

# FNSA News

The Newsletter of the First Nations Schools Association

Spring, 2006



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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 and the FNSA has 126 member schools.*

## Envisioning the Future of BC First Nations Education at the FNSA AGM and Conference

April 21-22, 2006

The Transformative Change Accord and First Nations education jurisdiction agreement, signed in Kelowna last November, mark new milestones in the recognition of First Nations authority over the education of K-12 on-reserve First Nations students.

Given those developments, this year's FNSA AGM and Conference event is a critical opportunity for First Nations schools to think strategically about how to support all First Nations schools in BC and take advantage of the new opportunities that will arise.

Participants will explore what Nations' education systems could look like and plan how First Nations can move forward with setting our own standards.

Planning will also take place regarding some of the core First Nations school programs, such as the five-year workplan, which has been designed to address the issues outlined under the Transformative Change Accord commitments.

Each school is encouraged to send at least one representative to the AGM and Conference, but more than one representative is welcome to attend. A range of perspectives are needed in order to ensure that the programs undertaken at a national and provincial level reflect the unique needs of all schools, staff, and students.

Registration kits are online at [www.fnsa.ca/currentevents.htm#agm](http://www.fnsa.ca/currentevents.htm#agm)

For more information about First Nations education jurisdiction, visit [www.fnesc.ca/about/about\\_jurisdiction.php](http://www.fnesc.ca/about/about_jurisdiction.php)

## The FNSA Celebrates its 10th Anniversary

This year's FNSA AGM and Conference marks the 10th year of the existence of the FNSA, an organization established by BC First Nations schools to address their own needs and priorities. FNSA membership now includes almost all First Nations schools in BC, and the FNSA has an influential and respected voice at the provincial and national level. Congratulations to First Nations schools on this achievement!

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## **School BCeSIS Pilots Streamline Data Collection and Retrieval BCeSIS**

Beginning this spring, First Nations schools are piloting a new way of collecting and sharing information called the BC electronic Student Information System (BCeSIS). It is envisioned that this new technology will eventually house all student information for public schools, independent schools and First Nations schools in BC.

Schools will be able to connect to the system by the Internet, and BCeSIS will act as a central storehouse for information on student performance, attendance records, transitions, and academic results. The BCeSIS can track student achievement and provide principals, educators, and other stakeholders with increased access to data to assist in planning and goal setting.

An executive committee composed of FNSA board members will be responsible for the final decision-making within the project.

More schools applied to take part in the 2006 pilot project than could be accommodated, but the FNSA anticipates being able to offer the tool more widely next year. At the FNSA AGM and Conference there will be more news about this proactive data collection strategy and input from school representatives is very welcome.

Andrew Smit was hired as the project manager for the FNEsc/FNSA BCeSIS Project on January 11, 2006.

## **Tracking Program Effectiveness**

Funding for education is increasingly being tied to results-based programming and First Nations schools have long recognized the need to set their own parameters for data collection rather than having standards imposed upon them.

The FNSA is at the forefront of efforts to collect quality data in partnership with First Nations schools through the FNSA School Measures and Data Project, which has been implemented over the past 2 years. At the 2004 and 2005

AGMs, the FNSA membership approved a data collection project that was designed through a series of consultation workshops.

Given the importance of this initiative to First Nations Schools, the FNSA board recommends that the project continue in the upcoming school year and this motion will be brought to the FNSA AGM for approval by the membership.

## **FNSA Clubs and Health Canada Work to Address Youth Suicide**

According to Health Canada, the suicide rate of Aboriginal youth in Canada is 5 to 6 times higher than the rate of non-Aboriginal youth. Through a new partnership with Health Canada, the FNSA and FNEsc are working to get suicide prevention information to youth, teachers and parents.

The first stage of this work involves the following:

1. Increasing resiliency of the 7000 youth involved in the Seventh Generation Club through newsletter content that promotes a strong sense of identity and strengthens their ability to deal with life's problems.
2. Increasing awareness of parents to help parents identify suicidal behaviours and use effective strategies to prevent suicide. This component will involve articles in the Parents Club newsletter.
3. Review of quality teaching materials on youth suicide prevention by a focus group of educators and the creation of a strategic plan for training teachers and implementing the curricula in First Nations schools.

The next stage of the project will include professional development training to support teachers in implementing interventions in First Nations schools, providing students with life skills and stress management techniques, and developing community awareness of factors that strengthen youth.

For more information about the Youth Suicide Prevention Initiatives, please contact Marie Matthew at [mlmatthew@direct.ca](mailto:mlmatthew@direct.ca)

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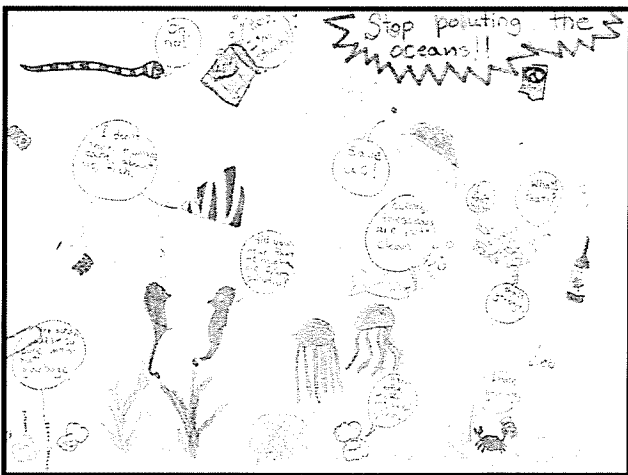
## New Assessment Tool for Small Nursery/Preschools

Completing an FNSA sponsored assessment project involves a full internal review of school programs plus satisfaction surveys of parents, teachers, students and community members. The assessment also includes an external review by colleagues from other First Nations schools. With this effective process, BC First Nations schools have been national leaders in the school assessment process.

