



fnesc Newsletter

Quality Education: A Right

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THE FNESC NEWSLETTER GETS A NEW NAME THANKS TO ITS RECENT EVALUATION

This year, in an attempt to ensure that the organization is adequately serving First Nations in BC, FNESC undertook its first comprehensive evaluation of its entire operations.

The FNESC evaluation provided valuable feedback and suggestions for ways to support continued growth in First Nations education. A range of people were asked to comment on FNESC activities, and one recommendation was the need for a new title for the FNESC newsletter, as shown above.

FNESC intends to follow-up on other evaluation recommendations, as well, and we would like to thank everyone who took the time to participate in the evaluation and share their thoughts and ideas. The evaluation findings are described in much more detail on page 3 of this newsletter.

CELEBRATING THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING: RECOGNIZING THE SIGNING BY FNESC, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, AND THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

On July 24, 2003, a historic agreement was signed that will significantly effect First Nations education in British Columbia.

On that date, Deborah Jeffrey and Chief Nathan Matthew on behalf of FNESC, the Honourable Robert D. Nault, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and Christy Clark, Minister of Education and Deputy Premier, signed a Memorandum of Under-

standing (MOU) on First Nations education in British Columbia.

The MOU provides a legislative framework that will allow First Nations in BC to exercise greater control in the area of education.

The framework is founded upon the notion of authority and jurisdiction being exercised by First Nations at the local level.

First Nations will have the ability to opt in or out of the framework, according to their own unique priorities and perspectives.

First Nations that choose to opt in to the framework will create community education authorities that will govern education matters. The structure those Authorities will be determined by each First Nation that chooses to participate.

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On July 24, 2003, a landmark Memorandum of Understanding on Aboriginal Education was signed at the First Nations House of Learning, UBC



Grand Chief Edward John speaking at the MOU signing

Memorandum of Understanding continued from page 1

Community Education Authorities will have the ability to make decisions and undertake a range of education initiatives that will be legally recognized and protected.

First Nations that negotiate agreements according to the new framework can choose to delegate some aspects of their control to a central, provincial-level First Nations education organization. The nature and mandate of that organization will be considered by First Nations as they proceed with their negotiations.

In the next several months, FNEC will provide a number of opportunities for

further exploration of this critical issue.

A two-day forum will take place in October, at which time First Nations leaders and education staff will come together to share their ideas for moving ahead with jurisdiction negotiations.

The topic will also be a critical component of this year's regional sessions.

FNEC will continue to provide updates about this issue as the discussions progress and as First Nations move ahead with their own jurisdiction negotiations.

AN EXCITING NEW ATEC INITIATIVE

The Aboriginal Teacher Education Consortium (ATEC) is continuing its important efforts to promote better representation of Aboriginal teachers in the school system, and this summer their work took an important step forward.

In July, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada approved \$420,000 in funding for ATEC to sponsor three pilot bridging programs. That funding is allowing the University College of the Cariboo, Malaspina University College, and Sto:lo Nation in partnership with Simon Fraser University to offer bridging programs that include English and mathematics courses, as well as a first year education course.

The programs are intended to prepare Aboriginal students for entrance into teacher education programs, providing them the credits and skills they need to achieve success once they are enrolled in post-secondary programs. Approximately 75 students are enrolled in the three pilot programs.

This new initiative will complement other ongoing ATEC activities to promote teaching as a positive career choice.

BECOME AN IAHLA MEMBER AND VOTE AT ITS FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:

JANUARY 12, 2004
VANCOUVER, BC

The newly created Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association is busy planning ways to support Aboriginal controlled adult education programs and post-secondary institutes in BC, and everyone's input is more than welcome.

Membership applications for the new Association are now being accepted, with a \$200.00 annual fee for membership.

IAHLA is also very excited to be planning its first-ever Annual General Meeting (AGM) for January 12, 2004. That event will include a review of the recent IAHLA research project, which gathered information about existing programs in BC. The AGM will also facilitate discussions about future IAHLA projects. Details about the AGM will be distributed soon, and it is hoped that all adult programs and post-secondary institutes will send a representative.

IAHLA has signed an agreement with FNEC for the provision of administrative support, and so information about IAHLA is available through the FNEC office.

FNESC EVALUATES ITS OWN PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO ENSURE IT IS ADEQUATELY FULFILLING ITS MANDATE

Many people recently received a phone call from independent consultant Paul Kyba asking for their views about the FNESC organization. Mr. Kyba was collecting feedback on behalf of the FNESC Board of Directors, reflecting their commitment to accountability.

