

ALBERTA'S EMERGING MILLENNIALS



**A National Survey Reading of
Alberta Teens and Other Teens**



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Contents

Introduction	1
Background	1
The Latest National Survey	1
1 Some Background Characteristics	4
Birthplace, and Residence	5
Parentage and Home Environments	6
Socio-economics status	7
Religious Identification	8
Summary Note	10
2 Things Valued and Enjoyed	11
What's Important	12
Sources of Enjoyment	13
Friends	15
Groups	16
Perceived Sources of Influence	17
Summary Note	19
3 Canada and the World	20
Social Concerns	21
Confidence in Leadership	22
Views of People	23
Awareness and Concern Regarding Global Issues	24
The Value Placed on Canada	26
Summary Note	28
4 Morality and Family Life	29
Sources of Moral Decisions	30
Interpersonal Values and Behaviour	31
Sexual Attitudes and Behaviour	33
Cohabitation and Parenting	35
Religious Beliefs and Practices	36
Summary Note	40
5 Personal Concerns	41
Primary Concerns	42
Teens at Risk	44
Views and Use of Drugs	45
Trouble and Encounters with the Police	46
Overall Self-Image	47
Summary Note	49
6 Aspirations	50
General	51
Education	51
Careers	53
Family life	54
Community Involvement	55
Summary Note	56
Conclusion	57
The Overall Picture	57
The Immediate Future	59
Appendix	60

INTRODUCTION

Background

This report pulls together extensive and unique survey data on Canadian youth, including a national sampling of Aboriginal young people attending band-run schools. The data were collected in 2008 and early 2009. The surveys were part of a much larger survey research initiative.

Since the mid-1970s, I have been carrying out a series of national adult and youth surveys from the University of Lethbridge. They have consisted of seven “Project Canada” surveys of adults conducted every five years from 1975 through 2005, and four complementary “Project Teen Canada” surveys completed in 1984, 1992, 2000, and 2008.

The surveys have attempted to generate comprehensive information on attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviour. The adult samples have averaged about 1,500 people who are 18 and over, and have been highly representative of the adult population. The youth samples have been comprised of teenagers between the ages of 15 and 19 who are still in high schools/secondary schools or their equivalents (e.g., CEGEPs in Quebec). These highly representative samples have an average of about 3,800 cases.

The Latest National Youth Survey

Background work on the most recent youth survey, Project Teen Canada 2008, began in the early fall of 2007. I served as the Project Director and James Penner, an adjunct professor at the University of Lethbridge, was the project’s Associate Director. The first phase of the data collection took place during the spring (March 15 to June 15) and fall (September and October) of 2008. The methodology used in the 1984, 1992, and 2000 Project Teen Canada surveys was replicated. Schools across the country were randomly selected and, in turn, one randomly selected class in each school was invited to participate.

At the request of the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research (ACCFCR), one of the three funding sources, Alberta teens were oversampled, with the goal of increasing the number of participants in that province from a “normal” 500 or so to around 650.

As a result of the encouragement of Marc Fonda of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, I decided to oversample teens in Aboriginal-run schools, since the timing seemed ideal for gathering such comparative data. The collection of these additional Project Teen Canada 2008 data took place between November of 2008 and February of 2009. Here again, an Alberta oversample was pursued. Terri-Lynn Fox, a Teaching Assistant at the University of Lethbridge and a Ph.D. student at the University of Calgary, served as the Aboriginal Sample Coordinator.

For the survey as a whole, questionnaires were received from 248 of the 308 schools that were contacted – a level of participation of 80%, similar to previous years. These included 42 of the 50 band-run schools across Canada that had been invited to participate. In Alberta, 56 of the 69 schools approached participated, including 20 of 25 Aboriginal schools.

A total of 5,564 questionnaires were received from across the country, with 818 coming from Aboriginal schools. This ***national total*** has been weighted to 4,600 cases. The sample is highly representative of the Canadian population.¹ The ***national Aboriginal school sample*** has been weighted for region to 500 cases, and appears to be highly representative of Aboriginal secondary students.² In addition to the 818 teens enrolled in Aboriginal-run schools, a further 141 students who were attending off-reserve schools indicated that they are Aboriginal – bringing the total national unweighted Aboriginal sample to 959 young people.

Table I.1. School Participation by Region					
	Number of Schools			Totals	%
	Received Unable	Refused/ Received	Not		
NATIONAL	248	19	41	308	80
B.C.	30	2	6	38	79
Alberta	36	1	7	44	82
SK-MB	18	0	4	22	82
Ontario	58	6	7	71	82
Quebec	43	4	9	56	77
Atlantic	16	3	2	21	76
North	5	1	0	6	83
Aboriginal	42	2	6	50	84

The **Alberta segment** of the initial PTC08 sample consists of 763 cases, including an oversample of 232 teens. The national Aboriginal school sample of 818 teens has been supplemented by an Alberta oversample of 318 individuals, resulting in a total Alberta Aboriginal school sample of 420 young people. With the Aboriginal supplement added, the unweighted Alberta youth sample consists of a total of 1,183 young people (763 plus 420). The sample has been weighted down to 1000 cases to minimize the use of large weight factors.

¹ A sample of this size permits a high level of accuracy in generalizing to the population (within some 3% points, +/-, 19 times in 20).

² An accuracy level of approximately +/- five % points, 19 time in 20.

This total Alberta sample is highly representative of teenagers, 15-to-19, who are attending high schools.³ The 420 Aboriginal young people, drawn from 15 of the 20 schools contacted, appear to be representative of teens enrolled in band-run high school programs.⁴ Even band-run school dropouts have not been excluded: 33% of the teens in the Alberta band school sample indicate they returned to school after having dropped out; the national figure is 22%.

Further methodological details are provided in the Appendix.

The focus of this report is Alberta. But what makes the information special is that the broader Project Canada 2008 sample makes it possible to compare teenagers in Alberta with their counterparts in the rest of the country – including Aboriginals.

Readers interested in learning more about the Project Canada 2008 findings might consult the following sources that to varying degrees are drawn upon in this report:

1. Bibby, Reginald W.
The Emerging Millennials: How Canada's Newest Generation is Responding to Change & Choice. Lethbridge: Project Canada Books, 2009.
2. Bibby, Reginald W. with Terri-Lynn Fox and James Penner.
The Emerging Aboriginal Millennials. Lethbridge: Project Canada Books, 2010.
This report follows the same layout as this one, but focuses on Aboriginals nationally, and includes survey results for a modest national sub-sample of Aboriginals living off-reserve.
3. Bibby, Reginald W. and James Penner.
10 Things We All Need to Know About Today's Teens: That Is IF We Care About Them. Lethbridge: Project Canada Books, 2010.
4. The websites reginaldbibby.com & projectcanadabooks.com.

Some Reflections on the Survey: Teenage Participants

Alberta Teens Generally

- "I think it's good that your doing this because many adults forget what it is like to be a teenager"
-a female, 15, from Edmonton
- "I really believe that this is a very important thing you people are doing and I am honoured to have had the chance to participate" -a 17-year-old Calgary male
- "This survey has made me look at my life and my future in a different way"
-a male 15, who lives in northern Alberta
- "Do this more often" -a 16-year-old male from eastern Alberta
- "This survey was pretty depressing" -a 15-year-old female from Edmonton

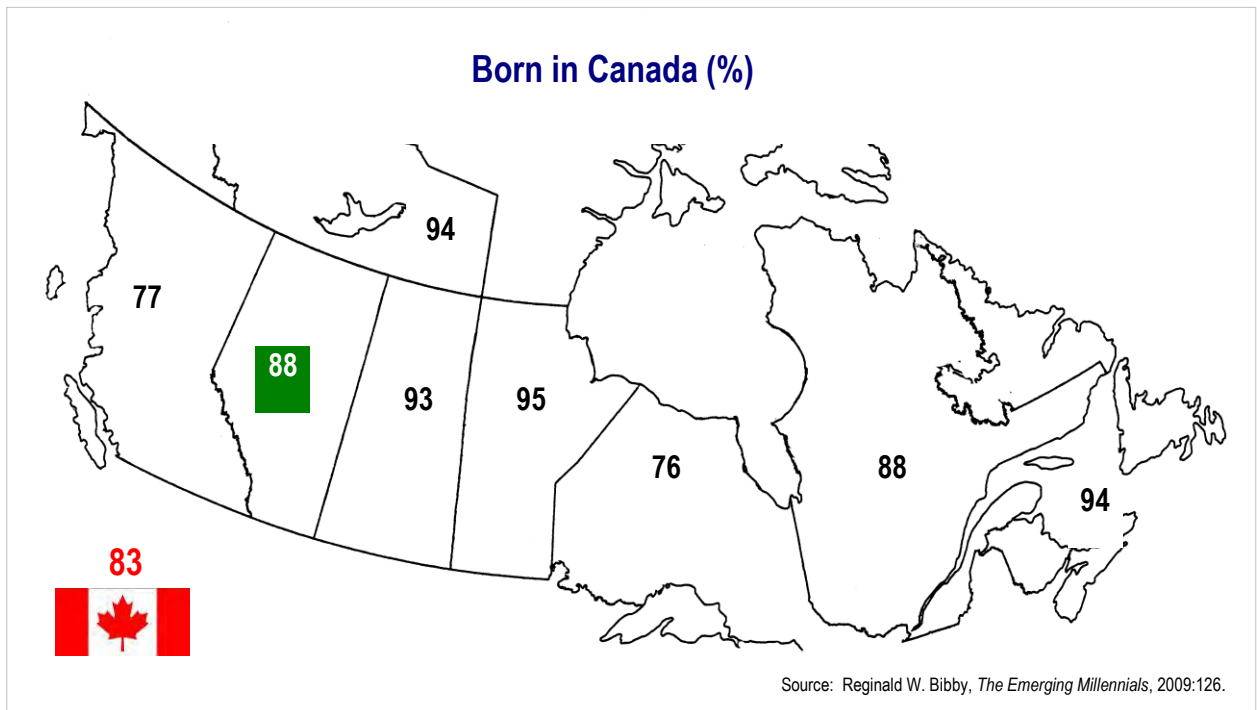
Alberta Aboriginals Specifically

- "I think this is a great way of seeing into teenagers' eyes!" -a female, 17
- "This is a pretty cool survey, there should be more like it" -a 15-year-old male
- "Thank you for letting me give a piece of my mind to your survey" -a male, 17
- "This survey made me see my real self" -a 15-year-old female
- "Thank you for asking what is on my reserve and on my mind. My life has been a hell of a ride for being Canadian and Native" -a male, 17

³ Within some 3% points, either way, 19 times in 20.

⁴ Within about +/- 5% points of the population figures, 19 times in 20.

1. SOME BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS



Birthplace and Residence

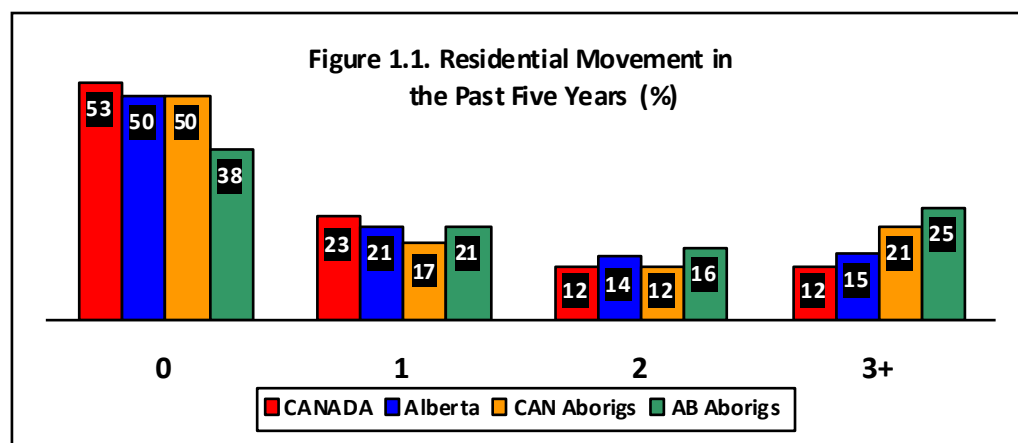
Approximately 90% of Alberta teenagers indicate that they were born in Canada, slightly higher than the 83% figure for the country as a whole. Some 98% of Alberta teens attending Aboriginal schools say they were born in Canada; almost all of the remainder were born in the United States. A large number of young Albertans have immigrant backgrounds: 36% report that one or both of their parents were born outside Canada, somewhat below the national level (44%).

Table 1.1. Birthplace (%)		
	Alberta	Canada
Canada	89	83
Parents & Self		
Born in Canada	64	56
One elsewhere	24	27
Both elsewhere	12	17

Alberta teens closely mirror their counterparts across the country in their tendency to reside in communities of 100,000 or more, 99,000 to 10,000, and under 10,000. The stereotype of Albertans living primarily in rural areas no longer reflects reality. In sharp contrast to teens as a whole, about 9 in 10 (93%) Alberta youth who attend band-run schools live on reserves – a level similar to Aboriginal school students across the country (88%).

Table 1.2. Residence by Community Size (%)		
	Alberta	Canada
100,000-plus	64	67
99,000-10,000	12	12
<10,000	24	21

Close to 50% of Alberta teens and other teens told us that they have changed residences “in the past 5 years” – about 25% two or times, another 25% once. What stands out here are the higher levels of residential movement for young people on reserves. In Alberta, for example, 41% of Aboriginal school students have moved twice or more in the past five years, versus just 29% of other students in the province.



Parentage and Home Environments

Alberta teens tend to closely mirror other Canadian young people with respect to the marital status of their parents. Just under 7 in 10 indicate that their biological parents are married to each while slightly more than 2 in 10 say they are no longer married to each other. Most of the remainder report that their parents were or are in common-law relationships, or that one or both are no longer alive.

- Teenagers attending Aboriginal schools are considerably less likely than others to indicate that their biological parents are *married to each other*, and are more likely to say their parents are no longer either married or living common-law.
- Aboriginal young people attending band-run schools are also more likely than others to report that one or both of their parents are no longer alive.
- Such marital status patterns also are very similar for Aboriginals who are attending off-reserve schools.⁵

Table 1.3. Marital Status of Parents (%)
"Are your biological father and mother currently..."

	CAN	ALTA	ABAB
Married to each other	67	65	25
No longer married to each other	21	22	27
Living common-law	4	2	13
No longer living common-law	4	5	21
One or both are no longer alive	3	5	13
Other	1	1	1
Total	100	100	100

Yellow highlight: 10% point difference or more.

These various parental situations are reflected in current living situations.

- Some 7 in 10 teenagers across Canada and in Alberta are currently *living with their both parents*, and about 1 in 10 with *a parent and a stepparent*.
- In the case of Alberta Aboriginals, about 4 in 10 are living with parents or stepparents.
- About 15% of teens in Alberta and elsewhere are living with *either their mothers or their fathers*; the figure for Alberta Aboriginals is 27% (21% with mothers, 6% with fathers).
- *Other arrangements* – including living with relatives, friends, or foster parents – are considerably more common for Aboriginal teenagers than others. In Alberta, 14% of teens attending band-run schools indicate they are living with grandparents, 9% with aunts and uncles.

Table 1.4. Current Home Situation (%)

<i>Currently Living With:</i>	CAN	ALTA	ABAB
Mother-Father	70	67	32
Mother only	12	11	21
Mother-Stepfather	6	8	8
Father only	3	4	6
Father-Stepmother	2	3	2
Mother-Male partner	2	1	2
Father-Female partner	<1	1	<1
Other*	5	5	29**
Total	100	100	100

*Varied: family members, friends, girlfriend/boyfriend, foster home, alone.
 **14% grandparents, 9% aunt/uncle, 6% other.

⁵ See Reginald W. Bibby, Terri-Lynn Fox, and James Penner, *Canada's Emerging Aboriginal Millennials*. Lethbridge: Project Canada Books, 2010:4.

My Biological Parents and Who I Am Living With: Alberta

"...They never married; I've never met my dad...they live in different provinces...I am living with my mom and she's remarried; I have no clue bout my father...they are not together at all...they are divorced and both have remarried...my mother to my stepdad, by dad to my stepmom...they are not married; dad sends child support to me and mom from his other family - I have no clue where he is..."

"I'm at mom's on weekdays and dad's on weekends...I am with my mother and stepfather half time, my father the other half...mother and female parent...in a shared custody situation...Auntie and Uncle...I split my time evenly...Auntie - for school...People...Dad, Mom, Stepdad...I go back and forth between my parents' homes...mom and with dad part-time every other month...I live with my brother..."

Socio-economic Status

Alberta teens as a whole report fairly similar educational attainment levels for their parents as teenagers in the rest of the country. The attainment levels of parents reported by Aboriginal young people are considerably lower nationally, and even somewhat lower again in Alberta.

