.

The following research conducted and written up in this paper by the Educational Policy Institute builds on previous discussions and data mining exercises, as noted above. We collect a similar, but expanded set of data. Our findings echo those of the previously mentioned endeavours. However, this new research delves beyond the findings of previous studies by focusing on multiple forms of data collection, such as self-identification on standardized tests and surveys. Self-identification data's use and availability once it has been collected is also explored in this study beyond the scope of previous investigations.

In addition to reporting information on data collection, we asked questions about data use. Moreover, we gathered answers to questions about “best practices” and “lessons learned” to strengthen and better inform the pan-Canadian conversation surrounding the self-identification of Aboriginal people. We also interviewed a wider range of individuals involved in Aboriginal self-identification information collection in education, including school boards, superintendents, universities, colleges and researchers.

Overall, our research found that the collection and use of Aboriginal self-identification information in Canada lacks consistency as data collection practices and usages vary widely across jurisdictions. In terms of collection:

1. There are a wide variety of data collection practices; however, there is a clear geographical cleavage in that the data collection, analysis and dissemination practices are considerably more detailed in the four western provinces than they are in the more easterly provinces; the data collection, analysis and dissemination of information also varies within the territories: the two western ones are considerably more detailed than that in Nunavut in the east.
2. Where self-identification information is collected, the data tends to be stored as part of an individual’s school record. Some jurisdictions collect identity data during standardised testing processes; others find this unnecessary as they can link test files to school records and obtain identity data regardless. In either case, this permits analysis of test scores according to Aboriginal status.
3. Only one province (Alberta) has a province-wide standard question on identity. Another province (British Columbia) is currently in the process of implementing an even more comprehensive standard that will cover all government entities, including education but also other issue areas such as health, transportation and labour. Two others (Manitoba and Ontario) are currently piloting province-wide questions that are formulated and recommended by governments.
4. Most jurisdictions ask questions related to Aboriginal status as a matter of *identity*. However, Manitoba and Saskatchewan ask about Aboriginal status and *ancestry*.
5. Most jurisdictions ask not simply about Aboriginal status but more specifically about identity as First Nations, Inuit, etc. However, the specific choices offered with respect to Aboriginal identity groups varies across (and sometimes within) jurisdictions. Only in one jurisdiction (British Columbia) can an individual decide to self-identify with more than one identity group, though another (Manitoba) is considering implementing similar choices.
6. While some jurisdictions, namely Quebec and the eastern provinces, don’t ask individuals to self-identify, they are still able to identify those students who are Aboriginal through either a band address (in the case of the Atlantic provinces) or language (in the case of Quebec).

In terms of the data use, for the majority of locations, the information is collected and then used for very pragmatic reasons: to gain an accurate count of Aboriginal students. This count is conducted mostly for funding purposes: for tuition reimbursements at the K-12 level and for special scholarships at the post-secondary level. In addition, several institutions and schools use the information to gauge Aboriginal learning and to assess student needs to be able to plan programming in response; this can

take place at either the K-12 or post-secondary levels. Regarding data use beyond a particular school or institution, we obtained very little information on these policy implications.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this project was to explore Aboriginal self-identification practices in elementary and secondary systems across Canada, as well as at the post-secondary level. The main method of data collection for this project was key informant interviews, which EPI conducted over the course of several months. During this period, we interviewed nearly 50 key informants, a list of whom can be found in Appendix A. The first round of interviews was conducted with representatives from each jurisdictional ministry or department of education or post-secondary education (usually at least two representatives from each jurisdiction). A second round of interviews consisted of one to five follow-up interviews in each province and territory with key informants in school boards and post-secondary institutions.

A handful of interviews were also conducted with key informants who conduct research at the national level, including representatives from Statistics Canada. Our questions asked about the Aboriginal self-identification practices in the specific areas of student records, standardized testing and surveying. In each of these categories, we asked about data collection, use and policy implications. A more detailed list of the questions we asked can be found in the full interview instrument, which is included as Appendix B.

This report is the synthesis of these interviews.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS REPORT

This report attempts to paint as clear and complete a picture as possible of the state of Aboriginal self-identification in education-related data collection in Canada. Lacking a national standard or even jurisdictional standards for data collection in most cases, this was not an easy task. As noted above in the methodologies section, the data collection began by looking at what is practiced in each jurisdiction's ministry(ies) or department(s) of education at the K-12 and post-secondary levels. Then, a sampling of individuals from different school boards and institutions in each jurisdiction were interviewed per the recommendations of the key informants at the ministerial/departmental level. These findings were shored up by some internet research. Overall, our findings are limited by the reports of the individuals we interviewed and, thus, might not have captured all the data possible for each jurisdiction.

In addition, due to the fact that practices vary so widely across the country, the reporting varies widely. In this paper, the information gathered is synthesized as much as possible to give the range of findings and practices, by geographic region, particular jurisdiction or anonymously. However, tables or sections in this report may seem incomplete; they are not. The lack of data reflects one of two things: either the jurisdiction does not collect or use the data as we asked or the interviewee did not

have the information to answer our question. We tried to be as clear as possible in letting you know the particular circumstances.

Despite these shortfalls, there is a wealth of information in this paper that serves to further the goals of the CMEC and CESC to better understand what types and how data are collected in Canada in this area and to assess the feasibility of a pan-Canadian standard for self-identity data collection.

CURRENT APPROACHES TO ABORIGINAL SELF-IDENTIFICATION BY JURISDICTION

This section overviews current approaches to Aboriginal self-identification. The first part overviews jurisdictional approaches in the area of data collection in education, namely in elementary, secondary and post-secondary education. Our research, particularly, looked at the types and uses of data collected across Canada in education records, testing and surveying. This section will attempt to answer the following questions for each section:

- Who collects Aboriginal self-identification information?
- In what areas within education is this information collected?
- Who has a standard for what is collected, or is implementing a standard now or shortly?
- What information is collected, identity or ancestry, Aboriginal only, or identity groups?
- List identity groups that are identified, where applicable.
- How Aboriginal identity information is used in reporting, such as:
 - Is it used for enrolment only or for outcomes as well?
 - If outcomes are reported, specify which ones: graduation, standardized testing, satisfaction surveys, pursuit of post-secondary?
 - Are numbers for Aboriginal students compared to Non-Aboriginal students, or to all students?
 - If collected, are identity group results reported?

The second part covers a summary of pan-Canadian approaches, which are taken from a recently written White Paper produced by the CESC as well as any additional information gleaned from key informant interviews conducted with individuals at Statistics Canada. This section will also include information collected during interviews with individuals who conduct research at the national level. This section is included to draw comparisons between what is collected at the national level with what is collected at the jurisdictional level. It will show that while some similar variables are collected, there is also not a standard collection method at the national level. In thinking about developing a pan-Canadian model for Aboriginal self-identification, researchers and surveyors at the federal level will also need to be consulted.

The third and final part provides comparative information from several other countries, namely the United States, Australia and New Zealand. These locations are included because each has a significant Aboriginal population, and, different from Canada's current practices, each of these countries has an established national standard for the collection of Aboriginal self-identification information. As such, in each country, Aboriginal self-identification information is collected for education matters (meaning both elementary/secondary and post-secondary) in the same manner that it is collected for other issue areas as well as during the Census count. In this section we will explore how each country collects this information as possible models for what a potential pan-Canadian standard could look like.

CURRENT COLLECTION OF ABORIGINAL SELF-IDENTIFICATION INFORMATION

As noted earlier, this research looks at each jurisdiction's practices when it comes to collecting Aboriginal self-identification information. In particular, it looks at how data on Aboriginal status is or is not collected on students.

In general, identity data can be collected via three types of data collection points.

Student Records: At the primary and secondary level, a student record refers to records that student, parents or individuals complete during enrolment or registration in secondary or elementary school. At the post-secondary level, records refer to college or university applications or enrolment/registration forms. In either case, the form on which data is captured may be designed in such a way as to capture information about identity or ancestry.

Surveys: Identity data is sometimes collected along with other “tombstone” data via questionnaires given to students or parents.

Testing: Identity data, along with other “tombstone” data such as gender and date of birth, may be captured on forms which accompany a standardized test given to students.

IN WHAT AREAS IS INFORMATION COLLECTED IN EACH JURISDICTION?

This sub-section looks at whether a jurisdiction collects self-identification information in the following areas: records, surveys and testing. The best way to illustrate the findings is using a table, which categorizes the information collected in each jurisdiction, with K-12 and post-secondary education reported on different tables. In each table, cells are marked with a Y (yes) or N (no) for current collection. In addition, it is marked in the cell if there are current concrete plans to begin collection. With regard to the survey column, there are specifics added as to what type of survey information is currently or planned to be collected. For testing, the word “linked” is written if testing information is not explicitly collected, but available due to the ability to link test scores to student record information.

At the K-12 level, twelve jurisdictions were surveyed on self-identification information collection in school records, surveying and testing. Table 1 summarizes the results for K-12 data collection for each jurisdiction.

Table 1: Aboriginal identifiers in K-12 data

JURISDICTION	RECORD	SURVEY	TESTING
British Columbia	Y	Y	Linked
Alberta	Y	Y	Linked
Saskatchewan	Y	Y	Y
Manitoba	Y	N	Y
Ontario	Y	N	N
Quebec	N	N	N
New Brunswick	N	N	N
Nova Scotia	N	N	Planned
Newfoundland and Labrador	Planned	Planned	Planned
Prince Edward Island	N	N	N
Yukon	Y	Y	N
Northwest Territories	Y	N	N
Nunavut	Y	Planned	Planned

As Table 1 shows, the Western provinces and the territories routinely collect self-identification information when they collect record data. Ontario is in the early stages of initiating the collection of this information. Data is currently only being collected by school boards, not the province. Eastern Canada is the only region that does not collect self-identification information in their school records.⁵ Only British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Yukon collect self-identification information on their student surveys, but Newfoundland and Labrador and Nunavut both plan to collect this information. The small numbers in this column can be explained due to the fact that these answers were obtained during interviews with Ministry officials and most surveys that are conducted at the K-12 level are done less formally at the individual school level. While four jurisdictions use self-identification information during standardized testing, Saskatchewan and Manitoba ask for the information during the test. Alberta and British Columbia link their test scores to record data through the student numbers. Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia answered that they were planning to collect this information during testing shortly. New Brunswick and Quebec neither collect the information nor have future plans to do so.

⁵ It is important to note the difference between identification and self-identification such that identity or ancestry or status can be obtained in ways other than from self-identification including by name (e.g. Aboriginal last name) or address (e.g. postal code of a Band). In fact, while jurisdictions in Eastern Canada such as New Brunswick do not ask for self-identification information in education records, they are able to identify individuals living on Bands for tuition funding purposes. In Quebec, there is a question about mother tongue, which allows individuals to enter one of several Aboriginal languages. In addition, an identification code is entered on the file of students who live on an Indian reserve and attend a public or private school pursuant to an agreement between the band council and the school board or school concerned.

For post-secondary education, twelve jurisdictions plus the MPHEC were surveyed regarding their self-identification practices in school records, i.e. university and college applications and enrolment, and surveys. In most jurisdictions, the self-identification story that exists at the K-12 level mirrors that at the post-secondary education level, as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Aboriginal Identifiers in Post-Secondary Data

JURISDICTION	RECORD	SURVEY ⁶
British Columbia	Y	Y
Alberta	Y	Y
Saskatchewan	Y	Y
Manitoba	Y	Planned
Ontario	Y	N
Quebec	N	N
New Brunswick	N	N
Nova Scotia	N	N
Newfoundland and Labrador	Y	Y
Prince Edward Island	N	N
Yukon	Y	N
Northwest Territories	Y	Y
Nunavut	Y	N
MPHEC	n/a	Y

As the table shows, self-identification information is collected in most places in school applications or enrolments, with the exception of Quebec and the Eastern provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. A handful of jurisdictions also collect this information in surveys, including the MPHEC, which started surveying Maritime post-secondary students several years ago. In post-secondary education, standardized testing is not conducted except in a few rare occasions with regard to apprenticeships or adult basic education, so this category was erased from the table.

⁶ British Columbia and Newfoundland and Labrador do not track Aboriginal status in surveys of students but do track status in surveys of graduates.

ASKING THE QUESTION

This section will delve into the following questions:

1. Who currently has a standard for what is collected or is implementing a standard or will shortly develop one?
2. Are individuals asked about their identity or ancestry?
3. Are they asked as to their Aboriginal status only or also to pick an Aboriginal identity group?

When answering these questions, it is important to clearly define what we mean by “standard.” Here, when we refer to standard we refer to a standard means of collecting information as well as a standard definition of Aboriginality, which could sometimes include more specific identification into further identity categories such as First Nation, Métis, Inuit or other populations.

In addition, it is necessary to understand that in Canada, there are two basic approaches to identifying people by ethnicity. The first is to ask about *identity*, which basically asks individuals whether they identify themselves with a specific cultural group (e.g. Anishnaabe). The second is to ask about *ancestry* or, roughly, how they would describe their parents and grandparents. Because of ethnic intermarriage, the number of people claiming ancestry of a particular group is always larger than the number of people claiming identity with that group. Although the two approaches are distinct, and complementary (the Canadian Census, for instance, uses both questions), jurisdictions and institutions who choose to use a single question to capture ethnicity have to use one or the other; while the identity approach predominates, the ancestry approach has its adherents as well.

Complicating matters somewhat is the case of First Nations, as some questions will ask not just about identity but also legal status (i.e. whether an individual is a “status” or “non-status” Indian). Status is fundamentally a legal issue, albeit one partly dependent on ancestry, and so is not purely a question of ethnic identification. Other questionnaires will also ask about the student’s residential status and specifically the issue of whether or not an individual lives on- or off-reserve.

Broadly speaking, the dominant approach to identification in Canada is to ask students about their identity, not their ancestry (though the latter strategy is employed by Manitoba and the three Territories). However, within some jurisdictions, individual institutions or schools will ask the self-identification question in a way that asks about ancestry rather than identity, even if the prevailing provincial policy is to ask about identity. For instance, Saskatchewan’s survey on their standardized tests asks about ancestry as does the Ontario colleges application.

Following is a summary of each jurisdiction’s practices in these areas.

Currently in **British Columbia**, there are a variety of practices that take place when it comes to self-identification in education. At the K-12 level, administrators collect data and fill out a standardized

web form when a student enrolls in which there are two entries to make: “Native Ancestry Y/N” and “Band Code.” A few years ago, the province implemented an “ever Aboriginal” policy where individuals remain identified as Aboriginal even if they do not identify themselves as such in later years.

Parents and students in Grades 4, 7, 10 and 12 are asked to participate in satisfaction surveys where they are asked “are you of Aboriginal ancestry (First Nation, Inuit, Métis)?”