The first-ever FNESC comprehensive evaluation sought to determine levels of satisfaction with FNESC activities and support services.

The evaluation process involved interviews with First Nations education staff, First Nations school representatives, FNESC Board members, and First Nations political organizations. FNESC staff, federal and provincial government officials, as well as other education partners and School District staff were also asked to share their opinions about a range of issues. The people interviewed were randomly selected, and their participation was voluntary.

Overall, the results of the FNESC evaluation were very positive. The majority of people who took part indicated that FNESC is responsive to direction from First Nations and contributes greatly to growth in First Nations education.

Specifically, when asked if FNESC is fulfilling its research mandate, the majority of FNESC Board members, First Nation community and school representatives, First Nation political organizations, school district and government representatives all responded very positively.

In addition, all of the stakeholder groups consistently agreed that the quality of education for First Nations learners has improved as a result of FNESC support. In fact, 95% of First Nations representatives and 100% of First Nations school representatives agreed or strongly agreed with that statement.

One of the most challenging and also most important roles of FNESC is the provision of a united First Nations voice in terms of education issue. In order to fulfill that role, FNESC sponsors numerous consultation and networking opportunities, which appear to be having a positive effect.

The FNESC evaluation indicated that 85% of First Nations staff, 100% of First Nations school staff, and the majority of First Nations political organizations believe that FNESC fairly and legitimately speak on behalf

of and as directed by BC First Nations. Only non-First Nations partner groups expressed some concern in this regard. The FNESC Board is committed to continuing its efforts in this area.

Another important component of the FNESC mandate is to share information related to First Nations education matters. That mandate is thought to include keeping First Nations up-to-date about changing education research and policy, as well as raising awareness about First Nations education issues and priorities amongst non-First Nations organizations.

Overall, the FNESC evaluation indicated that FNESC is achieving significant success in the area of communications. Over 90% of First Nations and FNESC Board members, as well as 100% of First Nations schools, indicated that they receive information from FNESC often. 100% of the representatives of affiliated boards and the federal and provincial governments also agreed with that perspective.

Finally, the success of FNESC in supporting First Nations schools was specifically considered in the evaluation. In that area, 90% of FNESC Board members,

73% of First Nations, 89% of First Nations schools, and 100% of school districts, affiliated boards, and federal and provincial government representatives agreed or strongly agreed that the success of First Nations learners has increased as a result of FNESC support to First Nations schools.

The FNESC Board is extremely pleased to have received such positive feedback to its work. In addition, the Board greatly appreciates all of the thoughtful comments and suggestions shared by the people interviewed through the evaluation process.

In addition to the suggested new name for this newsletter, other recommendations from the evaluation include minor adjustments to FNESC's communication techniques, efforts to improve access to workshops and meetings, possibilities for broadcasting conference presentations electronically, as well as improvements to the FNESC web site. The Board will be following up on those suggestions as soon as possible.



HELPING FIRST NATIONS STUDENTS TO FIND THEIR OWN PATH

Do you work with First Nations students who are trying to plan for their futures? If so, you will be interested in a new publication from FNEESC and the FNSA.

Finding Your Path: A Guide to Career and Education Planning was designed to assist education coordinators, counsellors, school staff, parents, and any other people who are trying to help First Nations young people effectively prepare for their futures.

The new resource covers topics such as how to help youth explore their skills and interests to identify the types of education and employment appropriate for them. The guide also describes the planning required at the high school level to ensure that young people are able to pursue their goals, and it includes a step-by-step description of post-secondary education application procedures. The publication also shares numerous web sites for further information.

Last spring, FNEESC and the FNSA sponsored five workshops to share that information -- three workshops for education workers, and two for First Nations youth. At those workshops, a draft of *Finding Your Path* was shared for feedback and

suggestions, and the response to both the guide and the workshops was consistently positive.

The final version of *Finding Your Path* is now being sent directly to all Bands, Tribal Councils, and First Nations schools, and additional copies are available through the FNEESC office at a small charge. In addition, more workshops for education workers will be hosted early in the new year as a part of the FNEESC/FNSA Speakers Series. Look for information about those workshops soon.

FIVE NEW WORKSHOPS FOR FIRST NATIONS PARENTS

FNEESC and the FNSA are pleased to announce five workshops for parents, to share information about how to help young people establish career goals and plan their education paths.

The Career and Education Planning Workshops will provide information about the options available to First Nations students beyond grade 12, the requirements for a range of education and career possibilities, and steps to applying for post-secondary education opportunities. There is no

fee for attending the day-long workshops, and each participant will receive a free copy of *Finding Your Path: A Guide to Career and Education Planning*.

