

# INDIGENOUS CULTURAL SAFETY, HUMILITY, AND COMPETENCY GUIDE







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# Territorial Acknowledgement

The Chilliwack School District acknowledges that we are privileged to live, learn and play on the unceded traditional territory of the Ts'elxwéyeqw, Semá:th, and Pil'alt.

## S'ólh Témexw

We honour and acknowledge our history, live in the present, and look to the future to guide all teaching and learning. The Chilliwack School District is in the heart of the Stó:lō (People of the River) territory. Surrounded by the Ts'elxwéyeqw, Pilált, Semá:th, the Stó:lō refer to this as S'ólh Témexw (our world). Ts'elxwéyeqw is situated in the lower Fraser River watershed. It is a place where the fresh waters meet and flow into the Fraser River. Stó:lō elders share that this is the place where dug-out cedar canoes were “going back upstream” out of the Fraser River. The name Chilliwack is derived from the Halq'eméylem word Ts'elxwéyeqw.

In Halq'eméylem, the language of the Stó:lō people, Xáxastexw te mekw'stám translates to 'Respect for all things.' In keeping with this teaching, this document has been developed to support all partners of learning within the Chilliwack School District to build cultural safety, competency, and humility. At the heart of this work, is the “responsibility to treat all beings with respect,” Naxaxalhts'i (Sonny McHalsie)





# About This Guide

## Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to help educators in the K-12 education system to find and use appropriate and meaningful resources that will increase their ability to provide culturally safe and respectful learning environments.

## Cultural Competency and Cultural Humility

Cultural competency involves being aware of and sensitive to your own biases and developing skills for interacting in respectful ways with people who are different from you.

Cultural competency does not require you to become an expert in cultures different from yours, it simply requires that you reflect on how your values and biases affect your interactions with others. It is only by understanding a family's, caregivers', learners', or colleagues' culture through communication and relationship building that you can provide cultural safety ( (BC Ministry of Children and Family, 2021)).

To understand cultural humility, it is important to think about how culture is central in these interactions. The authors of the Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) standards explain the importance of culture. The use of 'health care' can easily be substituted with 'education' and 'learning.'

"Culture defines how... information is received, how rights and protections are exercised, what is an... [education] problem, how symptoms and concerns about the problem are expressed, who should provide treatment for the problem, and what type of treatment should be given. In sum, because... [education] is a cultural construct, arising from beliefs about the nature of... [learning], cultural issues are actually central in the delivery of... [education and learning] (Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services, <https://thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/clas>)."

Thus, discovering and incorporating these differences help foster an environment that allows cultural humility to grow and take shape.

Cultural humility is  
a process, while  
cultural competency  
is an outcome.

. A Theory of Cultural Humility.  
Journal of Transcultural Nursing.  
(Foronda, 2019)





## How To Use This Guide

This guide contains educational resources to develop cultural competency for educators. The inclusion of these resources is not an endorsement; as professionals, it is up to each individual educator to determine which resource works best for them. These are suggestions only and are not exhaustive.

## Who Should Use This Guide

Educators who work in the K-12 system.

School District No. 33 recognizes and needs to ensure that the unique rights, interests, and circumstances of Indigenous peoples in B.C. are acknowledged, affirmed, and implemented. The district recognizes First Nations, the Métis Nation, and Inuit as the Indigenous peoples of Canada, consisting of distinct, rights-bearing communities with their own histories. The work of forming relationships based on the recognition of rights, respect, and partnership must reflect the unique interests, priorities, and circumstances of each people.

*Adopted from Early Years Indigenous Cultural Safety Resource Guide (BC Ministry of Children and Family, 2021)*

# What is Cultural Competency, Safety, and Humility

## A Note on Definitions

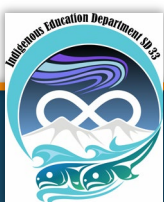
The definitions in this guide are basic in nature. To be equitable and culturally safe, Indigenous nations and organizations may define cultural safety in a manner appropriate to the interests and needs of their community.

## Definition Of Cultural Competency

Cultural competency is the ability “to provide care to individuals with diverse values, beliefs, and behaviours... [to] meet their social, cultural, and linguistic needs” (Health Care Assistant Core Competencies, 2014). Whether a child or family feels culturally safe is dependent in part on whether the educator is culturally competent.

## Definition of Cultural Safety

Cultural safety means attending to cultural differences. It is also important to understand that power differentials, which are part of providing care, impact cultural safety.





## Definition of Cultural Humility

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) defines cultural humility as “a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby the individual not only learns about another’s culture, but one starts with an examination of their own beliefs and cultural identities.”

## Context

Cultural humility and cultural safety are important when two or more cultures interact within the same space, as one culture is often dominant.

This means that the values of the dominant culture are placed above the marginalized group or groups. This is true in Canada, where many Indigenous cultures and traditions are often intentionally or unintentionally invalidated. Cultural safety means creating a space where these cultures are respected and treated equally.

In 2015 an Audit of the Education of Aboriginal Students in the BC Public School System reported significant inequities of outcomes for Indigenous learners in the BC public school system. According to the provincial Aboriginal How Are We Doing Report (studentsuccess.gov.bc.ca, 2022), this continues to be true in almost every school district in the province today.

In 2019, Standard 9 was added to the Professional Standards for BC Educators which apply to all individuals holding a Certificate of Qualification to teach in British Columbia (BC Teachers' Council, 2019). Standard 9 states:

*Educators respect and value the history of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in Canada and the impact of the past on the present and the future. Educators contribute towards truth, reconciliation, and healing. Educators foster a deeper understanding of ways of knowing and being, histories, and cultures of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis.*

*Educators critically examine their own biases, attitudes, beliefs, values, and practices to facilitate change. Educators value and respect the languages, heritages, cultures, and ways of knowing and being of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. Educators understand the power of focusing on connectedness and relationships to oneself, family, community, and the natural world. Educators integrate First Nations, Inuit, and Métis worldviews and perspectives into learning environments.*

## Relationship Between Cultural Humility, Safety, and Cultural Competency

To be culturally competent, it is necessary to be aware of, and understand, the cultural belief of the communities where you work as well as reflecting on your own beliefs and identity and how they might create biases. Cultural competency is a necessary step towards building a culturally safe experience for learners. Developing cultural competency will help you work towards providing cultural safety.

*Adopted from Early Years Cultural Safety Resource Guide*  
(BC Ministry of Children and Family, 2021).





## Information / Facts

These resources were adapted from the Ministry of Children and Family Development for shared education and learning.

**CONTENT WARNING:** *The content in the following resources addresses topics that include information on residential schools, trauma including intergenerational trauma, and may trigger unpleasant feeling or thoughts of past trauma.*

Individuals who may need emotional support and resources can contact the Crisis Line Association of BC Mental Health Support Line at 310-6789 (no area code needed). Indigenous peoples who may require emotional support can also contact the 24-Hour KUU-US Crisis Line at 1-800-588-8717.

### What Does Indigenous Mean?

Indigenous refers to a person who is native to an area. It is the term currently utilized by the United Nations, as well as the Canadian and British Columbia governments. There is no common definition, rather the basis is on self-identification with pre-colonial societies, traditional territory, and cultural systems. Currently, the term used to self-identify within the Chilliwack school district as agreed on by the local First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities through representation on the Indigenous Education Advisory is **Indigenous**.

**NOTE:** *Most Indigenous or Aboriginal peoples and Nations prefer to self-identify. If you aren't sure, it's respectful to ask.*

### Explore Legal Terminology

**Aboriginal** peoples, as defined in the 1982 Constitution, refer to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people. **Aboriginal** is a legal concept.

- A Band is a legal term used to refer to a group of Indigenous peoples. Most prefer to use the terms Nation, First Nation, or Community.
- A person who is **Status** meets the definition of an Indian under the Indian Act and has certain rights and restrictions.
- A **reserve** is a track of land set aside by the Indian Act for the use of a specific Band.
- A person who is **Non-Status** does not meet the definition of an Indian or chooses not to register, yet still identifies as First Nations.

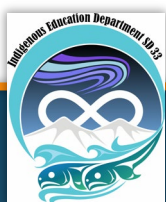
**NOTE:** *Indian is a legal term, and in most other contexts is considered offensive.*







<b>STÓ:LŌ SERVICE AGENCY First Nations</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Traditional Name</b>	<b>Address</b>
<b>Aitchelitz First Nation</b>	Áthelets	PO Box 2130 Chilliwack, BC V2R 1A5
<b>Skowkale First Nation</b>	Sq'ewqeyl	#304 - Bldg 10 7201 Vedder Road Chilliwack, BC V2R 5R7
<b>Shxwhá:y Village</b>	Shxwhá:y	44680 Schweyey Rd. Chilliwack, BC V2R 5M5
<b>Squiala First Nation</b>	Sxwoyehà:là	45005 Squiala Rd. Chilliwack, BC V2P 7Z9
<b>Tzeachten First Nation</b>	Ch'iyàqtel	Unit 29 - 6014 Vedder Rd Chilliwack, BC V2R 5M4
<b>Yakweawioose First Nation</b>	Yeqwyeqwi:ws	7176 Chilliwack River Rd Chilliwack BC V2R 4M1
<b>Other First Nations beyond Chilliwack School District</b>		
<b>Leq'á:mel First Nation</b>	Leq'á:mel	43101 Leq'á:mel Way Deroche, BC V0M 1G0
<b>Matsqui First Nation</b>	Máthxw	5720 Julian Drive PO Box 10 Matsqui, BC V4X 3R2
<b>Sumas First Nation</b>	Semà:th	2788 Sumas Mtn. Rd. Abbotsford, BC V3G 2J2
<b>Skawahlook First Nation</b>	Sq'ewá:lxw	58611A - Lougheed Hwy Agassiz, BC V0M 1A2
<b>Stó:lo Tribal Council First Nations Governance</b>		
<b>Cheam First Nation</b>		52161 Victor Dr. Rosedale, BC V0X 1X1
<b>Skwah First Nation</b>		
<b>Kwaw-kwaw-Apilt</b>		Bldg#10 3rd Floor 7201 Vedder Rd Chilliwack, BC
<b>Soowahlie</b>		4172 Soowahlie Road Chilliwack, BC
<b>Stó:lo First Nations beyond Chilliwack School District</b> Kwantlen, Scowlitz, Seabird Island, Shxw'ow'hamel		





## Métis

Members of the Métis Nation trace their origins to the fur trade in the Red River Valley and across Rupert's Land. Métis people are distinct from other Indigenous people, and share a common culture, language, shared history, and homeland.

- As of the 2016 statistics, over 89,000 people identified as Métis in British Columbia. As of 2022 only 24,000 verified as registered with [Métis Nation BC](#), the **provincial** governing body. The **national** governing body is the [Métis National Council](#).
- Métis people share collective cultural practices, kinship ties, and history as a Nation. The term Métis does not encompass all individuals with mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage, rather Métis refers to a distinct people who have their own customs, ways of life, and recognizable group identity separate from those of their First Nations and European forbears. Although the Métis people are one Nation, they have diverse expressions of Métis culture. The Métis National Council defines Métis as... “a person who self- identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, and who is accepted by the Métis Nation.”

## Inuit

Inuit refers to Indigenous peoples of Northern Canada, the word means 'people' in Inuktitut. Inuit people have a distinct language and culture.

- In Canada, Inuit have inhabited communities stretching from the westernmost Arctic to the eastern shores of Newfoundland and Labrador for uncounted generations. This area, known as Inuit Nunangat, refers to the land, and surrounding water and ice, which Inuit consider to be integral to their culture and way of life.
- There are over 1,600 Inuit living in BC, making up just under 1% of all Indigenous people in BC.
- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami is the national representative organization for Inuit in Canada.

*Adopted from. Early Years Cultural Safety Resource Guide. (BC Ministry of Children and Family, 2021)*





# Indian Act

## Background

Coming into effect in 1876, the Indian Act (the Act) is the principal statute which the federal government administers Indian status, local First Nations governments, and the management of reserve land and communal funds (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, 1876).

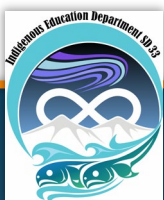
The Act does not apply to Métis, Inuit, and non-status First Nations peoples. However, since the Daniels decision in 2016, Métis and non-status First Nations are considered 'Indians' under s.91 (24) of the Constitution, which places them under federal jurisdiction.

The Act was amended significantly in 1951, which removed many political, cultural and religious restrictions; yet introduced new restrictions on status that discriminated against First Nations women. The Act was amended in 1985 following the passage of Bill C-31, which called for the reinstatement of status to those who had been discriminated against and giving Bands control over their membership list.

Despite amendments, the Act continues to be heavily criticized, and its historical impacts are felt to this day. The Act is administered by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC).

## Present Day

- Jurisdiction
  - Provincial laws that do not contradict the Indian Act apply to 'Indians' in that province.
- Finances
  - Personal property and income are tax exempt only when an 'Indian' is living and/or generating income on reserve.
- Healthcare
  - Essentials are provided by Non-Insured Health Benefits in BC. This is administered by the First Nations Health Authority.
- Land and Housing
  - Reserve lands are held in trust by the Crown. Individuals cannot own reserve land unless they are granted a certificate. Housing on reserve is typically owned collectively.





- Education
  - Schools can be established and run under the Indian Act. Educational funding is provided by Canada and administered by the Band. Children who live on reserve do not qualify for K-12 provincial public- school funding, therefore children living on reserve who attend K-12 public schools are charged tuition. This is known as the Nominal Roll. The Nominal Roll list is determined annually by the Band in cooperation with the local school district. Educational services for Nominal Roll students are often guided by Local Education Agreements (LEA) and more recently (2018), the BC Tripartite Agreement (BCTEA).

While the Act outlines rights to housing, funding for education and access to healthcare, *not all 'Indians' will receive these benefits*. There are limitations and exclusions to the medical coverage provided. Some reserves are limited in size and cannot offer housing to band members. The education funds offered are limited, resulting in students and families receiving partial funding or funding being deferred if there are more eligible students than funds available.

## Understanding Status

- Status 'Indians' may be eligible for a range of benefits, rights, programs, and services offered by the federal, provincial, or territorial governments.
- Status must be applied for. The Indian Registrar determines eligibility and maintains a federally controlled list.
- Each individual will have their own status number that connects them to the First Nation they are registered with.
- There is currently no federal register for Inuit or Métis. Métis people can register as members of their local or regional Métis organizations (Example: Métis Nation BC). Inuit people may be members of a land claim agreement.



*Adopted from. Early Years Cultural Safety Resource Guide. (BC Ministry of Children and Family, 2021)*





# Residential Schools

## Background

The Canadian state funded church-run schools to assimilate Indigenous children into Canadian society. The schools operated from the 1860s to the 1990s, and over 150,000 children attended.

Children were often sent to residential schools far away from home and separated from their siblings in effort to destroy connections to community and culture. Other children were compelled to attend Indian Day School each day, were they experienced the same types of abuse as Residential School Survivors.

Daily activities included religious worship, physical labour, and colonial education. Children were malnourished and exposed to the elements due to improper clothing and housing. They were punished with physical force and confinement for using their traditional languages or demonstrating ties to their culture. Children experienced physical, sexual, emotional, cultural, and psychological abuse. Many died while trying to return home, or from serious illness with inadequate medical care. Some residential schools had a death rate as high as 50%.

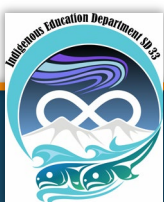


There were two residential schools operating in the Fraser Valley: Coqualeetza Residential School (1886-1940) and St. Mary's Residential School (1867-1984). Coqualeetza Residential School was located on the shores of Luckakuck Creek in Chilliwack, BC and was operated jointly by the Women's Missionary Society and the Board of Home Missions of the Methodist Church, and, after 1925, by the United Church of Canada. St. Mary's Residential School was located overlooking the Fraser River in Mission, BC and operated by the Catholic Church. Both schools enlisted students from the Straits of Juan de Fuca to the borders of Alaska. By the 1930s about 25% came from the Fraser Valley and the Interior and almost 50% came from communities to the north of the Haida Gwaii.