For universities and colleges, there is a joint application service, the Post-Secondary Application Service of British Columbia. On this online application, individual applicants are “encouraged to advise institutions of [their] Aboriginal ancestry, to assist them in providing culturally-appropriate services.” Applicants are asked to check a box if they “would like to declare North American First Nation ancestry.”

At the post-secondary level, in addition to the application, individuals are asked to self-identify during both the college and university surveys. Here, the question for the college survey is about identity but the university survey question asks about ancestry. Specifically, the college survey asks, “Are you an Aboriginal person that is an indigenous person of Canada, including North American indigenous person Inuit or Métis? If Yes, Are you a member of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, or Other.” On the university survey, individuals are asked, “Are you an Aboriginal person? An Aboriginal person is someone of native descent that is an individual who is Inuit, Métis or North American, either status or non-status.”

As well, the province has established and is in the process of implementing a standard for self-identification information collection. Similar in conception to the Alberta standard, British Columbia’s attempt at standardization would be more wide-ranging as it would include all government departments (including education, health and economic development). The new standard is under review in K-12, and has been accepted for implementation by all public post-secondary institutions. This move is part of a province-wide effort to close “the socio-economic gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal British Columbians” within the next decade, which recognizes that “accurate, good quality data supports the ability to measure the effectiveness of programs and services and to monitor outcomes” (Ministry for Aboriginal Relations 2007). If successful, this model would be the first of its kind in Canada, connecting data collection between and among various issue areas.

When implemented, the question will be one of identity. As currently planned, individuals would be asked if they identify as Aboriginal and if so, asked to further identify themselves as First Nations, Métis or Inuit (individuals would be able to identify with more than one of the sub groups). In addition, there are optional additional components such as on- or off-reserve and status or non-status.

In 2004, **Alberta** implemented The Aboriginal Learner Data Collection Initiative (ALDCI) to identify and assess Aboriginal learners in the province. The data collected by Alberta Education is used to help assess the educational attainment of Aboriginal learners and the effectiveness of the education system. To collect this data, a voluntary Aboriginal identity question, which is standardized across the

jurisdiction, appears on K-12 student registration/application forms as well as in post-secondary education applications. The province also conducts standardized testing on a regular cycle in K-12; the self-identification question is not asked again during testing, but students' standardized test results can be matched to their student records using their student numbers, which permits aggregate comparison of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students on relevant testing measures.

Here, individuals are asked to specify their status "if they wish to declare that they are Aboriginal."⁷ The options are: Status Indian/First-Nation, Non-Status Indian/ First-Nation, Métis and Inuit. The question's purpose is explained as necessary to "measure [the] system effectiveness over time and develop policies, programs and services to improve Aboriginal learner success. This information will also be used to determine the provincial First Nations, Métis and Inuit Funding Allocation provided to school jurisdictions."⁸

At the post-secondary level, institutions are required to use the same standard question as in K-12 on their applications. However, key informants from the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) told us that the question on their application was about ancestry rather than identity, and allows individuals to check off different categories than those the Ministry discussed, namely: Status Indian, Non-Status Indian, Bill C-31,⁹ Métis or Inuit.

The **Saskatchewan** Ministry of Education requires that school boards report self-identification information in a standard way as part of a recently implemented system called the Continuous Improvement Framework. Fully implemented in Fall 2007, individual school districts are required to report, in a standard manner, information on students' identity as well as data on learning and other information part of this system to improve education and learning in the jurisdiction. Here, the mechanism (i.e. the CIF) is standardized, but the method (i.e. the specific questions used to capture the necessary data) is not. As such, it is up to each individual school or school district to capture this data, but it is up to their discretion to figure out how to ask the questions.

In Saskatchewan's standardized testing program in K-12, students are asked a question about ancestry in the socio-demographic survey section which accompanies the test. The relevant question is as follows:

⁷ "Aboriginal Learner Data Collection Initiative Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)." Updated July 2007. Alberta Ministry of Education: <http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/FNMI/aldci/faq.asp>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ C-31 refers to a 1985 Amendment of Canada's Indian Act, which allowed First Nations women the right to keep or regain their status even after marrying non-Aboriginals and granted status to the children (but not grandchildren) of such a marriage. According to this Act, a child of a status/non-status marriage would retain status, but if his or her child in turn married a non-status or another status/non-status child, their children would not be granted status.

Are you of Aboriginal descent? (This is a voluntary declaration.)

Yes Please Specify: (Ex: Cree, Dene, Inuit, Métis, Saulteaux)

No

At the post-secondary level, there is no standard method of data collection at the level of the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour. In addition, both the method of data collection as well as the question of self-identification information varies by institution. Specifically, both the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan ask about Aboriginal ancestry on their undergraduate admissions applications.

The University of Saskatchewan's application question is as follows:

The University of Saskatchewan is committed to education equity. Completion of all or any questions related to education equity is voluntary.

Please refer to the University Calendar for definitions of the terms used below.

My Ancestry is:

Status Indian Yes No

Non-status Indian Yes No

Métis Yes No

Inuit Yes No

In the mentioned University Calendar, Aboriginal Ancestry is defined as "it is determined by reference to the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 and includes Indian, Métis and Inuit persons of Canada as well as persons who are accepted by one of the Aboriginal peoples of Saskatchewan as a member of their community."

At the University of Regina, applicants are asked to fill out their "Aboriginal Ancestry and Affiliation" by checking status Indian, non-status Indian, Métis and Inuit. Here, there are similar identity groups as on the University of Saskatchewan application, but the question is phrased differently. On the University of Regina application, individuals who self-identify can also fill in "Other" and there is a space to fill in "Band name."

In **Manitoba**, there is currently no standard for self-identification data collection. However, there are currently provincial conversations taking place about setting up a province-wide standard that not only would be uniform in post-secondary education, but that would also link K-12 with PSE.

Today, like in several other provinces, each institution collects information at various levels and in various different ways. At the K-12 level, while there is currently no standard question for collecting school records, in December 2006, the Ministry sent a letter to school heads requesting that, beginning in the 2007-08 school year, they ask individuals to self-identify and to do so by their “ancestral/cultural identities.” Parents/guardians declaring Aboriginal identity of their child in K-12 public schools in Manitoba are allowed to select “up to three categories” including: Not Aboriginal, Aboriginal – Uncertain of Ancestry, Anishinaabe (includes Ojibway/Saulteaux), Ininiw (Cree), Dene (Sayisi), Dakota, Oji-Cree (includes Island Lake Dialect), Métis (Michif), Inuit and Aboriginal – Other.

At the post-secondary level in Manitoba, there is no standard practiced across the province. The colleges collect self-identification information based on ancestry by identity group (Inuit, Métis and First Nation, for the most part, though due to the lack of standard this varies by institution). Some of the universities do not collect information on Aboriginal identity while others merely collect information on whether or not an individual identifies as Aboriginal or not. The practice of the universities not to self-identify marks a shift that took place when the Freedom of Information legislation was implemented; they interpreted the legislation to mean that they couldn’t collect information that wasn’t needed for program management so they stopped collecting this information. Since then, the Ministry has asked them to resume collection, and that is in various stages of implementation across the province.

Ontario currently doesn't have a Ministry policy requiring school board to collect self-identification information at the K-12 level so that information is not available on enrolment, the Education Quality and Assurance Office (EQAO) standardized test results, graduation rates and drop-out rates. However, as part of a larger mission “to improve achievement among First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students and to close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in the areas of literacy and numeracy, retention of students in school, graduation rates, and advancement to post-secondary studies,” the Ministry of Education is encouraging school boards “to develop policies for voluntary, confidential Aboriginal student self-identification that would provide a basis for gathering the relevant information.”

As part of this ongoing project, as of the 2006-07 school year, seven school boards have a student identification policy in place, including the Toronto District School Board, Keewatin-Patricia and Kenora Catholic District School Boards and Grand Council Treaty #3. As part of this initiative, the Ministry of Education has generated materials that urge school boards to work with them to come up with a standardized version of a self-identification question that allows students to identify with four identity groups: First Nation (residing on a reserve and paying a tuition fee), First Nation (residing in the jurisdiction of the school board), Inuit and Métis.

However, each school board will develop their own plan for self-identification information collection in consultation with the Aboriginal community and using tools provided by the Ministry so that the self-identification question asked in one school board won’t necessarily be the same as the question asked in another school board. In addition, this plan currently relates only to school boards, but the Ministry would like to extend it to EQAO exams and post-secondary education in the future.

In Ontario at the post-secondary level, self-identification information is collected on both the college and university joint applications. In addition, each college and university also collects information during registration and in their own surveying. Institutions that receive funding from the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities through the Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy are in theory mandated to collect information on Aboriginal students, but data collection methods vary and reported institutional numbers are in many instances little better than estimates.

On each type of application, however, the wording of questions vary. For instance, on the joint college application (administered by the Ontario College Application Service online), individuals are asked about their self-identification through a series of three questions: 1) the applicant is asked their country of citizenship. If they select “Canada” as their country than they will be prompted to answer a question about their “status in Canada” (with the possible answers being “Aboriginal ancestry” or “Canadian Citizen”). If they indicate that they are of Aboriginal ancestry, than they are prompted with third question that asks them to select from four types: status first nation, non-status first nation, Inuit and Métis.

Significantly, the paper application for Ontario colleges asks a somewhat different set of questions. This application has an abridged question that also asks about ancestry and simply asks individuals if they are “of Aboriginal status, [to] identify [their] ancestry” as Inuit, Métis, non-status First Nation or status First Nation.

On the joint university application, individuals are asked to self-identify based on their status; this phrasing alludes to ancestry based on questioning an individuals’ relationship to the treaty rights and definitions, which are explained on the application as follows:

The Aboriginal and Treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada are recognized and affirmed in the Constitution Acts of 1867 to 1982 (section 35). Section 35(2) indicates that Aboriginal peoples include Indian (First Nation), Inuit and Métis peoples.

In keeping with this definition, you may self-identify by answering, Yes to the question. You may further specify one of First nation, Métis or Inuit. If you do not meet this definition or do not wish to declare your status, leave the field blank or choose ‘No/Undeclared’.

Are you an Aboriginal person? If yes, please specify. (Please see above paragraph for specifics.)

In **Quebec**, individuals are not asked to self-identify at the K-12 level. However, student records include the identification of “mother tongue.”¹⁰ There is a standardized form from the Ministry that

¹⁰ The language requirement imposed by the Quebec government is primarily targeted at French and English students and not at identifying Aboriginal status. While the government could use this as a way to identify Aboriginal individuals, many Aboriginal students consider themselves to be French or English when it comes to their “mother tongue,” which means there is a high degree of uncertainty as to whether the “mother tongue” could be relied upon to identify Aboriginal status.

each student or parent fills out upon enrolment in a Quebec public or private school. One section asks about language and allows students to fill in a number code for either French, English or Other, and there are two boxes within that question, one for mother tongue and the other for “language spoken at home.” In addition, the form asks about “language of study.” In the accompanying code guide, the following language categories are cited:

- Inuktitut
- Algonquin languages: Cri, Malécite, Micmac, Innu, Ojibway, Pied-Noir, Abénakis, Algonquin, Atikamakw, Naskapi
- Iroquois languages: Mohawk and Huron
- Athabaskan languages (Dene): Chilcotin, Chipewyan, Esclave, Flanc-de-Chien, Kaska or Nahani, Kutchin or Loucheux, Peau-de-Lièvre, Porteur, Tahltan; Tutchone, Yellowknife
- Other American Indian languages: Dakota, Haida, Kutenai, Salishenne, Tlingit, Tsimshiam, Wakashane

Each enrollee is assigned a student identification numbers, which is then used throughout their tenure in K-12 as well as referred to when entering post-secondary education. However, the majority of Aboriginal students within Quebec (approximately 70% according to one Aboriginal official) receive their primary/secondary education at reserve/band administered schools and are not given the same registration form; thus, this information is not collected for them.

The Quebec Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport told us that post-secondary institutions don’t ask Aboriginal students to self-identify, but ask them questions about legal status and residency on various applications and the information is transmitted to the Ministry.

In respect of universities, some endeavour to identify their Aboriginal clientele and may therefore resort to self-identification. As self-governing institutions, universities develop their own registration forms to target specific clienteles in order to supply adequate services and programs, as in the case of international students and Aboriginal students. This information is not disclosed fully to the Ministry. Upon request by universities, the Ministry grants financial assistance to some institutions, either to adapt students and offer courses of study in areas identified as priorities by communities, or to provide special assistance to such students, or else to promote the revitalization of Aboriginal cultures. In addition, the college system also offers a program to support CEGEPs’ efforts to implement measures fostering access to college-level studies for Aboriginal students enrolled in the first year of a college program.

However, further research showed that both Université Laval and McGill University ask self-identification questions on their applications. At McGill, applicants are asked to check an optional box if they wish to identify as Aboriginal “to help improve service to students for First Nation, Inuit or Métis.” On the Laval application, perspective students are asked, “do you self identify as a Canadian Aboriginal?” In addition, on both applications, individuals are asked to provide their student record number as well as provide permission to the institution to access this number; the information gleaned from this record would then supplement the data on the application form and

provide access to information about “mother tongue” and residency as discussed above in the K-12 paragraph.

Generally speaking, in the Eastern provinces, Aboriginal people are not asked to self-identify. However, at the regional level for post-secondary education, the MPHEC surveys graduates of colleges and universities, and asks for Aboriginal identification in their surveys. In their survey of 2003 Maritime graduates, individuals were asked if they were “members of a First Nation or Aboriginal.” In the recent survey of 2006 graduates, respondents were asked if they “consider[ed themselves] to be Aboriginal (First Nations, Inuit, Métis), a visible minority, none of the above, prefer not to answer.”

New Brunswick does not collect self-identification information and doesn’t have plans to do so. However, individuals who are Band members are identified for funding purposes, but these individuals do not self-identify; rather they are identified by the Ministry by their address (e.g. if they live on reserve they are considered Aboriginal for tuition funding purposes).

In **Nova Scotia**, like with New Brunswick, the Ministry is able to identify the schools that are Band schools and individuals who might not attend Band schools but live on reserve through their address. However, they don’t ask for self-identification information.

The Department of Education of the Government of **Newfoundland and Labrador** is discussing the feasibility of self-identification, but doesn’t currently practice self-identification in K-12.

At the post-secondary level, while the Ministry does not collect self-identification information, both Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic applications for admission have questions that ask individuals to self-identify. For instance, at Memorial University, a definition for “Aboriginal people” is given as “an Aboriginal person is a North American Indian or member of a First Nation, a Métis, or Inuit. North American Indians or members of a First Nation include status, treaty or registered Indians, as well as non-status and non-registered Indians.” Then, individuals are simply asked if they are Aboriginal people or not. At the College of the North Atlantic, applicants are asked if they have Aboriginal status. If yes, they are asked to pick an Aboriginal identity group from: Labrador Inuit, Labrador Métis, Inuit, Mi’Kamq or Other, for which they are given a space to fill in.

