



Promoting Equality of Educational Opportunity

Canada Report for the UNESCO Eighth
Consultation of Member States on the
Implementation of the Convention and
Recommendation against Discrimination in
Education



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Executive Summary

UNESCO regularly monitors the implementation of the Convention and the Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, as adopted by UNESCO's General Conference on December 14, 1960. Canada is not a signatory to the convention. This report relates to the application of the recommendation only. This eighth consultation covers the period from 2006 to 2011.

Background and context

A brief demographic overview reveals that according to the 2011 census, Canada has a population of 33,476,688, an increase of 5.9 per cent since the 2006 survey. Net international migration accounts for two-thirds of the growth. Canada has two official languages and more than 200 first languages reported. In the 2006 census, a total of 1,172,790 people identified themselves as an Aboriginal person, that is, First Nations, Métis, or Inuit. The Aboriginal population is growing at a much faster rate than that of the non-Aboriginal population. The 2006 census enumerated over six million foreign-born people in Canada, almost 20 per cent of the population. Over five million people, 16 per cent of the population, belonged to a visible minority.

The educational systems in Canada work within this pluralistic society to eliminate discrimination and provide equitable and fair access to quality education for all.

Legal frameworks

Governments in Canada have established a solid legal framework that integrates a collection of laws and policies that prohibit discrimination on the grounds outlined in the convention and recommendation — race, colour, sex, language, religion, political opinion, national origin, economic condition, or birth. Education is a significant human right in Canada that is guaranteed in federal, provincial, and territorial legislation.



In Canada, exclusive legislative responsibility for education is granted to the provinces in Canada's *Constitution Act, 1867*; similar responsibilities are delegated to the territories by the federal government. The education or school act in each province or territory specifies who is entitled to attend school. Although each act differs in specifics, the overall principles are consistent throughout the country. All children have the right to attend a public school if they meet the age and residency requirements. No tuition is to be charged to the student or the parent for this education.

The federal government shares responsibility with First Nations for the provision of education to children ordinarily resident on reserve and attending provincial, federal, or band-operated schools.

Within the framework of legislation and policy, the rights of students to be free from discrimination encompass not only access to education, but also the quality of the educational experience itself. Educational jurisdictions in Canada are reaching beyond the idea of anti-discrimination to the concept of truly inclusive education. In inclusive education, educational values and beliefs are centred on the best interests of the students, promoting social cohesion, belonging, equal opportunities for success, and active participation in learning.

Access to quality education

Early childhood learning and development: Every jurisdiction provides Kindergarten programs, whether full-day or half-day, mandatory or voluntary. Six of the provinces offer full-day Kindergarten, with others considering it. Statistics Canada numbers show that in seven provinces, school districts offer junior Kindergarten for four year olds. Over 90 per cent of five year olds are attending Kindergarten across Canada.

Elementary and high school systems: The vast majority of the school-age population from 5 to 17 years of age is attending school. At age 15, this is 95 per cent and at age 17 it is 91 per cent, including registrations in college and university. In 2010, the attainment rate for youth under 25 had risen to 78.3 per cent. When those over 25 are included, the rate rises even higher, indicating the strength of adult educational offerings. The early leaver rate has also been decreasing over the past 10 years.



International tests have revealed the high overall scores achieved by students in Canada. As well, indicators of an equality of educational opportunity included the narrow gap between the scores of the highest performers and those of the lowest performers, and the high proportion of students scoring at the high levels and fewer at the lower levels in comparison with other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. Factors such as socioeconomic status of students had less of an impact than in other countries.

The major area of concern is the lower level of educational attainment among Aboriginal peoples.

Postsecondary education: According to the joint Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, and Statistics Canada report, *Education Indicators in Canada: An International Perspective*, 2009 figures for highest level of education attained indicate that about half of the population aged 25 to 64 have successfully completed a program of postsecondary education, far above the average for OECD countries. One-quarter (24 per cent) have a certificate or diploma from a college, while 25 per cent have earned a degree. Further research indicated that the level of parental education is a strong determinant for student participation in postsecondary education. Aboriginal populations showed much lower levels of access to and graduation from university than the non-Aboriginal population, but have similar rates of college completion.

Adult learning and skills development: A 2008 study, the Access and Support to Education and Training Survey, revealed that between July 2007 and July 2008 almost half of the Canadian population aged 18 to 64 had participated in some type of formal education credit program or training, with 18 per cent in formal education and 34 per cent in training. The vast majority of training programs were supported by an employer. The level of previous education had a strong influence on participation in training.

Continuing challenges

Aboriginal students are completing secondary school and graduating from postsecondary education at rates much lower than those of the non-Aboriginal population. Despite many gains across provinces and territories in recent years,



student early leaver rates among Aboriginal youth remain high, and the transition rate from secondary school to postsecondary education remains low.

Provincial and territorial education systems provide education to Aboriginal students, with the exception of those attending the schools on reserve, who are the responsibility of the federal government. The ministers responsible for education in the provinces and territories, working together as the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), have identified Aboriginal education as one of the key activity areas within their four pillars of education. The objective is the elimination of the gap in academic achievement and graduation rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

Brief descriptions of initiatives to provide more equal opportunities for educational success to Aboriginal students are outlined at the legislative, policy, funding, programming, curriculum, and services levels within the provinces and territories, and are built around collaboration and cooperation with Aboriginal communities and organizations.

Conclusion

With a strong legislative and policy framework that prohibits discrimination in education, the education systems have moved toward widely inclusive education in which all are able to participate and succeed to the best of their abilities. Some challenges remain; most important among these is the education, at all levels, of Aboriginal populations. Provincial and territorial governments recognize that special attention must be paid to Aboriginal students and — working in collaboration with Aboriginal communities and organizations and other partners — are making progress in closing the achievement gap in order to offer equality of educational opportunity.



Section One — Background and Context

The nature of the report

1. UNESCO regularly monitors the implementation of the Convention and the Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, as adopted by UNESCO's General Conference on December 14, 1960. The convention, which has been recognized as a key pillar in the Education for All process, contains 19 articles that define discrimination and the goals and policies of education systems free from discrimination. The purpose of the convention and the recommendation is not only the elimination of discrimination in education, but also the adoption of measures aimed at promoting equality of educational opportunity and treatment.
2. The recommendation sought to take into account the diversity of states and the capacity of all legal and political systems to ratify the convention, particularly those states, such as Canada, with a federal structure. Barring differences in wording and in legal scope, the content of the recommendation is identical to that of the convention. The substantive difference is that the convention has binding force and the states that are party to it must incorporate its provisions into the national Constitution or domestic law. The recommendation, non-binding in nature, is a norm that member states are invited to apply and which is intended to influence the development of national laws and practices.
3. Canada is not a signatory to the convention. This report relates to the application of the recommendation only. The provinces and territories affirm their commitment to the recommendation as best reflecting their priorities and responsibility for education in the Canadian federation.
4. UNESCO has conducted seven previous consultations of Member States since the adoption of the convention and the recommendation. This eighth consultation covers the period from 2006 to 2011.
5. The definition of discrimination in the convention includes any distinction, exclusion, limitation, or preference which — being based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political opinion, national or social origin, economic



condition, or birth — has the purpose of nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education, in particular with regards to access, education of inferior quality, or inflicting conditions which are incompatible with the dignity of man. As is shown in this report, the legislative framework established in Canada does not permit these, or any other, forms of discrimination in education or any other aspect of life. For this reason, the report for Canada focuses on the promotion of equality of education opportunities and success and the provision of inclusive education, rather than documenting a struggle against discrimination.