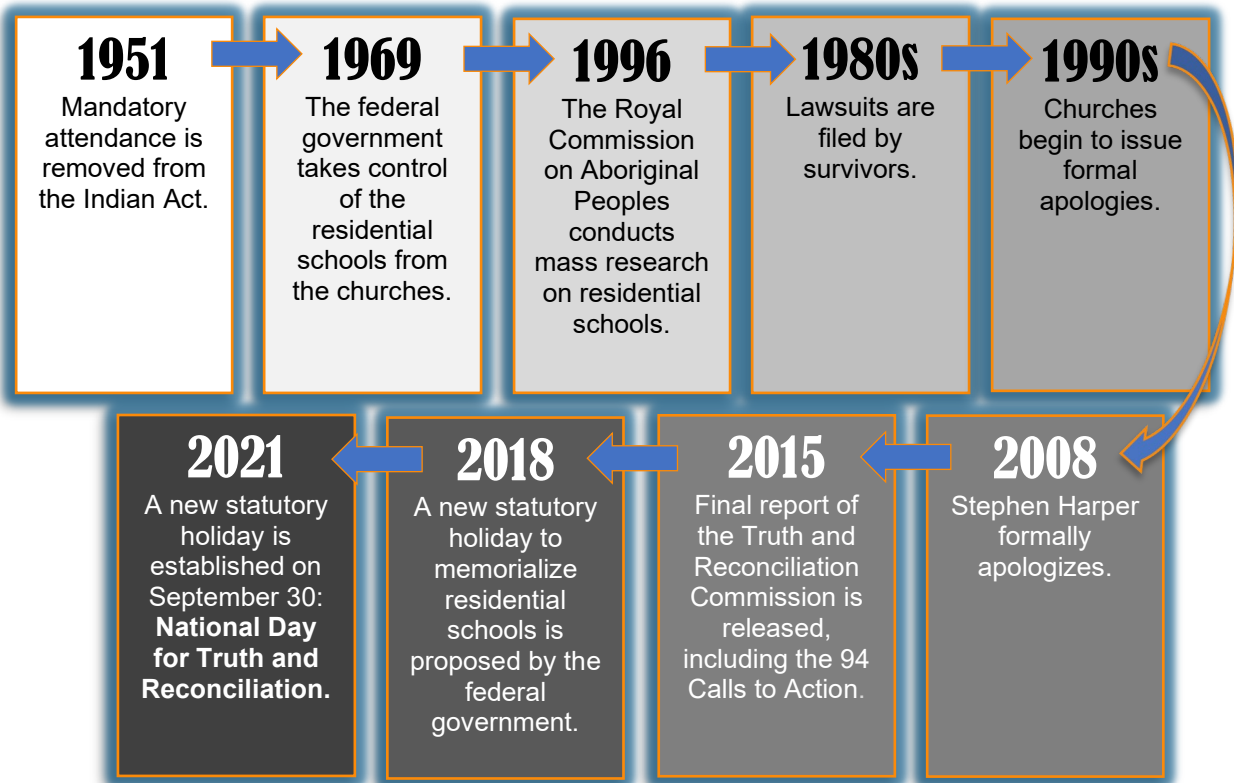
There were residential schools open in Canada until 1996.

**NOTE:** *Orange Shirt Day (September 30) is a commemorative event inspired by Phyllis Webstad's Story when she arrived at St. Joseph Mission Residential School in Williams Lake. This has now become the same day as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (Webstad).*





## Government Action: Residential Schools



## Legacy

- The trauma experienced in residential schools have affected every aspect of Indigenous life, and has intergenerational effects on language, culture, and family and community structure.
- Cycle of abuse began with those who attended residential schools and has been passed on through generations. Many survivors feel feelings of guilt, shame, depression, hopelessness, and mistrust and anxiety around government institutions.
- The Métis experience had been underemphasized in the telling of residential school history. Métis people attended and survived residential schools, and many Elders are beginning to share their stories.

*Adopted from. Early Years Cultural Safety Resource Guide (BC Ministry of Children and Family, 2021)*





# Government Action: Sixties Scoop

In 1951, amendments to the Indian Act gave provinces jurisdiction over Indigenous child welfare. Discriminatory child welfare practices led to a surge of Indigenous children in provincial care.

The Sixties Scoop refers to the large-scale removal of Indigenous children in provincial care. The scoop took place from 1950s through to the 1980s; although many have pointed out that over representation of Indigenous children has remained high since (the Millennial Scoop), despite shifts and policy and practice.

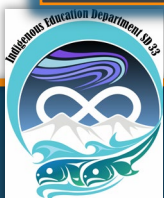
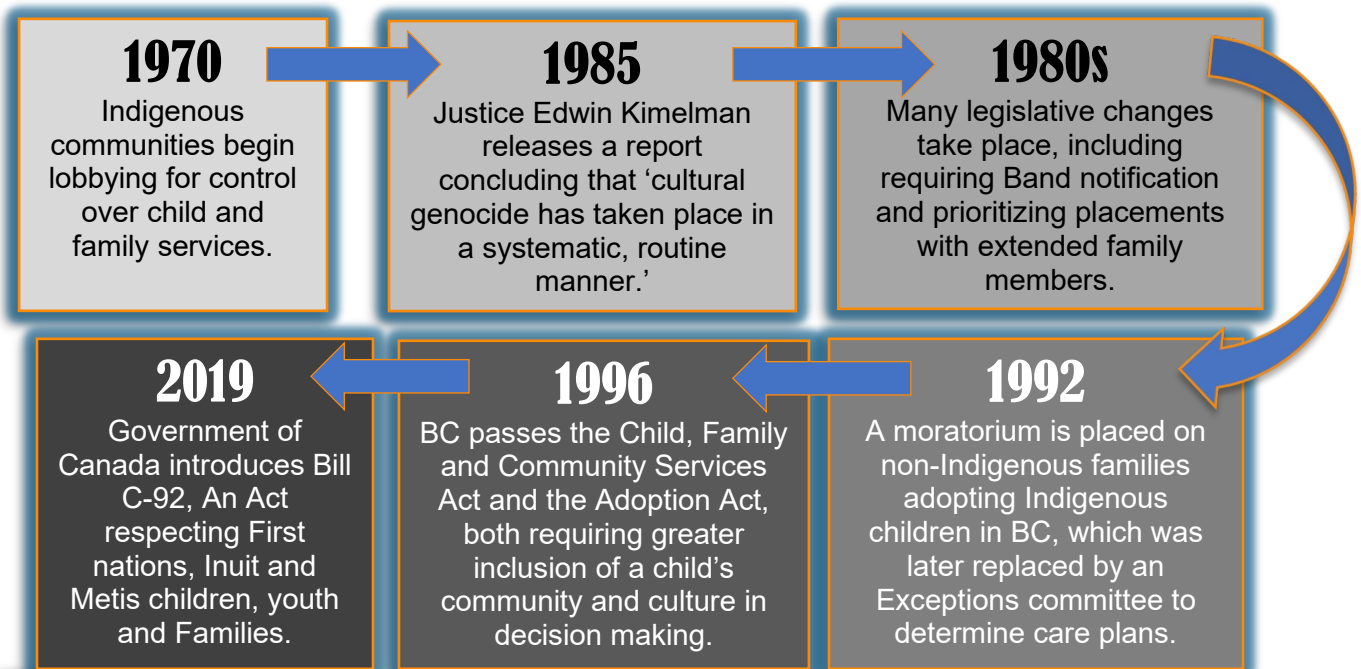
Due to colonial policies and intergenerational trauma, Indigenous children and families struggle with many social and economic barriers. It was provincial policy during this era to remove Indigenous children, often without consent of the family or community.

In BC, the percentage of Indigenous children in care rose 33% in 13 years – from 1% in 1951 to 34% in 1964. 70% of children removed were placed in non-Indigenous homes.

Approximately 11,000 children were removed, but many believed it to be closer to 20,000 due to the erasure of non-status and Métis identity in the gathering of data, even though these groups experienced the Scoop.

Children were separated from their families and siblings, many even being adopted out of the country, losing all ties to their culture and identity.

## Government Action





## Legacy

- The removal of Indigenous children continues to be a widespread issue; as of March 2018, 63% of children in care in BC are Indigenous. Indigenous children are often removed due to poverty, which is linked to systemic barriers and intergenerational trauma.
- The federal government has reached an agreement to commit \$800 million to Sixty Scoop survivors for loss of cultural identity. This agreement has received criticism because it does not account for abuses suffered and excludes non-status and Métis survivors.
- There are currently 18 active lawsuits throughout Canada. The federal settlement is expected to settle many of them.

*Adopted from. Early Years Cultural Safety Resource Guide.  
(BC Ministry of Children and Family, 2021).*

# Intergenerational Trauma

## Background

Through colonial assimilation policies such as mandatory attendance at residential schools, forced hospitalizations, and removals during the Sixties Scoop, Indigenous peoples have been subject to traumatic experiences that have affected their well-being.

Intergenerational trauma occurs when an older member of a community transfers the effects of trauma onto younger members, affecting their ability to lead healthy lives mentally, physically, emotionally, or spiritually.

Trauma can result in but is not limited to the loss of language, culture, and connection to community and family, low sense of self-esteem, internalized racism, disconnection from Indigenous and Western society, abuse, addiction, drug abuse, and suicide.

Different communities and Indigenous groups experienced colonization and trauma in different ways, resulting in different effects. For this reason, each Indigenous person's story and history should be treated as unique and valid.





## Impacts

<b>Self Harm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Suicide and self-inflicted injuries are the leading cause of death for Indigenous youth. Suicide is respectively 6.5, 3.7, and 2.7 times higher for Inuit, First Nations, and Métis than for non-Indigenous people.</li> </ul>
<b>Children</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•63% of children in care in BC are Indigenous (2018). Indigenous children are 16 times more likely to be taken into care.</li> </ul>
<b>Violence Against Women</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Indigenous women in Canada are 2.7 times more likely to face violence, and these women made up 24% of homicides nationally in 2015.</li> </ul>
<b>Prison</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•While Indigenous people only make up 4% of the Canadian population, they account for 26% of the federal prison population.</li> </ul>
<b>Community Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•First Nations communities have reported (2008-2010) that alcohol and drug abuse, housing, and employment are the top three challenges to community well-being.</li> </ul>
<b>Mental Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Indigenous people struggle with mental illness at much higher rates, yet few programs or strategies exist especially for Métis, urban and non-status people.</li> </ul>

## Resilience

While Indigenous communities are often encouraged to move on from the past era, this feat is not a simple matter. Legacies from residential school, the Sixties Scoop, along with ongoing issue like inadequate housing, lack of capacity, and continued discrimination under the Indian Act makes recovering from colonial trauma an ongoing and complex process.

Indigenous communities are actively revitalizing and reclaiming traditional practices and fighting against ongoing colonial policies and attitudes.

Indigenous communities are actively healing from trauma. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation has identified three pillars to healing:

- **Legacy Education** - connecting past to present.
- **Cultural Interventions** - re-centering Indigenous experiences, traditional teachings, and culture.
- **Therapeutic Interventions** - individual, family, and community healing events.

*Adopted from. Early Years Cultural Safety Resource Guide (BC Ministry of Children and Family, 2021).*





# Structural Intervention

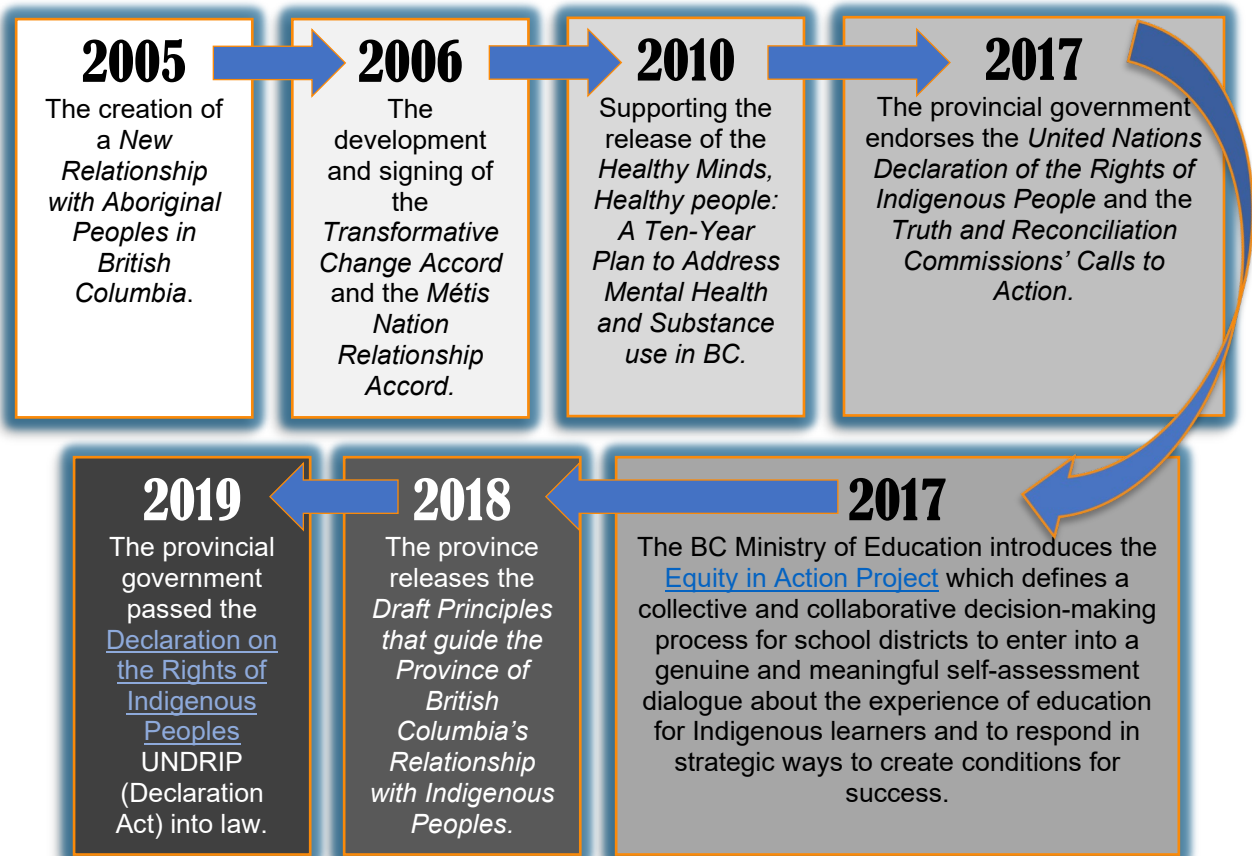
## Background

Systemic barriers are hidden in the rules, procedures, policies, and operations of organizations and are intentionally or unintentionally discriminatory. These barriers limit access to services, goods, programs, and facilities.

A structural risk is an issue that results from systemic problems beyond the control of any individual (i.e., poverty, housing, transportation, discrimination, etc.).

Because of systemic barriers, Indigenous children are over-represented in alternate education programs, suspensions, attendance, etc., and underrepresented in learning outcomes evidenced in school completion rates, learning assessments, as well as sports, enhanced educational programs, extracurricular activities, to name a few.

## Government Action





## Structural Intervention

- A structural intervention allows the service provider to adapt programs and services to reduce the presence of structural risks.
- This type of intervention requires recognizing the existing social order and acknowledging that the cause of Indigenous peoples over-representation across the social sector is because of the ongoing discrimination and systemic barriers that they face.
- Structural interventions promote a holistic service delivery by treating the source of the problem, not the symptoms.
- The cycle of trauma will continue if systemic barriers and the source of problems are not addressed.
- Structural interventions help build strength-based, collaborative relationships with children, youth, families, and communities in British Columbia.

## BC Teacher's Council: 9th Standard

In 2019, a 9th Standard was added to Professional Standards for British Columbia Educators in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (find out more about the [94 Calls to Action](#)). This standard is a commitment by educators to strive toward truth and healing to restore balance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, cultures, and ways of knowing. (BC Teachers' Council, 2019)

## Jordan's Principle

Jordan's Principle only applies to Status First Nations children, or children of Status First Nations parents, and is an example of structural intervention. Non-status First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children do not qualify unless their parents are Status First Nations.

Jordan's Principle is a child-first principle named in memory of Jordan River Anderson, a First Nations child from Norway House Cree Nation in Manitoba.

Jordan spent more than two years unnecessarily in hospital while the Province of Manitoba and the federal government argued over who should pay for his at home care. Jordan died in the hospital at the age of five years old.

