

BC Aboriginal Education Partners

Spring 2006

Issue #2

An Aboriginal student in a BC's public school today faces a brighter future than their counterpart did just a few years ago. For instance, graduation rates are slowly improving, schools are using more First Nations content in their curriculum, and new relationships being created and sustained between school districts and Aboriginal communities.

It is unprecedented progress, but much work remains to be done and the Aboriginal Education Partners Group (EPG) are committed to raising awareness within their organizations and to improving school success for Aboriginal learners in BC.

The EPG has worked to raise the profile of Aboriginal education issues throughout the education system through their collective and individual work since 1999. Efforts have been focused on the key areas of anti-racism, employment equity, and Aboriginal teacher education and recruitment.

This newsletter, which is created for the membership of the Partners organizations, provides news from the EPG organizations and shares highlights of the recent evaluation.

The Education Partners Group was established in 1999. Below are indicators of some of the changes that have happened since that time.

Percent of student population in BC public schools that identifies as Aboriginal

1999 - 7% Today - 9.1%

Aboriginal graduation rate

1999 - 39% Today - 48%

Number of Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements

1999 - 2 Today - 23

Number of students enrolled in BC First Nations Studies 11/12

1999 - 864 Today - 2165



District parent leaders and BCCPAC board members spent the day learning about Enhancement Agreements and Aboriginal data and visiting four First Nations Communities within SD#68. Read more inside.

For information about the Aboriginal Education Partners Group, contact:

**Suite 113-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC V7T 1A2**

T: (604) 925-6087 F: (604) 925-6097

<http://www.fnesc.ca> fnesc@fnesc.ca

Communications: jenniferw@fnesc.ca

Evaluation Highlights

To help the Partners gauge their effectiveness in achieving their collective goals and to help the group identify areas for improvement, the EPG chose to undertake a full evaluation in the fall of 2005. A project team was established and the evaluation was carried out with the help of an independent evaluator, Sandy Thomson.

Thirty-eight interviews took place including representatives from the following four populations:

1. Education Partners Group members
2. Aboriginal Education contacts working in the public school system at the school district level
3. Educators and Education Coordinators working in BC First Nations communities
4. BC First Nations political representatives.

Key findings

Awareness and Communications

62% were aware of the EPG and its mandate.

Less than 20% of stakeholders from First Nations and the public schools system were aware of the EPG's three priority areas, although some knew of the activities, but had not directly connected them to the EPG.

Close to 65% of all stakeholders indicated that they received information from the EPG infrequently or not at all. However, 65% of all respondents found the information received to be useful.

Relevance

97% thought that the mandate of the EPG is still relevant, and that the Partners serve a continuing ongoing need. 20% suggested some modifications to the mandate.

97% expressed that there is an ongoing need for the EPG to continue working in the three priority areas of anti-racism, employment equity, and Aboriginal teacher education and recruitment. Suggested additional priorities included parental involvement, sharing best practices and early learning.

The majority of stakeholders thought that committee membership should be expanded to include other stakeholders, such as Aboriginal youth.

Success

A review revealed that the EPG had at one point established seven core goals, but that reporting on these goals as a committee had ceased in 2002. Establishment of overall indicators of "success" was recommended.

50% of stakeholders thought that the EPG has been successful in carrying out its mandate. Comments were made about the need for more data and difficulty linking success directly to the activities of the EPG. Nevertheless, 70% thought that the EPG had a positive impact on quality of education.

Most stakeholders felt that work in the three priority areas had very little impact on policy or legislation, although many highlighted positive impacts on education practices with respect to Aboriginal teacher education and anti-racism.

A bare majority of respondents expressed satisfaction that the concerns of their community were heard and acted upon by the EPG. First Nations respondents were the most satisfied at 78%.

The Challenge to Revitalize

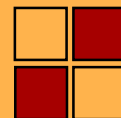
Stakeholders recommended enhancing communications to the education "front lines" and establishing more "focus and accountability" in its work.

EPG members generally felt (63%) that the quarterly meetings were an effective use of their time. But there was a very high level of agreement (80%) among all EPG members that the meetings should focus "less on talk, more on action."

