fnesc

FNSA

Annual Report
2025/26



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First Nations Education Steering Committee and First Nations Schools Association

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COVER PHOTO: Lake Babine Nation

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FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION STEERING COMMITTEE
FIRST NATIONS SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

Annual Report 2025/26

Contents

Message From the Presidents	2
Who We Are	4
Our Partnerships	5
Key Education Agreements	6
Information Sharing	9
K-12 Education Programs and Services	10
First Nations Post-Secondary Education Support	21
Conclusions	22

PHOTO: Sxoxomic Community School

Message From the Presidents

FNSA President Aaron Burgess

FNESC President Tyrone McNeil

It is our pleasure to introduce the 2025/2026 Annual Report of the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) and First Nations Schools Association (FNSA). We are pleased to provide this update on the continued progress being made in First Nations education in British Columbia (BC).

Since our founding, FNESC and FNSA have been committed to ensuring that First Nations students of all ages have every opportunity possible to achieve and excel. That commitment emerges from a steadfast belief in our students' inherent value and extraordinary potential, and 2025/2026 presented us with many exciting chances to help our students grow and learn.

- We continued to advance new possibilities arising from the 2024 School Act Amendments, including important opportunities related to Local Education Agreements and Indigenous Education Councils.
- Implementation of the co-developed 2024 First Nations Mandated Post-Secondary Institutes Act is moving ahead, supporting the integral role of First Nations-mandated post-secondary institutes in the BC education system.
- The First Nations Languages Fluency Degree and new funding for community-based Teacher Education Programs are opening up critical new education options for our learners.
- We were proud to sponsor numerous conferences, information sessions, and workshops throughout the past year, which allowed for a collective sharing of ideas and knowledge for raising the outcomes of our students.
- Our work to promote higher rates of student attendance remains a priority, including promoting the critical importance of creating schools where parents and students feel a strong sense of belonging.
- Our 2025/2026 capacity building sessions with parents were particularly meaningful, and we look forward to hosting more events to hear directly from families about how we can support an alignment of learning opportunities at home, at school, and in our communities.



Of course, we didn't accomplish all of this alone, and we would like to thank the innumerable people who have contributed to our work.

- The ongoing support we receive from First Nations leadership, our Board members, and community and school representatives is invaluable.
- We benefit from numerous partnerships that expand and enhance efforts to increase our students' achievement and attendance. We know that, simply put, stronger relationships will ultimately mean better schools and higher student achievement.
- We would like to acknowledge the dedication and hard work of our employees. We are very proud of how our staff embraces the core values of our organizations – including a commitment to service and the best interests of our students, which drives everything we do.

As we step into a new year, we are confident that FNESC and FNSA are well positioned to lead more positive change for the benefit First Nations learners in BC. Our students deserve no less.

PHOTO: Lake Babine Nation

Who We Are

The BC First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) is a policy and advocacy organization that represents and works under the direction of First Nations in BC. FNESC has a mandate to support First Nations in their efforts to improve the success of all First Nations students and advance First Nations education in BC by disseminating information, undertaking research, administering programs and services, and advocating and negotiating with the provincial and federal governments and other key stakeholders at the direction of First Nations.

The BC First Nations Schools Association (FNSA) was created to promote improved educational outcomes for students attending First Nation schools by supporting the development and implementation of appropriate, meaningful, and quality education programs, and providing a forum for networking and information sharing amongst schools and other education partners. The FNSA is committed to designing programs to assist First Nation schools in creating effective and linguistically and culturally appropriate education environments that provide students with a positive foundation in all academic areas.

FNESC MANDATE

"To facilitate discussion about education matters affecting First Nations in BC by disseminating information and soliciting input from First Nations."

FNSA MISSION

"The First Nations Schools Association will collaborate with First Nation schools to create nurturing environments that will develop learners' pride and competence in their First Nations language and heritage and will equip them to realize their full potential, within self-governing First Nations communities."

Our Partnerships

In addition to working directly with First Nations and First Nation schools to improve student outcomes and attendance, FNESC and FNSA have established key relationships that are invaluable for the development of relevant and meaningful policy, programs, and services to enhance First Nations education in BC.

- FNESC and FNSA greatly appreciate the constant support we receive from First Nations leadership. We regularly report to and seek direction from BC First Nations leadership regarding all significant issues affecting First Nations education, and FNESC's activities are undertaken according to a formal 2015 Protocol that confirms the close working relationship between FNESC and First Nations leadership in BC, and recognizes FNESC as the lead First Nations education policy and advocacy organization in BC.

