



# Quality Education A Right.

NEWSLETTER OF THE FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION STEERING COMMITTEE

## Spring 2002 Issue Highlights:

FNSA Conference 2

Fundraising Gala 2 Treaty Referendum Resources 3 LEA Update 3 Gathering Strength Program 4 School Funding Research 4 MoE Activities 5 Adult Education 5 ISSP Update 6 Special Education 7 Staffing Update 8

## ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES CONFERENCE A SUCCESS FEBRUARY 22 AND 23, 2002, VANCOUVER BC

Thanks to the enthusiasm of its participants, the Aboriginal Languages Conference that took place on February 22 and 23, 2002 turned out to be one of the most successful FNEESC events ever!

FNEESC joined with the First Peoples Cultural Foundation and the First Nations Confederation of Cultural Centres to organize the *Echoing the Voices of Our Ancestors Aboriginal Languages Conference*, which

brought together almost 250 people who share a passion for First Nations languages.

The Conference workshops and presenters shared some wonderful examples of successful language programs. Another of the event highlights was the opening ceremony; the Squamish, Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations welcomed the Conference delegates, and visiting guests responded in their own lan-

guages. It was a powerful expression of First Nations unity in pursuing the common goal of revitalizing Aboriginal languages.

Dorothy Lazore, keynote speaker from the Mohawks of Tyendinaga, conveyed a strong message that everyone can contribute positively to their language revival. At the Conference banquet, Joe Michel, an Elder with the Shuswap of the Adams Lake Band, encouraged all of the Conference delegates to "put on our binoculars" to look around and find assistance for our language work.

Squamish, Haahuupayuk, and St'at'imc dancers also entertained the delegates with songs, dances and regalia, and it was particularly heartwarming to see the children participating in these groups.

The delegates unanimously supported a second Language Conference next year, so look for information about that event in the upcoming months.

## ANNOUNCING A NEW EVENT FOR FIRST NATIONS PARENTS

THE FIRST NATIONS  
PARENTS CONFERENCE  
MAY 24 AND 25, 2002

FNEESC is very pleased to be joining with the First Nations Schools Association (FNSA) to organize our first ever Conference planned by and specifically for First Nations parents. The First Nations Parents Conference will take place on May 24 and 25, 2002 in Vancouver, BC.

The Parents Conference is being held in recognition of the important role of parents, grandparents, and other guardians in supporting the education of their children. The FNSA and FNEESC are very pleased to sponsor this event, which will celebrate the dedication shown by First Nations parents throughout the province, and offer them relevant information and an opportunity to share their ideas.

(continued on page 3)



## THE FIRST NATIONS SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION IS PLANNING ITS SIXTH CONFERENCE AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The First Nations Schools Association (FNSEA) is currently planning its 2002 Conference and Annual General Meeting (AGM). Both events will take place on April 26 and 27, 2002 at the Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre Hotel.

The theme of this year's Conference is *Celebrating and Sharing Our Achievements*, and the event will focus on successful programs being implemented in First Nations schools.

Some of the interesting topics being explored at the Conference include effective discipline, diabetes prevention, technology for language curriculum, school music programs, and instructor supervision. The Conference will also include a keynote address by Grand Chief Edward John.

Concurrent with the Conference, the FNSEA will be hosting its sixth AGM. Some of the important topics of discussion this year will be plans for the recently announced special education funding for First Nations schools, the ongoing school assessment project, and details regarding the 2002/2003 Gathering Strength Program.

The AGM will also include the election of the 2002/2003 Board of Directors. All authorized representatives of FNSEA member schools are welcome to vote at the AGM, and anyone interested is welcome to attend.

Please contact the FNSEA office at (604) 925-6087 if you would like more information about the AGM or FNSEA membership.

### DO YOU KNOW ANYONE LOOKING FOR A NEW TEACHING CAREER?

On April 28, 2002, the FNSEA is hosting a Teacher Job Fair at the Vancouver Wall Centre Hotel.