Feedback from participating schools and the external assessment team members suggests that the assessment and certification processes are proceeding well.

The FNSA is now working to expand this initiative by practically addressing the needs of small nurseries and preschools. This need led to the development of a new tool called the Assessment Template for Small/Nursery Schools, which will be shared in draft form at the FNSA AGM. The new template is similar to the existing school assessment templates, but it has been modified to reflect a fewer number of students and staff members.

Watch for more news about school assessment following the FNSA AGM.



*Cleo Trace submitted this excellent underwater adventure to the Seventh Generation Club. The picture and story Cleo attached tell of the importance of protecting our oceans.*

## Regional Specialists to Support First Nations Schools Considered

Many First Nations schools have asked for better access to specialists, including speech language therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists, who can work with students on a frequent basis.

Until recently, Special Education Program (SEP) funding could not meet this province-wide need without impacting school allocations. However, now that SEP funding is being increased, regional support staff can be considered.

A four year plan has been drafted to serve as a starting point for discussions at the AGM. It proposes that schools have the option of having a portion of their school SEP allocation held back to support a regional resource person. Those schools would be eligible to access the services of the resource person, and schools that did not choose this option would still be able to use their SEP funding for local priorities such as supporting existing agreements for therapy services.

As in past years, regardless of the decisions on this component, the majority of the SEP funding will continue to be allocated to schools and some SEP funding will be used for provincially coordinated services.

A survey about access to specialist services was sent to all First Nations schools in February 2006 and the data will be shared at the AGM to assist the discussions of the regional therapy service proposal. For more information, please contact [kellyk@fnesc.ca](mailto:kellyk@fnesc.ca).

## Research Notes

Research planned for this year includes teacher standards and competencies in First Nations Schools, and the FNSA is excited about this endeavour as it will support higher teaching standards in First Nations schools. The FNSA also plans to update the First Nation School Administrators' Handbook and the Employment Standards Handbook, which are both very popular publications.

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## Parents Conference

This year, FNSA and the Eugene Joseph School Parents Club are hosting the 3rd Annual Parents Club Conference, happening May 25-26 in Vancouver. The conference theme: *Our Children - Our Future* will provide an opportunity for parents to come together to share strategies for supporting their children. The conference is offered free of charge and each registered Parents Club may send two representatives.

See the registration information at <http://www.fnsa.ca/programs.htm#parents>

## Language and Culture Teacher DSTC Programs

Four Developmental Standard Term Certificate (DSTC) programs are currently operating to teach First Nations language and culture and ladder into a standard teaching certificate. FNEC and the BC College of Teachers worked together to establish the DSTC framework and here are the collaborations that are currently happening to provide the DSTC:

1. First Nations Education Advisory Council SD#72 (Campbell River) & the University of Victoria - Kwak'waka & Sliammon/Comox
2. Chemainus First Nations & Malaspina University College - Hul'qumi'num
3. Siwiix'o'oscwim Wilnatahl Gitksan Society & the University of Northern BC - Gitksan
4. Sto:lo Nation / Simon Fraser University - Halq'emeylem

## Ongoing Services

### Special Education Resource Line

The Resource Line, toll-free in BC at 1-877-547-1919, is a free service connecting teachers, administrators, parents, and service providers to the information they need to support First Nations students with special education needs. The Resource Line also has a monthly *Connections* newsletter. Subscribe by emailing [jenniferw@fnesc.ca](mailto:jenniferw@fnesc.ca)

### Supporting Principals

Marie Matthew, Principal Resource Person, provides networking and support to principals of First Nations schools. There are currently three regional groups of principals that meet across BC, and suggestions are now being sought for strategies to support more isolated school administrators. Contact Marie at [mlmatthew@direct.ca](mailto:mlmatthew@direct.ca).

### Resource Sharing Web Page

Through this new web page, FNEC provides First Nations schools the opportunity to share textbooks and other school resources. Visit the web page at [www.fnesc.ca/publications/ResourceSharing.php](http://www.fnesc.ca/publications/ResourceSharing.php)

### Post-secondary News and Resources

[www.fnesc.ca/programs/PSE%20and%20Training.php](http://www.fnesc.ca/programs/PSE%20and%20Training.php)

### YES and New Paths for Education Programs

[www.fnesc.ca/programs/index.php](http://www.fnesc.ca/programs/index.php)

### Anti-Racism Leadership Network

[www.fnesc.ca/about/about\\_anti\\_racism.php](http://www.fnesc.ca/about/about_anti_racism.php)

## 2006 Calendar

**FNSAAGM and Conference**, April 21-22, Vancouver

**First Nations Education Steering Committee Board Meeting**, April 28, Vancouver and July 6-7, Prince George

**First Nations Parents Club Conference**, May 25-26, Vancouver

**Annual Provincial Conference on Aboriginal Education**, December 7-9, Vancouver

**Seventh Generation Club Gala and Benefit Auction**, December 8, Vancouver

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## FNSA Board of Directors

**Greg Louie** - President: Nuuchahnulth/Coast Salish Region

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

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

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

### Regional Representatives

**Cliff Casper** - Secpwepecm/St'at'imc/Nlaka'pamux Region

**Richard Elliott** - Tshilqot'in/CARRIER/Sekani Region

**Robert Matthew** - Secpwepecm/St'at'imc/Nlaka'pamux Region

**Lillian Morton** - Nuuchahnulth/Coast Salish Region

**Deavlan Bradley** - Kaska/Dene/Tahltan/Tagish/Inland Tlingit Region

**Zoe Damant** - Kootenay/Okanagan

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