- Close to 40% of non-Aboriginal teens indicate that their mothers and fathers have completed university, compared to about 12% of Aboriginal youth.
- About 30% of Aboriginals attending reserve schools in Alberta say that their parents have not completed high school, considerably higher than the 10% figure for non-Aboriginals in the province.
- Aboriginal mothers are somewhat more likely than fathers to have university educations.

Table 1.5. Parents' Education (%)

<i>Highest Level Completed</i>	CAN	ALTA	ABAB	ABCAN
Father				
University degree-plus	39	35	11	13
Trade-Business-college	25	23	16	19
High School/secondary	26	28	43	44
<High school/secondary	10	14	30	24
Mother				
University degree-plus	38	38	15	18
Trade-Business-college	25	19	13	18
High School/secondary	30	33	42	37
<High school/secondary	7	10	30	27

Table 1.6. Perception of Family Income (%)

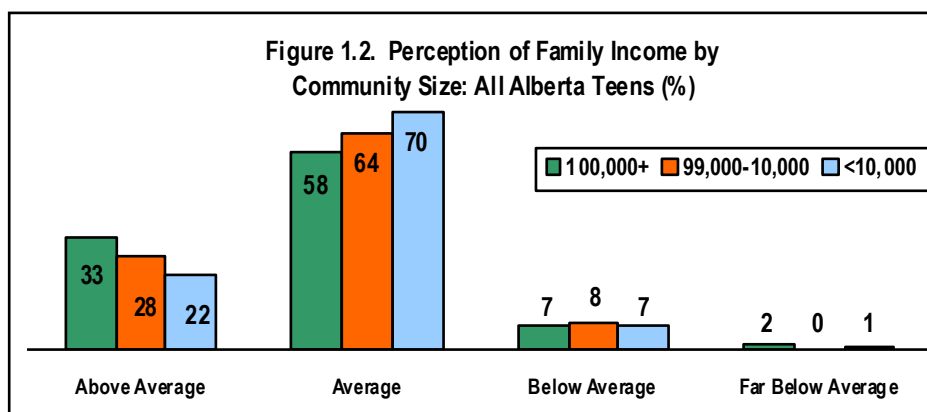
"Compared with other Canadian families, would you say your family income is..."

	NAT	ALTA	ABAB	ABCAN
Above average	23	30	16	13
Average	56	62	68	66
Below average	18	7	13	17
Far below average	3	1	3	4
Total	100	100	100	100

We didn't ask students about the specifics of their families' incomes – in part because of the implications we felt it may have had for obtaining permission from schools and parents to have students participate. However, we did ask teens for the perception of their family's income, compared with other families.

Alberta teens as a whole are more likely than teens in the rest of Canada to say their family incomes are “average” or more, and less likely to indicate they are below average. That said, significant differences exist. **Aboriginals in Alberta and elsewhere are less likely than others to tell us their family incomes are “above average.”**

Generally-speaking, the perception that one’s family income is above average versus average is more prevalent in cities of 100,000 or more versus smaller communities.



Religious Identification

Alberta teens tend to look fairly similar to Canadians teens as a whole when it comes to religious identification, with a few exceptions.

- Fewer Alberta teens are Catholic and a slightly higher proportion indicate they have “no religion.”
- Some 60% of Aboriginals attending band schools cite “Aboriginal Spirituality” as their religious preference and about 10% identify themselves as Catholics. Another 5% or so say their religious preferences lie with both Aboriginal Spirituality and Catholicism. Most of the remaining 25% or so indicate that they have “no religion.”

Table 1.7. Religious Identification (%)			
"What is your general religious preference?"			
	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
Catholic*	34	27*	9
Other	16	13	6**
Protestant	13	14	1
Christian <i>unspecified</i>	3	5	0
Aboriginal spirituality	2	4	60
None	32	37	24
Total	100	100	100

*Includes Orthodox.
 **Almost all = Aboriginal spirituality & Catholic.

Obviously some teens may place importance on both **Aboriginal spirituality and Christianity**, given its historical place in many Aboriginal settings. We put the question directly to teens who attend Aboriginal schools. What we found in the case of Alberta is that about 45% value both, while some 40% value Aboriginal spirituality but not Christianity. Some 5% indicate they value Christianity only, while the remaining 10%-or-so told us they don't particularly value either.

Table 1.8. Views of Aboriginal Spirituality and Christianity (%)	
<i>Teens Attending Aboriginal Schools in Alberta</i>	
<i>"Which of the following best describes you personally?"</i>	
I value Aboriginal spirituality and also value Christianity	44
I value Aboriginal spirituality but I don't value Christianity	39
I don't value Aboriginal spirituality but I do value Christianity	6
I don't particularly value either	11
TOTAL	100

A LOOK ACROSS THE PROVINCE

Residential Movement

"How many times have you changed residences in the past 5 years?"

% Indicating Once or More



AB

50



Edm

47



Cal

52

10,000-99,000

56

under 10,000

46

Aboriginals

63

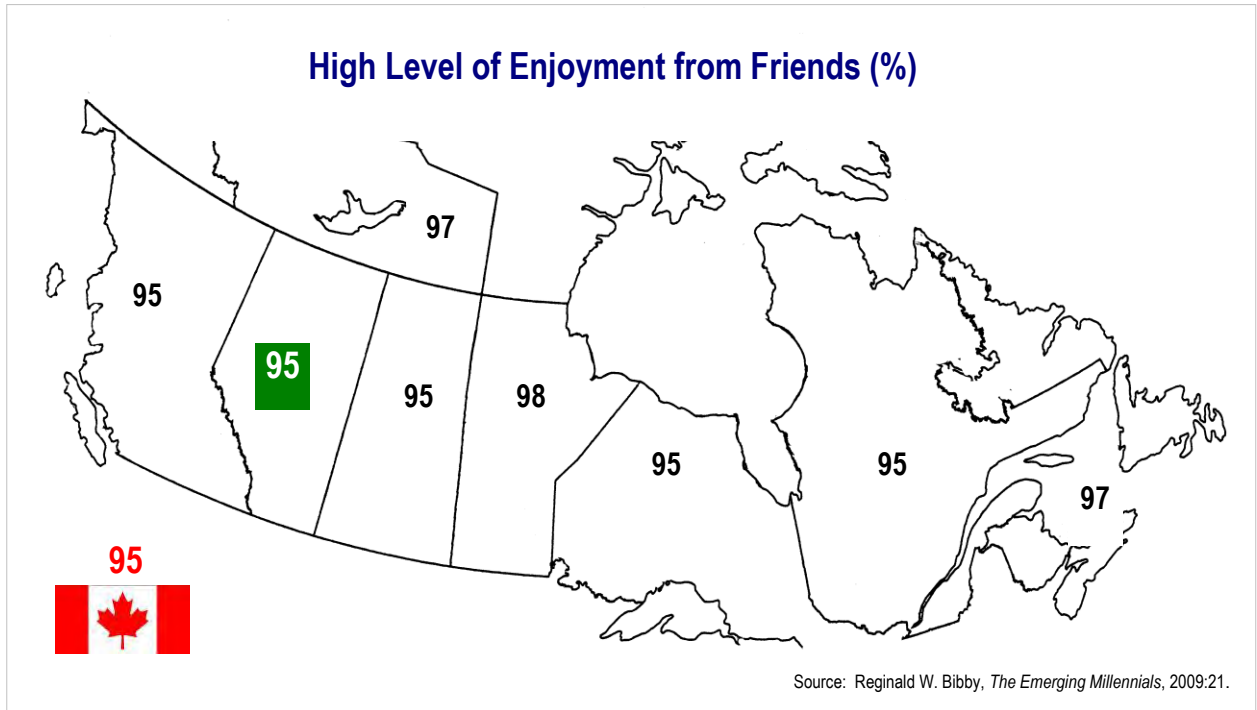
Summary Note

These findings on a number of demographic characteristics indicate that Alberta teenagers look pretty much like teenagers in the rest of Canada, with some exceptions. They have fairly similar home situations and their parents have levels of education that are similar to parents in other provinces. Alberta teens, however, are not quite as diverse – ethnically, racially and religiously. They also are somewhat more inclined to see themselves as affluent than young people elsewhere.

The findings also show that Alberta teenagers who are attending Aboriginal schools differ fairly significantly from other Alberta teens – as do Aboriginals in the rest of the country. In addition to birthplace and residence, their home environments are frequently different, their parents tend to have lower levels of education, and many indicate that their family incomes are at best average. Their religious inclinations vary from most other Alberta and Canadian young people, in that a majority lean toward Aboriginal spirituality.

Some of these features may help us to understand how young people attending Alberta Aboriginal schools compare with Alberta and Canadian teens as a whole when it comes to areas such as values, attitudes, enjoyment, concerns, and expectations.

2. THINGS VALUED AND ENJOYED



What's Important

Teenagers across the country place premier importance on two things: *friendship* and *freedom*.

- Following behind but highly valued by most are such traits and goals as *being loved, a comfortable life, a good education, and success*.
- *Family life and excitement* are also very important to a majority of young people.
- Of importance to less numbers? *Money, spirituality, and one's cultural group background*.

Alberta teens who are attending Aboriginal schools are not quite as inclined to place a “very high” level of

importance on friendship, freedom, and a comfortable life. But they are far more likely to see family life, cultural group background, and spirituality as extremely important. They also are a bit more likely to place a very high level of importance on getting a good education.

Both in Alberta and nationally, females are more likely than males to place importance on almost all of these valued goals - although the rank order is very similar for both sexes. That rank order by gender holds also holds for Aboriginals, in Alberta and elsewhere.⁶ even in the case of the importance that teens in Aboriginal schools give to family, cultural group, and spirituality.

Table 2.1. What Teenagers Want

% Viewing as “Very Important”

	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
Friendship	86	88	77
Freedom	85	86	76
Being loved	79	82	69
A comfortable life	75	77	67
Getting a good education	73	76	80
Success in what you do	73	77	77
Family life	67	68	85
Excitement	64	74	63
Money	44	43	43
Spirituality	27	29	52
Your cultural group bkground	22	20	66

Yellow highlight: 10% point difference or more.

Table 2.2. What Teenagers Want by Gender

% Viewing as “Very Important”

	NATIONAL		ALBERTA	
	M	F	M	F
Friendship	89	83	93	84
A comfortable life	76	75	78	75
Getting a good education	79	67	78	72
Family life	74	60	75	60
Spirituality	28	26	30	28
Your cultural group bkground	22	22	19	22

⁶ See Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:8-9.

Sources of Enjoyment

The primary sources of enjoyment for young people in Alberta and elsewhere continue to be *friends* and *music* – just as we have found in all of our youth surveys dating back to 1984.⁷ What is new are the ways in which both can be experienced, thanks to the advent of the *Internet* and the arrival of *iPods* and *MP3 players*.

- Other important sources of enjoyment continue to be *relational* – mothers and fathers, siblings and grandparents, boyfriends and girlfriends – and pets.
- Among the additional top sources of enjoyment for teenagers are *one's own room*, *television*, and *shopping*, along with *school*, *reading*, and *video and computer games*.
- Aboriginals *attending off-reserve schools* differ very little from teens across the country as far as their top sources of enjoyment.
- Teens who *attend Aboriginal schools* exhibit a few noteworthy differences. Higher proportions say they receive high levels of enjoyment from sports, their siblings, and grandparents, along with school. Enjoyment of the Internet is somewhat lower, but levels of enjoyment of iPods, cell phones, and e-mail – are fairly similar to everyone else.

Table 2.3. Sources of Enjoyment			
% Receiving "A Great Deal" or "Quite a Bit"			
	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
Friends	95	95	93
Music	92	94	92
The Internet	83	82	69
Your iPod/MP3	80	83	81
Your mother	79	76	83
Your own room	74	73	81
Your father	73	69	69
Sports	70	72	80
Brother(s) or sister(s)	66	64	84
Your grandparent(s)	66	62	79
Television	64	61	54
Shopping	61	61	63
Your boyfriend/girlfriend	59	58	66
Your pet(s)	56	62	50
Your cell phone	56	69	66
School	53	50	76
E-mail	52	47	46
Reading	47	48	46
Video/computer games	45	51	56

Generally-speaking, Alberta young people, including Aboriginals, *differ little* from the rest of the teen population both with respect to what they and how often they engage in the things they enjoy.

Daily activities for most include:

- ✓ watching television,
- ✓ using a computer,
- ✓ listening to music,
- ✓ sitting – or taking a walk – and thinking,
- ✓ doing something to stay in shape,
- ✓ following sports, or
- ✓ following the news.

Table 2.4. Some Daily Activities			
	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
Watch television	99%	99	99
Use a computer	99	99	96
Listen to music	87	90	84
Sit/take a walk & think	48	43	40
Do something stay in shape	33	39	34
Follow sports	22	22	29
Keep up with the news	17	12	17

⁷ See Bibby 2009:26-27. Alberta N's based on a maximum of 25 missing values, Alberta Aboriginals 15.

However, one area where Aboriginal youth differ somewhat is in the extent to which both males and females follow sports.

- Nationally, while 22% of teens say they are following sports on a daily basis, that figure camouflages an important gender difference – 37% for males vs. only 9% for females. In Alberta the figures are very similar at 34% for males and 10% for females.
- Among Alberta Aboriginals, comparable 35% of males say they are following sports every day. But the figure for females is a much-higher, 23%.

This higher level of interest in sports among Aboriginal females can also be seen in their greater interest in the NHL. Close to 50% say they are closely following the league, compared to only 25% for young females nationally and 33% in Alberta.

Speaking of pro sports generally, **Alberta teens are somewhat more inclined than other teens to be following the NHL and the CFL.** But overall, levels of interest and disinterest are fairly similar in Alberta to elsewhere. Alberta Aboriginals – as with Aboriginals in the rest of the country – exhibiting higher levels of interest in particularly the NHL, the NBA, and MLB.⁸

Other activities that fall into the weekly-plus and monthly-plus categories include:

- ✓ playing video computer games,
- ✓ reading,
- ✓ praying privately,
- ✓ going to a movie,
- ✓ attending a sports event, and
- ✓ gambling with money.

Alberta Aboriginals, along with other Aboriginals, are somewhat more likely to play video games and far more likely to gamble using money.⁹ They also pray privately more often.

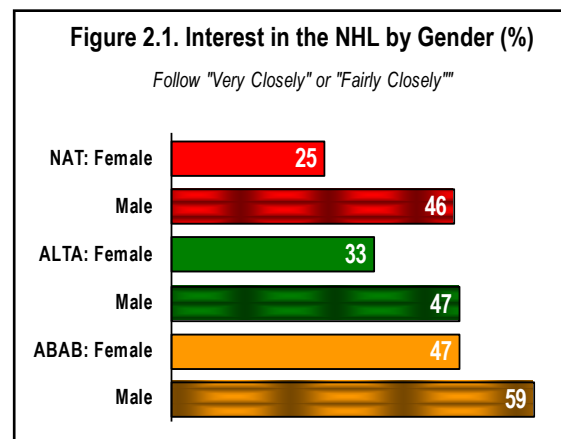


Table 2.5. Interest in Pro Sports (%)
Follow "Very Closely" or "Fairly Closely"

	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
NHL	35	40	53
NBA	21	20	43
NFL	19	17	22
CFL	14	19	21
MLB	10	8	19

Table 2.6. Other Common Activities

	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
Weekly-Plus			
Play video computer games	49%	55	65
Read books you <i>want</i> to read	36	38	39
Play instrument/wk on music	35	34	36
Pray privately	30	32	41
Party	28	25	29
Read Bible/other Scriptures	13	14	16
Monthly-Plus			
Go to a movie	72	75	71
Attend a sports event	48	52	***
Attend a religious service	33	32	29
Gamble with money	15	16	41

⁸ See Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:10.

⁹ See Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:10.

Friends

Over the past decade or so, there has been a remarkable increase in the number of close friends claimed by Canadian teens. In 1984, 49% indicated they had 4 or more close friends; today that figure stands at 72%, with most of the increase occurring since 2000.¹⁰ Only 1 in a 100 teens say they have no close friends.

The four-plus figure for Alberta Aboriginals is even higher than that for other young people, in part seemingly the result of closer communal ties more generally. Overall, females and males are equally likely to claim they have a number of close friends.

	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
Four-plus	72	75	83
Three	16	14	9
Two	9	8	7
One	2	2	1
None	1	1	<1

In general, the emergence of electronic means of interacting with options has contributed significantly to the sense that teens and the rest of us have close friends. Facebook declares it: “135 friends,” complete with their photos.

	NAT	ALTA	ABAB	ALTA M	F	ABAB M	F
Use a cell phone	54%	70	58	63	76	50	66
Text message	44	62	54	54	70	46	63
Access Facebook	43	42	30	33	50	19	41
Use e-mail	42	34	27	29	38	22	33
Access YouTube	27	26	35	31	21	39	30

Cell phones and text messaging are particularly popular in Alberta. Aboriginals’ use of both, along with Facebook and e-mail, are somewhat lower; but the accessing of YouTube is higher (and Bebo joins Facebook as a favourite Aboriginal networking site).