Prince Edward Island does not ask for self-identification information at either the K-12 or PSE levels (either at the Ministerial or institutional levels), though discussions about the possibility of asking for self-identification information has started in the former.

In the three Territories, self-identification is done at the K-12 level in school records as well at the various public colleges in the application process, but there is no standardized way of collection in either the Northwest Territories or Nunavut. Yukon has a new standard manner of collecting self-identification information on school records in K-12; here, while there is standardized testing at the K-12 level, there is not self-identification question since the test records are matched to student record numbers.

In the **Yukon**, the Education Student Enrolment Form, which is the standard used across the territory, asks about ancestry with several questions:

1. Yukon First Nation Yes/No
2. Which First Nation are you a member of? (listing more than a dozen choices of First Nations: Champagne and Aishihik FN, Kwanlin Dun FN, Little Salmon/Carmacks FN, Ross River Dene Council, Vuntut Gwitchin FN, White River FN, Tr'ondek Hwech'in FN, Selkirk FN, Teslin Tlingit Council FN, Liard FN, FN of Nacho Nyak Dun, Ta'an Kwach'an Council FN, Carcross/Tagish FN, Kluane FN)
3. Inuit – Yes/No
4. Métis – Yes/No
5. Other - First Nation: _____

At Yukon College, the territory's only post-secondary institution, applicants are asked to self-identify very simply by answering: Do you consider yourself to be of First Nations Ancestry? Y/N. If yes, which First Nation: (applicants write this in).

In the **Northwest Territories**, at the K-12 level, students enrolling in school are asked to check a box as whether they are Inuit, Dene, Métis, Southern Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. There is no standard specific question, but each school must collect the information in the abovementioned categories so that they may be entered into the territory-wide system.

At the post-secondary level, applicants to Aurora College, the territory's only public college, are asked about their ancestry in the personal information section. Under ancestry, applicants can choose to self-identify as Dene, Non-Status Indian, Métis, Inuit, Inuvialut and Other, which they fill in. Under language, applicants can choose from: Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun, Dogrig, English, French, North Slavey, South Slavey, Greenlandic, Chipewyan, Cree, Gwich'in and Other, which they fill in.

In **Nunavut**, at the K-12 level, students are asked their "ethnic origin" and language preferences on the school enrolment form, but there are no options (i.e. it is an open-ended question). However, in the *Nunavut Student Records Management Directive* (1991), in the appendix where school boards are told how to enter their data, Inuit, Aboriginal –non-Inuit, and Non-Aboriginal are listed as the three possible answers for entry under ethnicity, and under language preferences Inuktitut (syllabics), English, Inuinnaqtun and French are the options listed. As such, while the enrolment form is left open ended for the self-identifier to fill out, the administrator entering the information into the Territory's database is limited in their options.

At the post-secondary level, when individuals apply to the Arctic College, they are asked about ancestry and language. Regarding ancestry, applicants can choose Inuit or Other (with no space to fill it in). On main language fluently used, applicants can tick off Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun, French, English or Other (with no space to fill in more specifics).

The following tables summarize Aboriginal identities and sub-identity groups mentioned in self-identification schemes by jurisdiction.

Table 3: Aboriginal Identifiers Used in K-12 School Data Systems by Jurisdiction

JURISDICTION	IDENTITIES	SUB-IDENTITIES ¹¹
New Brunswick	Self-identification information not collected.	
Nova Scotia	Self-identification information not collected.	
Prince Edward Island	Self-identification information not collected.	
Newfoundland and Labrador	Self-identification information not collected.	
Quebec	Self-identification information not collected.	
Ontario	First Nation On Reserve First Nation Off Reserve Inuit Métis	
Manitoba	Not Aboriginal Aboriginal – Uncertain of Ancestry Anishinaabe (including Ojibway, Saulteaux) Ininiw (Cree) Dené (Saysi) Dakota Oji-Cree (including Island Lake dialect) Métis (Michif) Inuit Aboriginal – Other _____	
Saskatchewan	Aboriginal descent	Cree Dene Inuit Métis Salteaux
Alberta	Aboriginal Learner (Status Indian / First Nation) Aboriginal Learner (Non-Status Indian / First Nation) Aboriginal Learner (Métis) Aboriginal Learner (Inuit)	
British Columbia <i>No response is recorded as “Non-Aboriginal”</i>	Aboriginal	First Nation Métis Inuit
	First Nations (some institutions only)	On-reserve Off-reserve, or Band code
Yukon	First Nations	Champagne and Aishihik FN Kwanlin Dun FN Little Salmon/Carmacks FN Ross River Dene Council Vuntut Gwitchin FN White River FN Tr’ondek Hwech’in FN Selkirk FN Teslin Tlingit Council FN Liard FN FN of Nacho Nyak Dun Ta’an Kwach’an Council FN Carcross/Tagish FN Kluane FN
	Inuit	
	Métis	
Northwest Territories	Inuit Métis Dene Southern Métis Non-Aboriginal	
Nunavut	Inuit Aboriginal-non-Inuit Non-Aboriginal	Plus language choices: • Inuktitut • English • Inuinnaqtun • French

¹¹ This column is filled in if a follow-up question is asked to individuals to further specify an Aboriginal identity group beyond the first question.

Table 4: Aboriginal Identifiers Used in PSE Applications by Jurisdiction

JURISDICTION	IDENTITIES	SUB-IDENTITIES
New Brunswick	Self-identification information not collected.	
Nova Scotia	Self-identification information not collected.	
Prince Edward Island	Self-identification information not collected.	
Newfoundland and Labrador	Aboriginal	Labrador Inuit Labrador Métis Inuit Mi'Kmaq Other
Quebec	Aboriginal	
Ontario	Aboriginal	Inuit Métis Status First Nation Non-Status First Nation
Manitoba	Aboriginal	Inuit Metis First Nation
Saskatchewan	Inuit Métis Non-Status Indian Status Indian	
Alberta	Aboriginal Learner (Status Indian / First Nation) Aboriginal Learner (Non-Status Indian / First Nation) Aboriginal Learner (Métis) Aboriginal Learner (Inuit)	
British Columbia <i>No response is recorded as "Non-Aboriginal"</i>	Aboriginal Ancestry	First Nation Métis Inuit
	First Nations	On-reserve Off-reserve, or Band code
Yukon	First Nation	Which First Nation?
Northwest Territories	Dene Non-Status Indian Métis Inuit Inuvialut Other	Plus language choices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chipewyan • Cree • Dogrib • North Slavey • South Slavey • Greenlandic • Gwich'in • Inuktitut • Inuvialuktun • Other
Nunavut	Inuit Other	Plus language choices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inuktitut • English • Inuinnaqtun • French • Other

As the above summary tables shows, jurisdictions run the gamut of different practices in their self-identification. There are differences not only on the use of ancestry vs. identity, but also very different practices regarding the capture of information about status vs. non-status and tribal identities.

HOW IS ABORIGINAL SELF-IDENTIFICATION INFORMATION USED?

This section will explore how Aboriginal self-identification information is used. In a broader sense, this is really a question about why the information is collected by the particular jurisdiction or institution. Generally, Ministries at both the K-12 and post-secondary levels collect information for internal purposes only. However, in British Columbia, most public reports separate out Aboriginal performance and highlight the need to close the gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal performances. In some cases, Ministries or Departments share particular school board data with those particular school boards, but they won't share one school board's information with another, and when comparisons are done, they are done in the aggregate. In doing so, most discussed the need to improve education performance and outcomes for Aboriginal students and, thus, the need for reliable and accurate data to make informed decisions regarding these changes.

SELF-IDENTIFICATION PRACTICES IN STUDENT RECORDS: REGIONAL COMPARISONS

We found that the practices used to collect Aboriginal self-identification data varied widely. These practices varied across jurisdictions, between K-12 and post-secondary education, and across student records, standard testing, and surveying (or other research). Some regularities were also observed.

When self-identification data is collected, this was taking place by and large in K-12 and post-secondary education schools, when students registered or enrolled. The choices provided for Aboriginal self-identification tended to be one of four different types. Of the four possible scenarios described below, the second scenario was the most frequently used by far, in both K-12 and post-secondary education.

In the simplest scenario, students or their parents were asked to identify whether they are Aboriginal or not. In the Northwest Territories, the choice offered was, "Northern Indigenous Aboriginal resident." In the second scenario, students or their parents were asked to identify whether they were First Nations, Métis or Inuit. This was subject to local differences however. For example, in Nunavut, due to the fact that the majority of the population is Inuit, the choices provided were fewer (Métis was not included it seems). Finally, in the third scenario, a list of local First Nations peoples were provided as choices for identification beyond identification simply as First Nations. In some cases in this scenario other options were infrequently provided, for example Aboriginal – Uncertain or Aboriginal - Other. An example is in K-12 in Manitoba where the examples provided on the form to illustrate ancestral identity included a specific First Nation (Cree). In the fourth scenario, a completely open question was used to elicit self-identification data.

The most common practice used across regions in Canada was to offer students (or their parents) the choice to identify as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit. When those three categories are the ones used, as they are in the west and in the North, differences emerge in the sub-categories of First Nations in the region provided. There were also cases in the North of subcategories of Inuit languages being provided as choices for self-identification. In those jurisdictions where the most detailed self-identification data was being collected, the choices provided tended to reflect the local First Nations peoples.

The most detailed self-information data was being collected in the Northern jurisdictions of Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut. In the Yukon, for example, K-12 students are offered a list of 14 First Nations communities to select from in self-identifying as Aboriginal. In the Northwest Territories, the Dene Nation was identified. It is also in the North that self-identification data has been collected for the longest time, that is, since the 1980's, compared to the 1990's or the 2000's in other jurisdictions. This may be explained by the fact that there is a much larger Aboriginal population in the North than in other jurisdictions in Canada. In Nunavut, one college's student population is reportedly 80% Aboriginal.

In the Western provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba), self-identification data was collected. The data being collected in these provinces was the most detailed in Manitoba, where the choices for self-identification included a list of five Nations, as well as Métis, Inuit, Aboriginal-Other, and Aboriginal – Uncertain of Ancestry. The provision of an open “Aboriginal-Other category” is important, since it takes account of the reality of migration within Canada.

Self-identification data was collected with the least regularity in Eastern Canada (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador). However, in Newfoundland and Labrador at the public college and university level, self-identification data was being collected. Practices of data collection in that public college and university differed however. Inconsistencies in how colleges and universities in the same province collected self-identification data were noted in other jurisdictions too, for example, in Manitoba and Ontario. Efforts to enter self-identification data in a longitudinal record were noted in most of the provinces collecting self-identification data in K-12 and PSE, but this information does not appear to be transferred between K-12 and PSE.

In the North, in the Yukon and Nunavut, the terminology “on-reserve”, “off-reserve”, and “Bands” is not used; this is because there are no “reserves” or “Bands” in this region. In Nunavut we were informed that all Inuit people carry a beneficiary card. This is different from the provinces in Canada, in which this terminology is recognized. Information about which students have Band funding is not being collected systemically across Canada. We did not find that information about Band affiliation was either known or routinely collected as part of self-identification data. We learned that this information is known for K-12 students in Alberta and Saskatchewan. In Saskatchewan, Band affiliation and treaty number are identified. At the post-secondary education level, we found only one jurisdiction in which information identifying Band affiliation is being collected but this data was not being collected in a standardized way across British Columbia schools.

In general, in most jurisdictions, at the K-12 level, the record data become part of a longitudinal record for the individual. However, how the Aboriginal identifier is maintained in this record varies by location: in some, the identifier is permanently retained as it was initially entered (as in British Columbia¹²) or it is asked again each year (as it is in Alberta and the Yukon). In Quebec, at the K-12 level, the form was standard across the province and the individual student record was used throughout a student's tenure in the school system and also accessed if and when they applied to post-secondary education in the province.

At the post-secondary level, all the jurisdictions that answered this question told us that the identifier remains attached to the individual student's record throughout their duration at the institution, but that the record is not used after graduation.

From what we have gathered so far, data are mostly internal, but are often analyzed and reported on for public consumption in some form or another, usually in a report that is published on the Ministry's website. In addition, there is usually some reporting to specific government entities within the jurisdiction as well as, in some instances, the giving over of data to these entities to use for their own purposes. Specifically, regarding K-12 in the Territories, access to the information is given to Bands and school boards for them to be able to internally assess their own performances relative to the rest of the jurisdiction. In Alberta, there is planning underway to develop a guideline that will permit the release of data to external researchers.

Please see Appendix C for summary tables on K-12 and post-secondary education student record information.

SELF-IDENTIFICATION PRACTICES (TESTING AND SURVEYS)

The collection of Aboriginal self-identification data in the administration of standardized testing was the exception, not the rule. Only in Saskatchewan did we find Aboriginal self-identification data was being collected in standardized testing, although this data was not being linked to the student record data.

Instead of collecting Aboriginal self-identification data in standardized testing, in a number of jurisdictions we found that standardized test results were linked to students' school records which already contained that information. Student identification numbers were used to link standardized test results with Aboriginal identifiers in the student record. This was the case for example in Alberta, New Brunswick, and Yukon in K-12.

In PSE almost no standardized testing takes place, thus no information was collected on this topic.

¹² It is important to note that while a student's identity is retained in British Columbia, their identity is asked each year and those answers are retained, making it possible to look at an individual's pattern of self-identification over time.

Please see Appendix C for summary tables on K-12 student testing information.

SELF-IDENTIFICATION PRACTICES (SURVEYS/OTHER RESEARCH)

We found that there was a difference between self-identification data collection in survey research at K-12 and PSE levels. We found only one case of the collection of self-identification data in surveys/other research at the K-12 level. In this case, self-identification data was collected in a K-12 school satisfaction survey in British Columbia and the data was not entered in the longitudinal record (where self-identification data is already collected as part of the student record). More surveying probably takes place, but at the individual school level.

Surveys/other research done in post-secondary education was often graduate outcomes research. In the cases of outcomes research which was being done, largely in the western provinces (including British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba), the collection of Aboriginal self-identification data for those surveys was usually either ongoing or planned.

Please see Appendix C for summary tables on K-12 and PSE student survey information.

The following summary charts look at how different jurisdictions use the data they've collected in records, surveys and testing. The types of data used were specifically asked to key informants during our conversations with them and we checked the boxes for the uses they indicated were practiced in their jurisdiction. If there are plans to use the data in a particular manner, the box is marked "P." The shaded columns represent jurisdictions that either don't collect Aboriginal self-identification information (as in the case of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island) or weren't contacted for this study (as in the case of Quebec). Blank boxes are intentional; they represent circumstances in which data are not used.

