



# BC Aboriginal Education Partners

## Fall 2004

In 1999, by signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, key education stakeholders demonstrated their commitment to improving the success of Aboriginal learners in British Columbia. That memorandum reads:

*"We the undersigned, acknowledge that Aboriginal learners are not experiencing school success in British Columbia. We state our intention to work together within the mandates of our respective organizations to improve school success for Aboriginal learners in British Columbia."*

Since that time, the BC Aboriginal Education Partners have met regularly and focused their collective efforts on three critical areas: Aboriginal teacher education and recruitment, employment equity, and anti-racism. In addition, many of the Partners have been making important strides in their individual efforts to improve Aboriginal education.

This update is intended to share with the Education Partners' respective memberships some the good work that is being done by all of the partner organizations.

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### **The Aboriginal Education Partners and Organization Representatives**

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## News from the Education Partners Working Groups

### Preparing Aboriginal students for teaching careers

During the past several years, three highly effective bridging programs have been implemented to offer post-secondary preparation to Aboriginal support workers, First Nations language teachers, and others wishing to pursue teaching careers. These programs were made possible by the **Aboriginal Teacher Education Consortium (ATEC)**, which grew from an Education Partners working group and its goal of increasing the number of Aboriginal teachers working in the province.

ATEC, with funding from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, sponsored **pilot programs** in 2003-4 at the University College of the Cariboo, Malaspina University-College, and Sto:lo Nation/Simon Fraser University. Approximately 80 students were enrolled in those pilot programs, which offered students courses in academic preparedness including English, math and pedagogy. The post-secondary institutes showed a great commitment to making the bridging programs meaningful for their students and reported many successes as a result.

Post-secondary institutes were once again invited to submit proposals for 2004-2005 ATEC funding. The successful applicants were Malaspina University-College, University of Northern BC, Okanagan University College, and University College of the Cariboo.

For more information about the work of ATEC please contact the FNEC office at 1-877-422-3672.

### Addressing the shortage of Aboriginal teachers

It is estimated that there are 350 to 400 Aboriginal teachers currently teaching in BC. In order to make the number of teachers more reflective of our schools' large and growing Aboriginal student population (8.2% of the entire student population at last count), there is a need to examine possible barriers to the hiring and retention of qualified Aboriginal teachers. That goal is the reason for the **Employment Equity Working Group**, which aims to create a resource that will aid school districts and other employers in developing employment equity strategies to increase the number of Aboriginal staff. This resource is called the **Aboriginal Employment Equity Toolkit**.

Among its many components, the toolkit explains how to use the special programs exemption of the BC Human Rights code, provides sample job postings, and offers advice on building union support. The toolkit also explains the rationale for employment equity initiatives and answers common questions and concerns. When the toolkit is complete it will be available online on the FNEC website <http://www.fnesc.ca> in the Publications section, and available for order from the FNEC office.

### Anti-racism training travels to BC schools and communities

The Education Partners are also proactively tackling racism issues at the provincial level, with work focused on creating racism-free schools for Aboriginal students. Over the past two years the anti-racism program offered extensive **workshops and training** and created a highly successful **anti-racism toolkit** with fun activities for use in classrooms and workshops to teach anti-racism principles.

This year, as well as continuing many of the workshops, there are **three new components** to the anti-racism work including the development of internalized racism resources and workshops, local work in the Merritt area, and Youth Anti-Racism Leadership training.

**Youth Anti-Racism Leadership Training** brought twenty young adults from across the province to Camp Capilano in North Vancouver to train them to be anti-racism leaders in their communities. The goal is to develop a network of active young people living across the province who can act as resource people for local anti-racism initiatives.

The Education Partners appreciate the continued support for the anti-racism work from the Department of Canadian Heritage, as well as new funding from the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services and the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada New Pathways for Education Program.

**An Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement** is a working agreement between a school district, all local Aboriginal communities, and the Ministry of Education. It establishes a collaborative partnership between Aboriginal communities and school districts that involves shared decision making and setting specific goals to meet the educational needs of Aboriginal students.

EAs highlight the importance of academic performance and, more importantly, stress the integral nature of Aboriginal traditional cultures and languages to Aboriginal student development and success. Fundamental to EAs is the requirement that school districts provide strong programs on the culture of local Aboriginal peoples on whose traditional territories the districts are located.