That event will provide an opportunity for First Nations schools to meet with teachers who are interested in new employment positions. The two previous job fairs have resulted in direct hirings of new teachers and administrators.

Further details about the teacher job fair are available on the FNSEA web site at [www.firstnations-schools.bc.ca](http://www.firstnations-schools.bc.ca). Everyone is welcome.

## YOU ARE INVITED TO THE SECOND ANNUAL SEVENTH GENERATION CLUB GALA

If you missed last year's Seventh Generation Club Gala, you won't want to miss the exciting evening being planned for April 25, 2002. On that evening, approximately 200 people will be gathering at the Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre Hotel to celebrate the success of the Seventh Generation Club.

The Seventh Generation Club continues to grow and provide invaluable opportunities for First Nations students throughout BC. There are now over 6100 members of the Club, and the Club daytimers, Sports Day, Science Day, newsletters,

contests, and other activities continue to be very popular.

The Gala will provide an opportunity to recognize the continued support of the Club's sponsors and raise funds for this initiative. The evening will include performances by a First Nations comedy troupe, a First Nations dance group, and Blues musician George Leach. Last year's extremely successful silent auction will also be repeated again.

If you would like to purchase Gala tickets or contribute to the Silent Auction, please contact the FNESC office.



## LOCAL EDUCATION AGREEMENTS UPDATE

FNESC and the other Education Partners continue to support the establishment of Local Education Agreements (LEAs), and the LEA mediation process is still available for anyone interested.

The mediation process is a joint initiative sponsored by FNESC, the Ministry of Education, and the Department of Indian Affairs. The process provides free access to mediation services of the Justice Institute.

In the past several months, the mediation process has met with great success. As a result of the service, agreements have been reached in both the Fort Nelson and Kitkatla areas.

To access this service, a First Nation and School District must jointly agree to enter into negotiations with the assistance of a mediator. The Justice Institute will then become involved and assign a mutually agreeable individual to assist with LEA discussions. All costs for the services will be paid by the mediation process sponsors.

If you would like further information about this initiative, please contact the FNESC office.

## PARENTS CLUB CONFERENCE CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

The Conference is intended primarily to support members of existing First Nations Parents Clubs. Limited space will also be available for non-Parent Club members.

The Gitsegukla Parents Club is co-hosting this Conference, helping to outline the Conference agenda and assisting with the overall organization of the event.

The Conference will include presentations on a number of exciting topics, including healthy living, literacy, parental advocacy, bullying, career planning, single parenting, involvement of fathers, and drug and alcohol awareness.

The Parents Conference will accommodate only 200 parents, so space is very limited. We expect that Conference capacity will be reached quite quickly, and we apologize in advance for any disappointment that results.

A Conference invitation has now been sent to all communities in BC. Please call the FNESC office as soon as possible if you have not yet received that information.

## NEW RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE BC TREATY REFERENDUM

Are you concerned about the provincial government's commitment to hold a public referendum on the BC Treaty Process? Some people have expressed a fear that the contentious issue will cause conflicts in schools throughout the province due to misunderstandings about the referendum and the treaty process itself.

FNESC and the other Education Partners want to ensure that First Nations students are not exposed to any uncomfortable situations as a result of the proposed referendum. The Education Partners have therefore created two pamphlets on the BC Treaty Process. The pamphlets have been de-

signed for teachers and parents, to provide them with some basic facts about the proposed referendum. The Education Partners hope that sharing information amongst teachers and parents will help them be proactive in facilitating informed discussions about this important issue.

The two pamphlets are available free-of-charge to anyone interested, and they can be accessed through the FNESC office. Copies of the publication *Understanding the BC Treaty Process* are also still available if further information is needed.



## FNESC AND THE FNSA RECEIVE APPROVAL FOR THE 2002/2003 GATHERING STRENGTH PROGRAM

FNESC and the First Nations Schools Association (FNSA) are now preparing for another exciting year of Gathering Strength activities in BC.