Table 5: Summary Table of Data Use for K-12

	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	NL	PE	NT	NU	YK
To report student data separately for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.	√	√	√	√							√	√	√
For funding formula for education or support programs targeted for Aboriginal students.	√	√		√								√	
To compare Aboriginal student data with other jurisdictions.													√
To report data separately for identity groups of Aboriginal students.													
To share student results with Band funders or sponsors of Aboriginal students.	√	P	√	√								√	
To present test results separately for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.	√	√		√									√
To compare Aboriginal test results with other jurisdictions.													√
To present test results separately for identity groups of Aboriginal students.													
To present survey results separately for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.	√	√											
To compare Aboriginal survey results with other jurisdictions.													
To present survey results separately for identity groups of Aboriginal students.													

At the K-12 level, as table shows, all but one jurisdiction (Ontario) that we contacted out of a total of eight that collect information said they report Aboriginal student data separately from other students' information. Half of the jurisdictions that collect information said they use data for funding formula for education or support programs targeted for Aboriginal students.

In general, the majority of jurisdictions use the information for reporting and funding purposes. Only a few share the information with Bands or Aboriginal communities, but a couple are planning to do so in the near future. Most of the jurisdictions that test, do report on testing scores and, while they compare

overall Aboriginal results with the general population, they don't compare their territory or province to other locations.

Table 6: Summary Table of Data Use for Post-Secondary Education

	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	NL	PE	NT	NU	YK
To report student data separately for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.	√	√		√							√		
For funding formula for education or support programs targeted for Aboriginal students.	√												
To compare Aboriginal student data with other jurisdictions.											√		
To report data separately for identity groups of Aboriginal students.	P	√											
To share student results with Band funders or sponsors of Aboriginal students.			√										
To present survey results separately for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.	√	√	√										
To compare Aboriginal survey results with other jurisdictions.													
To present survey results separately for identity groups of Aboriginal students.													

Overall, at the post-secondary level, our interview contacts at the Ministries gave us very little information on data use. For the most part, they told us that data are used for very pragmatic reasons: to internally count the number of students so that special funding could be provided or that programming could be planned. Where data are collected, it is most frequently used for reporting purposes, specifically to look at data for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students separately, and only one discussed reporting more specifically by Aboriginal identity group. Out of all the locations we interviewed, only one compared their student results with other locations and only one jurisdiction said that they shared their information with Aboriginal people or communities.

SUMMARY OF CURRENT JURISDICTIONAL APPROACHES

Currently, across Canada, the data regarding Aboriginal self-identification can be described as varied at best. While each jurisdiction collects student records information and about half have some form of standardized testing at the K-12 and a good number conduct their own surveys, the type of information that is collected and how it is used varies by location.

In general, our research does not give us a clear reason for why data are collected, even among those jurisdictions that collect this information. Where a standard exists, those involved in developing a standard may recognize a reason (improve reporting on outcomes for Aboriginal students), but those asked to implement this may not understand it. Where no standard exists information may be collected, but often the Ministry can't articulate the particular policy implications. Some may only use it for reporting, others don't even report on what they collect.

SOME CURRENT PAN-CANADIAN APPROACHES TO IDENTIFICATION

When thinking about the question of Aboriginal self-identification in Canada and gathering as much information as possible regarding current practices and uses of information, it is useful to survey entities outside of provincial and territorial governments and institutions and school boards. As such, this section looks at some national approaches to self-identification data collection, namely the Statistics Canada's approaches as well as the approaches of several research organizations that collect information at the national level in education-related fields.

We have thoroughly reviewed the Centre for Education Statistics' summary of ten Statistics Canada surveys that include Aboriginal identifiers in data collection, including the following:

- Population Census
- Labour Force Survey
- International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey
- National Graduates Survey
- Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics
- National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth
- Program for International Student Assessment/Youth in Transition Survey
- Post-Secondary Student Information System
- 2003-04 Information and Communications Technologies in Schools Survey (past)
- 2003 Adult Education and Training Survey (past)
- Aboriginal Peoples Survey
- Aboriginal Children's Survey

The following summary table shows the types of identifiers used, the frequency of data, the size of sample and whether the information have been released publicly.

Table 7: List of Statistics Canada Surveys Relevant for PCEIP that Contain Aboriginal Identifiers

DATA SOURCE	ABORIGINAL IDENTIFIERS BASED ON ANCESTRY OR IDENTITY?	FREQUENCY OF DATA RELEASE	IS THE ABORIGINAL SAMPLE SIZE LARGE ENOUGH TO PRODUCE RELIABLE ESTIMATES? YES / NO IF YES: WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DETAIL ALLOWED?	HAVE ABORIGINAL DATA EVER BEEN RELEASED USING THIS SOURCE? YES / NO
Population Census	Ancestry, Identity, Treaty / Registered Indian, and Indian Band/First Nation membership	Every 5 years	YES (virtually all levels of details are possible)	YES
Labour Force Survey (LFS)	Identity	Monthly	YES, mainly for estimates at a broad level	YES (Western Canadian provinces)
International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS)	Identity	Occasional (2003)	YES, mainly for total Aboriginal estimates in the over-sampled regions	YES
National Graduates Survey (NGS)	Ancestry; Class of 2000 based on Ancestry and Identity	Occasional (most recent classes: 1995 and 2000)	YES, but mainly for total Aboriginal estimates at the Canada level	YES (MANITOBA ABORIGINAL GRADUATES, 2000 CLASS)
Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID)	Ancestry and Treaty / Registered Indian status	Annual	Sample size is small; data source not perceived as constituting a reliable source of information on Aboriginal peoples	NO
National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY)	Cycle 6 based on Ancestry and Identity	Biennial	Sample size is small; data source not perceived as constituting a reliable source of information on Aboriginal peoples	NO
Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) / Youth in Transition Survey (YITS)	Identity	YITS – Biennial, PISA - Every three years	Sample size is small; data source not perceived as constituting a reliable source of information on Aboriginal peoples	NO
Post-Secondary Student Information System (PSIS)	Identity	Annual	Data on Aboriginal status was not collected in surveys that PSIS is replacing. This question will be studied once PSIS is fully implemented	NO
Information and Communications Technologies in Schools Survey (ICTSS)	n/a	One time (2003-2004)	YES, but mainly for estimates at a broad level	YES
Adult Education and Training Survey (AETS)	Ancestry	Occasional (2003)	YES, but mainly for total Aboriginal estimates at the Canada level	NO
Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS)	Ancestry, Identity, Treaty / Registered Indian, and Indian Band/First Nation membership	1991; 2001; 2006	YES (virtually all levels of details are possible)	YES
Aboriginal Children's Survey (ACS)	Ancestry, Identity, Treaty / Registered Indian, and Indian Band/First Nation membership	Conducted for the first time following the 2006 Census	YES (virtually all levels of details are possible)	NOT YET

As the table above shows, Aboriginal identifier data that are collected in various surveys in Statistics Canada vary. In terms of the types of identifiers asked in the questions, of the 12 surveys analyzed,

four ask about ancestry *and* identity together among other things including treaty status; four ask about identity only and three ask about ancestry only.

The frequency of data collection varies by survey as does the data use. In terms of data use, five of the sources released their data regularly, which is a much higher level of use than that at the jurisdictional level.

Regarding sample size, other than the Census and the APS and ACS, all other survey samples of Aboriginal peoples were considered too small to be used at a level lower than a Canada-wide level. In a number of these surveys, even though information on Aboriginal identity is collected as part of other background variables, the data were not considered as constituting a reliable source of information on Aboriginal peoples. This is because these surveys were not developed to specifically address Aboriginal peoples' issues and needs.

As well, the Census and the 1991 and 2001 Aboriginal Postcensal Survey (APS) were the only survey that questioned on-reserve individuals. The information reported in the summary also does not include information about other identifiers asked such as language, ancestry, and geographic location.

Each of these three Statistics Canada surveys asks their Aboriginal self-identification questions in different ways. For instance, the 2006 Census asked a series of questions, including one each on ancestry ["What were the ethnic or cultural origins of this person's ancestors?"], identity ["Is this person an Aboriginal person, that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit (Eskimo)?"], status ["Is this person a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian as defined by the *Indian Act* of Canada?"] and Band affiliation ["Is this person a member of an Indian Band/First Nation?"].

The Aboriginal Peoples Survey in 2006 also asked a series of questions that inquire about a number of categories, which parallel those in the Census: ancestry ["Do any of your ancestors belong to any of the following identity groups (North American Indian, Métis, Inuit)?"], identity [Are you an Aboriginal person, that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuk?], status ["Are you a Treaty Indian or Registered Indian as defined by the *Indian Act* of Canada?" and "Have you ever applied to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to be registered as a status Indian under Bill C-31?" and "Have you been registered as a Status Indian under Bill C-31?"] and Band affiliation ["Are you a member of an Indian Band or First Nation?"].¹³

Participants in the Aboriginal Children's Survey in 2006 were asked to respond on behalf of their children for more or less the same questions as in the APS. However, they are not asked about application to DIAND¹⁴ regarding registry under Bill C-31.

¹³ These questions are from the 2006 APS, as cited in "How Statistics Canada Identifies Aboriginal Peoples."

¹⁴ DIAND, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, is now known as INAC, Indian and Native Affairs Canada.

Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey (LFS) in 2004 included an Aboriginal identity question that permitted respondents to identify themselves as North American Indian, Métis or Inuit. In the December 2007 LFS, individuals were asked, "Is ... an Aboriginal person, that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit?" and if they answered "yes" to that question then they were asked to "specify an Aboriginal group from the list of North American Indian, Métis or Inuit?" Respondents are allowed to identify with up to three of those groups.

In addition to Statistics Canada, other national research entities utilize self-identification in their surveys. For instance, the University Applicants Survey and the College Applicants Survey, both conducted by the education research firm Academica Group asks participants to self-identify. In the most recent surveys for both college and university applicants in 2007, applicants were asked:

Are you an Aboriginal person? (An Aboriginal person is someone of native descent, that is, an individual who is Inuit, Metis, or North American Indian - either status or non-status)

1. Yes
2. No
3. Decline to answer
(if yes) Please indicate the group to which you belong
1. Métis
2. Inuit
3. Non-status
4. Decline to answer
5. Status specify _____

This question has evolved over time. In the surveys between 1999 and 2001, Aboriginal identity was one of the answers in an overall question about an individual's "ethno-cultural group" where they could choose white, black, North American Native (First Nations/Métis), South Asian, East Asian and South East Asian. Between 2002 and 2004, the question evolved to asking whether or not individuals were Aboriginal. In 2005 and 2006, the question reverted to the earlier version and participants were asked about their backgrounds.

As part of the Measuring the Effectiveness of Student Aid (MESA) Project, low-income access bursary recipients and non-recipients who are randomly selected to participate in a multi-year telephone survey are asked a series of questions about their attitudes toward and finances for post-secondary education. In the questionnaire, low-income students, who are both recipients and non-recipients of access bursaries from the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation are asked to self-identify. Specifically, they are asked: *People in Canada come from many different cultural or racial backgrounds. Could you describe your background?* The participants are not given any prompts, but this is the place where an individual would self-declare whether they were white, Aboriginal or black, among a long list of possibilities.

Overall, both government and non-government research provides another place to look for possible ways to ask individuals to self-identify in education records, surveys or testing.

SUMMARY OF CURRENT SELECT COMPARATIVE COUNTRIES

In addition to looking at Canadian national and jurisdictional information, it also might be useful to do some comparisons with self-identification practices in the United States, Australia and New Zealand. Each of these countries has an Aboriginal population and has grappled with similar issues regarding the question of self-identification. However, different from Canada's tactics to date, each of these countries has developed a national standard for requesting self-identification information. This standard is used when Census data are collected, and it is also used when data are collected in specific issue areas like education. As such, when the United States Department of Education conducts a survey or requests information from school boards or universities/colleges, any question asking individuals to self-identify will be asked in this same way.

SELF-IDENTIFICATION IN THE UNITED STATES

In the United States, there is a nationally standardized way of asking self-identification questions in education matters, which follows relatively new regulations set up by the White House Office of Management and Budget.

Here, the question of Native identification is wrapped up in a much larger issue of ethnicity and race identity, which, at least very recently, primarily revolves around Latino heritage. The most recent significant action that has taken place in the United States is that, in 1997, the White House Office of Management and Budget made changes to the way that race and ethnicity data was to be collected for the 2000 Census and beyond. It was also the intent that these changes be implemented in other federal surveys as well as at the state level. The implementation is still taking place, and there is much discussion from which this project in Canada could glean ideas.

Taking these changes into account, the National Center for Education Statistics 2002 Handbook notes the following for use in education-related surveys:

The ethnicity question is:

What is this person's ethnicity?

- Hispanic or Latino
- Not Hispanic or Latino

The race question is:

What is this person's race? Mark one or more races to indicate what this person considers himself/herself to be.

- White
- Black or African American
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

As such, in the United States, all individuals are asked to self-identify, first based on their ethnicity and second based on their race. Aboriginal people who wish to self-identify will be able to tick off whether or not they are ethnically Latino or Hispanic and then have only one choice in the race question as to whether they are American Indian or Alaska Native. There are no further Aboriginal identity groups from this point.

SELF-IDENTIFICATION IN AUSTRALIA

In Australia, there is also a national standard for self-identification, which is used in the Census and education matters.

The Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG) written by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is used to clarify questions of status. Changes were made between 2001 and 2006, so it might be interesting to compare before and after and speak with individuals on the process. The 2006 Census questionnaire has a question on “indigenous status.” This is for individuals who identified themselves as being Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander on an earlier question of race. Choices are: Non-indigenous, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Not Stated, and Overseas Visitor. Questions of a person’s ancestry are also asked. This question asks, “What is the person’s ancestry?” In 2006, answerers were told to “provide up to two ancestries” and have separate spaces to provide the ancestries of both sides of their family. There are additional questions about family, language, location.

Prior to the 1971 Census, Aboriginal peoples were counted in order to exclude them from population estimates for each state/territory. The 1967 Referendum changes section 127 of the Constitution to allow Aboriginal people to be included in official Census population counts. The 1971 and 1976 Censuses asked each person’s racial origin. Since the 1981 Census, the word “racial” has been dropped from the question. The 1996 Census was the first to allow people’s origins to be recorded as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander; prior to this, only one or the other could be recorded.

In addition, Australia implemented a specific Indigenous special enumeration strategy since the 1976 Census. Their role is to encourage participation as well as to provide culturally sensitive materials to relate to indigenous people. Individuals involved might be people with whom we wish to speak on process issues. Indigenous Engagement Managers exist in each regional Census office and facilitate a range of survey and Census activities with Indigenous people across the country.