6. Canada has 13 educational jurisdictions, all of which are committed to the elimination of discrimination in education at all levels. This report is not intended to be inclusive of all the activity and legislation concerned with promoting equality of educational opportunity in Canada from 2006-2011. The focus is on presenting an overview, as well providing a portrait of the levels of access to and graduation from educational opportunities at all levels of public education. Policies, programs, and resources that address the ongoing challenge of eliminating the achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students highlight how governments and educators continue to strive for true equality of educational opportunities.
7. Four reports recently completed by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, in cooperation with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, offer extensive detail on the specific activities of the provincial and territorial departments and ministries of education and civil society to promote equality of educational opportunities:
 - *Report to UNESCO and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on Human Rights Education: Report for Canada 2005–2009.* <http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/267/hr-canada-report-2005-2009-en.pdf>
 - *The Development and State of the Art of Adult Learning and Education (ALE): Report for Canada. October 2008.* <http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/194/FINAL%20CONFINTEA%20VI%20EN.pdf>



- *The Development of Education: Report for Canada. Report One: The Education Systems in Canada — Facing the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century; and Report Two: Inclusive Education in Canada: The Way of the Future. October 2008. <http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/122/ICE2008-reports-canada.en.pdf>*
- *UNESCO Seventh Consultation of Member States on the Implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education: Report for Canada 2007. <http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/105/Canada-report-antidiscrimination-2007.en.pdf>*

Demographic context

8. A brief demographic overview is provided to present some important characteristics of the population that are significant for education. According to the 2011 census, Canada has a population of 33,476,688, an increase of 5.9 per cent since the 2006 survey. Net international migration accounts for two-thirds of the growth. Almost 70 per cent of the population lives in a census metropolitan area, with the three largest— Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver—having 35 per cent of the population of Canada. Using results from the 2006 census, it is possible to look at some of the specific characteristics of the population, providing a context for an examination of access to and equality within education.
9. Languages: Canada has two official languages: French and English. The 2006 census enumerated over 18 million anglophones and almost 7 million francophones. Canadians reported more than 200 first languages, with those who have neither French nor English as a first language representing 20 per cent of the population. These include languages long associated with immigration to Canada, such as German, Italian, Ukrainian, Dutch, and Polish. Between 2001 and 2006, language groups from Asia and the Middle East — including the Chinese languages, Punjabi, Arabic, Urdu, Tagalog, and Tamil — recorded the largest gains. There are also 11 Aboriginal language groupings, comprising more than 65 distinct languages and dialects. In the northern territory of Nunavut, two Inuit languages, Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun, are official languages, while in Northwest Territories, there are



nine Aboriginal languages listed in the Official Language Act, meaning that government services are available in these languages, on request.

10. Aboriginal population: In the 2006 Census, a total of 1,172,790 people identified themselves as an Aboriginal person, that is, First Nation, Métis, or Inuit. The Aboriginal population is growing at a much faster rate than that of the non-Aboriginal population. Of most consequence for the educational systems, children and youth aged 24 and under made up almost half (48 per cent) of all Aboriginal people, compared to 31 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population.
11. Immigration: The 2006 census enumerated over six million foreign-born people in Canada, almost 20 per cent of the population. Recent immigrants born in Asia made up the largest portion, over 58 per cent, of newcomers to Canada since the previous census.
12. Diversity: Over five million people, 16 per cent of the population, belonged to a visible minority. As outlined in *Canada's Ethnocultural Mosaic, 2006 Census*, the visible minority population increased by 27 per cent between 2001 and 2006, with fully 75 per cent of recent immigrants being visible minorities. About 4.4 million Canadians (14.3 per cent) reported having a disability in 2006. The percentage of Canadians with disabilities increased with age, ranging from 3.7 per cent for children 14 years of age and under to 4.7 per cent for those between 15 and 24 and 56.3 per cent for those over 75 years of age.
13. The educational systems in Canada work within this pluralistic society to eliminate discrimination and provide equitable and fair access to quality education for all.



Education systems in Canada

14. In Canada, exclusive legislative responsibility for education is granted to the provinces in Canada's *Constitution Act, 1867*. As stipulated in the federal laws that created the three territories — Nunavut, Northwest Territories, and Yukon — each territory has comparable responsibility for education. In the 13 jurisdictions — 10 provinces and three territories — departments or ministries of education are responsible for the organization, delivery, and assessment of education at the elementary and secondary levels. The institutions in the postsecondary systems have varying degrees of autonomy from provincial or territorial government control. The ministers responsible for education in the provinces and territories come together at the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to discuss matters of mutual interest, undertake educational initiatives cooperatively, and represent the interests of the provinces and territories nationally and internationally.
15. The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, outlined the four pillars of lifelong learning in the document *Learn Canada 2020*, with commitments that reflect the components of the UNESCO recommendation:
 - Early childhood learning and development: All children should have access to high-quality early childhood education that ensures they arrive at school ready to learn.
 - Elementary and high school systems: All children in our elementary to high school systems deserve teaching and learning opportunities that are inclusive and that provide them with world-class skills in literacy, numeracy, and science.
 - Postsecondary education: Canada must increase the number of students pursuing postsecondary education by increasing the quality and accessibility of postsecondary education.
 - Adult learning and skills development: Canada must develop an accessible, diversified, and integrated system of adult learning and skills development that delivers training when Canadians need it.



16. While there are a great many similarities in the provincial and territorial education systems across Canada, there are important differences that reflect the geography, history, culture, and corresponding specialized needs of the populations served. The comprehensive, diversified, and widely accessible nature of the education systems in Canada reflect the societal belief in the importance of education. More information on the educational systems in Canada can be found by consulting “Education in Canada: An Overview” at <http://www.cmec.ca/299/Education-in-Canada-An-Overview/index.html>.



Section Two — Legal Frameworks

17. Governments in Canada have established a solid legal framework that integrates a collection of laws and policies that prohibit discrimination on the grounds outlined in the convention and recommendation — race, colour, sex, language, religion, political opinion, national origin, economic condition or birth. Education is a significant human right in Canada that is guaranteed in federal, provincial, and territorial legislation.

Legislation of the Government of Canada

18. The *Canadian Human Rights Act* was put in place to give effect to the principle that all individuals should have equal opportunities. In this act, discrimination is prohibited on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability, and conviction for which a pardon has been granted. In defining discriminatory practices, the act states that it is illegal, for any of the reasons listed above, to deny, or deny access to, any good, service, facility, or accommodation to any individual or to differentiate adversely in relation to any individual. Access to education is included in this prohibition.
19. The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* clearly states that “[e]very individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability.” It further ensures that this guarantee of rights “does not preclude any law, program, or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability.”
20. The *Citizenship Act* provides that all Canadians, whether by birth or by choice, are entitled to the same rights, powers, and privileges and are subject to the same obligations, duties, and liabilities.