Following direction received at the FNESC regional sessions and the 2001 FNSA Annual General Meeting, FNESC and the FNSA once again submitted a proposal to the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) for the Gathering Strength funding for 2002/2003. The DIA recently approved that proposal, and it is expected that approximately \$7.4 million will be available in the BC region.

In the upcoming year, Gathering Strength funding will continue to be used to support three general program areas: activities in First Nations schools; community-based projects; and collective activities designed to support all schools and communities.

For 2002/2003, funding for school and community-based programs will once again be allocated through a base-plus-per capita formula. Information about the specific funding allocations will be outlined in a letter that will be sent directly to each community and school. For

communities, the funding is to be used for projects aimed at improving the school success of First Nations learners.

The funding being provided to First Nations schools is intended to be used for projects in four areas: school capacity building, activities aimed at encouraging students to stay-in-school, community service integration, and special education services.

In addition to the direct grants, Gathering Strength funding will also be used to sponsor collective initiatives aimed at supporting all First Nations communities and schools.

Some of the very successful activities implemented in the past several years will be continued in 2002/2003. For example, the Toll-Free Special Education Telephone Support Line will be continued using Gathering Strength funding.

The very successful Speakers Series will also continue in the upcoming year, with informative workshops taking place throughout BC on topics including literacy, positive student behaviour, board training, record keeping, and conflict resolution.

A number of other training workshops will also be supported through the Gathering Strength program, including a continuation of the language curriculum development workshops. Those workshops, which have been hosted for the past two years, have been extremely well received, with capacity reached for every workshop offered. Given their past success, four workshops will again be offered in 2002/2003 to assist people interested in learning more about the development of effective language curriculum.

Next year, a new area will be the focus of research and training sessions. Materials will be developed and then shared at a series of regional meetings to assist those people who work with First Nations students in career and educational planning.

In addition to those activities, Gathering Strength funding will also be used to continue the First Nations Parents Club. That initiative has grown significantly since its establishment just two years ago. It now involves over 75 community-based parents clubs, with approximately 1700 First Nations parents throughout BC. In the upcoming year, the newsletters and parent resources will continue to be distributed. The Parents Club cal-

endars, which were so popular this year, will also be available again in 2003.

Gathering Strength funding will also be used to support the FNSA School Assessment Project, specifically through the expansion of its mentoring component. The funding will also support the establishment of a provincial-level Adult Education Association, which is described further on page five of this newsletter.

Finally, the Gathering Strength program for 2002/2003 will include assistance for special education programs in First Nations schools, support for student assessments, as well as direct service delivery through additional FNESC special education staff.

If you have any questions about the Gathering Strength programming, please call Derek Payne at the FNESC office. Derek would be pleased to answer questions and provide any assistance required.



Ted Williams Memorial Learning Centre - Gathering Strength Initiative

## FNESC COMPLETES A RESEARCH PROJECT ON FUNDING FOR FIRST NATIONS SCHOOLS

For First Nations people throughout the province, the funding of First Nations schools has long been an issue of significant concern. Many people have suggested that the federal government's funding formula does not adequately support the provision of quality education to students in First Nations schools.

Accordingly, FNESC began a detailed exploration of that issue in 2001/2002. Marie Matthew was contracted to undertake a thorough analysis of the funding provided to First Nations schools in comparison to the funding levels of the public education system. That research, reported in *the Cost of Quality Education*, demonstrated a large discrepancy between the federal and provincial funding levels.

In response to the results of that research, DIA made a commitment to work with FNESC in considering this issue further, and Bill Postl was subsequently hired to continue the *Cost of Quality Education* paper with even more detailed calculations.

That latest research report, which is available through the FNESC office, confirms the significant difference between the federal and provincial funding levels. Those important results will now provide a basis for further negotiations with DIA.

## THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION WANTS TO HEAR FROM FIRST NATIONS PARENTS AND STUDENTS

The Ministry of Education (MoE) is interested in hearing from you, and is currently asking students, parents, and school staff to complete an opinion survey to determine levels of satisfaction with the programs offered by the public education system.

According to the MoE, the survey is intended to guide school improvement plans, and lead to better learning opportunities and higher student achievement levels for all students. The Ministry is particularly hoping to have the First Nations voice strongly represented in the school satisfaction survey.

The Ministry of Education surveys are available at [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sat\\_survey/](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sat_survey/). FNESC encourages anyone interested to visit that web site and review the information provided.

If you would like further details about this initiative, please feel free to contact the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Standards team at (250) 386-1891.

## FNESC CONTINUES TO SUPPORT A FIRST NATIONS ADULT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Last summer, representatives of First Nations controlled post-secondary institutes and adult education programs gathered together in Vancouver to discuss the need for more mutual support. At the end of that Gathering, the representatives asked FNESC to facilitate ongoing efforts to organize an association dedicated to First Nations adult learning in BC. FNESC has since been working toward the development of such an association.

FNESC, in partnership with the ISSP Committee, hosted two additional gatherings of adult learning agencies in October 2001 and March, 2002 which allowed for more detailed discussions regarding the structure and intent of a support organization. A Working Group has been established to create a draft Terms of Reference and Constitution for an Adult Learning Association, and those documents are now under review. FNESC will provide further information about this initiative as it becomes available.





## FNESC CONGRATULATES THE STÓ:LO NATION ON THE APPROVAL OF ITS DEVELOPMENTAL STANDARD TERM CERTIFICATE

FNESC would like to once again extend its congratulations to Stó:lo Nation, the BC College of Teachers, and Simon Fraser University (SFU) for successfully establishing the first ever BC Developmental Standard Term Certificate (DSTC) in First Nations Languages and Cultures.

The approval of the Stó:lo Nation/SFU DSTC was publicly announced on December 6, 2001. A powerful celebration of that historic accomplishment then took place on January 25, 2002, with representatives of Stó:lo Nation, SFU, the College of Teachers, FNESC, and other celebrants in attendance. FNESC greatly appreciates the opportunity to be a part of that event.

FNESC would also like to acknowledge all of the other Nations that are currently working towards a DSTC. FNESC wishes them well with their very valuable efforts.

## AN UPDATE ON THE INDIAN STUDIES SUPPORT PROGRAM COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

The Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP) is an initiative funded by the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) to support the development and implementation of post-secondary programming for First Nations learners. The ISSP provides grants to First Nations communities and First Nations controlled post-secondary institutes for accredited, transferable post-secondary programs and courses.

The ISSP Committee membership recently underwent substantial changes, and the Committee would like to welcome three new members. Gwen Point of Sto:lo

Nation, Sharon Bird of Nak'axdli Band Council, and Lisa Wilson Wells of the Kwakiutl District Council all joined the Committee last December. Gwen and Sharon are filling positions left open following the resignation of Derek Payne and Monty Palmantier. Lisa's position is intended to expand the Committee's representation in the North Vancouver Island area.

Once again, the 2002/2003 Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP) proposal review was a significant challenge for the Committee members. While DIA provided under \$2 million for the entire 2002/2003

ISSP program, the Committee received applications totalling almost twice that amount. With the limited funding available, the ISSP Committee was able to fund 19 different post-secondary programs for the upcoming year.

The Committee would like to thank everyone who applied for the 2002/2003 ISSP funding, and congratulate those funded for their excellent programs.

All of the funding available for this year has now been allocated. It is expected that the next deadline for proposals will not be until January, 2003.

Representatives of Stó:lo Nation, SFU, BC College of Teachers, FNESC and others witnessed the approval of the Stó:lo Nation DSTC.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES CONTINUE TO BE A PRIORITY FOR FNE SC

The FNE SC Special Education Team has been very busy in recent months, particularly following the federal budget unveiled on December 10, 2001. That budget included \$185 million nationally over two years for Aboriginal children, which includes allocations for Head Start programs, FAS/FAE initiatives, and special education funding for First Nations schools.

