

# FNSA News

March 2007

The Newsletter of the First Nations Schools Association



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## FNSA 11th Annual General Meeting & Conference

**April 20-21, 2007, Richmond, BC**

Each year we ask participants what they enjoy most about the FNSA Annual General Meeting and Conference, and each year, the answer is nearly unanimous: networking! This year's theme: *Quality Programs and Strategies: Best Practices for First Nations Schools*, will bring First Nations school educators and administrators together once again for this unparalleled networking experience.

Download a registration kit from the FNSA website, [www.fnsa.ca](http://www.fnsa.ca), and you'll immediately see that the FNSA has expanded the workshop offerings this year and that the workshops cover the

spectrum of education from Head Start through post-secondary and adult education. Workshops have been chosen based on their utility for classroom and school application, and we're proud of the variety of workshop selection this year.

It is the feedback from AGM participants that

shapes the FNSA's annual workplan, so make sure your school's membership is up to date so you can have a voting representative at the AGM! Topics of discussion this year will include the ongoing work of data collection and school measures, language education, education jurisdiction, school assessment, programs, and more. A range of perspectives will help all of us ensure that the FNSA activities help meet the needs of schools and students.

We are honoured to have Larry Grant of the Musqueam Nation providing the traditional welcome and distinguished educator, Jo-Ann Archibald, delivering the keynote address. ♦

*Above: Gitanyow Independent School students display their dance aprons. This was one of the excellent submissions for the Seventh Generation Club Photo Contest*

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## **Standardized Testing Put to the Test**

First Nations schools have recently been taking a close look at the use of normed testing in First Nations schools, and a series of five workshops held earlier in the year was a focal point for those discussions. The workshops included an overview of normed assessments in First Nations schools, a review of the basic elements in CTBS and CAT3 tests, and a variety of support materials, including test samples, to inform the dialogue surrounding the use of the tests in First Nations schools.

The 66 workshop participants discussed a variety of topics, including the need to be aware of cultural bias in the tests; the value of normed assessments for tracking student growth over time; use of normed assessments with students who have special needs; how normed tests can complement, but not replace, classroom level assessments; and strategies for using and communicating standardized testing results.

For more details about the discussions, watch for the background document prepared for the FNSA Annual General Meeting online at [www.fnsa.ca/currentevents.htm](http://www.fnsa.ca/currentevents.htm) ♦

## **Coordinating Data Collection: Schools Pilot BCeSIS**

Five First Nations schools have been selected to pilot the BC electronic Student Information System (BCeSIS) in the coming months. BCeSIS is a comprehensive student information system which is being implemented by the Ministry of Education in school districts throughout BC. The system is Internet based and its functions include student demographics, attendance, marks, grading, report cards, and more.

Over the past year, the FNSA has been reviewing the suitability of the BCeSIS for First Nations schools, and the school pilots will assist the project team in identifying any implementation issues that may arise.

Since September 2006, a First Nations BCeSIS

Implementation Team has been working to develop a comprehensive Implementation Plan. The planning process has been assisted by Fujitsu Consulting which was contracted by the Ministry of Education to support the development of a First Nations BCeSIS Implementation Plan. Also supporting the process have been two First Nations advisory committees, one composed of a steering committee of FNSA board members and the other a working group of experienced education practitioners who work in First Nations schools. This group has provided valuable input into the plan.

Providing the pilots run smoothly, the system will be rolled out to other First Nations schools for implementation in the 2007/2008 school year. ♦

## **Is Your School Assessment Complete?**

The FNSA School Assessment Project can assist First Nations schools, including adult programs that are funded through the INAC nominal roll, to meet the INAC requirement for an evaluation once every five years. The five-year timeline for the INAC evaluation requirement began in 2003/2004. That means that all schools must satisfactorily complete one of the three assessment processes by the end of the 2007/2008 school year. If your school has not yet made plans to meet that deadline, please contact FNSA Assessment Project Administrator, Marie Matthew, as soon as possible at [mlmatthew@direct.ca](mailto:mlmatthew@direct.ca)

More than 90 First Nations schools have taken part in the FNSA School Assessment Project to date, and more than a third of those have taken the next step to successfully achieve FNSA certification. This unique assessment and certification process was developed by and for First Nations schools, and includes rigorous external and internal evaluation components, as well as adaptations for different sizes and types of First Nations schools. For the past eight years, the project has been one of the central activities of the FNSA. ♦

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## Supporting Students with Special Education Needs

How can small and geographically dispersed First Nations schools better access the services of professional Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs)? A creative project is underway that mixes communication technology with in-person school visits to make sure students are receiving the services they need. To do this, FNEESC/FNSA has contracted five SLPs to work in five schools to explore the use of technology as a way of increasing access to SLP services. The SLPs visit the schools twice per year, but are also available by phone/video-conference for follow-up support, consultations with staff and parents, and to provide in-services/training. The project is a result of recommendations from the regional discussion sessions at the 2006 FNSA AGM.

Educators are also receiving direct support around the issue of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). A 3-day workshop on FASD was offered in February, 2007, and it had 48 participants plus a waitlist of 30 more. Due to the workshop's popularity, a second session is being offered from June 10-12th to accommodate those on the waitlist and any others who may have missed the first opportunity. The training is facilitated by Diane Malbin and presented by FNEESC/FNSA with funding from the First Nations Inuit Health Branch. Workshop participants are required to provide a follow-up training or information session in their community/school.

