



GOVERNMENT STANDARD FOR ABORIGINAL ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

**Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation
Intergovernmental and Community Relations
Aboriginal Administrative Data Standard
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Document Approval

The following signatures represent agreement and approval of the Aboriginal Administrative Data Standard described therein.

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Table of Contents

1. Strategic Provincial Context.....	4
2. Introduction	5
2.1 Purpose	5
2.2 Rationale	5
2.3 Scope	6
2.4 Ownership of this Standard	6
2.5 Guidelines for review and revision of this Standard.....	6
2.6 Policy Guidelines for use of this Standard.....	6
3. Legal Authority	8
3.1 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms	8
3.2 Ministry/Agency Legal Authority	8
4. Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPOP)	8
5. The Aboriginal Administrative Technical Data Standard.....	10
5.1 Guidelines for using this Standard.....	10
5.2 Required Data Elements	10
5.3 Optional Data Elements.....	13
5.4 Reporting Rules.....	14
6. Definitions	15
7. Appreciations	16

1. Strategic Provincial Context

The strategic vision of the Province of British Columbia is:

1. To make B.C. the best educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent;
2. To lead the way in North America in healthy living and physical fitness;
3. To build the best system of support in Canada for persons with disabilities, special needs, children at risk and seniors;
4. To lead the world in sustainable environmental management, with the best air and water quality, and the best fisheries management, bar none; and
5. To create more jobs per capita than anywhere else in Canada.

The province will not be successful at achieving these outcomes for B.C. if social and economic outcomes for Aboriginal people are not improved substantially, as well.

Along with government's strategic vision, three documents form the provincial framework from which all ministries are working to support improved outcomes for Aboriginal people: *The New Relationship*, the *Transformative Change Accord* and the *Métis Nation Relationship Accord*.¹

The New Relationship is a vision document created by the Government of British Columbia and the B.C. First Nations' Leadership Council that sets out the vision and principles of a new government-to-government relationship based on respect, recognition and accommodation of Aboriginal title and rights.

In November 2005, the Province, the Federal Government and the Leadership Council representing the First Nations of British Columbia signed the *Transformative Change Accord* (TCA) to close the social and economic gap between First Nations and other British Columbians, reconcile Aboriginal rights and title with those of the Crown, and establish a new relationship based upon mutual respect and recognition. The TCA commits BC to closing the socio-economic gap in 10 years – and further commits to establishing a cross-ministry implementation plan to effect change and to measuring progress over time. It sets the priorities for closing the gap in education; health and well being; housing and infrastructure; economic opportunities; and relationships.

The *Métis Nation Relationship Accord* was signed in May 2006 between the Métis Nation B.C. and the provincial government. It is an agreement to work in partnership on socio-economic outcomes for Métis people, to use existing tripartite process, to build on positive relationship, and to measure results.

¹ These documents are available on the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation website: <http://www.gov.bc.ca/arr/newrelationship/default.html>

2. Introduction

2.1 Purpose

The Province of British Columbia is committed to reporting progress in closing the socio-economic gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal British Columbians. Additionally, the province recognizes the importance of culturally appropriate programs and services in meeting the needs of Aboriginal people. Many provincial ministries and government agencies deliver programs and services that are intended to support improved outcomes for Aboriginal clients. Others, such as Vital Statistics, collect data that can be used to measure the socio-economic outcomes of citizens. Accurate, good quality data supports the ability to measure the effectiveness of programs and services and to monitor outcomes.

The purpose of implementing a provincial government data standard for the collection of data specific to Aboriginal persons is to support improved provincial government administrative data. This in turn will support:

- culturally appropriate, effective and efficient² policy, program and service development;
- performance management and measurement; and
- socio-economic research, analysis and reporting.

