

Update on K-12 Recovery and September Planning for Public and Non-First Nation Independent Schools

July 8, 2021

The First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) is sharing details related to the Ministry of Education's plans for the 2021-22 school year. This update is relevant to all First Nations with students in public and non-First Nation independent schools and includes important information on an expectation that boards of education and non-First Nation independent school authorities engage First Nations in planning for September.

FNESC and the First Nations Schools Association (FNSEA) will also continue to support First Nations schools as the 2021-22 school year approaches. Further information specific to First Nations schools will follow throughout the summer.

Please feel free to contact FNESC with your questions. Find the latest updates on our [COVID-19 information page](#).

K-12 Recovery Plan and District Reporting

On June 17, 2021 the BC Ministry of Education [announced](#) its [K-12 Recovery Plan](#) for the 2021-22 school year. In alignment with the wider provincial [Restart Plan](#), BC public and non-First Nation independent schools are planning a full return to in-class instruction beginning in September 2021.

Acknowledging that some First Nations may continue to take increased safety measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and consistent with the BC *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, BC public school districts and non-First Nation independent schools are expected to engage First Nations with students living in community (on reserve) and enrolled in public and non-First Nation independent schools to discuss return to school plans for September. This will help to identify potential accommodations needed to support students who may not be returning to in-person classes.

Please see [this letter](#) from the Deputy Minister with further details and a copy of the reporting template that public school districts will be required to complete. A similar letter and reporting template for non-First Nation independent schools is available [here](#).

The [K-12 Recovery Plan](#) also includes direction to boards of education and non-First Nation independent school authorities to engage with BC First Nations. A selection of these expectations is provided below.

First Nations are encouraged to bring the following key provisions forward in discussions with school districts:

- Boards/authorities are encouraged to apply a compassionate and trauma-informed leadership lens in their recovery planning. (p.2)
- The fourth principle guiding the K-12 sector throughout the 2021-22 school year clarifies the need to "Consult and work with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples to address the unique educational and learning needs of their communities." (p.3)
- Some First Nations communities may continue to take increased safety measures during the pandemic recovery phase or still be under states of emergency as the 2021-22 school year begins. This may mean that some First Nations learners will not be able to attend in-person classes. (p.10)
- Boards of education and independent schools (excluding First Nations independent schools) are expected to engage with First Nations communities who have First Nation students living in community (on reserve) enrolled in the school district/school as soon as possible to discuss return to school plans for September. (p.10)

- Boards of education and independent school authorities are expected to continue to support equitable outcomes and opportunities for all Indigenous learners by maintaining Indigenous student supports and collaboration with Indigenous communities and education partners. Boards/authorities are expected to collaborate with local First Nations, Métis Chartered communities and Indigenous communities on any changes/updates to the delivery of any programs including Indigenous language and culture services. (p.11)
- The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on Indigenous communities. Boards/authorities should identify Indigenous students whose educational outcomes may have been negatively impacted during the pandemic and make accommodations to ensure these students are supported. The needs of Indigenous students who require additional supports should be planned for and prioritized in partnership with parents/caregivers and communities. (p.11)
- Boards of education are also expected to engage with First Nations to identify the transportation needs of First Nation students living on reserve and attending in-person classes. Collaboration between boards and First Nations is necessary to ensure there are equitable and safe transportation opportunities as students transition to in-class instruction. (p.11)

Additional considerations for boards/authorities include:

- Collaboration between teachers and Indigenous support staff on the development of Indigenous students' learning plans, including ensuring the integration of language and culture into these plans.
- Awareness and sensitivity regarding the complex and devastating history that pandemics have had on many Indigenous communities.
- Understanding that some Indigenous families and communities may continue to take increased safety measures, which may mean that some students will not be able to attend in-person instruction in September. (p.11)

Additionally, boards/authorities have an obligation to inform and communicate with the First Nations they serve regarding learning plans for Nominal Roll students, Enhancement Agreement goals and Equity Action Plans, Local Education Agreements and Joint Transportation Plans. (p.11)

\$4.8 Million to First Nations for COVID-19 Response

As part of its Recovery Plan, the Province [recently announced](#) an investment of \$4.8M to address the needs of First Nations students who normally reside on reserve and regularly attend public and non-First Nation independent schools.

The funding will be used to provide grants for all BC First Nations with students in public and non-First Nation independent schools, calculated using an equitable base-plus-per-capita formula, to support students whose access to education continues to be disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic in the fall, as well as students who need additional assistance in order to overcome COVID-related learning and social-emotional impacts. To access their grants, First Nations will be required to submit a Letter of Intent including a spending plan.

FNESC appreciates the Ministry's investment and recognition of the important role of First Nations in assisting and ensuring the well-being of First Nation students in response to the significant challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. FNESC will provide information on how First Nations can access this funding in the coming months.

Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools: Outlook for the 2021-22 School Year

On June 17, 2021 the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) released their [Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools: Outlook for the 2021-22 School Year](#) including information on anticipated public health guidance for K-12 schools for the 2021-22 school year. The BCCDC is expected to provide a full update to the Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools in August 2021, which may differ from the guidance included in this resource. First Nations may wish to consult this document in anticipation of September start-up. A separate communication with information on the BCCDC guidance will be provided directly to First Nations schools.