



Ministry of
Education



March 5, 2021

Update on the \$8.2M in Federal Safe Return to Class Funds for BC First Nations

To support B.C.'s COVID-19 response for K-12 education, the federal government announced \$242.4 million in one-time funding for the 2020-21 school year, with the first instalment of the investment allocated in September. The second instalment of this funding was announced on January 29, 2021 with \$101.1 million allocated to public school districts, \$7.5 million to independent schools, an additional \$3.5 million to public school districts to help manage COVID-19 exposures in public schools and \$8.2 million to support First Nations students living on reserve.

The Ministry of Education is working in partnership with the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) to send the \$8.2 million of federal funding to BC First Nations to meet the needs of the roughly 9,000 First Nations learners living on reserve and attending BC public and non-First Nations independent schools. The \$8.2 million is intended to supplement the supports that BC public and independent schools should be providing with the federal and provincial COVID funding to all of the 70,000 students who self-identify as Indigenous whether they live on or off reserve. The additional funding recognizes that First Nations require specific financial support as they strive to address the unique needs of students within their own communities.

This funding will be allocated by FNESC using an equitable allocation methodology, reflecting direction from the First Nations Leadership Council. In alignment with the requirements of the federal government, the funding must be utilized to provide direct supports to students in their communities, including technology for remote learning, mental health support, adapted classroom spaces, enhanced cleaning measures, and initiatives to address learning loss occurring as a result of the pandemic.

To access the funding First Nations will submit a Letter of Intent to FNESC outlining their spending plan for the funding. First Nations that access funding must also submit a final report to FNESC on the use of the funding and FNESC will provide the Ministry of Education a summary of those reports.

The direct allocation of funding will allow First Nations to implement supplemental supports and activities in their communities for their students that will enhance the fundamental education services provided by public and non-First Nation independent schools. First Nations should engage with local school districts and non-First Nation independent school authorities on the spending and supports for First Nation students in their communities, to jointly consider how this funding can align with and complement the supports that school districts and non-First Nation independent school authorities have in place.

School districts and non-First Nation independent school authorities are responsible for planning for and meeting the needs of all students, including First Nations students, in alignment with expectations established as part of the [Provincial COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#) and the



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[Operational Guidelines for School Districts and Independent School Authorities](#). Consistent with the first installment of federal funding, districts are also required to report on how the needs of Indigenous students were met with the federal funding, and how Indigenous peoples were involved in the planning and use of the funding.

This approach represents an exciting model of partnership that recognizes the critical and complementary roles that school districts and First Nations play in providing educational services to First Nations learners. The Ministry and FNESC are confident this funding will assist in meeting the unique challenges presented to BC First Nations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you have questions, please contact Caroline.Ponsford@gov.bc.ca