

# FNSA News

October 2008

The Newsletter of the First Nations Schools Association



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## First Nations School Funding – a Growing National Issue

In Quebec, a campaign by the First Nations Education Council to bring attention to the underfunding of First Nations schools has been building momentum with the approaching federal election. The underfunding is not only a concern in Quebec, of course, but is an issue nation-wide. Here in BC, research by the First Nations Education Steering Committee and the FNSA indicates that First Nations schools continue to receive approximately 15-17% less funding than public schools.

Why is there such a large gap? Factors include the nearly 27% increase negotiated by public schools since 2005 through collective bargaining. In contrast, there has been a two percent annual cap on funding increases to First Nations schools since 2005.

The funding gap is significant because it strains the ability of our schools to attract and retain experienced staff and puts pressure on staff to dedicate their time and efforts to writing proposals and reports to supplement core instructional dollars. It is also impacting the ability of First Nations to negotiate adequate funding to begin implementing their education jurisdiction, although those negotiations are ongoing and we are optimistic that adequate funding for jurisdiction implementation will eventually be achieved.  
(cont. p. 2)



Students from Chalo Community School, Brandi Whitehead and Courtney Dettieh, celebrate their 2008 graduation.

## New Team of Regional Principals Launched to Assist with FNSA Teacher Certification Process

Beginning this fall, a team of three First Nations Schools Association (FNSA) staff will provide in-school assistance for teachers and principals as they work through the FNSA Teacher Certification Process. The FNSA Teacher Certification Process is a new initiative aimed at assisting principals and teachers in promoting professional growth in all First Nations schools.

The new staff - Sue Gower (soon to be retired from Chalo School), Karen Linkert and Darryl Ashdown, will be working directly with schools that are undertaking certification pilot projects this year.

The FNSA has approved fourteen teacher certification pilot projects for the 2008/2009 school year. The pilots are designed to test the strengths and weaknesses of the process, as well as the effectiveness of the FNSA's support structures. The FNSA believes that the Teacher  
(cont. p. 3)

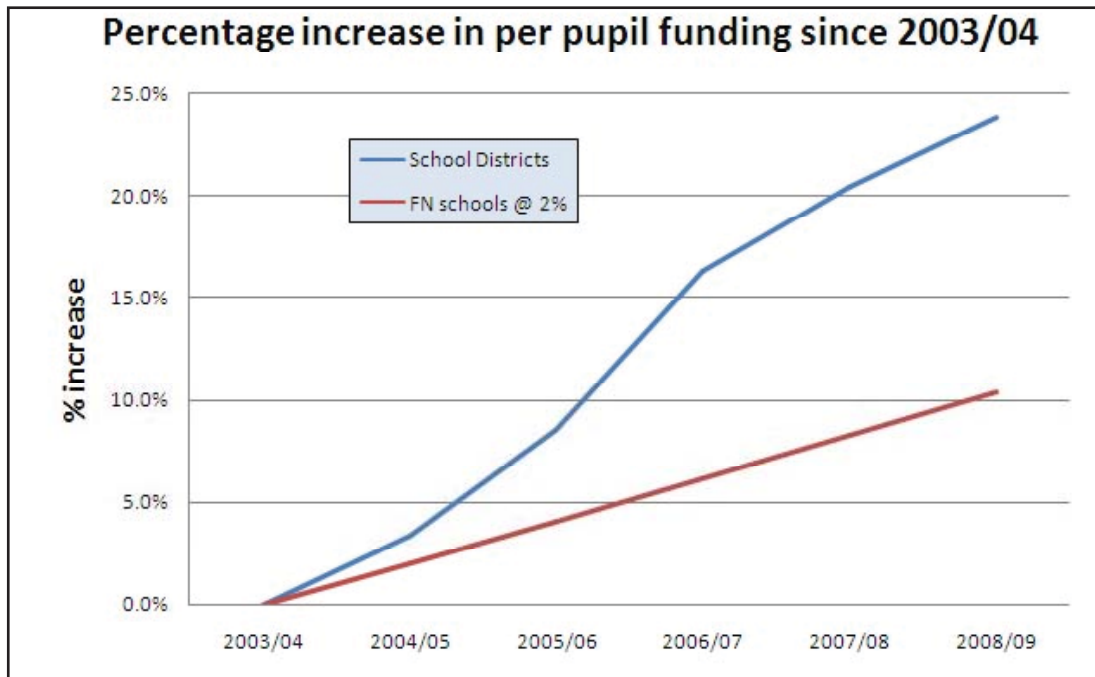
## Contact

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### School Funding, cont.