2.2 Rationale

At a minimum, government should be consistent in the way Aboriginal citizens are identified. The term Aboriginal as used throughout this document is meant to encompass the diversity of Aboriginal persons as broadly defined under the Canadian Constitution Act, 1982, Part II, Section 35(2), as “the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada”. For the purposes of Aboriginal identification within British Columbia, the term “First Nation” is often the preferred term in place of “Indian”. For statistical and analytical purposes, these terms are considered interchangeable and representative of the same population.

- The adoption of a provincial Aboriginal administrative data standard ensures that information collected is complete, comparable and useful for planning and reporting purposes.
- A common definition of the Aboriginal population will enhance inter-ministry coordination across program areas.
- Paying for surveys and access to special data sets is expensive. Migration to this standard will entail costs (financial and human resources) but once

² Efficiency is defined as the relationship between the amount of input (usually dollars or employee time) and the amount of service output or outcome of an activity or program. Effectiveness is defined as the extent to which a program or service is meeting its stated objective(s).

established will provide an inexpensive source of data that can be used for the above stated purposes.

- The data identified through this standard is consistent with the Census denominators which allow for National /Provincial/Territorial comparisons.
- Statistics Canada has adopted the Census questions as a standard way of identifying Aboriginal groups on other surveys, such as the Aboriginal Peoples' Survey. This wealth of data can be used to supplement a ministries' administrative data.

2.3 Scope

The scope of this standard is limited to defining the data required to provide consistency to Aboriginal identification in provincial government administrative data.

This Standard is not intended to limit the collection of data that a ministry may require in order to fully support their regular business functions; develop a central data warehouse; a common personal identifier; or an identity management approach.

2.4 Ownership of this Standard

The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR) is the owner of this standard and as such is responsible, along with the Ministry Chief Information Office (CIO), for managing the review and revision process, and for ensuring that the standard is used in future developments.

2.5 Guidelines for review and revision of this Standard

MARR will test the efficacy of the new Standard after a reasonable implementation time to allow for field testing, ministry and client feedback.

In the normal course of performing their functions, ministries may discover areas where this standard may not fully support regular business practices. These instances together with possible suggestions for enhancements or change should be directed to the owner of this standard.

It is important that this standard provide for alignment and consistency with federal initiatives, in particular Statistics Canada. The owner of the standard should be aware of any changes to census questions by Statistics Canada and review, revise and republish this standard accordingly. Future review and revision of this standard will include engagement with ministries, Aboriginal stakeholders and others as appropriate.

2.6 Policy Guidelines for use of this Standard

This standard should be applied by ministries and agencies responsible for the delivery of services and programs designed to improve the socio-economic outcomes for

Aboriginal persons, and ministries and agencies that monitor and measure citizen outcomes.

At the time of establishing the first release of this standard, the following ministries are identified:

- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Advanced Education
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Forests and Range (Housing)
- Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance
- Ministry of Economic Development
- Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Ministry of Attorney General
- Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

It is the responsibility of each ministry to:

- 1) Evaluate all business processes and points of contact with clients to determine the changes necessary. In determining if changes are necessary, ministries should identify which opportunities for data collection are consistent with the purposes of implementing this standard, i.e. will collecting data about Aboriginal identity contribute to the purposes for which this standard is intended:
 - a) culturally appropriate, effective and efficient policy, program and service development;
 - b) performance management and measurement; and
 - c) socio-economic research, analysis and reporting.
- 2) Influence their agencies to adopt this standard. Examples of ministry agencies includes but is not limited to the Industry Training Authority; BC Housing Authority; post-secondary institutions; regional health authorities; etc.
- 3) Clarify to clients/citizens that the collection of their personal information is voluntary and refusal to provide this information will not affect service eligibility.
- 4) Clarify that personal information will be kept confidential and is protected under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.
- 5) Ensure Aboriginal identity information is appropriately classified, according to government information classification standards, and the information is handled in accordance with information security standards and the records management practises of government.
- 6) Work with staff, agencies and Aboriginal stakeholders in implementation of the standard and in ensuring that the client experience in responding to questions is positive.

