

OPERATING A FIRST NATIONS ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAM

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Prepared by

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AUGUST 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Glossary Of Terms Used

Introduction

Structuring Your Program

Offering The Dogwood / Adult Dogwood Diploma

Funding Your Program

Staffing Your Program

Course Delivery

Being Attentive To Student Attendance

What About Offering Alternate Education?

Appendix A

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED

BC Adult Dogwood Diploma: formally known as the BC Adult Graduation Diploma, a BC Ministry of Education graduation certificate that is available to adult learners. A student can only be placed on an Adult Dogwood program AFTER the age of 18.

BC Dogwood Diploma: formally known as the BC Certificate of Graduation, the Ministry of Education graduation certificate awarded to students who successfully complete the provincial graduation requirements. The Dogwood Diploma indicates that a student has achieved the provincial learning outcomes set out by the Ministry of Education.

BC Tripartite Education Agreement: Supporting First Nation Student Success: or “**BCTEA**”, an agreement signed by FNEESC, Canada, and British Columbia, and witnessed by the FNSA, which is intended to lead to systemic shifts to support successful educational outcomes of all First Nation students, regardless of where they live or are enrolled in school in BC.

First Nations Adult Secondary Education Program: a BCTEA-funded program of study for adult learners who have not yet graduated and who are taking secondary level courses to access the Dogwood or Adult Dogwood Diploma, or adult learners who have graduated and are taking one or more eligible provincial courses in order to pursue further studies or employment opportunities.

First Nation Adult Education Centre: a centre located on-reserve and operated and administered by a First Nation in British Columbia, which provides a First Nations Adult Secondary Education Program.

First Nation School: a school located on-reserve and operated and administered by a First Nation in British Columbia, providing education at one or more of the kindergarten, elementary or secondary levels, including First Nation Independent schools. First Nation schools enroll school-age and possibly also adult students.

First Nations Education Steering Committee: or “**FNEESC**,” a policy and advocacy organization that represents and supports First Nations’ efforts to improve the success of their students and advance First Nations education by disseminating information, undertaking research, administering programs and services, and advocating and negotiating with government at the direction of First Nations.

First Nations Schools Association: or “**FNSA**,” a society that supports First Nation schools in creating effective, nurturing, and linguistically and culturally appropriate education environments that provide students with a positive foundation in all academic areas.

First Nations Education Funding Model: the approach for federal funding for K4-12 First Nations education in BC (including adult secondary education), which is based on the Ministry of Education Operating Grants Manual, with specific adaptations to reflect the unique needs and circumstances of First Nation schools and First Nation adult education centres.

First Nations Education Funding Handbook: the funding manual maintained by FNEESC and FNSA that sets out the formula used to calculate funding for students attending First Nation schools and adult education centres.

Funding Estimator Tool: a calculator that determines the funding allocation for a First Nation based on the BC First Nations Education Funding Model and student enrolment numbers.

First Nations Schools Assessment and Certification Process: a process for assessment, improvement planning, and certification of First Nation schools and First Nation adult education centres, which is managed by FNSA and FNEESC.

Indigenous Services Canada: or “ISC,” the federal department that manages funding for First Nations education.

ISC Nominal Roll: the registry of all eligible elementary and secondary students (including adult students) who are funded by Canada to attend a First Nation, federal, provincial, or private/independent school, including a First Nations adult education centre.

School Governing Authority: the term used when referring to the Authority that oversees the ongoing operations of First Nation schools and adult education centres, including directing their purpose, mission, budget, and policies.

INTRODUCTION

This pamphlet was created by the BC First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNEESC) and BC First Nations Schools Association (FNSEA), in consultation with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), to share information with First Nations representatives that are planning to operate a First Nation adult secondary education program. Resources with additional details about the topics briefly described herein are highlighted where relevant, and support is also available upon request.

- Please feel free to contact Lauranne Hutton, lauranneh@fnesc.ca, for further assistance if needed.
- Specific questions about ISC funding for adult secondary education can be directed to the ISC BC Region education team at aadnc.bceducation.aandc@canada.ca.

STRUCTURING YOUR PROGRAM

One of the first things to consider when preparing to offer a First Nation adult secondary education program in your community is where the program will be located.

