
First Nations
Education Steering Committee
(FNE SC)

2001/2002
Regional Sessions
Summary

January, 2002

Introduction and General Background

The First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNEESC) is a collective organization that works to support First Nations in their efforts to promote quality education for First Nations learners. Generally, FNEESC has been directed to provide services in the areas of research, communications, information dissemination, and networking. FNEESC collects and shares up-to-date information about available programs, government policies and initiatives, and evolving local, provincial and national education issues that effect First Nations learners in BC.

Each year FNEESC organizes a series of regional sessions in First Nations communities throughout the province. Those regional sessions provide a foundation for all FNEESC activities, as they allow FNEESC to maintain accountability to the First Nations its services, and to gather advice and direction for all FNEESC initiatives. The regional sessions include a reporting on its ongoing efforts, as well as an opportunity for First Nations representatives to respond to the work of the organization and to share information about critical issues in their areas.

In 2001, regional sessions were held in Campbell River, Cranbrook, Kamloops, Osoyoos, Prince George, Saanich, Terrace, Tofino, Tsawwassen, and Williams Lake.

Update on General FNEESC Developments

Currently, there are approximately 35 members of the FNEESC Board of Directors. Membership on FNEESC is determined by First Nations, with each First Nation eligible to appoint a member to the Board. In July of 2001, the FNEESC Board elected an Executive that will serve for the next two years. That Board includes the following individuals:

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| • President | Deborah Jeffrey | Tsimshian Tribal Council |
| • Vice President | Jim Angus | Kispiox Nation |
| • Treasurer | Brenda Leighton | Metlakatla |
| • Secretary | Barbara Barltrop | Nanoose First Nation |

A number of additional people participate in FNEESC activities through its sub-committees. In 2001/2002, the FNEESC sub-committees included those focusing on Aboriginal Languages, Special Education, Post-Secondary Education and Adult Secondary Education. Further information about the work of those sub-committees is outlined in this report.

The staff of FNEESC expanded significantly in 2001/2002. As a result, the staff now includes the following individuals.

- Christa Williams, Executive Director
- Barbara Kavanagh, Director of Research and First Nations Schools
- Kelly Kitchen, Acting Director of Special Education
- Derek Payne, Program Administrator
- Ethel Gardner, Project Manager
- Jennifer White, Communications Officer
- April Smith, Finance Clerk
- Natasha Nahanee, Executive Secretary
- Stephanie Nahanee, Receptionist
- Roz Bodwell, Office Assistant
- Karen Horner, Special Education Resource Line Coordinator
- Dean Irvine, Special Needs Educator

Promoting Information Sharing

Conferences

Each year, FNEESC organizes a number of conferences in an effort to provide information sharing and networking opportunities. Five FNEESC sponsored conferences were planned for the fall and spring of 2001/2002.

Annual Provincial Education Conference November 3, 4 and 5, 2001, Vancouver BC

One of the primary events facilitated by FNEESC is an annual Provincial Aboriginal Education Conference, which is co-hosted with the BC Ministry of Education. For 2001, the provincial conference focused on the theme of Math and Science. That Conference was very successful, bringing together 400 enthusiastic participants who were entertained and informed by a variety of science and math demonstrations and workshops.

Input from Regional Session Participants

At both the Tsawwassen and Prince George regional sessions, participants suggested that the provincial conference should include workshops aimed not only at teachers; more topics of interest to administrators should also be included.

At the Tsawwassen session, several people also spoke to the need to keep the Conference affordable, perhaps by reducing production costs and relying to a greater extent on community members as presenters.

Second Annual First Nations Youth Conference August, 2001, Seabird Island, BC

A second conference organized by FNEESC in 2001 was the Second Annual First Nations Youth Conference -- *Empowering Youth Through Leadership*. That event involved approximately 200 youth from throughout the province, who came to Seabird Island BC to participate in a number of sports clinics and workshops designed to promote self-esteem and goal setting.

Input from Regional Session Participants

In Williams Lake and Prince George, it was suggested that late summer is not the best time for the youth Conference, and Spring Break was recommended as a possible alternative for future consideration. The participants at the Prince George regional session also recommended that more advanced notice would be useful, allowing communities more time to establish criteria for selecting youth participants and for youth to fundraise for their attendance.

Special Education Conference September 28 and 29, 2001, Vancouver, BC

Another very successful event took place in September 2001 – the *Special Education Connections Conference: Strategies and Resources for First Nations*. That conference, co-sponsored by FNEESC and the First Nations Schools Association, shared information about a range of reading programs for consideration by First Nations school representatives. Over 200 people were in attendance at the Conference, to share their experiences and ideas for enhancing literacy rates of First Nations students.

Input from Regional Session Participants

Participants at several regional sessions suggested that late September is a challenging time for school representatives to attend a Conference.

Aboriginal Languages Conference February 22 and 23, 2002, Vancouver BC

Information was also shared at the regional sessions regarding plans for an Aboriginal Languages Conference to be organized by FNEESC for the first time in February, 2002. That Conference was planned to include a range of speakers and workshops to share suggestions for language program planning and language teaching.

Input from Regional Session Participants

In Saanich, it was suggested that cultural workers also be encouraged to attend the Language Conference, as the issues of language and culture are so closely related.

In Campbell River, the participants recommended that the teachers who attend the Language Conference should be encouraged to bring a lesson plan, so that a collection of lesson plans can be shared with the conference delegates.

First Nations Parents Conference May 24 and 25, 2002, Vancouver BC

The 2001 regional sessions also allowed an opportunity for FNEESC to announce another event being planned for the spring of 2002. As recommended at the previous year's regional sessions, a Conference will be held for First Nations parents. That Conference is intended to bring together Parents Club members, and share suggestions for supporting children and creating a healthy, encouraging environment at home.

