

Special Education Background Information.

Throughout the past five years, one of the highest priorities of the FNSA has been the provision of assistance to First Nations schools in terms of special education.

Based upon extensive consultation with representatives of First Nations schools and communities, the FNSA has undertaken the activities highlighted below.

Throughout the fall of 1998, the FNSA facilitated special education consultation workshops to allow for detailed discussions of planned collective efforts, research, and information sharing.

For the past three years, the FNSA has arranged special education training for school staff, parents, education workers, and other interested community members through the Speakers Series Workshops and a Special Education Conference in the fall of 2001.

From 1998-2000, a comprehensive research project explored the types and levels of special needs that exist in First Nations schools throughout BC. That research involved psycho-educational consultants assessing a sample of students suspected of having special needs, with the intention of meeting several purposes. The data collected through the project supported FNSA efforts to promote the need for special education funding for First Nation schools. The research findings have also better informed efforts by First Nations schools and the FNSA to address special education needs. Finally, the psycho-educational consultants worked directly with students, school staff and parents to design appropriate interventions and services for the students with special needs, providing an immediate and meaningful service at the community level. That research report can be found on the publications list on this web site.

Since 1999, a FNSA sponsored toll-free special education resource line has been in operation. Through that line, teachers, school staff, parents, education coordinators, health workers, and child care workers are able to phone Karen Horner to ask about specific special education questions, resources and materials, potential professional development opportunities, and support groups. A monthly newsletter is also distributed to complement the resource line. More details about that initiative are provided through Karen's Corner on this web site.

In 2001/2002, the FNSA staff was expanded to include a Director of Special Education and a Special Education Resource Teacher. Those individuals have been providing direct services to First Nations schools through telephone and school visits, and through efforts to purchase and create special education materials in a cost-effective manner.

For the past three years, special education grants have been distributed to all schools in BC for the implementation of locally-based special education programs and services. Those grants have totaled over \$2 million in direct support.

Finally, the FNSA has been actively involved in a national effort to access increased special education funding for First Nations schools, working with the Department of Indian Affairs and the Assembly of First Nations to prepare a thorough funding request.