Registration is limited to 35 participants per workshop, and 20 of those spaces have been reserved for members of First Nations Parents Clubs. Travel subsidies are also available for two representatives of each registered First Nations Parents Club.

Further information about the workshops and registration forms are available from the FNEESC office.

The workshops for parents are scheduled as follows.

November 15, 2003
Prince George

December 5, 2003
Nanaimo

December 6, 2003
Agassiz

January 17, 2004
Kelowna

January 30, 2004
Cranbrook

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT NEW PATHWAYS FOR EDUCATION

Last year represented the end of the federal government's commitment to the Gathering Strength program, and vigorous debate has taken place at the national level to determine the future of the program funding. Last spring, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) announced that the Gathering Strength program would be replaced with a new program titled New Pathways for Education.

INAC agreed that FNEESC and the FNSA would still administer the New Pathways funding, allowing for continued grants to First Nations schools and communities, as well as collective efforts. However, several challenging issues have arisen.

Particularly problematic is INAC's reconsideration of the formula for allocating the funding to regions. Some of the possibilities being considered would have a significant, determinantal impact on the funding available in BC. First Nations are encouraged to contact FNEESC for further information about the proposed changes, and for ideas about how to respond to INAC.



A SECOND ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES CONFERENCE: A SECOND SUCCESS



The FNEsc Aboriginal Languages Conference was a hands-on opportunity to learn about the applications of technology to the recording and teaching of Aboriginal languages

On August 26 and 27 2003, First Nations representatives gathered in Merritt BC to discuss a fascinating conference theme: *Where Tradition and Technology Meet*.

176 people came together for that memorable event, and they enjoyed wonderful food, thoughtful discussions, and a great deal of laughter.

The Conference included several interesting presentations, including an inspirational keynote address by Peter Jacob, a young man who has learned to speak both the language of his mother's and father's First Nation, in addition to his first language of English.

Representatives of the Sto:lo Nation also generously shared their experience in implementing the Developmental Standard Term Certificate (DSTC), an accredited program for training language teachers. The Sto:lo Nation DSTC was approved by the BC College of Teachers several years ago, and they are hoping to have their first program graduates by the end of this year.

Andy Everson also made a thought-provoking presentation on his development of language resources. Andy spoke about the need for patience in trying new things that are not always successful the first time, and he emphasized the importance of

perseverance in continually revising and building effective tools.

The Conference participants also enjoyed spending two days exploring how modern technologies can be effectively used to support language programming.

Fluent language speakers practiced using digital cameras and sophisticated computer programs to create and edit language videos.

People with expertise in computer technologies also had an opportunity to learn more about the needs of language speakers and teachers, and to gain critical insight into appropriate

protocols and methods of recording and using language resources.

Another exciting aspect of the Conference was the specific involvement of First Nations youth. Prior to the Conference, the SchoolNet program sponsored a two-day workshop, during which youth received training in video production and computer animation. The young people then worked with language speakers and teachers at the conference, sharing what they had learned and gaining more experience in the production of language resources.

FNEsc thanks everyone who attended the Conference and helped to make it such a success.



For two days before the conference, a group of First Nations youth learned skills in digital video filming and editing, making them valuable assistants at the conference.





BC LANGUAGE SPEAKERS GAIN INSPIRATION FROM A VISIT WITH THE MAORI IN NEW ZEALAND

Last March, 25 very excited people travelled to New Zealand to visit with the Maori people and learn about their experience in indigenous language programming.

FNESC organized the tour in an effort to support the people who are undertaking such important work in teaching First Nations languages.

While visiting New Zealand, the BC representatives had an opportunity to visit Maori language nests, elementary and secondary Maori language immersion schools, and Maori university programs.

The trip participants reported that they returned home inspired to continue with their critical efforts. The knowledge gained through the visit was also said to be invaluable for their continued work.

Given the success of the initiative, FNESC plans to organize additional trips to New Zealand in future years.

FNESC REMAINS COMMITTED TO FIGHTING RACISM IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Anti-Racism program of the Aboriginal Partners Group is now entering its second year, and Nora Greenway, Anti-Racism Officer, and Erik Wong, the Anti-Racism Consultant, are again busy providing support in this challenging but critical area.

Sponsored by a two-year grant from Heritage Canada, the Anti-Racism project has provided direct support to First Nations communities through workshops, presentations, and the facilitation of meetings between First Nations representatives and other education system stakeholders.