21. The *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* provides that the “Government of Canada recognizes the diversity of Canadians as regards race, national or ethnic origin, colour, and religion as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society and is committed to a policy of multiculturalism designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians while working to achieve the equality of all Canadians in the economic, social, cultural, and political life of Canada.”
22. In November 2010, Canada joined other countries in supporting the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as a reaffirmation of its commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada and around the world. The declaration sets out the individual and collective rights of Indigenous peoples, as well as their rights to culture, identity, language, employment, health, education, and other needs.
23. Recently, the Government of Canada, with the support of all the provinces and territories, ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, an international human rights instrument of the United Nations intended to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. The core obligations relate to non-discrimination and reasonable accommodation, with specific provisions for education.
24. The federal government shares responsibility with First Nations for the provision of education to children ordinarily resident on reserve and attending provincial, federal, or band-operated schools.

Provincial and territorial legislation

25. To guard against discrimination and foster human rights, every province and territory has its own human rights legislation and procedures, as well as a human right commission or equivalent. The commissions promote and educate about human rights and anti-discrimination laws, as well as work to settle claims of discrimination. Education is included in each piece of human right legislation as a service that is subject to the provisions of the law.



The Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies (CASHRA) is the national association of Canada's 12 statutory agencies charged with administering federal, provincial, and territorial human right legislation. British Columbia and Nunavut do not have Human Rights Commissions; they do have Human Rights tribunals. The CASHRA web site (<http://www.cashra.ca/links.html>) provides links to these agencies and the legislation.

26. The human rights acts or codes provide protection from discrimination or denial of service, with variations by jurisdictions, for such reasons as age; colour; race; ethnic or national origin; criminal conviction; political belief; sexual orientation; association; creed or religion; family and marital status; physical and mental disability, including addiction; and source of income. The federal and provincial/territorial legislation is inclusive in terms of individuals, businesses, and services to which they apply.
27. The education or school act in each jurisdiction specifies who is entitled to attend school. Although each act differs in specifics, the overall principles are consistent throughout the country. All children have the right to attend a public school if they meet the age and residency requirements. No tuition is to be charged to the student or the parent for this education.
28. School systems reflect the values of the legislation cited by creating and maintaining conditions that foster success and equitable treatment for all. The education acts also address the provision of reasonable accommodations to meet the learning needs of students with special needs. Codes of conduct in some jurisdictions refer to the standards of behaviour that are expected from all members of school communities related to safe and positive learning environments and respecting the rights of others.

The issue of parental choice

29. Parental choice is a central component of the education systems. According to the province or territory in which they are living, parents may have the choice of sending their children to a secular or non-denominational



public school, a religion-based separate school, a French- or English-language school, or a private school that may or may not receive public funding. Parents may also choose to home-school their children. Public and separate school systems that are publicly funded serve about 93 per cent of all students in Canada. The legislation and practices concerning the establishment of separate educational systems and private educational institutions vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. For more information on provincial and territorial policies concerning parental choice, see pages 12–16 in *UNESCO Seventh Consultation of Member States on the Implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education: Report for Canada 2007* at <http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/105/Canada-report-antidiscrimination-2007.en.pdf>.

30. The principle of access remains paramount because each child is entitled to a free, public education. It is also consistent across jurisdictions that no child is required to take part in any religious observance or instruction if the parent wants to have the child excused, or if the child asks to be excused.

From anti-discrimination to inclusion

31. Within the framework of this legislation and policy, the rights of students to be free from discrimination encompass not only access to education, but also the quality of the educational experience itself. Educational jurisdictions in Canada are reaching beyond the idea of anti-discrimination to the concept of truly inclusive education. In inclusive education, educational values and beliefs are centred on the best interests of the students, promoting social cohesion, belonging, equal opportunities for success, and active participation in learning. More detail on the policies and practices of inclusive education can be found in the report *The Development of Education: Report for Canada. Report Two: Inclusive Education in Canada: The Way of the Future* <http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/122/ICE2008-reports-canada.en.pdf>.



Section Three — Access to Quality Education

32. Educational systems that encompass the principles of anti-discrimination and inclusive education provide not only equality of access, but also significant equality of achievement and graduation. In this report, educational indicators and data collected at the pan-Canadian and international levels highlight progress being made and ongoing challenges in achieving the vision set out in the convention.

Early childhood learning and development

33. Research has shown that the children who are most successful in school are those who were nurtured, encouraged, and stimulated in the early years — whether at home or in early learning and child care settings. Being ready to learn continues to have an impact throughout a child’s education, with a strong link to secondary-school completion and to future employability, earnings, and life satisfaction. As of July 1, 2011, Statistics Canada estimated that there were just over 1.9 million children aged four and under in Canada, with about 1.8 million between five and nine years of age.
34. The provinces and territories have recognized the importance of supporting the early development and education of children so that they are better prepared to learn, especially those from more vulnerable populations. Each jurisdiction has established policies and programs that address early intervention and learning services, as well as access to Kindergarten and junior Kindergarten. In some jurisdictions, the responsibility for early childhood education is a shared responsibility between departments responsible for education, social or family services, and health.
35. Every jurisdiction provides Kindergarten programs, whether full-day or half-day, mandatory or voluntary. Six of the provinces offer full-day Kindergarten, with others considering it. Statistics Canada numbers show that in seven provinces, school districts offer junior Kindergarten for four-year-olds. In some jurisdictions with half-day programs, full-day Kindergarten is offered for more vulnerable populations. Since 2008, a



number of provinces and territories have expanded their Kindergarten programs to full-day offerings and increased investments and resources for the early years, in line with international trends. In 2011, the ministers of education held a special session of early childhood learning and development at a meeting of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.

36. According to the *National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth* (2008) undertaken by Statistics Canada, over 90 per cent of five-year-olds are attending Kindergarten across Canada. The recent publication, *Early Years Study 3: Making Decisions, Taking Action* revealed that across all the provinces, 52 per cent of 2- to 4-year-olds regularly receive early childhood education in child care, pre-school, or public school programs. The importance of being ready to learn as a foundation for later educational success has been recognized and programs established and expanded to best serve the widest number of children.

Elementary and high school systems

37. Each province and territory has established legislation, policies, programs, curricula, and practices for an elementary and secondary education system that best reflect the history, culture, and learning needs of its population. The ages for compulsory schooling vary from one jurisdiction to another, but most require attendance in school from age 6 to age 16. In some cases schooling starts at age 5, and in others it extends to 18, or graduation from secondary or high school.
38. In most jurisdictions, there are 12 years of school, with elementary school covering the first six to eight years and high school covering the final four to six years of compulsory education. In some places, junior high or middle school covers the middle years of the 12-year span. In Quebec, students move to postsecondary cégeps (colleges) after 11 years of elementary and secondary school.
39. Access to education is one measure of successful anti-discrimination policy and practice. In 2009-10, there were 4,711,093 full-time equivalent



enrolments in public elementary and secondary schools, according to *Educational Indicators in Canada: Report of the Pan-Canadian Indicator Program (PCEIP)*. This represents the vast majority of the school-age population from 5 to 17 years of age. For 2010-11, the participation rate in elementary or secondary school for 15-year-olds was 95 per cent, 93 per cent for 16-year-olds, and 76 per cent for 17-year-olds. However, an additional 12 per cent of 17-year-olds were in college and a further 3 per cent were in university, raising the total proportion of 17 year-olds still in education to 91 per cent. At age 18, only 28 per cent are in secondary school, with 21 per cent in college and another 21 per cent in university — indicating that 70 per cent of 18-year-olds are still taking part in formal education.