Jordan's Principle aims to make sure First Nations children can access all public services in a way that is reflective of their distinct cultural needs. It takes full account of the historical disadvantage linked to colonization, and with experiencing and service denials, delays, or disruptions because they are First Nations.

First Nations Health Authority is leading the implementation of the Jordan's Principle in BC.

*Adopted from. Early Years Cultural Safety Resource Guide. (BC Ministry of Children and Family, 2021)*





# Cultural Safety

## Background

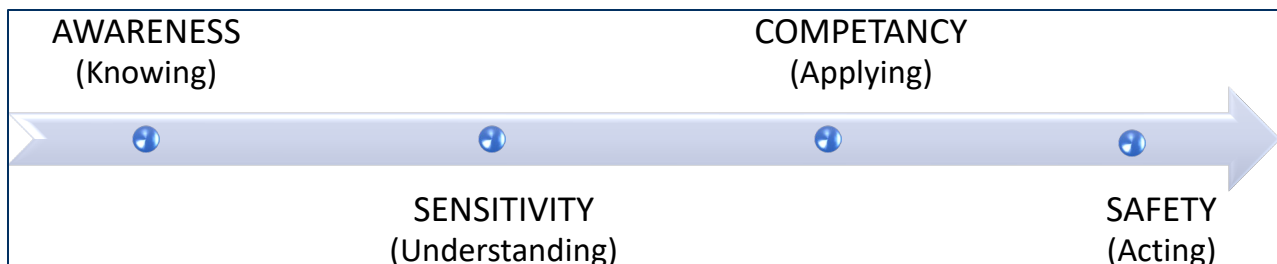
Due to a history of colonialism, oppression, marginalization, Indigenous people are under-represented in most categories of what would be considered successful learning outcomes. Indigenous learners often do not see themselves or their communities reflected in the learning activities or environment and when it is, it often feels like an afterthought.

Past and ongoing trauma at the hands of government institutions have made Indigenous peoples less likely to trust service providers, and cultural barriers may cause an Indigenous person to avoid taking actions to get the help they need.

Government institutions and service providers are not designed by and for Indigenous people, and Indigenous people often feel alienated, humiliated, or under-served when they try and access support.

Cultural Safety		
<p>is an outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in the system. It results in an environment free of racism and discrimination, where people feel safe. (First Nations Health Authority)</p>	<p>represents a journey into wisdom, where wisdom is to know that culturally significant knowledge, shared histories, and experiences are relevant and must guide decisions and actions. (MCFD, Aboriginal Recruitment and Cultural Safety)</p>	<p>is based on a framework of two or more cultures interacting in a colonized space - where one culture is legitimized, and the other is marginalized. This can happen in schools, hospitals, workplace, and in many service settings.</p>

## Cultural Safety on A Spectrum



Adopted from. *Early Years Cultural Safety Resource Guide*. (BC Ministry of Children and Family, 2021)





# Culturally Sensitive Learning Environments

Many teachers are understandably afraid of teaching Indigenous material poorly, perpetuating stereotypes or overstepping their bounds and engaging in cultural appropriation.

## Cultural Appropriation

**Cultural appropriation** can take on many forms.

- It can be the adoption of elements of one culture into another without fully understanding or acknowledging their meaning.
- It can mean making use of sacred objects, like headdresses at Halloween for example, without learning about why they are sacred or important.
- It can mean presenting Indigenous peoples as caricatures or as existing only in the past.
- It can mean speaking on behalf of Indigenous people or taking on elements of Indigenous spirituality without getting permission from qualified Indigenous knowledge keepers.

Basically, cultural appropriation is taking and using important cultural elements that do not belong to you without learning about them first. It is setting yourself up as an expert on a culture you are not a part of, or not respecting the living existence of Indigenous people, the sophistication of Indigenous knowledge and spirituality, or the capability of Indigenous experts, Elders, and knowledge keepers.

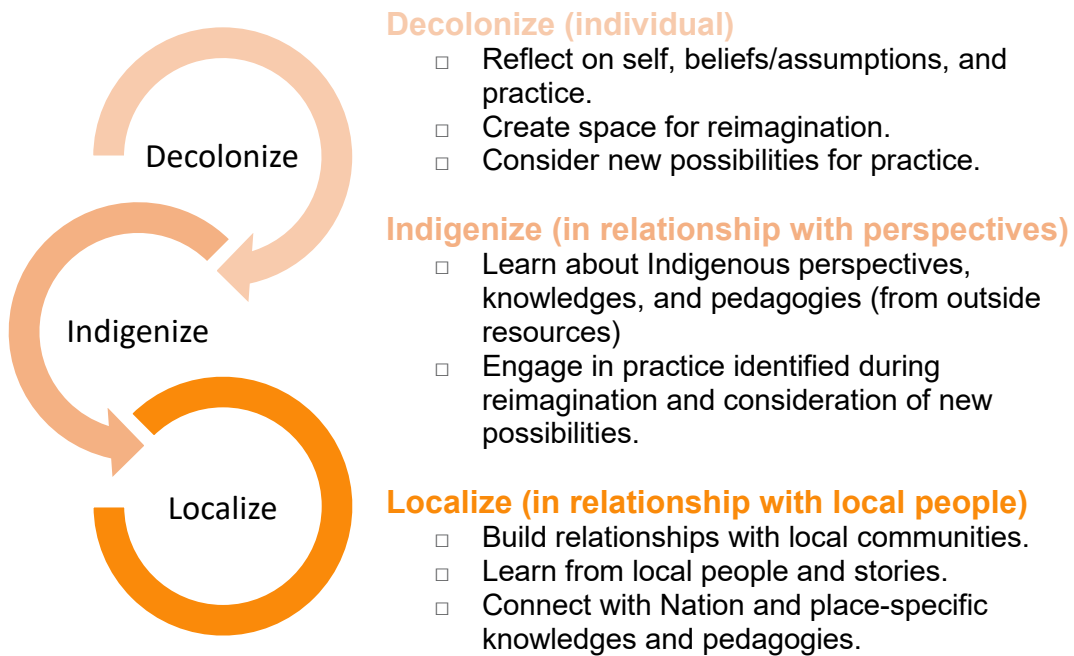


Figure: *Equity, Indigenous Learning, Teaching: Truth and Reconciliation in Your Classroom* (Dr. Sara Florence Davidson, 2018)





## Steps To Avoid Cultural Appropriation and Still Incorporate Indigenous Content

- Never dress, act or do activities that reduce a group into a caricature or stereotype. If it's not accurate and respectful, it's not OK.
- Don't misuse anything of religious significance or cultural meaning, even if you don't understand exactly why. If you're not sure if something is sacred, it is important to ask or do your research.
- Don't *practice* culture in your classroom, *teach about* culture in your classroom.
- Never appropriate someone else's culture as your own – not even as a demonstration for students.
- Ask yourself: "If I were a member of the group in question, could I be offended?" Take history into account and show empathy.

## Truth And Reconciliation: Tips for Teaching

- Do, whenever possible, allow Indigenous people to speak for themselves. Inviting local Indigenous knowledge keepers into your classroom is an opportunity to forge new and ongoing relationships. If an Indigenous person cannot be present, there are excellent and well-vetted videos available.
- Don't start with cultural genocide and residential schools. Indigenous people are not victims first. Take the time to learn about the many proud and resilient people who were impacted by Canada's residential school system.
- Do learn about contemporary Indigenous people. Not only do they still exist, but they are also the fastest growing population in Canada.

## Preparedness

Investing time to prepare yourself to teach Indigenous content is crucial to success and helps to build confidence. There are many opportunities available, including completing an online course, attending Indigenous events, participating in professional development activities offered, and engaging with Elders or knowledge keepers.





The best resources are human resources. Indigenous people have time-tested knowledge systems, education, governance, and ways of raising children that are sophisticated and beautiful; you won't regret taking the time to have conversations with Indigenous people in your community and learning about them. Also, don't forget BC has 203 different Indigenous communities and each one has a unique cultural identity, so don't assume that the cultural identity of one Indigenous group represents all Indigenous groups. In some places, having conversations with Indigenous people in your community isn't easy and there is much healing to do. Some places where you can find experts on these matters include friendship centres, Indigenous Studies departments, and Indigenous student services at universities, and most importantly, the Indigenous education experts that the school district employs.



## Chilliwack School District Commitment

The Chilliwack School District has a long-standing commitment in investing in a positive and collaborative relationship with our First Nation communities. Of the 24 Stó:lo First Nations, 10 First Nations feed into our school district. Below are some examples to this commitment.

### Indigenous Education Advisory Committee

The Indigenous Education Advisory Committee, IEAC, is a committee that meets monthly and consists of representatives from the Métis Community, 10 of the 24 Stó:lo First Nation and representatives from the school district. The purpose of the IEAC is to ensure regular and ongoing communication, planning and engagement in the education for all Indigenous students. The IEAC has been meeting since 1994.

### Local Education Agreements

Chilliwack School District has Local Education Agreements, LEAs, with the 10 of the 24 Stó:lo First Nation that feed into our schools. The aim of the LEAs is ensuring "the Parties are committed to taking actions aimed at improving First Nation Student outcomes and acknowledge that LEAs are one mechanism to increase accountability and to promote and achieve effective working relationships between First Nations and local boards of education, enabling them to work collaboratively to support First Nation Students." The LEAs in the Chilliwack School District are signed annually to ensure that community voice is current. *FNESC. (n.d.) Local Education Agreements. <http://www.fnesc.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Schedule-H-LEA-Schedule-June-28-2018-FINAL.pdf>*





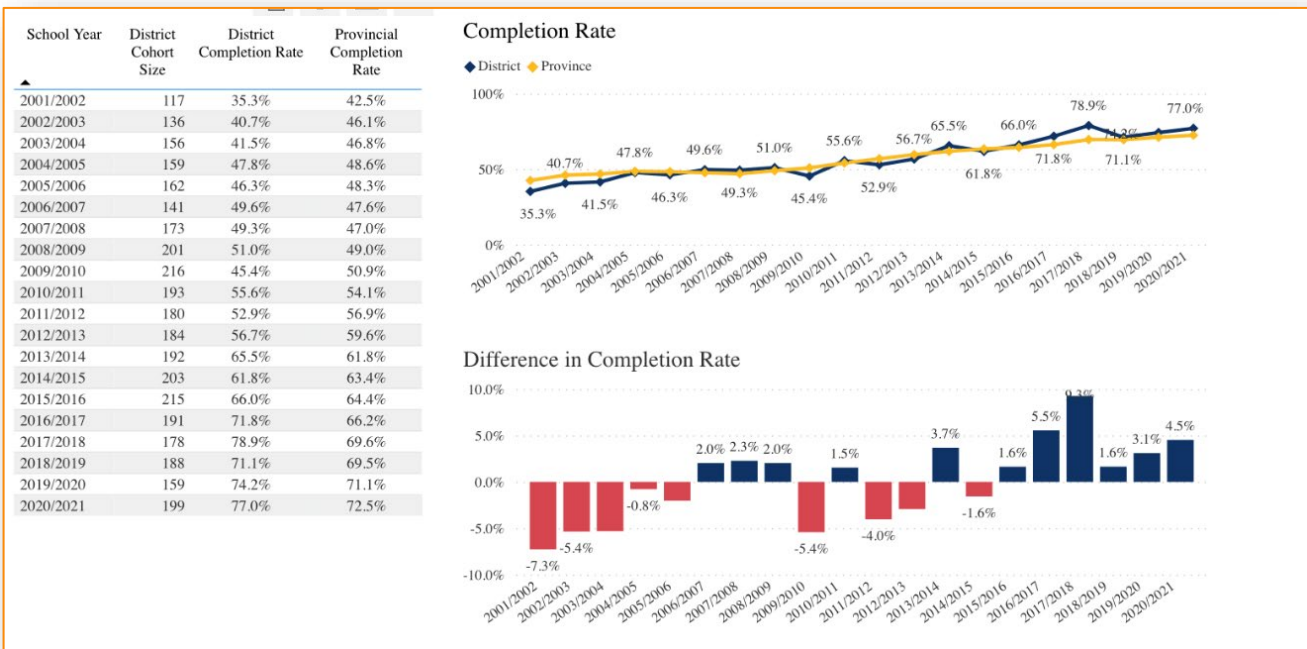
## Enhancement Agreement

The Chilliwack School District, in collaboration with the Indigenous Education Advisory Committee, have been working together since 2006 with the first agreement being published in 2010. Our current Enhancement Agreement was created in 2017 and will run to 2022, with the goals:

- To increase Aboriginal students/families/guardians belonging and engagement at school.
- To continue to increase academic success of all Aboriginal students.
- To continue to increase the respect and understanding amongst all students and staff of language, culture, governance and history of Stó:lō and all Aboriginal peoples.

## Celebrating Successes

Educational outcomes, such as graduation rates and transition to post-secondary education, have been steadily improving for K-12 students across British Columbia. According to the BC Ministry of Education, Indigenous students have seen the steepest rates of improvement in each of the reported categories. Every year, the BC Ministry of Education reports on Indigenous Education, and “B.C. is the only province that collects and reports annually on student achievement and student satisfaction data” (Archibald, & DeRose, 2014). The latest student data report from the Chilliwack School District can be found [here](#).



Indigenous student completion rates have continued to improve over time.





Dr. Jo-Anne Archibald reports on the various changes and improvements in BC Indigenous education that have resulted in the success of Indigenous students across the province. (Archibald 7 DeRose, 2014).

- Indigenous Teacher Education
- Work together with Aboriginal communities.
- Track students and use local and provincial data to drive decisions.
- Have an Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement (EA) with Aboriginal communities that includes measurable, attainable goals.
- Embed local Aboriginal knowledge throughout their curriculum.
- Offer provincially developed courses such as the English First Peoples 10, 11, & 12 and First Nations Studies 12.
- Seek to employ Aboriginal educators and support staff; and
- Offer ongoing professional development for all educators.

The Chilliwack School District has developed an Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement in collaboration with Indigenous representatives, parents, students, and community stakeholders “to increase the belonging and engagement of Aboriginal students/families/guardians; to continue to increase academic success of Aboriginal students; to continue to increase the respect and understanding amongst all students and staff of language, culture, governance and history of Stó:lō and ALL Aboriginal peoples”. (Chilliwack School District, 2017). You can view the AEEA [here](#).

## Vetting Resources

As a general guide, look for these four things:

1. **Content and accuracy:** Make sure that the content makes sense and portrays Indigenous people in a whole-person, fair way.
2. **Authorship:** Try to privilege Indigenous authors. There are also many non-Indigenous people with expertise in Indigenous studies, but it is important to make sure that they do have authentic expertise. Do Internet searches to check authors’ biographies and credentials.
3. **Approachability:** Choose resources that reflect where you are and who your students are. You can also connect students’ interests to Indigenous content. Choose a subject of interest and go from there. Avoid resources or content that might ‘exclude’ or ‘marginalize’ Indigenous learners.





4. **Diversity:** Indigenous people have knowledge of content that touches on all subject areas, so teachers can integrate Indigenous content into any classroom. Including Indigenous content in every subject underlines the sophistication of Indigenous knowledge. You can also use Indigenous content to share diverse perspectives and compare mainstream and Indigenous views on historical and current events.

*Adapted from EDCAN Network: Equity, Indigenous Learning, Teaching: Truth and Reconciliation in YOUR Classroom (Dr. Sara Florence Davidson, 2018)*





## Sources

- [Early Years Cultural Safety Resource Guide](#) (2021). BC Ministry of Children and Family Development
- An Audit of the Education of Aboriginal Student in the B.C. Public School System (2015). [www.bcauditor.com](http://www.bcauditor.com)
- Chilliwack SD#33 How Are We Doing Report (2021/2022). <https://studentsuccess.gov.bc.ca/school-district/033>
- [Professional Standards for BC Educators](#); Standard 9 (2019). BCTF
- The Indian Act (1876). [https://nctr.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/1876\\_Indian\\_Act\\_Reduced\\_Size.pdf](https://nctr.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/1876_Indian_Act_Reduced_Size.pdf)
- Phyllis Webstad’s Story, [www.orangeshirtday.org](http://www.orangeshirtday.org)
- Calls to Action (2015). Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
- Equity, Indigenous Learning, Teaching: Truth and Reconciliation in Your Classroom(2018). EDCAN Network
- A Theory of Cultural Humility. Journal of Transcultural Nursing. Vol3(1), 7-12. (2019). Foronda, Cynthia

## Appendices

### Appendix I

#### **HAWD Report**

Chilliwack School District: How Are We Doing for Indigenous Learners

### Appendix II

#### **Declaration Action Plan**

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan

### Appendix III

#### **UNDRIP**

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

### Appendix IV

#### **OAGBC**

Audit on the Education of Aboriginal Students in the BC Public School District





# Information to support student learning.

This report provides British Columbia citizens with easy access to a comprehensive set of information about each school district in the province.

