



Ministry of
Education and
Child Care



Canada 

First Nation Student Transportation Planning, Policy, and Procedures Guide

2026/27 School Year: Interim Approach

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Introduction

The [BC Tripartite Education Agreement: Supporting First Nation Student Success](#) (“BCTEA”) between the Province of British Columbia (“BC”), the First Nations Education Steering Committee (“FNESC”), and Indigenous Services Canada (“ISC”) sets the foundation for further growth and changes to support the enhancement of the B.C. public education system.

Since 2018/19, Boards of Education (“Boards”) and First Nations have been co-developing Joint Transportation Plan Worksheets (“Joint Plans”) to address on-reserve First Nation Student transportation. The Joint Plans were to be informed by criteria established by the BCTEA Parties.

Transportation funding is intended to be supplemental to already available funding (e.g., the Student Location Factor, Supplementary Student Location Factor, Student Transportation Fund, other Provincial general operating grants, and proxies for transportation funding included in the First Nation Student Rate) to meet the transportation needs of First Nation Students’ identified through the co-development of Joint Plans.

An ongoing effective transportation model is essential to improving First Nation Students’ attendance and outcomes. The Parties are committed to building upon the improvements for First Nation Students’ transportation initiated under BCTEA in 2018. An interim approach will be implemented for the 2026/27 school year:

- In this transition year, the BCTEA First Nation Student Transportation funding is based on approved amounts from the 2025/26 school year for To/From school transportation. School districts should maintain existing To/From service levels that were in place in the 2025/26 school year.
- Other sources of funding, such as other available provincial operating grant funding, may be needed to support parental assistance and extracurricular transportation.
- First Nation Student Transportation funding will be used to enhance services that are currently funded by the school district or create new services as identified by the First Nation and school district.
- First Nation Student Transportation funding will be allocated from ECC to school districts, based on 2025/26 To/From approved amounts, as a special grant that is restricted and accounted for as a special purpose fund under section 115(a) of the [School Act](#).
- These funds may only be used for the transportation needs of First Nation Students attending BC public schools with an annual Joint Plan.
- A simplified report template will assist with streamlining reporting requirements.

Purpose

The *First Nation Student Transportation Planning and Procedures Guide* is a guideline for Boards and First Nations to plan transportation services for First Nation Students attending BC Public Schools.

Guiding Principles for Joint First Nation Student Transportation Plans

The following are Guiding Principles for Joint First Nation Student Transportation Plans by Boards and First Nations:

1. The Board of Education and First Nation will identify transportation needs and services to get all First Nation Students enrolled in BC public schools to and from those schools, respecting parental choice of where to enroll their child to attend school.
2. Safety is paramount in all planning and decisions:
 - a) there will be a safety protocol in place to address safety issues for the First Nations (e.g., weather conditions, wildlife)

- b) shelters will be made available where needed.
3. Transportation will be available for extracurricular activities.¹
 4. There will be no walk limits (i.e., drivers need to go into the community or catchment area to pick up and drop off children).
 5. The shortest ride possible will be implemented.
 6. Wherever possible, there will be no highway pick ups or drop offs.
 7. A communications protocol will be established and agreed upon to ensure effective and timely communications to address issues that arise (e.g., travel disruption due to inclement weather) and method of preferred communication (e.g., radio/satellite communication).
 8. Drivers will receive adequate professional development related to customer service, student management, etc. as required.
 9. Criminal record checks will be required for bus/water taxi employees (including school district staff and non-school district staff).
 10. Changes to the joint plan may only be made by written agreement, with timely notice to parents.

Funding

Transportation of First Nation Students living on reserve and attending BC Public Schools includes funding from the following sources:

- **First Nation Student Rate (FNSR)**
The Student Location Factor, Supplemental Student Location Factor and Student Transportation Fund outlined in the Provincial Operating Grants Manual and Summary of Grants Tables will remain in the FNSR. This portion of the FNSR is considered a “proxy” for funding First Nation Student transportation and it is the minimum amount of the FNSR that should be applied to the transportation of First Nation Students.
- **Provincial Student Transportation Fund (\$15.4M)**
The Provincial Student Transportation Fund is available and allocated to all sixty school districts to be used for “Enhancing safety and services to all students, including service improvements that will benefit First Nation students.”
- **Provincial Operating Grants**
Boards can allocate Provincial Operating Grants to support First Nation Student transportation.
- **Federal First Nation Student Transportation Funding (\$3.8M)**
In this transition year, the BCTEA First Nation Student Transportation funding is based on approved amounts from the 2025/26 school year for To/From school transportation.

Joint First Nation Student Transportation Plans

The Ministry requires boards of education to annually co-develop a Joint First Nation Student Transportation Plan (Joint Plan) with First Nations to be jointly signed off with each First Nation needing transportation for their students attending a BC Public School. School districts should maintain existing To/From service levels that were in place in the 2025/26 school year. For the 2026/27 school year, Joint Plans do not need to be submitted to the Ministry.

A Joint Plan worksheet is available to support planning discussions and document transportation services (refer to the Ministry’s [BCTEA website](#) and the [FNESC website](#) to access all supporting documents, including Joint Plan and reporting templates). The Joint Plan should include To/From transportation services for First Nation Students provided by either the school district or the First Nation.

¹ This principle is subject to funding constraints.

Safety Declaration

It is important that First Nations and school districts review all bus stops. Signatures to the Joint Plan indicate that pick-up and drop-off points have been reviewed for safety considerations.

First Nations Providing Transportation Services

The operating costs of First Nations currently providing transportation services are accounted for within the 2025/26 Joint Plans and reflected in the 2026/27 First Nation Student transportation funding. Service agreements between school districts and First Nations providing transportation services, with priority given to To/From services, should not be impacted.

