

FNSA News

The Newsletter of the First Nations Schools Association

Fall, 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.

First Nations Jurisdiction over Education

In his address at this year's First Nations Schools Association (FNSA) Annual General Meeting, FNSA president Greg Louie spoke to the progress that BC First Nations were making toward the recognition of their jurisdiction for on-reserve K-12 education, saying jurisdiction will "bring us new opportunities we aren't even fully aware of yet." On July 5, 2006, the goal of achieving First Nations education jurisdiction became a step closer when representatives of First Nations and the federal and provincial governments signed a landmark agreement in First Nations Education in BC. The signing was attended by representatives from First Nations political leadership, First Nations education technicians, parents, grandparents and community members. The agreement recognized the right of First Nations peoples to make decisions about the education of their learners.

BC First Nations have sought jurisdiction over education for many decades. Among the benefits, jurisdiction will allow First Nations to set curriculum and school and teacher standards for K-12 on-reserve schools. Additionally, First Nations languages will be officially recognized as a second language credit. Only First Nations who formally opt-in to the jurisdiction process will be affected by these changes.

The next step in the jurisdiction process is the passage of enabling federal legislation, which is currently in progress. More

information, jurisdiction news, and answers to frequently asked questions can be found on the web site: www.fnesc.bc.ca/jurisdiction/index.php or by contacting the FNESC/FNSA office.

2006 Regional Sessions

Regional Sessions for 2006 are now under way! Regional Sessions provide invaluable feedback on the past year's work and set the direction of future projects of the FNSA and the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC). All interested individuals are encouraged to attend. Registration is required.

To allow more time for in-depth conversation, this year the sessions will focus on Jurisdiction, Post-Secondary Education and Aboriginal Languages. There will also be time to address the local education issues that are relevant to your particular community.

Sessions have already taken place in Prince Rupert, Lytton, Kamloops, Port Alberni, Prince George, Nanaimo, Williams Lake, and Cranbrook. **The remaining schedule is as follows: Kelowna** November 15-16; **Campbell River** November 20-21; and the **Lower Mainland** November 27-28.

The sessions are co-hosted by the BC Ministry of Education and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). For additional information, to register or to download the **Regional Session Virtual Binder**, go to: www.fnesc.ca.

Special Education Program Updates

New this year: SEP Regional Sessions

This year, FNEESC and the FNSA are hosting eight special education regional sessions in locations around the province to gather input in developing a BC plan to address the Indian and Northern Affairs Compliance Directive regarding special education. In addition, regional specialist services and other region-specific topics will be discussed. *FNEESC/FNSA will cover the travel and accommodations for one person from each First Nation school to attend the session nearest them.* Download the registration form from www.fnsa.ca.

An e-Health model of speech-language service delivery is being piloted in several First Nations schools this year. It is anticipated that the use of video-conferencing to enable schools to access ongoing speech-language services will increase the availability of services at a much-reduced cost. The outcomes of this pilot project will be shared at the FNSA AGM in April 2007.

FNEESC and the FNSA are once again responsible for managing the Special Education Program for First Nations schools in BC. Visit the Special Education Program page at www.fnsa.ca for deadlines, application forms, newsletters and up to date information.

Has Your School's Data Collection Survey Arrived?

The First Nations Schools Measures and Data Collection Project is now entering its third year. For 2006/2007, the FNSA aims to increase the response rate and we are asking for all schools to help us with this endeavour.

Faxes and emails were sent to schools during the week of October 16. Please email the completed form and mail or fax the survey forms to FNEESC by **November 17, 2006**. Schools that did not receive the School Measures and Data Collection materials can contact Marie Matthew at 250-672-5652 or mlmatthew@direct.ca.

The data collected by the FNSA over the past two years illustrates that First Nations students are being provided with unique educational opportunities that are aligned with the aspirations of First Nations

communities. For example, data gathered in 2005/2006 revealed that 54% of responding schools were governed by Boards and all schools implement language and culture programs with 82% of the responding schools integrating these programs, to varying degrees, with other subject areas. All responding schools reported having early childhood learning opportunities in the community.