**Our mandate for education:** A quality education system assists in the development of human potential and improves the well-being of every British Columbian. The B.C. school system develops educated citizens by supporting each student's intellectual, human and social, and career development, and by considering a wide range of information in all of these areas.



## Intellectual Development

Includes the ability to analyze critically, to reason, to think independently, and to acquire important skills and bodies of knowledge.

Reading, Writing, and Numeracy . . . . .	3
Grade-to-Grade Transitions . . . . .	5
Provincial Examinations . . . . .	5
Completion Rates . . . . .	6



## Human and Social Development

Includes developing a sense of self-worth and well being, personal initiative, social responsibility, and a tolerance and respect for the ideas and beliefs of others.

Early Development . . . . .	7
Student Satisfaction . . . . .	8



## Career Development

Includes preparing students to attain their career objectives and to develop effective work habits and the flexibility to deal with change in the workplace.

Post-Secondary and Career Preparation . . . . .	9
Transition to B.C. Post-Secondary Education . . .	9

When reviewing district results, it is important to consider various factors that can influence student learning.

Community demographic and student enrolment information is provided to help inform local planning and continuous improvement efforts.

For information about this district and their plans for enhancing student learning, please refer to: <http://www.sd33.bc.ca>



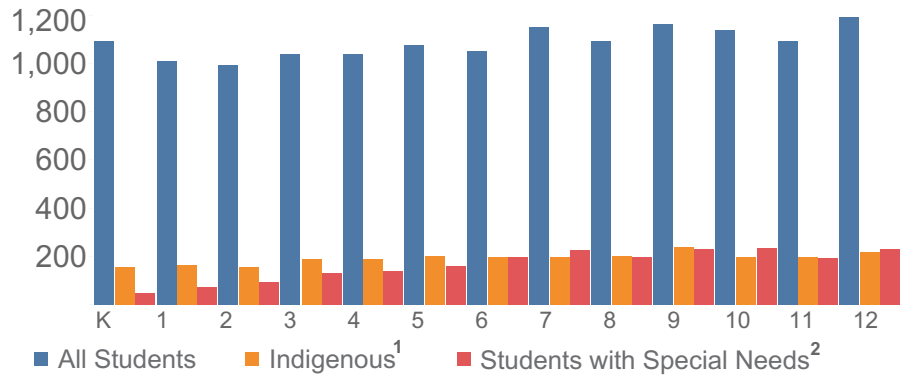
### Current Headcount

14,186

Projected change over next 10 years

1,017

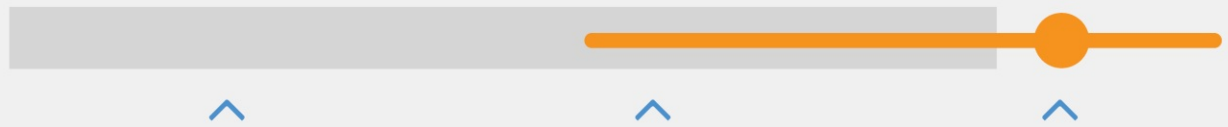
### Total Students Across All Grades (2021/22)



### Community Demographics

	Unemployment Rate	Percent of 25-64 with Post Secondary Credentials	Percent of Lone-Parent Families	Median Family Income Economic Families	Population Density (people per sq. km of land area)
B.C. Public Schools	6.8%	63%	4.4%	\$93,013	3,496
District: Chilliwack	6.6%	54.9%	4.6%	\$85,072	2,221

### How to Read the Charts in This Report



The grey band represents **typical performance** for school districts across British Columbia (the range of results f..

The orange line shows this district's **results over time** (for the last ..

The orange dot shows the **most recent results** for this school district.

# Intellectual Development

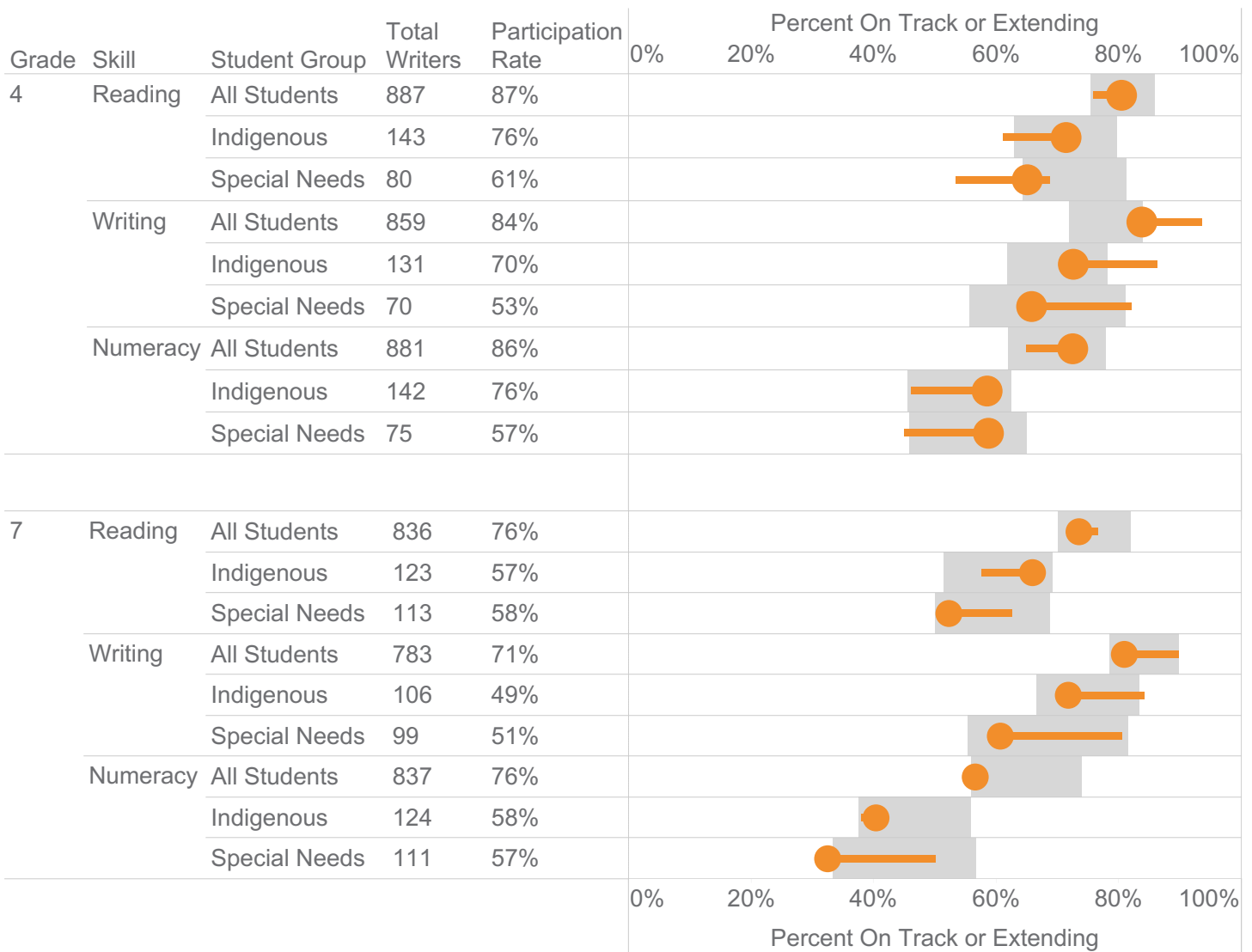
A goal of B.C.'s education system, supported by the family and community, is intellectual development – enabling our students to think critically, independently, and to acquire important skills and knowledge that will enable them to thrive in a rapidly changing world.



## Reading, Writing, and Numeracy (2020/21)

The Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) is a set of reading, writing, and numeracy assessments administered each year to students in Grades 4 and 7, and was completely re-designed for the 2017/18 school year. The FSA is a valuable indicator of where students might have challenges in reading, writing, and numeracy and can be used to help plan their education. It also provides a snapshot of how our education system is meeting the needs of students in these key areas.

*\*in the chart below the orange bar represents only results in the redesigned FSA: 2017/18 - 2020/21 year range*



## Student Growth Over Time

These charts follow the performance of a single group of students on their Grade 4 and 7 FSA reading and numeracy assessments.

See <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/systemperformance> for comparable results for the writing assessments.



## Reading

Students' 2020/21 Results in Grade 7, Compared to their Grade 4 results

Student Performance Levels in Grade 4 (2017/18)	Number of Students	Extending	On Track	Emerging	Did Not Participate
Extending	99	12%	75%	2%	11%
On Track	524	0%	64%	17%	19%
Emerging	187	1%	32%	41%	27%
Did Not Participate	75		24%	17%	59%

## Numeracy

Students' 2020/21 Results in Grade 7, Compared to their Grade 4 results

Student Performance Levels in Grade 4 (2017/18)	Number of Students	Extending	On Track	Emerging	Did Not Participate
Extending	39	33%	51%	10%	5%
On Track	497	2%	53%	27%	18%
Emerging	278	1%	21%	52%	26%
Did Not Participate	71		21%	23%	56%

Percent of students with the same level of performance in Grade 4 and 7

Percent of students with a higher level of performance in Grade 7 than 4

Percent of students with a lower level of performance in Grade 7 than 4

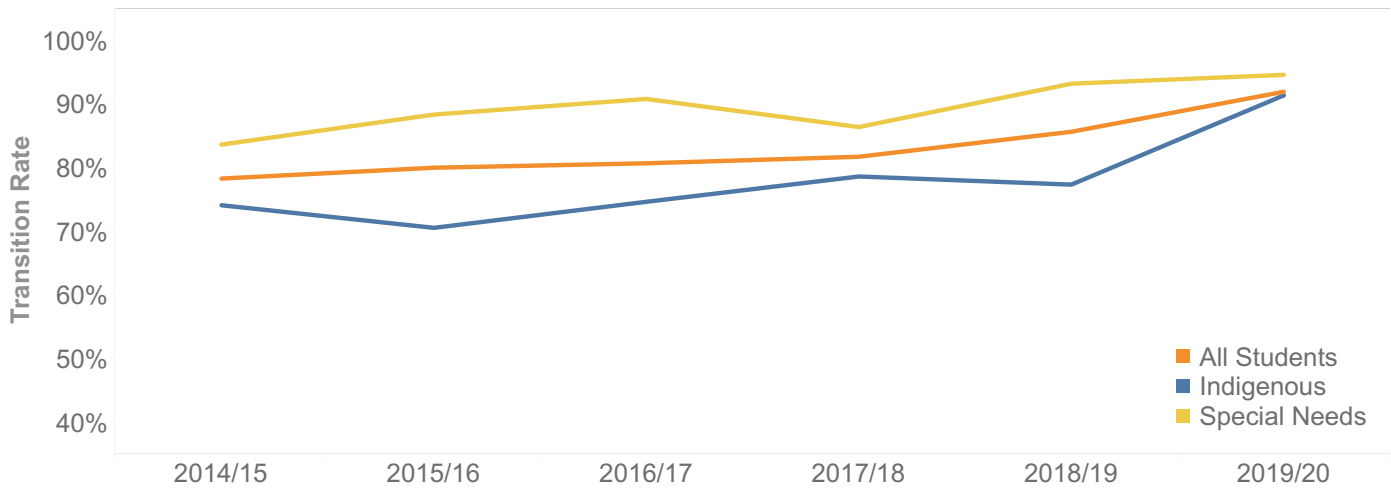
# Intellectual Development



## Grade-to-Grade Transitions (2019/20)

Grade-to-Grade transition is the percent of students who make a successful transition to a higher grade the following year.

Shown here are the percent of students in the district making a successful transition from Grade 11 to Grade 12.



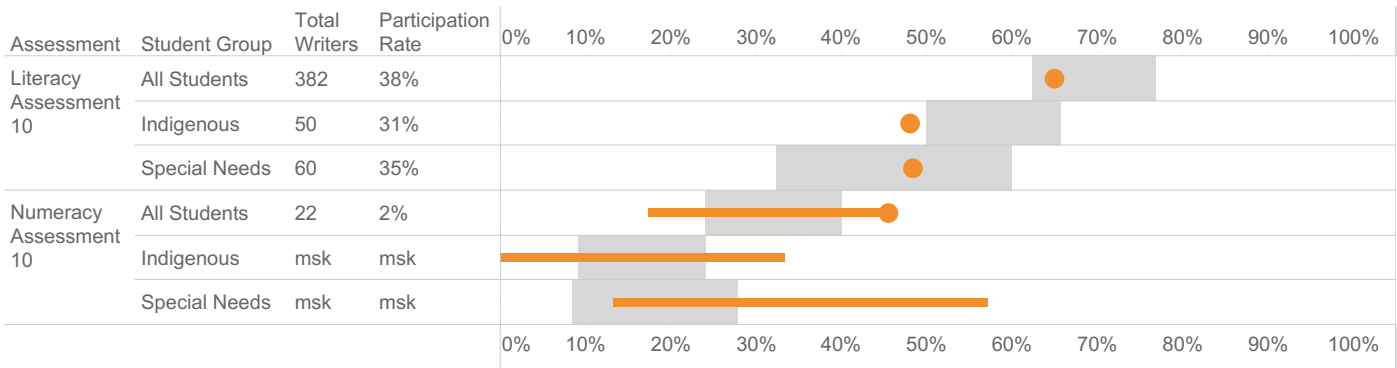
## Graduation Assessments (2019/20)



Provincial Assessment results are displayed for:

- » Grade 10 Numeracy Assessment
- » Grade 10 Literacy Assessment

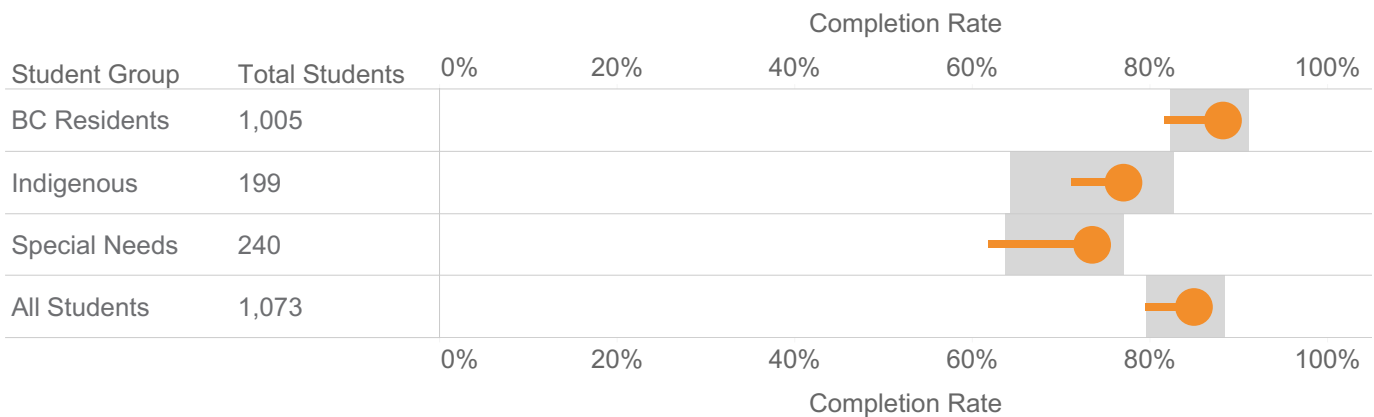
The purpose of Graduation Assessments is to measure the extent to which students are literate and numerate and to provide students and educators with information about their proficiency. As part of the updated graduation requirements, students in the New Graduation Program will have to complete two provincial assessments. They will focus on the demonstration and application of numeracy and literacy.