- Some First Nations that already operate a First Nation school choose to enroll adult students in that school.
- Other First Nations choose to open an adult education centre that operates independently of an existing First Nations school.

In either case, First Nations that want to access Nominal Roll funding, including those that intend to open a new centre and those that are planning to add a grade or adult education program to an existing First Nation school, must first apply to ISC. ISC must then review and approve the application before the new grade or program can be funded through the Nominal Roll.

Applications to add grade(s) or program(s) must be submitted by January 31st in order to be considered for implementation in September of the following school year.

- The addition to grade or program application form, which includes details about ISC's requirements, can be requested from ISC Education Program staff by email at aadnc.bceducation.aandc@canada.ca.

Generally, the application requires information to demonstrate that an adequate facility is available to offer the adult education program, as well as information about projected enrollment and the applicant's ability to offer adult students the Dogwood or Adult Dogwood Diploma.

The application also requires confirmation of Chief and Council support for the program, and so it is critical to communicate clearly and have approval in place for any planned First Nations adult secondary education program.

An additional issue to be considered is how the program will be governed. A broad range of governance models exist for First Nation schools and First Nation adult education centres in BC, such as:

- operating under the direct authority of Chief and Council, with no school board or education committee in existence;
- being governed by Chief and Council, advised or guided by some kind of an education committee or board, which may or may not be incorporated;
- being guided by some kind of committee (non-legal entity) that is accountable back to the Chief and Council; or
- having a formal school board (a distinct legal entity, usually under the provincial *Societies Act*).

Some adult education centres are governed by the same authority that oversees a First Nation school in the community. Others are governed by a separate authority.

Whatever the case may be, determining the governance structure that will work best for your particular needs and circumstances is a key decision for any First Nation adult education centre, and one that clearly requires direction from Chief and Council and your community.

- Further information about effective school governance is available in a 2020 FNECS and FNSA *Handbook For First Nation School Governing Authorities*.

OFFERING THE DOGWOOD / ADULT DOGWOOD DIPLOMA

As agreed through the British Columbia Tripartite Education Agreement (BCTEA), First Nation schools and First Nation adult education centres can offer their eligible students the provincial Dogwood or Adult Dogwood Diploma if the school or centre is certified through the First Nations Schools Assessment and Certification Process.¹

The First Nations Schools Assessment and Certification Process is a five-year cycle of review and follow-up. The Process begins with participating schools and adult education centres implementing a year-long examination of all aspects of their operations, including considering their programs and

¹ First Nations schools with Independent School status can automatically award the Dogwood or Adult Dogwood certificate to eligible graduates and they do not require FNSA Certification, but participation in the First Nations Schools Assessment and Certification Process is still optional for First Nations Independent Schools if they choose to use the opportunity for school improvement planning purposes.

administration structures, student outcomes data, as well as survey input from governing authority members, students, parents / caregivers, and school staff. The overall goal of the process is to identify school or centre strengths and areas for growth, leading to the creation of a School Growth Plan (that is, a strategic plan for improvement). First Nation schools and adult education centres are sponsored for participation in the process, and there are also workshops and ongoing assistance from FNEESC staff.

Upon completion of the internal review, participating schools and centres are then visited by a team that reviews the assessment findings and School Growth Plan to provide suggestions and feedback. In years two to four, funding grants and continued support from FNEESC staff are available to assist schools and centres in implementing their School Growth Plans.

Participating schools and adult education centres also may request "Certification" as part of the assessment process. This component requires meeting a set of collectively established standards that relate to student achievement and overall success, including having well-supported and effectively planned programs, with a School Growth Plan that will help the school or centre to realize its mission.

Students who attend a First Nation school or adult education centre that has been certified can access the Dogwood or Adult Dogwood if the students complete all of the graduation requirements set by the BC Ministry of Education.

- The steps to offer the Dogwood or Adult Dogwood are outlined in a *Guide to the Dogwood / Adult Dogwood Diploma Process for Non-Independent First Nations Schools*.

Alternatively, First Nation adult education centres can have their students access the Dogwood or Adult Dogwood through a partnership arrangement with another First Nation school, with a school district, or with a provincially recognized Online Learning Centre.

Most First Nations schools and First Nation adult education centres award the provincial graduation certificates by becoming FNSA certified.

