

HOW ABORIGINAL CHILDREN LEARN



Traditional

Children learn by following the adults around and imitating their actions:

- > The boys follow the men to learn how to make tools and weapons, hunt and fish, build shelters and wage war.
- > The girls follow the women to learn how to make clothing and household objects (baskets, baby carriers), how to gather plants and what they are used for, how to cook, prepare animal skins and grow plants.

Everyone learns the values, beliefs and knowledge of their society by listening to the elders' explanations.

Residential schools

In the 19th and 20th centuries, governments took Aboriginal children away from their families to send them to residential schools where they learned the Christian religion and its values, how to speak French or English, mathematics, etc. They were not allowed to speak their language or to act as they did in their Nations.

Today

Most Aboriginal communities have an elementary school, and some have a high school. Students learn the same subjects as other Quebecers, but they also learn their mother tongue (for example Inuktitut or Innu) in the first years, and they have periods where they learn traditional activities with the elders of the community.

Sometimes, children have to leave their village to continue their studies, for example to go to college or university, and some even for high school. It is often difficult for them to live far away from their loved ones.