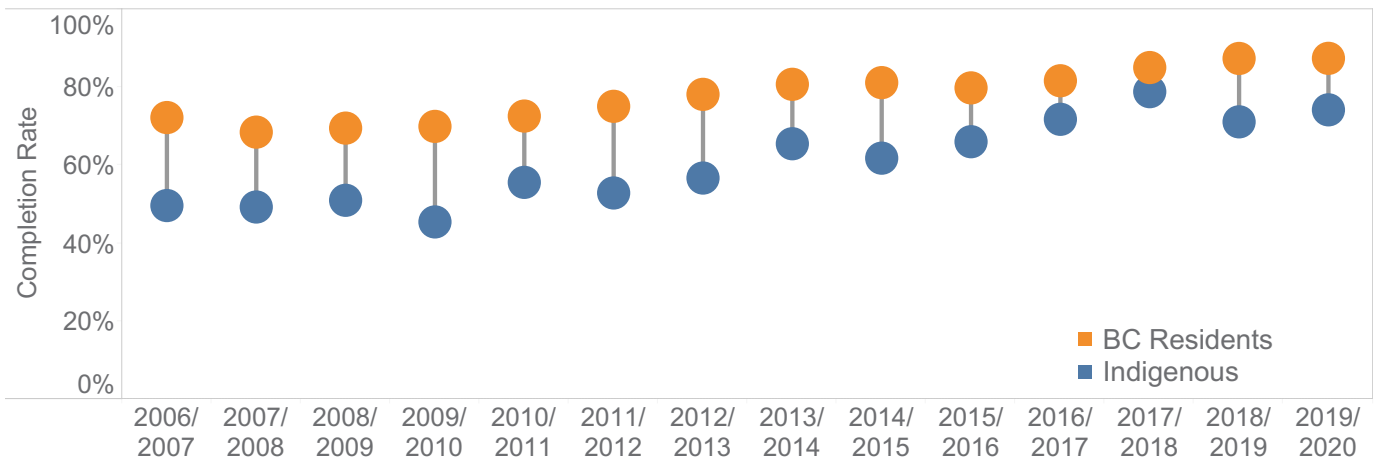
# Intellectual Development

## Completion Rates (2020/21)

The Six-Year Completion Rate is the proportion of students who graduate with a B.C. Certificate of Graduation or B.C. Adult Graduation Diploma, within six years from the first time they enrol in Grade 8. Results are adjusted for student migration in and out of British Columbia.



## Completion Rates Over Time for Indigenous and All Students



# Human and Social Development

Schools are expected to play a major role, along with families and communities, in helping each student develop a sense of self-worth and well being, personal initiative, social responsibility, and a tolerance and respect for the ideas and beliefs of others.



## Early Development

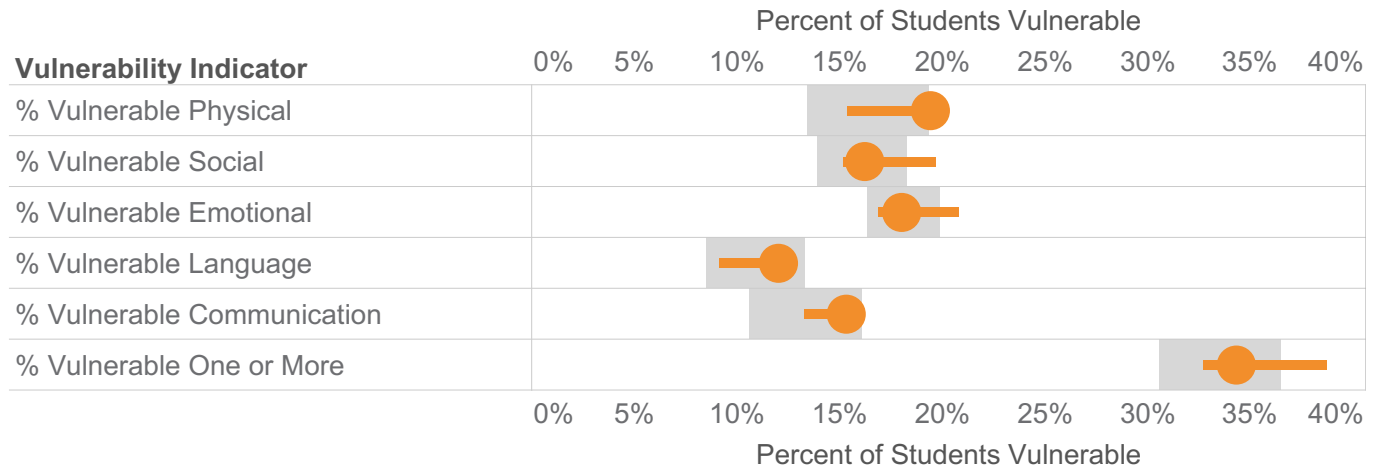
The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a questionnaire completed by kindergarten teachers from across British Columbia. The questionnaire measures five core areas of early child development. These areas are good predictions of adult health, education, and social outcomes. Listed below are the percentages of students considered vulnerable in each of these core areas. Learn more about the EDI at <http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/edi>

**878** Total number of students assessed (2016/17 - 2018/19)

■ Typical range across B.C. (middle 50% of districts)

● Selected district's most recent results (2016/17 - 2018/19)

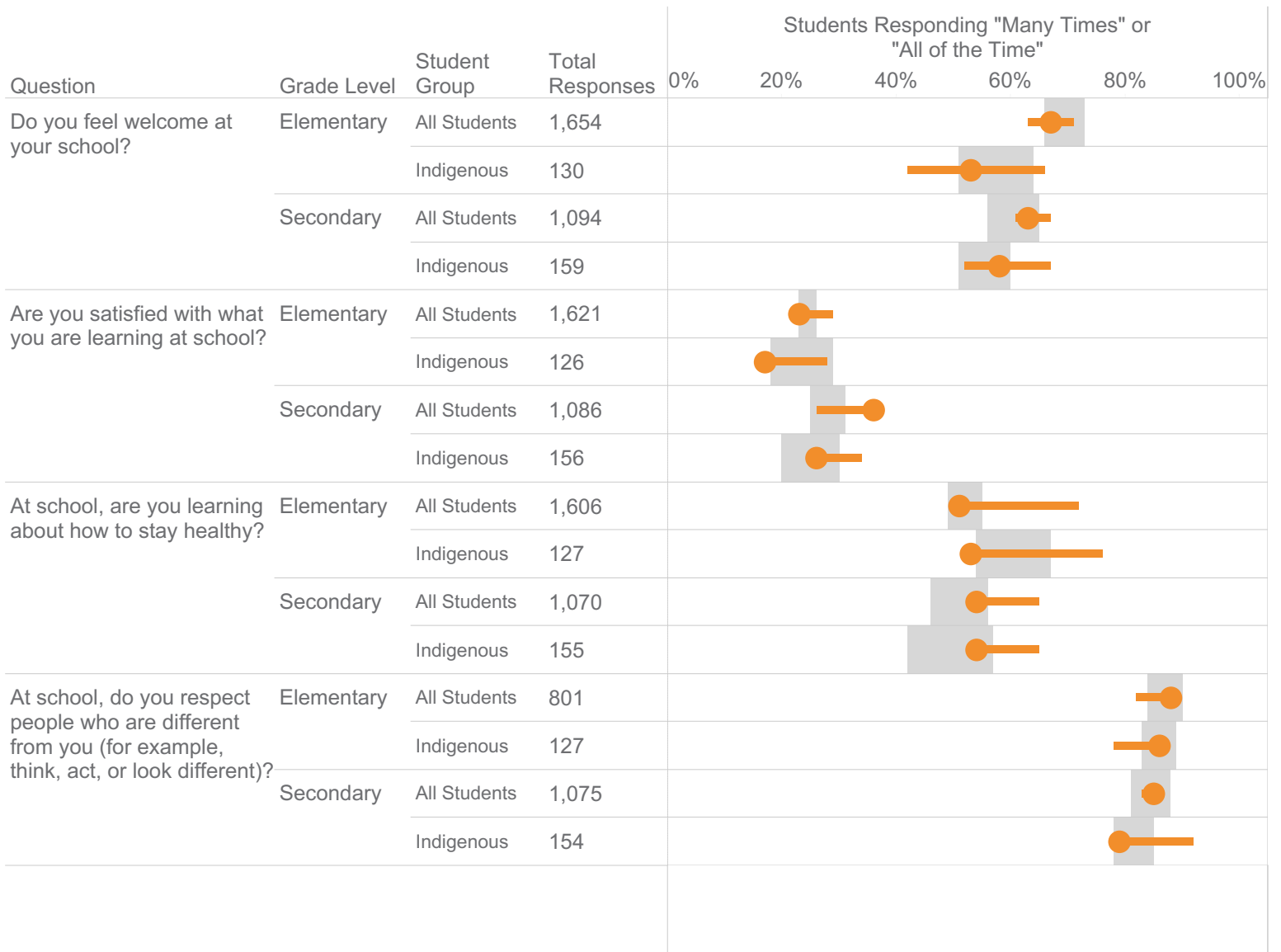
— Range of district's results over time (2007/08 - 2018/19)



# Human and Social Development

## Student Satisfaction (2020/21)

Every year, the B.C. Ministry of Education invites students in Grades 4, 7, 10 and 12 to complete an online survey about their school experience. Results for elementary students (Grades 4 and 7) and secondary students (Grades 10 and 12) are provided.

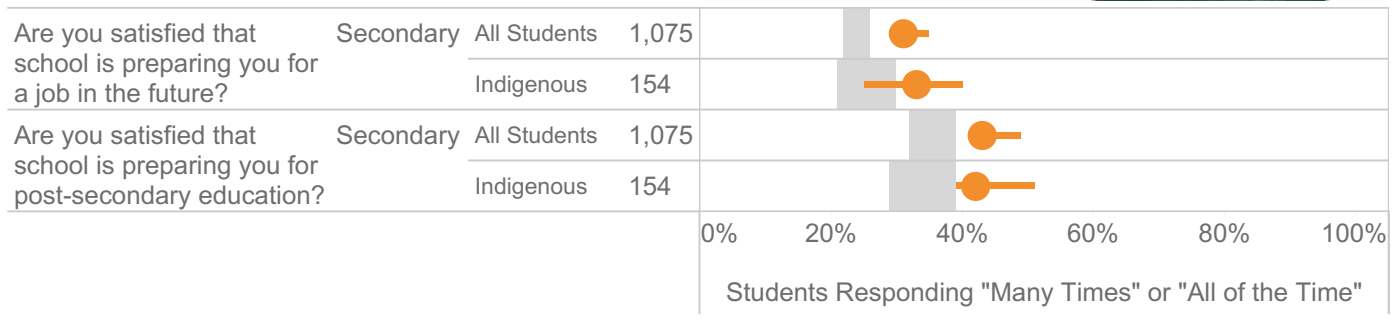


# Career Development

Schools are expected to play a major role, along with families and communities, in helping students attain their career objectives and develop effective work habits and the flexibility to deal with change in the workplace.



## Post-Secondary and Career Preparation (2020/21)

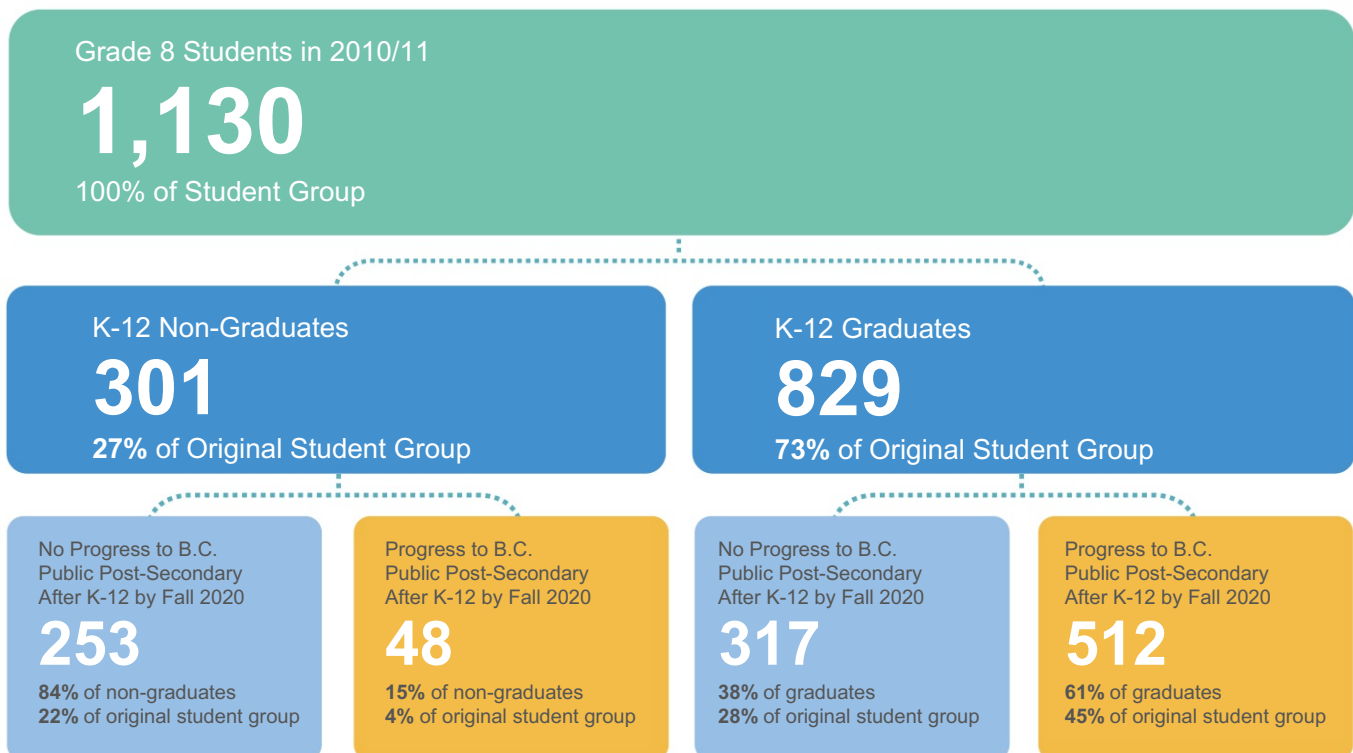


## Transition to B.C. Public Post-Secondary Education (2019/20)

The following information shows the transitions of a cohort of students in this district, and:

- » how many of these students graduated from the B.C. school system by fall 2015; and
- » how many of these students enrolled in a B.C. public post-secondary institution by fall 2019<sup>3</sup>

\*Note, these results do not include those students who enrolled in post-secondary institutions outside of B.C.



## About This Report

This report provides an overview of information collected by the B.C. Ministry of Education for all school districts across the province. It complements new planning and reporting efforts that are underway to enhance student learning in every school and school district in British Columbia.

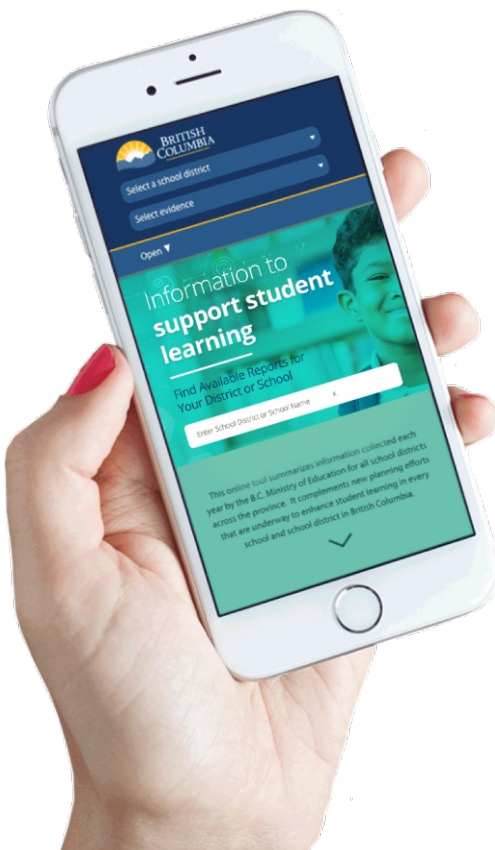
A complete and interactive version of this report is available at <https://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/systemperformance>



## Questions to Consider When Reviewing Results

Some questions you might consider when reviewing information in this report include:

- » To what extent do the results align with what you expected to see?
- » How do the results compare with other information that exists?
- » What are areas of strength?
- » What areas may need further attention?
- » Where do you see growth over time?
- » What patterns do you see across particular groups of students?
- » What efforts are underway to support student success, and what role can you play?