- Through participation on the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Chiefs Committee on Education and National Indian Education Council, FNESC representatives are actively engaged in discussions with other First Nations organizations across the country to jointly advocate for First Nations education.

- We enjoy a very close working relationship with the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA), which was created in 2002 to support and represent Aboriginal-controlled adult and post-secondary education institutes in BC. FNESC and IAHLA have agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which acknowledges the respective roles of each organization in advancing an evolving BC Tripartite Post-Secondary Education (PSE) Model – described further in this report.

- FNESC and the First Nations Education Authority (FNEA) work together closely in regard to First Nations jurisdiction for education. The FNEA, which came into operation on July 1, 2022, is an independent body that assists First Nations in BC that have assumed jurisdiction over their K-12 education systems on their land pursuant to legislation and individual education jurisdiction agreements with Canada.

- FNESC and FNSA have established important formal relationships with the following organizations, among many others: the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA); the BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner; the BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA); the Association of BC Deans of Education (ABCDE); the Representative for Children and Youth (RCY); Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI); Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council (ISPARC); Association of School Transportation Services of British Columbia (ASTSBC).



PHOTO: 'Na Aksa Gyilak'yoo School

Key Education Agreements

The BC Tripartite Education Agreement (BCTEA)

In June 2018, the BC Tripartite Education Agreement: Supporting First Nation Student Success (BCTEA) was signed by FNESC, Canada, and British Columbia, and witnessed by the FNSA. BCTEA represents a cooperative commitment that formally recognizes the capacity of BC First Nations and First Nation schools to build and implement a relevant and research-based First Nations Education System. BCTEA also formalizes the joint commitment of the parties to improve outcomes for First Nations students.

- BCTEA establishes a flexible funding model for First Nation schools based on the BC public education funding formula, with adaptations to reflect First Nation schools' unique characteristics.
- BCTEA also provides funding for a comprehensive collection of second and third level services.
- Consistent with BCTEA, the following initiatives are being implemented, among many others.
  - ECC annually publishes data to monitor the achievement and attendance of Indigenous students in BC.
  - ECC and FNESC representatives have focused significant attention on the implementation of the Indigenous-focused graduation requirement for all students in BC, announced by ECC in March 2022.
  - Each year, BC school districts are required to host an Indigenous-focused professional learning day for all teachers in public schools. The purpose of this day is to prioritize Indigenous student achievement and to further integrate Indigenous worldviews and perspectives into public education learning environments.
  - Reflecting BCTEA commitments, 2024 legislative changes allow First Nations the option to apply a Model Local Education Agreement (LEA) where there is no existing LEA with a public school board. LEAs are formal agreements between First Nations and School Boards that outline strategies to promote greater student success, and they are the mechanism through which First Nations transfer federal funding for identified First Nations students to school districts and non-First Nation independent schools.
  - The BCTEA partners are responding to challenges related to the transportation of First Nations students living on-reserve who attend BC public schools, through enhanced funding and joint planning.



PHOTOS OPPOSITE PAGE: Lake Babine Nation



First Nations Education Jurisdiction Agreements

For over 25 years, FNESC has worked with BC First Nations to advance education jurisdiction, and seven First Nations have signed First Nations education jurisdiction agreements with Canada, thereby becoming Participating First Nations (PFNs). PFNs have the legal authority to pass education laws in the best interest of their learners.

PFNs also work together through the First Nations Education Authority (FNEA), created in July 2022. The FNEA is a regulatory body that is responsible for key First Nations education jurisdiction responsibilities, including implementing delegated authority for PFNs' teacher certification (other than language and culture teachers), graduation requirements, approval of courses required for graduation, and school certification.

FNESC is pleased to support First Nations interested in pursuing jurisdiction through information sharing and grants to help First Nations prepare for this important initiative.



Indigenous Children and Youth In Care Protocol

A First Nations Children and Youth in Care Protocol was signed in May 2020, which commits BC and First Nations to engage in dialogue and joint action on specific issues and initiatives, seeking to improve the educational outcomes and well-being of Indigenous children and youth in care and former youth in care through legislative, policy, and practice reform. This Protocol represents an important commitment to promote consistent and effective support for Indigenous children and youth in government care and former youth in care, ensuring these young people have every opportunity possible for educational and lifelong success.



FNESC / BC Ministry of Education and Child Care (ECC) Protocol Agreement

In June 2015, ECC and FNESC signed a Protocol agreement to formalize their long-standing bilateral relationship and establish a clear framework for collaborative efforts. Associated with this Protocol, FNESC and ECC work together to identify opportunities to integrate First Nations' perspectives into public education decision-making processes, to co-develop policy and legislation, and to share resources and expertise -- including advancing key commitments in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) Action Plan. This Bilateral Protocol will be updated to better align with the standards in the UN Declaration.