## Steps Forward: News and Profiles of the Education Partners

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### BC Ministry of Education

The Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch of the BC Ministry of Education is committed to improving school success for Aboriginal learners, increasing Aboriginal communities' voice in education, and promoting knowledge of local Aboriginal language, culture, and history for all students.

There are now fourteen signed **Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements** across the province. New Westminister became the fourteenth district when it signed an Enhancement Agreement with its local Aboriginal communities and the Ministry of Education on October 7th. Most school districts have either completed or are now working towards an Enhancement Agreement. The Enhancement Agreement process requires that all Aboriginal students are represented and that Aboriginal communities are fully engaged in constructive dialogue with their district in reaching a shared vision for success for all Aboriginal students.

Campbell River and Kamloops were among the first school districts to sign Enhancement Agreements and they are now in the process of developing new Enhancement Agreements. The data indicates that these districts have been experiencing success in meeting the goals they set five years ago, which include goals for student achievement and attendance.

The Ministry continues to share information with First Nations schools and communities about the new

graduation requirements, and staff from the Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch have been travelling with FNEESC Board members and staff to **Regional Sessions** to meet with representatives from Aboriginal communities and discuss education issues. Another major communications activity, the **Abnet listserve**, which is facilitated by the Ministry, continues to be a popular way to discuss current news in Aboriginal education.

The Ministry is a cohost of the **10<sup>th</sup> Annual Provincial Conference on Aboriginal Education** and it presented four workshops at the conference this year.

Other Ministry activities include further development of the **Accountability Framework**, support and promotion of the **First Nations Studies textbook** and course, work with the Aboriginal Education **Tripartite Committee**, and various research projects with FNEESC and the FNSA.

The 2003/2004 How Are We Doing Report contains current Aboriginal education data and it is now available on the Ministry website at <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/performance.htm>

## British Columbia School Superintendents Association

Established in 1919, the British Columbia School Superintendents Association (BCSSA) is an autonomous, non-profit organization of senior school district administrators working to improve education for BC students.

The BCSSA is part of the Education Partners, and through its participation the BCSSA aims to build a BC school system that has an equitable number of Aboriginal educational leaders in all schools and to model success for Aboriginal students through Aboriginal leadership in education.

In order to support those goals, the BCSSA has identified key strategies:

- ◆ establish a mentorship program to advance Aboriginal educators into positions of school, district and provincial leadership;
- ◆ ensure that Aboriginal values and cultures are a mandatory component to teacher leadership training;
- ◆ focus discussions and decisions on Aboriginal student achievement;
- ◆ support an Aboriginal network of leadership; and
- ◆ establish school district recruitment programs to hire Aboriginal educators.

## British Columbia College of Teachers

The College, as the professional regulatory body for BC College of Teachers certificate holders in British Columbia, establishes and promotes standards for the education, competence and professional conduct of its members.

In June 1999, the BCCT approved the framework for a new certificate for teaching First Nations Language and Culture. Through that framework, the BCCT set the stage for First Nations communities to enter into partnerships with post-secondary institutions to develop programs that lead to **Developmental Standard Term Certificates (DSTC)**. The DSTC program has been created to address a critical shortage of First Nations language and culture teachers, thereby supporting the renewal of First Nations languages

Proposals for DSTC programs must be initiated by First Nations communities and then proceed through the BCCT's program approval process. Post-secondary institutions with teacher education programs must work in partnership with First Nations communities to develop programs.

A holder of a DSTC is recognized as a teacher (of languages and culture) under the *School Act* and will be granted a certificate to teach in BC. The DSTC consists of 90 credits of academic and professional work and can be 'laddered' into a permanent standard certificate by gaining an additional 30 credits of specialized academic and professional work. For a full professional certificate, a further 30 credits would be required.

## BC Teachers' Federation

The British Columbia Teachers' Federation is the union of professionals representing 43,000 public school teachers in the province of British Columbia.

The BCTF's First Nations Education Association (FNEA) provides an **in-service program for teachers of BC First Nations Studies**. The BCTF Aboriginal Education Program continues to offer four workshops: Aboriginal History and Culture, Inclusive Schools, Working with Aboriginal Youth, and the anti-racism workshop Beyond Words.

At the Annual Summer Conference, the BCTF offered two workshops that were well attended.

The **BCTF Aboriginal Associates** continue to carry out a joint activity with the First Nations Education Steering Committee working with the Anti-Racism Toolkit.