## We Value Your Feedback

The B.C. Ministry of Education welcomes your feedback on this new way of displaying student information.

Please send any questions, comments, or suggestions for improvement to [educ.systemperformance@gov.bc.ca](mailto:educ.systemperformance@gov.bc.ca)

**Visit** <https://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/systemperformance> to view the interactive version of this report.

(1) **Indigenous Students:** students who have self-identified as being of Aboriginal ancestry (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit)

(2) **Students with Special Needs:** when the Ministry of Education reports on the total number and performance of students with special needs, all categories are included.

(3) **Transitions to B.C. Public Post-Secondary:** for more information, please refer to <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/post-secondary-education/data-research/student-transitions-project>

*msk* - throughout this report some numbers are 'masked' to protect the privacy of potentially individually identifiable populations of students



# DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACT ACTION PLAN

2022-2027



**Copies of this report are available from:**

Reconciliation Transformation and Strategies Division  
BC Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation  
Email: [declaration@gov.bc.ca](mailto:declaration@gov.bc.ca)

and electronically (in a .pdf file) from:  
<http://declaration.gov.bc.ca>

**Cover design:**

*Cover photo:* The photo was taken by Melody Charlie, a First Nations photographer. Melody is based out of Yuuthluithaht (Ucluelet) B.C. Her photography reflects the love and respect she holds for her culture and ways of life, always focussing on the strengths and resilience of her people.

*Front and back cover art:* The feather and drum art presented on the cover was developed by Andy Everson. Andy is an accomplished artist from the K'omoks First Nation on Vancouver Island. He draws upon his roots amongst the Kwakwaka'wakw, Salish and Tlingit peoples to create artwork that reflects the convergence of ancient traditions with modern society.

The four feathers represent the diversity of the Indigenous Peoples of British Columbia, while the drum symbolizes the heartbeat of ceremonies. The feathers are arranged in four directions to represent the people of the North Coast (North), Interior (East), Salish (South) and those who are disenfranchised or have relocated to western Canada (West).



# JOINT MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER OF BC AND THE MINISTER OF INDIGENOUS RELATIONS AND RECONCILIATION

---

On November 26, 2019, with the unanimous passage of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* in the B.C. legislature, we committed to upholding the human rights of Indigenous Peoples. Under this legislation, we have begun with a five-year action plan in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples to advance this vital work. We are pleased to present the first *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* action plan.

This has been challenging work in challenging times. Over the past two years while we worked together on this plan, we faced incredible adversities. We have been grappling with a global pandemic, a toxic drug supply crisis, and our communities were ravaged by wildfires, floods and heat waves. Through all of these challenges, Indigenous Peoples have carried a disproportionate burden. This burden was made even heavier by the devastating findings of unmarked graves at former residential school sites. These experiences have been stark reminders of the continued effects of colonialism and systemic racism. They also reinforce with absolute certainty the importance of the work to be carried out through this action plan to implement and uphold the human rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Even in the face of these overwhelming challenges, Indigenous Peoples throughout the province continued to work with us on this action plan, determined to create a better future for all generations to come. We are grateful for the time, energy, leadership, and expertise they contributed to finalizing this action plan.

We are also grateful for the dedication of the many public servants who contributed to this work, and who will work in partnership with Indigenous Peoples to carry out these actions to advance our shared long-term vision of reconciliation. We acknowledge the support for this action plan from local governments, business and industry, the non-profit sector, scholars, and many others who share our commitment to reconciliation.

Our government is committed to pursuing the goals and achieving the outcomes articulated in this action plan. It includes 89 actions that represent contributions by each and every ministry. Together, we will work to advance reconciliation in tangible and measurable ways in communities across the province.

This work requires real and meaningful systemic change. We see the commitment to that change across the board – from the Province, Indigenous Peoples, allies, and supporters, and it gives us great hope that the outcomes of this plan are not only possible, but achievable. We have much work ahead of us, and together we will create a better future for everyone.



John Horgan  
Premier



Murray Rankin, QC  
Minister of Indigenous  
Relations and Reconciliation



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# INTRODUCTION



The [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#) (Declaration Act)<sup>1</sup> was unanimously passed by the British Columbia Legislative Assembly in November 2019. This made B.C. the first jurisdiction in Canada to adopt the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UN Declaration).<sup>2</sup> The Declaration Act was developed jointly with Indigenous leaders and legal staff and was introduced through historic ceremony.

The Declaration Act established the UN Declaration as the Province’s framework for reconciliation, as called for by the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#).<sup>3</sup> Section 4 of the Declaration Act requires development and implementation of an action plan, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples,<sup>a</sup> to achieve the objectives of the UN Declaration. The UN Declaration is a “universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the Indigenous [P]eoples of the world and it elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to the specific situation of Indigenous [P]eoples.”<sup>4</sup> The provincial government is committed to upholding these human rights in its institutions, laws, policies and practices to advance reconciliation and address the legacy and harms of colonialism on Indigenous Peoples. The Province reaffirms its intent to achieve government-to-government relationships based on respect, recognition and exercise of Aboriginal title and rights and reconciliation of Aboriginal and Crown titles and jurisdiction.

The *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* contributes to the implementation of the UN Declaration in B.C. by:

- requiring the Province, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples to take all measures necessary to ensure the laws of B.C. are consistent with the UN Declaration (section 3);
- requiring the development and implementation of an action plan, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples, to achieve the objectives of the UN Declaration (section 4);
- requiring the Province to report annually on progress made toward alignment of laws and achievement of the goals in the action plan (section 5); and
- enabling agreements with Indigenous governing bodies, including joint or consent-based decision-making agreements that reflect free, prior and informed consent (sections 6 and 7).

This action plan outlines significant actions the Province will undertake in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples over the next five years. The Province will continue to demonstrate commitment and ensure accountability to implement the UN Declaration and the Declaration Act Action Plan through collaborative annual reporting.

<sup>a</sup> Consistent with section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* and section 1 of the Declaration Act, the term “Indigenous Peoples” includes First Nations, *Métis* and Inuit Peoples in Canada.

The Province conducted initial engagement to develop the draft action plan with Indigenous Peoples between July 2020 and February 2021.<sup>b,5</sup> The Province conducted broader engagement on the draft action plan to seek input from Indigenous Peoples to inform the final action plan between June and September 2021. Engagement focused on Indigenous Peoples in B.C.; however, local governments and non-Indigenous people, organizations, business and industry leaders also participated.<sup>c</sup> Engagement feedback was carefully reviewed, considered and utilized to finalize this action plan.

Colonization and the associated attempted genocide of Indigenous Peoples fractured the self-determined lives, cultures and well-being of Indigenous Peoples across Canada. The Declaration Act is both an acknowledgment of these histories and a commitment by the Government of B.C. to respect and uphold the human rights of Indigenous Peoples. If history is a teacher, meeting this collective responsibility will require a different approach from that previously taken. This action plan has been built through discussion with Indigenous Peoples in B.C. It describes initial actions for the Province to take in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples over the next five years. Through the action plan, the Province is committed to changing the trajectory of history through coherent, concrete and cooperative action.



b For further details on the development of the draft action plan, see the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act 2020/21 Annual Report](#).

c Further details and reflection on the draft action plan engagement process will be included in the forthcoming annual report for 2021-2022.

# PURPOSE



This action plan provides a province-wide, whole-of-government approach to achieve the objectives of the UN Declaration over time. The Province acknowledges the widespread socio-economic and health inequities for Indigenous Peoples in B.C. and across Canada. This includes the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the justice and child welfare systems, lower rates of education, and higher instances of poverty, unemployment and homelessness. The goals and outcomes of this action plan focus on addressing the inequities experienced by Indigenous Peoples by achieving the highest attainable standard for health and well-being.

## **DISTINCTIONS-BASED APPROACH:**

The Province is committed to a distinctions-based approach. This requires that the Province's dealings with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples be conducted in a manner that acknowledges the specific rights, interests, priorities and concerns of each, while respecting and acknowledging these distinct Peoples with unique cultures, histories, rights, laws, and governments. Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, recognizes and affirms the rights of Aboriginal Peoples of Canada, while all Indigenous Peoples have human rights that are expressed in the UN Declaration. However, not all rights are uniform or the same among or between all Indigenous Peoples. In many cases, a distinctions-based approach may require that the Province's relationship and engagement with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples include different approaches or actions and result in different outcomes.

These actions are intended to support changes in understandings, behaviours and systems to shift the status quo, address Indigenous-specific racism and establish new foundations of government that respect and uphold the human rights of Indigenous Peoples. The actions identified advance a distinctions-based approach that recognizes First Nations, Métis and Inuit as the Indigenous Peoples of Canada.

The action plan is meant to help everyone who lives in British Columbia understand the importance of reconciliation and how it will help the province achieve its greatest social, cultural and economic potential.

The actions identified in the plan build on priorities brought forward through decades of advocacy and leadership by Indigenous Peoples. These include existing priorities identified in current agreements between the Province and Indigenous organizations.

The 2018 [\*Implementing the Commitment Document - Concrete Actions: Transforming Laws, Policies, Processes and Structures\*](#)<sup>6</sup> is one existing document between the First Nations Leadership Council<sup>d</sup> and

<sup>d</sup> The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

the Province that sets out priorities with First Nations, including with respect to policy and legislative changes that reflect the recognition and implementation of title and rights.

The October 27, 2021 [Letter of Intent](#)<sup>7</sup> between Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) and the Province is another document that commits to strengthening relationships. This Letter of Intent proposes a new whole-of-government approach to Métis relations as a partnership between MNBC and British Columbia that respects Métis self-determination.

The 2022 government-to-government [Shared Priorities Framework](#) between each of the eight modern treaty nations and the Province commits to concrete actions to ensure timely, effective and fully resourced implementation of modern treaties.

Each action listed in this plan will be implemented in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples, reflecting our commitment to work in partnership and collaboration. The plan outlines actions that will be undertaken between 2022 and 2027. Progress will be reviewed on an annual basis and publicly reported in the Declaration Act annual reports.

It is important to note that the action plan does not include all provincial initiatives to advance reconciliation in B.C. Further, while closely linked to work under section 3 of the Declaration Act to ensure laws are consistent with the UN Declaration, the action plan is a separate and distinct obligation. Actions proposed in this plan do not replace, limit, change or stop existing initiatives or related commitments. These efforts will continue alongside the development and implementation of the action plan.

## **ANTI-RACISM:**

The government of British Columbia recognizes the need to address Indigenous-specific racism in this province and within our systems, practices, and policies. First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples have experienced ongoing, systemic and race-based discrimination that has maintained unequal treatment and normalized the false notion that Indigenous Peoples are 'less than' their non-racialized counterparts.

Anti-racism is fundamental to achieving the objectives of the UN Declaration. Therefore, anti-racism is foundational to the goals, objectives and actions laid out in this plan. Key to the implementation of the Declaration Act are actions that identify, challenge, prevent, eliminate and change the values, structures, policies, programs, practices and behaviours that perpetuate racism. This will require understanding and targeting the root causes of systemic discrimination, our colonial and racist foundations, and committing to take action to create conditions of greater inclusion, equality and justice.<sup>e,8</sup>

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<sup>e</sup> Indigenous-specific racism and anti-racism in this action plan are defined as per the 2020 [In Plain Sight Report](#).

## MODERN TREATIES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA:

The Province's relationship with the eight Nations with whom it has signed modern treaties is distinct and unique. These treaties, to which the Government of Canada is also a signatory, set out constitutionally protected rights and obligations of the parties and contain the actions and language necessary to carry out those rights and obligations. The rights and obligations contained in modern treaties have been established, a distinction that has significant and important implications for the work the Province does with modern treaty nations.

The Province recognizes that, consistent with the distinctions-based approach, all Indigenous Nations can choose whether they wish to enter the treaty making process.

The Province's work with modern treaty nations to fully implement these treaties occurs both with individual nations and collectively through the Alliance of British Columbia Modern Treaty Nations (the Alliance). The Alliance was formed to collaborate and advance areas of shared interest relating to the implementation of modern treaties in B.C.

As part of the continued work under the action plan, the Province has entered into a government-to-government [Shared Priorities Framework](#) with modern treaty nations with the goal of renewing its commitment to timely, effective and fully resourced implementation of modern treaties. The framework will address three broad outcomes:

- Comprehensive organizational and policy changes in the public service to ensure timely, effective, fully resourced whole-of-government approach to treaty implementation;
- Appropriate fiscal arrangements to fulfill treaty rights and obligations; and
- Meaningful involvement of modern treaty nations in legislative and policy initiatives.

Progress made to achieve these outcomes will be included in future annual Declaration Act annual reports.

# SHARED UNDERSTANDINGS

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This action plan and its implementation are informed by the following understandings:

**Comprehensive** The articles of the UN Declaration are interrelated and interdependent, intended to be read together and understood as an indivisible whole.

**Distinctions-based** The Province of British Columbia recognizes First Nations, Métis and Inuit as the Indigenous Peoples of Canada with rights recognized and affirmed in section 35(1) of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. The Province also recognizes that First Nations, Métis and Inuit are distinct, rights-bearing communities, and is committed to a distinctions-based approach to its relationship with each.

**Diverse** The action plan reflects the principle of diversity amongst Indigenous Peoples as stated in section 1(2) of the Declaration Act, which includes meeting the standard in article 37(2) that nothing in the UN Declaration “may be interpreted as diminishing or eliminating the rights of [I]ndigenous [P]eoples contained in treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements.”<sup>9</sup>

**Legally Plural** The action plan is grounded in the affirmation, consistent with the UN Declaration, that upholding the human rights of Indigenous Peoples includes recognizing that within Canada there are multiple legal orders, including Indigenous laws and legal orders with distinct roles, responsibilities and authorities.

**Principled** The goals, outcomes and actions in the action plan, and the process of implementing them will be consistent with “the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being”<sup>10</sup> of Indigenous Peoples in the UN Declaration.

**Cooperative** The action plan has been developed and will be implemented in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples.

**Enabling** The action plan must enable and support government-to-government relationships between Indigenous Peoples and the Province based on recognition and implementation of the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

**Impactful** The implementation of the action plan must make tangible improvements to Indigenous Peoples’ social, physical, cultural and economic well-being.

**Transparent** Progress under the action plan will be reviewed and publicly reported on annually.

# 2022-2027 ACTIONS

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The actions are organized by the following four themes:

1. **Self-determination and inherent right of self-government**
2. **Title and rights of Indigenous Peoples**
3. **Ending Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination**
4. **Social, cultural and economic well-being**

Each theme includes a **Goal**, with **Outcomes** and **Actions**.

The **goals** and **outcomes** are drawn from the UN Declaration. They describe what the Province is striving for with this action plan and set the vision for achieving the objectives of the UN Declaration.

The **actions** articulate the specific commitments and steps that the Province will take between 2022 and 2027 to achieve those goals and outcomes.

Each action identifies the ministry or ministries responsible for leading its implementation. As this action plan takes a cross-government approach, other ministries may be involved in the work, even if they are not listed within an action.

## INTERPRETIVE GUIDANCE

The following *must* be applied when interpreting and implementing this action plan.

First, all actions identified in this action plan are to be implemented in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples in B.C., as described in the Declaration Act.

Second, a wide range of terminology is used in the goals, outcomes and actions referring to Indigenous peoples including: "Indigenous Peoples," "First Nations," "Indigenous Nations," and others. Effort has been made to use this terminology consistently and coherently using a distinctions-based approach; wherever possible, reference to First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples are made intentionally to reflect these distinctions. There are currently some variances in use for several reasons; for example, out of respect for the diversity of preferences among Indigenous Peoples, or to reflect and remain consistent with terminology used in existing commitments, agreements and other constructive arrangements. A distinctions-based approach must be applied in the interpretation and implementation of the action plan. Some of the actions referencing Indigenous Peoples may, through implementation, come to be more aptly focused on First Nations and/or Métis people.

Lastly, progress on implementing this action plan will be provided through the Declaration Act annual reports. In those reports, the Province must make reference to First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples intentionally to uphold a distinctions-based approach.





THEME

1

# Self-Determination and Inherent Right of Self-Government



## THEME 1. Self-Determination and Inherent Right of Self-Government

### GOAL

Indigenous Peoples exercise and have full enjoyment of their rights to self-determination and self-government, including developing, maintaining and implementing their own institutions, laws, governing bodies, and political, economic and social structures related to Indigenous communities.