Post-Secondary Education and Training Protocol Agreement

On July 8, 2016, the Minister of Advanced Education, FNESC President, and IAHLA Chair signed the Post-Secondary Education and Training Protocol Agreement, which formalizes the positive working relationship between the signatories and establishes a commitment to meet regularly to promote First Nations post-secondary education and training in BC. The work of First Nations to provide post-secondary education to their communities is now supported by the 2024 First Nations Mandated Post-Secondary Institutes Act, which reinforces the integral role of First Nations-mandated post-secondary institutes as a key pillar of BC's post-secondary education system. That Act also commits the Province to contribute ongoing operational and capacity funding for eligible institutes, addressing a key commitment in the Declaration Act Action Plan.

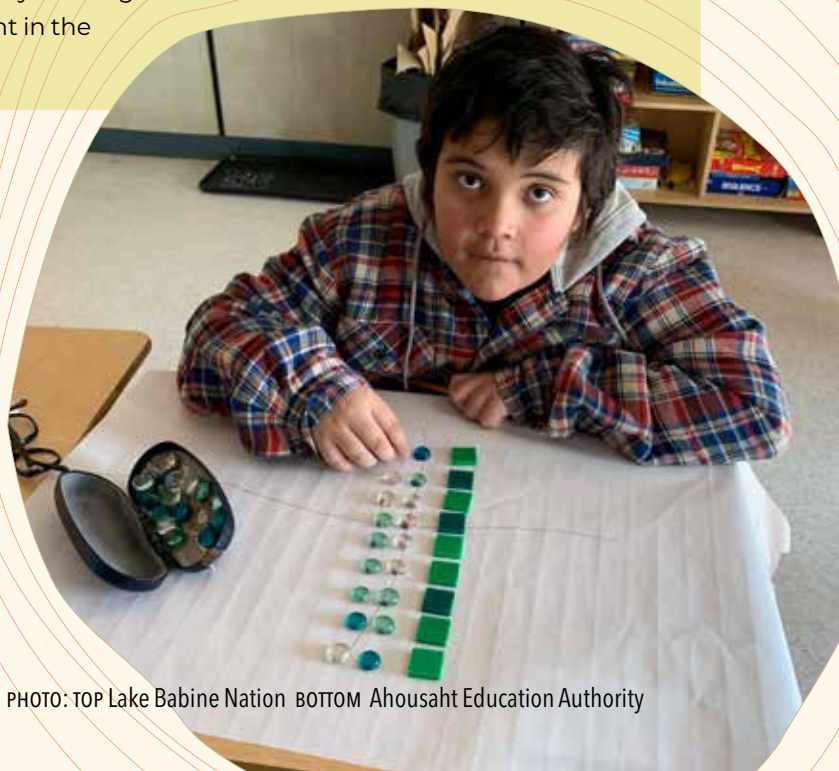


PHOTO: TOP Lake Babine Nation BOTTOM Ahousaht Education Authority

Information Sharing



The FNESC Annual Conference

In December 2025, FNESC hosted its annual First Nations Education Conference: *Creating an Education System Worthy of our Children* – with approximately 650 participants. The conference featured keynote presentations by journalist and author Duncan McCue, and by author and professor Niigaan Sinclair. The Conference also included a plenary presentation, "Focus on Improving Education," as well as dozens of workshops on key First Nations education topics.

The FNSA Annual Conference

The FNSA hosted approximately 450 people who attended the May 2025 FNSA Conference, with a theme, *Cultivating Cultures of Success*. Two-time Governor General's Literary Award winner and social advocate David Robertson, along with Indigenous author and journalist Brandi Morin, made keynote presentations at the event, and the Conference included workshops and opportunities for attendees to connect and share their experiences and knowledge.

Information Sessions

Each year, FNESC and FNSA organize a broad range of information sharing sessions, maintain websites, implement media strategies, and regularly communicate with representatives of First Nation communities and schools about arising First Nations education issues. For example:

- FNESC – with participation from ISC and ECC – annually reports on important First Nations education issues at a series of workshops known as Regional Sessions, which facilitate information sharing and joint discussion of emerging priorities for supporting the success of First Nations learners – wherever they attend school in BC. The sessions allow FNESC to seek direction from First Nations on specific First Nations education matters, and they are a key component of FNESC's accountability to First Nations.

- Additionally, FNESC assists with annual virtual and in-person information sharing sessions to support First Nations in completing the ISC Nominal Roll and implementing the Joint Verification Process.