Other Information Sharing Activities

In addition to conferences, FNEESC also undertakes a number of regular information sharing activities. In addition to distributing relevant information and updates as they arise, FNEESC publishes a quarterly newsletter, *Quality Education – A Right*, as well as a new *Aboriginal Languages Newsletter*. Both of those newsletters are distributed to all Bands, Tribal Councils, First Nations schools, and other individuals who express an interest in receiving them. FNEESC also maintains a web site at www.fnesc.bc.ca.

Working in Partnership to Promote Change

In undertaking all of its activities, FNEESC strives to work in partnership with other education organizations whenever possible. By sharing resources and coordinating efforts, FNEESC and its partners are able to provide programs and services more effectively.

First Nations Schools Association

Among the primary partnerships of FNEESC is its relationship with the First Nations Schools Association (FNSA). Since the establishment of the FNSA five years ago, the two organizations have jointly implemented numerous activities. For the past three years, the close working relationship has been formalized, through an administrative agreement. According to that agreement, the FNEESC staff provides administrative support to the FNSA Board for the implementation of the FNSA workplan. Given the extensive partnership that exists between FNEESC and the FNSA, many of the activities outlined at the regional sessions were FNSA or jointly sponsored, which is reflected in this report.

The FNSA held its 2001 Annual General Meeting (AGM) in April, 2001 in Vancouver, BC. That AGM was organized to coincide with a FNSA organized Conference titled *Honouring Our Community Partnerships*. The Conference and AGM provided an opportunity for over 200 representatives of First Nations schools to collectively consider ways to build stronger community relationships to support First Nations learners.

Immediately following the FNSA Conference and AGM, a First Nations schools job fair took place. That event allowed First Nations schools to meet with teachers and administrators to discuss employment opportunities and potential work placements in the schools. The response to the job fair was very positive, and many schools were able to fill job vacancies through contacts made at the event.

Indian Studies Support Program

For the past three years, FNEESC has also worked very closely with the Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP) Committee through a fee-for-service arrangement. According to their

agreement, FNEESC staff provides support to the Committee, including such things as organizing committee meetings, taking minutes, preparing correspondence, and facilitating the annual proposal call and review. The ISSP provides funding for First Nations controlled post-secondary programs. Proposal information is distributed to all First Nations and First Nations Post-Secondary Institutes in the fall of each year, and proposal deadlines are in January of each year.

Working With the Federal and Provincial Governments and Other Education Organizations

For the past several years, FNEESC has been meeting regularly with representatives of the federal and provincial government in a tripartite process. Those meetings have resulted in a very effective sharing of information and ideas regarding ways to enhance the success of First Nations learners throughout British Columbia.

Input from Regional Session Participants

At the Tsawwassen, Kamloops, and Campbell River regional sessions, the participants spoke to the importance of the technology funding, and the need to ensure that the funding continues to be available. The funding has allowed schools to purchase much needed equipment, which now must be maintained. It was also recommended that “best practice” uses of the technology funding should be collected and shared, particularly in terms of efforts to incorporate cultural aspects into technology programs. In addition, the participants emphasized the need to ensure that First Nations have full input into decisions regarding the use of the technology funding.

In addition to the tripartite meetings, FNEESC is also a founding member of what is known as the Education Partners Group. That group includes some of the most significant stakeholders in the BC education system, including FNEESC, the FNSA, the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), the BC Ministry of Education (MoE), the BC Teachers’ Federation, the BC College of Teachers, the BC School Trustees Association, and the BC Principals and Vice Principals Association. For the past two years, the Education Partners Group has focused on ways to implement the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 1999. That MoU commits the Education Partners to “work within our respective organizations to improve school success for Aboriginal learners in British Columbia.” Specifically, the Education Partners have begun their efforts with a focus on three issues: Aboriginal teacher recruitment, employment equity, and racism.

Aboriginal Teacher Education Consortium (ATEC) Initiative

The Aboriginal teacher recruitment activities relate to the need to ensure greater representation of Aboriginal teachers in schools. In order to achieve proportionate representation of Aboriginal students and Aboriginal teachers in the public education system, far greater numbers of Aboriginal teachers must be employed. In addition, there is also a demand for Aboriginal teachers in the First Nations school system. Unfortunately, there are currently far too few Aboriginal teachers, or Aboriginal students enrolled in teacher education programs, to meet the need that exists.

In order to address that issue, the Education Partners established the Aboriginal Teacher Education Consortium (ATEC), which involves a representative of each of the Education Partners groups, as well as representatives of Teacher Education Programs in BC. The goal of that group is to increase the number of trained Aboriginal teachers in BC, and their planned activities fall within four major components:

- program planning and the hiring of a program coordinator;
- the production of promotional materials for students, parents, and educational personnel, to increase the interest of Aboriginal secondary students in the teaching profession, and to encourage course selections that will allow them to access teacher education opportunities;
- bridging programs, including the enhancement of existing bridging programs and the development of two new programs to help interested Aboriginal candidates obtain the courses required to enter teacher education programs; and
- satellite teacher education programs organized in First Nations communities to improve access to the programs.

While the first two components of this work are now underway, the bridging program development will take place throughout the next several months, and the satellite teacher education programs is a long-term initiative that may take several years to fully implement.

Input from Regional Session Participants

At Tsawwassen, it was suggested that it would be useful to include student support funding in this initiative.

Anti-Racism Working Group

The Education Partners have also established an Anti-Racism Working Group, which is planning several activities to address the sensitive issue of racism. The group has begun its work by focusing on awareness raising, such as including relevant articles in newsletters such as the Seventh Generation Club newsletter, the Parents Club newsletter, and newsletters published by the other Education Partners. Another initiative may involve working with Canadian Heritage and possibly Multiculturalism BC. Canadian Heritage is particularly interested in considering the issue of student transitions from First Nations to public schools, and discussions are underway regarding a significant project in this area. That project may involve the hiring of a program coordinator who will investigate and share information about relevant initiatives and ways to create positive partnerships between First Nations and public schools. Some of the ideas being considered include joint drama events, interschool sports events, school visits, literacy buddy programs, and inter-school student mentoring programs.