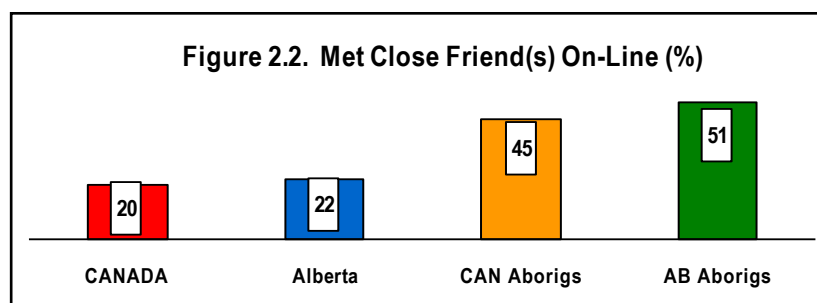
Females everywhere – including those attending Aboriginal schools in Alberta and elsewhere – are much more likely than males to say they are using cell phones, text messaging, accessing Facebook, and using e-mail every day.¹¹

- Of considerable importance, **45% of teens who attend Aboriginal schools nationally – including 51% in Alberta – say that they have met at least one close friend on-line** – considerably higher than Aboriginals who attend off-reserve schools (31%) and more than double the figure for Canadian teenagers as a whole (20%).
- That 45% Canada-wide figure, incidentally, is almost equally comprised of females (46%) and males (44%). In Alberta, the 51% includes 53% of females of 49% of males.
- Significantly, **82% of teens attending Aboriginal schools in Alberta say they have at least one close friend who does not live on their reserve**; the national figure is 83%.

¹⁰ Bibby 2009:31.

¹¹ See Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:11.

The Internet has also made a revolutionary contribution to the geographical expansion of friends.



Groups

We offered teens a list of six kinds of groups, and asked them if they are part of any of them. We also gave them the opportunity to list any additional groups in which they are involved.

What we found is that the two most popular kinds of groups for teenagers across the country, including Alberta, are **sports and Internet-related**. They are part of sports groups and teams, and also part of Internet social networks of kind or another. In both instances, the level of involvement for Alberta Aboriginals attending band-run schools is only slightly below that of others – particularly in the case of sports.

Table 2.9. Involvement in Groups (%)
"Are you part of any of the following groups?"

	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
Sports	48	49	45
Internet	45	42	35
School	31	23	7
Hobby	18	19	9
Religious	14	15	5
Nationality	5	4	**
Other	4	4	6

- Involvement in *school-related* groups is somewhat higher in the rest of Canada than Alberta, but otherwise, levels of participation in groups with a hobby, religious, and nationality, focus, for example, are similar.
- What is eye-catching are the relatively low levels of participation in such groups for teens attending Alberta Aboriginal schools.

In general, males are more inclined than females to be involved in team and group sports, although differences for Alberta Aboriginals are small. However, females are more inclined than males to be part of Internet social networks, especially in the case of those attending band-run schools.

Table 2.10. Involvement in Groups by Gender (%)

	NATIONAL		ALBERTA		AB ABORIG	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Sports	40	56	44	56	44	46
Internet	48	41	46	37	43	27
School	35	27	27	20	8	6
Religious	15	12	17	13	4	5

- Females are also slightly more likely than males to participate in both school and religious youth groups.
- In both instances, there are no significant differences by gender for Aboriginal students.

The popularity of relational and varied entertainment websites is fairly similar for Alberta teens and the rest of the country. Relational sites are especially important to females attending Aboriginal schools while *YouTube* is cited as a favourite website by a particularly high proportion of Aboriginal males.

Table 2.11. Favourite Websites by Gender (%)						
	NATIONAL		ALBERTA		AB ABORIG	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Relational	58	24	59	30	68	31
Facebook	50	20	42	20	34	15
Nexopia	2	<1	10	2	1	2
Bebo	<1	<1	3	1	27	10
Other	8	4	7	7	6	4
Sports	2	16	4	14	1	5
You Tube	6	11	7	13	9	39
Computer games	2	12	2	17	2	8
Music	3	6	5	9	8	5

Perceived Sources of Influence

Enjoyment sources are somewhat closely related to *sources of influence*, with a few exceptions. **Overall, Alberta teens and other teens are inclined to feel that the primary sources of influence on their lives are their families, their own willpower, and their friends. Many downplay the impact of their teachers, television, the Internet, and leaders.**

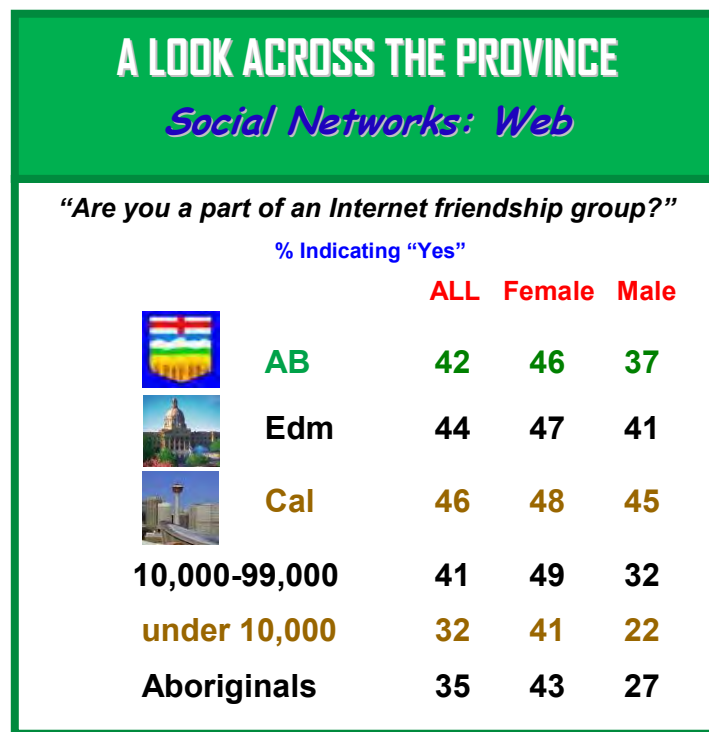
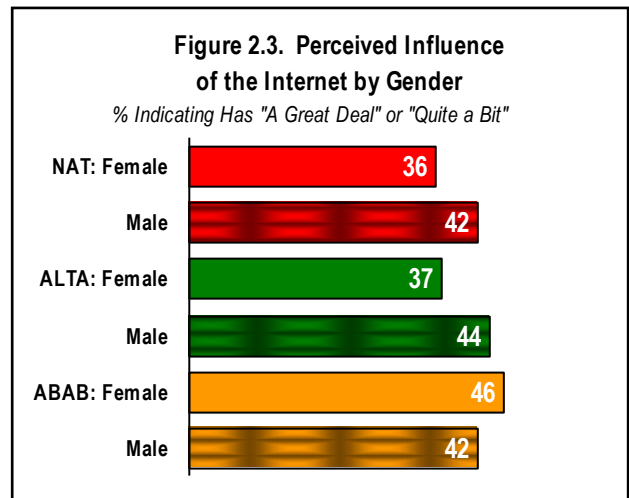
- Alberta **Aboriginal young people** stand out in further underlining the **importance of other adults** who they respect, besides their parents.
- Teens attending Aboriginal schools are also somewhat more inclined than other young people to acknowledge the influence on their lives of teachers, television, and the Internet, and, in particular, God/the Creator, luck, and what people in power decide.
- **These** latter patterns of perceived influence also characterize Aboriginal young people who are attending band-run schools in the rest of the country.¹²

Table 2.12. Perceived Sources of Influence			
% Seeing as Influencing Their Lives "A Great Deal" or "Quite a Bit"			
	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
The way you were brought up	92	93	89
Your own willpower	89	90	86
Your mother specifically	89	88	84
Your friend(s)	86	89	83
Your father specifically	82	82	75
The characteristics born with	76	78	86
Another adult(s) you respect	65	68	84
Music	64	69	***
What you read	49	55	44
Your teacher(s)	45	50	54
Television	41	45	46
God/some other supernatural force	40	44	75
Luck	39	41	63
The Internet	39	40	44
What people in power decide	36	35	50

¹²See Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:13.

In light of the attention that young females on reserves are giving to the Internet, it is not surprising to see that they – along with males in the same settings – are considerably more likely than other teenagers to maintain that the Internet is influencing their lives.

Overall, **Aboriginals** are more inclined than other young people to see their lives as influenced by both internal and external factors.



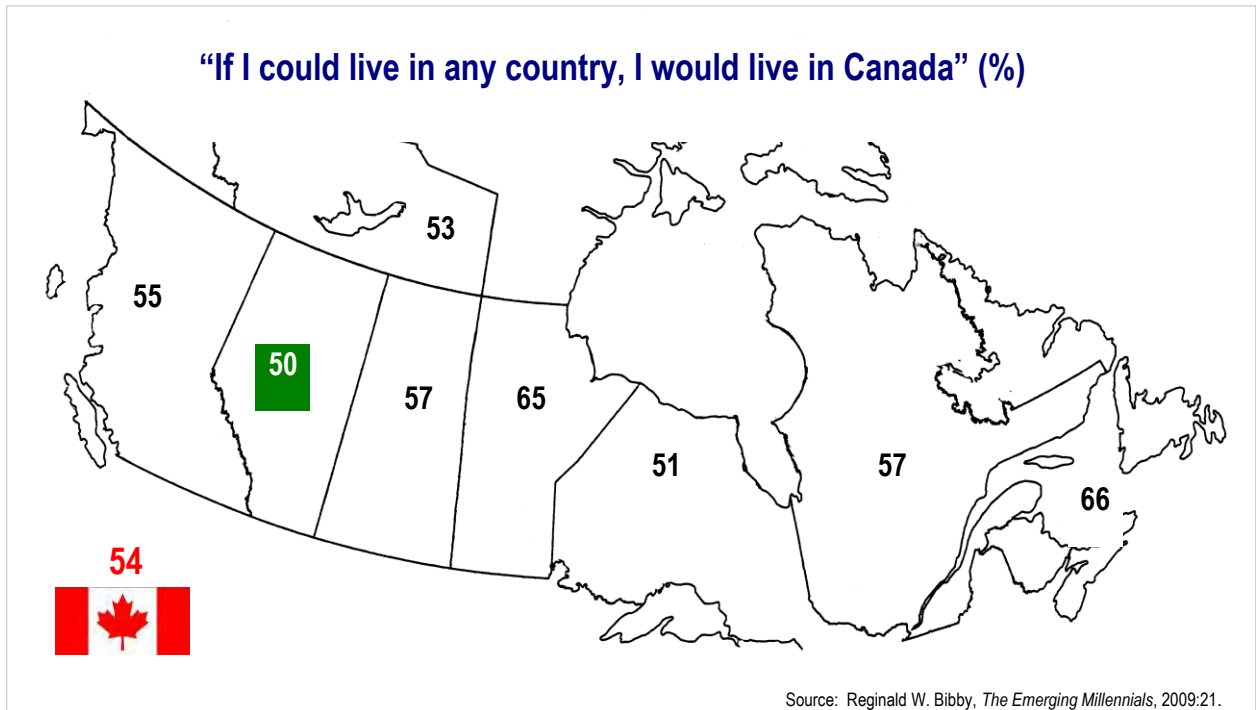
Summary Note

Alberta teens closely resemble other Canadian teens in receiving considerable enjoyment from friends and family members. The emergence of new technological means of experiencing friendships and enjoying family members has enabled young people both to initiate contacts and to stay in contact, removing old geographical barriers.

While these changes have had an important impact on how Canadians of all ages can experience relationships and understand the country and world, **the Internet-led technology may be having nothing less than a revolutionary impact on Aboriginal youth living on reserves in Alberta and the rest of Canada.** For many, led by females, the Internet is providing a bridge to the rest of Canada and the globe.

Yet, it is interesting to note that many young people – especial non-Aboriginals – minimize the influence of their teachers, television, the Internet, and leaders. They instead see the key sources of influence on their lives as their families, their own willpower, and their friends.

3. CANADA AND THE WORLD



Social Concerns

We asked teens about their interest in the news, as well as specific topics and issues. Nationally, 40% say they follow the news at least “several times a week” – down from 45% in 2000. The current “daily” figure is 17%.

Alberta young people are just about as likely as their counterparts in the rest of the country to claim to follow the news in general. However, Aboriginals attending schools on reserves in Alberta and elsewhere indicate slightly higher levels of interest in specific current issues – such as news relating to the environment, Canadian politics, and developments in Afghanistan.¹³

	The News	World Events	Environment Issues	Canadian Politics	Afghanistan Developments
Nationally	40%	54	51	30	19
All Alberta	35	56	51	36	21
Alberta Aboriginals	35	58	58	43	26

*Follow the news several times a week or more; others – follow “very closely” or “fairly closely.”
 Yellow highlight: 10% point difference or more.

Teens in Alberta differ little from teens across the country in their perception of the seriousness of social issues.

- The environment and child abuse are ranked at the top.
- They are followed by such issues as teenage suicide, discrimination, drugs, violence, bullying, and youth gangs.

What stands out is the tendency for a higher proportion of Aboriginals attending band-run schools in Alberta and elsewhere to see almost all of these issues we posed as constituting “very serious” problems.¹⁴

	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
The Environment	54	50	65
Child abuse	51	53	73
Teenage suicide	46	46	68
Racial discrimination	45	45	55
Drugs	42	46	59
Violence in schools	42	42	48
Poverty	41	40	48
Violence against women	39	38	64
Crime	38	41	61
AIDS	38	36	59
Bullying	34	35	46
Unequal treatment women	34	34	48
Youth gangs	33	35	59
Terrorism	31	30	44
The Economy	23	18	35
Aboriginal & non-Aboriginal relations	21	21	45

¹³See Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:16.

¹⁴See Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:16.

Confidence in Leadership

Alberta teens and other Canadian teens express very similar confidence levels and confidence rankings when it comes to the country's major institutions.

- Some 7 in 10 maintain that they have “a great deal” or “quite a bit” of confidence in the leadership that is being given to *schools* and the *police*.
- That high level of confidence slips to about 6 in 10 in the case of the *court system*, *newspapers*, and *the music industry*, and to about 5 in 10 for *provincial* and *federal government* leadership.
- Around 4 in 10 teens say they have high levels of confidence in the leadership being given *religious groups* and the *television industry*.

Table 3.3. Confidence in Leaders (%)

“How much confidence do you have in the people in charge of...”

% Indicating “A Great Deal” or “Quite a Bit”

	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
Schools	69	69	76
The Police	67	68	**
The RCMP	**	**	58
The Court System	58	55	53
Newspapers	58	55	56
The Music Industry	52	55	79
Your Provincial Government	48	50	56
The Federal Government	47	51	56
Religious Organizations	39	44	54
Television	37	37	48

Overall, teens attending Aboriginal schools in Alberta and elsewhere express levels of confidence in leadership that tend to be as high or higher than other young people.¹⁵

We asked students attending band-operated schools about the **confidence** they have **in the leadership being given to some activities and structures found specifically on reserves**. Alberta and national differences tend to be small.

- More than 7 in 10 express high levels of confidence in the people in charge of *schools* and *traditional ceremonies*.
- About 6 in 10 say the same about individuals involved with *band councils*, along with the *RCMP*.
- Just over 5 in 10 say they have “a great deal” or “quite a bit” of confidence in people in charge of *the courts*, the *federal* and *provincial governments*, and *religious groups*.
- Some 5 in 10 indicate they have a high level of confidence in the *Band police* – slightly below the 58% level of the *RCMP*.

Table 3.4. Confidence in Leaders:

Teens Attending Alberta Aboriginal Schools (%)

“How much confidence do you have in the people in charge of...”

% Indicating “A Great Deal” or “Quite a Bit”

	ABAB	CANAB	Females	Males
School	76	75	78	74
Traditional Ceremonies	80	74	84	77
Your Band Council	60	63	57	63
The RCMP	57	58	61	53
Your Provincial Government	56	53	58	54
The Federal Government	56	54	59	53
Churches/religious groups	54	52	56	52
The Courts	53	55	55	51
The Band Police	48	50	50	46

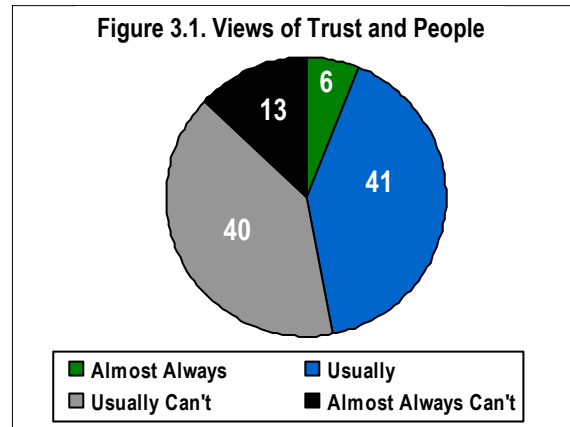
¹⁵See Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:17.