The program has initiated very important discussions about racism and its devastating impact on First Nations students. The awareness raising events have been well attended and well received.

The Anti-Racism staff have also produced a toolkit for use in schools. That toolkit is intended to facilitate meaningful conversations about racism in classrooms throughout BC.

A five-year strategy for the Anti-Racism efforts is now being developed by the Education Partners and the newly created Anti-Racism

sub-committee of the FNESC Board. That strategy will then be used in efforts to seek long-term funding for Anti-Racism activities.

Goals for future activities include sharing ideas about successful anti-racism efforts, as well as continued efforts to provide relevant in-service and professional development to student and practicing teachers.

Anyone requiring further information about these activities is welcome to contact Nora Greenway at norag@fnesc.bc.ca.

THE SPECIAL EDUCATION TEAM REMAINS AS BUSY AS EVER

The FNEsc and FNsa Special Education Team is again working with First Nations schools to help ensure that the needs of all students are appropriately met.

Final reports from the first year of new special education funding demonstrated that First Nations schools were able to make significant gains with the resources available, and FNEsc congratulates the schools on their efforts.

Building on that success, First Nations schools have already been notified of their special education funding allocations for the 2003/2004 school year, and the school programs and services are well underway. This year, approximately \$5.8 million was available for First Nations activities in BC, and next year it is anticipated that INAC will provide approximately \$6.3 million for the BC region.

While the majority of funding available in BC is allocated through grants to First Nations schools, the FNsa membership agreed that a portion of the funding should be reserved for collective initiatives.

This year, those collective activities will again include

approximately 70 psycho-education assessment coordinated at the regional level, a continuation of the toll-free special education resource line, and direct school support through visits from Madeline Pohlmann, Special Education Consultant, and Larissa Schrader, Speech and Language Pathologist.

FNEsc is also continuing to sponsor professional development activities for First Nations school staff, including a partnership with Simon Fraser University for a graduate program titled "Supporting Diverse Learners," as well as credit courses for a Speech-Language Assistant diploma program through Shoreline Community College.

This year, FNEsc will also be undertaking an evaluation of its special education programming, and we look forward to reporting on the feedback and suggestions we receive.

In the meantime, anyone wanting further information about the many special education services available is welcome to phone Kelly Kitchen or Barb O'Neil at the FNEsc office.

FIRST NATIONS SCHOOLNET PROGRAM SUPPORTS FIRST NATIONS SCHOOLS

Since becoming responsible for the First Nations SchoolNet program last spring, FNEsc and the FNsa have been extremely busy providing resources and support to First Nations schools.

The SchoolNet program is intended to enhance the technological capacity of First Nations schools by providing hardware and software, enhancing internet connectivity, and supporting the effective integration of technology into school curricula.

Reflecting those goals, BC's SchoolNet funding is being used to provide computers and digital cameras to schools, to establish a Helpdesk, to sponsor internet connections, and to provide in-service for school staff.

Anyone interested in more information about the SchoolNet program is welcome to contact SchoolNet Coordinator Phillip Djwa, Project Manager Dawn Dawes, or SchoolNet Assistant Roz Bodwell.

PROGRAMS FOR FIRST NATIONS YOUTH ARE UNDERWAY AGAIN

Once again, youth throughout BC are exploring new careers through four programs funded by Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The 2003/2004 First Nations Youth Employment Strategy Program is again being managed by FNEsc and the FNsa, and this year's demand for the available funding remained as high as ever.

Funds for the Student Summer Opportunities program (formerly the Summer Student Career Placement Program) was again allocated directly to each First Nation through a base-plus-per-capita formula.

Funding for the other three programs was allocated using a proposal process, through which 41 Science and Technology Programs and 12 Career Promotion and Awareness Programs were supported. An increase in the funding available for the Youth Work Experience Program allowed 20 of those programs to be approved for funding.

FNEsc congratulates all of the successful applicants this year, and wishes everyone the best with their ongoing programs.



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FNESC Newsletter - Quality Education: A Right is the newsletter of the First Nations Education Steering Committee. Published quarterly, it is intended as a forum for sharing information on First Nations education resources, research and strategies.

The newsletter is mailed to interested organizations and government agencies.

Send mail to: Editor, FNESC Newsletter, First Nations Education Steering Committee, #113-100 Park Royal South, Vancouver, BC, V7T 1A2 Tel: (604) 925-6087 Fax: (604) 925-6097 e-mail fnesc@fnesc.bc.ca

FNESC MEMBERS

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Alexandra Charlie
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