



## First Nations Education in British Columbia: Key Accomplishments

First Nations in BC have worked collectively to advance First Nations Control of First Nations Education since 1992 when the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) was created. FNESC, under the direction of First Nations, is the lead policy and advocacy body for First Nations education with a board of 130 First Nations. It strives to improve education outcomes and attendance for all First Nations learners, regardless of where they live or attend school.

**FNESC, working with numerous education partners, has led the following achievements.**

- A) **First Nation Schools Assessment and Certification (since 2000):** A First Nations-controlled review and improvement planning process that supports the evaluation and certification of First Nation schools in BC.
- B) **Professional Standards for First Nation Schools (since 2005):** Professional Standards have been created to guide the work of First Nation school principals, teachers, education assistants, and governing authority members.
- C) **Reciprocal Tuition Agreement (since 2009):** BC and FNESC entered an agreement that provides for BC to pay full tuition costs for off reserve students attending First Nation schools.
- D) **Indigenous First Nations Language Fluency Degree (since 2018):** This degree program framework contributes meaningfully to the revitalization of First Nations languages in BC.
- E) **Sixth Non-Instructional Day (since 2019):** Boards of Education must now schedule at least one Indigenous-focused non-instructional day each school year to help the 49,000 public school teachers enhance student achievement and integrate Indigenous worldviews into learning environments for *all* students in BC.
- F) **Children and Youth in Care Protocol (since 2020):** The First Nations Leadership Council, FNESC, and the Province of BC have made a joint commitment to improve educational outcomes of all First Nations children and youth in care or formerly in care.
- G) **Education Jurisdiction Initiative (since 2000):** FNESC led this initiative under the direction of First Nations and it included processes and mechanisms to support First Nations' exercise of self-government over First Nations schools in BC.
- H) **Indigenous Focused Graduation Requirement (since 2023/24):** All BC secondary students are required to complete 4 credits of Indigenous-focused course work to graduate – an important component of a reconciliation and anti-racism strategy.

- I) **First Nations Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy (2023):** BC has committed to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to increase the number of First Nations teachers in BC, including ongoing funding for First Nations Community Based Teacher Education Programs.
- J) **School Act Amendments (2023):** Legislative changes co-developed by FNESC and BC allow First Nations:
- the opportunity to choose which school their on-reserve students will attend;
  - discretion to apply a model local education agreement for the purchase of services from school districts;
  - to play a lead role in Indigenous Education Councils, which advise BC School Boards for the benefit of all Indigenous students.
- K) **First Nations Mandated Post-Secondary Institutes Act (2024):** This co-developed legislation supports the integral role of First Nations-mandated post-secondary institutes in the BC education system, including ongoing operational funding (\$6M annually) and capacity funding (\$450K annually).
- L) **First Peoples Curricular Resources (since 2006):** FNESC has led the development of First Peoples curricular resources covering every major subject area from K-12, effectively weaving First Peoples knowledge into the education system. First Nations Authorized Course and External Credential Processes also provide for the recognition of First Nations-designed learning opportunities for course credit.
- M) **Protocols with Education Partners (since 1996):** FNESC has protocols and associated workplans with numerous provincial education partner organizations to better address the needs of First Nations learners.