FUNDING YOUR PROGRAM

Nominal Roll Funding

First Nations that have approval from ISC to add adult secondary education to an existing First Nation school or to open a new First Nation adult education centre can receive federal funding for their students according to the BCTEA funding formula. The majority of First Nation schools in BC are now funded according to the BCTEA funding formula, with the exception of schools that are operated by a First Nation that has a treaty or self-government agreement or by a First Nation that has a block funding agreement with ISC. The funding arrangements for those schools are consistent with their Nation's agreement.

The BCTEA funding formula is based on the BC Ministry of Education’s funding model for public schools, with adaptations to reflect the unique circumstances of First Nations.

First Nations’ BCTEA funding allocations are calculated by ISC using student enrolment data and factors that apply specifically to each school or adult education centre. Enrolment data is collected by ISC annually using the Nominal Roll – the registry of all eligible elementary and secondary students funded by Canada.

Each year, ISC applies the BCTEA funding formula to First Nation schools and First Nation adult education centres, and outlines the approved funding amount for each First Nation using a “Funding Detail Budget Report.”

The BCTEA funding model and ISC’s Funding Detail Budget Report is described in detail in a First Nations Education Funding Handbook, and a “Funding Estimator” tool is also available to allow First Nations to forecast their school funding for the upcoming year based on projected enrolments.

The updated BCTEA Funding Handbook and Estimator Tool are available on the FNESC and FNSA web sites, and support for understanding BCTEA budget information is available from FNESC staff.

- Adult students can be included on the ISC Nominal Roll if they are age 18 and over on December 31 of the school year in which funding support is required. There is no maximum age limit for adult learners attending a First Nation adult education centre.
- In order to be Nominal Roll funded, adult learners must be ordinarily resident on-reserve.²
- Adult students must be enrolled in an ISC approved adult program or adult education centre in order to be eligible for the Nominal Roll. Any exceptions to this requirement must be pre-approved through discussion with ISC education staff.
- Adult students who have not previously graduated are eligible for funding for courses that lead to the Dogwood or Adult Dogwood.

² According to the BC Tripartite Agreement (BCTEA), ordinarily resident on reserve means: a student usually lives at a civic address on reserve, is a child in joint custody who lives on reserve most of the time, or is staying on reserve and has no usual home elsewhere. Students continue to be considered ordinarily resident on reserve if they return to live on reserve with their parents, guardians or maintainers during the year, even if they live elsewhere while attending school or working at a summer job. “Reserves” are deemed to include all land set aside by the federal government for the use and occupancy of a First Nation, along with all other Crown lands which are recognized by Canada as settlement lands of the First Nation of which the student is a resident.

- Graduated adult students are eligible for funding for the courses listed in Appendix A starting in the 2021/2022 school year, recognizing that some graduated adults may require courses for the purpose of upgrading their education or meeting the pre-requisites of post-secondary or training programs.
- It is a requirement of the Nominal Roll data collection system (EIS) to identify the grade level of a student enrolled in any program – including an adult secondary education program. The grade level listed for an adult student will affect ISC’s funding calculations. To calculate a student’s FTE enrollment for the purpose of the Nominal Roll:
 - Students who are working below the grade 8 level can be reported as up to 1.0 FTE, regardless of the number of courses being taken.
 - Students who are working at the grade 8 or 9 level will be funded at a base of 0.625 FTE for 1 course, plus 0.125 FTE for each additional course being taken.
 - Students who taking grade 10, 11 or 12 courses will be funded at 0.125 FTE per course.

# of Courses Being Taken	Adult Students Who Have Not Graduated High School			<i>New for 2021-22 school year:</i> Adult Students Who Have Graduated High School
	Working at a level below grade 8	Working at a grade 8 or 9 level	Taking grade 10 – 12 courses	Eligible Secondary Level Courses
1	Up to 1.0 FTE total, regardless of number of courses being taken	0.625 FTE	0.125	0.125
2		0.750 FTE	0.250	0.250
3		0.875 FTE	0.375	0.375
4		1.000 FTE	0.500	0.500
5		1.000 FTE	0.625	0.625
6		1.000 FTE	0.750	0.750
7		1.000 FTE	0.875	0.875
8		1.000 FTE	1.000	1.000
9		1.000 FTE	1.125 *	1.125 *

* Note: Under BCTEA, it is possible to claim more than 1.0 FTE for grade 10 to 12 students who are enrolled in more than eight courses. Each additional course can be claimed as an additional 0.125 FTE.