The ABS also has a *Dictionary of Standards for Education and Training Statistics*. The questions on status mirror those in the Census as explained above.

In summary, in Australia, Aboriginal self-identification is standardized and is a question of ancestry and status; respondents have the capacity to pick more than one ancestry if they wish.

SELF-IDENTIFICATION IN NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand has established a Statistical Standard for Ethnicity such that information is uniformly collected in all surveys so that it can be compared. The collection of information about ethnic origin in the Population Census is mandatory under the Statistics Act 1975.

According to the Statistics New Zealand website, there are two main questions that are asked in their surveys, including the Census, which would relate to our research. One asks about identity while the other ancestry. Individuals surveyed are asked, “Which ethnic group do you belong to?” and then can answer as many as they wish from the following: New Zealand European, Maori, Samoan, Cook Islands Maori, Tongan, Niuean, Chinese, Indian, Other. Regarding ancestry, individuals are asked particularly with regard to Maori, “Are you descended from a Maori (that is, did you have a Maori birth parent, grandparent or great-grandparent, etc.)?” The website notes that “a person has Maori descent if they are of the Maori race of New Zealand; this includes any descendant of such a person.”¹⁵

In addition to questions about ethnicity, Statistics New Zealand is developing the “core questions module,” which is a set of questions aimed at gathering key demographic variables such as age, sex, and ethnicity consistently across social surveys. This module will first be used in April 2008.¹⁶

¹⁵ <http://www.stats.govt.nz/default.htm>

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

VIEWS ON THE PRACTICES OF ABORIGINAL SELF-IDENTIFICATION

This section will explore general views of Aboriginal self-identification and provide a synthesis of answers to several key questions including:

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of current self-identification practices? How could the weaknesses be addressed? Are there gaps in the current practices?
2. What are the benefits and costs of disaggregating the Aboriginal population into subgroups?
3. What are the impacts or implications for Aboriginal learners, parents/guardians and Aboriginal communities of having Aboriginal identity information?
4. Would it be beneficial or detrimental to have a pan-Canadian standard for Aboriginal self-identification?

This section, which is taken from the last section of questions in our survey to key informants in jurisdictions across the country, will provide answers in the aggregate; individual jurisdictions won't be named.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF CURRENT PRACTICES

In terms of strengths, many jurisdictions identified their **coordination with the Aboriginal community** as a major strength. Many interviewees mentioned positive feedback from the pan-Canadian process in conjunction with CMEC and CESC, and indicated that this would reinforce and assist them to improve the work they are already doing in conjunction with Aboriginal communities.

In addition, the jurisdictions that have a **standard for data collection** or that are currently developing one mentioned this as strength. They noted that having a standard does and would greatly assist with data collection and their ability to analyze the data centrally to better evaluate the education practices in the province/territory as well as allow them the capacity to compare themselves to other jurisdictions or regions.

Moreover, those who do not have a standard, mentioned that **having a central database** that includes data management software into which school boards and others could enter information was a strength in their self-identification practices. Short of having a standard for data collection, having this system required them to have an intra-jurisdictional way to upload the information, thus making it easier to analyse and look at the bigger picture. Saskatchewan, for instance, recently began using one of these programs and indicated that its use has greatly assisted their ability to query and analyze data in addition to being able to compare and aggregate data from across the province.

Regarding weaknesses, respondents said that despite the many gains in trust and the overall communication that is taking place between policy makers and Aboriginal leaders, there is still **fear among Aboriginal communities that they are going to be presented in a bad way**. In addition, because of the long history of information abuse and misuse, many communities that are **suspicious of data collection** and there is still a lot of work to do to assuage these concerns across the country. In particular, fears about how the data are used and if they will be used in a respectful way and are used for good and improvement and not to divide or shame people still exists. Key informants spoke about the continued need to reach out to communities on this issue.

Moreover, jurisdictions discussed the **need to be more proactive in taking the information back to communities**, particularly highlighting success stories and uses for information and reports that have been done on the potential of data in K-12 and post-secondary education. In some cases, information is not shared with the communities, which many noted was a critical aspect of successful self-identification practices. In other cases, not enough explanation is given regarding the complex legal and privacy issues surrounding data collection.

A few locations discussed the **lack of clarity in questions** as a weakness that was causing individuals not to identify. In related matters, some mentioned the lack of identity groups as a weakness while other viewed that as a strength; some mentioned the lack of standardization as a strength and others as a weakness.

In addition, a couple of jurisdictions discussed the challenge that **international students were misunderstanding the question** to mean “native” and answering it so that there were individuals from China who were self-declaring as Aboriginal. This is particularly an issue for post-secondary education applications. In addition, Aboriginal people from the United States and Australia were also answering the question even though it was not intended for them. A desire to fix this weakness lead OCAS to ask the self-identification questions in such a way that an individual can declare themselves a Canadian citizen or an Aboriginal person.

Another weakness cited by at least one jurisdiction was the **gap between the data collection at the local level (i.e. by each individual school or institution) and the data gathering at the governmental level**. In other words, in provinces such as Saskatchewan, the Ministry asks the schools to enter the data they collect into the provincial database in a standard manner. The data, however, are collected in a non-standard manner, which means that some of the data entering decision-making is left up to the administrator entering the information.

BENEFITS AND COSTS OF DISAGGREGATION

As noted earlier, many jurisdictions collect self-identification information in some disaggregated form whether by Aboriginal identity group, tribe or another division. However, while the majority of jurisdictions ask for self-identification information to be divided into identity groups upon collection, many do not report data in the disaggregate for various different reasons, including the following that were cited during key informant interviews:

- Ability to maintain confidentiality of students could be compromised due to small numbers when get to disaggregated groups;
- Lack of usefulness of disaggregated sample since the size would be too small to be statistically meaningful or useful;
- Lack of usefulness of a disaggregated sample since most jurisdictions are only first getting the data for identity groups now so there's no longitudinal information yet; however, this issue will become moot as disaggregated data are collected for a number of years;
- Fear of engendering competition among Aboriginal groups or pitting one group against another;
- Actual financial costs to develop and run data systems and conduct analysis;
- Problem of answering the question if individual is of mixed background; and
- Decision as to which identity groups to divide into since there will be different identity groups depending on use of data collection. For instance, in some cases language might be necessary to develop language-specific program while in others Band-identity will be necessary to fulfil education funding requirements.

Nonetheless, most key informants cited not collecting information on identity groups as a cost to gathering useful data on Aboriginal self-identification; they maintained that there were clear benefits in collecting this information, benefits that outweighed any costs. However, it is critical to note that these pros and cons are within the context of *collecting* the information and not *reporting* the information.

Specific advantages of collecting disaggregated information that were cited in interviews were:

- Identity groups can be useful to assist in self-identification. For instance, individuals may more readily identify as Cree than Aboriginal. Encourages identification as it gives individuals who answer the question a more specific category with which to identify.
- Aboriginal communities tend to think of themselves in more specific terms so it is most appropriate to collect data from them in this way.
- May be more useful to share more specific information with particular groups, but will depend on what groups want.
- Allows knowledge of a particular community area's particular strengths, weaknesses and needs; once have that knowledge, can place additional emphasis where necessary and make informed and specific policy decisions.
- More specific information allows for more interesting data collection than that at the aggregate level.

- Specific data collection allows program or curricular development and policies to be as specific as possible. For instance, in one territory, the department can match students to their home locations and use the knowledge to encourage them to enter fields such as education and mining that are needed in those particular communities. In addition, some jurisdictions would use language information for K to 12 programming and would like to collect it.
- Funding is allocated based on identity groups, so a necessary method of collection for funding allocation is required.
- Different policy implications for different groups, so it is important to have knowledge broken down into the different groups.

A PAN-CANADIAN STANDARD

A major question that envelops this entire project is: would it be helpful to have a pan-Canadian standard on when and how to collect Aboriginal identity information for the education system, including a standardized definition of Aboriginal identity?

To date, as discussed earlier in the paper, the only two jurisdictions that have a standardized way of collecting this information are Alberta and British Columbia. British Columbia has developed a province-wide standard for the collection of Aboriginal self-identification information in all issue areas, not just for education, and is currently working on its implementation. In addition, others have government-recommended standards for particular areas of data collection such as student records in K-12 for Ontario and Yukon and standardized testing in Saskatchewan.

Overall, key informants said it would be beneficial to have some level of Canadian standardization for self-identification so that jurisdictions could be compared to one another. Some respondents spoke of the advantage of using Census definitions since Census numbers provide population counts for comparisons. As noted earlier, the United States, Australia and New Zealand use this method whereby each country has a national standard that stems out of the question asked on the Census, allowing for cross comparisons between Census data and education data.

However, they also noted the difficulties in coming up with such a pan-Canadian approach including the decision-making process on the so-called “universal question” as well as the fact that the universality would have to be beyond just the question since different jurisdictions measure things differently, e.g. graduation rates.

Most informants said that while it might be a statistical ideal, in reality, a strict Canadian standard would not be feasible in a country that is so federalized, particularly in the realm of education; but, at the most basic level, some form of standardized self-identification question, particularly with a common definition as a guideline, would be helpful, particularly to improve data comparability and the confusion between the uses of ancestry versus identity. In addition, learning and using best

practices from some jurisdictions could assist other jurisdictions who have less developed questions or have fewer resources and time allocated to this project in their development of their standards; it would help them avoid “reinventing the wheel.” In the same vein, from the Aboriginal perspective, having a national indicator could be useful to pressure individual jurisdictions to do better in their collection of data.

Considering these difficulties while still recognizing the importance of a national standard for data-collection and policy purposes, many informants took a middle-of-the-road approach that would involve some form of national standard, but the specifics as to how such a standardization would look and how it would be used would differ across the country. Many individuals with whom we spoke stressed the need for flexibility to meet the various needs of different jurisdictions and even specific locations within each jurisdiction. Many stressed that there could be no “one size fits all” model of self-identification, perhaps just a high-level standard that would allow individual jurisdictions to add breakdowns that meet their needs.

This method would allow cross-jurisdictional comparisons by rolling up to common level (e.g. Aboriginal versus non-Aboriginal, or First Nations, Métis or Inuit versus non-Aboriginal), but then would also allow individual locations to use different or additional identity groups that better suited their research or policy needs.

In working out the intricate details of how a Canadian standard might look or if it could exist at all, representatives from each jurisdiction emphasized the important of consultations with the Aboriginal community during the entire decision-making process; they cited that the discussions that have been taking place through the CMEC and CESC have been helpful and particularly appreciated the involvement of the Assembly of First Nations and other Aboriginal groups.

LESSONS LEARNED

This section will be a synthesis of lessons learned or promising practices that were gleaned from key informants based on their experiences in education data collection and identifying Aboriginal people. Here, individual jurisdictions will be identified as we look at practices, promising and not, in the following areas:

- Encouraging Aboriginal self-identification/Consulting with Aboriginal groups
- Encouraging stability in self-identification
- Promising practices on data collection and on reporting

In each, where possible, we will explore the barriers to and highlight good practices.

ENCOURAGING SELF-IDENTIFICATION/CONSULTING WITH ABORIGINAL GROUPS

In each jurisdiction where there are questions about Aboriginal self-identification, informants with whom we spoke stressed the need to greatly encourage the Aboriginal community to self-identify. Strategies ranged from direct encouragement and education about how to answer the specific questions to indirect education about the importance of gathering data and participation in record keeping, testing and surveying to better the data collection in jurisdictions and understanding of the education sector.

In Alberta, the Aboriginal community was heavily involved in the process that established a province-wide standard; part of that discussion involved understanding the value of collecting their information in education record keeping, testing and surveying. After the standard was implemented, the government produced brochures and posters and “frequently asked questions,” which they sent to every school in 2005 and also posted online. In addition, there is explanation text that accompanies the question, which encourages individuals to identify and explains its importance.

Saskatchewan really stands out in this area. In Saskatchewan, at the K-12 level, the government works closely with Bands to encourage them to participate in self-identification. Here, they have created a Shared Standards and Capacity Building Council, a council that brings together chiefs from Bands across the province together with Ministry staff, to establish shared standards, build capacity and advocate for Aboriginal students. The unique Council has brought many people together to discuss the process of self-identification and the value of data and importance of collection and an informant noted that it is the “key to why Saskatchewan has such a high number of self-declared students and why Band schools are also part of the system.”

In addition, the Saskatchewan Ministry’s student tracking system works closely with First Nations and Métis education branches, and each Superintendent is assigned Bands and areas to work with and be a liaison with those groups. According to key informants, this partnership has increased identification as well as quelled negative attitudes about data misuse. Moreover, once the data are collected, the

teacher and student records are sent out to Aboriginal communities to teach how to enter records and use them. Key informants cited this method of reaching out to and including the Aboriginal community in the policy conversation as “invaluable education, which has had a huge impact of the success of the system.”

Saskatchewan is also a national leader regarding assessments and seeks First Nations and Métis participation in all aspects of assessment development; they said they ask for their help when composing exams as well as vet all tests with community leaders. In scoring the exams, the Ministry encourages First Nations and Métis council members and Band members to participate. They noted that a number of Band members observed the testing process last year.

In post-secondary education, at the University of Saskatchewan, there is a question on the university application but individuals are not required to answer. However, high school counsellors from schools are asked to encourage students to identify and explain to them the importance of identification and the uses of the data. In addition, at the University of Saskatchewan, the President has a special advisor on Aboriginal matters (who is Aboriginal himself) who traveled around to Bands to speak with students and elders to encourage students to identify when they apply and similarly explain the importance of self-identification.

In British Columbia, due to the implementation of the new self-identification standard, there has been a recent push to teach students about the benefits of self-identification and why this information is being collected. At the University of British Columbia, for instance, the standards approach as well as the accompanying materials was developed in close collaboration with the First Nations House of Learning and Okanagan Aboriginal Programs and Services, thus including both the administration such as enrolment services as well as on-campus Aboriginal community. Key informants cited that their approach has been fairly successful. In 2006, they had roughly 450 Aboriginal people apply to the University, and only 50 of them opted out of self-identification. The University is now working on raising awareness among other universities about their approach, and others are following their approach.

At the K-12 level in British Columbia, schools receive funding for additional Aboriginal programming. With the new standard, there is a noted “climate of encouragement.” As part of this initiative, the Provincial Aboriginal Branch Director provides workshops to administrators and communities. In addition, some school administrators sent out letters to families informing them of the changes to the policy.

In Ontario, while there is no direct initiative from the government, individual colleges have made different efforts to encourage self-identification on college and university applications, particularly those institutions with larger Aboriginal populations. In fact, universities recently requested that the Ontario University Application Centre add an Aboriginal self-identification question on their application. The key driver for institutions is that the government provides some funding support for particular programs and services, often through the Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy.