The funding allocated for FAS/FAE is \$10 million nationally for the first year and \$15 million nationally for year two. That funding is going to be allocated through Health Canada. FNE SC is currently engaged in discussions with the Chiefs Health Committee and Health Canada regarding an integrated approach to the special education and FAS/FAE initiatives to make the most effective use of the available funding.

The allocation for special education is \$30 million dollars for each of the next two years. DIA and the Assembly of First Nations are currently determining how that funding will be allocated to each region.

In preparation for the special education funding in BC, FNE SC and the First Nations Schools Association

(FN SA) have finalized a funding implementation five-year plan. That plan is available for review on the FN SA web site.

The primary component of the five-year plan will be funding allocations to First Nations schools to allow them to provide services to their students. Once the funding for BC has been confirmed, First Nations schools will be advised of the process for accessing their funds, and special education regional sessions will be held to provide more detailed information on matters such as workplans, record keeping, and reporting procedures.

An additional component of the five-year plan will focus on collective professional development activities. In that regard, FNE SC is currently approaching community colleges to explore the possibility of developing a diploma in special education for teachers and teacher assistants in First Nations communities. While that initiative is being further developed, FNE SC and the FN SA are planning to host summer institutes for staff of First Nations schools.

A Special Education Management Committee has also been established to

provide advice on the provision of special education services to First Nations schools. It is anticipated that this group will meet quarterly.

In order to provide direct services to First Nations schools, FNE SC and the FN SA are planning to hire a speech and language pathologist to oversee services in communities. In addition, Dr. Art More will again be coordinating a collective student assessment process. FNE SC and the FN SA are also organizing the bulk purchase of special education materials for First Nations schools in order to access more reasonable prices.

Finally, the Special Education Toll-Free Resource Line continues to provide valuable support to parents, teachers and other community workers. Feedback on the Resource Line has been extremely positive, and the most recent statistics available demonstrate that use of the service continues to increase.

## THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY CONTRACTS

Have you heard about the Ministry of Education's efforts to establish "accountability contracts" throughout BC's public school system?

The Deputy Minister of Education, Emery Dossdall, has been visiting every School District in the province to discuss the establishment of clear indicators of school success. Each Superintendent will be required to set measurable goals for upcoming school years. As a part of that process, Districts will be responsible for reporting on the success rates of Aboriginal students and for creating a clear plan for improvement.

Discussions between Deputy Minister Dossdall and School District superintendents took place throughout the fall and early winter of 2001/2002, and the resulting contracts are now becoming available for review and implementation.

If you would like further information about this initiative, please contact the Ministry of Education or your local School District office. FNE SC will be following the progress of this initiative in the coming months, and will provide further details as they become available.



## FNESC STAFF UPDATE

We would like to welcome new staff member Jan Haugen to the FNESC team. Jan began working for FNESC in January, 2002 as the new Executive Assistant.

We are also pleased to welcome two other new staff members: Barb O'Neil, Secretary of Special Education, and Sonya Woodman, Secretary.

FNESC would like to thank Monty Palmantier for his hard work while he was with FNESC. Monty was employed with FNESC last fall as the Office Manager. He left the organization in December to return to his work in the community of Lake Babine. FNESC wishes Monty all the best with his fu-

ture endeavours. The position of Office Manager will be filled again in the upcoming months.

Please also note that Dean Irvine is no longer working with the FNESC Special Education Team. FNESC also wishes Dean well with his new challenges.

FNESC continues to expand its effectiveness in terms of special education support, and is currently hiring a Special Education Resource Teacher and a Speech and Language Pathologist. Further information about the individuals hired to fill those new positions will be shared soon.



QUALITY EDUCATION 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.

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