Another key thing to think about is how your first year of operations will be funded, as you will not receive funding based on your October Nominal Roll submission until the following year.

ISC may consider providing advance funding to a First Nation if program implementation will result in financial hardship. As funding is dependent on the number of FTEs, having a firm number of anticipated students will be important. It is necessary to contact an ISC Funding Services Officer to initiate discussion if this is an option you want to pursue.

Other Funding Sources

Once students are included on the ISC Nominal Roll, a number of funding grants for First Nation adult education centres are available.

For example, for almost two decades a Special Education Program (SEP) administered by FNEC and FNSA has supported First Nation schools and First Nation adult education centres in meeting the needs of their students with exceptionalities. Each year, the majority of the funding available for this program is allocated to all First Nation schools and adult education centres through grants to support their special education programming. A separate portion of the BC SEP funding is also available through a proposal process to address extraordinary needs that cannot be met using schools' annual grants.

FNEC and FNSA also manage a comprehensive First Nations Language and Culture Program, which provides grants to First Nation schools and First Nation adult education centres for students on the Nominal Roll, totaling approximately \$14 million annually.

BCTEA-funded First Nation schools and First Nation adult education centres are provided details about the SEP and Language and Culture grants each year, including information about their specific funding amounts, as well as the process for accessing their allocations and reporting on the sponsored activities.

You may also want to consider whether you can access other sources of funding available to support your adult secondary education program, if needed. For example, there are currently 14 Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) agreement holders in BC, with regional service areas, to help Indigenous people prepare for, find and keep high-demand jobs now and in the long term. In some cases, it may be possible to access financial assistance for secondary courses if they are part of a skills training program. Information about this possibility can be found at <https://www.itabc.ca/aboriginal-people-trades/isets-holders>.

It is also important to clarify how the funding for adult students will be integrated into the overall school budget if adult secondary education is added to an existing First Nation school.

Unfortunately, adult students are currently not eligible for funding through the Reciprocal Tuition agreement with the Province of BC.

STAFFING YOUR PROGRAM

A key consideration for First Nations adult secondary education is determining who will oversee the First Nation adult education centre or adult education program that is operated as part of a First Nation school.

Larger programs may be led by a Program Coordinator, or the program may have a head teacher, principal, or adult ed instructor leading the administration of the program and providing student supports and instruction, as appropriate.

If your courses are being taught by a qualified adult ed instructor and you want to seek certification by the Ministry of Education, the instructor can apply to the BC Ministry of Education Teacher Certification Branch for a Letter of Permission (LOP) – a special permit to teach at a particular school for up to one school year. LOPs are generally used to hire an uncertified instructor when a certified teacher is not available. More information about applying for a Letter of Permission is available at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/teach/employer-support/letter-of-permission>.

COURSE DELIVERY

First Nation schools and First Nation adult education centres use a variety of approaches to offer secondary courses to students – often using different methods simultaneously.

- **Instruction On-site:** Offering instruction on-site is an ideal option if a teacher with the appropriate expertise is available. Offering instruction on-site can help to build a sense of connectedness for students and can be especially beneficial for supporting students directly and pro-actively. This is true whether the students are school-age or adults.
- **Connected Classrooms:** For schools and adult education centres that do not have a teacher with the necessary subject matter expertise available to deliver specific courses on-site, the FNEESC/FNSA-sponsored Connected Classrooms program facilitates an innovative opportunity for collectives of BC First Nation schools and adult education centres to offer high school courses using a combination of technologies to create an integrated, interactive classroom environment for students in various locations. This project differs from other online learning initiatives as the students use real-time video conferencing to participate in a virtual classroom with an instructor who is qualified to teach the subject, complemented by in-person support from a certified lead co-teacher who is located on-site. More information about this option is available by contacting Lauranne Hutton at lauranneh@fnesc.ca.
- **Online Learning Arrangements with a provincial agency (previously known as Distributed Learning – DL):** Some First Nation high schools and adult education centres are helping their students take courses through arrangements with provincial Online Learning schools. “Online Learning” means a method of instruction that relies primarily on indirect communication between learners and educators, including internet or other electronic-based delivery, teleconferencing or correspondence.

