

HANDBOOK FOR THE FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGE AND CULTURE PROGRAM FOR FIRST NATIONS SCHOOLS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA:

Introduction

This Handbook was prepared by the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) and First Nations Schools Association (FNSA) to describe the implementation of the First Nations Language and Culture Program (FNLCP) for First Nations schools in BC. The document includes the principles guiding the program, as well as information about how the FNLCP funding is allocated to First Nations schools and also used to support collective-level programs and services that are provided by the FNSA and FNESC.

The BC FNLCP – including both grants for schools and collective services – is available only for First Nations schools in this province. While FNESC and the FNSA appreciate that First Nations students attending other educational settings have important language needs, the funding available for the BC FNLCP is intended to meet the needs of students who are now attending First Nations schools. FNESC continues to advocate for adequate resources to support First Nations students in other settings.

The plans and procedures outlined in this Handbook are being implemented for the first time in 2018/2019, and may evolve over time in response to input from First Nation community and school representatives. Feedback on the initial program implementation is welcome.

Section One: Principles that Guide the BC First Nations Language and Culture Program (FNLCP)

Languages and culture are central to First Nations' distinctive traditions and ways of life, and are inherently derived. As such, First Nations view them as constitutionally protected Aboriginal rights under the Canadian Constitution. Further, under the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.

First Nations have consistently identified the fundamental importance of their languages and cultures and have called for measures for their protection. The imposition of the residential school policy of assimilation significantly damaged First Nations languages, resulting in a decline, and in some cases a loss, of Indigenous languages, and substantive efforts are required to protect, revitalize and preserve them.

Reflecting that situation, more appropriately addressing First Nations Language and Culture programming needs was a key component of the negotiation of the BC Tripartite Education Agreement (BCTEA). The Language and Culture Schedule to BCTEA states:

- A. The BC First Nations Education System has been created to build upon and reflect First Nations' rights, First Nations languages, cultures, values, and traditions, and First Nations' commitment to quality education and improved students outcomes.
- B. The loss of First Nations languages and cultures that resulted from Canada's colonial history and the limited resources that have been available to address this serious problem has detrimentally affected too many First Nations students' in terms of their self-esteem, self-identity and the health of their families and communities, all of which undermines their school and lifelong success.
- C. Revitalization, preservation and maintenance of languages is integral to the well-being of First Nations communities.

The new resources provided for First Nations Language and Culture learning opportunities in First Nations schools through BCTEA represent an opportunity to support the development and delivery of appropriate language and culture programs to meet the needs of First Nations.

In planning for the implementation of the new FNLCP, First Nation school representatives expressed support for a comprehensive approach – one that includes an emphasis on local-level programming, with complementary collective support activities to create economies-of-scale and increase access to necessary expertise and relevant Language and Culture materials.

Therefore, the majority of the funding available in the BC Region is allocated to First Nations schools through a school-grant allocation process. Section 2 of this document describes the specific grants available and how to access them.

The BC FNLCP also includes a significant emphasis on second level support services to assist school staff in implementing necessary programs and services for students. The collective activities that are organized to maximize the benefits of the FNLCP funding are also described in more detail in Section 2 of this Handbook.

Section Two: Accessing School Allocations and Second Level Services

As described in Section One of this Handbook, the FNLCP implementation in the BC Region is founded upon two general themes – funding allocations for schools to support local-level activities, as well as funding retained for second level services. The proportion of funds dedicated for each of these purposes will be regularly and repeatedly reviewed with First Nations schools in BC.

2.1 School-Level Funding

As described above, the majority of the FNLCP funding available in the BC Region is distributed for First Nation students attending First Nation schools through a school-grant allocation process – a process that has been used historically for FNEESC/FNSA managed programs, which has been consistently supported by representatives of First Nation schools and communities.

Each year, all schools are provided a base amount of funding, recognizing that Language and Culture learning needs exist in all First Nations schools in the province. That base amount is

supplemented by a per capita-determined allocation to account for differing school sizes. The flexibility of this funding process is intended to enable schools to focus on local priorities for Language and Culture program development and teaching.

Ideally – if ISC has finalized the nominal roll according to the expected schedule – school grants for the upcoming school year are calculated each spring. Assuming this schedule is possible, schools are notified of their grants before summer break, in time for effective planning and allowing schools to make critical staffing decisions.

2.1.1 School FNLCP Allocations –Base-Plus-Per-Capita Grants

For the vast majority of schools in the BC Region, the per capita amount is calculated using ISC’s nominal roll, including school-age and adult students attending programs between K4 through to the Grade 12 level.

First Nations schools access their FNLCP grants through the submission of workplans that detail the activities to be undertaken according to the eligible expenditures. This information is critical for FNEC and FNSA, working with First Nations schools, to understand, monitor and plan service delivery according to evolving needs and priorities.

Schools must submit their required workplans by the deadline established each year. Timely submission of all program documents allows FNEC/FNSA to finalize the school grants budget based upon the submitted requests from eligible schools. FNEC/FNSA then reallocate any un-accessed funding to implement other important Language and Culture activities. Based upon the submission of an approved workplan and a signed contribution agreement that sets out the responsibilities of FNEC and the school, 75% of the Language and Culture grants is released to schools. Schools then are expected to implement their FNLCP activities according to their workplans.