Similarly, Manitoba works in partnership with educational stakeholders to ensure there is support for this type of data collection and consults with Aboriginal organizations and communities to ensure that the identifiers being used in the data collection process are appropriate.

In the Territories, lack of self-identification is less of an issue than in the Southern jurisdictions due to the majority population of Aboriginal people. Nonetheless, Yukon has a First Nations Education Advisory Committee, which is made up of members from each of the 14 First Nations in the territory. They, along with the Community Education Liaison Coordinators in each school, disseminate information regarding the importance of self-identification and are there to encourage parents to tick off that box if they see that it is not checked.

ENCOURAGING STABILITY IN SELF-IDENTIFICATION AND OTHER IDENTITY ISSUES

Another issue that our study addressed was identity trends. Specifically, we were interested in three things:

1. Understanding if there were certain individuals or identity groups who were more or less likely to identify as Aboriginal.
2. If there were some purposes for which individuals were more or less willing to identify as Aboriginal? If so, what are they? Consider funding, enrolment, testing, follow-up surveys or any other purpose.
3. Knowing whether Aboriginal identification remains stable for the same individual over time. That is, do students always identify themselves as Aboriginal from one year to the next, or do some identify themselves as Aboriginal some years but not others?

While these were questions asked to each key informant with whom we spoke, we found that most did not have any information on most if not all of these questions. We report below our small findings in this category.

INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE MORE OR LESS LIKELY TO IDENTIFY

On this first question, we found that most jurisdictions didn't know whether or not certain individuals or identity groups were more or less likely to identify as Aboriginal. In fact, many jurisdictions told us that the discrepancy between the number of self identifiers and the population is getting increasingly smaller, which they accounted for due to their work with communities and an increase in a combination multiculturalism and ancestral pride.

SITUATIONS IN WHICH INDIVIDUALS ARE MORE OR LESS LIKELY TO IDENTIFY

On the second question, key informants told us of the following situations where individual students might not want to identify:

- If an individual is enrolled in a school with few Aboriginal students, he or she might not want to be singled out in fear of racism or mistreatment.
- Parents might not want to fill out the information due to a political stance against data collection on First Nations or Métis status due to bad history of misuse.
- Lack of clear definitions of what it means to be Aboriginal or part of one of the different identity groups. For instance, if don't know what is Métis versus Inuit.
- General confusion regarding the form or document that they are filling out.
- If a student considers her or himself half and half and don't want to choose one or the other. This problem also arises for some parents who don't consider themselves an "either/or," but they can't be both since it is only possible to fill in one box.
- If they move to another jurisdiction, then they might change the community with whom they identify.

Regarding the purposes for which individuals were more willing to identify as Aboriginal, respondents had similarly little information to give us. Most told us about particular financial incentives such as Aboriginal-specific scholarships such as the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation's Access Bursaries in Saskatchewan and Manitoba at the post-secondary level or tuition funding at the elementary or secondary school levels for which individuals were required to self-identify. In addition to funding, respondents spoke of other benefits for which they were required to, and thus willing to, identify such as support in the application and registration process, access to Aboriginal advisors and housing awards at the post-secondary level.

STABILITY OF IDENTIFICATION

On this third question, most jurisdictions also didn't have any information regarding whether Aboriginal identification remains stable for the same individual over time or if students identify themselves differently from one year to the next. Alberta noted that they would have this information in the future, but that it was too early to tell at this point since they had just recently implemented their system, which had markedly increased self-identification, but that the numbers were not yet stable. The Ontario joint college and university applications indicated that they had access to this type of information within any given year, but that they didn't look at it, but could if it were requested.

Saskatchewan was the one jurisdiction that was able to speak on this topic at length. They told us that they "snapshot," (i.e. look at a small picture of it) their data several times a year so can see if

individual has changed status within the year and across years. As such, they know that identity can be static as they can see that individuals add or remove self declaration and change category within, e.g. Métis to Inuit.

In addition, they noted that individuals will change their status to receive one of the abovementioned benefits. For instance, some of the colleges have programs that require students to prove their status in order to enrol such as admittance into a specific First Nations access program or to receive some special scholarships.

At the school level, some of schools have forms that allow individuals to declare for a number of years. Other schools might not have had the option to declare when they started and then might do it later. In most instances, a student can get a change of form, but identity information doesn't really change, especially once it is tied to their student number; even if the student decides not to declare in high school but is already recognized as Aboriginal in the database that identity sticks.

In the Northwest Territories, informants spoke of cases where identity changes since identity is too narrow or not well defined so that will change depending on where they are living. As well, they discussed circumstances where a Dene individual, for instance, will be born into one family in a specific location, but then adopted into another and thus considered belonging to the other and might identify as such.

DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING

Alberta, which is the only jurisdiction with a currently-implemented standard, went through a long process before coming up with the question and definitions that are currently used province wide. They used the definition that is in the Constitution so that it would have staying power. In creating the question, they consulted with a number of individuals and branches within the government as well as with an Aboriginal advisory committee. In their standardization, they added the category "First Nations non-status," which they believe will result in counting people who would not have self-identified without this category because they don't identify as status. Since their standardization, they report an increased level of self-identification, to the tune of 75 to 80 percent compliance across the jurisdiction.

At this point, it is difficult to evaluate the pros and cons of this standardization since it was recently implemented. It would, however, make sense to revisit this question regarding Alberta in a couple of years in order to properly assess the success or failures of this system.

In Saskatchewan at the K-12 level, while there is no standard way of getting the information, the Ministry asks for schools to enter it in a similar manner into the computer system. This has been happening since 2005, and there is a noted increase in individuals identifying since that point.

At the post-secondary level, the University of Saskatchewan has a reasonable approach to collecting information: students fill out the forms electronically, and then are asked to verify the data at a later point. Currently, initially students are able to choose all four categories in the application, but when they go to the clean up, have to choose one. This new system has brought about more stability in the data collected. Here, like with some other jurisdictions, there is an issue here of international students self-identifying as Aboriginal. The “clean up” process allows some of this to be rectified, but this is still an issue that the province is working out.

At the K-12 level, Saskatchewan prides itself on its outreach processes. They train counsellors and other individuals who go out into the field and have successfully been able to convince students that collecting data is for the good and that it is beneficial to self-identify. As such, they have seen their numbers increase, not just because the population is growing, but also because more individuals are choosing to self-identify.

Like with Alberta, Saskatchewan very recently switched over to this new system (in 2005) so they haven't yet done a lot of data validation in this area. To date, they are still working to learn the system and get basic information out of the system, e.g. basic enrolment information before moving on to calculating other types of information like self-identification practices. One identified big weakness is that they don't have a systematic way of collecting data at the school level, which is on the work plan for the current year.

British Columbia has just completed a government-wide initiative to formulate a standardized self-identification question, which will allow reporting in three identity groups. They are slowly implementing this new standardization due to the great costs of modifying the data warehouses at the K-12 level; the slow implementation at the PSE level is due to the need for a new admissions cycle to begin where they can start this new questioning; this will occur in fall 2009.

Two weaknesses were noted. For one, until the full implementation takes place, not all programs and service departments use the new standard, which results in incomplete data from which to do longitudinal studies on enrolment. In addition, in post-secondary education, students do not always identify as Aboriginal and institutions are able to overcome this shortfall by matching students who attended primary and secondary schools in British Columbia with their Personal Education Numbers from their K-12 record data to see if they identified as Aboriginal at that time. The latter remains a weakness for individuals who are enrolled in post-secondary education in British Columbia, but didn't attend K-12 in the province.

Manitoba, at the K-12 level, reviews their data collection process and identifiers on an annual basis. The Province requests school divisions/schools in the provincial school system to collect the information on Aboriginal identity as part of their student registration process.

The Ministry also consults with advisory committees at the K-12 and post-secondary levels, which is part of an overall partnership approach to improve education success, one that gives recognition to the Aboriginal community. One of the improvements that has come out of these conversations is that the province now translates all forms into French.

Recently, Ontario has spent time on this issue at both the post-secondary and K-12 levels. At the K-12 level, they are currently in the midst of implementing a province-wide way of collecting self-identification information as a way to better collect data in order to improve Aboriginal access to and performance in education.

At the post-secondary level, the Ontario Colleges Application Service recently altered the self-identification question to be in line with Statistics Canada identification (i.e. First Nations status and non-status, Métis and Inuit). This was done due to requests by the colleges so that they would better be able to identify the number of Aboriginal students applying for financial aid and programmatic purposes.

In Nunavut, there is a meeting planned for January 2009 to rethink this important question. However, in this region, different from most of the Southern locations, they also have technological barriers such as the lack of bandwidth needed to computerize the system. In addition, with small population of only 30,000 people and 8,000 students in high schools, the costs of upgrading the school records system is prohibitive for the small number of people involved. As such, they will be assessing their need considering these and other circumstances.

In Northwest Territories, at the K-12 level, school administrators are required to send records to the Department of Education. At the post-secondary education level, this territory has a bit of challenge since they don't have the capacity to capture individuals who don't apply for financial aid, but get funding instead from regional land claims. Currently, there is no mechanism to allow the department to share information from claim groups and vice versa. In addition, they don't have a way to track distance learning for graduate work. As such, the department recognizes that there are gaps in the information that they have, which they are currently discussing.

In Yukon, they are still in the process of implementing a new, improved data system, but need more time to understand its pros and cons. They know that the new system allows them to collect more specific information as opposed to just general as before, which is a plus.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS: TOWARD A BETTER WAY TO COLLECT DATA

Fundamentally, this paper is about data collection and data use; it is part of a much larger and broader pan-Canadian discussion on jurisdictional Aboriginal self-identification practices and their implications for both research and policy making. The findings included in this paper shed light on the many aspects of how education data, in general, and Aboriginal self-identification information, in particular, are collected, reported and used.

Overall, Canadian jurisdictions collect a vast amount of administrative data related to education, at both the elementary/secondary and post-secondary levels. Beyond school records at the elementary and secondary levels and application/enrolment records at the post-secondary level, identifying information is collected during standardized testing, all sorts of different surveys (such as graduate surveys in post-secondary education), as well as testing in apprentice education and adult basic education. In addition, there are identity questions on financial aid forms, which are jurisdiction-based.

As part of this data collection, most jurisdictions ask individuals to self-identify as Aboriginal or further into more specific Aboriginal identity groups such as Inuit, Métis and First Nation. As noted above, jurisdictions run the gamut of different practices in their self-identification. There are differences not only on the use of ancestry versus identity, but also very different practices regarding the capture of information about status versus non-status and tribal identities. Compounding these variations is the fact that local conditions seem to have an enormous impact in the way Aboriginal people choose to self-identify. In the north, where Aboriginal people form the majority in many communities, there appears to be little concern that people are not self-identifying as Aboriginal. In the south, where individuals may be concerned that there may be a stigma attached to self-identification as Aboriginal, self-identification problems exist.

In addition, once the data are collected and held in various databases and warehouses across Canada, their uses also vary widely. Frequently, jurisdictions report collecting and using information for program administration purposes such as identifying who the Aboriginal students were in order to disburse tuition reimbursements or to award Aboriginal-specific financial aid. In some cases, data were used to improve program delivery (e.g. accurate geographic targeting of services). In a very few cases, the data were used for policy research purposes: benchmarking Aboriginal performance and monitoring longitudinal progress of Aboriginal students.

Unfortunately, not all data and results are transferable across provincial border because of a lack of a common standard in defining and coding Aboriginal identity. Few provinces even have consistent province-wide standards in asking questions about Aboriginal identity. Even where standards do exist, there is frequently a gap between theory and practice: that is to say, that the policy reasons for asking particular questions on identity in particular ways may not be evident to those responsible

for collecting and coding the data. Where no standard exists information may be collected, but often the ministry or department often couldn't articulate the particular policy implications. Some may only use it for reporting, others don't even report on what they collect.

Across the country as a whole, therefore, we have a patch-work of methods for data collection. Data on identity is collected differently by each jurisdiction and even varies within certain jurisdictions. While some individuals expressed a desire to create a pan-Canadian method of collection as it would allow for comparative research, some were also opposed to this potential. Few of those interviewed, whether they were pro or con a pan-Canadian standard, could imagine how such a system could work given the differing provincial needs and contexts.

The wide variety of opinions among key informants pointed to the fact that there are no easy answers to the question of whether and how to create a pan-Canadian standard. However, a pan-Canadian standard need not require a ground-up revision of practices. In fact, the infrastructure or skeleton for a system of data collection and reporting exists already, namely in two Statistics Canadian databases currently utilized in the education sector.

At the K-12 level, Canada has the Elementary-Secondary Education Statistics Project (ESESP). ESESP is a project that was first introduced by Statistics Canada in 2003. This project is currently investigating the possibility of collecting data on enrolment and number of graduates by Aboriginal identity (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit). To the extent that this project is looking to improve national data on self-identification, it could use this currently-existing instrument, but would need to make some changes to it. For one, Aboriginal identifiers would need to be added as well as several other output related fields in order better understand Aboriginal learning, completion rates, etc. that would allow analysis and understanding of these issues for Aboriginal learners. Nonetheless, despite these changes, this existing system would be a good starting point for allowing standardized data collection. In addition, because the data would be entered in a standard database, it would be possible to adapt the questions to reflect jurisdictional differences.

Currently, at the post-secondary level, some institutions and government ministries/departments report different types of information using the Postsecondary Student Information System (PSIS). Through PSIS, they have the capacity to report data in one central database, which will allow for inter-jurisdictional longitudinal comparisons. This database will have to allow for the storage of data on Aboriginal self-identification and fields related to Aboriginal participation and success in education. Currently, the student data file contains demographic and other descriptive information about the students attending the various institutions. Among others, it allows for student name, birth date, gender, Social Insurance Number, contact information, previous education, and characteristics such as whether or not the student has self-identified as a visible minority, Aboriginal person or person with a disability. This file contains one record per student per institution. It also contains a unique student identifier designed to help link incoming student records with records already on the national database.

With some improvements to each, these systems could be highly effectively in assisting jurisdictional policy makers and researchers to harvest data in a way that could engender comparative pan-Canadian research both for research and policy making. As such, this could be another important step to assist individuals partnered in their commitment to improving Aboriginal education to meet their goals and, thus, forwarding Aboriginal participation and success in all levels of education in Canada.

In conclusion, following our interviews with key individuals in all provinces, we have five concluding pieces of advice with respect to the creation of a pan-Canadian standard.