In general, females attending Aboriginal schools are slightly more inclined than their male counterparts to express confidence in the leadership in almost all of these instances.

Views of People

One of the most valued interpersonal characteristics of young people is trust. We asked them for their thoughts about trust and people.

- A small number – about 5% - maintain people can *almost always* be trusted.
- Another 40% say they can *usually* be trusted.
- A further 40% feel that we *usually can't be too careful* in dealing with people.
- Close to 15% feel that we *almost always can't be too careful* when we are relating to people.



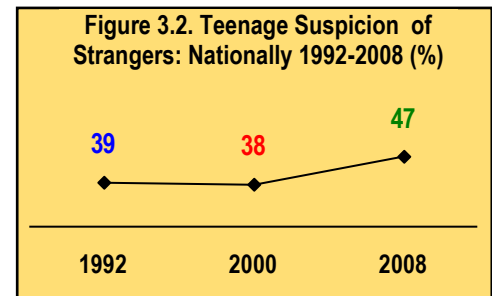
We consequently have a situation in Canada where teenagers, along with adults, put supreme importance on good interpersonal relations. Friendship and friendliness, love and compassion, trust and reliability are all highly valued. **Yet, many feel a need to relate to each other and to adults with caution.** Generally-speaking, gender differences in trust tend to be small.

In Alberta, teens are slightly more trusting of people than teens as a whole (51% vs. 47%). However, Alberta Aboriginals attending band-schools are slightly less trusting (41%), in contrast to Aboriginals nation-wide (49%).

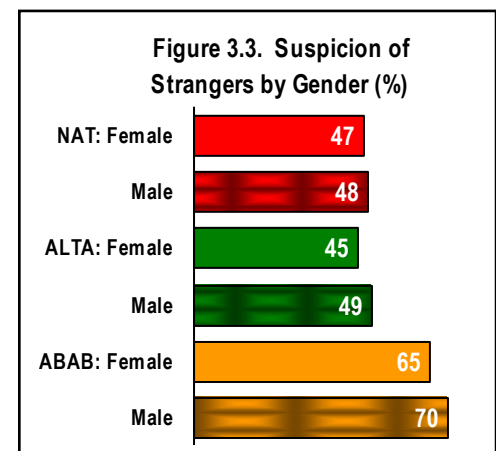
Table 3.5. Views of Trust and People by Gender (%)						
	NATIONAL		ALBERTA		ABAB	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Almost always	6	7	5	4	10	15
Usually	38	44	46	47	29	29
Usually can't	42	37	39	35	42	36
Almost always can't	14	12	10	14	19	20

For a number of years now, we've been asking teenagers and adults for their responses to the statement, "*A stranger who shows a person attention is probably up to something.*"

- Consistently since we first put the item to adults in 1990, some 20% have said they agree.
- In the teen instance, the agreement figure was just under 40% in 1992 and 2000. Today it has jumped to nearly 50%.



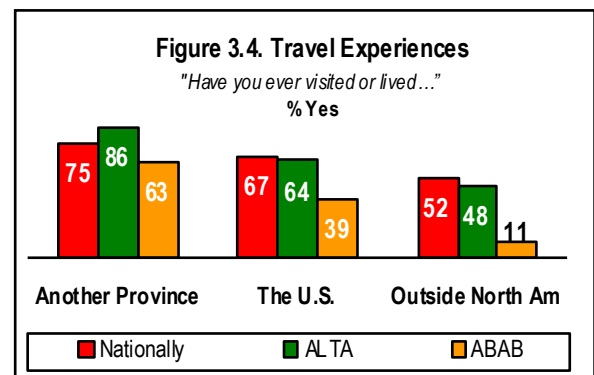
The Alberta suspicion figures are very similar to the country as a whole, for both females and males. However, what stands out is the much greater tendency of **Aboriginals attending reserve schools** to express suspicion of "friendly strangers," in the case of both males (70%) and females (65%). These patterns for Alberta are similar across Canada. They also characterize Aboriginals who are living off-reserve.¹⁶



Awareness and Concern Regarding Global Issues

Alberta teenagers are more likely than teenagers in the rest of the country to have travelled to another province or territory, but are marginally less likely to have travelled to the United States or to a country outside of North America.

- Close to 2 in 3 teens who attend Alberta reserve schools have travelled to another province or territory and just over 1 in 3 have been to the U.S. However, only about 1 in 10 have been outside North America.
- Those levels of travel are for Alberta Aboriginals are very similar to those living on reserves in the rest of the country.¹⁷
- The highest levels of travel are experienced by other Canadian teenagers, many of whom were born outside Canada, and revisit the countries from which they have come.¹⁸



¹⁶See Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:18.

¹⁷See Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:19.

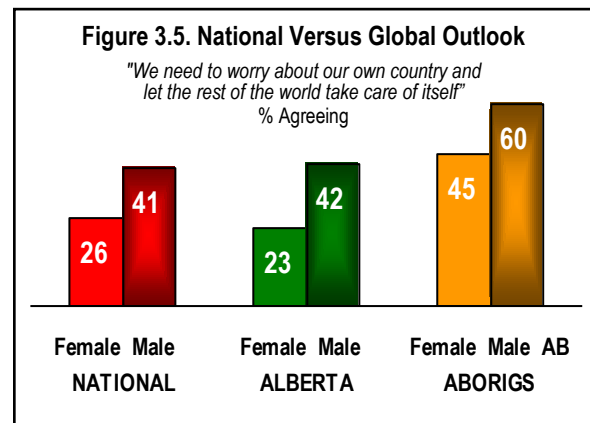
¹⁸See Bibby 2009:131.

The proportions of Alberta young people who express concern about a variety of global issues – such as global warming, human rights violations, AIDs, and terrorism – closely resemble the relatively low levels for Canada as a whole. What stands out is the inclination for higher proportions of teens in band-run schools to indicate higher levels of concern about such global matters.

Table 3.6. Concern About Global Issues
"Looking at the world more generally, how concerned are you about the following?"
 % Indicating "Very Concerned"

	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
Global warming	46%	41	59
Human rights violations	42	44	54
Poverty	39	41	38
AIDS	37	37	49
Terrorism	27	29	41
Overpopulation	20	21	27

Yet, while they indicate higher levels of concern about many such global issues, students in Aboriginal schools are more inclined than other young people to feel that *"we need to worry about our own country and let the rest of the world take care of itself."* Here, it seems that Aboriginal concern for people elsewhere is tempered by the reality of their own widespread needs.



In the case of Aboriginals and Alberta and Canadian teens more generally, males are considerably more likely than females to assert a "Canada-first" position. And while travel experiences differ little for teenage females and males as a whole, females – Aboriginal and otherwise – are more inclined than males to express concern about both global problems and the need for Canadians to respond.

Table 3.7. Travel Experiences and Concern About Global Issues by Gender: Canada, Alberta, and Alberta Aboriginals (%)

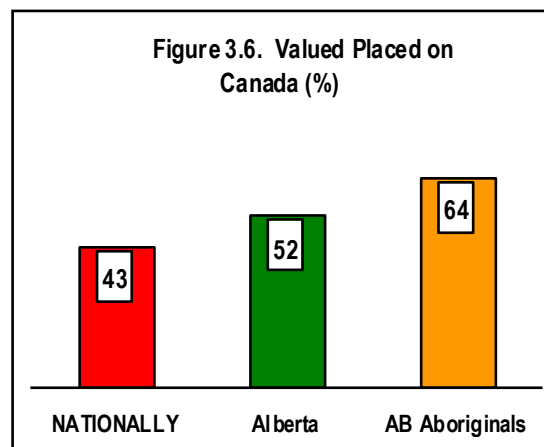
	NATIONAL		ALTA		ABAB	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Have Travelled...						
Another province	76	74	87	86	67	59
Outside North America	52	52	48	48	15	7
Concerned About						
Global warming	40	51	37	45	53	65
Poverty	32	47	33	47	35	42

In short, young females are more inclined than their male counterparts both to be troubled about global problems, and to maintain that we as Canadians need to respond.

The Valued Placed on Canada

Asked pointedly, **“How important is being a Canadian to you?”** some 43% of teens across the country indicate it is “very important”. Another 29% say it is “somewhat important,” 16% that it is “not very important,” and 12% that Canada is “not important at all.”

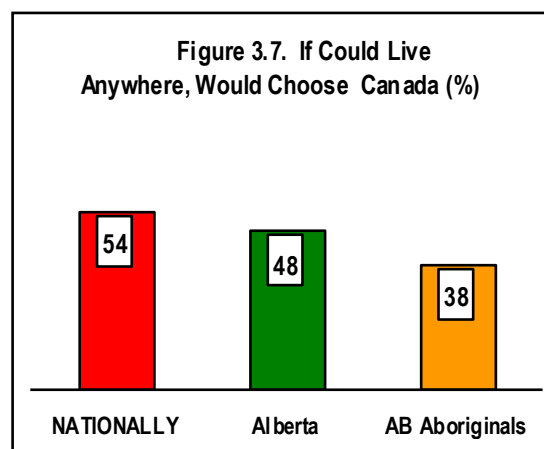
Alberta teenagers, led by Aboriginals in band-run schools, exceed the national average: 52% say it is “very important,” with the level rising to 64% for Aboriginals; the national level for Aboriginals students is 70%.¹⁹



Yet, when we asked young people, if they could live anywhere, where would they choose to live, “If you could live anywhere,” the results were quite different.

While about 55% of Canadian teens say they would choose Canada, the figure is slightly lower for Alberta teens (48%) and even lower for Alberta Aboriginals (38%).²⁰

- The United States is the preference of 12% of Alberta youth, including 34% of Aboriginals (34%). Other top choices for Albertans as a whole are England (4%), and Italy (3%).
- What seems to be at work here is that the majority of teens in Alberta and elsewhere who live on reserves do place a high value on Canada. Yet, for many, the quality of life is not what they want it to be. Therefore, many dream of eventually living somewhere else.



¹⁹Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:20.

²⁰The national figure for Aboriginals attending band-run schools is 45% (Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:20).

IF COULD LIVE ANYWHERE

Some Thoughts from Canadian Teens Living on Reserves

"...as long as I have a job it does not matter...anywhere away from the bad memories...Paris, France...not too far from home...Hollywood...stay in Canada, stay right here on the reserve...Greece or at least Saskatoon or some Big City somewhere...far away...a place where I can be successful and well-known...I don't know - I'll have to wait and see..."

Source: Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:23.

A LOOK ACROSS THE PROVINCE

Following the News

"Follow the news" several times a week or more



AB

35%



Edm

39



Cal

38

10,000-99,000

26

under 10,000

28

Aboriginals

35

Summary Note

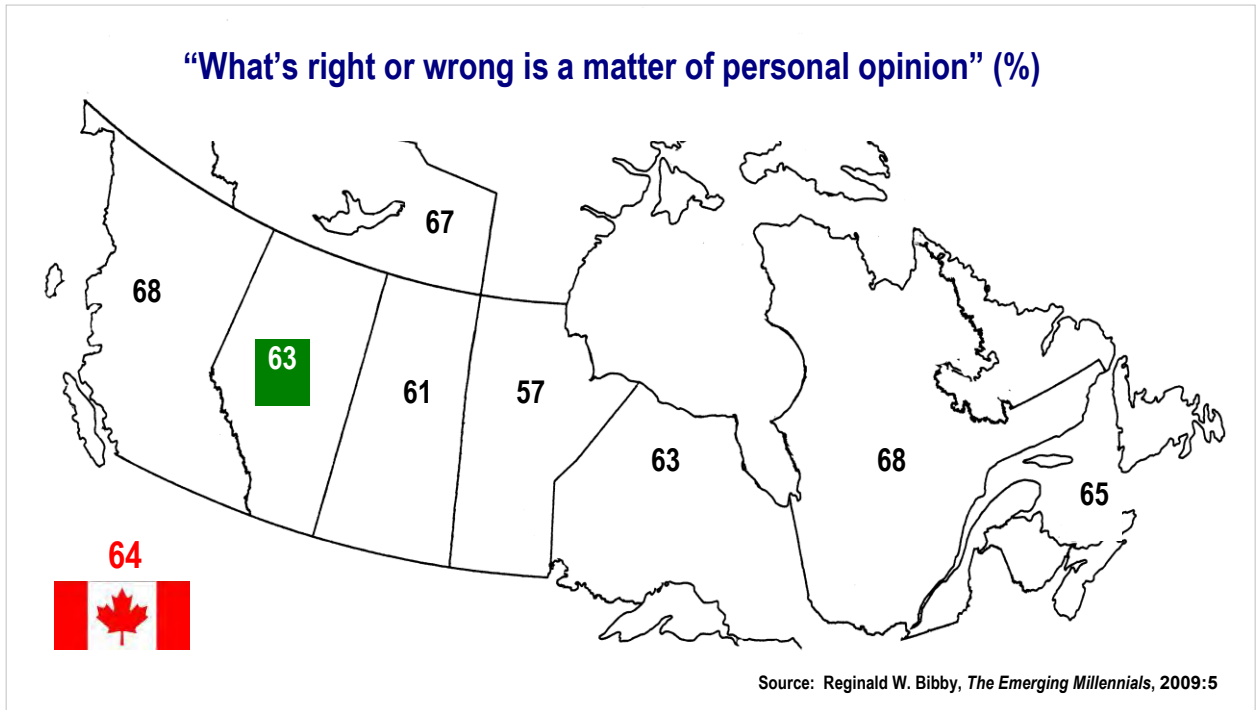
Alberta young people tend to be very much like other young people across the country when it comes to following the news and being concerned about national issues. They exhibit **very similar levels of confidence** in Canadian leaders **and trust** in average Canadians. They are a **bit more likely** than the average teenager **to have travelled to another province or territory**, and **only slightly less likely to have been to the United States or to a country outside North America.**

Their relatively low levels of concern about global issues are similar to teens elsewhere. Concern about global matters is somewhat higher for females in both Alberta and the rest of the country. Some one in two young Albertans say they place “very high” importance on being a Canadian and about the same proportion say that Canada is their number one country of preference. **The importance they give to being Canadians is somewhat higher than elsewhere, while the choosing of Canada as a place of residence is slightly lower.**

In almost all of the instances, Aboriginals attending band-run schools differ from Alberta young people in general. They report higher levels of interest in national and global matters, and consistently express higher levels of concern about a wide range of national and global issues. They tend to have similar or higher levels of confidence in institutional leaders, yet acknowledge a higher level of mistrust and suspicion when it comes to people in general. Their travel experiences are far more limited, with many not having been outside their own provinces or territories, and only about 10% having been outside the country.

Yet, for all the problems they see and their wariness of many people, young Alberta Aboriginals are more inclined than Alberta teens as a whole to place high value on being Canadians. Perhaps a very telling finding, **however**, is that **they are less likely to say that, if they could live anywhere in the world, they would choose Canada.**

4. MORALITY AND FAMILY LIFE

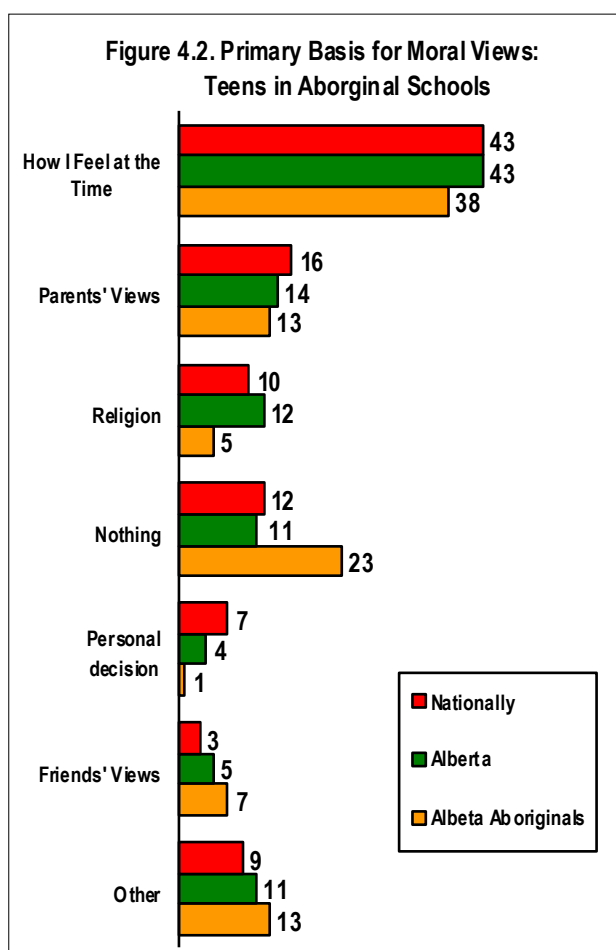
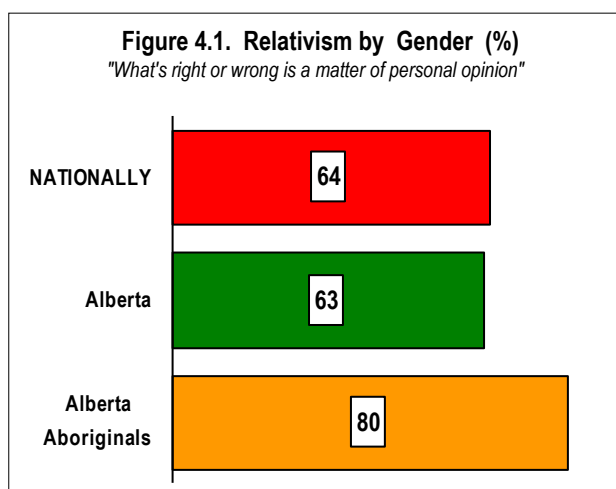


Sources of Moral Decisions

The majority of today's emerging millennial generation – like previous Canadian teenagers who grew up in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s – are inclined to see things in relativistic terms. They include Albertans. Some 65% of young people across Canada agree with the statement, *“What's right or wrong is a matter of personal opinion.”* In the case of Alberta Aboriginals attending band-run schools, the figure is 80% – similar to Aboriginals nationally.²¹

We asked teenagers, *“Generally speaking, on what do you base your moral views?”* and gave them six response options, along with the opportunity to cite any other criteria that might be important to them.