PHOTO: Lake Babine Nation

K-12 Education Programs and Services

Supporting a New Model for First Nation School Capital

First Nations have consistently highlighted the need for enhanced resources for education facilities on-reserve – assertions that are supported by decades of studies and reviews demonstrating significant funding gaps for building First Nation schools. In response, First Nations leadership supports the development of a made-in-BC funding model for First Nation school capital.



FNESC has been conducting research to develop options for a new capital funding model and is pursuing the advancement of the capital model on a bilateral basis with Canada. To manage the scope of this project, a Phased Approach has been developed and includes the following.

- Advocating for a seismic program with distinct funding for First Nation schools.
- Developing a new Operations and Maintenance (O&M) funding formula to ensure equity of federal and provincial funding approaches.
- Establishing minor capital programs for various purposes, rather than a single A-Base pot.
- Exploring the use of provincial standards for facility condition assessments instead of ISC's Asset Condition Reporting System (ACRS).

FNESC will continue to seek direction from BC First Nations to ensure that the Phased Approach reflects the needs and priorities of BC First Nations

PHOTO: Senpaq'cin School



Education Governance

Crucial to any education system is strong leadership – including effective governance over education and schools. First Nations education transformation is led at the school and community level, responding to the visions of First Nations for their citizens. Meaningful First Nations' decision-making for the education of their learners is a fundamental principle of First Nations control of First Nations education, and First Nations have the right to establish and control their own educational systems and institutions as a fundamental aspect of their inherent rights of self-determination and self-government – rights protected under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 and affirmed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration).

In response, FNESC and FNSA are committed to supporting education governance through a range of information sharing activities.

- Resources have been designed for school leaders, including *A Handbook for First Nation School Governing Authorities, a School Governing Authority's Guide to Attendance Promotion*, and a *Policy and Procedure Guide for First Nation Schools in BC*.

- Information sharing workshops are organized each year, and First Nation School Governing Authorities can request individual virtual information sessions as appropriate.

Additionally, grants are made available to support First Nations in building their capacity for education governance, made possible by accessing federal Education Partnership Program (EPP) funding. The grants support key activities, such as:

- Increasing family and community engagement in education decision-making.
- Providing professional development and training for education leaders.
- Supporting relationship-building of the Nation's education decision-makers and public education representatives.
- Establishing and reviewing the operations of school boards / school committees and/or Parent Advisory Councils.
- Developing education policies and procedures.

PHOTO: 'Na Aksa Gyilak'yoo School



Parental Engagement in Education

In addition to governance, family engagement is key to educational success.

- Family support and home-school partnerships are among the most fundamental factors influencing the well-being and educational outcomes of children and teens.
- Stronger home / school connections acknowledge that families are the greatest strengths in their children's lives, that families have the right to be involved in their children's education, and that parents and caregivers have invaluable expertise about what's right for students.
- Parental rights are the foundation of First Nations control of First Nations education, and parents must be fully informed and involved in determining and guiding their children's education.

In response to the extensive evidence that when families are involved in their children's education, students do better in school and schools improve, a First Nations Parents Club was created over two decades ago, with the goal of promoting the key role of parents and caregivers in the educational success of their children. Locally-based Parent Clubs receive newsletters, calendars, and Parent Kits with practical resources to support parental engagement and advocacy. In addition, funding grants are distributed each year for local Club activities, such as sponsoring guest speakers, training opportunities, and other activities to foster parental engagement in education.

Additionally, FNESC and FNSA are creating important resources and capacity building opportunities for families.

- *A Toolkit for First Nations Parents and Families* is available, which includes a series of resources that can be adapted and shared to provide information about the importance of parental involvement in education, how to interact with the school system, and how to create healthy and supportive learning environments at home. An Implementation Guide for this resource is also available, and in 2025/26 two capacity building workshops with First Nations parents gathered important feedback about ways to support family engagement.
- *Guiding Your Education Journey: A Handbook for First Nations Families* shares information to help families decide what courses students should take – especially in Grades 10, 11, and 12 – and to assist with planning for post-secondary education, training, and future careers.
- A range of initiatives have been organized to raise awareness about the importance of regular school attendance – including the publication of a Parents' Guide to Attendance Promotion and the presentation of two capacity building sessions for First Nations parents to help them feel prepared to act as "attendance champions" in their schools and communities.

PHOTO: Lake Babine Nation

Promoting First Nations Language Education

The BC First Nations Education System is built on a recognition that First Nations languages and cultures are central to First Nations' distinctive laws, governance systems, traditions, and ways of life. First Nations' connections to their lands are embedded in their languages. As set out in DRIPA, 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' inherent rights to language are constitutionally protected, and are recognized by the Government of Canada in the federal Indigenous Languages Act.

