

Learning report dispels native stereotypes

'A fresh, more balanced take'

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[CBC News](#)

First Nations, Inuit and Métis people display higher rates of volunteerism and informal learning — participation in clubs, sports, arts and music — as well as more community involvement than non-aboriginal Canadians, according to a new study.

The report by the Ottawa-based Canadian Council on Learning recognizes that aboriginal learning is lifelong, goes beyond the classroom and is about much more than just school dropout rates, said Paul Cappon, the council's president.

Community leaders praised the report for reflecting the array of experiences and opportunities that Canada's native people value in their lifelong learning, challenging decades of negative stereotypes and bad-news stories.

"By moving beyond the all-too-familiar storyline of poor academic performance, it has given us a fresh, more balanced take on who we are as learners," said Clément Chartier, president of the Métis National Council.

'Many tremendous successes'

Added Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, national chief of the Assembly of First Nations: "There are many tremendous successes in our communities, and this report ... offers an inspiring starting point for effective change."

Among the report's highlights:

- Seventy per cent of First Nations adults living on reserve volunteered within their community, compared with 46 per cent of non-aboriginal adults.
- Four in 10 aboriginal youth living off reserve reported interacting with elders at least one hour a week — a key source of learning about culture and traditions.
- Thirty-one per cent of off-reserve aboriginal youth participated in social clubs or groups outside school, compared with 21 per cent of non-aboriginal youth.
- Nearly 98 per cent of Inuit youth and adults reported that they had received some form of regular support from others in their community, up from 84 per cent five years ago.

The report, *The State of Aboriginal Learning in Canada: A Holistic Approach to Measuring Success*, used more than 30 statistical indicators, introducing a "ground-breaking" way of measuring native student success.

Along with conventional measures of learning such as high school attainment and literacy levels, the study tracked learning experiences outside the classroom, including ancestral language use, participation in cultural ceremonies, hunting, distance learning and job-related training.

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