Despite the challenges of underfunding, the 125 First Nations schools in BC offer a great deal to students that students generally won't find in public schools, including culturally-rich programming and a sense of place and community that are unsurpassed. First Nations schools are working hard to provide educational opportunities for their students that not only match but exceed the standard of education provided to First Nations students in the public education system. Closing the funding gap by achieving comparable core funding continues to be a key issue for the continued growth and effectiveness of First Nations schools in BC.

Also in national news, watch for a major national forum on Aboriginal education, which will be hosted in Saskatchewan in 2009.



Graph by FNESC, 2008

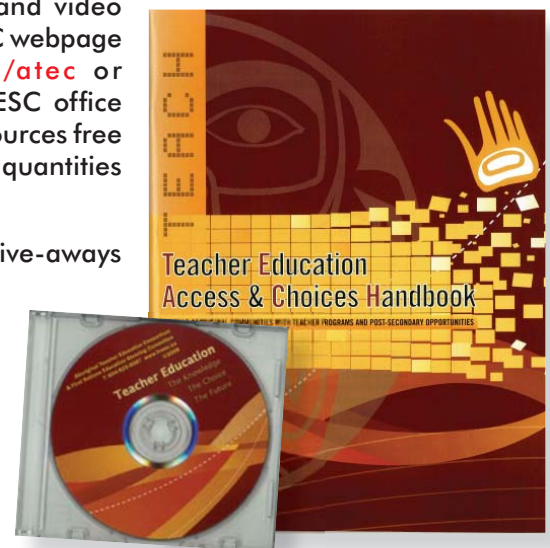
### New Resources for High School Students

Students, parents and teachers are welcome to visit the new website, Aboriginal Learning Links (ALL), which offers a wealth of resources relating to post-secondary funding and post-secondary planning. Find it at [aboriginallearning.ca](http://aboriginallearning.ca)

Do you know a student who could become a great teacher? A resource set has been created by the Aboriginal Teacher Education Consortium (ATEC) that introduces Aboriginal youth and young adults to the possibilities of a career in the education field. The magazine, TEACH, and the DVD, Teacher Education: The Knowledge, The Choice, The Future, both feature interviews with Aboriginal teachers and the handbook offers full-page spreads with information about the teacher education programs offered by post-secondary institutes across BC. View

the handbook and video on the new ATEC webpage [www.fnesc.ca/atec](http://www.fnesc.ca/atec) or contact the FNESC office to order the resources free of charge while quantities last.

They are great give-aways for career fairs!



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### Teacher Certification, cont.

Certification Process may be one of its most significant efforts to enhance actual classroom instruction – the most important variable in terms of student success. The Teacher Certification Process is founded upon a thorough review of teacher strengths and areas for improvement with the intention of creating professional growth plans.

To enquire about the services of the Regional Principals or the FNSA Teacher Certification Process, please contact the FNSA office.

## The Resource Lines Are Ready to Assist

If you have a special education question or if you are just looking for some ideas for special education professional development or teaching materials, help is just a phone call or email away. The First Nations Special Education Toll-free Resource Line and the First Nations Speech and Language Resource Line exist to provide help, free of charge, to those who are serving First Nations students in BC.

When you contact the First Nations Special Education Resource Line you will be greeted by Holly Smith, the new Resource Line Coordinator. Holly has 27 years of experience as a teacher. She has worked with First Nations students with special needs as both a special education teacher and an administrator in Moricetown, BC, and in northern communities in Labrador.

Holly began in this role in September, carrying on from the long-time Resource Line Coordinator, Lisa Ellis. "Already I have had calls from a couple of teachers, a community health nurse, an administrator, a grandfather and a mom – it is really rewarding."

What is it like to run the Resource Line? According to Holly, "It's exciting to answer the phone, never really knowing what may be asked! If I don't know the answer, I get to learn something new as I track down the information"

Questions on any special education topic are welcome at the Resource Line. Sometimes people call with issues specific to an individual student, while other times the question is about what school-wide approaches or professional development opportunities are available. Last year, behavioural issues and assessment proved to be the most popular topics of enquiry.

It used to be that majority of callers to the Resource Line were asking about speech and language topics, so at the

Annual General Meeting last year, First Nations schools elected to establish the First Nation Speech & Language Resource Line.

Today, Deanne Zeidler coordinates the Speech and Language Resource Line and, like Holly, she came to the position with a wealth of practical knowledge, including 13 years of experience as a community speech and language therapist with the Lil'wat Nation.