The **Aboriginal education conference, Reflections of the Past; Responsibilities for the Future**, was jointly offered by the BCTF Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee, First Nations Education Association, and Native Indian Teacher Education Program. The Conference was held from October 21-23, 2004 at the Longhouse, University of British Columbia, Vancouver. It was designed for administrators, teachers, support workers, community members, and anyone else interested in Aboriginal education.

A resource well worth reading is the BCTF publication **"Beyond Words: Creating Racism-Free Schools for Aboriginal Students,"** which is available online at <http://www.bctf.ca/social/AboriginalEd/BeyondWords.html>

## BC School Trustees Association

The BCSTA is a nonprofit, voluntary organization whose members, boards of locally elected school trustees, work to promote local control of public education and represent the membership on matters affecting the course of public education.

The BCSTA believes that the key work of school boards is to improve student achievement through community engagement, and improvements for Aboriginal students are an important part of that work. In the BCSTA's role of supporting member boards, ongoing trustee professional development regularly includes sessions on Aboriginal education issues, helping to sharpen our focus on improving education for Aboriginal students.

The BCSTA's active **First Nations Education Committee** became a Standing Committee of the Association in 1991. Its seven members are trustees from around the province, with a majority of First Nations ancestry. The Committee's mission - to promote awareness, understanding and respect for Aboriginal, Métis and Inuit cultures within the education system - is fulfilled through Committee recommendations on current and developing Aboriginal education issues to BCSTA's Board of Directors, Provincial Council, and Annual General Meetings.

Recent BCSTA activities on behalf of Aboriginal students include the following:

- ◆ The **2003-2004 First Nations Education Committee Survey on Aboriginal Education.** An Executive Summary is available from BCSTA.

- ◆ Aboriginal education is a key issue for the Canadian School Boards Association. Saskatchewan is leading development of a paper with input from school board

associations across the country. Publication is expected before the end of the next school year.

- ◆ The BCSTA led the workshop, **Aboriginal Leadership Through Trusteeship**, at the 10th Annual Provincial Conference on Aboriginal Education

- ◆ BCSTA **AGM resolutions** are an important means of raising trustee awareness. This year, the assembled membership passed six resolutions brought forward by the BCSTA First Nations Education Committee.

1. Education and Aboriginal communities working together to identify and support effective ways to increase success for boys without reducing support for girls.

2. Developing an information process for the new graduation program to assist students, their families, and communities in understanding the program and facilitating its successful implementation.

3. Establishing implementation strategies for graduation portfolios, including adequate financial and staff support and other resources.

4. Assessing the results of the 2003/2004 Grade 10 exams, particularly for Aboriginal and English as a Second Language (ESL) students, in order to make any necessary changes.

5. Developing a compliance audit process that does not compromise school district capacity to support students, while, at the same time, satisfies the province's need to be accountable to the public for expenditure of government funds.

6. Addressing the disproportionate impact of chronic under-funding of education on some of the most vulnerable and at-risk students.

The full text for these resolutions can be viewed by going to <http://www.bcsta.org/pub/pubindex.htm> and clicking on "BCSTA AGMs."

## BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils

The BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) is a non-profit organization that works to improve public education for all students by including and supporting parents. It carries on activities to promote and enhance parent participation in schools, school districts, as well as at the provincial level.

BCCPAC activities include the following.

- ◆ Conferences twice a year, including "Building Excellence with Best Practices" conference was held in Abbotsford on November 4-7, 2004.

- ◆ Regional events offered in the 2004-5 school year in Prince George, Prince Rupert and Kelowna.

- ◆ PACed workshops, which any PAC or DPAC can book for their local community

For more information see the BCCPAC website at <http://www.bccpac.bc.ca>.

BCCPAC believes that there is a need for greater child and youth advocacy in BC's public education system. PAC and DPAC leaders and volunteer advocates are committed to helping parents and students solve problems and offers support to reach that goal.

Advocates appointed under the BCCPAC Advocacy Project are volunteers committed to ensuring that parents and students in their school districts have a voice in decisions that affect them.

BCCPAC Advocates:

- ◆ help parents to be more effective natural advocates for their children;
- ◆ support parents seeking to improve communication and resolve problems between home and school;
- ◆ work within the problem-solving process already in place in their school districts to help parents and students define their concerns, obtain information, and communicate with school and district staff; and
- ◆ work to ensure that parents are heard, receive fair treatment, and understand the decision made with respect to their child.

