

# Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2006: School Experiences of Off-Reserve First Nations Children Aged 6 to 14

Statistics Canada

**E**arlier this year the Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division of Statistics Canada released a report, authored by Evelyne Bougie, which highlights initial findings from the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey regarding the school experiences of First Nations children aged 6 to 14 who are living off-reserve.

The goal of this report is to provide a descriptive portrait of the early school experiences among First Nations children, as well as to gain an understanding of some of the contextual factors likely to be associated with their school achievement. To meet this end a number of factors are explored, including school experiences, socio-demographic characteristics, activity limitations and medical conditions, and out-of-school activities.

Even though the educational profile of First Nations peoples living off-reserve in Canada has generally improved over the past decade, their rates of high school completion continue to be lower than the total Canadian population. Given that many researchers view the

path toward dropping out of school as beginning in the early years, there is a need to look at the early school experiences of children in order to understand the lower educational profile of First Nations people living off-reserve. This report provides new data on the early educational experiences of First Nations children aged 6 to 14 living off-reserve in Canada, and offers insights into some factors associated with their educational outcomes.

## Study highlights

- The Aboriginal Peoples Survey asked parents to rate how well their child was doing at school this year, based on their knowledge of their child's school work. In 2006, 70% of off-reserve First Nations children aged 6 to 14 were reported by their parents to be doing "very well" or "well" in school. About one quarter (24%) were reported to be doing "average", and 5% "poorly" or "very poorly", in school.



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- Among off-reserve First Nations children, girls were more likely to be reported by their parents as doing “very well” or “well” in school than boys (75% for girls and 65% for boys, respectively). As well, younger children (aged 6 to 10) were more likely than older children (aged 11 to 14) to be reported as doing “very well” or “well” at school (74% and 64% respectively).
- Similar perceptions of how children were doing at school were found for all children aged 6 to 14 in Canada. According to the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (2000/2001), about 67% of all children in Canada were reported by their parents to be doing “very well” or “well” in school. About 24% were reported to be doing “average”, and 4% “poorly” or “very poorly”, in school.
- The majority of off-reserve First Nations children had parents who were generally satisfied with their child’s school practices. For instance, most First Nations children had parents who agreed or strongly agreed that their child’s school provided enough information on their academic progress (92%), attendance (95%), and behaviour (91%).
- Parents of off-reserve First Nations children believe in the importance of education. While almost all First Nations children (97%) had parents who indicated that it was “very important” that their child graduates from high school, about 86% had parents who indicated that it was “very important” that their child obtains postsecondary education.
- Off-reserve First Nations boys were twice as likely as girls (18% versus 9%) to have been diagnosed with a learning disability. Off-reserve First Nations boys were also more than twice as likely as girls (13% versus 5%) to have been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD).
- Sports were the most popular out-of-school activity among off-reserve First Nations children, as more than one-fifth (21%) participated in sports 4 or more times per week. Spending time with Elders ranked second at 14%, followed by taking part in art or music activities at 9%. Off-reserve First Nations boys participated in sports more often than girls, whereas girls took part in art or music activities more often than boys.
- About 17% of off-reserve First Nations children were reported to be able to speak and understand an Aboriginal language. About 31% were able to understand (even if only a few words), but not speak, an Aboriginal language. Half (50%) of off-reserve First Nations children could neither speak nor understand an Aboriginal language. Off-reserve First Nations children with registered Indian status were four times as likely as those without status to be able to speak and understand an Aboriginal language (24% versus 6%).
- According to 2006 Census data, 50% of off-reserve First Nations children were living in a two-parent household, while 40% were living in a one-parent household. About 3% were living with grandparents (with no parent present), and about 6% were living with other relatives. In comparison, 78% of all children aged 6 to 14 in Canada were living in a two-parent household, 20% were living in a one-parent household, 1% with grandparents, and 1% with other relatives.
- A number of factors were associated with relatively higher perceived achievement at school among off-reserve First Nations children, after holding constant other factors. These were:
  - › Getting along well with teachers, or with friends and classmates;
  - › Having parents who were satisfied with school practices (such as providing information on the child’s academic progress, attendance and behaviour);
  - › Reading books everyday;
  - › Playing sports at least once a week, or taking part in art or music activities at least once a week;
  - › Living in a family in the highest household income quintile.

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- About 12% of off-reserve First Nations children had parents (one or both) who indicated that they had been residential school students. Off-reserve First Nations children with registered Indian status were more likely to have parents who had been residential school students (17%) than their non-status counterparts (3%).

- A number of factors were associated with relatively lower perceived achievement at school among off-reserve First Nations children, after holding constant other factors. These were:
  - › Having missed school for a period of 2 or more weeks in a row during the school year;
  - › Having been diagnosed with a learning disability or with attention deficit disorder;
  - › Having parents who attended residential schools.

### About the Aboriginal Peoples Survey

The Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) provides an extensive set of data about Métis, Inuit, and off-reserve First Nations adults 15 years and over and children 6 to 14, living in urban, rural, and northern locations across Canada. The Aboriginal Peoples Survey was designed to provide a picture of the lifestyles and living conditions of Métis, Inuit, and off-reserve First Nations peoples in Canada.

The survey was developed by Statistics Canada in partnership with the following national Aboriginal organizations: Congress of Aboriginal Peoples; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami; Métis National Council; National Association of Friendship Centres; and the Native Women's Association of Canada. The following federal departments sponsored the 2006 APS: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada; Health Canada; Human Resources and Social Development Canada; Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation; and Canadian Heritage.

The Aboriginal Peoples Survey is a post-censal survey, that is, a sample of about 60,000 people was selected from adults 15 years and over and children aged 6 to 14 living in private households whose response(s) on their 2006 Census questionnaire indicated that they:

- had Aboriginal origins and/or
- identified as North American Indian, Métis and/or Inuit, and/or
- had treaty or registered Indian status and/or
- had Indian Band membership.

Respondents self-identified as "North American Indian"; however, the term "First Nations" is used throughout the report.

Aboriginal people living in Indian settlements and reserves in the 10 provinces were not included in the 2006 APS data collection. In the three territories, all First Nations people were included in the APS target population. Discussions

are underway with stakeholders to determine how best to collect data with First Nations communities. Further discussions need to take place with federal partners and First Nations leadership. Therefore, findings from the Aboriginal Peoples Survey are not representative of all First Nations people living in Canada; however, they are representative of First Nations people (6 years and over) living off-reserve in the ten provinces and all First Nations people (6 years and over) in the territories.

The Aboriginal Peoples Survey was conducted between October 2006 and March 2007. Personal interviews were conducted in Inuit communities, the Northwest Territories (except for Yellowknife) and in other remote areas, while telephone interviews were conducted elsewhere. The overall response rate for the APS was 80.1%. More detailed information about the survey is available in the "Aboriginal Peoples Survey Concepts and Methods Guide" (catalogue number 89-637-X).

Source: Statistics Canada (January 2009), *Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2006: School Experiences of Off-Reserve First Nations Children Aged 6 to 14*, Catalogue no. 89-637-X no. 001, 40 pages.

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The entire report is available online at:  
[www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-637-x/89-637-x2009001-eng.pdf](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-637-x/89-637-x2009001-eng.pdf)  
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