40. In 2008, the upper secondary attainment rate for the population younger than 25 years of age was 75 per cent. (Attainment rate refers to individuals of a specific age who had obtained, during a given year, secondary school graduation, measured as a percentage of the corresponding population.) But upper secondary attainment can happen past the age of 25 for a portion of the population. The Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program (PCEIP) reveals a 79 per cent attainment rate when students over the age of 25 are included. This increase indicates how education systems are assisting adults to attain an upper secondary level of education. In 2010, the attainment rate for the population under 25 had risen to 78.3 per cent. In every province and territory, a larger proportion of females than males attained this level of education — with 83 per cent for females and 75 per cent for males in 2008.
41. A recent Statistics Canada publication, *Study: Trends in Dropout Rates and the Labour Market Outcomes of Young Dropouts* presents an encouraging trend — from 1990-91 to 2009-10, dropout rates fell from 16.6 per cent to 8.5 per cent of young people aged 20 to 24 years of age. Although the proportion of young women (6.6 per cent) who were dropouts in 2009-10 continues to be smaller than the proportion of male dropouts (10.3 per cent), the gap has narrowed over time. Dropout rates were lower for young immigrant adults than for their Canadian-born counterparts. Despite improvements throughout the country, dropout rates were persistently higher outside of big cities, in the territories, and among



Aboriginal youth. One in four of the dropouts were unemployed during the recent economic downturn, a much higher proportion than for those with high school graduation, and their earnings were lower.

42. Measures of achievement offer additional insight into issues of anti-discrimination and equality of opportunity and treatment. The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests close to half a million 15-year-old students in 65 countries, including 23,000 in Canada, in science, mathematics, and reading. In the 2009 study, the emphasis was on reading. Canada had a mean score of 524 on the combined reading scale, well above the OECD average of 496.
43. Students in Canada scored well above the OECD average in reading, with only students from Shanghai-China, Korea, Finland, and Hong-Kong-China performing significantly better. As well as high scores overall, the results on the OECD's PISA tests for Canada revealed important indications of equity in performance:
 - Canada is one of the few PISA countries with both **high performance and high equity**, indicated by the narrow gap between the scores of the highest performers and those of the lowest performers in each jurisdiction.
 - The proportion of Canadian students who performed at the **higher levels** of reading was significantly higher (40 per cent) than the OECD average (29 per cent), while the proportion of scores at **lower levels** of reading in Canada (10 per cent) was about half the OECD average (19 per cent). This result does indicate, however, that 10 per cent of the students in Canada have considerable difficulty in reading.
 - Measures of **parental education** showed that an average of more than 30 score points lies between students from more educated households and those from less educated households in Canada, compared to the OECD average of 50 points. The disparity in Canada is less, but still significant.
 - **Socioeconomic status** had very limited impact on score variations for students in Canada. In most other countries there are larger



disparities in learning outcomes between students who have higher socioeconomic status and those with low socioeconomic status.

- The PISA results revealed a **low variability of results between schools** as another key measure of the combination of high equity and high achievement in Canada. Across the OECD countries, 42 per cent of the variance in students can be explained by between-school variation; in Canada, the variation is about 19 per cent. This suggests that Canadian schools tend not to group students by ability, but have a wide range of ability in each school.

44. Consistent with previous national and international assessments, the 2009 PISA revealed significant **gender differences** in reading, favouring females in Canada as well as other countries in the study. Canadian female students outperformed males by 34 points in Canada, and by 33 points in OECD countries. **Mathematics and science** were also assessed in PISA 2009, although in less detail than reading. Canadian students performed above the OECD average in both domains, with seven countries outperforming Canada in mathematics and six in science. In mathematics, boys in Canada outperformed girls, but the difference is smaller than the gender difference favouring girls in reading. In science, Canadian boys outperform girls only slightly.
45. A major pan-Canadian study, *PCAP — 2010: Report on the Pan-Canadian Assessment of Mathematics, Science, and Reading*, revealed that over 90 per cent of Canadian Grade 8 (age 13) students are achieving at or above their expected level of performance in mathematics. Comparisons were also made on the basis of **gender differences** in performance:
 - In mathematics, there were no significant differences in performance between boys and girls.
 - For Canada as a whole, girls performed better than boys in both science and reading.



46. The 2009 PISA compared the reading performance of students in the **English and French school systems** for seven provinces. The performance of the minority language students — those in the English language system in Quebec and the French-language systems in the other six provinces — was compared to that of those in the majority language system. In five provinces and for Canada overall, students enrolled in the majority-language school systems performed significantly better in reading than those in the minority-language school system. In two provinces, Quebec and Manitoba, there were no significant differences. In the measures of performance in mathematics and science in PISA 2009, students in majority-language school systems outperformed their counterparts in minority-language school systems in five of the seven provinces.
47. Of the 15-year-old students in Canada assessed in PISA 2009, 24 per cent were individuals with an **immigrant** background — a much higher proportion than the OECD average. The results from three groups were compared: students who were born in Canada and whose parents were born in Canada; second-generation immigrant students who were born and educated in Canada but whose parents were born outside Canada; and first-generation immigrant students who were born and may have received part of their education outside Canada. PISA revealed that Canadian students with immigrant backgrounds, whether first- or second-generation, have reading skills that are not significantly different from those of non-immigrant students. Similarly, for immigrant students there were no performance differences on average between second-generation and first-generation students. This is a highly positive result, particularly when compared to that in OECD countries in general.
48. For historical and social reasons that are discussed in more detail below, Aboriginal students have not had educational attainment at the same level as the non-Aboriginal population. According to the 2006 census, 34 per cent of those aged 25 to 54 have not completed high school, compared to 15 per cent of the total population. According to the 2011 Statistics Canada publication, *Study: Trends in Dropout Rates and the Labour Market Outcomes of Young Dropouts*, between 2007 and 2010, the three-year average dropout rate among First Nation people living off-reserve, Métis, and Inuit aged 20 to 24 was 22.6 per cent compared to 8.5 per cent for non-Aboriginal people.



49. An important concern for education systems looking to promote equality of educational opportunity is the extent to which they serve the entire population. Striving to ensure that all students develop their full potential regardless of their societal backgrounds is a fundamental principle of public education in Canada. The studies cited above indicate that Canada has had considerable success in providing equitable access to, achievement within, and graduation from elementary and secondary school. However, within the student population are groups that are not achieving at the same levels as their peers. With a focus on Aboriginal students, programs and policies have been put in place to meet the ongoing challenges and ensure inclusion and success in education. These are described in Section Four — Continuing Challenges.

Postsecondary education

50. Postsecondary education is available in both government-supported and private institutions, which offer degrees, diplomas, certificates, and attestations, depending on the nature of the institution and the length of the program. Universities and university colleges focus on degree programs, but also offer diplomas and certificates, often in professional designations. Colleges, community colleges, and technical and vocational institutions offer diplomas and certificates, and in some cases, degree programs or two years of academic credit that can be transferred to a university. The private and public colleges in Quebec offer a choice of two-year academic programs that are a prerequisite for university study or three-year vocational and professional programs that prepare students for the labour market.
51. In this look at postsecondary education, information is provided on enrolment and graduation rates with particular attention paid to groups who have traditionally not participated or been successful in postsecondary education — Aboriginal populations and those whose parents do not have postsecondary education. Brief mention is made of some of the policies and programs in place to redress these disparities.