Additionally, widespread research shows that language learning is a strong contributor to educational achievement, and learning their own language increases First Nation students' self-confidence, sense of identity, and connections to their communities and cultures – all vital components of school success.

In response, FNESC and FNSA make every effort possible to assist First Nations in advancing their language education goals.

For example, in partnership with a consortium of IAHLA institutes and public post-secondary institutions, FNESC and IAHLA have continued to advance a framework for a four-year Indigenous Language Fluency Degree, which has fluency in an Indigenous language as its primary learning outcome and purpose. Funding is available for years 1 and 2 of the programs, and public post-secondary institutions fund years 3 and 4.

BCTEA also provides for a comprehensive First Nations Language and Culture Program (FNLCP) for First Nation schools, as well as important policy and program commitments related to First Nations language programming in the public education system. The FNLCP sponsors grants for First Nation schools totaling approximately $14 million annually – which is in addition to the funding that is provided directly to schools for language education through the BCTEA funding formula. FNESC and FNSA also offer language support services, such as school visits by language coaches, information sessions, and professional development opportunities for language teachers.

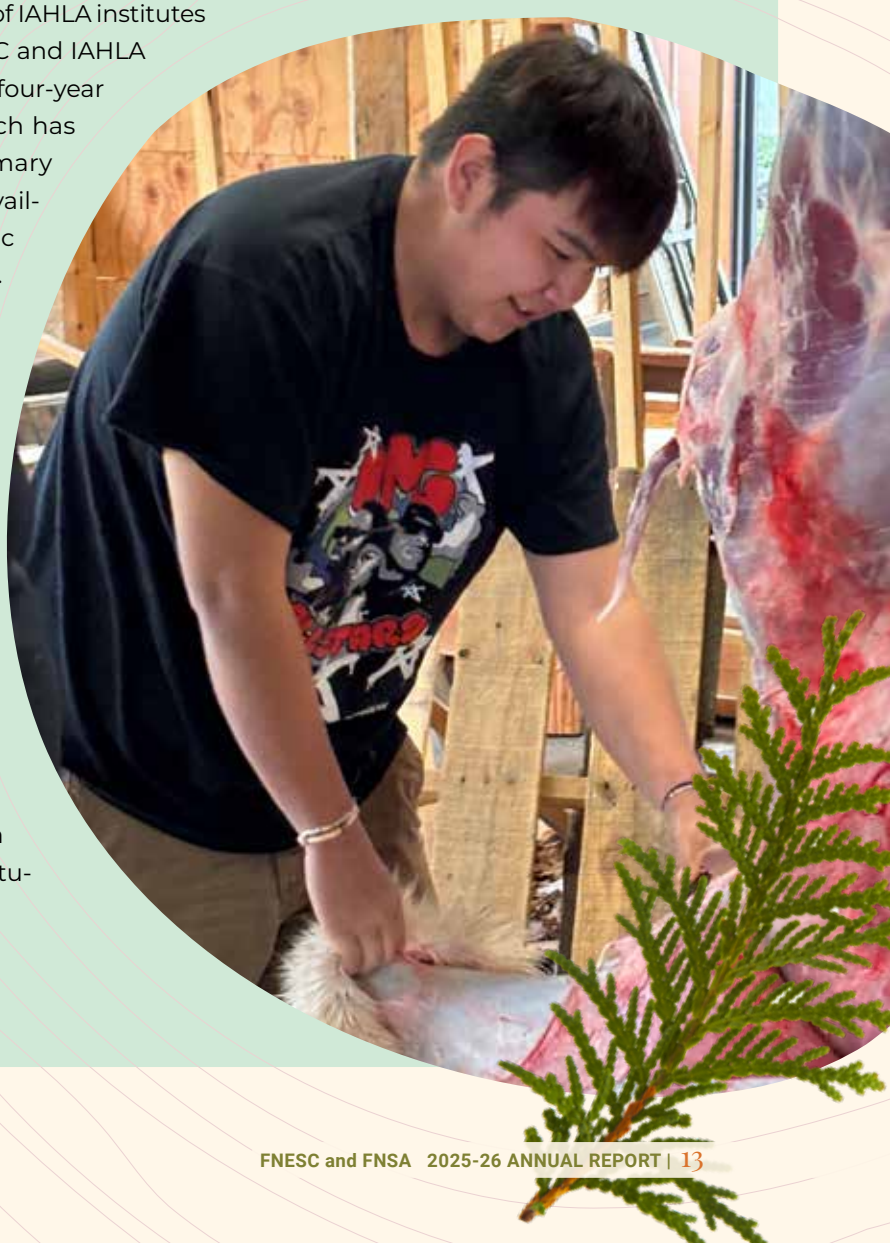


PHOTO: WSANEC Leadership Secondary School

132

First Nation schools accessed a First Nations Language and Culture Program grant in 2025/26

APPROXIMATELY

5,500

First Nation school students received language and culture instruction

> 6,100

hours of language and culture instruction offered by First Nation schools in the past year

Additionally, key resources have been created to support First Nations in delivering effective language and culture programs.