Coordinating the Speech and Language Resource Line, Deanne helps educators and school principals find speech and language therapist services and offers the practical advice they need in order to be strong, knowledgeable advocates for their students. Parents are very welcome to call the Speech and Language Resource Line, too.

Deanne would like to raise awareness that speech and language therapy training spans the early childhood years through to adulthood, and she says, "People may not be aware of the fact that they can access information on preschool speech and language development, as well as school age."

The Resource Lines are an initiative of the First Nations Education Steering Committee and the FNSA, made possible with financial support from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Visit them online using the Special Education link on the FNSA website [www.fnsa.ca](http://www.fnsa.ca).

**First Nations Special Education Resource Line**  
Toll-free: 1-877-547-1919 [hollys@fnesc.ca](mailto:hollys@fnesc.ca).  
**First Nations Speech & Language Resource Line**  
Toll-free: 1-877-547-5926 [deannez@fnesc.ca](mailto:deannez@fnesc.ca)

## First Nations Schools Have Their Say at Rural Schools Conference

Given that a large proportion of First Nations schools are rural or remote schools, the FNSA has a strong interest in ensuring that rural schools are strong and successful.

The Rural Schools Conference 2008 is happening this October in Vancouver and the First Nations schools of BC will be well represented, thanks to coordination provided by the FNSA, and travel and accommodation funding from the Ministry of Education Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch and the Rural Strategy Committee. Forty individuals from First Nations schools will be attending this year (registration is full). Guest speakers include Calvin Helin, Russell Bishop, Leyton Schnellert and Faye Brownlie.

# 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Provincial Conference on Aboriginal Education

Strengthening Connections:  
Investing in Aboriginal Students

The Westin Bayshore, Vancouver, BC  
November 27-29, 2008

Registration and Information:  
[www.fnesc.ca/conferences/index.php](http://www.fnesc.ca/conferences/index.php)  
Toll-free in BC: 1-877-422-3672

Earlybird Rate:  
by **October 22nd, 2008**

Book Hotel by **November 4th**



## FNSA Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is elected at the FNSA Annual General Meeting by authorized FNSA representatives from their region, to serve a 2 year term.

Greg Louie, President  
Nuu-chah-nulth/Coast Salish

Ernie Hill, Vice-President  
Haida/Tsimshian/Haisla/Nisga'a

Victor Jim, Secretary  
Gitksan/Wet'suwet'en

Sue Gower, Treasurer  
Kaska/Dene/Tahltan/Tagish/Inland Tlingit

Len Merriman, Regional Rep  
Nuu-chah-nulth/Coast Salish

Karen Smith, Regional Rep  
Kootenay/Okanagan

Robert Matthew, Regional Rep  
Secwepemc/St'at'imc/Nlaka'pamux

Karen Aoki, Regional Rep  
Kwakwaka'wakw/Heiltsuk/Nuxalk/Oweekeno

Jacquie Ledoux, Regional Rep  
Secwepemc/St'at'imc/Nlaka'pamux

Louise Lacerte, Regional Rep  
Tsilhqot'in/Carrier/Sekani

## Events

### Regional Sessions

Kamloops October 6 & 7  
Lytton October 9 & 10  
Campbell River October 14 & 15  
Cranbrook October 14 & 15  
Port Alberni October 16 & 17  
Lower Mainland October 20 & 21  
Victoria October 23 & 24  
Williams Lake November 13 & 14  
Kelowna November 20 & 21

### 14th Annual Provincial Conference on Aboriginal Education

November 27-29, 2008 –  
Westin Bayshore, Vancouver

### FNSA AGM & Conference

April 24-25, 2009 - Coast Plaza  
Hotel, Vancouver

## I'm proud of our school because...

At the FNSA Annual General Meeting and Conference, we asked people to tell us why they were proud of their school and we have been featuring these comments in the newsletter and the FNSA Annual Report.

*Our school teaches the children about who they are through language and culture. They will not only know some of the oral language, they will know how to read and write it, which will never again become lost if it is written. They will also know about dance and song and how to honour our Elders.*

Laverna Paul, Board of Education,  
Xit'olacw Community School,  
Mt. Currie, BC

### Reminder...

**School Measures  
and Data Collection  
Reporting - Due  
November 7, 2008**

The First Nations Schools Association (FNSA) is a non-partisan organization committed to improving and supporting the development of quality and culturally appropriate education for First Nations students. It is directed by representatives of BC First Nations schools. Visit the FNSA online at [www.fnesc.ca](http://www.fnesc.ca)