Finally, as part of the efforts to gather more high quality data about the FNSA Special Education Program (SEP) activities, a special needs screening template and evaluation form were sent to all First Nations schools in January, 2007. Approximately 104 responses were received, and an analysis of this new data is underway. The FNSA thanks everyone who submitted data for the project. A report on the data will be shared at the 2007 FNSA AGM.

## Teaching through Music

Watch for a new resource for First Nations school classrooms soon! As requested by schools at the FNSA 2006 AGM, a multi-level music resource is being developed to jumpstart classroom language learning and music education. The activity booklet has detailed plans for the types of classroom activities that require minimal equipment and bring lots of fun to the classroom. ♦

## Promoting Professional Growth

The FNSA is developing a variety of tools to assist teachers and principals in examining teachers' strengths and plan for continued professional development. Principals and teachers will be able to use those tools to more closely examine the proposed growth areas and to make informed decisions about professional development initiatives.

The proposed process for FNSA Teacher Supervision and Certification Process will begin with the principal and teacher collaboratively reviewing the teaching standards, competencies, and performance measures that were developed and approved by the FNSA. In that review, the principal and teacher will consider which areas are thought to be strengths and challenges for the teacher, and they will suggest one or two items to form the basis of a Professional Growth Plan.

Work in this area of teacher standards and supervision has been taking place since 2005, when the FNSA and the BC College of Teachers cooperatively organized a series of consultation workshops to consider the creation of teaching standards, competencies, and performance measures appropriate for First Nations schools in BC. The goal of that initiative was to provide a picture of what teachers in First Nations schools must be prepared and able to do in order to deliver quality education programs, with the intent to use the results to support teachers more effectively. ♦

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## Clubs Support and Inspire

The FNEsc/FNSA office is the central coordinating body for both the Seventh Generation Club, which has over 7000 young student members, and the First Nations Parents Club, which has 3000 member parents. Both clubs publish a series of popular newsletters during the school year, coordinate a variety of activities, and provide prizes to recognize accomplishments of club participants.

With the two clubs both growing at a quick rate, the importance of sharing information about club news and activities is as important as ever. While the Seventh Generation Club has had a well-established website to help with this task, the Parents Club has not had the same web presence. This is changing this spring as we launch the new Parents Club website.

The new website features handy resources and links, online newsletters, contests and club membership information. We hope that with the contributions of more photos and stories from parents and grandparents, the website will continue to grow and be an indispensable resource for parents and an effective communication tool for the club.

Visit the new website at <http://fnsa.ca/parentsclub/>

## Services and Handy Resources 2006/2007

### First Nations Special Education Resource Line

A free service to support students with special needs. Call toll free in BC: 1-877-547-1919. Subscribe to the monthly *Connections* newsletter by emailing [lisae@fnesc.ca](mailto:lisae@fnesc.ca).

### Supporting Principals

A network for sharing tips on the everyday challenges First Nations school principals and school administrators face. To join email [mimattthew@direct.ca](mailto:mimattthew@direct.ca). Providing Educational Leadership Handbook: [www.fnesc.ca/publications/index.php](http://www.fnesc.ca/publications/index.php).

### SchoolNet Help-Desk

Computer assistance for First Nations schools - toll-free 1-888-878-6644 9am-5pm [helpdesk@fnesc.ca](mailto:helpdesk@fnesc.ca).

### School Assessment Project

Background information and downloadable templates for schools. [www.fnsa.ca/strategies.htm](http://www.fnsa.ca/strategies.htm)

### Anti-Racism Leadership Network

This is a network of local people who have an interest and skills in anti-racism work. Contact the FNEsc office for details or visit: [www.fnesc.ca/about/about\\_anti\\_racism.php](http://www.fnesc.ca/about/about_anti_racism.php).

### Resource Sharing Web Page

Provides the opportunity to share textbooks and other school resources: [www.fnesc.ca/publications/ResourceSharing.php](http://www.fnesc.ca/publications/ResourceSharing.php).

### YES and New Paths for Education Programs

Virtual Binder - your guide to programs, deadlines and reporting templates. [www.fnesc.ca/programs/index.php](http://www.fnesc.ca/programs/index.php)

## 2006/2007 Calendar

April 18-19/07, Vancouver, The Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association Conference and Annual General Meeting

April 20-21/07, Vancouver, First Nations Schools Association Annual General Meeting and Conference

Summer 2007, location tbd, Aboriginal Languages Conference

December 2007, Vancouver, Annual Provincial Conference on Aboriginal Education

## 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.

**President:** Greg Louie – Nuu-chah-nulth/Coast Salish Region

**Vice-President:** Ernie Hill – Haida/Tsimshian/Haisla/Nisga'a Region

**Secretary:** Victor Jim – Gitksan/Wet'suwet'en Region

**Treasurer:** Len Merriman – Kwakiutl/Heiltsuk/Nuxalk/Oweekeno Region

### Regional Representatives:

Janice Antoine – Secpwepecm/St'at'imc/Nlaka'pamux Region

Louise LaCerte – Tsihlot'in/Carrier/Sekani Region

Robert Matthew – Secpwepecm/St'at'imc/Nlaka'pamux Region

Kaleb Child – Nuu-chah-nulth/Coast Salish Region

Deavlan Bradley – Kaska/Dene/Tahltan/Tagish/Inland Tlingit Region

Karen Smith - Kootenay/Okanagan

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*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.fnsa.ca](http://www.fnsa.ca)*