- 1. Jurisdictions vary widely in their capacity for data collection and analysis.** Some jurisdictions have fairly elaborate research and data strategies while others collect nothing at all. Understanding this full spectrum is critical to the success of any future dialogue. Jurisdictions with a lot of capacity and experience will want data to have sufficient to permit significant analysis; jurisdiction without much capacity will want the collection process to be as simple as possible. There is an inbuilt tension between these two points of view which will need to be taken into account in any future pan-Canadian discussion.
- 2. Any moves to creating pan-Canadian data standards must be cognizant of existing investments in data systems and definitions.** Especially in those provinces where considerable thought and work has gone into creating a provincial data standard, there will be a reluctance to abandon this work in favour of a pan-Canadian standard which may not reflect local concerns and conditions. A pan-Canadian standard will therefore need to find ways to incorporate as many current practices as possible if it is to succeed.
- 3. The challenge of obtaining consistent data is greatest at the post-secondary level.** Each jurisdiction has different relationships with their post-secondary institutions. In British Columbia, for instance, the Ministry makes suggestions to colleges and universities about what to collect. Perhaps the right mix for most is standardization with encouraged compliance, but the complexity of this relationship in each location will need to be considered as policies are discussed.
- 4. A pan-Canadian standard must involve consultations with Aboriginal groups and communities.** Nearly every informant stressed the imperative of consulting with Aboriginal groups at both the local and national level. As there is a deep and complicated history between Aboriginal peoples and education, data collection and self-identification practices in Canada, a successful model must include Aboriginal people in each discussion.
- 5. A pan-Canadian standard will need to take differing provincial and territorial privacy legislation into account.** Privacy legislation varies by province/territory and different provinces/territories have over time developed slightly different understandings about the acceptability of asking individuals to self-identify by race or ethnicity in various situations. A pan-Canadian standard will need to take these variations into account.

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APPENDIX A: LIST OF INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

The authors thank each of the interview participants, listed in alphabetical order by first name:

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8. Cathy Stock, Director, Labour and Citizens Service, British Columbia
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21. Emily MacDonald, Newfoundland and Labrador, Department of Education
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25. Helen Robinson-Settee, Director, Aboriginal Education Directorate, Manitoba
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27. Jane Martin, Alberta Ministry of Education Director of Aboriginal Policy
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30. Joan Langevin, Manager of Student Records, Aurora College, Northwest Territories
31. Julia Danos, formerly of the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, Ontario
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35. Laurel Graff, Northwest Territories Education
36. Marie-France Germain, Statistics Canada
37. Michael Martin, Statistics Canada Justice Branch
38. Michelle Braakman, Ontario Ministry of Education
39. Nancy Zuckewich, Statistics Canada Census Branch
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44. Rob South, Association of Universities and Colleges Canada
45. Robin Phillips, Prince Edward Island Ministry of Education Research/Policy
46. Scott de Jaegher, Policy analyst looking at what other ministries are collecting. Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Secretariat, Policy and Strategic Initiatives, Manitoba
47. Susan Gordon, Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education
48. Tatiana Morren Fraser, Nova Scotia, Ministry of Education
49. Tim Caleval, Saskatchewan Ministry of Education
50. Tina Schiavone, Office of First Nations and Inuit Education, McGill University
51. Veronique Mercier, Performance Measurement Analyst, Governance Branch, British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education
52. Vianne Timmons, Prince Edward Island, Vice President Academic Development, University of Prince Edward Island

APPENDIX B: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Hello. My name is

I am calling from the Educational Policy Institute. The Institute has been contracted by the Canadian Education Statistics Council to research provincial/territorial experiences in using Aboriginal self-identification. The Council is a partnership of The Council of Ministers of Education and Statistics Canada. The aim of the research is to build on “lessons learned” in order to improve the practice of collecting Aboriginal self-identification data and increase understandings of how these data can be used to improve outcomes for Aboriginal learners.

If this is the CMEC contact:

We are contacting you as the Council's contact for your Ministry/Department. Have you received a letter from The Council of Ministers of Education about this project?

If not....ask if they want a copy emailed to them.

We need your assistance in determining who we should talk to for this study. Has someone been delegated as the person we should interview?

If yes, get name, position and phone and email address

If no:

We need to talk to the person or people most familiar with your Ministry's/Department's practices with respect to collecting student Aboriginal identity information for student records, standardized testing and/or student surveys. Can you tell me who we should talk to?

If yes, get name(s), position and phone and email address

If no, ask who we should ask, or find out if we should call back

If this is the person delegated to be interviewed:

[Name of contact above] said that you were the person to speak to about your Ministry's/Department's practices with respect to collecting student Aboriginal identity information for student records, standardized testing and/or student surveys.

The interview will take about XX minutes. Do you have time to do the interview now?

If no, set up appointment to call back

If yes...ask the following questions

A. For All Respondents:

To which education systems will your responses apply:

Source	Yes/No
Elementary	
Secondary	
CEGEP	
College	
University	
Other—specify	

Does your organization require the collection of Aboriginal identity information for any of the following: student records, standardized testing or student, graduate or parent surveys?

Record in table below and go to applicable section(s) for further questions.

Source	Yes/No	Section of Survey
Student records		Go To Section C
Standardized Testing		Go To Section D
Student, Parent or Graduate Surveys		Go To Section E

B. For those NOT collecting Aboriginal identity Information:

Does your organization have plans to begin collecting information on Aboriginal Identity?

If NO Go To Section F

If YES Go To Question 4

Will your organization begin collecting Aboriginal identity information for student records, testing or surveys? If yes, when?

Source	Plan to collect Yes/No	When
Student records		
Standardized Testing		
Student, Parent or Graduate Surveys		

Why is your organization planning to collect Aboriginal identity information? (Add prompt: where is the impetus for collection is coming from – who wants to know? Is it Aboriginal parents or communities? Politicians? General public? Ministry staff looking for data to support policy?)

Go To Section F

C. Regarding Student Records:

How is Aboriginal identity information collected for student records?

- a) How many years has your organization been collecting Aboriginal identity information in student records?
- b) Is the information collected: verbally, on a written form, or electronically, that is, completing a form on the computer?
- c) For elementary student records: Who identifies the student as Aboriginal: the administrator, student, or parent?
- d) For post-secondary student records: is Aboriginal identity collected in the application form or in the registration form?
- e) Does the information become part of a longitudinal record for the student? If not, is it collected every year and only available as part of the data for that year?
- f) Is it asked as part of a series of questions on ethnicity, ancestry and identity? (i.e. is this a question asked to all students or just to Aboriginal ones?)
- g) Is it asked as part of a series of questions on demographic information such as gender and disability?
- h) Do you collect information on Aboriginal identity groups such as linguistic, cultural, status/non-status categories, or make a distinction between First Nations, Métis or Inuit?
- i) We need the exact wording of the question(s) on Aboriginal identity? Can you send the actual document or form, or all the questions that pertain to ethnicity, ancestry and identity?

Can you identify the records of those students who receive Band funding for their education?

Are there certain individuals or identity groups who are more or less likely to identify as Aboriginal on student records (e.g. registration or enrollment forms)? Consider age, gender, Aboriginal identity group, etc.

If so, what do you feel is the reason for these differences?

Are there some purposes for which individuals are more or less willing to identify as Aboriginal? If so, what are they? Consider funding, enrollment, testing, follow-up surveys or any other purpose.

If so, what do you feel is the reason for these differences?

Do you *know* whether Aboriginal identification remains stable for the same individual over time? That is, do students always identify themselves as Aboriginal from one year to the next, or do some identify themselves as Aboriginal some years but not others?

If stable: Does your organization have practices that encourage stability in Aboriginal identity reporting? If so, please describe them.

If not stable: In what ways is it not stable, or for what individuals or identity groups? What do you feel causes these changes? What does your organization do if a student ceases to identify as Aboriginal after doing so in the past?

Has your organization done anything to encourage Aboriginal identification on student records? For instance, do you:

work with Aboriginal groups or organizations so they see the value in collecting the information; or
explain to students/parents why the information is collected and how it will be used?

Why does your organization use this method to collect Aboriginal identity information on student records? Have you tried other methods in the past? If so, why did your organization change practices? Have you looked at practices in other jurisdictions or other organizations? How much sharing of ideas is there?

What are the weaknesses of your organization's practices in collecting Aboriginal identity information on student records? Have you found ways to address any of these weaknesses? If so, please describe these.

What are the strengths of your organization's practices in collecting Aboriginal identity information on student records?

Who has access to the data to conduct their own analysis?

Is the Aboriginal Identity information used to report student record data to students, to parents, to the School Boards, to Bands, Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education, or to the public in general? In what form is the information provided, individual student results, aggregate data, annual comparative data? For how long have you been reporting data? How has reporting changed over time?

Is Aboriginal Identity information in student records used for any of the following purposes? Are there others ways it is used?

Potential Use	Yes/No
To report student data such as enrollment or graduation numbers separately for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students	
For funding formula for education or support programs targeted for Aboriginal students?	
To compare Aboriginal student data such as enrollment or graduation numbers with other jurisdictions	
To report enrollment or graduation numbers separately for identity groups of Aboriginal students, if applicable	
To share student results with Band funders/sponsors of Aboriginal students	
<i>Specify Other Uses:</i>	

What program impacts or policy implications have arisen in your jurisdiction from having Aboriginal identity information in student records?

D. Regarding Standardized Testing:

Is standardized testing done on a regular basis, or just occasionally? If regular, please describe the testing cycle.

How is Aboriginal identity information collected for standardized tests?

- a) How many years has your organization been collecting Aboriginal identity information on standardized tests?
- b) Is the information collected: verbally, on a written form, or electronically, that is, completing a form on the computer?
- c) Does the information become part of a longitudinal record for the student? If not, is it collected every time the test is administered and only available as part of the data for that year?
- d) Is it asked as part of a series of questions on ethnicity, ancestry or identity?
- e) Is it asked as part of a series of questions on demographic information such as gender and disability?
- f) Do you collect information on Aboriginal identity groups such as linguistic, cultural, status/non-status categories, or make a distinction between First Nations, Métis or Inuit?

g) We need the exact wording of the question(s) on Aboriginal identity? Can you send the actual document or form, or all the questions that pertain to ethnicity, ancestry and identity?

Are there certain individuals or identity groups who are more or less likely to identify as Aboriginal in standardized testing? Consider age, gender, Aboriginal identity group, etc. What do you feel is the reason for these differences?

Are there some purposes for which individuals are more or less willing to identify as Aboriginal? If so, what are they? Consider funding, enrollment, testing, follow-up surveys or any other purpose. If so, what do you feel is the reason for these differences?

Do you *know* whether Aboriginal identification remains stable on standardized tests for the same individual over time? That is, do students always identify themselves as Aboriginal from one year to the next, or do some identify themselves as Aboriginal some years but not others?

If stable: Does your organization have practices that encourage stability in Aboriginal identity reporting? If so, please describe them.

If not stable: In what ways is it not stable, or for what individuals or identity groups? What do you feel causes these changes? What does your organization do if a student ceases to identify as Aboriginal after doing so in the past?

Has your organization done anything to encourage Aboriginal identification on standardized test? For instance, do you:

work with Aboriginal groups or organizations so they see the value in collecting the information; or explain to students/parents why the information is collected and how it will be used?

Why does your organization use this method to collect Aboriginal identity information on standardized tests? Have you tried other methods in the past? If so, why did your organization change practices?

What are the weaknesses of your organization's practices in collecting Aboriginal identity information on standardized tests? Have you found ways to address any of these weaknesses? If so, please describe these.

What are the strengths of your organization's practices in collecting Aboriginal identity information on standardized tests?

Who has access to the data to conduct their own analysis?

Is the Aboriginal Identity information used to report standardized testing data to students, to parents, to the School Boards, to Bands, Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education, or to the public in general? In what form is the information provided, individual student results, aggregate data, annual comparative data?

Is Aboriginal Identity information in standardized testing used for any of the following purposes? Are there others ways it is used?

Potential Use	Yes/No
To present testing results separately for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students	
To compare Aboriginal test results with other jurisdictions	
To present testing results separately for identity groups of Aboriginal students, if applicable	
Specify Other Uses:	

What program impacts or policy implications have arisen in your jurisdiction from having Aboriginal identity information in standardized testing?

E. Regarding Survey or other Research:

Are student, graduate or parent/guardian surveys conducted on a regular basis, or just occasionally? If regular, please describe the cycle.

Note to interviewer: If there is more than one type of survey or research that uses Aboriginal identity information, please ask each question in this section for each survey and make it clear which survey the answer pertains to by naming the survey.

Are Aboriginal people specifically sampled in the survey? If, so, are they over sampled relative to the sample size of non-Aboriginal people?

How is Aboriginal identity information collected for surveys?

- a) How many years has your organization been collecting Aboriginal identity information on surveys?
- b) Is the information collected: verbally, on a written form, or electronically, that is, completing a form on the computer?
- c) Does the information become part of a longitudinal record for the student? If not, is it collected every time the survey is administered and only available as part of the data for that year?
- d) Is it asked as part of a series of questions on ethnicity, ancestry or identity?

- e) Is it asked as part of a series of questions on demographic information such as gender and disability?
- f) Do you collect information on Aboriginal identity groups such as linguistic, cultural, status/non-status categories, or make a distinction between First Nations, Métis or Inuit?
- g) We need the exact wording of the question(s) on Aboriginal identity? Can you send the actual document or form, or all the questions that pertain to ethnicity, ancestry and identity?

Are there certain individuals or identity groups who are more or less likely to identify as Aboriginal on surveys? Consider age, gender, Aboriginal identity group, etc. What do you feel is the reason for these differences?

Are there some purposes for which individuals are more or less willing to identify as Aboriginal? If so, what are they? Consider funding, enrollment, testing, follow-up surveys or any other purpose. If so, what do you feel is the reason for these differences?

Do you *know* whether Aboriginal identification remains stable on surveys for the same individual over time? That is, do students always identify themselves as Aboriginal from one year to the next, or do some identify themselves as Aboriginal some years but not others?

If stable: Does your organization have practices that encourage stability in Aboriginal identity reporting? If so, please describe them.

If not stable: In what ways is it not stable, or for what individuals or identity groups? What do you feel causes these changes? What does your organization do if a student ceases to identify as Aboriginal after doing so in the past?

Has your organization done anything to encourage Aboriginal identification on surveys? For instance, do you:

work with Aboriginal groups or organizations so they see the value in collecting the information; or explain to students/parents why the information is collected and how it will be used?

Why does your organization use this method to collect Aboriginal identity information for surveys? Have you tried other methods in the past? If so, why did your organization change practices?

What are the weaknesses of your organization's practices in collecting Aboriginal identity information for surveys? Have you found ways to address any of these weaknesses? If so, please describe these.

What are the strengths of your organization's practices in collecting Aboriginal identity information for surveys?

Who has access to the data to conduct their own analysis?