Conclusion

Implementation of the evaluation results has begun and the EPG is happy to have the information to help the group become a more effective catalyst for change in the education system.

For an electronic version of the evaluation report, please email FNESC.jenniferw@fnesc.ca



Working Together Collective Work of the Education Partners

Foundation for a Province-wide Anti-Racism Network being laid

This fall, with input from the Anti-Racism Working Group of the EPG, FNEESC developed a renewed Anti-Racism Strategy. While keeping the group's goal firmly focused on the mandate of addressing systemic racism faced by Aboriginal students, the new strategy is about bringing that expertise closer to where it is needed: in local communities and schools across BC.

The first step in the strategy Anti-Racism Leadership Institute, which will involve approximately 20 people from communities across BC who will come to Vancouver on March 2-5 for an intensive training in both workshop design and facilitation, and anti-racism education. Many of those participating are support-workers and educators, and they bring a great deal of experience with them.

Each registrant in the training commits to delivering at least two local or regional anti-racism presentations, in coordination with the FNEESC office, and to being part of the Anti-Racism Leadership Network for at least the next two years. An ongoing communications strategy for the group will involve regular email bulletins and hopefully we will be able to offer additional professional development opportunities in the future.

The training is being facilitated by FNEESC former Anti-Racism Officer, Nora Greenway, and June Williams, a retired teacher and former chair of the BCTF Program Against Racism. Eric Wong will also be facilitating an important component of the training relating to the Anti-Racism Toolkit.

The Anti-Racism Project has been made possible over the past years due to the contributions of the Anti-Racism Working Group of the EPG, and the generous financial support of the Department of Canadian Heritage, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Vancouver Foundation.

The Work Continues to Increase the Number of Aboriginal Teachers being Prepared to Teach in BC Schools

As part of the Aboriginal Teacher Education Consortium (ATEC), the Partners continue their work to increase the number of Aboriginal educators working in the BC education system. Besides the EPG members, ATEC is comprised of representatives from all the teacher education programs in BC.

During the 2004-2005 fiscal year grants for pilot programs were awarded to BC teacher colleges;

- University College of the Cariboo (UCC)
- Malaspina University College
- Okanagan University College (OUC)
- University of Northern BC (UNBC)

In the 2005-2006 year, UNBC, Malaspina, and Thompson Rivers University (formerly UCC) have continued to offer bridging programs without further funding from ATEC and the University of Victoria was awarded a grant of \$80,000 for a bridging program.

ATEC also developed an updated brochure highlighting teacher programs in BC colleges and universities. This brochure is being distributed to all high schools and post-secondary institutes in BC.

An ATEC retreat was held in October of 2005, and the group planned a strategy and shared information around the Developmental Standard Term Certificate and worked on the development of a provincial strategy to further achieve the goals of ATEC

Parent Leaders Learn from Visit to First Nations Communities

BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) is committed to providing its members with educational opportunities to assist them in improving the success of all students in their schools and districts. Aboriginal education is an important part of that parent education.

This past fall, BCCPAC held its Fall Leadership Conference in Nanaimo. We were very pleased to have parents from many First Nations communities in BC attend and participate in a variety of workshops, including "Aboriginal Perspectives on the Subtleties of Racism in Education".

The location of the Fall Leadership Conference provided a great opportunity to bring District Parent Advisory Council Leaders together for some additional education in this area. District Parent leaders and BCCPAC Board members spent the day learning about Enhancement Agreements and Aboriginal data and visiting four First Nations Communities within SD 68. Parents visited the Snuneymuxw First Nations Band Office, followed by a tour

of Tillicum Lelum Native Friendship Centre. Members of the Chemainus First Nations provided lunch at S'ulxe:n Lelum. The final community visit took parents to the Snaw-Naw-As Education Centre in Nanoose Bay. The day ended with parent leaders coming together to discuss the strengths they had observed in the communities they visited, and how they could use those strengths to encourage even greater parent involvement in their own schools and districts. Parents ended the day with a lesson on the Métis jig.