The dominant response overall? *How they feel at the time* (43%), with another 7% saying it's a *personal* decision. For around 20%, the views of *parents, friends,* and *other people* are important. Only 10% report that *religion* is the primary basis for their moral decisions, slightly below the number who say their moral views have no particular basis. Other sources are cited by some 10%.



²¹Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:23.

Differences between Alberta teens and other teens are very small. Alberta Aboriginals are somewhat more likely than other teens in the province and elsewhere to say that they do not have a conscious basis for their moral views (23% vs. 11-12%), and even less likely to cite the influence of religion (5% vs. 10-12%). These tendencies also characterize Aboriginals across Canada.²²

Interpersonal Values and Behaviour

As in our previous Project Teen Canada surveys, we examined the importance that young people are giving to basic interpersonal values that make for civility.

- What we found is that some 80% of teenagers say that *trust* and *honesty* are “very important” to them, while 75% place the same level of importance on *humour*. Integrity is obviously extremely important to today’s teens. They also have discovered early that humour elevates life, making social connections more enjoyable, and tough tasks and tough times more tolerable.²³
- Other basic key interpersonal characteristics such a *concern for others*, *politeness*, *forgiveness*, and *working hard* are highly valued by about 6 and 10 – as is *cleanliness*.

	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
Trust	84	84	83
Honesty	81	81	74
Humour	75	80	70
Concern for others	65	68	55
Politeness	64	63	52
Forgiveness	60	63	67
Cleanliness	59	61	70
Working hard	55	54	65

Yellow highlight: 10% point difference or more.

Here there are few sizable differences between Alberta teens and teens nationally. Aboriginal students are slightly less inclined to emphasize the importance of **concern for others and politeness**. However, they are somewhat more likely to place a high level of importance on **cleanliness and hard work**.

We included a few items aimed at probing *behaviour beyond values*. Regarding honesty, we asked teens how they would respond if they purchased an item and realized they had been given \$10 more in change than they were supposed to receive. Would they return the money, keep it, or find their decision would depend on a number of factors (e.g., store size, knowing the clerk, expecting to shop there again). We also asked whether they “approve,” “disapprove,” or “don’t care either way” when someone (a) does not say “sorry” after bumping into another person, and (b) a person on occasion giving someone “the finger.”

²²Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:23-24.

About 4 in 10 told us they would return the ten dollars. The rest were divided between keeping it and feeling “it would depend.” Close to 8 in 10 said they would “disapprove” of someone not saying sorry after

bumping into another person, while just under 5 in 10 “disapprove” of people, in some situations, giving someone “the finger.” **Differences between Alberta teens and their counterparts elsewhere tended to be small – except for Aboriginals.**

Teenagers attending band-run schools were somewhat less likely than others to say they would return the \$10 and to disapprove of the missing “sorry.” Use of “the finger” also troubles fewer Aboriginals than other young people.

Overall, females across the country – Aboriginal and otherwise – are consistently more inclined than males to say they “highly value”

interpersonal traits. They also were more likely than males to inform us that they would return the \$10, disapprove of “the finger,” and disapprove of the “no sorry.”

Table 4.2. A Peek At Honesty in Action (%)

	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
Received \$10 in Error			
Go back and return the extra \$10	38	42	29
It would depend	31	29	21
Keep the \$10 and keep walking	31	29	50
Courtesy (disapprove)			
Not saying “sorry” bump into someone	77	71	49
Sometimes giving someone “the finger”	45	46	39

Table 4.3. Valued Interpersonal Traits by Gender

% Viewing as “Very Important”

	NAT		ALBERTA		ABAB	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Highly Value						
Trust	90	76	90	77	87	80
Honesty	87	74	87	74	80	67
Concern for others	73	56	77	58	66	44
Cleanliness	62	56	63	59	77	63
Working hard	58	52	56	53	66	64
Would return the \$10	44	31	47	37	37	22
Not saying sorry: disap	82	71	77	65	51	48
The finger: disapprove	51	37	52	38	46	32

Some Thoughts on Civility from Canada's Teens

“...I'd keep the \$10 but feel badly...not if I was broke...I'd give it back; it's not mine...would depend on the clerk's attitude...I never count my change...would depend on my mood...poor clerk - once made this mistake.....I wouldn't say sorry for bumping into them if they didn't say anything...giving the finger is harmless...it's funny...in anger, no; with friends, yes...”

Source: Reginald W. Bibby, *The Emerging Millennials* 2009:15.

²³ Bibby 2009:9.

Sexual Attitudes and Behaviour

At minimum, Canadians are expected to at best respect differences and at least tolerate them. The posture is something of “the Canadian way.”²⁴

When we posed sexual attitudes in this manner to teenagers, what we found is that, when love is involved, **premarital sex** receives a high level of both acceptance and approval (72%). If sex only has a “like” component, acceptance remains fairly high, but approval drops significantly.

In the case of **extramarital sex**, only 5% of teens say this is something that receives both their acceptance and approval. In fact, some 80% say they neither accept nor approve of married people having sex with other partners.

	Approve & Accept	Disapprove But Accept	Disapprove & Do Not Accept	Totals
Premarital Sex...				
when people LOVE each other	72%	19	9	100
when people LIKE each other	38	37	25	100
Extramarital Sex				
other than with one's marriage partner	5	17	78	100
Homosexuality				
Sexual relations between two people of the same sex	44	28	28	100

Source: Reginald W. Bibby, *The Emerging Millennials*, 2009:48.

As for **homosexuality**, 44% say they both accept and approve of same-sex relations. However, another 28% of teens indicate that they are willing to accept homosexuality, even if they do not personally approve.

Alberta young people exhibit very similar attitudes in these areas as their counterparts elsewhere. However, **Aboriginals attending band-run schools in Alberta and the rest of the**

	NAT	ALTA	ABAB	CANAB
Premarital sex...love each other	72	70	57	64
Premarital sex...like each other	38	38	34	35
Extramarital sex	5	4	8	6
Homosexuality	44	44	20	30

country are somewhat less likely than other teens to indicate that they approve of either premarital sex or homosexuality. Teens, Aboriginal and otherwise, are uniform in rejecting extramarital sex.

²⁴ Bibby 2009:47.

With respect to *actual sexual behaviour*, since the mid-1980s, we have found that a remarkably consistent, 60% of males and 50% of females have maintained that they have, at some point, been sexually involved.²⁵ Despite their attitudes, **Aboriginals in Alberta and elsewhere**²⁶ are more inclined than others to indicate they have been sexually involved.

Table 4.6. Teenage Sexual Activity by Gender

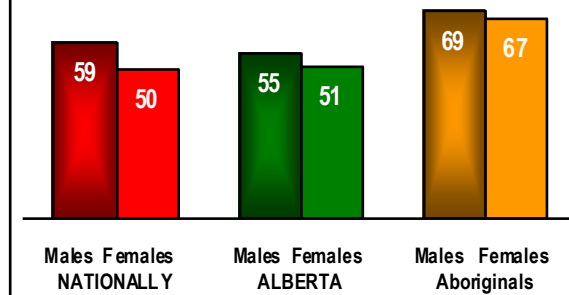
"About how often do you engage in sex?"

	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
Daily	5%	4	7
Several times a week	9	7	10
About once a week	7	6	8
2-3 times a month	7	8	14
About once a month	4	5	13
Hardly ever	12	13	17
Never	56	57	31
Totals	100	100	100

Currently, some 32% of teens across the country, including 35% in Alberta, say that they are engaging in sex at least once a month. Among Alberta Aboriginals attending band schools, the figure is a considerably higher 52%.

Figure 4.3. Sexual Activity

% Indicating Have Been Sexually Involved



We asked our respondents, “Do most of the teenagers you know who are sexually active use contraceptives?”²⁷

Across the country, about 5 in 10 think they do and 1 in 10 think they don’t. The remainder say they don’t really know. That means that, *among those who feel they know*, 88% maintain that, generally speaking, teens are using some form of birth control, while 12% say they are not.

Figure 4.4. Perceived Contraceptive Use: NATIONAL

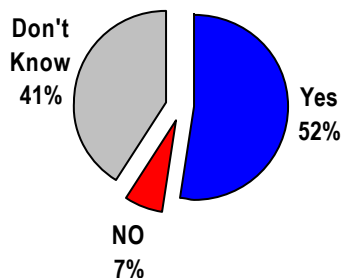


Figure 4.5. Perceived Contraceptive Use: ALBERTA

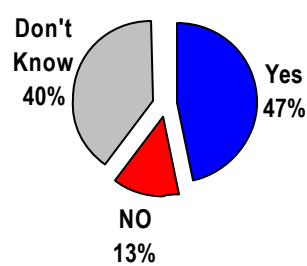
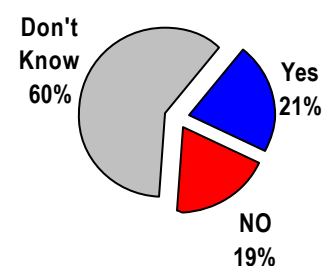


Figure 4.6. Perceived Contraceptive Use: ALBERTA ABORIGINALS



²⁵See Bibby 2009:52.

²⁶Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:26.

²⁷In the Aboriginal school version, we thought an improvement on the wording was to replace “contraceptives” with “birth control.”

Some 60% of teens living on Alberta reserves say they don't know whether or not sexually active are using birth control, compared to about 40% of other Alberta young people. **If we base our comparisons on those who *do* claim to know, the results are as follows: nationally for everyone: 88%; for all of Alberta, 89%; for teens attending Alberta band-run schools, 52%.** In all three cases, gender differences in the perception of the use of contraceptives are negligible.

Cohabitation and Parenting

Some 75% of Alberta teens, both female and male, say they approve of *unmarried couples living together* – similar to the views of Canadian teens as a whole. That level, however, is somewhat *lower* for Aboriginals attending band-run schools in Alberta and elsewhere.²⁸

Nationally, among all teens, just over 50% of females and males say that they approve of *unmarried couples having children*. In Alberta, levels of approval are slightly lower for both females and males, except in the case of Aboriginal females, where approval is relatively high – a gender difference that also is found outside Alberta as well.²⁹

Table 4.7. Views of Cohabitation and Parenting (%)

% Indicating "Approve & Accept" Unmarried Couples....

	NAT		ALTA		ABAB	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Living together	77	78	77	75	68	62
Having children	55	51	52	45	62	42

Sources of the Moral Views of Alberta Teens

"Generally speaking, on what do you base your moral views?"

"...Who I am...how I was brought up...I agree a lot with my religion, but not always...seeing the effects of some bad decisions...Catholicism and basic humanitarian ethics...past events in my life...what I have been taught...logic and my developing morals...my own knowledge and not someone else's...the Bible and my relationship with Christ...me and what I am comfortable with and believe...experiences...what I want to do...usually go it alone but I take in others' opinions...my common sense and general pride...carma...my own views...what I believe is right and wrong...my gut...God and my best bud..."

²⁸See Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:27.

²⁹Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:27.

Religious Beliefs and Practices

Similar to their counterparts dating back to the mid-1980s, close to 95% of teens tell us that they have raised the so-called “*ultimate questions*” about the purpose of life, whether or not there is a God, why is there suffering in the world, and what happens after death. Alberta teens, including Aboriginals, are among them.

Some 8 in 10 subscribe to the idea that the *central goal in life is to be happy*. Yet beyond this life, close to the same proportion believe there is *life after death*.

More than 6 in 10 say they believe in *God* or a higher power – what many Aboriginals refer to as “the Creator.” Close to the same proportion believe that such a supreme being *cares about them* personally and *expects them to be “good to each other.”*

Teenagers also hold a wide range of additional supernatural beliefs.

Table 4.8. Some Beliefs of Teenagers			
“Do you believe...”			
% Indicating “Yes, I definitely do” or “Yes, I think I do”			
	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
The central goal /main thing in life is to be happy	81	84	90
In life after death	75	74	83
God exists*	67	73	88
God cares about you personally	62	65	81
God expects us to be good to each other	62	66	86
Miraculous healing sometimes occurs	57	59	73
You yourself have spiritual needs	54	61	81
We can have contact with the spirit world	46	49	74
You have felt the presence of God	39	42	56

*“God or a higher power” was listed with each God reference in the items here that appeared in the main PTC08 questionnaire; in the Aboriginal sample supplement, “God or a Creator” was used.



- Almost 60% maintain that *miraculous healing* sometimes occurs.
- More than 50% acknowledge that they themselves have *spiritual needs*.
- Just under one-half think we can have *contact with the spirit world*.
- And some 4 in 10 claim that they have felt the *presence of God*.

Alberta young people are slightly more likely than Canadian teens generally to endorse almost all of these ideas, with the inclination particularly pronounced among Aboriginals attending band-run schools in Alberta and elsewhere.³⁰

We asked teens who are attending band-run schools about **some additional beliefs that are associated with Aboriginal spirituality. Such beliefs are endorsed by a majority of Aboriginal youth. Alberta levels** in each measurement instance are somewhat **higher than levels for Aboriginals nationally.**

³⁰See Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:41.

- We found that 85% believe that “*all things have a spirit,*” with slightly under 80% agreeing that “*all forms of life are connected to each other.*”
- Close to 8 in 10 affirm the *importance of gathering for traditional ceremonies*, while 7 in 10 agree that “*prayers of thanks*” *should be offered daily “to the Creator.”*
- Just over 6 in 10 say that *the Medicine wheel* helps them to understand their lives.
- Differences between Alberta Aboriginals and those elsewhere are particularly pronounced in the case of prayers of thanks and the Medicine Wheel.

Table 4.9. Some Specific Beliefs: Teens in Aboriginal Schools		
“Do you believe...”		
% Indicating “Yes, I definitely do” or “Yes, I think I do”		
		
All living things have a spirit	85%	89
It’s important for us to gather for traditional ceremonies	82	89
All forms of life are connected to each other	77	81
Prayers of thanks should be made to the Creator every day	68	83
The Medicine Wheel helps me understand my life	64	76

In the case of private prayer, the percentage of Alberta Aboriginals who say they *pray privately* at least once a week (41%) is higher than that of teens nationally (30%) and in Alberta (32%), as well as Aboriginals as a whole (30%). Some 13% of young people across Canada say they *read the Bible or some other type of sacred Scriptures* at least once a week – a level that is highly uniform across all categories.

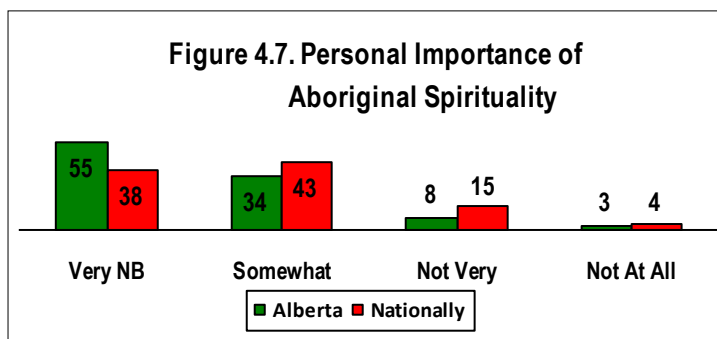
With respect to *organized religion*, about 1 in 3 teens in Alberta and elsewhere report that they *attend services* at least once a month, with similar proportions indicating they are receiving high *levels of enjoyment* from their involvement in religious groups. The attendance levels of Aboriginals are slightly lower (25% nationally, 29% in Alberta). Yet, Aboriginal enjoyment levels are slightly higher. In large part this may reflect a broader view of religion than something associated with service attendance – including many features of Aboriginal spirituality with its wide range of celebrations.