52. According to *Education Indicators in Canada: An International Perspective*, 2009 figures for highest level of education attained indicate that about half of the population aged 25 to 64 have successfully completed a program of postsecondary education. One-quarter (24 per cent) have a certificate or diploma from a college, while 25 per cent have earned a degree. Table One below details the postsecondary attainment of various age groups. In addition, another 12 per cent have certificates or diplomas from vocational schools or apprenticeship training.

Table One — Percentage of 25- to 64-year-old population that has attained postsecondary education by age group, Canada, 2009

	25 – 64 years of age	25 – 34 years of age	35 – 44 years of age	45 – 54 years of age	55 – 64 years of age
College	24	26	27	24	20
University	25	30	29	21	21
Total	49	56	56	45	41

Source: Canadian Education Statistics Council. *Education Indicators in Canada: Report of the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2011, p.106.

53. At the college level, the Canadian proportion of graduates (24 per cent) far exceeds the OECD average of 10 percent; at the university level the results are closer at 25 per cent in Canada, compared with 21 per cent in other OECD countries. Canada has experienced an 11 per cent increase in the proportion of adults aged 25 to 64 with postsecondary education between 1999 and 2009.
54. Enrolment rates for postsecondary institutions reveal a very marked trend — gender differences. At both colleges and universities, women students outnumber men. At universities, more women graduate from every field of study except mathematics, computer and information science, and architecture, engineering, and related technologies. Table Two provides an overview of the current extent of gender differences in enrolment:



Table Two — Number of full- and part-time university and college students by gender, Canada, 2008–2009

	College students full-time	College students part-time	University students full-time	University students part-time
Total	457,854	147,459	828,216	284,154
Male	203,649	54,228	360,663	110,748
Female	251,502	81,921	467,442	173,232

Source: Canadian Education Statistics Council. *Education Indicators in Canada: Report of the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, December 2011. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-582-x/81-582-x2011002-eng.htm>

55. Postsecondary educational attainment by Aboriginal populations is similar to that of non-Aboriginal populations at the trades and college levels, but there is a significant gap at the university level. According to the 2006 census, an estimated 555,400 adults identified as an Aboriginal person (First Nation, Métis, or Inuit). One in three had not completed high school and 21 per cent had high school as their highest educational level. At the same time, an estimated 44 per cent of the Aboriginal population were postsecondary graduates, with 14 per cent having a trade certificate, 19 per cent with a college certificate or diploma, and 8 per cent with a university degree.



56. Aboriginal students face many barriers to admission and to successful graduation from colleges and universities. Many Aboriginal students live in remote communities and so must relocate to communities many times the size of their original communities. Some may require additional academic support to successfully transition to postsecondary education. The provinces, territories, and educational institutions, along with the Aboriginal communities, have policies, programs, and collaborative arrangements to respond to the needs of Aboriginal postsecondary students. For example, programs have been set up and designed especially for Aboriginal students in education, law, business, and Aboriginal studies. Special support structures may provide counselling meeting places, preparatory programs, and funding.

57. A recent Statistics Canada analysis of the information gathered through the Youth in Transition Survey (YITS) — which, every two years, studies a cohort of young adults who were 15 years old in 2000 — explores the postsecondary education participation among underrepresented and minority groups. The research looked at the postsecondary participation of this cohort in 2006, when they were 21 years of age. As shown in Table Three, four factors had a significant impact on their participation: family income, parental education, immigrant status, and Aboriginal status.



Table Three — Rates of access to college and university for underrepresented and minority groups, YITS Cohort A, 2006, all provinces

	College	University	Any
Per cent			
All	33.0	41.7	74.7
Family income			
Income below \$50,000	34.8	31.4	66.2
Income above \$50,000	32.1	46.9	79.0
Parental education			
No postsecondary	36.6	24.3	60.9
At least some postsecondary	31.5	49.2	80.7
Immigrant status			
First-generation immigrant	29.6	57.0	86.6
Second-generation immigrant	30.0	53.0	83.0
Non-Immigrant	34.2	37.0	71.2
Aboriginal status			
Aboriginal	28.0	23.1	51.1
Non-Aboriginal	33.2	42.2	75.4

Source: Statistics Canada. *Postsecondary Education Participation among Underrepresented and Minority Groups*. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-004-x/2011004/article/11595-eng.htm>



58. The YITS results in Table Three for the immigrant students, both first- and second-generation, show they are far more likely to attend university than the children of non-immigrant Canadians, while slightly less likely to attend college. A further analysis of this data, presented in a report entitled *Access to Post-Secondary Education in Canada among the Children of Canadian Immigrants*, reveals that country of origin has a strong influence on which immigrant groups attend university. The children of immigrants from Chinese, other Asian, and African groups are much more likely to attend postsecondary education than the children of non-immigrant Canadians and those from the Americas (United States excluded). Factors such as province of residence, urban or rural location, parental education levels, family income levels, high school grades, literacy scores, and high school engagement partially accounted for the higher levels of postsecondary education among the children of immigrants. However, there also seemed to be a reflection of cultural factors, including a strong ethos for postsecondary education, among immigrant families, especially those from the three regions with highest attendance.
59. These results reveal a situation in Canada that differs considerably from that in Europe, where the children of immigrants appear to face substantial difficulties in terms of access to postsecondary education. However, as pointed out in a further report, *The Price of Knowledge: Access and Student Finance in Canada*, immigrant groups who are falling behind in their participation in postsecondary education would benefit from the additional attention of policy-makers.
60. A detailed study from Statistics Canada entitled *Intergenerational Mobility: University Completion in Relation to Parents' Education Level* provides some positive news about increasing levels of postsecondary graduation and some cautions about disparities that continue to exist. Data from 1986 to 2009 were analyzed for Canadian-born people between the ages of 25 and 39 from the General Social Survey:
- The proportion of university graduates in the 25 to 39 age group more than doubled from 15 per cent in 1986 to 31 per cent in 2009. The increase was much larger for women than for men.



- The effects of parental education were significant for both men and women. For men ages 25 to 39, 20 per cent of those with two parents with high school completion had a university degree, while 67 per cent of those with two parents with a university degree had a university degree in 2009. For women, the difference was 31 per cent for those with parents with high school education to 77 per cent for those with university-educated parents.
- Young adults with parents without postsecondary education were more likely to be university graduates in 2009 (23 per cent) than in 1986 (12 per cent). This trend is particularly pronounced for women, with only 10 per cent whose parents were not university graduates having a degree in 1986, compared to 28 per cent in 2009.

61. As the above research shows, in the last 25 years there has been a substantial increase in the number of young adults completing university, especially among those whose parents had not completed postsecondary education. Women have played a more significant role in narrowing this gap. However, a gap still remains as the level of parental education continues to have a significant impact on postsecondary education attainment of the children.