Input from Regional Session Participants

In Tofino, the regional session participants noted that very useful anti-racism pamphlets have been created by the Canadian Federation of Students (Provincial Aboriginal Caucus).

The Osoyoos regional session participants also suggested the creation of an e-mail pen pal system that would allow First Nations students to e-mail public school students and facilitate earlier contact and better understandings. In Campbell River, another suggestion made to ease the transition from a band school to a public school involves having a staff member from the First Nations school present in the new school for the first month or so.

In Cranbrook, several people spoke to the importance of the transition from First Nations schools to public schools, particularly between grades 7 and 8, which represents the move to the secondary school in their area. Some of the programs being implemented in that area include a late summer bar-be-cue for students who will be attending grade 8 in the fall, having elementary students regularly visit the junior high school, as well as a First Nations youth worker whose main focus is to support grade 8 students.

Participants at the Terrace regional session also discussed the importance of tracking students who were enrolled in headstart programs to measure the effectiveness of the programs, including the ability of the students to make successful transitions. It was noted that interested First Nations headstart programs and schools can use the

Personal Identification Number through the Ministry of Education (MoE) to help track the data, but doing so is optional. Anyone interested in more information can call the MoE Aboriginal Education Branch.

Finally, in Campbell River, the participants suggested using a First Nations Studies 12 Contest to contribute to the racism project. The students could be invited to create a presentation on their culture and identity, with selected projects highlighted on a web site for use by teachers and other students throughout BC.

Employment Equity Working Group

A sub-committee of the Education Partners is also working on an *Employment Equity Handbook*, to assist employers in designing and implementing policies to increase the number of Aboriginal people working throughout the public education system. The work of this sub-committee will continue into 2002/2003, with a draft of the handbook expected to be available for distribution within the coming months.

Gathering Strength Program

For the past several years, a primary component of FNEESC and FNSA activities has been the Gathering Strength program. For five years, the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) has provided funding for this program as one component of its response to the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Since its establishment, the majority of funding provided through the Gathering Strength program has been distributed to First Nations schools and communities for locally-based activities.

In 2000/2001, \$3 million was allocated to First Nations schools through a base-plus-per-capita funding formula, with allocations released following the submission of an approved workplan and budget. That funding allowed for a range of projects to assist with school capacity building, activities to encourage to students stay-in-school, and special education programming. An additional \$2.2 million was made available to First Nations communities through a proposal process. Gathering Strength funding was also used to sponsor a number of collective programs and initiatives. Those activities are outlined in some detail below.

For 2001/2002, \$4 million was distributed to First Nations schools through a base-plus-per-capita funding formula for projects related to school capacity building, stay-in-school, special education, curriculum development, literacy programming, and integration of services.

Input from Regional Session Participants

At several regional sessions, including Terrace, Cranbrook, Saanich, and Tsawwassen, it was suggested that the number of categories used for the school funding allocation should be reduced to make the application and reporting system simpler.

An additional \$1.8 million was made available to First Nations communities through a base-plus-per-capita formula. That change to a base-plus-per-capita funding formula for distribution of the community funding was implemented in response to feedback received at the 2000 Regional Sessions.

Input from Regional Session Participants

At each of the regional sessions, the participants were asked to respond to the community funding distribution mechanism -- particularly the change from a proposal process to a base-plus-per-capita formula. Several people had raised concerns about the change, as it meant that Tribal Councils and First Nations post-secondary institutes were no longer eligible to apply for the funding through the proposal process, which had allowed for many useful collective projects previously.

However, the overwhelming majority of participants at all of the regional sessions felt that providing allocations directly to First Nations is the most equitable funding mechanism, as all First Nations require support for education programming, yet they differ significantly in terms of their proposal writing capacity. The regional session participants also agreed that First Nations can combine funding to undertake collective initiatives if desired, and they recommended that FNEESC and the FNSA encourage such collective efforts whenever possible.

In Saanich, there was some discussion regarding the appropriateness of FNEESC and the FNSA managing the Gathering Strength funding overall. A suggestion was made that the Gathering Strength funding should instead be added to the core education funding of First Nations, with no FNEESC involvement. However, other participants at the session strongly advocated for a continuation of the FNEESC and FNSA administration of the funds. Those people felt that it was appropriate to have First Nations controlled organizations manage the money, they felt that the existing process works well, they noted the benefit of collective activities, and they expressed appreciation for the accountability that is in place. No concerns about the overall FNEESC/FNSA management were raised at any of the other regional sessions.

Finally, in Terrace, the participants shared information about a very successful Gathering Strength project implemented in 2000/2001. In the Prince Rupert area,

efforts are ongoing to develop a First Nations Education Partnership Agreement, which is intended to bring all stakeholders together, including band councils, parents, teachers, and school district representatives. A number of meetings have taken place to review the success rates of Aboriginal students, and planning is now underway for a number of activities in response to that information. Last year, one of the key activities undertaken was a parental involvement initiative, which involved a series of community workshops that focused on how to honour the knowledge and commitment of parents, elders, and community members. The workshop also included a sharing of strategies to improve literacy rates, with gifts, door prizes, and open discussions. Given the tremendous success of the workshops, efforts are ongoing to ensure that they continue.

Gathering Strength Collective Activities

Annual Speakers Series Workshops

For the past three years, Gathering Strength funding has been used to implement a Speakers Series. That initiative involves the organization of approximately seventeen workshops in locations throughout BC. The workshops held to date have focused on special education issues, community-wide programs to support young people, and board training. Parents, teachers, school board members, education workers, and community members have all participated in the Speakers Series.