Some 8 in 10 **Alberta teens join young people elsewhere in saying that they anticipate turning to religious groups for future rites of passage, such as weddings and funerals.** What’s more, some 60% of Aboriginals and some 50% of other teens say they are ***open to the possibility of greater involvement with religious groups***, if they can find it is worthwhile.

Table 4.10. Organized Religion			
	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
Attend: <i>monthly-plus</i>	33%	32	29
Enjoyment: <i>high</i>	28	32	56
Anticipate			
<i>Wedding ceremony</i>	84	84	73
<i>Funeral</i>	83	80	76
Greater involvement:			
<i>open to</i>	47	52	63

These general findings on beliefs and practices lead to the important question of how young Aboriginals are dealing with the rebirth of Aboriginal spirituality, in contexts where Christianity in general and Catholicism specifically have taken root over time.

Asked directly, “How important is Aboriginal spirituality to you?” 55% of Alberta teens in band-run schools say that it is “very important” and another 34% that it is “somewhat important” – well above national Aboriginal levels, which still are fairly high (38% and 43% respectively).



Some 83% of Aboriginal teens in Alberta report that they have participated in a pow-wow – a gathering honouring Aboriginal culture. About the same proportion (86%) claim they have participated in a smudging – a purification ceremony using smudge sticks that produce a type of incense. And close to three-quarters (73%) have been part of a ceremonial sauna known as a sweat lodge ceremony. All three levels are higher than national levels.³¹

Asked to clarify the relationship between Aboriginal spirituality and Christianity in their own lives, slightly over 4 in 10 Alberta teens in band-run schools say they *value both* Aboriginal spirituality and Christianity.

- Another 4 in 10 indicate they *value the former but not the latter*; while a small percentage (6%) say they *value Christianity but not Aboriginal spirituality*.
- Most of the remaining 1 in 10 say they *do not particularly value either*.
- Gender differences are minor.
- These pro-Aboriginal spirituality sentiments (39%) are somewhat higher than the national level (29%), while the “neither” figures are lower (11% vs 18%).³²

Table 4.11. Views of Aboriginal Spirituality & Christianity (%)			
Alberta Teens Attending Aboriginal Schools			
Value...	ALL	Females	Males
Aboriginal spirituality and Christianity	44	44	43
Aboriginal spirituality but not Christianity	39	41	37
Christianity but not Aboriginal spirituality	6	4	8
Neither	11	11	11
Other	<1	<1	1

Clearly, spirituality and Christianity are valued and practiced by significant numbers of Alberta’s Aboriginal young people.

³¹Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:44.

³²See Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:43.

"When you think of Aboriginal spirituality, what comes to mind?"

Ideas Offered by Alberta and Other Canadian Aboriginal Youth

Beliefs & Teachings

"...our grandparents, our ancestors' teachings...giving thanks to the Creator for what he gave us...respecting everything... our own religious beliefs that we've had long before the white man arrived in North America..."

Culture

"...my culture, my language... the culture and history and language...culture, values and traditions...culture, belief, prayers, ceremonies... going home and going hunting..."

Ceremonies

"...Sundance, sweat lodge, 4 directions, Eagle whistle, etc. ...ceremonies, pow-wows, round dances... ceremonies, and learning our way of life...drums, Sweetgrass, singing, and medicine... eagle feather, drums, ceremonies, regalia...an elder smudging us...Animals, the Creator, Feathers, Dancing, Praying, Singing...beautiful clothing..."

Other Thoughts

"...being respectful of others... I don't get it... I think about when our ancestors die, how they'll always be there to guide us as our angels...I immediately think of my spirit and how he is keeping me safe, and how he is helping me sustain from drugs and alcohol... when I was younger I always used to do dry meat and sew moose hide, take nature walks, and other things..."

Source: Derived from Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:44.

A LOOK ACROSS THE PROVINCE

Social Compassion

Concern for Others is "Very Important" to Me

		ALL	Female	Male
	AB	68	77	58
	Edm	66	78	53
	Cal	68	77	58
	10,000-99,000	76	78	73
	under 10,000	67	75	57
	Aboriginals	55	66	44

Summary Note

Alberta young people, like teens elsewhere, are inclined to see values as highly relative. This is especially true of Aboriginals across the country. That said, traits such as trust, honesty, and humour are widely viewed as important, with females more inclined than males to place importance on almost all interpersonal values. In practice, however, the implementation of honesty, for example, points to relativism.

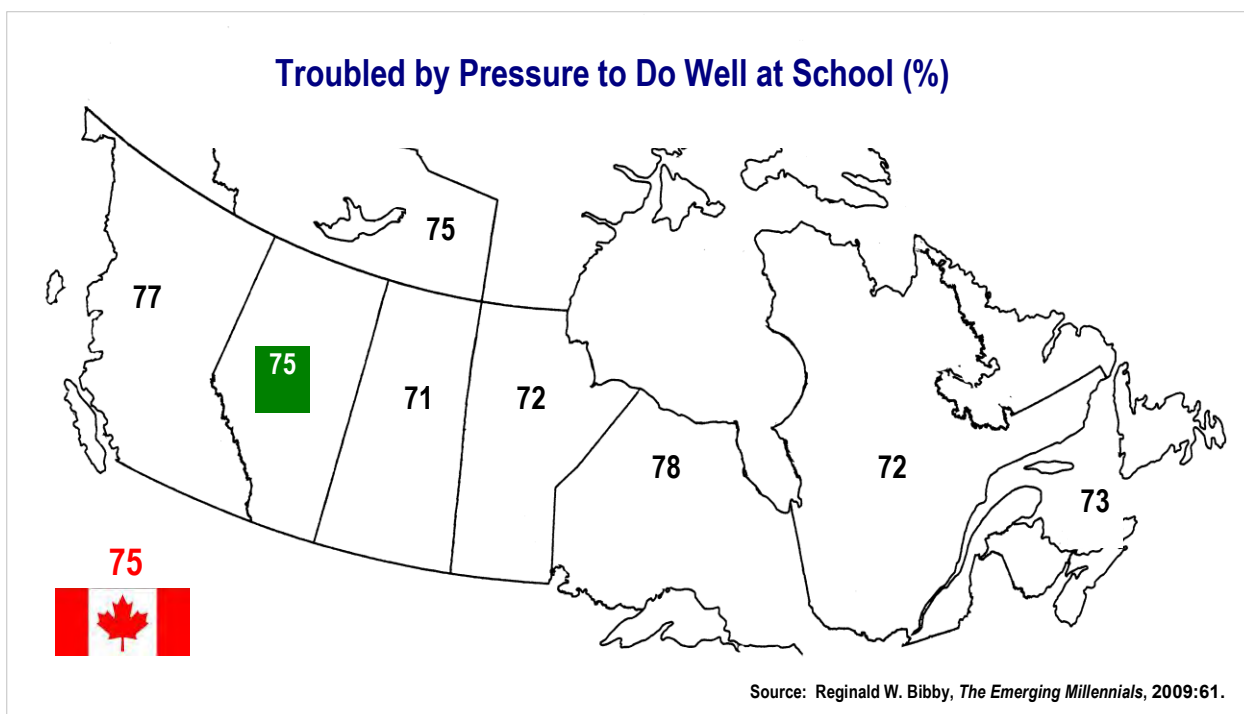
Alberta teens are inclined to have similar attitudes toward sexual behaviour and sexual orientation as other teens, and to exhibit similar levels of sexual involvement. Aboriginals attending band-run schools in Alberta and elsewhere depart somewhat from such national patterns. They express more conservative attitudes toward premarital sex, yet are more likely than others to actually engage in sex and less likely to use contraceptives. They also are less accepting of homosexuality.

Attitudes toward cohabitation and nonmarital parenthood also are somewhat divergent. Some 3 in 4 Alberta and Canadian youth approve of cohabitation, and 2 in 4 further approve of unmarried couples having children. Aboriginal teens are slightly *less inclined* to approve of cohabitation, but Aboriginal females are somewhat *more likely* than other young people to approve of unmarried couples having children. Common linear thinking in terms of marriage and parenthood is not as prevalent among Aboriginal youth as it is among other teens.

Religious beliefs and spirituality continue to be highly prevalent among Alberta and Canadian young people. While cores of individuals value and participate in organized religion, growing numbers neither identify with groups nor are actively involved. Still, the majority indicate that they expect to turn to religious groups for rites of passage, and sizable numbers maintain they have not closed the door on future involvement, if they can find it to be worthwhile.

Aboriginal youth in Alberta and the rest of the country tend to exhibit higher levels of religious belief and interest in spirituality than other teenagers. Many place importance on Aboriginal spirituality, yet frequently acknowledge that they simultaneously value Christianity.

5. PERSONAL CONCERNS



Primary Concerns

Alberta teenagers closely resemble young people in the rest of the country when it comes to the things that concern them personally. That said, those attending band-run schools are consistently more likely to be somewhat more troubled by a number of things than other teens, both nationally and in Alberta.³³ The *ranking* of personal issues, however, is similar for everyone.

The paramount personal concerns have to do with school – the *pressure to do well at school* and *what they are going to do once they finish school*.

- A number of issues are concerns for approximately 5 in 10 teenagers. They include *lack of money and time*, *boredom* – often associated with school since they spend so much of their time there, and a sense that so *many things are changing*. All except shortage of time are concerns for more Aboriginals than other young people.
- About 4 in 10 teens – and slightly higher proportions of Aboriginals – say they are concerned about the *purpose of life*, not being as *intelligent* as they would like to be.
- Just over 3 in 10 report that they are concerned “a great deal” or “quite a bit” about such diverse things as their *weight*, *depression*, *inferiority feelings*, and – in the case of Aboriginals on reserves – *isolation*.
- Additional issues for just under 3 in 10 teens include their *family’s lack of money*, *height*, and *being bullied at school* – with the first two more frequently mentioned by Aboriginals than by other young people.

	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
Pressure to do well at school	75%	76	79
What going to do when finish school	68	67	74
Lack of money	56	56	64
Never seem to have enough time	56	57	57
Boredom	53	54	66
So many things changing	50	55	74
Wondering about the purpose of life	45	46	57
Not as intelligent as would like to be	42	46	53
My weight	35	36	40
Depression	35	36	54
Feeling I am not as good as others	35	38	42
Loneliness	32	37	38
Isolation	**	**	34
Your family’s lack of money	29	25	43
My height	21	21	38
Being bullied at school	15	14	16

In short, a number of issues – led by change, boredom, depression, and lack of money stand out as being cited by larger proportions of Aboriginals in Alberta and elsewhere than other teenagers.

³³See Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:29.

Asked in open-ended fashion who they turn to when they face serious problems, teens in general mention *family* first, followed by *friends*. Together, they account for 73% of the key sources, 65% in the case of Alberta Aboriginals attending band-run schools.

. Those on reserves are somewhat less likely to turn to friends, and more likely to turn to family members and other significant adults.

Table 5.2. Resources When Facing Problems (%)

"When I face a serious problem, I turn to..."

	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
Family	35	35	43
Friends	31	27	14
Friends & family	7	6	8
Self	10	10	10
No one	6	5	7
Music	3	2	4
God/Religion	2	8	4
Counsellors	2	2	2
Other adults can trust	3	2	6
Other	1	3	2*
Totals	100	100	100

* Elders 1%

"...I Turn to..." - Some Responses of Alberta's Teens

"...my boyfriend - he's always there...friends and God...my mom, my aunt, my friends, and my teachers...thought...my mom...people I know...God and my dad...my grandma and my friends - the people I can trust...my sister, especially...nobody, I just deal with it...God, Mom and Dad...my books...my work buddies...the knowledge I picked up in life...study - it helps me forget other problems...my older brothers...God!...no one but myself...music, painkillers, and sleep...my auntie or my dad...letting it die or skateboarding...music...my best friend or Mom (I tell her everything)...sports...my friends and my alone time..."

And...some additional voices from Aboriginals on Reserves

"...my mom and my dad...music and somewhere I can be alone...my friends...my head to work things out...my iPod...my parents & my spiritual ways...the closest person to me - my brother...no one, because I am a problem-solver...my skate board...music or my mom...poetry...my room... kids' help-line...my tears or my friends...Elders...my METAL music...my peers and weed...someone I trust...my grandma...God, because you can trust him with everything and anything..."

Source: Reginald W. Bibby, *The Emerging Millennials* 2009:69.

Teens at Risk

There are some young people who seem to be particularly at risk when it comes to their personal well-being and safety at home and especially at school.

In Alberta, 93% of females and 93% of males say that they feel *safe at home*. Those levels are similar in the rest of the country.

With respect to school, some 85% of female teens in Alberta and elsewhere say they *feel safe at school*, as do about 83% of males.

However, those levels are lower for teens attending Aboriginal schools – both in Alberta and nationally. **“Safe at school” sentiments are expressed by 75% of male Aboriginals in Alberta and only 68% of females.** The national findings further suggest that, in the case of Aboriginals who are attending *off-reserve* schools, as many as 1 in 3 males express concern for their personal safety.³⁴

Nationally, there has been some very encouraging news about the success that is being experienced in responding to a number of issues that, for some time, have been negatively affecting young people.

Asked since the early 1990s about the extent to which various problems have been experienced by a close friend, a decreasing number of teens are reporting that they are being experienced by the people in their lives. The issues include alcohol and drug problems, severe depression, violence at school, attempted suicide, sexual abuse, and gang violence.

Figure 5.1. Safety at Home

% Indicating Feel Safe at Home

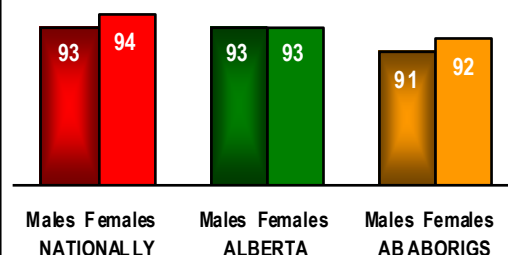


Figure 5.2. Safety at School

% Indicating Feel Safe at School

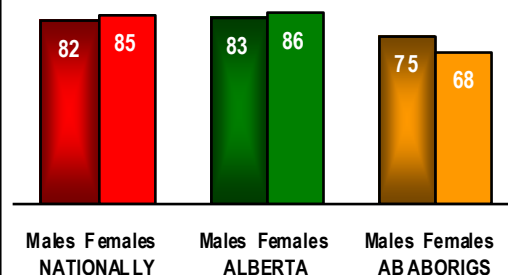


Table 5.3. Extent to Which Problems Have Been Experienced by a Close Friend: 1992-2008

	2008	2000	1992
Has an alcohol or drug problem	51%	46	60
Has been bullied at school	48	***	***
Has been severely depressed	46	48	***
Physically attacked at school	32	32	45
Has attempted suicide	31	41	58
Physically abused at home	27	37	42
Has been sexually abused	24	32	38
A victim of gang violence	19	21	35

Source: Bibby, *The Emerging Millennials*, 2009:73.

³⁴See Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:31.

That's hardly to say these concerns have been relegated to the past. In the case of Aboriginal youth, for example, many of these issues are still far too pervasive.

- Alberta Aboriginals and their counterparts in the rest of Canada are consistently more likely than other teens to say they have close friends who have been physically attacked at school.³⁵

Table 5.4. Extent to Which Problems Have Been Experienced by a Close Friend: Nationally & Alberta, 2008			
	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
Has an alcohol or drug problem	51%	52	61
Has been bullied at school	48	56	50
Has been severely depressed	46	51	43
Physically attacked at school	32	36	48
Has attempted suicide	31	34	43
Physically abused at home	27	33	28
Has been sexually abused	24	29	25
A victim of gang violence	19	18	40

- Higher numbers of Aboriginals also indicate they have close friends who have alcohol or drug problems, have attempted suicide or have encountered *gang violence*.

Clearly many Aboriginals in Alberta and Canada are finding life difficult, with the proportion at risk greater than that of the general teen population.

Views and Use of Drugs

From the time we started carrying out national youth surveys in the mid-1980s, we have found that young people have admitted that they have ready access to illegal drugs if they want to use them. Today is no different.

Some 90% of teens in Alberta and elsewhere who claim to know say that it is “not very difficult” or “not difficult at all” to obtain drugs if they want to use them. The figure is slightly

Table 5.5. Accessibility of Drugs According to Teens Who Claim to Know (%)			
	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
Extremely difficult	5	4	8
Somewhat difficult	6	6	14
Not very difficult	38	37	35
Not difficult at all	51	53	43

lower for Alberta Aboriginals on reserves (78%) – but still very high, given the common reality of geographical isolation.

Among Canadian teens as a whole, drug use has declined in the past decade. The use of *marijuana* or *hashish* has dropped from 37% in 2000 to a current level of 32%, and the use of *other illegal drugs* from 14% to 12% over the same time period. There also has been a significant decline in *cigarette smoking* since 2000, from 37% to 23%. *Alcohol* use also is down, from 78% to 71%.³⁶

Differences between Alberta teens and other teens are small; gender differences also tend to be fairly small in both the Alberta and national instances – with male levels slightly higher than that of females in the case of marijuana and other illegal drugs.

