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The separate schools operate under boards of elected trustees, as do the regular public schools, and conform to provincial standards on curriculum, textbooks, etc. Separate schools also receive government grants, but not always at the same level as the non-denominational public system.

The overwhelming majority of separate schools in Canada are Roman Catholic, but Protestant separate schools exist in some provinces. Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba and British Columbia make no provisions in legislation for tax-supported separate schools.

Private schools

In all but one province there exist schools which operate outside the public tax-supported systems. These private or independent schools have been established as alternatives to the public system on the basis of religion, language, or social or academic status. Nearly five per cent of all elementary and secondary students in Canada attend private schools.

Private kindergarten and nursery schools also exist for children of pre-elementary school age.

Federal schools

Although education in Canada is primarily a provincial responsibility, the federal government has assumed direct responsibility for the education of native peoples, dependents of armed forces personnel and inmates of penitentiaries.

Indian and Inuit schools

Education of registered Indian and Inuit children is an obligation of the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (INA). The Minister of INA is authorized to maintain schools for native children or to provide access to educational services in band-operated, provincial or private schools. In 1987-88, the federal government owned and operated some 123 schools on Indian reserves. Although the Minister regulates matters such as buildings, curricula, inspection and teaching, more than 262 band councils managed their own schools during this school year. Band control and operation of schools is a growing trend, supported and encouraged by the Government of Canada.

About one-half of the native children in Canada attend provincial public schools. The federal government reimburses the provinces by paying the students' tuition fees or by contributing to the schools' capital costs.