Is the Aboriginal Identity information used to report survey data to students, to parents, to the School Boards, to Bands, Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education, or to the public in general? In what form is the information provided, individual student results, aggregate data, annual comparative data?

How is the Aboriginal Identity information in surveys used? Is it used for any of the following uses? Are there others ways it is used?

Potential Use	Yes/No
To present survey results, such as satisfaction with education, employment outcomes, separately for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students	
To compare Aboriginal survey results with other jurisdictions	
To present survey results separately for identity groups of Aboriginal students, if applicable	
Specify Other Uses:	

What program impacts or policy implications have arisen in your jurisdiction from having Aboriginal identity information on surveys?

F. General Questions for Everyone

It could be possible to disaggregate the Aboriginal population into subgroups, such linguistic, cultural, status/non-status categories, or make a distinction between First Nations, Métis or Inuit. Are there policy implications or other benefits for disaggregating?

If yes: Please describe the implications, and the type of disaggregation that would be beneficial.

Are there costs of disaggregating the Aboriginal population into subgroups? If so, what are they?

What are the impacts or implications for Aboriginal learners, parents/guardians and Aboriginal communities of having Aboriginal identity information? (Add prompt: has there been any feedback in jurisdictions where information has been collected and made available?)

Does your education system have a requirement that Aboriginal identity information be collected?

If yes: Is there a standardized set of questions that you are required to use? Is there a definition of Aboriginal identity? For what purposes is Aboriginal identity required to be collected?

If no: Is there an initiative to work toward this?

In your jurisdiction, is there a provincial/territorial policy or requirement to collect Aboriginal identity information in a consistent or standardized manner across departments/ministries—such as for

education, health, social services? By this we don't mean linking data across ministries/departments. We just mean that Aboriginal identity information is required to be collected for individual records, and that a standard exists for how this is collected.

If yes: Is there a standardized set of questions that you are required to use? Is there a definition of Aboriginal identity? For what purposes is Aboriginal identity required to be collected?

If no: Is there an initiative to work toward this?

Would it be helpful to have a Pan-Canadian standard on when and how to collect Aboriginal identity information for the education system, including a standardized definition of Aboriginal identity? *Confirm whether this is for the entire education system or just a sub-sector, such as elementary/secondary, or post-secondary.*

Do you have any other comments or information on Aboriginal self-identification?

That completes the interview. Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX C: JURISDICTIONAL SUMMARIES

Table 8: K-12 Student Records – Collection of Aboriginal Identity Data

Jurisdiction	K-12 Student Records – Collection of Aboriginal Identity Data							
	How long identification data been collected	Collected in what format - verbal - paper - electronic	Who identifies - admin - student - parent	Entered in a Longitudinal Student Record	Aboriginal identification indicator	Band Funding Indicator	Who has access to the data to conduct analyses	Use of the data for reporting
British Columbia	Since early 1990's	Paper	Admin Parent Student	Aboriginal status is retained as a permanent identifier		No	Ministry; school districts, Aboriginal communities, research organizations, federal and other ministries.	Yes. compiled into a report for each school district and province of BC called How Are We Doing. This report is shared with Superintendents, school district staff, and Aboriginal communities.
Alberta	Since 2004	Paper	Parents	Asked again every year	First Nations (status or non-status), Métis, Inuit. Not asked as part of a series of questions about ethnicity or as demographic info, along with a question about languages spoken at home (including Cree as one of several examples).	Yes	Ministry; a guideline is planned which will permit release of data to external researchers	Provincial results go to School Districts; Public reporting is being considered in consultation with Aboriginal groups
Saskatchewan	Reliable data since 2004; data since 1990's	Verbal or paper – kept as an electronic record	Student or parent	Yes	First Nations or Métis; asked as part of demographic data. (Forms do not standardize identity but Ministry reporting is standardized)	Yes (Band affiliation and Treaty #)	School divisions, Ministry, Bands	Ministry reports go to schools for use in school planning. Use of data for policy development is in its infancy.
Manitoba	Since 1999/2000 school year	Paper	Parent/guardian	With students' pupil file	Asked in a question about ancestral/cultural identity (Métis is one of the examples of cultural identity given) Distinctions First Nations (status or non-status), Métis, Inuit are not made	No	Ministry based on the data	Under discussion
Ontario					First Nation (residing on the reserve and paying tuition, or residing within the jurisdiction of the school board), Métis, Inuit. [Not currently collected by the province]			
Nova Scotia	Not collected currently; it's being explored for K-12							

Jurisdiction	K-12 Student Records – Collection of Aboriginal Identity Data							
	How long identification data been collected	Collected in what format - verbal - paper - electronic	Who identifies - admin - student - parent	Entered in a Longitudinal Student Record	Aboriginal identification indicator	Band Funding Indicator	Who has access to the data to conduct analyses	Use of the data for reporting
New Brunswick	Not collected currently; collection of this data was tried and abandoned; perceived as racial profiling							
Newfoundland and Labrador	Not collected							
Prince Edward Island	Not collected/no plans to collect							
Yukon	Since the mid 1980's; mandatory collection since the mid-1990's.	Paper transferred to electronic; electronic since the 1980's	Student and/or parent	Yes and it's updated or confirmed yearly	(Optional) Can identify as one of 14 Yukon First Nations as part of a series of demographic questions	No. In the North, the terminology "on-reserve, off-reserve, and Bands" is not used.	Yukon Department of Education	Reports and information to NGOs
Northwest Territories	Collected at the time of registration	Can also be taken from student's Health care #, which contains an identifier	Parents			No	Internal access by schools and access superintendents of school boards for their boards	
Nunavut	For the past 20 years		Parent	Yes	Inuit or Non-Inuit (majority of population is Inuit)	All Inuit carry Inuit beneficiary card	School Services office has access to Grades 10-12 info Ministry (Deputy Minister, Assistant Deputy Minister, and Minister) houses and has access to the data Specific requests from Nunavut Bureau of Statistics	

* The findings displayed in this table reflect the data extracted from key informant interviews.

Table 9: PSE Student Records – Collection of Aboriginal Identity Data

Jurisdiction	PSE Student Records – Collection of Aboriginal Identity Data							
	How long identification data has been collected	Collected in what format - verbal - paper - electronic	Application or registration form	Entered into longitudinal student record	Aboriginal identification indicator	Band Funding Indicator	Who has access to the data to conduct analyses	Use of the data for reporting
British Columbia	Many years (# not specified)	Paper and electronic	Application form	Yes	Aboriginal identifier only currently; First Nations, Métis, Inuit will be used in future to conform with new standard	In some institutions no central collection of this data	Internal; External Who has access by approval	Ministry reports and reports to public
Alberta	Since 2004/5		Application form	Yes. Identity data is held internally permanently. It is not transferred externally.	First Nations (status or non-status, Métis, Inuit; Stand-alone question used.	No	Internal; Ministry	Internal statistics and Annual Report
Saskatchewan					Institutions are responsible			
Manitoba	Colleges since 1998/99; Universities stopped in response to Freedom of Information legislation, but are now encouraged to collect.	Undergrad – telephone and online; Graduate students - paper	Registration form	Yes, linked to Student Record	No standard requirement. Universities: Aboriginal identifier (yes or no) only Colleges: First Nations, Métis, Inuit identifiers	No		
Ontario					Ontario Universities (asked as a standalone question) : Indian (First Nation), Inuit, Métis, or No/Undeclared Ontario Colleges electronic application form (If Country of Citizenship is Canada – Aboriginal Ancestry or Canadian citizen. If Aboriginal ancestry, First Nation (status or non-status), Métis, or Inuit Ontario Colleges paper application form (Aboriginal status/ Aboriginal Ancestry): First Nation (status or non-status), Métis, Inuit			
Nova Scotia	Not collected							
New Brunswick	Not collected currently; collection of this data was tried and abandoned; perceived as racial profiling							

Jurisdiction	PSE Student Records – Collection of Aboriginal Identity Data							
	How long identification data has been collected	Collected in what format - verbal - paper - electronic	Application or registration form	Entered into longitudinal student record	Aboriginal identification indicator	Band Funding Indicator	Who has access to the data to conduct analyses	Use of the data for reporting
Newfoundland and Labrador	Collected	Paper	Application form	Yes (used to identify eligibility for scholarships and student employment)	University (Aboriginal Status): Aboriginal (First Nations, Métis, Inuit) College (Aboriginal Status): Labrador Inuit, Labrador Métis, Inuit, Mi'Kmaq, Other	No		Not sure about statistical usage
Prince Edward Island	Not collected/no plans to collect							
Yukon	Not collected							
Northwest Territories	In Aurora College since 1980's (80% Aboriginal)		Application	Yes, but students are not tracked after graduation	Students enter their Treaty # if they are Treaty. Treaty funding beneficiary information is collected, tied to funding levels. Northern Indigenous Aboriginal Resident	"Don't know"	Ministry	
Nunavut	Not collected							

* The findings displayed in this table reflect the data extracted from key informant interviews.

Table 10: K-12 Standardized Testing – Collection of Aboriginal Identity Data

Jurisdiction	K-12 Standardized Testing – Collection of Aboriginal Identity Data				
	<i>Is standardized testing done?</i>	<i>Cycle</i>	<i>Aboriginal identification indicator</i>	<i>Identity information treated as demographic data (e.g. as ethnicity, and asked about in a series of demographic questions)</i>	<i>Linked to student record</i>
British Columbia	Yes	Grades 4, 7, 10, and 12			Yes
Alberta	Yes	Grades 3, 6, and 9; Diploma exams in Grade 12	Not collected		Test results are linked to student record which contains Aboriginal identity data
Saskatchewan	Yes, since 2002, but not in all school boards. For instance, only 19 of 83 Band schools test.	Test Reading and Math in odd numbered years and Writing and Science in odd numbered years. Students in Grades 5,8,11 are tested. There are also Grade 12 diploma exams.	Yes	Yes	Not linked to student record
Manitoba	Yes	Grade 3, 7, 8. Provincial tests in mathematics and language arts in Grade 12	No	N/A	Test results are linked to student record.
Ontario	[No information]				
Nova Scotia			Not collected		
New Brunswick			Not collected		Tests can be linked to tuition-paying student ID numbers
Newfoundland and Labrador	Yes	Grades, 3, 6, and 9; Provincial Exams in Grade 12	Not collected		
Prince Edward Island	Not collected/no plans to collect		Not collected/no plans to collect		
Yukon	Reliable data since 1996 (unreliable since 1984)	Grade 3, 6, 9; Grades 10, 11, 12	Not collected	No	Yes
Northwest Territories					
Nunavut	Testing mainly for language; Testing is on hold; uncertainty expressed about the value of Pan-Canadian comparisons	English - Grades 4, 7, 10 Math - Grades 3, 6, 9 (testing for benchmark only to date)			

* The findings displayed in this table reflect the data extracted from key informant interviews.

Table 11: PSE Standardized Testing – Collection of Aboriginal Identity Data

Jurisdiction	PSE Standardized Testing – Collection of Aboriginal Identity Data				
	<i>Is standardized testing done?</i>	<i>Cycle</i>	<i>Aboriginal identification indicator</i>	<i>Identity information treated as demographic data (e.g. as ethnicity, and asked about in a series of demographic questions)</i>	<i>Linked to Student Record</i>
British Columbia	No				
Alberta	No				
Saskatchewan	No				
Manitoba	No				
Ontario	[No information]				
Nova Scotia			Not collected		
New Brunswick			Not collected		
Newfoundland and Labrador					
Prince Edward Island	Not collected/no plans to collect		Not collected/no plans to collect		
Yukon			Not collected		
Northwest Territories					
Nunavut			Not collected		

* The findings displayed in this table reflect the data extracted from key informant interviews.

Table 12: K-12 Survey/Other Research – Collection of Aboriginal Identity Data

Jurisdiction	K-12 Survey/Other Research – Collection of Aboriginal Identity Data							
	Survey/research done	Cycle	Collected in what format - verbal - paper - electronic	Aboriginal identification indicator	Identity information treated as demographic data (e.g. as ethnicity, and asked about in a series of demographic questions)	Entered in a Longitudinal Record	Who has access to the data to conduct analyses	Data used for reporting
British Columbia	Satisfaction Survey	Grades 4, 7, 10, and 12	Children - electronic Parents - paper	Yes		No	Ministry	Yes
Alberta	Not done							
Saskatchewan	High school leavers are surveyed; data is collected about “opportunities to learn”							Reports are generated to support School Board planning and internal assessments
Manitoba	Student transition related surveys of high school students and graduates	Periodic	Paper	Aboriginal, First Nation, Metis, Inuit	Yes	No	Ministry	Under consideration
Ontario	[No information]							
Nova Scotia				Not collected				
New Brunswick				Not collected				
Newfoundland and Labrador				Not collected				
Prince Edward Island	Not collected/no plans to collect			Not collected/no plans to collect				
Yukon	No mandated surveys; occasional non-standard satisfaction surveys						Schools	
Northwest Territories								
Nunavut								

* The findings displayed in this table reflect the data extracted from key informant interviews.

Table 13: PSE Survey/Other Research – Collection of Aboriginal Identity Data

Jurisdiction	PSE Survey/Other Research – Collection of Aboriginal Identity Data							
	Survey/other research done	Cycle	Collected in what format - verbal - paper - electronic	Aboriginal identification indicator	Identity data collected as demographic information (e.g. as part of a series of questions about ethnicity or other demographic info)	Entered in a Longitudinal Record	Who has access to the data to conduct analyses	Use of the data for reporting
British Columbia	Regular surveys in Colleges and Universities		Verbal (telephone Interviews)	Colleges - since 1995; Universities - since 1996	As part of a series of questions about ethnicity	Not linked to student record	Internal; other researchers with approval	Public reports
Alberta	Graduate outcomes	Biannual	Telephone and online	Last two cycles	No	Not part of student record	Individual schools; data are not aggregated	Results reported to Ministry
Saskatchewan	Annual Graduate survey since 2006		Telephone and online		Asked as a stand-alone question (First Nations (status or non-status), Métis, Inuit)	Not sure	Different data has different restrictions. Most data is released in aggregate form due to privacy concerns.	Survey results are made public. Data is reported on for public relations and policy purposes and to support public access to reported findings.
Manitoba	Early leaver and graduate surveys with the intention to follow a multi-year cycle (pending resources). Other research/surveys conducted on an occasional basis			Not to date; start up planned this coming year in the graduates survey.	To be determined.	Potential to link to student record which contains this data		
Ontario	[No information]							
Nova Scotia				Not collected				
New Brunswick				Not collected				
Newfoundland and Labrador								
Prince Edward Island	Not collected/no plans to collect			Not collected/no plans to collect				
Yukon				Not collected				
North West Territories								
Nunavut				Not collected				

* The findings displayed in this table reflect the data extracted from key informant interviews.

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