Visit <http://www.bccpac.bc.ca> for more information.

## BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association

The British Columbia Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA) is the professional organization for principals and vice-principals in BC. The BCPVPA has been an effective voice for school principals and vice-principals since 1958 when it was established as a Provincial Specialist Association.

Since 1988, the BCPVPA has been an autonomous organization representing more than 90% of the province's public school-based administrators.

The BCPVPA is also one of the co-signers of the Memorandum of Understanding on Aboriginal Education. To this end, the BCPVPA has worked to bring First Nations concerns to the forefront for all of its principals and vice-principals by:

- inviting Christa Williams, Executive Director of FNEESC, to address delegates and bring them up-to-date about FNEESC initiatives at a BCPVPA Chapter Council meeting during the 2003-2004 school year;

- preparing a BCPVPA First Nations Awareness Document to provide principals and vice-principals with a framework, which will help them explore and clarify important local issues related to the education of First Nations learners in the province of British Columbia;

- establishing a Scholarship Program for First Nations students, providing an acknowledgement and \$500 for a student who has shown both academic excellence and student leadership; and

- establishing a resources page in its member-only website area, which provides convenient links to a variety of First Nations resources, including:

- The First Nations Education Steering Committee
- The First Nations Awareness Document
- The B.C. Ministry of Education/Aboriginal Education
- The B.C. Ministry of Education/Aboriginal Agreements
- Our Children: Keepers of the Sacred Knowledge.

## Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) provides funding to Band councils or other First Nation education authorities to support instructional services for status Indians residing on reserve. This funding includes provisions for instructional services in on-reserve schools, (First Nation-operated and federal), the reimbursement of costs of on-reserve students attending provincial schools, and funding for the provision of student support services such as transportation, counselling, accommodation and financial assistance.

**First Nations Education Jurisdiction** - The signing of a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding on First Nations education jurisdiction between the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNEESC), the BC Ministry of Education, and INAC in July 2003 was a momentous occasion that has carried forward into negotiations. The ongoing negotiations have made significant progress and it is anticipated that some concrete results will be realized in the near future.

A **Data Linking Pilot Project** is being explored between INAC, BC Ministry of Education and FNEESC. This project will enable a sharing of information about INAC-funded students as they move between on and off reserve. The purpose of the pilot project is to increase the information available on First Nation learners' educational outcomes in order to improve educational programming.

**Enhanced Teachers Salaries** - A national committee was brought together to develop a business case for funding to enhance teachers' salaries in Band-operated schools.

**Post-Secondary Training** - The introduction of new post-secondary guidelines and upcoming compliance reviews has created a need for on-site information sessions. The information sessions are being conducted in conjunction with nominal roll training taking place at various locations across the province. FNEESC has arranged for their Post-Secondary Co-ordinator to be involved in the information sessions to ensure a First Nations perspective. One session was held prior to this writing and the turnout, interest, and feedback was very positive.

**Life Long Learning Sectoral Roundtable** - At the Canada - Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable on April 19, 2004, the Prime Minister made a commitment to hold follow up sessions in key areas of focus. As a result, six sectoral roundtables were established, one of which is for lifelong learning.

INAC is leading the federal government work on lifelong learning (early childhood development, education, and skills development), with support from other key Ministries. The objective of the lifelong learning roundtable is to identify ways government can improve how it operates in this area, and work with Aboriginal partners and others to develop and implement solutions jointly.

A number of planning sessions have been held since the Canada - Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable in April to conduct the internal federal work needed to support the process and to prepare for an upcoming roundtable with external stakeholders in November. The outcomes from the roundtable are expected to be discussed at a policy retreat in early spring with the Prime Minister, Ministers, National Aboriginal Leaders, and possibly other partners such as provincial and territorial governments.

## **First Nations Education Steering Committee & First Nations Schools Association**

The First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNEESC) is a non-profit organization that was founded by First Nations in BC. FNEESC works to undertake research, promote communications, disseminate information, facilitate networking, and raise awareness about First Nations education issues. The FNEESC board has over 50 members representing First Nations communities across BC.

An independent organization that works closely with FNEESC on a number of activities is the First Nations Schools Association (FNSEA), which represents the interests of BC's First Nations schools. The FNSEA's mandate is to improve and support the development of quality and culturally appropriate education for First Nations learners, and its

board is composed of ten representatives of First Nations schools.

