



## MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

between the FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION STEERING COMMITTEE (FNESC)  
and the British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA)

### WHEREAS

- A Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational system and institutions as affirmed in the *United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples* ("UN Declaration"), and as a fundamental aspect of their inherent right of self-government recognized by Canada and British Columbia pursuant to section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.
- B FNESC is a policy and advocacy organization that represents and works on behalf of First Nations in British Columbia, with a mandate to advance First Nations education in British Columbia by disseminating information, undertaking research, working with the First Nations School Association (FNSEA) to administer programs and services, and advocating and negotiating with the provincial and federal governments and other key stakeholders at the direction of First Nations.
- C The BCSTA is an advocacy organization that supports public boards of education, which are locally elected and responsible for the provision of education programs within public schools in British Columbia, pursuant to the *School Act* and subject to the Minister of Education and Child Care's authority governing the provision of educational programs
- D The BCSTA is driven by the following beliefs:
- A high-quality public education system is the foundation of a democratic society;
  - Improving student achievement is the key work of locally elected boards of education;
  - The interests of BC students are best met through local decision-making with an engaged community;
  - Providing a strong, representative voice for boards of education throughout the province is important;
  - Helping to build effective boards of education by providing development, communications and support services continues to be a vital role.
- E BCSTA, as an advocacy voice for its members and boards of education, is a key partner in developing and maintaining an effective public education system.
- F The Parties recognize and respect each other's mandate to represent the interests and operate at the direction of their respective membership, and acknowledge that their respective members, at times, identify issues and give direction for advocacy work on matters that are of common interest or concern.
- G The Parties are committed to supporting the implementation of the BC Tripartite Education Agreement (BCTEA), the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (BC), and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC).
- H The Parties seek to formalize their ongoing relationship by articulating a process to engage in regular dialogue on education as it relates to First Nations students in provincial public schools, and on related issues of mutual interest and concern.

### THEREFORE, the Parties have reached the following understanding:

#### 1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) confirms and sets out a mutual commitment of the Parties, consistent with their respective mandates, to engage in dialogue and joint action on specific issues and initiatives to improve the education outcomes of First Nations learners in provincial public schools.
- 1.2 The dialogue and work under this MOU are intended to be complementary to, supportive of and, as appropriate, informed or guided by the ongoing work under:
- the BC Tripartite Education Agreement (BCTEA), which commits FNESC, the Government of British Columbia and the Government of Canada to work together to achieve systemic shifts to improve education outcomes of First Nation learners in BC; and
  - the bilateral BC-FNESC Protocol (2015), which formalizes a bilateral process to assist the Ministry of Education and Child Care and FNESC to improve the educational outcomes of First Nations students through collaborative efforts.

## 2.0 Principled Framework

- 2.1 The Parties acknowledge that an existing principled framework is available for guiding collective work and collaboration to support improved education outcomes of First Nation learners, which includes:
- section 35 of the *Constitution Act*, 1982;
  - the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*;
  - the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*;
  - the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (BC);
  - the *Commitment Document*, Vision and Concrete Actions; and
  - the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.

## 3.0 Objectives

- 3.1 The Parties are committed to assisting the building of capacity within the BC public education system regarding matters relevant to First Nations education, including awareness and understanding of the principle of First Nations control of First Nations education, the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples, and the Indigenous human right to all levels and forms of education without discrimination affirmed in article 14 of the UN Declaration.
- 3.2 The Parties are committed to supporting improved educational outcomes of First Nations learners, and seek to work together, along with other government bodies and partners as appropriate and agreed, on key matters impacting First Nation student outcomes.
- 3.3 The Parties are committed to actively supporting relationships between boards of education and local First Nations.
- 3.4 The Parties are committed to promoting the negotiation and implementation of effective local education agreements (LEAs) by all boards of education with local First Nations, including:
- adhering to the LEA Guiding Principles developed by the parties to BCTEA; and
  - using the Provincial LEA, developed pursuant to BCTEA, upon the request of First Nations.

- 3.5 The Parties are committed to supporting the meaningful development and implementation of First Nation language programs in public schools.
- 3.6 The Parties are committed to supporting the establishment of Indigenous Education Councils in all BC school districts, as well as promoting their role as joint-decision makers in matters impacting First Nation learners.

## 4.0 Implementation

- 4.1 The Parties agree to hereby establish an Executive Table that will be comprised of:
- the Executive of BCSTA; and
  - the Executive of FNEESC.
- 4.2 The Executive Table will hold meetings two times per year to:
- identify priority issues and establish a mutual and focused agenda;
  - determine and direct work to be jointly undertaken regarding the priority issues and to advance the mutual agenda; and
  - discuss any other issues related to the effective implementation of the MOU.
- 4.3 The Parties will establish a technical table to carry out the direction under section 4.1 ("Technical Working Table"), including the development of a work plan, and will report back to the Executive Table.
- 4.4 The Parties agree to provide advance notice, whenever possible, on actions and communications that may have significant implications for the collective work under this MOU.


## 5.0 Term and Review

- 5.1 This MOU shall take effect from the date that it is signed by the Parties.
- 5.2 The Parties may agree to amend or terminate this MOU at any time.
- 5.3 The Parties will review the effectiveness of this MOU and identify opportunities for improving this MOU within two years of it taking effect.

## COMMITMENT

In witness thereof, the Parties have executed this MOU on Cooperation and Communication on this April 22, 2022.

On behalf of the British Columbia School Trustees Association:

  
Stephanie Higginson  
President

On behalf of the First Nations Education Steering Committee:

  
Tyrone McNeil  
President