This data collection project was originally developed in response to a need expressed by First Nations schools for data to track program and school effectiveness. There is shared recognition that clear measures of school effectiveness and standardized data collection will contribute to efforts to demonstrate the quality of First Nations schools' programming.

Thanks for your participation in this important project.

First Nations Schools Assessment Project

To date, 71 First Nations schools have completed assessments using the First Nations schools assessment process.

Among the 15 schools who will be participating in the First Nations Schools Assessment Project in 2006/2007, there are 5 of the very smallest First Nations schools, serving some of the youngest students. Those schools will be piloting a new template developed for First Nations nursery/ kindergarten schools with less than 5 FTEs. It will help those schools complete their school evaluation requirements, but with a streamlined process and it will include the same mentor support and external review component as the regular assessment process.

The assessment project is made possible through the dedicated support of First Nations' schools staff, and especially those who share their skills as mentors and external assessors. This expanding network of professionals is committed to promoting excellence in First Nations schools.

In the last three years, First Nations schools have also had the option of becoming certified by the FNSA. This option requires schools to have well-established programs in core subjects and a well developed, achievable school growth plan.

Youth Employment Strategy Science and Technology Program: A Success Story

The Science and Technology Program (STP) is one of four Youth Employment Strategy Programs (YES) funded in cooperation with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) in the BC Region. First Nations communities locally design STP initiatives for First Nations youth to discover the wonders of science and technology through a wealth of hands-on learning, experimentation and exploration techniques.

The Esketemec First Nation was a successful STP initiative that helped youth explore their traditional knowledge and transmission of traditional science and technology. The youth visited the Early Stuart spawning grounds and observed the factors affecting First Nations fisheries in today's society. The group learned about fishing methods and practices, stock sampling techniques, and received special instruction in traditional catching, cleaning and preserving processes for salmon. At the end of the project the students distributed fish to the Elders of the community.

The initiative was deemed so successful that several of the participating youth were interviewed about their experiences on local TV and radio. It was important for this community to have youth learn about their traditional skills in today's world while recognizing and respecting their own cultural roots and traditions.

The STP is instrumental in encouraging youth to pursue sciences in school and as a career choice. For more information on any of the YES programs, visit the FNEESC website: http://www.fnesc.ca/programs/program_youth.php or contact FNEESC.

Literacy and First Peoples' Literature Featured at Provincial Conference

The 12th Annual Provincial Conference on Aboriginal Education is being held this year from **December 7-9** at the Westin Bayshore Hotel in Vancouver. This year's conference theme is "Literacy & Literature" and will include 30 different workshops focused on effective literacy programs and successful strategies for using literature in the classroom. Other conference events include Aboriginal youth writers discussing what inspires them to write and their ideas on how to support budding young writers; and the "Aboriginal Voices in

Literature" evening, featuring readings from talented Aboriginal authors.

To download the registration kit, visit <http://www.fnesc.ca/conferences/index.php#conf>.

FNSA Annual General Meeting and Conference

This year's FNSA hosted Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Conference marked the tenth anniversary of the event. It was held April 21 and 22, 2006 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Vancouver, BC.

The conference theme was **First Nations Education: Celebrating Our Progress – Moving Ahead Together**. Two plenary sessions were held on Special Education and the FNEESC/FNSA Work Plan for the coming year. The format of the AGM changed slightly this year as regional focus groups were facilitated to derive regional feedback in the areas of education systems and school innovations, special education and data and school measures.

A special presentation was made to honour Nathan Matthew as he steps down from the role of Chief of the Simpcw First Nation. FNSA President Greg Louie took the opportunity to recognize the work he has done for First Nations schools and to thank him for his longstanding support and contribution to the FNSA.