BCCPAC's goal for this day was to make parent leaders more aware of Aboriginal education and the diversity of Aboriginal communities. Feedback was very positive, and many parents have been inspired to visit First Nations communities in their districts to better understand their cultures and challenges. This will hopefully result in more dialogue, which will go a long way toward building stronger relationships and improving the achievement of Aboriginal students and ultimately all students.

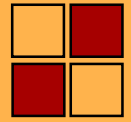
Ministry Welcomes Transformative Change Accord and Continues to Support Enhancement Agreements

The Ministry took part in the province's planning for the First Ministers meeting, held in Kelowna on November 25, 2005. We were encouraged to see a number of commitments arising from the meeting, including the **Transformative Change Accord**, signed by the Government of BC, Government of Canada and the Leadership Council representing the First Nations of BC. The parties have agreed to build relationships and adopt a 10-year plan to "close the gap in the areas of education, health, housing and economic opportunities."

The Ministry will work with its education partners and other ministries as the implementation strategy is developed. This will be a unique opportunity for the Province to develop initiatives and forge partnerships to improve Aboriginal student success and strengthen ties with Aboriginal communities.

The Ministry has initiated a process, through the establishment of an **Enhancement Agreements** Committee comprising representatives from several groups and organizations throughout the Province, to review how Enhancement Agreements enable Aboriginal communities to work closely with their school districts to develop and implement a five year vision of success for Aboriginal students. The review process, which will help shape future directions of Enhancement Agreements, will encourage thoughtful and broadly-based dialogue within the province.

Other initiatives and projects include the development of an interactive First Nations mapping project. This project will be linked to school resources for the purpose of increasing understanding and awareness of BC's First Nations, and increasing the number of BC schools becoming familiar with and incorporating First Nations themes in their teaching. We are also working closely with our Ministry's Achievement and Assessment Department to review the process of school resource evaluation, to ensure that Aboriginal perspectives are respectfully included in curriculum.



Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

INAC BC Region is involved with several initiatives at the regional and national level.

The *Education Action Plan* is intended to contribute to strengthening relationships among INAC, First Nations and key partners on First Nation education matters. The measures proposed in this Action Plan cover five areas: Strategy and Planning; Roles and Responsibilities; Funding; Accountability; Performance Measurement and Monitoring and Reporting. INAC is committed to developing, in partnership with First Nations, comprehensive First Nation education policy and management frameworks by 2006 and 2007 respectively. This is the first time that INAC and First Nations are working jointly on such policy frameworks. The intent is to enable First Nations to assume greater responsibility for their education while clarifying and strengthening accountability of all stakeholders. The *Education Action Plan* can be found on INAC's website at http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/edu/eap/acc_e.html

First Nations Education Jurisdiction

Following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with Respect to First Nations Authority and Jurisdiction over Education on July 24, 2003, Canada (INAC), BC and the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) have been negotiating a package of agreements. The package includes: a tripartite framework agreement; a BC-FNESC jurisdiction agreement; and a template Canada-First Nation Education Jurisdiction Agreement, with associated funding and implementation agreements. The negotiations were completed on November 26, 2005, and the next step is for all parties to seek approval of the agreements. For Canada, this includes the development and approval of legislation.

Working together

INAC BC Region's *Education Programs and Services Handbook* (updated August 2005) is intended to be a resource for First Nations education coordinators in their work. INAC also responds to requests for policy interpretation and information on its programs and services.

INAC works closely with FNESC, the First Nations Schools Association, as well as the Tripartite Education Committee, the Education Partners Committee and the BC Aboriginal

Post – Secondary Education and Training Partners to improve the school success of Aboriginal learners.

BC Teachers' Federation

The BCTF is committed to improving the success of Aboriginal students in BC's public schools. Our work is steered by our Assistant Director for Aboriginal Education, our Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee, the First Nations Education Association Provincial Specialists Association and our ongoing work with partner groups.

Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee Zonal Structure:

The BCTF's Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee has been expanded to nine members. Each member will have zonal responsibilities and will be working with local contacts for Aboriginal education, to enhance the success of Aboriginal children in school. The nine zones are Kootenay, Okanagan, North Coast, North Central, Peace River, Metro/Fraser Valley, Metro West, Vancouver Island North and Vancouver Island South. This new structure enables us to develop provincial networks, communicate directly with locals, and act on local issues and concerns at the provincial level.

Survey:

The BCTF Research Department and the Aboriginal Education Program, with input from the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee, developed a survey for Aboriginal teachers.

According to the latest information, there are 280 self-identified Aboriginal teachers out of a total of 38,000 working in BC schools. According to Ministry figures there are 57,227 Aboriginal self-identified students out of a total of 599,505 students.

The responses generated a number of central themes, including the need for improved Aboriginal curriculum and the need for more Aboriginal teachers in every area of the public school system. The most pressing concern, however, remains racism. It continues to have major impacts on Aboriginal teachers and is clearly a critical area the membership needs to address.

There is a need to gather explicit examples, to illuminate, and to begin the process of addressing the racism Aboriginal teachers endure on a daily basis.

(BCTF continued on the back page)

More Language and Culture Teacher Programs being offered thanks to BCCT, First Nations and FNEC Partnerships

The BC College of Teachers has worked with the First Nations Education Steering Committee to develop a framework for certifying teachers to teach First Nations languages and culture within a 90-credit teacher education program. Graduates of these programs are eligible for a Developmental Standard Term Certificate (DSTC), which is valid for up to eight years, provided that annual fees are paid. During the term of this certificate, the certificate holder can upgrade their qualifications to a non-expiring certificate.

The intent of the programs and the certificate is to allow language teachers to enter teaching more quickly than if they completed the typical teacher education programs in BC. Programs are designed to provide graduates with the specialized knowledge and skills needed to teach a First Nations language.

There are a number of programs currently approved by the College including the partnership program with the Stó:lō Nation and Simon Fraser University, which was the first program approved and is the first to recommend its graduates for certification with the College. Other programs that are approved include partnership programs with:

- Chemainus Nations and Malaspina University College,
- Cape Mudge- Campbell River- Klahoose - Homalco First Nations and the University of Victoria,
- Nisga'a Nation and the University of Northern British Columbia,
- Siwiixo'osxwim Wilnatahl Gitksan Nation and the University of Northern British Columbia,
- Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Authority and the University of Northern British Columbia (approval in process)

The BC College of Teachers has also been working with the First Nations Schools Association to explain the roles

and responsibilities of the BC College of Teachers and to begin the development of performance indicators and competencies related to the Standards for the Education, Competence and Professional Conduct of Educators in British Columbia. The work focuses on those competencies common to all practitioners as well as on the unique aspects of the work done by educators in First Nations schools.

Additional involvement includes regular reporting from Education Partners to public meetings of the BC College of Teachers Council; attendance at ATEC meetings; and a representative from the Council has been invited to be involved in a task force for the BC Deans of Education to develop a multi-faceted plan for Aboriginal Teacher Education.

A BCSTA Special Local Profile... **Increasing School Success for First Nations Learners in School District**

#52, Prince Rupert By Louisa Sanchez
Co-Chairperson, Board of School Trustees, First Nations Education Council, SD 52, First Nations Education Committee, BCSTA

School District #52, Prince Rupert, is dedicated to creating a community of young people and adults who value First Nations language, culture, knowledge and people as an integral part of our education system. We have several success stories in our district to share.

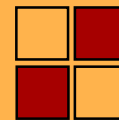
We coordinate many programs and services for First Nations learners throughout the school district using designated and targeted funds from the Ministry of Education.

We work closely with the First Nations Education Council to develop, implement and evaluate First Nations programs and services and we work with other district committees and programs to ensure that the needs of First Nations learners are incorporated into district programs and services.

Some of our successes are:

1) Sm'algyax Language:

Sm'algyax is offered from Grade 5 -12 in Prince Rupert and Port Edward, and in all grades in the village schools.



