

# Aboriginal Student Self-identification

## Information for Parents and Guardians

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

The following question box appears on registration and annual verification forms for public, separate, Francophone, charter and Level 2 accredited funded private school authorities.

<b>If you wish to declare the student is Aboriginal, please select one:</b>			
<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... (Contact information).			
{Level 2 accredited funded private schools: If you have questions regarding the collection of student information by the school, please contact the – (School collection activity contact)}.			

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

No. The response to the Aboriginal self-identification question is voluntary.

### Is proof of status or identity required? How do I know if my child is First Nations, Métis or Inuit?

Alberta Education does not ask schools or students for proof of Aboriginal identity. Aboriginal identity is best determined by each individual family.

### 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 or annual verification process in public, separate, Francophone, charter and Level 2 accredited funded private schools.

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### **Why does Alberta Education want to know if my child is Aboriginal?**

The information is used to improve accountability for Aboriginal education and to inform efforts to close the achievement gap between Aboriginal and all Alberta students. Alberta Education also provides additional funding to school authorities based on the number of self-identified Aboriginal students registered. The funding allocation rate is \$1,178 for each self-identified First Nation, Métis or Inuit students; this amounts to approximately \$47 million annually to school authorities.

### **How will my child benefit from answering the voluntary self-identification question?**

Knowing how Aboriginal students, as a whole, are doing in school helps Alberta Education and school authorities understand what programs are working; where additional programs, resources and supports are required; and what changes may be needed to improve the education system for the benefit of Aboriginal students.

### **How is the Aboriginal student data used?**

Alberta Education and school authorities use the information according to section 33(c) of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP Act)* to plan for program improvements, to make policy and funding decisions, and to measure and report Aboriginal student achievement. Student achievement measures include high school completion rates, dropout rates, transition rates from high school to post-secondary education, and results on provincial achievement tests and diploma exams.

Achievement results of self-identified Aboriginal students are reported in a respectful way that protects the anonymity of individual students. Provincial Aboriginal achievement results are included in Alberta Education's [Annual Report](#).

### **Does the Aboriginal self-identification question apply to First Nations students attending school on-reserve?**

No. The Aboriginal self-identification question applies only to students attending schools off-reserve in Alberta. First Nations students living on a reserve and attending school off-reserve may choose to self-identify as First Nations on the school registration form.

### **Does the Aboriginal education funding go directly to my child's school?**

School authorities are allocated additional funding based on the number of self-identified Aboriginal students registered annually. School authorities decide how to best use these funds based on the programming needs within their authority. Some school authorities retain the funds to support district-wide initiatives and others distribute funds, or a portion of the funds, directly to schools to support local programs.

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### **How are school authorities using the Aboriginal education funding?**

Aboriginal education funding is being used to support a range of projects such as:

- hiring Aboriginal Liaisons or Cultural Advisors
- school-based resource centers offering Aboriginal student supports
- tutoring and mentoring
- professional development for school and district staff (First Nations, Métis and Inuit resources, protocols, family engagement, etc.)
- purchasing or developing First Nations, Métis and Inuit resources
- high school completion coaches
- engaging Elders in the school collaborating with community partners
- language and Aboriginal cultural supports for school staff, etc

Please contact your school principal for further information.

### **How do you hold the school authority accountable for the Aboriginal funding?**

To ensure accountability school authorities share overall Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student results with the Ministry and the public in their Annual Education Results Reports. These reports are available by contacting your school authority and are posted on school authority websites. You may also wish to review the Aboriginal results in Alberta Education's [Annual Report](#).

### **Is this 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.

### **Can I change the response to the Aboriginal self-identification question in future?**

Yes, parents/students are given an opportunity to verify or change information on a student record annually.

### **I have an adopted Aboriginal child. How do I identify on the Aboriginal self-identification question?**

The Aboriginal self-identification question is voluntary and answered in relation to the student, including adopted children. The response to this question does not require proof of Aboriginal identity.

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### **Will my child be treated differently if he or she answers this question?**

No. Schools must ensure that confidentiality of student information is maintained and that all children are treated with respect. Your child's personal information is managed and protected by Alberta's privacy laws, the *FOIP Act*, the *Personal Information and Protection Act (PIPA)*, the *School Act* and the *Student Record Regulation*.

### **Will anyone else (besides Alberta Education and necessary school personnel) know my child's name, grade or marks?**

No. The Aboriginal student data is stored in a secure area that is tightly controlled to prevent unauthorized access to personal data. Personally identifiable data indicating Aboriginal identity is treated with the same due diligence as all other personal information under the stewardship of Alberta Education. School authorities must also meet their obligations to protect the information in accordance with the *Student Record Regulation* and applicable privacy legislation.

### **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).