Dining, Music and Auction Excitement Planned for Seventh Generation Club's Gala Fundraiser

Join us for an evening of fine food and entertainment to celebrate the success and growth of the Seventh Generation Club at our Gala and Benefit Auction, held in conjunction with the Provincial Conference on Aboriginal Education on December 8, 2006 from 5:30 to 10:00 pm at the Westin Bayshore in Vancouver. The Gala is a celebration of the work the Seventh Generation Club does for over 7000 young First Nations students in BC and will feature a silent auction of First Nations art, jewellery, sports collectibles and other items, and live music from the Aboriginal women's ensemble M'Girl. Tickets can be purchased or donations to our silent auction made by email at gala@fnesc.ca or by phone: 604-925-6087 or toll-free in BC: 1-877-422-3672. Participants in the 12th Annual Provincial Conference are eligible for a special ticket rate.

Thank you for supporting the Seventh Generation Club!

Send in your Stories for the New Parents Club Webpage

At the May 2006 Parents Club conference, the suggestion of a Parents Club webpage was met with a resounding – Yes! Participants told us that the new website should feature lots of helpful information, personal stories and words of humour and encouragement from parents and Elders.

Please help us let Parents Clubs, Elders and community members know that the FNSA is asking for their contributions and remind them that submissions are recognized with prizes! The Parents Club now has more than 2700 members and there are over 120 local clubs, all receiving materials and support from the FNSA and FNEESC.

Please send story contributions to website@fnesc.ca and get more club info at - <http://www.fnsc.ca/programs.htm#parents>.

Action Schools! BC ...Providing More Opportunities for More Children to be More Physically Active More Often

Action Schools! BC is a best practices model designed to assist schools in creating individualized action plans to promote healthy living by integrating physical activity and healthy eating messages into the school day and the school community. Registered schools receive assistance from a support team and are eligible to receive a complimentary workshop and classroom action bins containing equipment and teaching resources. Email info@actionschoolsbc.ca or visit www.actionschoolsbc.ca.

Upcoming FNSA Conference

Mark your calendars! The next FNSA Conference will be held April 20-21, 2007 in Vancouver. On the agenda is a combination of workshops and discussions of issues significant to all First Nations schools. Watch www.fnsc.ca for more information.

Ongoing Services and Handy Resources 2006/2007

Anti-Racism Leadership Network

This is a network of local people who have an interest and skills in anti-racism work. Contact the FNEESC office for details or visit: 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.

YES and New Paths for Education Programs

New Virtual Binder - your guide to programs, deadlines and reporting templates. www.fnesc.ca/programs/index.php

First Nations Special Education Resource Line

Free service to help support students with special needs. Call toll free in BC: 1-877-547-1919. Or subscribe to the monthly *Connections* newsletter by emailing lisae@fnesc.ca.

Supporting Principals

An email network for sharing tips on the everyday challenges First Nations school principals and school administrators face - to join, contact Marie Matthew, FNSA Principal Support Person, at mlmatthew@direct.ca.

Find an updated Administrator's Handbook and more at www.fnesc.ca/publications/index.php.

SchoolNet Help-Desk

Computer assistance for First Nations schools - toll-free 1-888-878-6644 9am-5pm/email: helpdesk@fnesc.ca.

School Assessment Project

Background information and downloadable templates for schools. <http://www.fnsc.ca/strategies.htm>

2006/2007 Calendar

FNSA Board Meeting, December 7
Annual Provincial Conference on Aboriginal Education, December 7-9, Vancouver

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

FNSA AGM and Conference, April 20-21, Vancouver

FNSA Board of Directors

The Board of Directors are elected at the FNSA AGM, by authorized FNSA representatives from their region, to serve a 2 year term. Terms are staggered so that some regional terms expire each year.

Greg Louie – President: Nuu-chah-nulth/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

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

Louise LaCerte – Tshilqot'in/CARRIER/Sekani Region

Robert Matthew – Secpwepemc/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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