Input from Regional Session Participants

In two regional sessions, suggestions were made for additional Speakers Series workshop topics. In Terrace, the participants suggested cross-cultural awareness workshops, which could include the provision of tools for First Nations people to deal with misunderstandings and challenging incidents. In Osoyoos, it was also suggested that Band education administrators would benefit from training in the area of career counseling and assisting students in finding and accessing appropriate post-secondary programs. Also on that topic, in Prince George it was recommended that FNEESC build upon its publication *Choosing Courses to Keep Your Options Open*, perhaps creating a revised publication that highlights several high demand careers, along with the steps required for entering that field.

In Williams Lake, the participants suggested that workshops on personal self-development and self-esteem would assist parents. They also felt that the benefits of such workshops would be transmitted to the children of those who attend.

Special Education Toll-Free Resource Line

The 2000/2001 and 2001/2002 Gathering Strength programs also included a continuation of the Special Education Toll-Free Resource Line, an initiative aimed at connecting First Nations educators and parents with information and support. Through the toll-free telephone service, a special education teacher has been available to answer questions and share professional development ideas, suggestions for special education materials, and information about relevant organizations and programs. The toll-free support line has been very effective, with an extremely positive response from people who have used the service and use of the line increasing consistently.

Input from Regional Session Participants

In Tofino, the regional session participants clarified that parents are welcome to use the toll-free resource line service, and they agreed that it is extremely useful for them to be able to have that access.

Parents Club

One of the most exciting new initiatives for 2000/2001 was the establishment of the Parents Club. That initiative involves the organization of locally-based parents clubs in First Nations communities, with support materials such as newsletters, incentive gifts, and parenting materials supplied by FNEESC and the FNSA. The first year of the program received an overwhelming response, with over 1500 members enrolled in over 70 locally-based clubs. For 2001/2002, greater Gathering Strength funding was allocated for the Parents Club, allowing for the production of additional newsletters and more support materials. Some of the ideas shared at the regional sessions included a calendar for parents, highlighting tips and ideas for family educational activities (calendars for 2002 have now been distributed), as well as vests for parents, books to support home-reading, and a Parents Club cookbook, using recipes submitted by Parent Club members.

Input from Regional Session Participants

The participants at the Cranbrook regional session shared a number of additional ideas for the Parents Club, including sharing homework tips in the newsletter, and perhaps in the future developing a manual for parents on dealing with challenging situations at home, perhaps using letters submitted from parents with their suggestions. The idea of eventually having a homework help line for parents was also seen to be very useful.

In Campbell River, the participants highlighted a successful parents club in that area, which has involved guest speakers and prizes associated with the speaker's topic. For example, the club invited a speaker on the topic of fire and home safety, and gave away a fire extinguisher as a door prize. On another occasion, when a speaker gave a presentation on bicycle safety, the club gave away a bike helmet. The club's organizers have found that to be a very effective and popular initiative.

In Tofino, another successful community involvement effort was noted. A school in the area organized a day for community members and high school students to help repair playground equipment. The day began with a pancake breakfast, and it was very effective in helping to bring the community together to support the school.

As mentioned above, a Parent's Conference is also being planned for May 24 and 25, 2002, which will take place in Vancouver BC. That Conference is intended to build upon the Parents Club by offering members an opportunity to gather together to share ideas for supporting their children's education.

Language Curriculum Development Workshops

In 2000/2001, Gathering Strength funding was used to sponsor two Language Curriculum Development Workshops. Those workshops provided introductory information for First Nations representatives interested in undertaking the important task of developing curriculum for their language programs. The workshops shared information about how to become organized for curriculum development, and the steps and resources involved in the process. The workshops were tremendously successful, with a very positive response from the participants.

Unfortunately, the two workshops could not accommodate everyone who was interested, and many people were left on a waitlist for attendance. Reflecting that very strong response, four workshops in total were planned for 2001/2002: the repetition of two level one, introductory workshops, and the addition of two, second level workshops.

School Assessment Work and School Growth Plan Implementation

Throughout the past two years, Gathering Strength funding has also been used to contribute to a comprehensive *First Nations Schools Assessment Project*. The FNSA has been working for several years to develop a school assessment framework that is appropriate for First Nations. In 2000/2001, DIA provided the FNSA over \$200,000.00 for the implementation of pilot school assessment processes, which allowed nineteen schools to participate and test the newly

developed information and assessment tools. Gathering Strength funding was used to sponsor a number of activities to support that work, including workshops for participating schools and external assessor training.

In 2001/2002, Gathering Strength funding was again used to support school assessment activities, and complement a second comprehensive assessment initiative that was organized by the FNSEA. Gathering Strength funding was used to sponsor support workshops, a mentoring initiative, and external assessor training, with the goal of expanding the number of people with expertise in First Nations school assessment. The Gathering Strength program also funded grants for schools that had completed an assessment process in 2000/2001, to assist with the implementation of school growth plans and efforts for continued development.

Input from Regional Session Participants

At the Terrace regional session, the participants commented upon the limited textbooks and reading materials available in most First Nations schools, and they particularly noted the need for more materials that have been created specifically for First Nations students. The participants therefore recommended that fundraising be undertaken to fill that need.

In Saanich, the topic of the public school accreditation process was discussed. The participants suggested that the process should be more relevant to the welfare of Aboriginal people, with more First Nations parental involvement. They also noted that it is extremely important to have school staff with a specific interest in First Nations education so that they can be proactive in ensuring that the issue is given priority in school growth planning.

In Tsawwassen, a similar concern was raised, with participants noting the need for more information about the public school accreditation process and the crucial role for First Nations representatives.