### OUTCOMES

A British Columbia where:

- Indigenous Peoples are fully supported in their work of freely determining and implementing their systems and institutions of government, through their internal processes of nation-rebuilding.
- Through their governments, Indigenous Peoples are recognized and engaged through formalized and predictable relationships with the Province, and exercise their jurisdictions and laws.
- Indigenous Peoples exercise self-determination and self-government.
- Through their governments, Indigenous Peoples have open, respectful and productive working relationships with the Province that recognize legal pluralism and reflect cooperative federalism.
- Indigenous Peoples have the necessary legal space to strengthen the application of their Indigenous Laws and legal orders in various areas not adequately addressed through the Canadian legal system.
- The overall emergency management structure and regime in B.C. is revised, in collaboration with the Government of Canada and Indigenous Peoples, to enhance Indigenous Peoples' emergency management outcomes through a strong tripartite approach.

### 2022-2027 ACTIONS

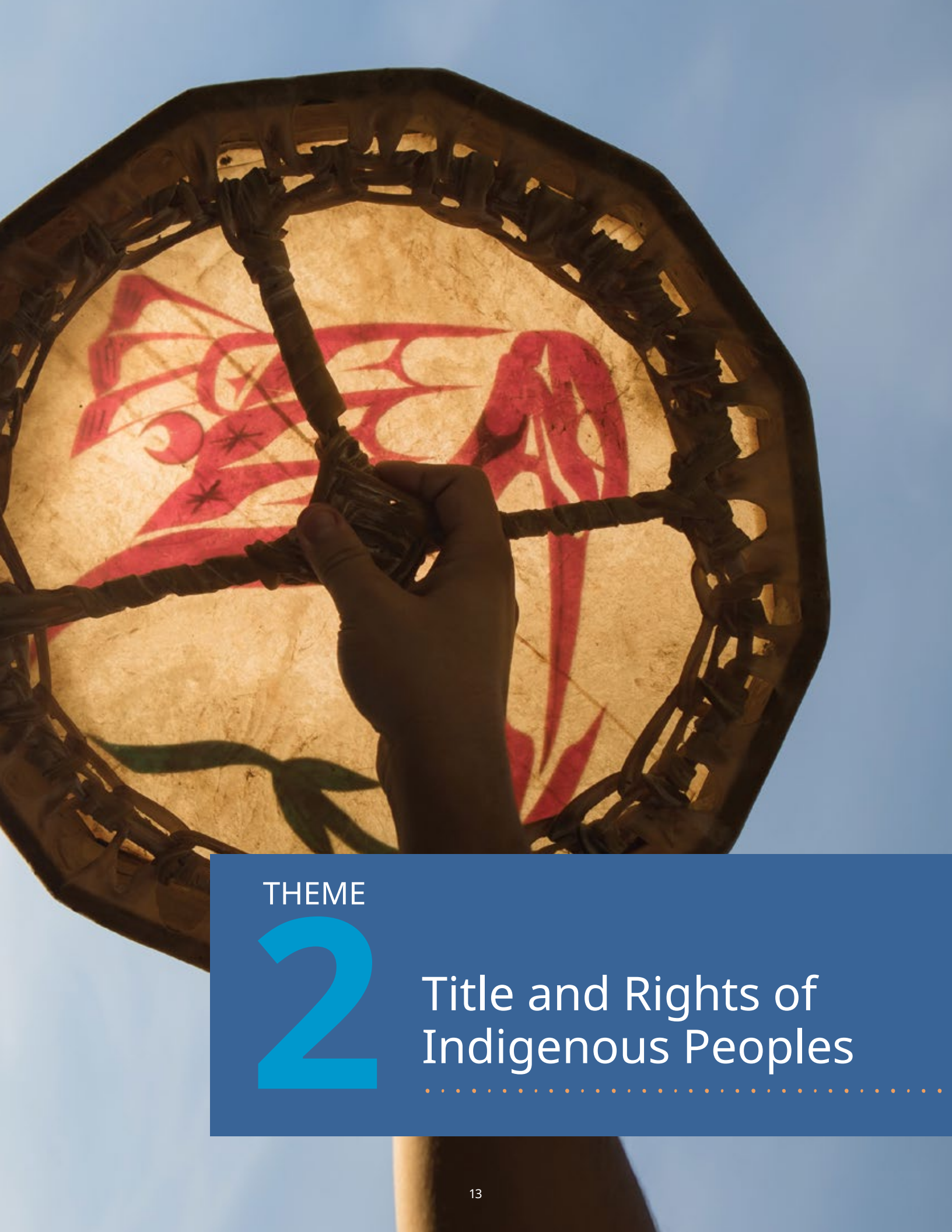
The Province recognizes that the work of nation-rebuilding is the work of Indigenous Peoples, and is to be conducted in accordance with Indigenous legal processes, rights, cultures, languages, protocols, traditions and standards, and undertaken as part of expressing, building, strengthening and implementing freely chosen governance systems.

To advance this, the Province will take the following actions in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples from 2022 to 2027:

- 1.1** In partnership with the Government of Canada, establish a new institution designed and driven by First Nations to provide supports to First Nations in their work of nation- and governance-rebuilding and boundary resolution in accordance with First Nations laws, customs and traditions. (*Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation*)
- 1.2** Shift from short-term transactional arrangements to the co-development of long-term agreements that recognize and support reconciliation, self-determination, decision-making and economic independence. (*Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation*)

- 1.3 Utilize sections 6 and 7 of the Declaration Act to complete and implement government-to-government agreements that recognize Indigenous self-government and self-determination. *(Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation)*
- 1.4 Co-develop with Indigenous Peoples a new distinctions-based fiscal relationship and framework that supports the operation of Indigenous governments, whether through modern treaties, self-government agreements or advancing the right to self-government through other mechanisms. This work will include collaboration with the Government of Canada. *(Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation)*
- 1.5 Co-develop and implement new distinctions-based policy frameworks for resource revenue-sharing and other fiscal mechanisms with Indigenous Peoples. *(Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation)*
- 1.6 Co-develop an approach to deliver on the BC Tripartite Education Agreement commitment, in which the Ministry of Education and Child Care and the First Nations Education Steering Committee will co-develop legislation that requires local education agreements (LEAs) with First Nations where a First Nation wants one, and that requires the application of the provincial LEA at the request of a First Nation. *(Ministry of Education and Child Care)*
- 1.7 Update the Bilateral Protocol agreement between the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care and the First Nation Education Steering Committee for relevancy, effectiveness, and consistency with the UN Declaration to support First Nation students in the K-12 education system. *(Ministry of Education and Child Care)*
- 1.8 Recognize the integral role of Indigenous-led post-secondary institutes as a key pillar of B.C.'s post-secondary system through the provision of core funding, capacity funding and the development of legislation. This includes institutes mandated by First Nations, as well as a Métis post-secondary institute being developed by Métis Nation BC. *(Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training)*
- 1.9 Work with the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, and the Urban Native Youth Association to co-develop an urban Indigenous centre that supports the childcare, housing and post-secondary needs of Indigenous learners, and strengthen the capacity of the Native Education College to provide culturally relevant post-secondary opportunities for urban Indigenous learners. *(Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training)*
- 1.10 Co-develop modernized emergency management legislation (replacing the *Emergency Program Act*) with First Nations. *(Emergency Management BC)*
- 1.11 Support inclusive regional governance by advancing First Nations participation in regional district boards. *(Ministry of Municipal Affairs)*





THEME

2

## Title and Rights of Indigenous Peoples

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## THEME 2. Title and Rights of Indigenous Peoples

### GOAL

Indigenous Peoples exercise and have full enjoyment of their inherent rights, including the rights of First Nations to own, use, develop and control lands and resources within their territories in B.C.

### OUTCOMES

A British Columbia where:

- The distinctions-based rights of Indigenous Peoples are respected, upheld and exercised.
- The rights of Indigenous Peoples, including First Nations title, are exercised, recognized and respected, and cooperatively implemented including through treaties, government-to-government agreements and other constructive arrangements.
- The Province's laws, policies and practices recognize and respect the distinctions-based rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Dispute-resolution and relationship-building with Indigenous Peoples are supported through cooperatively established institutions and processes that are fair, just and accessible, integrate Indigenous laws and protocols, and use the court system only as a last resort.
- First Nations benefit socially, culturally and economically from land and resources in their territories, including having access to multiple and diverse streams of revenue to finance their governments and deliver services to their citizens.
- Through their governments, Indigenous Peoples exercise their autonomy to set their own priorities, allocate fiscal resources and determine how to deliver programs and services to their citizens.
- Indigenous Peoples have meaningful and sufficient access to abundant and healthy traditional foods and have peaceful enjoyment of their harvesting rights.
- First Nations exercise their right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development, use and/or stewardship of their traditional territories and other resources.

### 2022-2027 ACTIONS

The Province recognizes the need to shift from patterns of litigation, and expensive and slow negotiations about title and rights, to cooperative implementation through effective government-to-government relationships.

To advance this, the Province will take the following actions in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples from 2022 to 2027:

- 2.1 Establish a Secretariat to guide and assist government to meet its obligation to ensure legislation is consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and is developed in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples. (*Declaration Act Secretariat*)
- 2.2 Finalize the [Draft Principles that Guide the Province of British Columbia's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples](#).<sup>11</sup> (*Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation*)

- 2.3 Issue guidelines from the Attorney General of B.C. to the Ministry of Attorney General legal counsel regarding the conduct of civil litigation involving the rights of Indigenous Peoples. *(Ministry of Attorney General)*
- 2.4 Negotiate new joint decision-making and consent agreements under section 7 of the Declaration Act that include clear accountabilities, transparency and administrative fairness between the Province and Indigenous governing bodies. Seek all necessary legislative amendments to enable the implementation of any section 7 agreements. *(Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship)*
- 2.5 Co-develop and employ mechanisms for ensuring the minimum standards of the UN Declaration are applied in the implementation of treaties, agreements under sections 6 and 7 of the Declaration Act and other constructive arrangements with First Nations. *(Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation)*
- 2.6 Co-develop strategic-level policies, programs and initiatives to advance collaborative stewardship of the environment, land and resources, that address cumulative effects and respects Indigenous Knowledge. This will be achieved through collaborative stewardship forums, guardian programs, land use planning initiatives, and other innovative and evolving partnerships that support integrated land and resource management. *(Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship, Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, Ministry of Forests, Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation, BC Oil and Gas Commission)*
- 2.7 Collaborate with First Nations to develop and implement strategies, plans and initiatives for sustainable water management, and to identify policy or legislative reforms supporting Indigenous water stewardship, including shared decision-making. Co-develop the Watershed Security Strategy with First Nations and initiate implementation of the Strategy at a local watershed scale. *(Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship)*
- 2.8 Collaborate with Indigenous partners on issues related to conservation and biodiversity in B.C., including the protection of species at risk. *(Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship)*
- 2.9 Develop new strategies to protect and revitalize wild salmon populations in B.C. with First Nations and the federal government, including the development and implementation of a cohesive B.C. Wild Pacific Salmon Strategy. *(Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship)*
- 2.10 Reform forest legislation, regulations and policy to reflect a shared strategic vision with First Nations that upholds the rights and objectives of the UN Declaration. *(Ministry of Forests)*
- 2.11 Integrate traditional practices and cultural uses of fire into wildfire prevention and land management practices and support the reintroduction of strategized burning. *(Ministry of Forests, Emergency Management BC)*
- 2.12 Collaboratively develop and implement CleanBC and the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy to support resilient communities and clean economic opportunities for Indigenous Peoples that benefit our shared climate and advance reconciliation. *(Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy)*

- 2.13** Identify and advance reconciliation negotiations on historical road impacts and road accessibility with First Nations on reserve, treaty and title lands, including reporting-out on the completion and implementation of these negotiations collaboratively with First Nations partners. *(Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure)*
- 2.14** Modernize the *Mineral Tenure Act* in consultation and cooperation with First Nations and First Nations organizations. *(Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation)*





THEME

# 3

## Ending Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination

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## THEME 3. Ending Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination

### GOAL

Indigenous Peoples fully express and exercise their distinct rights, and enjoy living in B.C. without interpersonal, systemic and institutional interference, oppression or other inequities associated with Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination, wherever they reside.

### OUTCOMES

A British Columbia where:

- All citizens have a constructive and respectful understanding of the distinct history and unique rights of Indigenous Peoples in B.C.
- The overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in the justice system is eliminated.
- Indigenous Peoples feel safe accessing the health-care system, knowing that they will receive high quality care, be treated with respect and receive culturally safe and appropriate services.
- Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+f people enjoy full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination.
- Indigenous Knowledge, laws and legal orders are affirmed and recognized as part of decision-making.
- Indigenous learners feel welcomed, respected, and comfortable learning and being Indigenous in schools and other educational institutions.

### 2022-2027 ACTIONS

The Province recognizes that systemic racism and discrimination against Indigenous Peoples exists throughout British Columbia and that fundamental changes to systems, behaviours, attitudes and beliefs are needed.

To advance this, the Province will take the following actions in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples between 2022 and 2027:

- 3.1** Develop essential training in partnership with Indigenous organizations, and deliver to the B.C. public service, public institutions and corporations that aims to build foundational understanding and competence about the history and rights of Indigenous Peoples, treaty process, rights and title, the UN Declaration, the B.C. Declaration Act, the dynamics of proper respectful relations, Indigenous-specific racism, and meaningful reconciliation. *(Public Service Agency, Ministry of Finance – Crown Agencies and Board Resourcing Office)*
- 3.2** Establish an operational approach to set and achieve targets for equitable recruitment and retention of Indigenous Peoples across the public sector, including at senior levels. *(Public Service Agency, Public Sector Employers' Council Secretariat)*

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f 2SLGBTQQIA+ refers to two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual and other sexually and gender diverse people.

- 3.3 Conduct an external review of Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination in the provincial public education system, and create a strategy, including resources and supports, to address findings. *(Ministry of Education and Child Care)*
- 3.4 Implement a mandatory course or bundle of credits related to First Peoples as part of graduation requirements in B.C. and co-create culturally relevant provincial resources with Indigenous people for use by all educators across the K-12 education system. *(Ministry of Education and Child Care)*
- 3.5 Provide resources to Indigenous organizations to improve public understanding of Indigenous histories, rights, cultures, languages and the negative impacts of Indigenous-specific racism. *(Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport)*
- 3.6 Introduce anti-racism legislation that addresses Indigenous-specific racism. *(Ministry of Attorney General)*
- 3.7 Implement recommendations made in the [In Plain Sight: Addressing Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination in B.C. health care](#)<sup>12</sup> report, striving to establish a health care system in B.C. that is culturally safe and free of Indigenous-specific racism. *(Ministry of Health)*
- 3.8 Develop and implement community-driven activities to end violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people, beginning with the foundational activities in [A Path Forward: Priorities and Early Strategies for B.C.](#)<sup>13</sup> and steps towards achieving the mandate commitment to develop a gender-based violence action plan. *(Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Ministry of Attorney General, Ministry of Finance - Gender Equity Office)*
- 3.9 Identify and implement multi-modal transportation solutions that provide support and enable the development of sustainable, safe, reliable and affordable transportation options for First Nations communities. *(Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure)*
- 3.10 Implement improvements to public safety oversight bodies and complaints processes, such as enhanced investments in the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal and new models for including Indigenous laws in complaints resolution. *(Ministry of Attorney General, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General)*
- 3.11 Develop and implement comprehensive policing reforms to address systemic biases and racism. This will include: updating the *Police Act*, [BC Provincial Policing Standards](#)<sup>14</sup> and mandatory training requirements; enhancing independent oversight; clarifying the roles and responsibilities of police officers in the context of complex social issues such as mental health, addiction and homelessness; and contributing to the modernization of the federal First Nations Policing Program. *(Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Ministry of Attorney General, Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions)*
- 3.12 Prioritize implementation of the First Nations Justice Strategy to reduce the substantial overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples involved in and impacted by the justice system. This includes affirming First Nations self-determination and enabling the restoration of traditional justice systems and culturally relevant institutions. *(Ministry of Attorney General, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General)*
- 3.13 Prioritize endorsement and implementation of the Métis Justice Strategy to reduce the substantial overrepresentation of Métis Peoples in and impacted by the justice system. This includes affirming Métis self-determination, and enabling the restoration of traditional justice systems and culturally relevant institutions. *(Ministry of Attorney General, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General)*

- 3.14** Advance the collection and use of disaggregated demographic data, guided by a distinctions-based approach to Indigenous data sovereignty and self-determination, including supporting the establishment of a First Nations-governed and mandated regional data governance centre in alignment with the First Nations Data Governance Strategy. *(Ministry of Citizens' Services)*
- 3.15** Adopt an inclusive digital font that allows for Indigenous languages to be included in communication, signage, services and official records. *(Ministry of Citizens' Services)*





THEME

# 4

Social, Cultural and  
Economic Well-being

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## THEME 4. Social, Cultural and Economic Well-being

### GOAL

Indigenous Peoples in B.C. fully enjoy and exercise their distinct rights to maintain, control, develop, protect and transmit their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, languages, food systems, sciences and technologies. They are supported by initiatives that promote connection, development, access and improvement, as well as full participation in all aspects of B.C.'s economy. This includes particular focus on ensuring the rights of Indigenous women, youth, Elders, children, persons with disabilities and 2SLGBTQIA+ people are upheld.