Eligible Expenses

The First Nation Student transportation funding is to supplement the transportation costs of First Nation Students To/From BC Public Schools. Eligible expenses include bussing, bus passes, and water taxis.

Water Transportation

Some First Nation Students are required to cross bodies of water to attend school and are accounted for within the Joint Plans received and approved in 2025/26.

First Nation Schools of Choice

As per the *School Act section 74.2*, First Nations can designate a public school of choice for on-reserve First Nation Students. As there is no additional funding to accommodate transportation to First Nation Schools of Choice, school districts and First Nations should consider the use of existing funding sources.

Ineligible Expenses

Administrative fees, courtesy rider fees, accessories (e.g., cameras on school buses and water taxis, bus driver cell phones or radios), bus driver training and professional development, capital purchases (e.g., bus shelters, buses, boats, etc.), transportation to dual credit courses/programs, and field trips are not eligible expenses.

Parental Assistance and Extracurricular

Parental (transportation) assistance requests and transportation for extracurricular activities may be approved and funded by school districts through existing funding sources such as Operating Grants (e.g., Student Transportation Fund) or Other Grants (e.g., [CommunityLINK](#)).

Boarded Students

Some First Nation Students are required to leave home to attend school and are boarded or billeted away from home. These Students may need additional supports. Boards should be reaching out to parents and First Nations, particularly in cases where the First Nation is not local, to make sure the Student's transportation needs "to/from" school and home are addressed equitably. This may include available transportation services or alternative services (e.g., providing bus passes). First Nations with Students in approved accommodations receive federal funding from Indigenous Services Canada to cover costs for bus passes, seasonal travel, and travel chaperones where appropriate.

Reporting Requirements

A simplified BCTEA First Nation Transportation Report will be submitted to the Ministry to report on spending and carry-over by funding source. Data collected is related to First Nation Student transportation.

The deadline for the 2025/26 BCTEA First Nation Transportation Report is **October 1st, 2026**.

School districts must share their report to be signed by all First Nations served to confirm that they have received the report (signature does not imply agreement). In lieu of signatures, email confirmation that the report has been shared with all parties will be accepted.

If the First Nation Student Transportation funding is not fully spent within any year, Boards will carry forward any remaining portion of the funds to be used for transportation of First Nation Students attending BC Public Schools. Carryover funds issued in 2025/26 or from previous years will be deducted.

Note: The above reporting requirements are in addition to the Ministry's regular financial reporting for school districts.

Monitoring and Review

A new BCTEA Tripartite Transportation Committee, including senior representatives from the three BCTEA Parties, will be established to address emerging issues and unique circumstances (e.g., evolving water transportation needs), and to confirm annual funding allocations and conduct follow-up as needed.

Questions / Further Information

First Nations may contact:

- FNEsc at BCTEA@fnesc.ca if they have questions related to the First Nation Student Transportation Fund, including joint transportation planning and reporting, and
- ISC at BCEducation@sac-isc.gc.ca if they have questions related to the Nominal Roll Report and BCTEA funding, including First Nation Student accommodation supports.

School districts may contact:

- The Ministry at bctea@gov.bc.ca.

Appendix A: Definitions

The following definitions from the BCTEA support common interpretation of transportation-related Q&As:

- **“BC Public School”** means all public schools in British Columbia providing kindergarten to grade 12 education, but does not include BC Independent Schools or First Nation Schools;
- **“First Nation Student”** means a student who is ordinarily resident on reserve in British Columbia and is eligible to be on the Nominal Roll;
- **“First Nation Student Rate”** means the education costs for a First Nation Student attending a BC Public School in a school district, as calculated annually by the Ministry in consultation with FNEC and Canada pursuant to section 8.0 of Schedule J [Funding Protocol], and is based on the funding paid by the Ministry to the board of education pursuant to sections 106.3, 106.4, and 115 of the School Act (formerly the “First Nations Billing Rate”);
- **“Nominal Roll”** means the registry of all eligible elementary and secondary students ordinarily resident on reserve and funded by Canada to attend a band-operated, federal, provincial, or private/independent school. To be eligible for the Nominal Roll, a student must be:
 - i. enrolled in a band-operated, federal, provincial, or a private/independent school (including E-learning institutions and Alternative/Outreach schools) recognized by the province in which the school is located as an elementary/secondary institution;
 - ii. a school- student aged 4 to 21 years on December 31 of the school year in which funding support is required and enrolled in Kindergarten 4 through grade 12, or an adult student age 18 and over and enrolled in an Adult Graduation Diploma program, on December 31 of the school year in which funding support is required; and
 - iii. ordinarily resident on reserve; and

a student who is ordinarily resident on reserve land that is leased is not eligible to be on the Nominal Roll unless that student is a registered Indian.

Note: Starting in the 2021/2022 school year, First Nation Students who had previously graduated high school became eligible under BCTEA to be included on the Nominal Roll report and for [certain upgrading and foundational secondary school courses](#) offered through ISC approved programs at First Nations schools or adult education centres located on reserve in BC and through BC Public School districts.

- **“Ordinarily resident on-reserve”** means that the 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. (In this context, reserves are deemed to include all land set aside by the federal government for the use and occupancy of an Indian band, along with all other Crown lands which are recognized by Canada as settlement lands of the Indian band of which the student is a resident);
- **“Parent”** means, in respect of a student:
 - i. the guardian of the person of the student;
 - ii. the person legally entitled to custody of the student; or
 - iii. the person who usually has the care and control of the student;