- If you are using online learning through an arrangement with a provincial agency, it may be helpful to review a pamphlet: *Things to Know If You Are Using Online Learning To Offer Courses To Your Students* (prepared by the FNSA and FNEC in December 2020).
- *New for 2021/2022:* FNEC and FNSA are beginning a pilot project in 2021, creating online courses for First Nation schools and First Nation adult education centres that will be available from a designated website. The courses will be designed for direct delivery to students on-site, with training and support provided by FNEC and FNSA. More information about this option will be coming soon.

BEING ATTENTIVE TO STUDENT ATTENDANCE

A key issue to be considered when operating an adult education program is how to promote regular attendance. High rates of absences can seriously threaten student success rates. Also, some researchers suggest that tendencies toward absenteeism for adult learners can ultimately lead to attrition, which poses serious challenges for not only students, but also for program success rates and ultimately an ability to continue to offer effective adult secondary education courses.

- To provide suggestions for addressing this very challenging but important topic, FNEC and FNSA have created a *A Toolkit For Raising The Attendance Rates of First Nations Students In British Columbia*. The Toolkit is intended to be of interest to people who work with First Nations students who are enrolled in a variety of education settings – including First Nations adult education centres. The Toolkit includes suggestions specifically for school age students, as well as suggestions that are intended to be relevant for adult learners and for communities that are working to support students of all ages.

WHAT ABOUT OFFERING ALTERNATE EDUCATION?

In some cases, students aged 16-17 years old may enroll in a First Nations Adult Education Centre or a First Nations school to work towards completion of their Dogwood Diploma through what are commonly called “Alternate Education Programs.” Such programs often:

- are designed to support vulnerable and at-risk students whose educational, social and emotional needs are not being met through existing mainstream programs;
- are focused on educational, social and emotional issues for students whose needs are not being met in a traditional school program;

- provide support through differentiated instruction, specialized program delivery and enhanced counselling services based on students' needs.

Strong practices for alternate education programs can include:

- an intake process to determine the students' needs, educational and life goals, and strengths / prior learning;
- an annually reviewed learning plan for each student that clearly defines the objectives for the student, additional services needed, strengths and progress to date, and any transition plans;
- an exit strategy for each student that focuses on their transition back into the regular school system, graduation, or to work or post-secondary training and education; and
- efforts to access additional services that would be beneficial for students (i.e. youth workers, counselling, etc...).

Please contact an ISC Education Program Advisor (aadnc.bceducation.aandc@canada.ca) before including school-aged alternate education students who are enrolled in a First Nation adult education centre on the Nominal Roll report.

APPENDIX A

The following courses can be offered to adult students who already have graduated through adult education programs that have been approved by ISC through the Additions to Grades application process as of the 2021/2022 school year.

The full list of approved courses is highlighted in the ISC Nominal Roll instructions.

- English Level 1/2: Companion-Reading
- English Level 1/2: Companion-Speaking & Listening
- English Level 1: Core
- English Level 2: Core
- English Level 3/4: Companion - Reading
- English Level 3/4: Companion - Writing
- English Level 3: Core
- English Level 4: Core
- English Level 5/6/7: Companion - Writing
- English Level 5: Core
- English Level 6: Core
- English Level 7: Core
- Information & Communications Technology
- Math Level 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5
- Math Level 6: Apprenticeship & Workplace
- Math Level 6: Math Foundations
- Math Level 7: Apprenticeship & Workplace
- Math Level 7: Math Foundations
- Science: Biology
- Science: Chemistry
- Science: Physics
- Social Studies
- English First Peoples 12
- Composition 11
- Creative Writing 11
- Literary Studies 11
- New Media 11
- Spoken Language 11
- English Studies 12
- Life Sciences 11
- Anatomy and Physiology 12
- Chemistry 11
- Chemistry 12
- Physics 11
- Physics 12
- Workplace Mathematics 11
- Foundations of Mathematics 11
- Pre-Calculus 11
- Pre-Calculus 12
- Apprenticeship Mathematics 12
- Foundations of Mathematics 12
- Calculus 12