

# **Assessing the Role of Provincial Education Systems and Reserve “Non-Systems” in Interprovincial Variation in Aboriginal Student Performance**

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Many factors determine education outcomes. Among the hardest to isolate is the impact of alternate school systems. This paper decomposes incomplete K-12 rates for young adults (ages 20-24 at the time of the 2006 census) by province, by location within a province (urban vs. rural, on- vs. off-reserve), and by Aboriginal identity group (non-Aboriginal, Métis, Indian – First Nation). The optimum provincial education systems are defined as those generating the lowest incomplete K-12 rates among subsets of young Aboriginals. The optimum reserve school "system" refers to the reserve schools in the province with the lowest K-12 completion gap between young Indian-First Nation living on-reserve and living in rural or small towns in the same province. On a national basis, deviations from the optimum provincial performance account for a quarter to half of Aboriginal / non-Aboriginal gaps in K-12 completion rates. The province with uniformly superior on- and off-reserve outcomes is BC. The paper discusses institutional differences between BC and other provinces that may partially explain BC's superior results. Suggestions as to how these options might be used in future are provided.