- *A Field Guide to Empowering Students Through Learning on the Land and Water* is intended to help educators design and implement relevant learning opportunities that are connected to the curriculum – for the benefit of learners and to enhance the revitalization and transmission of First Nations languages and traditions. In 2025/26, 47 schools accessed a funding grant from FNESC and FNSA to plan and implement related activities.
- *A Guide to Language Revitalization: Promising Education Practices for Consideration by First Nation Schools* is also available, which was developed through interviews with language champions and with contributions from a focus group of First Nation school representatives. Those resources are available on the FNESC website.



Impacts on Student Learning Supports

There is strong evidence that the negative effects of the COVID pandemic can still be seen in student achievement and attendance rates, requiring ongoing concerted efforts to supplement regular K-12 school programming with additional learning supports. In response, for the past five years, Impacts on Student Learning Grants have been provided to First Nations to sponsor local activities such as summer learning programs, extra-curricular programs and tutoring initiatives, home learning support initiatives, and on-the-land and cultural opportunities to increase students' social and emotional well-being.

PHOTO: Muskoti Elementary School

Supporting Students With Exceptionalities Program
(formerly the Special Education Program)

FNESC and FNSA are committed to supporting efforts to address the needs of all learners, and through BCTEA approximately $24 million is allocated annually through a Supporting Students With Exceptionalities Program (SSEP). The majority of the funding available for SSEP is allocated directly to First Nation schools to support local programs and services.

124
First Nation schools accessed a School funding grant in 2025/26

1,177
students were identified as having an Individual Education Plan (IEP) in the past year (to be updated)

841
of those students met one or more of their IEP goals (to be updated)

The funding for school-based services is complemented by collective initiatives to create economies-of-scale and increase access to necessary expertise and resources. In addition to professional development and information sharing sessions, First Nation schools can access advice and programming support from SSEP staff, who are available to help schools consider strategies and interventions for students with suspected or diagnosed exceptionalities. SSEP staff can also connect schools with relevant service providers, and they share information and respond to questions as needed.



PHOTO: Senpaq'cin School



Professional Development Supports

FNESC and FNSA sponsor a variety of professional development opportunities and programs to support First Nation school representatives.

- Each Fall, a School Start-Up Information Sharing Series is hosted for First Nation school educators, support staff, School Governing Authority representatives, and community education staff. Zoom sessions are offered on topics that include, among many others, effective instruction, report card writing, teacher recruitment and retention, and information sessions on supporting students who have exceptionalities as well as language and culture programming.

- FNESC and FNSA host an annual Fall Professional Development Day for all educators in First Nation schools. The 2025 event was focused on building a sense of connectedness and belonging for all students.

- In 2025/26, 25 teachers joined a year-long pilot project to explore how the Standards for Teachers in First Nation Schools can be actualized, resulting in a complementary Workbook as well as numerous supporting documents.

- Exciting opportunities to support Education Assistants (EAs) were implemented in the past year, including a 2-day professional development event, as well as the creation of a new Workbook and a new Toolkit to Accompany the Standards for EAs in First Nation Schools.

- Professional Networks are organized each year, which involve cohort groups meeting regularly to engage in focused discussions and share their experiences and ideas – with Networks for principals, K4 educators, EAs, and K-12 educators.

- Instructional Coaches and First Nations Language and Culture Coaches are available to work with teachers to support effective instruction and assessment practices for the benefit of students.

- FNESC and FNSA are dedicating considerable time and resources to raise awareness about the critical importance of student attendance. An *Attendance Toolkit* and *Attendance Counts: An Information Guide for Representatives of Adult Secondary Education Programs* are available – documents that have been informed by research and ideas shared by parents and school representatives through dozens of attendance workshops hosted in the past three years.

- Building on the attendance work, *Building Connections With Students: A Toolkit for Schools* includes research and a plethora of examples of what schools are doing to increase students' sense of belonging – a key component of efforts to raise student attendance and achievement.