An Integrated Resource Package (IRP) for Sm'alg̱ax has been approved as a Ministry-authorized course. Sm'alg̱ax meets the second language requirement for university entrance.

2) Family Workshops:

Called “Ɛimoomim K'abatg̱ūlk dm Suwilaawksat: Helping Our Children Learn”, these workshops are offered in elementary and secondary schools. Families learn ways to support their children's education from the home. Topics include Self-Esteem, Literacy, Social Responsibility, and Mathematics.

3) First Nations Curriculum Resources

We've created high-quality, culturally appropriate materials for the school district. These materials support the prescribed learning outcomes of BC curriculum and provide appropriate First Nations content. Two of our highlights were the launching of the text, “Perspective and Change: A History of the Ts'msyen Nation” written by Ken Campbell in consultation with the Ts'mysen communities and the “Learning Sm'alg̱ax” cd set and book. These resources benefit all students in the district.

In terms of Human Resources, we're happy to announce a new position to our district. Debbie Leighton-Stephens was appointed District Principal, First Nations Education.

Role Model Program

This program brings local First Nations role models into classrooms to speak about topics ranging from traditional culture to contemporary job opportunities. They link students with the First Nations community in Prince Rupert and provide positive models of First Nations values. As well, prominent, well-known First Nations speakers, authors, and artists are invited to share their talents, experiences and wisdom with all students.

Literacy Programs

Improving Literacy is a high priority for Prince Rupert School District. Literacy initiatives include:

Parents as Literacy Supporters (PALS)

Summer Read and Play Programs

Parents of Primary Students (POPS)

First Nations content books: Guided Reading and Shared Reading lessons

First Nations Elementary Program

This program is for young First Nations students who may be at high risk for leaving school because they did not feel a sense of belonging and success in school. It integrates strong First Nations content and experiences with the BC curriculum. This program runs at Seal Cove Elementary School.

First Nations Counsellors

These Counsellors support First Nations learners and their families. We have a District First Nations Elementary Counsellor, one at Prince Rupert Senior Secondary, one at Charles Hays Secondary School, and an Education Counsellor for Metlakatla.

First Nations Family Resource Workers and Home School Co-ordinations

These workers are vital to the well-being of First Nations children in our district. They know the families and children and help families and schools communicate with each other.

Partnership Agreement

Representatives of the local Band Councils, School Board, district employee unions and associations, as well as the Ministry of Education, signed an agreement which confirms their commitment to improving school success for all First Nations students in our district. Each year we publish an annual report. This report provides valuable information in performance areas. It is also an extension of the First Nations Education Partnership Agreement. It solidified our commitment to working together to improve educational success for First Nations learners by all education partners in the district and communities. For this we are all proud.

A BCSTA Special Local Profile...

News from the Southeast Kootenay School District *By Roberta Rodgers SD 5 (Southeast Kootenay), First Nations Education Committee, BCSTA*

School District #5 (Southeast Kootenay) is in the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa Nation, and on June 21st, 2005 the Ktunaxa, the Kootenay Region Métis Association, the School District, and the Ministry of Education signed an Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement, with the St. Eugene Mission Resort as the backdrop.

A summary of the Enhancement Agreement was made with copies sent to parents of Aboriginal students so they are aware of the document and some of the contents. The district hired Joe Pierre, from St. Mary's Band, to oversee the implementation of the Agreement.

Following are some of the highlights of the things School District #5 is doing to enhance Aboriginal education:

- establishment of an Aboriginal Advisory Committee comprised of students, parents and staff at a local secondary school
- the Aboriginal Education Department brought in the Ktunaxa Dance Troupe, a local dance group who shared some of their culture with students, staff and parents from all schools in our district
- there are Seventh Generation Clubs in most elementary schools
- a Fry Bread and Bannock Parent Club has been established and meets monthly
- Aboriginal student meeting rooms have been established in two secondary schools
- School District #5 has ten Aboriginal Education Support Workers that are based at schools, who support students with academics and social, cultural and emotional issues and building and maintaining with families
- partnerships have been developed with St. Mary's Indian Band and the Kootenay Regional Métis Association in a Mentorship Program is available to all district schools

- students from one of the district schools have the opportunity to participate in the ESPIRIT Aboriginal Business Plan Competition which sponsored by the Business Development Bank of Canada.