Adult learning and skills development

62. Adult learning and skills development are increasingly recognized as essential in a knowledge-based economy in which the skills required for a successful career are constantly evolving. Productivity, competitiveness, economic development, and the well-being of individuals, families, and communities are closely linked to a well-trained and adaptive workforce.
63. The hallmark of adult education is its incredible diversity of programs and providers. Adult learning and skills development includes literacy, adult basic education, academic upgrading programs, job readiness training, workplace and skills training, technical and vocational education and training, bridging programs for entry to postsecondary education, and language programs for newcomers to Canada. Providers include school boards, colleges, cégeps, universities, First Nation educational institutions, non-profit organizations, adult learning and literacy centres, libraries, immigrant and Aboriginal organizations, employers, industry, unions, and the private training sector.
64. In recognition of the importance of a lifelong approach to learning, a study entitled *Access and Support to Education and Training Survey (ASETS)* was conducted by Statistics Canada between June and October 2008. The *Survey* revealed that between July 2007 and July 2008, an estimated 10 million Canadians aged 18 to 64 had participated in some type of formal education credit program or in training (including courses, workshops, private lessons, or on-the-job training that does not lead to a formal educational credential) whether for personal interest, career, or employment. This is almost half (47 per cent) of the Canadian population aged 18 to 64. Among the significant characteristics of those engaged in training are:
- The percentage engaged in training (34 per cent) is almost double that of those engaged in formal education credit programs (18 per cent).
 - Participation in training generally increased with age, with the 35- to 44-year-olds being the most engaged at 41 per cent.



- The percentages of men and women participating in training are very close, with men at 33 per cent and women at 35 per cent.
 - The level of previous education has a strong influence on participation in training. Just over 14 per cent of those with less than high school participated in training; the percentage rose to 24 per cent for those with high school graduation; it rose significantly to over 42 per cent for those with postsecondary education.
 - The average duration of the training received in 2009 was 50 hours.
65. ASETS showed that the vast majority (89 per cent) of training activities undertaken by employed Canadians were supported by an employer. This support was higher for activities undertaken by workers older than 35 and slightly higher for men. In contrast, the proportion of training activities that were employer-supported was similar for the three levels of educational attainment.
66. Comparing the results of the 2008 ASETS to the Adult Education and Training Survey undertaken in 2002 shows some encouraging changes in terms of access to training.
- In 2008, 30.6 per cent of working-age adult Canadians participated in job-related training, a six per cent increase from 2002.
 - Participation was highest for those aged 35 to 44 at 36 per cent, with 25- to 34-year-olds at 32 per cent, and 45- to 64-year-olds at 27 per cent. All of these groups increased their participation rates from 2002.
 - Those with less than high school education had the largest rate of increase (5.2 per cent) but still had the lowest rate of participation in training at 11.7 per cent.
 - The proportion of job-related training activities sponsored by employers increased slightly from 88 per cent in 2002 to 90 per cent in 2008.



- The increase was most significant for activities for workers aged 35 to 44 and 45 to 64 and for those with a high school diploma or equivalent.

67. As with postsecondary education, adult learning and skill development are becoming more inclusive in terms of the age, gender, and educational levels of those who take part. Individuals who have not completed high school are still disadvantaged in access to job training, underlining the importance of programs and policies that support both youth and adults to complete high school and continue to participate in training throughout their working lives.
68. For each of the four pillars of education, progress has been made in promoting equality of educational opportunities and treatment in the period covered by the report — 2006 to 2011. Access to full-day Kindergarten has expanded, the graduation rate from secondary school has increased, the early leaver rate has fallen, more students are graduating from college and university, and more workers are participating in adult training and skills development programs. Despite the overall progress, some populations, especially Aboriginal students, are not achieving at the same level as the majority of their peers. The next section looks at the policies and programs that the ministries and departments of education have developed to provide more inclusive education for Aboriginal students so that all students succeed to the best of their ability.



Section Four — Continuing Challenges

69. Educators and educational authorities in all provinces and territories concentrate their efforts on providing equal educational opportunities and success for all students, especially those whom research and experience have shown to need extra support. Many of these ongoing challenges have been presented in the data presented above. In this section, the focus is on Aboriginal students in public education systems, and how ministries and departments responsible for education are responding to the challenge of the achievement gap.
70. The statistics provided above reveal that Aboriginal students are completing secondary school and graduating from postsecondary education at rates much lower than those of the non-Aboriginal population. Despite many gains across provinces and territories in recent years, student early leaver rates among Aboriginal youth remain high, and the transition rate from secondary school to postsecondary education remains low. This section of the document provides some historical context for the achievement levels of Aboriginal students and an overview of the activities of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, in Aboriginal education. A small selection of policies and practices of the provincial and territorial governments to improve graduation rates for Aboriginal students are also highlighted. Much more can be learned about the activities of the jurisdictions on their Web sites, as listed in Appendix A.
71. The roots of this achievement gap can be traced historically. Starting in the 1840s and continuing until the 1960s, education for many Aboriginal students entailed the erasing of Aboriginal cultures and languages. Thousands of Aboriginal children were taken from their homes for the most part at age six but as early as age three and put into residential schools to be assimilated into the ways of the dominant society. Family bonds were broken, with repercussions that are still felt in Aboriginal communities. The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples stated that “Assimilation policies have done great damage, leaving a legacy of brokenness affecting Aboriginal individuals, families, and communities. The damage has been equally serious to the spirit of Canada — the spirit of generosity and mutual accommodation in which Canadians take pride.”



72. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was created as part of the 2007 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement to inform all Canadians about the legacy of Indian Residential Schools and inspire a process of reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect. In February 2012, the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Interim Report* was released along with *They Came for the Children*, an examination of more than 100 years of history, purpose, operation, and supervision of the residential school system, the effect and consequences of the system, and its ongoing legacy. The findings state that the Residential Schools constituted an assault on Aboriginal children, families, self-governing Aboriginal nations, and culture. The impacts of the residential school system were immediate and have been ongoing since the earliest days of the schools.
73. The policies and practices of assimilation have left a deep sense of mistrust of education and schooling among Aboriginal people. Aboriginal education has traditionally stressed experiential learning and the oral traditions, rather than classroom-based approaches. Aboriginal students often experience a sense of cultural dislocation and isolation in mainstream educational settings. Other issues around levels of federal government funding for on-reserve schools, the lack of a system of First Nations education, and accountability have also contributed to the need to improve Aboriginal education.
74. The federal government shares responsibility with First Nations for the provision of education to children ordinarily resident on reserve and attending provincial, federal, or band-operated schools. According to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, the federal department supported the education of 117,500 First Nation Kindergarten to Grade 12 students living on reserves across Canada in 2010–11. Band-operated schools located on reserves educate approximately 61 per cent of the students living on reserves, while 39 per cent go off reserve to schools under provincial authority. Provinces and territories have responsibility for the provision of education to Aboriginal (including First Nation) children living off reserve who are educated in the public elementary and secondary schools in their cities, towns, and communities. Recognizing that many First Nation education initiatives are led by First Nation authorities, it is noted



that this report covers public education systems under the responsibility of provincial and territorial ministers of education.

75. The Government of Canada has made a commitment to improving First Nation education on reserves. In February 2012, a national panel represented its report on the next steps to improve educational outcomes for First Nation students living on reserves to the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.
76. Provincial and territorial education systems provide education to Aboriginal students, with the exception of those attending the schools on reserve (there are no reserves in Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut). The ministers responsible for education in the jurisdictions, working together in the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) have identified Aboriginal education as one of their key activity areas within *Learn Canada 2020*, CMEC's framework to enhance Canada's education systems, learning opportunities, and overall education outcomes. Key activities for Aboriginal education support the elimination of the gap in academic achievement and graduation rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.
77. In 2009, a summit on Aboriginal education was held at which the ministers discussed ways of strengthening Aboriginal success in education with leaders of national and regional Aboriginal organizations. In February 2011, a further meeting between ministers of education and national Aboriginal organizations was held, with topics such as new initiatives and policies, data collection, and funding of Aboriginal education. As well, CMEC shared ideas on a new strategy for Aboriginal education which provides for regionally appropriate work on pan-Canadian Aboriginal-education data collection and research, teacher education, and knowledge transfer among all those involved in Aboriginal education, as well as ongoing discussion with the federal government on Aboriginal education issues.
78. The CMEC Educators' Forum on Aboriginal Education, held in December 2011, brought together a wide range of individuals and groups interested in Aboriginal education — including educators, academics, government officials, and representatives of Aboriginal organizations — to address



persistent issues within Aboriginal education and to share ideas, evidence, and experiences in Aboriginal early childhood education and elementary and secondary school.