- In the past year, a new Toolkit for Schools was created, *Promoting Family Engagement: What Can Be Done?* That new resource reflects input gathered in three sessions with school representatives and First Nations parents to review the draft Toolkit and gather relevant comments and suggestions.

- First Nation schools in BC can request support from Regional Principals, who assist school principals with supervision of instruction practices (including effective teacher observations and follow-up), scheduling, planning effective school structures, accessing relevant services and professional development opportunities, and designing and implementing frameworks for monitoring and responding to student data.

PHOTO: Qwam Qwum Stuwixwulh

First Nation Schools Assessment and Certification Process

The First Nations Schools Assessment and Certification Process is a five-year cycle of review, improvement planning, and follow-up that supports participating schools (including adult education and K4 centres) in reviewing their operations, including considering school programs and administration structures, student outcomes data, as well as survey input from School Governing Authority members, students, parents / caregivers, and school staff. The overall goal of the process is to identify school strengths and areas for growth, leading to the creation of a School Growth Plan (i.e. a strategic plan for improvement). Upon completion of the internal review, participating schools are visited by an External Team of experienced educators who review the findings and provide suggestions and feedback.

Interested schools may also request "Certification," which is a determination that the school meets collectively established standards related to school operations and climate, education programs and services, and family and community engagement. Certification through the First Nation Schools Assessment and Certification Process is related to several key education agreements and opportunities, including BCTEA, Reciprocal Tuition, First Nation schools' access to the Dogwood and Adult Dogwood Diploma, and the jurisdiction initiative.

First Nation schools that are participating in the Assessment and Certification process receive support through project workshops and funding grants for the implementation of School Growth Plans.

First Peoples Curricular Resources

For more than two decades, FNESC and FNSA have developed First Peoples curricular resources covering every major subject area from K-12. Teacher resource guides developed by experienced teachers and educational leaders share suggestions for effectively weaving First Peoples knowledge into various curricular areas, emphasizing the importance of using authentic resources and collaborating with local First Nations.

Additionally, learning opportunities for K-12 educators are regularly organized to help teachers use the resources. With the introduction of the Indigenous focused graduation requirement in 2023/24, these workshops have become increasingly important, as more and more teachers are now incorporating First Peoples content into their classrooms.



PHOTO: 'Na Aksa Gyilak'yoo School



Promoting Evidence-Based Decision Making and Reporting

FNESC and FNSA support First Nation schools with the collection and analysis of student performance data by sponsoring professional development and follow-up for the effective use of the Acadience Reading Assessment, Canadian Achievement Test 4 (CAT4), and the Preschool Early Literacy Intervention (PELI) assessment. A new Specialist is also available to support schools with the effective use of assessments and data for school planning and decision-making.

Additionally, a *Student Reporting Handbook for First Nation Schools in BC* provides evidence-based suggestions for student reporting practices; an overview of possible reporting mechanisms, with a focus on written report cards and the use of proficiency scales, letter grades, and comments / written feedback; and considerations related to reporting policies. That resource is complemented by a *Record Keeping Handbook for First Nation Schools*.

Information Technology, Privacy, and Security Resources

Recognizing the increasingly complex responsibilities of education settings related to data security and information management, FNESC and FNSA have been working to help schools understand and address these critical issues.

- A newly updated (2026 version) *Information Technology Systems Toolkit for First Nation Schools* includes suggestions related to the effective, sustainable, and secure use of information technologies to support school operations and learning.
- Given the growing attention to the integration of Artificial Intelligence in education settings, a considerations document, posters for students, and a pamphlet for parents are available to help schools consider these issues and promote awareness with their staff and students.
- A *Privacy Toolkit for First Nation Schools* shares information related to privacy requirements for education initiatives that involve the collection, use, storage, disclosure and transfer of Personal Information.

Student Information Management

First developed in 2010, the Data Records and User Management System (DRUMS) is a student information system designed specifically for First Nation schools to manage student information and produce report cards. FNESC and FNSA provide training for schools that use DRUMS and regularly communicate with participating schools to ensure that the system remains relevant and effective.

PHOTO: OKIB Cultural Immersion School



Connected Classrooms Program

The Connected Classrooms Program was created over two decades ago to address challenges First Nation schools experience in recruiting and retaining specialist secondary teachers and offering courses for small cohorts of grade 10 - 12 students. The Connected Classrooms Program is an innovative opportunity for collectives of First Nation schools to jointly offer high school courses that lead to graduation and/or are often required as pre-requisites for post-secondary. The Program uses a combination of technologies to create a synchronous, interactive classroom environment that students can join from various locations throughout the province. Connected Classrooms students participate in a real time virtual classroom with a qualified educator who has specific subject matter expertise, who co-teaches with a certified educator who supports students on-site. All First Nation schools and adult education centres in BC that offer grades 10 – 12 are invited to participate in the Program when they have students who would benefit from accessing this unique and flexible learning option.