Gathering Strength Sponsored Research Projects and Materials Development

Each year, Gathering Strength funding is also used to implement a number of research projects, as outlined below.

Employment Handbook Update

First published in 1996, the *Employment Handbook for First Nations Schools* highlights a range of employment related information, such as suggestions for hiring, developing employment policies, staff evaluations, and discipline practices. With 2000/2001 Gathering Strength funding, that handbook was updated and reviewed by a lawyer specializing in employment issues. The new handbook has been distributed to schools throughout British Columbia.

Development of Special Education Pamphlets Volumes 5 and 6

FNESC and the FNSA previously published four volumes of a special education pamphlet series, focusing on general information about special needs, fetal alcohol syndrome/fetal alcohol effects, attention deficit disorder, and information for parents. In 2000/2001, two additional pamphlets were published – *the Individual Education Plans Handbook for Teachers*, and *the Individual Education Plans Handbook for Parents*. Copies of those handbooks were distributed to all First Nations and First Nations schools in BC.

Input from Regional Session Participants

At the Williams Lake regional session, the participants noted that the special education pamphlets are used on professional development days and for other training, and they suggested that the pamphlets continue to be produced.

Educational Transitions for First Nations Learners

Last year, FNESC and the FNSA sponsored a research project to examine challenges and possible interventions that relate to specific “transition” in students’ lives. Marie Matthew undertook that project, which included a literature review and select interviews with First Nations representatives. That research report, titled *Educational Transitions for First Nations Learners: Challenges and Interventions*, identified a number of common challenges for students undergoing an education transition, as well as suggestions to support students throughout their school lives.

Input from Regional Session Participants

At several regional sessions, the participants commented on transitional issues. For example, in Osoyoos, concern was expressed regarding the transition of students from First Nations schools, where they are taking courses in their own language, to a public school, where other languages are emphasized. In Campbell River, concern

was also expressed regarding the decrease in funding for Head Start programs, as they provide support for the important transition from home to school.

Adults With Special Needs Research Report

FNESC and the FNSA also sponsored a 2000/2001 research project to investigate issues relevant to adult First Nations students with special needs. That project involved a literature review, interviews, as well as a survey of First Nations adult education program representatives. The findings of the research includes an overview of the ways in which “special needs” is interpreted and applied in an adult education setting, and some of the common issues and challenges faced by First Nations adult students. Copies of the final report have been shared with all First Nations schools and adult programs, and it is also available on the FNESC web site.

Board Training Manual

For 2001/2002, Gathering Strength funding was allocated for a research project focused on First Nations Board Training. Based upon the positive response from participants at the Speakers Series School Board Training Workshops, as well as suggestions made at a 2000 FNESC sponsored Integration of Services Forum, FNESC initiated the development of a manual for individuals serving on a range of First Nations Boards, including School Boards, Health Boards, Child Care Boards, and others. An advisory committee with representatives of various service organizations has been working with a contractor to create a handbook covering issues such as Board responsibilities, policy development, finances, personnel, and community relations. The Handbook will soon be shared with all First Nations in BC, and the information gathered will be the foundation for the 2001/2002 Speakers Series Board Training Workshops.

Record Keeping Research

Another topic consistently highlighted as a relevant issue is record keeping, and the usefulness of implementing systems to facilitate effective information sharing and communications between service agencies. Responding to that issue, FNESC and the FNSA sponsored a Record Keeping research project for 2001/2002, which will consider the design of effective record keeping mechanisms, possibly computerized, within the context of issues such as privacy rights and freedom of information considerations.

Other Research Projects

In addition to projects sponsored through Gathering Strength funding, each year FNEESC undertakes a number of other research projects, as described below.

First Nations Education Financing Report

Prepared by Chief Nathan Matthew in 2000/2001, *First Nations Education Finances – A Review* outlines various facets of First Nations education funding within the context of a historical review of First Nations education. Included in the report is a review of the funding provided by the federal government for on-reserve First Nations students in public schools, for First Nations schools, post-secondary education, and other program areas, as well as funding available through the Ministry of Education. This project represents an update of a research report originally published in 1995.

Post-Secondary Education Policies Handbook

A second 2000/2001 FNEESC report is the *Post-Secondary Education Policies Handbook*, which highlights a collection of sample post-secondary education policies that were shared by First Nations from throughout BC. The handbook is intended to provide ideas for First Nations interested in establishing or updating their policies for the allocation of and accounting for post-secondary education funding.

Researching the Funding Available For First Nations Schools

Previously, FNEESC and the FNSA organized a research project to investigate the level of funding provided for the operation of First Nations schools. The findings of that project, highlighted in the publication *The Cost of Quality Education*, demonstrates a significant discrepancy between the funding provided by DIA for First Nations schools and the funding provided for public schools through the BC Ministry of Education. In 2001/2002, that preliminary research has been expanded, with a much more detailed review of the federal funding formula undertaken by a contractor working for FNEESC and DIA. Once finalized, the

project report will provide a foundation for discussions of possible adjustments to the band school funding formula.

Performance Standards Project

Throughout 2001/2002, FNEESC, in partnership with DIA, focused attention on the achievement of Aboriginal learners in the public school system through the *Performance Standards Project*. That project is intended to examine possible measures of student performance that can be included in agreements between First Nations and School Districts, so that the results of programs and support activities can be effectively assessed on an ongoing basis. That project is now in a developmental phase, and more information will be provided as it becomes available.

Input from Regional Session Participants

In Tofino, some concern was expressed about the possibility of First Nations schools using the Personal Identification Number as a tracing mechanism. It was agreed that further discussion about the positive and negative implications of the number is required.

