

# Aboriginal Student Self-identification

## Information for School Authorities

### What is the Aboriginal self-identification question?

The Aboriginal self-identification question was informed by the *Constitution Act*, 1982, section 35(2), in that "Aboriginal peoples" include "Indian, Inuit and Métis." The following question box (updated November 2016) appears on registration and annual verification forms for public, separate, Francophone, charter and Level 2 accredited funded private school authorities.

Public, separate, Francophone, and charter school authorities:

If you wish to declare the student is Aboriginal, please select one:			
<i>First Nation (status)</i>	<i>First Nation (non-status)</i>	<i>Métis</i>	<i>Inuit</i>
For further information, please refer to: <a href="http://www.education.alberta.ca/system-supports/results-reporting">www.education.alberta.ca/system-supports/results-reporting</a> or contact Alberta Education at 780-427-8501.			
If you have questions regarding the collection of student information by the school board, please contact the School Board Superintendent at... (insert your contact information).			

Level 2 accredited funded private school authorities:

If you wish to declare the student is Aboriginal, please select one:			
<i>First Nation (status)</i>	<i>First Nation (non-status)</i>	<i>Métis</i>	<i>Inuit</i>
For further information, please refer to: <a href="http://www.education.alberta.ca/system-supports/results-reporting">www.education.alberta.ca/system-supports/results-reporting</a> or contact Alberta Education at 780-427-8501.			
If you have questions regarding the collection of student information by the school, please contact the – (insert your school collection activity contact).			

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### **What is the purpose of the Aboriginal self-identification question on school registration forms?**

The Aboriginal self-identification question helps determine the number of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in provincial school authorities. This information is collected during the student registration and annual verification process in public, separate, Francophone, charter and Level 2 accredited funded private school authorities. It is a voluntary choice for parents/guardians to identify the student as Aboriginal.

Alberta Education provides additional funding to school authorities based on the number of self-identified Aboriginal students registered. Alberta Education also uses the information to track overall achievement measures for Aboriginal students. This guides efforts to close the achievement gap between Aboriginal and all Alberta students. Student achievement measures include high school completion rates, dropout rates, transition rates from high school to post-secondary, and results on provincial achievement tests and diploma exams.

### **Is it mandatory for students to self-identify?**

No. The response to the Aboriginal self-identification question is voluntary and does not require any proof of Aboriginal identity.

### **Is it mandatory for schools to have the question on their registration forms?**

Yes. Since September 2004, public, separate, Francophone, and charter schools have been required to include the Aboriginal self-identification question on K-12 registration/application and annual verification forms. Beginning in the 2008/09 school year, Level 2 accredited funded private schools also began collecting this information and made it a mandatory part of their K-12 registration/application and annual verification forms.

The Aboriginal self-identification question must appear on the registration/application and annual verification forms as is. School boards are expected to comply with their obligations under the *Student Record Regulation* and the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act* when collecting Aboriginal student data. Private schools are expected to comply with parameters set out in the *Student Record Regulation*, *Private Schools Regulation* and the *Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)*.

### **Are school authorities permitted to change or alter the text in the question box?**

No. The question must appear exactly as shown above on all registration/application and annual verification forms. School authorities are not permitted to modify the Aboriginal self-identification question or the response options. If the school authority needs to add a title to match the format of the registration form, Aboriginal self-identification may be used.

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### In addition to the standard question, can a school authority also ask for more specific/detailed information about Aboriginal identity?

In some cases, school authorities may ask for more specific information if they have determined a legitimate need in accordance with the *FOIP Act*, or the *PIPA*, whichever is applicable. It is the responsibility of the school authority to verify the applicability of relevant legislation for any additional data they wish to collect (i.e. conduct a privacy impact assessment in collaboration with the local Aboriginal stakeholders). The collection of other information must be in a section separate from the Aboriginal self-identification question.

Some school authorities may require further information from students who reside on-reserve for funding administration purposes. In this situation, school authorities should ask for this information in a section separate from the Aboriginal self-identification question (example below).

