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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Education

### **New Evergreen certificate rules address auditor general, education partner concerns**

NORTH VANCOUVER – Education Minister Mike Bernier has said the Province is moving forward to address concerns raised by the auditor general of British Columbia and education partners about the disproportionately high number of Aboriginal students receiving Evergreen Certificates.

British Columbia schools will no longer be allowed to issue Evergreen Certificates to students unless they are classified as students with special needs and have an Individual Education Plan – ensuring the certificates are used only for their original purpose.

The change was made at the request of the First Nations Education Steering Committee, the British Columbia School Trustees Association and British Columbia Teachers' Federation. Restricting the use of Evergreen Certificates was also a recommendation made by the auditor general of British Columbia in her report, *An Audit of the Education of Aboriginal Students in the B.C. Public School System*, released in November 2015.

The Evergreen is a B.C. school-completion certificate awarded to students with a special needs designation. It is not a graduation certificate like the Dogwood and is usually not sufficient for direct entry into most post-secondary programs.

Government's goal is to ensure all students receive a Dogwood diploma prior to leaving school so they are prepared for university, college and skills training so they can take advantage of British Columbia's strong and growing economy.

Today's changes support the Ministry of Education's work to further increase the six-year graduation rate for Aboriginal students, which has risen from 39% in 2000-01 to an all-time high of 63% in 2014-15.

#### **Quotes:**

##### **Mike Bernier, Minister of Education –**

"This change helps us move forward in partnership with First Nations' educators and with B.C.'s school trustees. All students in B.C. deserve the very best education we can provide and we are delivering to help ensure our First Nations students have equal opportunity to succeed."

##### **Tyrone McNeil, President, First Nations Education Steering Committee –**

"This amendment is a key element in addressing the racism of low expectations identified in the recent Auditor General's report on Aboriginal education. We applaud the province for its leadership and we look forward to working collaboratively with our education partners to make

systemic changes that improve First Nations student outcomes.

“We must remain diligent and proactive in our efforts for continued improvement until we close the achievement gap, and continue to work together in a partnership approach consistent with our Tripartite Education Framework Agreement and Bilateral Protocol with the province.”

**Glen Hansman, BC Teachers’ Federation –**

“This policy change around the issuing of Evergreen Certificates is an important step in improving education for BC’s First Nations students. The BCTF is pleased to see the government respond to our advocacy, as well as the recommendations made by other education partners like FNEESC, to address the misuse of Evergreen Certificates by some school districts. Moving forward, the province and partner groups need to continue to work to address systemic racism faced by First Nations learners and ensure that the resources, services, and funding are put in place to ensure their success.”

**Teresa Rezansoff, president, BC School Trustee Association–**

“At our 2015 Annual General Meeting, members of BCSTA voiced their support for a review of the Evergreen Certificates parameters. It is our hope that these changes will help to increase Aboriginal student graduation rates, which have already shown considerable improvement in the past 15 years. Our ongoing partnership with the First Nations Education Steering Committee and the Ministry of Education can only serve to strengthen this promising progress.”

**Quick Facts:**

- The Evergreen Certificate (School Completion Certificate) was developed in 1996 school year.
- The Evergreen was in response to concerns from parents and educators that students, many of them with special learning needs, needed a certificate to showcase meaningful recognition of their achievements prior to leaving school.
- The Dogwood Diploma is the certificate of graduation that is granted to a student who completes the Ministry of Education’s provincial graduation requirements. It signifies that the student has met the requirements for graduation as set out in the Graduation Program Order.

**Learn More:**

First Nations Education Steering Committee: <http://www.fnesc.ca/>

B.C. Student Credentials: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/administration/legislation-policy/public-schools/student-credentials>

Six-Year Completion and Graduation Rates and other provincial reports: <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/province.php>

BC's Education Plan: <http://www.bcedplan.ca/>

BC’s new curriculum: <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/>

Student completion rates news release: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2015EDUC0082-002149>

British Columbia School Trustees Association: <http://www.bcsta.org/>

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