Jurisdiction Project

For the past several years, FNEESC has been involved in discussions with the federal and provincial governments regarding First Nations jurisdiction for education. The discussions to date have been very preliminary, intended only to consider possibilities that may exist for assisting First Nations as they attempt to implement their jurisdiction for education. In 2000/2001, FNEESC used a grant provided by the Assembly of First Nations to coordinate a number of regional meetings. Those meetings allowed FNEESC to gather input directly from First Nations regarding this important subject, and to determine whether First Nations support FNEESC's efforts in this area. The results of those meetings are highlighted in the *Jurisdiction Project Summary (July 2001)*. Overall, it appears that First Nations are striving to move ahead in exercising greater authority in the area of education, through efforts to strengthen their school boards, develop their own education operations, establish First Nations controlled schools and post-secondary institutes, and increase their decision-making role in the public education system. The participants at the meetings also expressed support for further consideration of this issue by FNEESC.

Input from Regional Session Participants

At the Tofino regional session, the participants noted that the workbook lay-out was effective, particularly in terms of its wide spacing.

For the upcoming year, FNEESC intends to move ahead in this area by focusing on the key issue of governance, which has been consistently highlighted as a concern. FNEESC has planned the board training activities described earlier in this report. FNEESC also submitted a proposal to DIA, requesting funding for a number of detailed pilot projects on governance, as well as work to consider in more detail potential collective organizations and activities. More information about that proposal and ongoing activities will be shared as it becomes available.

Special Education Activities

For the past several years, special education has been an area of significant focus for FNEESC and the FNSA. Given the critical shortage of special needs funding for First Nations schools, much of the ongoing activity has been designed to bring attention to the need for special education resources, including participation with a national effort coordinated by the Assembly of First Nations to prepare a comprehensive funding submission to the federal government. While that proposal was under consideration, FNEESC and the FNSA implemented a number of initiatives in anticipation of funding for First Nations schools.

At the 2000 regional sessions, a special education policy was presented and approved, which will guide FNEESC and the FNSA in their administration of funding. In addition, a community-level policy framework was presented for feedback, which will assist First Nations in the development of their own special education policies. Information and materials also have continued to be developed.

In 2001/2002, new support services were established to complement the Special Needs Toll-Free Support Line. An Acting Director of Special Needs was hired to support First Nations in their special education planning. In addition, a special education teacher was hired to travel to First Nations schools to assist them in identifying the special needs of their students, and in planning programs and services to support them.

Some of the other activities planned for 2001/2002 include the Special Education Conference described above, as well as ongoing efforts to secure funding for First Nations schools.

Seventh Generation Club

One of the most successful initiatives of the past several years has been the Seventh Generation Club. That Club focuses on promoting amongst First Nations students the value of staying-in-school and making healthy life choices. With sponsorship from DIA, Health Canada, the Vancouver Canucks, and the Chiefs' Health Committee, and administrative support from the FNSEA, Club members receive regular newsletters, a school daytimer specifically designed for the Seventh Generation club, as well as prizes for contests that were based upon participation and enthusiasm. The Seventh Generation Club has been an exceptionally successful initiative, with over 5500 First Nations students enrolled, and consistently positive responses from teachers and parents of club members.

Input from Regional Session Participants

In Cranbrook, it was suggested that a daytimer specifically designed for elementary school students, with more space to write in and materials relevant for younger students, would be useful.

Aboriginal Language Sub-Committee Update

The Aboriginal Languages Sub-Committee of FNEESC has been very active throughout the past several years, striving to provide support to First Nations in the area of Aboriginal languages. In the past, the Sub-Committee has developed an *Aboriginal Language Program Planning Handbook* and accompanying *Workbook*. The Sub-Committee has also worked with the BC College of Teachers to outline the framework for the Developmental Standard Term Certificate (DSTC). The DSTC will allow people interested in teaching their Aboriginal Language to attain post-secondary training that can be ladderred into a Bachelor of Education. Several First Nations communities are nearing the completion of a DSTC program outline, developed in partnership with a post-secondary institute.

The Aboriginal Languages Sub-Committee also planned a number of other initiatives for 2001/2002. The Sub-Committee has started to distribute an Aboriginal Languages Newsletter, to share information and updates more regularly. In addition, the Sub-Committee will be hosting the Aboriginal Languages Conference described earlier in this report. Future plans being considered include the possibility of organizing a tour of New Zealand to learn first-hand from the experiences of the Maori people, who have made tremendous strides in terms of language education and development.

Input from Regional Session Participants

In Cranbrook, there was considerable discussion about the value of the future Maori trip, and the participants strongly recommended that every effort should be made to widely share the information gathered through the trip. Among the suggestions made were encouraging participants to keep a journal of their experiences that could be shared with others who are unable to take part, and asking some of the trip participants to make presentations at relevant meetings and conferences. In addition, it was suggested that sponsoring a Language teaching student to attend the trip would be a valuable investment and excellent incentive for a committed student.

Adult Education Update

There were significant developments in terms of adult education in 2001/2002. For several years, FNEESC included both a Post-Secondary Education and an Adult Secondary Education Sub-Committee, which were concerned with various aspects of adult education. In June 2001, the Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP) sponsored a Post-Secondary Institutes Gathering, which was intended to bring together representatives of First Nations controlled post-secondary education programs for the purpose of information sharing and networking. At that event, the participants highlighted the need for collective support from a provincial level organization, and they requested that FNEESC undertake such a role. They also recommended that, in doing so, adult education be considered holistically. In response, FNEESC amalgamated its post-secondary and adult secondary education sub-committees, and established the Adult Education Sub-Committee. A second adult education gathering was held in October, at which time FNEESC staff was asked to assist a working group in drafting Terms of Reference and supporting documentation for a new, adult focused, provincial-level organization. Further details about this effort will be distributed widely as more progress is made.