### **First Nations Education Jurisdiction: continuing progress**

Since the signing of the landmark Memorandum of Understanding on First Nations jurisdiction over First Nations education on July 24, 2003, significant progress has been made. All three signing parties -- FNEESC, the BC Ministry of Education, and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada -- have been engaged in negotiations to define the possible nature and scope of First Nations jurisdiction and authority. Key areas being negotiated include equitable levels of funding between First Nations schools and public schools, standards, credentialing, recognition of First Nations school certification, teacher certification, reciprocal tuition agreements, and information sharing. Consultation with Aboriginal communities is ongoing and includes a two day meeting in Vancouver on December 15 and 16, 2004.

### **Aboriginal Languages Strategy**

Remarkably, there are thirty-two Aboriginal languages and eight language families in BC, making it a richest linguistic region of Canada but also posing a major challenge to language teaching and preservation efforts. FNEESC and the First People's Heritage Language and Culture Council are working with BC First Nations to develop a province-wide strategic plan for Aboriginal language revitalization. A draft of the plan was shared at the 2004 Aboriginal Languages Conference and it will be discussed further by BC Aboriginal communities this fall and winter.

### **Seventh Generation Club**

Over 6000 Aboriginal students, from both First Nations schools and public schools, are proud members of the Seventh Generation Club. The club encourages young people to plan for the future and make healthy choices in all aspects of their lives. Club members receive newsletters and are eligible for prizes to recognize excellent school attendance. For enrolment information, visit the website <http://www.seventhgenerationclub.com>.

### **First Nations Parents Club**

There are now over 100 FNSEA and FNEESC supported local First Nations Parents Clubs across BC, which recognize and support the key role of parents in ensuring educational success for their children. The club recently hosted a Parents Conference, sent several parents to participate in the BC Confederation Parents Advisory Council conference, and sponsored in-community workshops for parents. In addition to its newsletters, the club recently published a Parents Club cookbook and Parents Club calendar, which features ideas for fun and educational family activities.

### **Programs and Support for First Nations Schools and Communities**

FNESC and the FNSA jointly administer several funding programs, including the Youth Employment Strategy and New Pathways for Education Program. Those programs support valuable education and career preparation opportunities for First Nations children and youth. Full information about the programs is available on the FNESC website in the Programs section, <http://www.fnesc.ca>.

### **First Nations SchoolNet**

FNESC and the FNSA are the regional management bodies for First Nations SchoolNet -- an Industry Canada initiative aimed at helping First Nations schools improve their Internet connectivity and effective use of technology in the classroom. Several training opportunities have been offered through SchoolNet, and SchoolNet provided over 300 computers to First Nations schools last year. Another major SchoolNet initiative has been the creation of a portable Aboriginal Language Recording Lab Resource that will help schools develop local language teaching resources.

### **Special Education Services and Resources for First Nations Schools**

FNESC and the FNSA's special education staff and services have grown significantly in the past several years, now including special education consultation, services to First Nations schools, and professional development opportunities, including the two-year graduate diploma, "Supporting Diverse Learners" and courses toward the "Language and Learning Certificate". The FNESC staff also administers school special education funding, runs a toll-free resource line, and coordinates student assessments.

### **FNESC/FNSA Current Research Notes**

FNESC and the FNSA are currently sponsoring the following research projects.

A possible *Data Liking Pilot Project*, which will improve the ability to track the progress of students when they move between on-reserve First Nations schools and public schools.

*Measures and Data Collection Project*, which will gather more consistent data to demonstrate the success of First Nations schools and promote school growth.

*Teacher Salary Surve* to consider the salary inequities between teachers in First Nations schools and those in the provincial school systems.

*Post-Secondary Research* focusing on data collection related to students attending First Nations post-secondary institutes.

### **The Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA)**

This new organization, designed to support Indigenous post-secondary institutes and adult learning programs in BC, held its first Annual General meeting in January of 2004. IAHLA is an independent, non-profit society that has an administrative support agreement with FNESC. IAHLA's goals are to share information, undertake research, facilitate networking, and support collective professional development in regard to adult and post-secondary education.

### **Retired Aboriginal Teachers Society**

The Retired Aboriginal Teachers Society (RATS) is a new organization that aims to bring the wealth of experience and knowledge of retired Aboriginal teachers to support Aboriginal education in BC. The members will focus on providing advice and mentorship to current Aboriginal teachers. New members are welcome. Contact Lee Gardner at the FNESC office for more information.

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