Interim and final reports are required in February and June of each year, and they must reflect FNLCP reporting templates provided by FNSA/FNEC. Thorough, timely reporting on all FNLCP funding is necessary for accountability for the FNLCP resources. Accurate reporting is also necessary in order to demonstrate the ongoing need for funding for Language and Culture programming in BC First Nation schools. Accordingly, all reporting requirements must be followed in order to ensure, to the extent possible, a continuation of the FNLCP. Also, reciprocal tuition students are not eligible for the funding.

2.1.3 Additional Policies and Special Considerations for Accessing FNLCP School Funding Grants

A. First Nations Schools Operated Under a Treaty or Self-Government Agreement

The exception to the use of the nominal roll for calculating FNLCP allocations is schools that belong to a First Nation that operates under a Treaty or Self-Government Agreement with the Government of Canada. These schools are eligible for BC's FNLCP funding, but they are not required to submit an annual nominal roll to ISC. These schools therefore must annually submit the standard form directly to FNEC/FNSA enrollment information for students who usually would be eligible for ISC's nominal roll.

B. Students Funded Through the Reciprocal Tuition Agreement

In November 2009, the Province of British Columbia and FNEC reached a Reciprocal Tuition Agreement. Under that Agreement, the BC Ministry of Education provides full per-pupil funding for students living off-reserve who are enrolled in First Nations schools, and for eligible non-status students living on reserve lands. At this time, students who are funded through the Reciprocal Tuition Agreement with the BC Ministry of Education are not eligible according to BCTEA for inclusion in calculating the FNLCP per capita school allocations. *(The reciprocal tuition agreement states that the rates used for reciprocal tuition funding (formerly the First Nations Billing Rate, now called the First Nations' Student Rate under BCTEA) are based on the average per pupil funding for the school district in which the eligible band-operated school resides – meaning that reciprocal tuition payments do account for all of the items factored into those district averages, including Aboriginal education targeted funds, which can be used to support Language and Culture).*

C. Accounting for More Than One School Per First Nation

As described above, the funding grants for First Nations schools are calculated using a formula that provides a "base" plus "per capita" (FTE count) amount. The base amount is allocated per First Nation (*not* per school). For the past few years, when the base has been shared amongst schools within one First Nation, the portion allocated to each school has been calculated according to the relevant student population numbers of each school.

D. Consequences for Not Reporting

FNLCP reporting is crucial to the integrity of the program, and schools must complete and submit all required template report by the deadlines established each year. Schools are provided the final 25% of their funding allocations based upon submission of a complete and approved interim template report. There are also financial consequences for schools that do not submit a final report ***by the established deadline.***

Specifically, the BCTEA Language and Culture reporting requirements for First Nations schools' funding include: the number of First Nation students receiving Language and Culture instruction; the number of hours of instruction in Language provided to First Nation students; and the number of hours of instruction in Culture provided to First Nation students. The required reporting is included in the workplan and reporting templates.

E. Language and Culture Funding and the FNSA School Assessment Process

An additional requirement for eligibility for Language and Culture funding relates to the FNSA First Nations Schools Assessment and Certification Process. At the 2018 FNSA AGM, the following motion was passed with consensus.

IT WAS RESOLVED THAT First Nations Language and Culture Workplans should be reviewed and monitored through the FNSA School Assessment process

In order to implement that direction, each year FNSA School Assessment Process External Assessment Team members will be given the FNLCP Workplan for the school they are visiting, and will complete a checklist to confirm that the planned activities are underway. For example, a large number of schools will likely use FNLCP funds to hire relevant staff. In such cases, the school will be asked to identify which staff members were hired using FNLCP funds. If the FNLCP Workplan includes resource purchases, the school will be asked to provide evidence of the purchases. If there is no evidence of the Workplan activities being implemented in the school, the FNLCP Director will be notified and follow-up support will be provided to the school by FNLCP staff as soon as possible.

NB: It is also important to recognize that a school can be deemed "in progress" according to the FNSA School Certification Process if the External Review Team Report indicates serious inadequacies in the school's Language and Culture program. If a school is interested in receiving Reciprocal Tuition from the BC Ministry of Education, which requires FNSA School Certification in good standing, any significant problems identified in its External Assessment Report must be resolved before September 30 of the following year – the deadline for the annual Reciprocal Tuition application. Therefore, accessing assistance from a FNLCP staff person will be seen as a priority in such cases.

2.2 Second Level Services

These second level services include direct supports provided to First Nations schools. Collective activities are implemented each year to maximize the benefits of the FNLCP funding and help First Nations schools access programs and services that will benefit their students. The Language and Culture services are allocated in a variety of ways, depending on the specific intentions of the services. Among the services being provided are the following.

A. Language and Culture Staff

FNLCP staff share information with schools, answer questions, organize services, and provide overall management to ensure the effective operation of the FNLCP program. The FNLCP staff also provide ongoing assistance to all interested First Nations schools in BC through professional development and training workshops, to which all First Nations schools are invited to send representatives. Professional development opportunities are designed – to the extent possible – to recognize geographic challenges, meaning that community and/or regionally-based training opportunities are seen as particular priorities.

B. In-School Support from Coaches and Specialists

In addition, in-school support and coaching will be provided from individuals with specific expertise in First Nations Language and Culture programming. Coaches with significant experience related to Language and Culture teaching and program planning will be added to the core FNLCP staff to provide ongoing assistance through emails, telephone and technology. This approach is intended to provide maximum flexibility, which is needed to address the broad array and changing needs of students in First Nations schools throughout the province.

A range of professional development / information sharing opportunities will also be planned and implemented in the 2018/2019 school year.