Youth Program Administration

FNESC and the FNSA continue to cooperatively manage four youth programs that are funded by DIA – the Summer Science and Technology Camp Initiative, the Summer Student Career Placement Program, the Youth Work Experience Program, and the Cooperative Education Program. Proposal information for those programs is distributed to all First Nations each spring, and final reports are requested upon completion of the projects. The youth programs continue to be very effective, providing excellent learning and growth opportunities to First Nations young people. However, funding for the programs continues to be extremely limited, and FNESC and the FNSA will continue to share that situation with DIA.

Input from Regional Session Participants

At each of the regional sessions, a question was raised regarding the distribution of summary final reports for the youth and gathering strength programs. Several First Nations representatives suggested that the very comprehensive, lengthy final reports need not be distributed as widely as they have been in the past. The final reports will continue to be produced, as they are a key component of the organizations' accountability for the funding. However, producing and distributing numerous copies of the reports is time-consuming and expensive.

At the regional sessions, the participants generally agreed that the reports are useful to some people, but that distributing copies to all Bands, First Nations schools, and Tribal Councils is excessive. There was widespread agreement with the suggestion that one copy of each report should be sent directly to each Band in BC only. A notice that the reports are available will also be sent to all First Nations schools and Tribal Councils, so that they can request a copy from FNESC or borrow the Band's copy if they are interested in seeing the complete report.

At the Tsawwassen regional session, the participants noted that there is some confusion regarding all of the funding programs administered by FNESC, including eligibility criteria for each. They recommended that FNESC distribute a one page summary, listing all of the funding programs and basic information about each.

BC Human Rights Commission

In Osoyoos, Tofino, Tsawwassen, and Prince George, representatives of the BC Human Rights Commission joined the regional sessions for an afternoon discussion. It was explained at those

sessions that the BC Human Rights Commission had planned to facilitate hearings throughout BC to explore issues associated with Aboriginal education. Unfortunately, the newly elected provincial government suspended funding for those Hearings in the fall, and the Commission was no longer able to implement its planned meetings. In response, FNEESC invited the Commission to attend the remaining regional sessions for 2001, to hear directly from First Nations representatives about some of their pressing concerns in the area of Aboriginal education. Those sessions were very informative for the BC Human Rights Commission, as the regional session participants provided very thoughtful input and raised several pertinent ideas and suggestions.

Ministry of Education Data Review

As in previous years, the regional sessions also included a review of the Ministry of Education (MoE) data regarding academic achievement rates of Aboriginal learners in the public school system. The First Nations representatives in attendance at the regional sessions continued to express their concern about the limited success demonstrated in meeting the needs of Aboriginal learners. However, they also expressed their appreciation for the data collection, as it provides a very useful basis for planning interventions and programs to benefit Aboriginal students, and it also is excellent for awareness raising.

Thanks

FNEESC would like to express its gratitude to all of the people who took the time to attend a regional session and share their suggestions and feedback. The meetings continue to provide the FNEESC Board and staff with invaluable advice and inspiration. FNEESC hopes that it can continue to meet the needs of First Nations communities and schools, and undertake programs that can help to achieve quality education for First Nations learners.

List of Participants

Campbell River Regional Session

Randy Bell	Namgis Health Centre
Sharon Gordon	Namgis Health Centre
Nancy Henderson	Campbell River Band
Vivian Hermansen	North Island College
Scot Hutton	Kwakiutl District Council
Arlene John	Ehattesaht Band
Chief R. Kwakseestahla (Russell Quocksister)	Campbell River Band
Pam Lewis	Cape Mudge Band
Len Merriman	T'lisalagi'lakw School
Elaine Price	Cape Mudge Band
Godfrey Price	Cape Mudge Band
Vern Price	Cape Mudge Band
George Quocksister	Campbell River Band
Nicole Seeley	Comox Band
Keith Wilson	Cape Mudge Band
Christa Williams	FNESC
Kelly Kitchen	FNESC

Cranbrook Regional Session

Karen Bailey-Romanko	Ktunaxa Kinbasket Tribal Council
Mary Jimmie	Ktunaxa Kinbasket Tribal Council
Eva Joseph	Columbia Lake
Johanna Kinsman	School District #5
Denise Louie	Lower Kootenay Band
Cecilia Luke	Lower Kootenay Band
Don Maki	Ktunaxa Independent School Society
Maryann Nielson	School District #5
Hazel Pascal	Columbia Lake
Vickie Thomas	St. Mary's Band
Robert Williams	St. Mary's Band
Lynnette Wray	Community Healing and Intervention Program
Barb Kavanagh	FNESC

Kamloops Regional Session

Laura Antoine	Coldwater Band
Ken Billy	Siska Band
John Chenoweth	Upper Nicola Band/School Disitrcet #58
Terrie Davidson	Boothroyd Band

Jody Delaney	Skeetchestn Band
Ross Dickson	School Disitrcet #73
Donna Jules	Adams Lake Band
Charlene McRae	Upper Nicola Band
Monica Macaulay	North Thompson Indian Band
Dineen Manuel	Upper Nicola Band
Marie Matthew	Neqweyqwelsten School
Carol Michel	Stein Valley Nlakapumx School
Janice Michel	Secwepemc Cultural Education Society
Dawn Morrison	Neskonlith Indian Band
Dolores O'Donaghy	Boston Bar Band
Renee Spence	School District #73
Jean York	Lower Nicola Band School
Keith Zabol	Bonaparte Indian Band
Chief Nathan Matthew	FNESC
Monty Palmantier	FNESC

Okanagan Regional Session

Theresa Dennis	Lower Similkameen Indian Band – SD 53
Helen Gallagher	SD 53
Alice George	SD 23-Central Okanagan
Cecilia George	Osoyoos Indian Band –Alternate School
Hubert George	Osoyoos Indian Band – Education Board
Lucy Louie	Osoyoos Indian Band –Education Board
Ramona Louie	Osoyoos Indian Band –Education Board
Dixon Twin	Osoyoos Indian Band
Christa Williams	FNESC
Dean Irvine	FNESC