79. As part of the February 2011 meeting between the ministers of education and representatives of Aboriginal organizations, provincial and territorial initiatives addressing key issues in Aboriginal education were presented and discussed. A few of these initiatives are described below to illustrate how the jurisdictions, in cooperation with Aboriginal organizations, are working to address the achievement gap. The projects are presented under the four pillars of education that guide the work of CMEC.

Early childhood learning and development

80. In 2008, the New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development partnered with New Brunswick First Nation communities to implement the K4 Transition to Kindergarten Initiative, which focuses on building capacity at first Nation K4 sites. Recognizing the importance of early education to ensure school readiness, preschool educators at K4 sites are provided with professional learning opportunities, instructional tools, and classroom resources to better support the age 4 learners. The program is based on partnerships involving the First Nation communities and organizations in the province, the provincial and federal government, and health and wellness professionals. It has been successful in improving teacher retention and satisfaction, as well as student outcomes.

Elementary and high school systems

81. Initiatives in the elementary and high school systems have encompassed all aspects of the systems — legislative, policy, funding, partnerships and collaboration, programs, and curriculum.
82. In Nunavut, with a population that is 86 per cent Inuit, a new *Education Act* was proclaimed in 2009. Its fundamental principle is that the public



education system in Nunavut is based on Inuit societal values and culture and the concepts of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, such as respecting others, being welcoming and inclusive, and decision making through discussion and consensus. The new Act mandates culturally appropriate school programs, curriculum, and resources, in addition to bilingual education with the Inuit language and increased support for young children through language and cultural programs. Greater local control across the vast expanse of Nunavut with direct roles and responsibilities for District Education Authorities was set up as a way to encourage more Inuit students to stay in school and succeed in their education.

83. An Aboriginal education enhancement agreement in British Columbia is a commitment made by each school district — involving all local Aboriginal communities and the Ministry of Education — to work together to improve the success of all Aboriginal students. The agreements are based on mutual respect and trust and represent a five-year vision of success for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students in each school district. Enhancement agreements establish programs that reflect the culture of local Aboriginal people and increase knowledge and respect for that culture among all students and staff. They emphasize the integral nature of traditional culture, language, and history to Aboriginal student development and success. Decision making is based on collaboration and consensus is reached through continuous dialogue respecting the shared ownership of the agreement. Assessment is continuous and includes input from all the partners. In addition, an annual report from the Ministry of Education, entitled *Aboriginal Report — How Are We Doing?* provides detail on all aspects of Aboriginal educational achievement. In the 2010 report, the six-year completion rate for Aboriginal students has shown a small but consistent improvement from 2005-06 to 2009-10.
84. Alberta Education and Advanced Education and Technology established a First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) Education Partnership Council in 2009 to help guide the future direction of FNMI education and move forward in eliminating the gap in educational outcomes between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners. The Council, composed of FNMI elected leadership and eight FNMI community members, as well as representatives from the government, developed an action plan built around:



- ensuring that FNMI students are ready and able to learn;
- engaging parents and families to support children and youth; and
- educating teachers.

The Alberta Ministry of Education, in cooperation with FNMI stakeholders, developed a model for school authorities to use when developing collaborative plans and initiatives with the local First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities. Through the use of this FNMI conceptual collaboration framework, parents and communities work with educational authorities to develop outcomes, strategies, and measures designed to improve FNMI success in school. Alberta has also initiated the development of an FNMI Professional Development Strategy with First Nation and Métis teachers and community members across the province.

85. The province of Nova Scotia and the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey signed an agreement setting up a common tuition agreement between the organization and the province as a way of improving educational opportunities for Mi'kmaw students. In addition, a Mi'kmaq liaison office (MLO) was established to serve as a conduit between the Department of Education and the province's Aboriginal communities. The MLO works with Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey to provide services to teachers and school administrators and assists with the development of curricula and resources that promote the inclusion of Mi'kmaq content and perspectives in all of the province's classrooms.
86. The Aboriginal Student Achievement Initiative in Northwest Territories (NWT), involving collaborative planning by educators and Aboriginal leaders, is dedicated to closing the achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Pilot projects in each region of NWT are focusing on developing partnerships between schools and community members to increase attendance among Aboriginal students. Some of these initiatives involve appointing a counsellor to support student success, mentorship programs with community members, incentives for perfect weekly and monthly attendance, student-developed video and print materials to highlight the benefits of school attendance, and working with Elders to assist students who have difficulty with attendance.



87. In 2009, a pilot project, the Southern Tutchone Bi-Cultural Program was launched as a collaborative project involving Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the Yukon Department of Education, and St. Elias Community School. The program is designed to significantly increase the level of First Nation content and perspectives taught using traditional First Nation methods of learning. The program, featuring immersion in Southern Tutchone language and culture for 30 minutes every day, began in Kindergarten and has now been extended to Grades 1 and 2. All of the partners have recognized the program as beneficial and as an important step forward in the integration of First Nation culture into daily teaching and learning.
88. In Newfoundland and Labrador, research has shown that a focus on curriculum delivery in the First Nation language of Innu-aimun is vital for Innu students, if they are to maintain their language and culture. The Department of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, the Labrador School District, the Innu Educational Council of Sheshatshui, and the Natuashish Educational Band Council worked together to develop curriculum resources for Innu students to promote the Innu language and to assist students in meeting the requirements of the provincially-prescribed social studies curriculum. The professional development component increased the capacity of Innu educational leaders, teachers, and teaching assistants.
89. Aboriginal students experiencing school transitions from school to work, to further education, and to life in the community have received additional supports through the Aboriginal Education Transitions Initiative offered through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in Prince Edward Island. The student-centred process has resulted in increased rates of graduation from high school and higher levels of access to and enrolment in postsecondary education. New staff, focused on transitions, family liaison, and career planning, was hired and the level of parental involvement increased.
90. In Saskatchewan, the Ministry of Education, in partnership with stakeholders — including school divisions, schools, parents/caregivers, inter-ministry groups, students, and human service agencies — continues to



implement a needs-based model of identifying and providing supports for all students. The intent of this process is to ensure that:

- all students are provided with supports in the development and attainment of competencies and independence;
- all students have access to appropriate learning opportunities, resources, and supports;
- all students are supported through differentiated and responsive instruction; and
- all students are provided with inclusive opportunities to reach their potential.

Ensuring equitable outcomes and improved student achievement for First Nation and Métis students is a priority. The Ministry of Education is working towards this by investing money in targeted innovation, accountability, and best practice initiatives that directly impact educational outcomes for First Nation and Métis students. In the 2012-13 budget, government has renewed its commitment of \$4.3 million for the First Nations and Métis Education Achievement Fund (\$3.8M) and individual Achievement Accounts (\$500K).