³⁵See Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:31.

³⁶For comparisons over time, see Bibby 2009:75-76.

The level of acknowledged drug use among Aboriginal teens in Alberta and the rest of Canada tends to be considerably higher than that of other young people. The only exception is alcohol use, where there differences are negligible.

Table 5.6. Teenage Drug Use									
% Indicating Regular or Occasional Use									
	NAT			ALL ALBERTA			AB ABORIGS		
	ALL	F	M	ALL	F	M	ALL	F	M
Use marijuana or hashish	32	29	35	28	25	31	61	57	65
Use other illegal drugs	12	10	13	10	7	13	23	24	22
Smoke cigarettes	23	23	22	22	21	23	58	61	55
Drink beer, wine or other alcohol	71	70	72	69	71	67	71	70	72

Trouble and Encounters with the Police

The vast majority of teens across the country say that they “*try to stay out of trouble.*” Such an outlook is slightly more prevalent among females than males.

However, **Aboriginals in Alberta** (61%) and elsewhere (65%) are far *less likely* than other teens (81%) to say they “*have never got into trouble with the police.*”

In Alberta, about 4 in 10 Aboriginal males indicate they have had had run-ins with “the law,” compared to some 2 in 10 non-Aboriginal males.

Here again, **fewer females than males** report such problems – although the difference is very slight for Aboriginals. To some extent, this may reflect the presence of Band Police, and greater mutual familiarity and interaction.

Figure 5.3. "I Try to Stay Out of Trouble" (%)

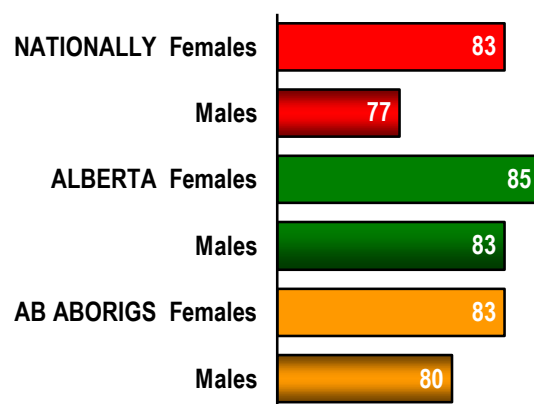
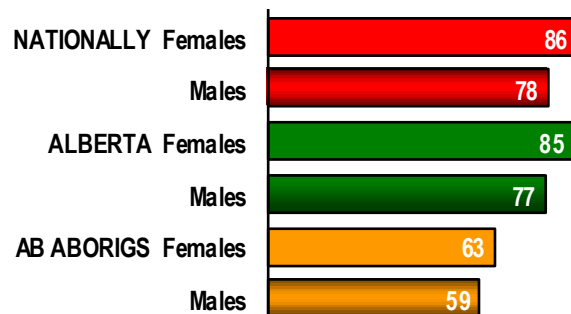


Figure 5.4. "I Have Never Got Into Trouble with the Police" (%)



Overall Self-Image

Alberta young people, including Aboriginals, exhibit remarkably positive self-images, as to do teenagers across the country.

- Some 9 in 10 – and only slightly lower proportions of Aboriginals – say that they are *good people* with a number of *good qualities*, who are *well-liked*.
- Differences are negligible when it comes to expressions of *competence*, *good-looks*, and *having high levels of confidence*.

Table 5.6. Self-Images of Teenagers (%)

% Indicating Describe Them "Very Well" or "Fairly Well"

	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
"I am a good person"	94	94	89
"I have a number of good qualities"	94	92	86
"I am well-liked"	93	92	87
"I can do most things very well"	79	77	82
"I am good-looking"	77	76	77
"I have lots of confidence"	68	71	77

If we put the six items together and construct a self-image index, what we find is that Alberta teens, including Aboriginals, closely mirror young people in the rest of the country – including Aboriginals elsewhere.³⁷ The proportions who score "high," "moderate," and "low" on such an index are virtually identical.

Such "mirroring" also applies to gender with the self-image scores of males slightly exceeding those of females in Alberta and Canada, and among Aboriginals across the country.

Table 5.7. Self-Image Index Scores (%)

	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
High (6-5)	74	72	73
Females	71	70	69
Males	78	75	77
Moderate (4-3)	20	23	21
Females	23	24	25
Males	17	20	17
Low (2-0)	6	5	6
Females	6	6	6
Males	5	5	6

Self-Esteem is High for Most Alberta Teens

"I love my culture. I love myself and everyone around me. Basketball lover for life.

Next NBA star right here. Life is the best." –a 16-year-old Aboriginal male

"Although I'm a teenager, I'm ready to be a responsible adult." –a male, 17, from east of Edmonton

"Youth are changing and becoming more concerned about who we are and how important we are"
–a 17-year-old female from Calgary

"I'm very happy and secure right now." –a female, 16, from southern Alberta

³⁷See Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:34.

A LOOK ACROSS THE PROVINCE

Concern About Life Beyond School

Concerned "A Great Deal" or "Quite a Bit"
About What Will Do When Finish School

		ALL	Female	Male
	AB	67	71	63
	Edm	67	72	61
	Cal	67	72	62
	10,000-99,000	76	82	70
	under 10,000	62	60	63
	Aboriginals	74	78	71

Summary Note

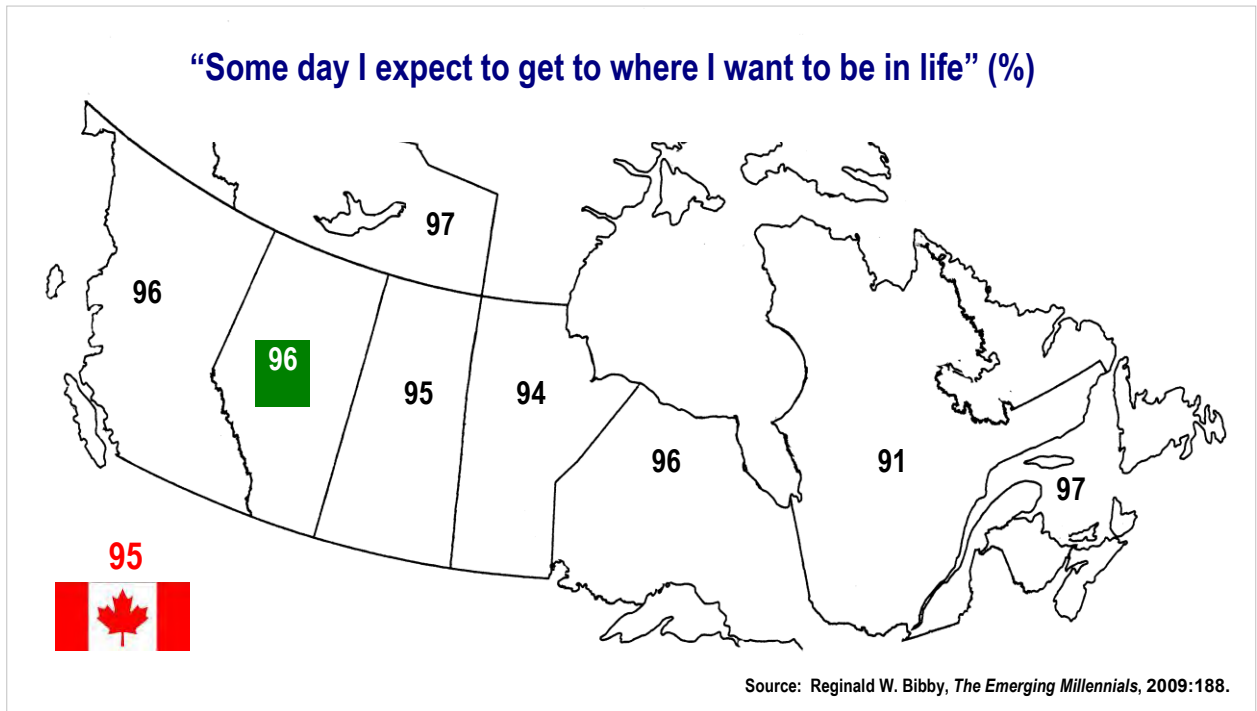
When it comes to personal concerns, Alberta teenagers look pretty much like teenagers in the rest of the country. Their primary concerns have to do with doing well at school, and what they are going to do once they graduate. A variety of other age-old concerns are shared by today's young people in the province – things like lack of money and time, so many things changing, the need for a sense of purpose, self-confidence, looks, and so on.

The good news is that the majority of teens in the province report that they receive considerable support from family and friends. Over the past two to three decades, there has been an encouraging decline in many problem areas, including violence at home and at school, attempted suicides. Almost all are trying to stay out of trouble, and most have not had encounters with the police.

The disconcerting news is that a disproportionately high number of Aboriginal young people in Alberta and elsewhere are saying that life is sometimes difficult. Money, rapid change, the lack of social support, discrimination, conflict, and fear for one's safety are issues that are putting many young Aboriginals in a disadvantaged position. Drug use and problems with the law are furthering serving to lower their quality of life.

Yet, somewhat remarkably, Aboriginals exhibit the potential for resilience, sharing with other teenagers very positive self-images, and holding high hopes for a better future. To that final topic we will now turn.

6. ASPIRATIONS



General

As teenagers in Alberta and the rest of Canada look to the future, they are dreaming and dreaming big. In our surveys, we have been asking them about their expectations – not merely their *hopes*, but what they *expect* to experience.

- More than 9 in 10 expect to pursue careers, and close to 9 in 10 say they expect to get the job they want when they graduate. Notice – they are not talking about finding work; they are anticipating that they will be able to find the kind of job that they want.
- These days – in fact for a number of years now – the financial experts have been telling us that, in a growing number of parts of the country, young people cannot afford to own their own homes. Nonetheless, no less than 97% of teenagers say that they expect to experience such a reality.
- And for decades prognosticators have been telling us that “this will be the first generation in Canadian history that will have to settle for less than their parents.” Young people still don’t believe the prophets: 81% maintain that they will be more financially comfortable than their parents.
- Almost 60% add that they *don’t* think they will have to work overtime in the process.

Table 6.1. Employment and Economic Expectations (%)			
% Who Indicate They Expect to...			
	NAT	ALTA	ABAB
Pursue a career	95	95	85
Get the job I want when I graduate	87	85	89
Own my own home	97	97	96
Be more financially comfortable than my parents	81	78	77
Have to work overtime in order to get ahead	43	45	60

Alberta Aboriginal young people, as well as others attending band-run schools in the rest of the country – share these lofty expectations of Canadian youth. They differ only in being more inclined to think they will have to work overtime. But overall, differences in expectations are minor.

Education

Educational aspirations in Alberta and elsewhere have continued to increase significantly in recent decades. In 1987, 57% of Canadian teenagers said they expected to go to university. As of 2008, the figure has increased to 76%. In 1987, some 88% felt they would finish high school; that’s now the minimum expectation of close to 100%.³⁸ In Alberta, some 78% of females and 72% of males tell us they expect to reach university.

³⁸ For details, see Bibby 2009:197.

Aboriginal educational aspirations are not as high – but they still are very high.

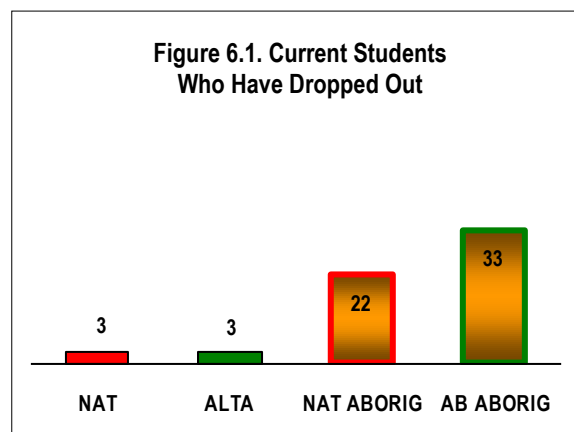
- Despite the fact that about 25% of those attending band-run schools in Alberta and elsewhere say their mothers or fathers did not graduate from high school, almost all maintain that they themselves will obtain high school

Table 6.2. Educational Aspirations
"How much education do you expect you will eventually get?"

	NAT		ALTA		ABAB	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Graduate from university	73	62	69	61	41	26
Some university	7	10	9	11	16	15
Complete vocational	13	16	11	13	6	8
Some vocational	3	5	3	3	1	8
High school	4	7	8	12	32	42
Less than high school	<1	<1	<1	<1	4	1

diplomas. Moreover, in Alberta, about 55% of Aboriginal females and 40% of males say they expect to go to university. Nationally, those figures for Aboriginals are 56% and 47% respectively.³⁹

- Many young Aboriginal students are showing tenacity in trying to further their educations.** One in 3 who are attending reserve schools in Alberta indicate that they dropped out at some point, higher than the 1 in 5 nationally. The figure for teens as a whole both in Alberta and Canada is only 3%. Noteworthy numbers of Aboriginals are attending alternative schools on reserves that are aimed at ensuring that drop-outs



complete high school. Consequently, Alberta's high "returnee" figure may speak well of the "educational safety net" that appears to be in place for Aboriginals.

Why Aboriginal Students Drop-Out

The Take of Two Alberta 16-year-olds Who Attend Reserve Schools

"School is too boring. Make more sports and music activities so I will have something to look forward to. And when I get no fun at all at school, I just leave" -a male

"I think our school needs more activities to attract more students to our school. Towards the middle of school it gets pretty boring and that's why students drop out, normally around second semester. Need more fun things to do" -a female

³⁹Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:36-37.

Careers

No less than 74% of teenagers in Alberta and Canada agree with the statement, *“Anyone who works hard will rise to the top.”* They include some 90% of Aboriginals attending schools on reserves in Alberta and across the country. We saw earlier that 65% of teens who attend Alberta Aboriginal schools say that working hard is “very important” to them – as do 54% of Alberta teens as a whole.

As a result, it’s not surprising that a majority of Aboriginal young people, led by those living on reserves, believe that hard work can lead to the realization of their educational and occupation dreams – helping to explain why 87% expect to get the jobs they want when they graduate; the figure for Alberta is 89%.⁴⁰

When asked if they expect to eventually live on a reserve, teens currently attending Alberta band-run schools are almost equally divided between those who

Table 6.3. Employment and Economic Expectations by Where One Eventually Expects to Live: Teens on Alberta Reserves (%)

	ALL	On A Reserve	Off A Reserve
Attend university	49	43	55
Pursue a career	85	86	82
Get the job I want when I graduate	89	90	87
Own my own home	96	94	96
Be more financially comfortable than my parents	77	80	74

say “Yes” (49%) and those who say “No”; virtually the same situation exists nationally (52%). However, whether young Aboriginals plan to eventually live on or off of a reserve does not seem to have much of an effect on their educational, career, or economic aspirations.

The general rankings of the characteristics teens associate with “a good job” are very similar for young people across Canada. The majority think a good job is one where the work is interesting and provides feelings of accomplishment.

Table 6.4. Characteristics of a Good Job : General and by Future Residence Plans of Aboriginals

% Viewing as “Very Important”

	NAT	ALTA	ABAB	ABON	ABOFF
The work is interesting	83	84	67	68	66
Provides feelings accomplishment	76	78	63	61	66
Is a chance for advancement	67	72	58	61	56
It pays well	65	66	73	76	69
People are friendly and helpful	64	65	60	63	56
Adds to other people’s lives	58	64	52	53	53
Is little chance of being laid off	56	57	43	46	42
Allows me to make most of the decisions myself	50	53	55	58	50

Pay is ranked higher for Aboriginals, being laid off lower. Interestingly, perceived “good job” features differ only slightly by “on reserve” vs. “off reserve” residential plans.

⁴⁰The national Aboriginal figures in this section are found in Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:37-38.

Family Life

Some **94% of Alberta teens** say that they expect to get married at some point in their lives – slightly above the **90% figure** for the nation as a whole. What's more, despite the home experiences they may have had growing up, **87% say that they expect to stay with the same partner for life**, a figure that is virtually identical for teens across the country.⁴¹

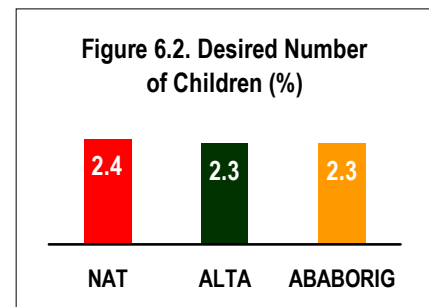
Among Aboriginals attending band-run schools, the figures drop considerably in both Alberta (77% and 63%) and nationally (81% and 67%).

Apart from some diverse plans regarding marriage, **almost every teenager expects to have children**, with Aboriginal expectations only slightly lower than other young people. Teens are remarkably uniform in expecting to have just under 2.5 children.