- 7) Ensure that all clients have the opportunity to respond to the questions i.e. that there are no assumptions made as to who is Aboriginal or not Aboriginal.
- 8) Implement this standard in a timely fashion.

In the future, this standard may impact more ministries or more programs and services within participating ministries. These situations will be identified as part of the regular review cycle and communicated by the owner of the standard.

3. Legal Authority

3.1 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Section 15 (subsection 1) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms reads: Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the 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.

Subsection (1) 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.

Asking an individual to identify as an Aboriginal person is permissible provided there is a legitimate, defensible reason for asking for that information – such as the provision of specially designed programs, policy development, etc. While it is legitimate to ask such a question, it would not be permissible to refuse service(s) on the basis of a person refusing to answer a request for personal information.

When asking individuals for personal information, such as their Aboriginal identity, the province must be clear that disclosure is optional and for what purposes the information is being collected.

3.2 Ministry/Agency Legal Authority

Provincial ministries and their agencies that adopt this standard must comply with their respective legal authority.

4. Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPOP)

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act [RSBC 1996] CHAPTER 165 makes provision for the collection and protection of personal information. Information requested under this standard must be necessary for “an operating program or activity of the public body” or must be otherwise authorized by the Act.

Ministries are each responsible to protect personal information as prescribed under the Act. Section 69 of the Act requires a Ministry to complete a Privacy Impact Assessment to determine whether a new enactment, system, project or program meets the requirements of FOIPPA. Ministries are advised to contact their Director/Manager, Information and Privacy to assist with determining whether an Assessment is required.

A privacy impact assessment (PIA) is an evaluation process that allows those responsible for the collection, use and disclosure of personal information to evaluate the privacy, confidentiality and security risks that may be involved and to develop mitigation measures aimed at avoiding or reducing the identified risks.

5. The Aboriginal Administrative Technical Data Standard

This standard focuses on the common data elements, data values and data rules required to gather information and report about B.C.'s diverse Aboriginal population consistently across government.

Ministries require the flexibility to collect and structure their data based on their services, business processes, method of soliciting client information, etc. Therefore this standard does not restrict how the data is defined in the Ministry data bases (e.g. size, format, naming, or data model structure)

5.1 Guidelines for using this Standard

1. Ministries may define and implement the data elements outlined in Sections 5.3 and 5.4 according to their own data administration policies with the exception of the data element description, set of data values and data rules which must conform to this standard.
2. Customer-facing input forms and whenever possible, inward-facing input forms should be designed to ensure the data meets the standard data rules defined for each data element. This standard recognizes however that data discrepancies (e.g. a response of “yes” and “no” to the same question) may be unavoidable particularly if the response is sent in on a paper form. If the discrepancy cannot be cleared up, it should be entered as it was provided and interpreted when it is used for reporting. Section 5.4 identifies a set of consistent reporting rules which handle these potential discrepancies.
3. For consistency, store the value representing Métis, without the accent over the “e”.
4. Individuals may change their response over time. It is up to each ministry to determine if they need to keep a history of responses.

5.2 Required Data Elements

The following aboriginal administrative data must be collected for an individual.

Data Element: Aboriginal Identity Indicator

Standard Data Element Description: Indicates if a person identifies as an Aboriginal person, that is, First Nations, Métis or Inuit.

Standard Questions:

- a) Do you identify yourself as an Aboriginal person, that is, First Nations, Métis or Inuit?

- b) Does this individual identify as an Aboriginal person, that is, First Nations, Métis or Inuit?

Standard Data Values

Be able to store data that represents the following three values:

- Individual identifies as being an Aboriginal person
- Individual does not identify as being an Aboriginal person
- Individual's response to Aboriginal identity question is either unknown or not provided

Standard Data Rules:

- One and only one value can be chosen. For example an individual can identify as an Aboriginal person or as a non-Aboriginal person but not both.