School Bus Program

Through BCTEA, FNESC and FNSA allocate funding for the purchase of school buses for First Nation schools – with 12 buses purchased in the 2025/26 school year. FNESC is also working with the Association of School Transportation Services of British Columbia (ASTSBC) on several transportation-related initiatives. For example, FNESC is exploring a shared services model on school transportation maintenance between First Nations and school districts.

Additionally, in order to address the school bus driver shortage across BC, a school bus driver training program was implemented for candidate school bus drivers in First Nation schools. In 2025/26, eleven driver training sessions were sponsored, which supported over 30 new school bus drivers in First Nation schools. Additional opportunities are now in the planning phase.



PHOTO: TOP Qwam Qwum Stuwixwulh | BOTTOM Lake Babine Nation

First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy Initiative

Each year, FNESC and FNSA manage the First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy, which consists of:

- The Summer Work Experience Program (SWEP), which supports opportunities for summer work experience and training for in-school secondary and post-secondary First Nations students.
- The Career Promotion and Awareness Program, which sponsors career development activities such as career fairs and leadership projects.
- The Cooperative Work Placements Program, which funds First Nation schools' career readiness activities.
- The Science and Technology Program, which sponsors activities to promote science and technology as a career choice by providing first-hand experience in various science and technology disciplines.
- The Mentored Work Placement Program, which supports work experience opportunities for out-of-school, unemployed, or under-employed First Nations youth.
- The Information Communication Technology (ICT) Work Placement Program, which sponsors ICT work experience opportunities for out-of-school, unemployed, or under-employed youth.

Artists in Education Initiative

For over 20 years, FNESC and FNSA have worked in partnership with ArtStarts in Schools – a charitable organization that collaborates with educators, artists, families, and communities to promote art as an essential part of learning and life. Through this partnership, funding grants have been provided annually to First Nation schools, which sponsor exciting art opportunities for students, often involving local BC First Nation artists who are recognized by their communities for their talents and gifts.



PHOTO: Lake Babine Nation

First Nations Post-Secondary Education Support

Since 2018, FNESC and IAHLA have been working under the direction of BC First Nations on the development of a BC Tripartite Post-Secondary Model (BC PSE Model), which will fundamentally transform the post-secondary education system in BC. Through engagement with First Nations and First Nations-mandated post-secondary institutes, efforts are being made to ensure that the BC PSE Model addresses the needs and priorities identified by First Nations. Work on the Model has been formally endorsed by First Nations leadership through resolutions passed by the First Nations Summit, BC Assembly of First Nations, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

The draft BC PSE Model has four pillars:

1.

First Nations Learners

First Nations-developed guidelines and allocation methodology to ensure that First Nations have funding for all learners to receive the supports they need to pursue post-secondary education and training.

2.

First Nations-Mandated Post-Secondary Institutes

First Nations-mandated institutes have ongoing core and capacity development funding, anchored in legislation, recognizing their integral role in the BC PSE system.

3.

Community-Based Program Delivery

Funding for the delivery of community-based programming that is responsive to First Nation priorities, supported by a First Nations-controlled funding process that is fair, equitable, and transparent.

4.

Respectful and Responsive Public Post-Secondary System

Systemic change within public post-secondary institutions (PPSIs) based upon shared decision-making with First Nations on whose territory PPSIs operate to ensure that PPSIs are responsive to the needs of First Nations learners.



FNESC also supports the PSE Coordinators of individual First Nations with the administration of PSE funding. Annual PSE Coordinator Workshops are hosted throughout BC to support professional development and provide an opportunity for engagement with First Nations on key post-secondary initiatives. PSE Coordinators can also contact the FNESC PSE Resource Line by phone or email at any time to receive information and support related to the Post-secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) and the University and College Entrance Preparation Program (UCEPP), or any other post-secondary topic.

Conclusions

As demonstrated throughout the report, First Nation schools and communities in BC have directed important efforts to improve First Nations education in BC, and tremendous progress has been made in building a relevant and effective BC First Nations Education System.

FNESC and FNSA strive to support First Nations students, communities, and schools in meaningful and effective ways, and to advance relevant change that reflects their needs and priorities. We are confident that by continuing to work collectively and with our many education partners, even greater improvements in First Nations student learning outcomes and attendance will be achieved.

PHOTO: Lake Babine Nation

Financial Statements FNESC and FNSA

The FNESC and FNSA Audited Financial Statements will be included when available





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