Principals' Initiatives Continue Strong Support for Aboriginal Education

The BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA) is the professional organization for public school principals and vice-principals in BC. It has 2250 members representing more than 90% of the province's public school-based administrators.

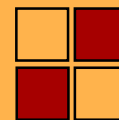
As one of the original co-signers of the Memorandum of Understanding on Aboriginal Education, the BCPVPA continues to bring Aboriginal education concerns to the fore for all of its members, who work hard in their schools to ensure the greatest possible success for Aboriginal students.

In the past the BCPVPA has:

- Prepared a BCPVPA First Nation Awareness document to provide principals and vice-principals a framework to help them explore and clarify local issues related to the Aboriginal learners in BC
- Established a \$500 annual scholarship for an Aboriginal student who has shown both academic excellence and student leadership
- Incorporated awareness of Aboriginal education issues in the programs provided at the annual Short Course at UBC, designed to orient new school leaders to their roles as principals or vice-principals

The BCPVPA will be hosting the Canadian Association of Principals National Conference in April 2007. Gayle Bedard, the BCPVPA representative to the Education Partners Group will be a member of the planning committee and will help ensure that Aboriginal education in BC will be one element of the program

Visit the Association online at www.bcpvpa.bc.ca



BCTF, continued

Workshops:

Two new workshops for members, “Employment Equity for Aboriginal Teachers” and “Negotiating your Enhancement Agreement,” have been developed. As well, a workshop for parents, “Aboriginal Parents,” is being developed.

Teacher Education:

We are continuing our work with teacher education programs, speaking to the importance of infusing Aboriginal knowledge and culture into the curriculum and teaching. We have had a number of very successful “BCTF on Campus “ events and have bookings for the coming year. The Assistant Director is participating in an ABCDE working group exploring issues and making recommendations to enhance the abilities of faculties of education to attract and retain Aboriginal student teachers.

Mentoring:

The BCTF has requested locals encourage the activism of Aboriginal members into local and provincial leadership positions. Local associations have been advised that funding is available for this work through BCTF mentorship grants.

Resources Database:

We are creating a database for Aboriginal resources. Copyright issues are being addressed and the resources and lesson plans are being digitized for increased accessibility. This will be an extension of the BCTF Teaching to Diversity website ([bctf.ca/Teaching To Diversity](http://bctf.ca/TeachingToDiversity))

The Aboriginal Education Partners and Organization Representatives

Ministry of Education
Emery Dosdall
Trish Rosborough
Heather Morin
BC Teachers' Federation
Jinny Sims
Christine Stewart
BC Principals' & Vice Principals' Assn
Gayle Bedard
Dede Derose
BC College of Teachers
Marie Kerchum
DeDe DeRose
BC School Superintendents' Assn
Wendy Lee
Stan Watchorn
BC School Trustees Assn
Judith Clark
Theresa Hebert
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
Jennifer Guscott
Bill Zaharoff
Harold Powell
BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils
Lori Tedrick
Kim Howland
Union of BC Indian Chiefs
Don Bain
First Nations Education Steering Committee
Chief Nathan Matthew
Deborah Jeffrey
Christa Williams
First Nations Schools Association

About the Partners

The Education Partners Group includes some of the most significant stakeholders in the BC education system, including the First Nations Education Steering Committee, the First Nations Schools Association, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the Ministry of Education, the BC Teachers' Federation, the BC College of Teachers, the BC School Trustees Association, the BC Superintendents Association, the BC Confederation of Parents Advisory Council, and the BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association.

The majority of the Partners are signatories to a Memorandum of Understanding in 1999, that expressed their commitment to working collectively and within the mandates of their organizations to improve school success for Aboriginal learners in British Columbia.

Visit the Education Partners online at: http://www.fnesc.ca/about/about_Edpartners.php