### On-reserve resident information\*

The information below is only required for students who currently live on-reserve. The information is provided to First Nations and/or the federal government for funding purposes.

First Nation of Residence	Student's Indian Registry number (ten-digit number)
ABC First Nation	123456789

\* Please note, this information is provided for example only. To confirm what information is required for federally-funded students, please contact Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada or the First Nation with which your school authority has an education services agreement.

### How are schools to submit the information to Alberta Education?

Information is to be provided to Alberta Education by each school authority through the submission of student registrations using an integrated SIS or PASIPrep.

There are four Aboriginal student self-identification codes:

- Code 331 Aboriginal student - Status First Nations
- Code 332 Aboriginal student – Non-Status First Nations
- Code 333 Aboriginal student – Métis
- Code 334 Aboriginal student – Inuit

There is a separate and distinct code (Code 330\*) to identify federally-funded First Nations students who live on-reserve but attend a provincial or private school off-reserve. This code is not linked to the Aboriginal self-identification question and is only applied to a student attending a school off-reserve under an Education Services Agreement (ESA). School authorities should only apply code 331-334 to a code 330 student if the student has self-identified on the school registration form.

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- \* Status First Nations students living on-reserve, who attend a provincial or private school off-reserve under an Education Services Agreement, will have two codes (both 331 and 330) if they choose to self-identify as Status First Nation on the student registration form. Both these codes must be entered in Integrated SIS for these students. For more information, please refer to Section 1.8 of the Alberta Education Funding Manual for School Authorities.

### **If a student answers the Aboriginal self-identification question on a registration form indicating that he/she is Aboriginal, will they always be counted as being Aboriginal?**

Only the student's most recent response is used to determine their inclusion in analysis of Aboriginal data. All parents/guardians/students have an opportunity to update the information on the student record annually.

### **How should schools conduct the annual verification of information on a student record?**

School authorities and schools are responsible under the *Student Record Regulation* to ensure that students and parents/guardians are provided with an opportunity to verify the demographic information on the student record annually. This may be done in a variety of ways, depending on district procedures. Many school authorities send home a pre-populated document with the student's information as it appears on file, including their response to the Aboriginal self-identification question. Parents/guardians are asked to verify and sign this document in September each year. [Alberta Education recommends this process.](#)

In the event that a form is not returned, schools may assume that there is no change to the information from the previous year. If there is a change from the previous year, the student record should reflect that change for the current and future years, unless removed by the parent/guardian/student.

### **How can school authorities use Aboriginal student information?**

School authorities should use Aboriginal student information to target programs to address student needs, determine effectiveness of initiatives for Aboriginal students, identify promising practices, or to determine professional development needs for teachers.

Ideally, school authorities will collaborate with their local Aboriginal parents/guardians and communities to develop policies regarding use and reporting of this data. Alberta Education supports the development of initiatives to address the achievement gap between Aboriginal and all students in Alberta.

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### **Is the Aboriginal self-identification question answered in relation to the student or the parent/guardian?**

As with all of the other questions on the registration form and annual verification form, the Aboriginal self-identification question is to be answered in relation to the student.

### **What are the regulations that govern the collection and sharing of Aboriginal student information?**

Alberta Education and school authorities collect, use and disclose student information within the parameters set out by the following acts and regulations:

- *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act* – sections 34(1)(b), 39(1)(a), 39(1)(c), 40(1)(c) and 40(1)(f) [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)
- *Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)* – section 14(b) [Personal Information Protection Act](#)
- *Student Record Regulation* – section 2(1)(t) [Student Record Regulation](#)
- *Private Schools Regulation* – provision 20 (2.1) [Private Schools Regulation](#)

### **Who can I contact to find out more about the Aboriginal self-identification question?**

For more information, please contact the office of the Director, Policy and Research, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Division, Alberta Education at 780-427-8501 (dial 310-0000 first to be connected toll-free from anywhere in Alberta).