Sample implementations:

1. Field name: **Aboriginal Identity Indicator**
List of values: a) YES, NO, null (i.e. no value provided)
Or b) ABORIGINAL, NON-ABORIGINAL, null (i.e. no value)
Default value: null

Note: The following implementation is NOT adequate for this standard as it is focused on Ethnicity or Race.

- Field name: **Identity**
List of values: null, ABORIGINAL, CAUCASIAN, ORIENTAL, etc,
Default value: null

Data Element: Aboriginal Identity Group

Standard Data Element Description: The specific Aboriginal group, that is, First Nations, Métis or Inuit with which an individual identifies.

First Nations: Officially called Indians in the *Indian Act*, this term refers to the indigenous peoples of North America located in what is now Canada, and their descendents, who are not Inuit or Métis. For the purposes of Aboriginal identification within British Columbia, the term "First Nation(s)" is the generally preferred term in place of "Indian". For statistical and analytical purposes, these terms are considered interchangeable and representative of the same population.

Métis: Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal Peoples and is accepted by the Métis Nation.

Métis people identify themselves, and are recognized, as distinct from First Nations (Indian), Inuit or European descendants. The distinct Métis culture arose after contact with the first European explorer/settlers but prior to colonialism.

Inuit: The Inuit are the Aboriginal inhabitants of the North American Arctic. They are united by a common cultural heritage and a common language. Formerly, the Inuit were referred to as "Eskimo." Now they prefer their own term, "Inuit," meaning simply "people."

Standard Questions:

- a) If you identify yourself as an Aboriginal person, are you:
 - First Nations?
 - Métis?
 - Inuit?
- b) If this individual identifies as an Aboriginal person is he/she:
 - First Nations?
 - Métis?
 - Inuit?

Standard Data Values

Be able to store data that represents the following values:

- Individual identifies as a First Nations person
- Individual's response to First Nations identity is either unknown or not provided
- Individual identifies as a Métis person
- Individual's response to Métis is either unknown or not provided
- Individual identifies as an Inuit person
- Individual's response to Inuit is either unknown or not provided

Standard Data Rules:

- An individual can belong to multiple Aboriginal identity groups (any combination of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit).

Sample implementations

1. A separate data element for each:
 - Field name: **First Nations Indicator**
 - List of values: YES, NO, null (i.e. no value provided)
 - Default value is null
 - Field name: **Métis Indicator**
 - List of values: YES, NO, null (i.e. no value provided)
 - Default value is null
 - Field name: **Inuit Indicator**
 - List of values: YES, NO, null (i.e. no value provided)
 - Default value is null

2. A single data element with up to 3 occurrences
Field Name: **Aboriginal Identity**
List of values for each occurrence: First Nations, Métis, Inuit, null (i.e. no value provided)
Default value is null.

5.3 Optional Data Elements

Data Element: First Nations Status Indicator

Standard Data Element Description: Indicates if an individual is registered under the *Indian Act* of Canada. A Registered Indian is also known as a Status Indian.

Standard Question:

- a) Are you registered under the *Indian Act* of Canada (i.e. a Status Indian)?
- b) Is this individual registered under the *Indian Act* of Canada (i.e. a Status Indian)?

Standard Data Values:

Be able to store data that represents the following three values:

- Individual is Status (Registered under the *Indian Act* of Canada)
- Individual is Non-status
- The status of the individual is either unknown or the answer is not provided

Standard Data Rules:

- One and only one response can be chosen. For example an individual can be status or non-status but not both.
- The response can be “status” if and only if the individual identifies as a First Nations person

Sample implementation:

1. Field name: **First Nations Status Indicator**
List of values: a) YES, NO, null (i.e. no value provided)
Or b) STATUS, NON-STATUS, null
Default value: null

Data Element: First Nations On-Reserve Indicator

Standard Data Element Description: An individual who is a First Nations person living on a reserve.

Standard Question:

- a) If you identify yourself as a First Nations person do you live on a reserve?

- b) If the individual identifies as a First Nations person does he/she live on a reserve?