Postsecondary education

91. The plans and activities to improve Aboriginal access to and achievement within postsecondary education often include skills training and labour-market readiness to ensure a comprehensive approach and options for the individuals.
92. In 2010, the *Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework* in Ontario was developed by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities through a wide-ranging community engagement process that included educators, government officials, school board representatives,



Aboriginal government bodies, and organizations and individuals working in First Nation education. The policy framework reflects the view that Aboriginal people need increased opportunities to acquire skills and formal education to actively participate in the changing labour market. The overall strategic directions include:

- strategic communications
- accountability and reporting
- sustained engagement with Aboriginal communities
- leadership and professional development
- building the postsecondary education and training systems' capacity
- access and pathways to achievement
- retention and completion
- facilitating transitions to the labour market

In order to track progress in closing gaps in educational achievement, an Aboriginal postsecondary education performance measures strategy has been developed.

93. *Bridging Two Worlds: Aboriginal Education and Employment Action Plan 2008-2011* was developed by Manitoba educational authorities in consultation with Aboriginal peoples and educational stakeholders to achieve four long-term goals that complement and reinforce each other:
1. Student engagement and high school completion.
 2. Access to and success in adult learning, including postsecondary education and training.
 3. Meaningful participation in the labour market.
 4. Family and community engagement and educational stewardship.
94. For each of the four goals in Manitoba's *Action Plan*, long-term outcomes, objectives, and activities are outlined. For postsecondary education, the key objective is an increase in Aboriginal student participation in and successful completion of postsecondary education and training, including



the provision of financial assistance. Along with providing scholarships and bursaries, continued funding is available for special ACCESS programs at postsecondary institutions which offer personal, financial, academic, and cultural support. Since the implementation of this program, Manitoba has experienced higher graduation rates for students of Aboriginal ancestry in several professional categories, including engineering, medicine, and education.

Adult learning and skills development

95. Adult learning and skills development is a multi-faceted field and the provincial and territorial projects that have been put in place respond to all components.
96. The Manitoba *Action Plan*, referenced above, highlights labour market participation by Aboriginal populations, supported through such activities as culturally relevant career resources, community-based apprenticeship training, training partnerships with employers, counselling, specialized labour market programming, and programs for transition to employment.
97. Saskatchewan Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration funds and delivers adult basic education programs in First Nation communities. This encompasses a wide range of credit and non-credit programs, as well as services, to help adult learners achieve their goals. The programs — which include high school completion, literacy and basic skills, and general education development — provide Aboriginal adults with opportunities to increase their educational and certification levels; gain prerequisites for further education and training; enhance their life skills, independence, and self-sufficiency; and learn skills in areas such as technological literacy, communication, and portfolio development.
98. A centre for skills training in construction and related fields for Aboriginal adults throughout Quebec was established through a partnership comprising the Quebec Construction Council; the Montreal School Board; the Ministry of Education, Recreation, and Sports; a consortium of representatives of First Nation and Aboriginal organizations; and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. The virtual centre, funded



through a federal government program and the Quebec Ministry of Education, Recreation, and Sports, serves all of Quebec by taking advantage of the educational infrastructure already in place to offer a wide range of programming. For the first four years of the project, the goal is to train Aboriginal adult learners, who will have guarantees of employment in the construction industry or in other positions that require construction skills. Providing ongoing and comprehensive student support is essential to the success of the learners.

99. The February meeting between CMEC and national Aboriginal organizations, at which many of these projects were discussed, was organized around a number of themes, emergent from the CMEC Summit on Aboriginal Education, that resonate in the initiatives and highlight key factors for greater success by Aboriginal students:

- strengthening Aboriginal language and culture;
- enhancing equity in funding;
- increasing access, retention, and graduation, particularly in postsecondary education and adult learning;
- sharing responsibility and accountability;
- planning for transitions;
- reporting and benchmarking success;
- providing programs and services that reflect Aboriginal culture and learning; and especially,
- engaging all partners in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit education.

These examples illustrate the scope of the initiatives undertaken by the provinces and territories to address the critical challenge to the inclusive education in Canada – the elimination of the gap in academic achievement and graduation rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Much has been achieved, but much work also lies ahead.



Section Five — Conclusion

100. This eighth consultation on the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education covers the period from 2006 to 2011 and provides an overview of participation and graduation rates in early childhood, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education, as well as adult learning in Canada. With a strong legislative and policy framework that prohibits discrimination in education, the education systems have moved toward widely inclusive education in which all are able to participate and succeed to the best of their abilities. Some challenges remain; most important among these is the education, at all levels, of Aboriginal populations. Provincial and territorial governments recognize that special attention must be paid to Aboriginal students and — working in collaboration with Aboriginal communities and organizations and other partners — are making progress in closing the achievement gap in order to offer equality of educational opportunity.



Appendix A — Sources

Canadian Commission for UNESCO

<http://www.unesco.ca/>

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada

<http://www.cmec.ca/>

Education Web sites

Alberta Enterprise and Advanced Education

<http://eae.alberta.ca/>

Alberta Education

<http://education.alberta.ca/>

British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education

<http://www.gov.bc.ca/aved/>

British Columbia Ministry of Education

<http://www.gov.bc.ca/bced/>

Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy

<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/acl/>

Manitoba Education

<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/edu/>

Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport du Québec

<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/>

Le Centre de formation professionnelle pour Autochtones dans les métiers de la construction (CFPAMC) - Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport du Québec

<http://www.cfpamc.ca/>

New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

<http://www.gnb.ca/0000/index-e.asp>



New Brunswick Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour
http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/post-secondary_education_training_and_labour/labour.html

Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Advanced Education and Skills
<http://www.hrle.gov.nl.ca/hrle/>

Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education
<http://www.gov.nl.ca/edu/>

Northwest Territories Department of Education, Culture and Employment
<http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/>

Nova Scotia Department of Education
<http://www.ednet.ns.ca>

Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education
<http://www.gov.ns.ca/lwd/>

Nunavut Department of Education
<http://www.edu.gov.nu.ca/>

Ontario Ministry of Education
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca>

Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/tcu/>

Prince Edward Island Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
<http://www.gov.pe.ca/education/>

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<http://www.gov.pe.ca/ial/>

Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration
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<http://www.education.gov.yk.ca>

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Canada. *Citizenship Act*. 1985. Retrieved March 6, 2012, from <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-29/>

Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies
<http://www.cashra.ca/links.html>

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Promoting Equality of Educational Opportunity

UNESCO regularly monitors the implementation of the Convention and the Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, as adopted by UNESCO's General Conference on December 14, 1960. Canada is not a signatory to the convention. This report relates to the application of the recommendation only. This eighth consultation covers the period from 2006 to 2011.

A brief demographic overview reveals that according to the 2011 census, Canada has a population of 33,476,688, an increase of 5.9 per cent since the 2006 survey. Net international migration accounts for two-thirds of the growth. Canada has two official languages and more than 200 first languages reported. In the 2006 census, a total of 1,172,790 people identified themselves as an Aboriginal person, that is, First Nations, Métis, or Inuit. The Aboriginal population is growing at a much faster rate than that of the non-Aboriginal population. The 2006 census enumerated over six million foreign-born people in Canada, almost 20 per cent of the population. Over five million people, 16 per cent of the population, belonged to a visible minority.

The educational systems in Canada work within this pluralistic society to eliminate discrimination and provide equitable and fair access to quality education for all.