Prince George

Theresa Abou	Iskut First Nation
Sharon Bird	Nak'azdli Band
Margie Chingee	Tsay Kay Dene
Wayne David	Saik'uz First Nation
Tamara Dokkie	West Moberly First Nation
Darcy Erickson	Nak'azdli Band
Marlene Erickson	Carrier Sekani Tribal Council
Mavis Erickson	Carrier Sekani Tribal Council
Lillian French	Takla Lake First Nation
Sue Gower	Fort Nelson First Nation
Kateri Haskel	TI'azt'en Nation
Gary Jonson	Saik'uz First Nation
Louise Lacerte	Lake Babine Nation
Phillip Lacerte	Lake Babine Nation

Beverly Leon	Tl'azt'en Nation
Jackie Lowley	Lake Babine Nation
Barbara Michell	Fort Babine School
Paul Michell	UNBC First Nations Studies
Lorraine Naziel	Kyah Wiget Education Society
Betty Patrick	Lake Babine Nation
Dorothy Patrick	Lake Babine Nation
Teanne Paulson	Lake Babine Nation
Ann Prince	Takla Lake First Nation
Andreas Rohrback	Aatse Davie School
Delilah Sam	Nak'azdli Band
Tomasson	Tsay Kay Dene
Jane Tuesday	Tsay Kay Dene
Marilyn Vickers	Saik'uz First Nation
Barbara Ward-Burkitt	Prince George Native Friendship Centre
Cathy Warren	Aatse Davie School
Deborah Warren	Lake Babine Nation
Monty Palmantier	FNESC

Saanich Regional Session

Joe Bartleman	Saanich Indian School Board
Lexi Charlie	Ya Thuy Thut Training Centre
Kari Comeau	Victoria Native Friendship Centre
Marie Cooper	Tsartlip Community
Patti Edwards	Nanoose First Nation
Maryann Gladstone	LAU, WELNEW Tribal School
Steven Greymorning	University of Victoria
Denise James	Penelakut Tribe
David Jim	Tseycum Band
Georgia Katz	T'Sou-ke Nation
Zelda Kormucu	Snuneymuxw First Nation
Nella Nelson	Greater Victoria School District
Claudia Roland	Cowichan Tribes
Maryann Thorne	Cowichan Tribes
Conrad Vanderkamp	Saanich Indian School Board
Barbara White	Snuneymuxw First Nation
Barb Kavanagh	FNESC

Terrace Regional Session

Claude Barton	Gingolx First Nation
Desmond Barton	Gingolx First Nation
Neal Barton	Gingolx First Nation
Sharon Beedle	Coast Mountain School District #82
Tim Bilou	Haisla Nation

Deborah Bright	Gitwangak Education Society
Marlene Clifton	School District #52
Louise Daniels	School District #52
Stan Dennis	Lax kw'alaams Band Education Committee
Anne Derrick	Gitanyow Independent School
Ernie Hill	Hartley Bay
Vonnie Hutchingson	Haida Nation
Silimks, Irene Seguin	Gitwinksihlkw Village Government
Debbie Leighton-Stephens	School District #52
Gail McKay	Kitkatla Band
Jacob McKay	WWN – Nisga'a Nation
Moses McKay	WWN – Nisga'a Nation
Debbie Moore	Kitselas Band
Murray Reece	Lax kw'alaams Band
Diane Robinson	Gitanyow Independent School
Vernon Skog	Kitkatla Band
Peter Stevens, Jr.	Gingolx First Nation
Melvin Tolmie	Kitkatla Band
Laura Welde	New Aiyansh Village Government
Amanda Zettergreen	Gitwangak Education Society
Christa Williams	FNESC
Barb Kavanagh	FNESC

Tofino Regional Session

Charlotte Elliot	Chemainus First Nation
Eileen Haggard	Nuu chah nulth Tribal Council
Priscilla Jack	Kyuquot Houpsitas Pre-School
Ann Justin	Kyuquot
Greg Louie	Ahousat/Maaqtusiis School
Carol Martin	Nuu chah nulth Tribal Council
Syd Pauls	Haahuupayak School
Therese Smith	Kyuquot
Brian Tate	Ditidaht First Nation
Cathy Tom	Nuu chah nulth Tribal Council
Mary Touelue	Ucluelet First Nation
Pat Thompson	Nuu chah nulth Tribal Council
Gloria Valentine	Ucluelet
Tracey Webster	Hesquiaht First Nation
Christa Williams	FNESC
Dean Irvine	FNESC

Tsawwassen

Joan Adams	Sto:lo Nation
Cherron Beadnell	Institute of Indigenous Governance

Frances Carlick	Ministry of Education, Aboriginal Education Branch
Willie Charlie	Chehalis First Nation
Angie Dawson	Squamish Nation
Norma George	Douglas First Nation
Deborah Jacobs	Squamish Nation
Les Joe	Sto:lo Nation
Dianna Kay	Sumas First Nation
Tyrone McNeil	Seabird Island
Faye Mitchell	Musqueam First Nation
Andy Phillips	Seabird Island
Sandra Victor	Cheam First Nation
Leslie Williams	Sto:lo Nation
Rosalind Williams	Squamish Nation
Karen Horner	FNESC
Monty Palmantier	FNESC

Williams Lake Regional Session

JoAnne Meiere Bob	Cariboo Tribal Council
Sue Carlson	Yunesit'in ?Egsul School
Christine Chelsea	Esketeme First Nation
Richard Elliot	Tl'entiqox School
Joan Gentles	School District #27
Mamie Hall	School District #27
Denise Sellars	Williams Lake Band
Chief Nathan Matthew	FNESC
Monty Palmantier	FNESC