Standard Data Values

Be able to store data that represents the following three values:

- The individual lives on reserve
- The individual lives off reserve
- The individual's residency (on or off reserve) is unknown or the answer is not provided

Standard Data Rules:

- One and only one response can be chosen. For example, an individual can be on reserve or off reserve but not both

Sample implementation:

1. Field name: **On reserve Indicator**

List of values: a) YES, NO, null (i.e. no value provided)

Or b) ON RESERVE, OFF RESERVE, null

Default value: null

5.4 Reporting Rules

The following rules identify how to handle discrepancies in the data:

1. Count an individual as Aboriginal if any one of the following applies:
 - Individual identifies as an Aboriginal person (e.g. Aboriginal identity indicator = yes)
 - Individual does not identify as an Aboriginal person but identifies as one or more of the following: First Nations, Métis, Inuit
 - For ministries that also collect First Nations Status:
Individual does not identify as Aboriginal (e.g. aboriginal identity indicator = null or "No") and does not identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit, but does identify as "Status".
2. For ministries that also collect First Nations Status, count an individual as First Nations if any of the following applies:
 - Individual identifies as a First Nations person OR
 - Individual does not identify as a First Nations person but does identify as Status Indian
3. For formal reporting, the term Métis should be written with an accent ague over the "e" (i.e. Métis)

6. Definitions

Aboriginal: An Aboriginal person is identified in accordance to the *Constitution Act* of 1982, Part II, Section 35(2), as “the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada”. Canada’s aboriginal population is distinct and diverse. The *Constitution Act* recognizes the aboriginal peoples of Canada as the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. “First Nation” is the generally preferred term for Indian peoples of Canada. The term “Indian” is still used where referring to legislation or government statistics.

Aboriginal Identity: Aboriginal identity refers to a person reporting that he or she identifies with, or is a member of, an organic political or cultural entity that stems historically from the original persons of North America. The term includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

Indian Act: The *Indian Act* is federal legislation which dates from 1876. There have been over twenty major changes to the original *Act* since then. The *Act* is administered by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The *Act* deals with registered Indians, their bands, and the system of Indian reserves.

First Nations: Officially called Indians in the *Indian Act*, this term refers to the indigenous peoples of North America located in what is now Canada, and their descendents, who are not Inuit or Métis. For the purposes of Aboriginal identification within British Columbia, the term “First Nation(s)” is the generally preferred term in place of “Indian”. For statistical and analytical purposes, these terms are considered interchangeable and representative of the same population.

Status: First Nations (Indian) people may be “status” (registered) or non-status Indians as defined under the *Indian Act*. Status Indians are eligible to receive benefits under the provisions of the *Indian Act*.

Non-Status: First Nations people who claim Aboriginal identity, but do not meet the criteria for registration, or have chosen not to be registered, under the *Indian Act*.

Métis: Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal Peoples and is accepted by the Métis Nation. (*Definition adopted by the Métis National Council at their 2002 Annual General Assembly.*)

Métis people identify themselves, and are recognized, as distinct from First Nations (Indian), Inuit or European descendants. The distinct Métis culture arose after contact with the first European explorer/settlers but prior to colonialism. (*General definition.*)

Inuit: The Inuit are the Aboriginal inhabitants of the North American Arctic. They are united by a common cultural heritage and a common language. Formerly, the Inuit were referred to as "Eskimo." Now they prefer their own term, "Inuit," meaning simply "people."

7. Appreciations

Appreciation is extended to all of those individuals who contributed to the drafting of this data standard. Many more people were involved than those mentioned below who formally provided advice and guidance to the project. A number of individuals were “early champions” of the project, recognizing the value of improved data administration to both government and Aboriginal communities. Ministries and Aboriginal organizations came to the table prepared to listen and contribute efforts that included championing the project, providing policy and technical advice, working internally within ministries to raise awareness and begin the process of implementation, and engaging with Aboriginal organizations. Without this level of cross-ministry and Aboriginal investment in the process, this data standard would not exist.

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