Table 6.5. Family and Career Expectations (%)
% Who Indicate They Expect to...

	NAT		ALTA		ABAB	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Get married at some point in your life	89	91	95	93	78	75
Stay with the same partner for life	90	85	90	83	66	59
Have children	94	95	93	93	89	89
Live with a partner but not marry	30	32	28	33	50	59

If things sound rather traditional, an interesting and important “add-on” to family life defies the idea that teens are returning to the family ideals of earlier generations. **Some 1 in 3 Alberta young people indicate that they expect to live with a partner but not marry.** Clearly for many, life-long relationships will be preceded by temporary relationships that involve living with someone.



Aboriginal teens tend to differ from other Canadian teens in being considerably more inclined to anticipate that they will cohabit but not get married – despite the fact that they are more inclined than other young people to say they do not approve of cohabitation. Perhaps it's a case of a moral ideal somehow being seen by many as elusive in practice.

A Poignant Comment About Wanting a Different Life

“Want a home like the one I grew up in?” F-that. My parents are married, but my father is in jail. Are white people doing this too?” *-a 16-year-old Aboriginal female*

⁴¹National figures for Aboriginals in this section are taken from Bibby, Fox, and Penner, 2010:38.

Involvement in Their Communities

In Alberta and across Canada, some 70% of females and 65% of males maintain that they expect to be involved in their communities in the future.

It is interesting to note that a **noteworthy difference** in anticipated community involvement exists for **Aboriginal youth who plan to eventually live on a reserve versus those who do not.**

- In Alberta, some 82% of those who expect they *will* live on a reserve see their futures including involvement in their communities.
- Among those who *do not* expect to eventually live on a reserve, the figure is 56%.
- In both scenarios, females are more likely than males to envision being involved or not being involved in their communities.
- Similar patterns are also found for Aboriginals across the country.

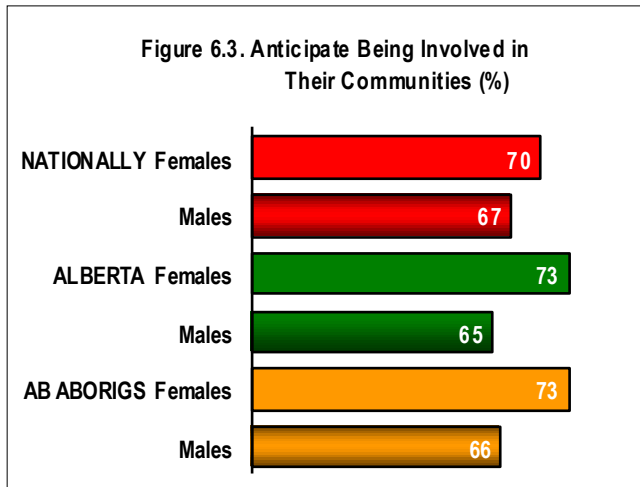




Table 6.6. Future Involvement in One's Community by Where One Plans to Live: Aboriginals Attending Band-Run Schools (%)

				
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Plan to live on a reserve	84	59	85	78
Plan to live off reserves	84	56	61	51

Some Canadian Teens' Thoughts About the Future

"I don't think money is worth worrying about, if you're doing something you love...I hope to be as comfortable as my parents...It will be hard to be as comfortable as my parents...life isn't supposed to be comfortable... I won't be a leader in my community because I'll be travelling too much... I want to stay with the same person, but it will depend on my partner as well...if you are going to rise to the top, you have to work hard at the right thing...I want to be passionate about my work...some people don't have to work hard to get to the top, because they have everything handed to them...my life well be a hell of a ride for being Canadian and Native....if I could live anywhere, I would live anywhere away from the bad memories...I will live anywhere as long as I can have a job...I want to live not too far from home...I expect to someday get to where I want to be in life, but what do I do from there?..."

Source: Reginald W. Bibby, *The Emerging Millennials* 2009:204.

A LOOK ACROSS THE PROVINCE

Financial Expectations

““I expect to be more financially comfortable than my parents”



AB

78%



Edm

80



Cal

81

10,000-99,000

73

under 10,000

75

Aboriginals

77

Summary Note

Alberta’s teenagers, including Aboriginals attending band-run schools, have high expectations as they look to the future. In the course of analyzing the results of the national survey as a whole, I’ve suggested that it is almost as if teens pretty much everywhere in the country have something like “a hope chip” imbedded.⁴² Even if they have not had positive home experiences or have been short of money or have parents with inadequate educations, they feel that their own lives can be an improvement on what they and their family members have known. They firmly believe that, even if things have not been what they could have been to date, if they work hard and persevere, they can turn things around – educationally, financially, and relationally.

Alberta Aboriginals and their counterparts in the rest of the country likewise have extremely high hopes as they look to the future. An intriguing finding is that one in two feel that they are going to have to leave their reserves in order to realize their dreams. However, another one in two believe that their dreams can be fulfilled by their living on their reserves – indeed, in large part will be fulfilled precisely because they can share in the life of their communities. One seems to be pursuing it all by leaving – the other by returning, or never leaving at all.

⁴² Bibby 2009:189ff.

CONCLUSION

The Overall Picture

The latest Project Teen Canada survey results, when compared to the findings for earlier surveys dating back to the early 1980s, document the fact that Canadian teenagers, including those in Alberta, have probably never looked better.⁴³

- The vast majority continue to place high importance on key **values** that make for positive interpersonal life, including trust, honesty, politeness, and concern for others.
- They love their **friends and music**, in the process being able to benefit from good relationships and good times.
- Their ties with **parents** are the best in decades: more are enjoying their parents, feel that they are understood by them, and are open to their influence.
- While they are feeling pressure to do well at **school**, the majority nonetheless say they are enjoying school – with the level up from 53% to 44% in the early 90s.
- **Smoking, drinking and other drug use** has decline in the past decade or so.
- The incidence of **sexual involvement** has not increased since at least the early 1980s, and the majority of females and males tie sexual involvement to significant relationships.
- Most teens continue to feel **safe at home** and greater numbers now feel **safe at school**.
- Some 90% say their **health** is either “excellent” or “good.”
- Three in four express very **positive self-images**, and no less than 90% describe themselves as “very happy” or “pretty happy.”
- Since the early 1990s, there have been steady declines in the proportion who say they have close friends who have (a) **alcohol or drug problems**, (b) been **attacked at school**, (c) attempted **suicide**, (d) been physically **abused at home**, (e) been **sexually abused**, and (f) been victims of **gang violence**.

As we have seen in this report, Alberta teens closely resemble teens in the rest of Canada. Apart from some slight demographic differences, such as the proportion born outside of Canada, they do not stand out as differing very much when it comes how they view life and live life. They consequently share in this largely “good news story” about today’s youth.

Yet, as I frequently remind readers and audiences, I am neither naïve nor out of touch with reality.

⁴³ For details and documentation re: the summary that follows, see Bibby 2009 and Bibby and Penner 2010.

- ❖ Is there still a good distance to go with future cohorts? Of course.
- ❖ Are there still areas of need? Definitely.
- ❖ Are some teenagers at risk? Most certainly.
- ❖ The findings point to difficulties and challenges that need to be addressed.
- ❖ Some are more serious in specific regions and communities than others

Still, overall, today's teens – including those in Alberta – are looking very good. The research points to the fact that considerable progress has been made.

And why not? Young people today are benefitting from “**the Boomer legacy**”. The Boomers worked hard to bring about freedom, equality, and pluralism. They made major contributions in areas including education, information, technology, and the economy. Boomer women knew unprecedented levels of education, participation, and empowerment. Women and men both learned a great deal about how to better balance careers and relationships, careers and family life, and careers and the enjoying of life. Today's young people are the beneficiaries of many of the positive results.

What's more, in Alberta and much if not most of the rest of Canada, **young people have been a high priority**. Because we care deeply about our children and grandchildren, we have insisted that governments, agencies, corporations, schools, and other organizations direct significant resources toward enhancing their lives. The results appear in improved health care, responses to physical and learning disabilities, protection from violence at school and home, counseling and programs directed at addressing family problems, drugs, and sex, the developing of employment skills and life skills more generally – to offer just a short list. Our schools have never been better, our teachers are better prepared than ever before. If we didn't see improvements in teenagers, we would have to wonder why. To say teens today are not up to what they used to be is sheer nonsense. Of course we have been moving forward. These are not the 50s and 60s when it comes to the quality of teenage life.

A third factor beyond the Boomer legacy and youth resources is that **freedom and choice** have combined to provide young people with more options than ever before. In the face of the explosion of entertainment and ways to experience each other – videogames, sports sites, e-mails, text messages, Facebook, YouTube and MySpace - teens, like the rest of us can only give their attention to so many things, good or bad. The results? Even teenage vices have taken a serious hit.

As a province and country, we have been making progress on the youth front.

The Immediate Future

The findings suggest that this is a time for a measure of celebration. We need to *give some credit* to those who are working with youth. To the extent they include us, we also need to *take some credit*.

We then need to keep moving forward. We need to sustain the gains and do all we can to further enhance the lives of young people. Besides **raising the quality of life** of teenagers, it is essential that we know **quantitative success as well**, elevating the lives of more and more of our youth.

The Project Teen Canada 2008 survey has been unique in providing us with some unprecedented comparative snapshots of Aboriginal young people and other Alberta and Canadian young people.

Those snapshots make it clear that Aboriginal youth need to continue to be a priority in a province that aspires to serve families and children well. **The survey shows that Aboriginal teens, like other teens, want to know the best that is possible in life.** They want to have good family life, good educations, and good relationships. They say they are willing to work hard and, as necessary, go where they have to go in order to achieve their educational and occupational dreams.

But it also is clear that, compared to the majority of their teenage counterparts, they are not lining up at the same starting line. In many instances, the enthusiasm surrounding their aspirations will dissipate along with their hopes and expectations.

In the broader analysis of the survey findings for Aboriginals that I have carried out with James Penner and Terri-Lynn Fox, we draw on the words of Professor Jean Lafrance, a leading Aboriginal expert and advocate. He recently commented that the “history of pernicious poverty has left a legacy of people who are wounded in their souls, and communities that are fragmented and divided.” He added, “At the very least, we need to ensure Aboriginal communities a level playing field in terms of economic security, decent housing, and supportive communities.”⁴⁴

Until we do, we undoubtedly will continue to come up with telling findings, like we just have, where 70% of Aboriginal teens say they “highly value” being Canadians,” yet – if they could live anywhere in the world, only 45% would choose Canada.

Much has been accomplished on the youth scene. Much still needs to be done.

⁴⁴ Bibby, Fox, and Penner 2010:56.

Appendix

Project Teen Canada 2008 Methodology

Background

As indicated in the Introduction, background work on the Project Teen Canada 2008 survey began in the early fall of 2007, with funding from both the Alberta Centre (\$40,000) and Louisville Institute (\$20,000) approved by the end of the year. Data collection took place primarily between March 15 and June 15 of 2008, and was completed in the fall. To meet the sample goal of about 4,000 students, the participation of one class in each of some 200 randomly selected schools was pursued. The survey was carried out from the University of Lethbridge, with the methodology used in the 1984, 1992, and 2000 Project Teen Canada surveys replicated. Alberta teens were oversampled at the request of the ACCFCR, with the goal of increasing the number of participants in that province from a “normal” 500 or so to around 650.

Between approximately mid-November of 2008 and the end of February 2009, a sub-sample of young people in Aboriginal band schools across the country was pursued. The goal was to generate a representative national sample of at least 500 young people in Aboriginal schools to supplement and complement the core sample. The existence of the Project Teen Canada 2008 data made such an initiative highly desirable, since it would permit invaluable comparisons between young Aboriginals and the rest of the youth population. As a parallel to the original PTC08 sampling design, an oversample of Alberta Aboriginals was pursued that would raise that segment from around 100 to some 400.

The Response

As summarized in the Introduction, questionnaires were received from 248 of the 308 schools that were contacted – a level of participation of 80%, similar to previous years. The remaining 60 schools either declined to participate (19) or did not respond to requests to do so (41).

A total of 5,564 questionnaires were received, 818 from band-run Aboriginal schools. The 1984, 1992 and 2000 totals were 3,530, 3,891 and 3,501 respectively. As with previous surveys, ***the total national sample*** has been weighted to ensure representativeness, with adjustments made for region, community size, and school system.

In its final, weighted form, the national sample consists of 4,600 teenagers – weighted down slightly to avoid the use of overly large weight factors. This weighted sample is highly representative of high school students, 15-to-19-years-old. A sample of this size and quality makes it possible to generalize to young people in this category with a very high level of accuracy – on most items, within about plus or minus 3 percentage points of the true population values, 19 times in 20.

The ***national Aboriginal school sample*** has been weighted for region to 500 cases, and appears to be representative of Aboriginal secondary students. Generalizations to the Aboriginal high school student population should be accurate within about +/- 5% points of the actual population figure, 19 times in 20.

In addition to the 818 teens enrolled in Aboriginal-run schools, a further 141 students who were attending off-reserve schools indicated that they are Aboriginal – a total national *unweighted* Aboriginal sample of 959 teenagers.⁴⁵

The **Alberta segment** of the initial PTC08 sample consists of 763 cases, including an oversample of 232 teens. The national Aboriginal school sample (818) includes an Alberta oversample of 318 individuals. With the entire Alberta Aboriginal school sample (420) added, the unweighted Alberta youth sample consists of a total of 1183 young people (763 plus 420). The sample has been weighted down to 1000 cases to minimize the use of large weight factors. Incidentally, all but 18 of the teens in Aboriginal schools come from communities of under 10,000.

The 420 Aboriginal young people, drawn from 15 of the 20 schools contacted, also appear to be representative of teens enrolled in band-run high school programs. A sample of this size should yield results within about +/- 5% points of the population figures, 19 times in 20.

Table A1. Characteristics of the High School Teenage (15-19) Population and Project Teen Canada 2008 Sample

		Population	Sample
Region	British Columbia	13%	13
	Prairies	19	19
	Ontario	39	39
	Quebec	22	22
	Atlantic	7	7
	North	<1	<1
Community Size	100,000 & over	67	67
	99,999-10,000	12	12
	under 10,000	21	21
Gender	Male	48	47
	Female	52	53
School System	Public	72	70
	Catholic	17	17
	Private	9	11
	Aboriginal	2	2

Table A2. Regional Characteristics: Aboriginal Population and Sample

	Population	Sample
British Columbia	17%	17
Alberta	17	17
Saskatchewan	14	14
Manitoba	15	15
Ontario	19	19
Quebec	8	8
Atlantic	5	5
North	5	5

⁴⁵ When weighted to reflect the characteristics of the entire Canadian population of teenagers, 15-to-19, the number of Aboriginals attending off-reserve schools is 108, reserve schools 106, the total 214 – approximately 4% of the total sample – very close to population estimates offered in census data.

Table A3. Alberta Sample					
	Pop %	Pop N	Sample	WTF	WTD N
Total	100%	---	1,183	---	1000
100,000-plus	64	640	453	---	640
Calgary	33	333	229	---	333
Females	51	170	106	1.6038	170
Males	49	163	123	1.3252	163
Edmonton	31	307	224	---	307
Females	51	157	131	1.1985	157
Males	49	150	93	1.6129	150
99,000-10,000	12	120	152	.7895	120
under 10,000	24	240	578	---	240
Teens not on reserves	85% 20.4	204	176	1.1591	204
Teens on reserves	15% 3.6	36	402	.0896	36

Figure A1. Summary of the Components of the Project Teen Canada 2008 Sample

NATIONAL SAMPLE 4,600 weighted, 5564 unweighted	AB Oversample 763 - 531 added to 232
National Aboriginal School Oversample 500 weighted, 818 unweighted	Alberta Aboriginal School Oversample 420 - 318 added to 102
Aboriginals Off-Reserve Schools 141	Aboriginals Total Unweighted 959

These rich data sets make a wide range of analyses possible that will be carried out over the next few years. A major overview of the national findings with some regional and Aboriginal analyses is available in the book, *The Emerging Millennials: How Canada's Newest Generation is Responding to Change and Choice* (Reginald W. Bibby, Lethbridge: Project Canada Books, 2009; for information, see projectcanadabooks.com).

- A detailed examination of the findings comparing Aboriginals – including a small sample of those who are attending off-reserve schools – with other young people nationally appears in the report, *Canada's Emerging Aboriginal Millennials* by Reginald W. Bibby with Terri-Lynn Fox and James Penner (Lethbridge: Project Canada Books, 2010).
- A succinct overview of the Project Teen Canada 2008 findings is available in the 59-page illustrated, colour booklet that includes a discussion of implications and responses: *10 Things We All Need to Know About Today's Teens: That Is, IF We Care About Them* by Reginald W. Bibby and James Penner (Lethbridge: Project Canada Books, 2010).

Project  CanadaBooks.com