### OUTCOMES

A British Columbia where:

- Indigenous Peoples, communities and nations in B.C. are thriving and prospering as full participants in the social, cultural and economic landscape of the province.
- Indigenous Peoples design, control and set the standards and policies for the services that support and facilitate the well-being of Indigenous citizens.
- Indigenous Peoples care for their own children and youth in their communities, and exercise jurisdiction over their own child and family services through systems and practices they determine for themselves, with family preservation prioritized and children and youth kept within their families and communities.
- Indigenous children in need of protection are cared for by their community, and where they cannot be cared for by their community, they are connected to their communities and cultures.
- Health, social and education systems apply an intersectional lens to meet the needs and honour the worldviews, cultures, lived experiences, knowledge and histories of Indigenous Peoples.
- Indigenous languages are living, used, taught and visible throughout their respective territories, including in the provincial public education system.
- Indigenous food systems are recognized and supported in their foundational and interconnected role in providing for cultural, social, environmental and economic well-being.
- Indigenous learners lead graduation rates, are supported to pursue their own excellence, and can access relevant and responsive post-secondary education and skills training.
- Government functions in such a way that distinct Indigenous cultures and identities are understood, upheld and respected, including how Indigenous Peoples access and interact with all provincial government services.
- Respect for Indigenous cultures is tangibly demonstrated through Indigenous maintenance, control, protection and development of their cultural heritage resources, intellectual property, art, spiritual traditions, knowledge systems, economic systems, food systems and spiritual and sacred sites.

- Indigenous Peoples are thriving in their role as stewards and managers of their cultural heritage and receive funding and support to develop community-based cultural heritage plans and programming that will assist with: documenting oral histories and cultural traditions; managing cultural heritage sites, objects and systems; and supporting the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge; and showcasing and commemorating Indigenous cultural heritage.
- First Nations create archives for historical community records, mapping services and place-naming.
- Governance of the economy respects, acknowledges and upholds Indigenous rights and interests and First Nations title, is co-led with Indigenous Peoples, and ensures that all First Nations have economic opportunities and benefit from the lands and resources in their territories.
- Indigenous Peoples freely determine their economic development goals, priorities and strategies, and exercise their right to maintain and develop their economic systems and institutions to support self-governance, along with traditional and other economic activities.
- The Province and Indigenous Peoples collaborate and participate in ongoing, meaningful, and enduring dialogue to achieve a more inclusive, innovative, and sustainable economy for the benefit of present and future generations that reflects Indigenous values, interests, goals and worldviews.
- The Province and Indigenous Peoples collaborate through meaningful dialogue to create more inclusive, sustainable and low carbon economies for the benefit of present and future generations and a just climate transition.
- Indigenous peoples with disabilities are supported in accessing culturally relevant care and services.

## 2022-2027 ACTIONS

The Province recognizes that social and economic disparities exist in British Columbia with particular impacts on Indigenous Peoples, and that addressing these disparities while supporting the cultural distinctiveness of Indigenous Peoples is fundamental to upholding human rights.

To advance this, the Province will take the following actions in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples from 2022 to 2027:

### Social

- 4.1 Identify and undertake concrete measures to increase the literacy and numeracy achievement levels of Indigenous students at all levels of the K-12 education system, including the early years. *(Ministry of Education and Child Care)*
- 4.2 Develop and implement an effective recruitment and retention strategy to increase the number of Indigenous teachers in the K-12 public education system. *(Ministry of Education and Child Care, Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training)*
- 4.3 Co-develop and implement a framework for the involvement of Indigenous Education Councils in school district financial planning and reporting. *(Ministry of Education and Child Care)*
- 4.4 Identify, develop and implement mechanisms and approaches to enable boards of education to better support Indigenous students, including increasing and ensuring equitable access to education and safe environments. *(Ministry of Education and Child Care)*

**4.5** Co-develop a policy framework for Indigenous post-secondary education and skills training that includes:

- supporting post-secondary institutions to be more culturally relevant and responsive to the needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners and communities;
- expanding the Aboriginal Service Plan program to all 25 public post-secondary institutions;
- ensuring that Indigenous learners have access to student housing that is safe, inclusive, and enables them to thrive personally, academically, and culturally;
- developing mechanisms for First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners and communities to play an integral role in public post-secondary institutions' decision-making; and
- identifying legislative amendments needed to ensure all public post-secondary institution boards include at least one Indigenous person.

*(Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training)*

**4.6** Promote culturally relevant sport, physical activity and recreation initiatives and opportunities that increase Indigenous engagement, participation and excellence in both traditional and mainstream sports for individuals in both urban and rural or remote areas. *(Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport)*

**4.7** Demonstrate a new and more flexible funding model and partnership approach that supports First Nations to plan, design and deliver mental health and wellness services across a full continuum of care and to address the social determinants of health and wellness. *(Ministry of Health, Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions)*

**4.8** In alignment with the tripartite health plans and agreements, continue to strengthen and evolve the First Nation health governance structure in B.C. to ensure First Nations are supported to participate as full and equal partners in decision-making and service delivery at local, regional and provincial levels, and engage First Nations and the Government of Canada on the need for legislation as envisioned in the tripartite health plans and agreements. *(Ministry of Health, Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions)*

**4.9** As a part of the implementation of the *Accessible British Columbia Act*, support the identification, prevention and removal of barriers for Indigenous persons with disabilities. This includes ensuring that the development of accessibility standards considers the rights recognized and affirmed by the UN Declaration. *(Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction)*

**4.10** Prioritize the implementation of Primary Care Networks, the First Nations-led Primary Health Care Initiative, and other primary care priorities, embedding Indigenous perspectives and priorities into models of care to increase Indigenous Peoples' access to primary care and other health services, and to improve cultural safety and quality of care. *(Ministry of Health)*

**4.11** Increase the availability, accessibility and the continuum of Indigenous-led and community-based social services and supports that are trauma-informed, culturally safe and relevant, and address a range of holistic wellness needs for those who are in crisis, at-risk or have experienced violence, trauma and/or significant loss. *(Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions)*

**4.12** Address the disproportionate impacts of the overdose public health emergency on Indigenous Peoples by:

- applying to the Government of Canada to decriminalize simple possession of small amounts of illicit drugs for personal use, and continuing campaigns and other measures to help end the stigma and shame associated with addiction;
- expanding prescribed safer supply and other harm reduction measures; and
- ensuring accessibility of recovery beds, and evidence-based, culturally relevant and safe services to meet the needs of Indigenous Peoples, including youth.

*(Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Ministry of Attorney General)*

**4.13** Increase the availability and accessibility of culturally safe substance use services, including through the renovation and construction of Indigenous-run treatment centres and the integration of land-based and traditional approaches to healing. *(Ministry of Health, Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions)*

**4.14** Increase the availability and accessibility of resources to Indigenous partners in COVID-19 pandemic health and wellness planning and response, including the implementation of the [Rural, Remote, First Nations and Indigenous COVID-19 Framework](#)<sup>15</sup> to ensure access for all Indigenous Peoples to immediate and culturally safe and relevant care closer to home. *(Ministry of Health, Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions)*

**4.15** Incorporate Indigenous experiences and knowledge of poverty and well-being into ongoing poverty reduction efforts and the 2024 Poverty Reduction Strategy. The strategy will recognize the ongoing impacts of colonialism and include Indigenous-identified actions and progress measures. *(Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction)*

**4.16** Co-develop a B.C.-specific fiscal framework, in partnership with First Nations, Métis and Inuit, and in consultation with key Indigenous organizations, to support and move forward with jurisdiction over child and family services. *(Ministry of Children and Family Development)*

**4.17** In collaboration with B.C. First Nations and Métis Peoples, and Inuit, continue implementing changes to substantially reduce the number of Indigenous children and youth in care through increased prevention and family support services at all stages of contact with the child welfare system. *(Ministry of Children and Family Development)*

**4.18** As committed to in the First Nations Children and Youth in Care Protocol, co-develop and implement measures to support improved education outcomes of current and former First Nation children and youth in care, including meaningful data collection to inform policy planning and service delivery. *(Ministry of Education and Child Care, Ministry of Children and Family Development, Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training)*

**4.19** As part of a commitment to an inclusive, universal childcare system, work in collaboration with B.C. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples to implement a distinctions-based approach to support and move forward jurisdiction over child care for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples who want and need it in B.C. *(Ministry of Education and Child Care)*

- 4.20** Advance a collaborative, whole-of-government approach in the partnership between the Métis Nation of British Columbia and the Province of B.C., respecting Métis self-determination and working to establish more flexibility and sustainability in funding. *(Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation)*
- 4.21** Bring together key Indigenous urban leaders to create a provincial urban Indigenous advisory table to develop and implement a five-year plan to address the priorities of urban Indigenous Peoples, including a focus on Elders, youth, children, women, men, 2SLGBTQIA+ and persons with disabilities. *(Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction)*
- 4.22** Ministers and executives across the provincial government social sector will meet annually with urban Indigenous service organization leaders, such as the provincial urban Indigenous advisory table (see Action 4.21), to discuss successes, innovations, and challenges of supporting the social, cultural and economic needs of urban Indigenous Peoples. *(Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation)*
- 4.23** Undertake a cross-government review of provincial supports and services for Indigenous Peoples in urban settings and develop a plan with clear timelines that will provide greater collaboration and coordination to meet needs. *(Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation)*
- 4.24** Expand support to Aboriginal Friendship Centres and other urban Indigenous organizations that serve the needs of urban Indigenous people in B.C. while also acknowledging that Aboriginal Friendship Centres and other urban Indigenous organizations play a vital role for those that wish to connect to their cultures and traditions. *(Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation)*
- 4.25** Work with Indigenous Peoples to build more on- and off-reserve housing and pursue new federal contributions. *(Ministry of Attorney General, Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation)*
- 4.26** Strengthen the health and wellness partnership between Métis Nation British Columbia, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, and support opportunities to identify and work to address shared Métis health and wellness priorities. *(Ministry of Health, Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions)*



## Cultural Heritage

- 4.27 Review the principles and processes that guide the naming of municipalities and regional districts, and evolve practices to foster reconciliation in local processes. *(Ministry of Municipal Affairs)*
- 4.28 Draft a report with recommendations for how BC Parks can better reflect Indigenous Peoples' histories and cultures in provincial parks and protected areas. *(Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy)*
- 4.29 Establish an Indigenous-led working group to develop a strategy for the revitalization of Indigenous languages in B.C., including potential legislative supports. *(Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Ministry of Education and Child Care, Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training)*
- 4.30 Support Indigenous language revitalization through sustainable funding. *(Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training)*
- 4.31 Develop full-course offerings in First Nation languages and implement the educational Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the K-12 education system. *(Ministry of Education and Child Care)*
- 4.32 Co-develop a K-12 First Nations Language Policy and associated implementation plan for the public education system with the First Nations Education Steering Committee, including ensuring that the language and culture of the local First Nation(s) on whose territory(ies) a board of education operates schools are the ones primarily reflected in any First Nations language and culture programs and services of the board. *(Ministry of Education and Child Care)*
- 4.33 Co-develop a policy framework to support repatriation initiatives. *(Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport)*
- 4.34 Reset the relationship between the Royal BC Museum and Indigenous Peoples in B.C. by ensuring that Indigenous voices are prioritized and inform the development of narratives, exhibitions and learning programs. *(Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport)*
- 4.35 Work with First Nations to reform the *Heritage Conservation Act* to align with the UN Declaration, including shared decision-making and the protection of First Nations cultural, spiritual, and heritage sites and objects. *(Ministry of Forests, Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport)*

## Economic

- 4.36 Ensure every First Nations community in B.C. has high-speed internet services. *(Ministry of Citizens' Services)*
- 4.37 Provide funding to assist Indigenous tourism businesses that have been financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to further support recovery of the Indigenous tourism sector in B.C. *(Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport)*
- 4.38 Provide investments to Indigenous Tourism B.C. to support Indigenous tourism, Indigenous job creation, preservation of Indigenous languages, celebration of Indigenous cultures and the stewardship of territories, and to tell the stories of Indigenous Peoples in B.C. in their own words. *(Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport)*

- 4.39** Work with the Province's Economic Trusts and First Nation partners to develop a mechanism that ensures inclusion of First Nations at a regional decision-making level. *(Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation)*
- 4.40** Ensure Indigenous collaboration in the development and implementation of the BC Economic Plan, including a technology and innovation roadmap. *(Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation)*
- 4.41** Work with First Nations, Métis chartered communities and urban Indigenous organizations to provide funding for self-determined, community-led programs for Indigenous Peoples to upgrade skills, obtain credentials, secure employment, and develop and support community economies. *(Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction)*
- 4.42** Co-develop economic metrics to help evaluate progress as reconciliation is advanced. The baseline data will begin to address the persistent gap in Indigenous-specific economic metrics and through this co-designed effort, build a comprehensive set of data to measure Indigenous economic well-being and track progress over time. *(Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation, Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation)*
- 4.43** Co-develop recommendations on strategic policies and initiatives for clean and sustainable energy. This includes identifying and supporting First Nations-led clean energy opportunities related to CleanBC, the Comprehensive Review of BC Hydro, and the BC Utilities Commission Inquiry on the Regulation of Indigenous Utilities. *(Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation)*
- 4.44** Review, evaluate and improve B.C.'s Indigenous Youth Internship Program. *(Public Service Agency)*
- 4.45** Prioritize and increase the number of technology sector training opportunities for Indigenous Peoples and other groups currently under-represented in B.C.'s technology sector. *(Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation)*
- 4.46** Improve economic supports for Indigenous workers and employers by increasing access for Indigenous clients to the Ministry of Labour's services and programs, including employment standards, workers' compensation and workplace safety. *(Ministry of Labour)*
- 4.47** Advance a collaborative approach to cannabis-related governance and jurisdiction between First Nations and the Province that reflects common objectives to protect youth, prioritize public health and safety, strengthen First Nations governance capacity and secure economic benefits for First Nations. *(Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General)*
- 4.48** Work with the B.C. Indigenous Advisory Council on Agriculture and Food and other Indigenous partners to identify opportunities to strengthen Indigenous food systems and increase Indigenous participation in the agriculture and food sector. *(Ministry of Agriculture and Food)*
- 4.49** Review existing provincial mandates to enhance treaty and self-governing Nations' fiscal capacity to deliver services to their citizens. *(Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation)*

## ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPLEMENTATION

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The Province's development of the action plan was undertaken in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples in B.C. and centred around the shared understandings outlined on page 6. The process to implement the action plan will be approached in the same way: comprehensive, distinctions-based, diverse, legally plural, principled, cooperative, enabling, impactful and transparent.

Ministries across government will continue to work in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples across the province to implement actions identified in this plan, reflecting our mutual commitment to work together in partnership. Identified ministries are accountable for their actions as well as ensuring effective monitoring and reporting on progress. As the action plan is province-wide in scope, it requires an all-of-government approach with coordination across ministries to support implementation.

The Province will work with Indigenous Peoples to identify suitable tools, indicators and measures for monitoring, assessing and reporting progress on implementation of the Declaration Act. Progress under the action plan will be reviewed on an annual basis and publicly reported in an annual report that will be prepared consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples, and submitted to the B.C. Legislature by June 30 each year. The action plan will be comprehensively updated within five years.

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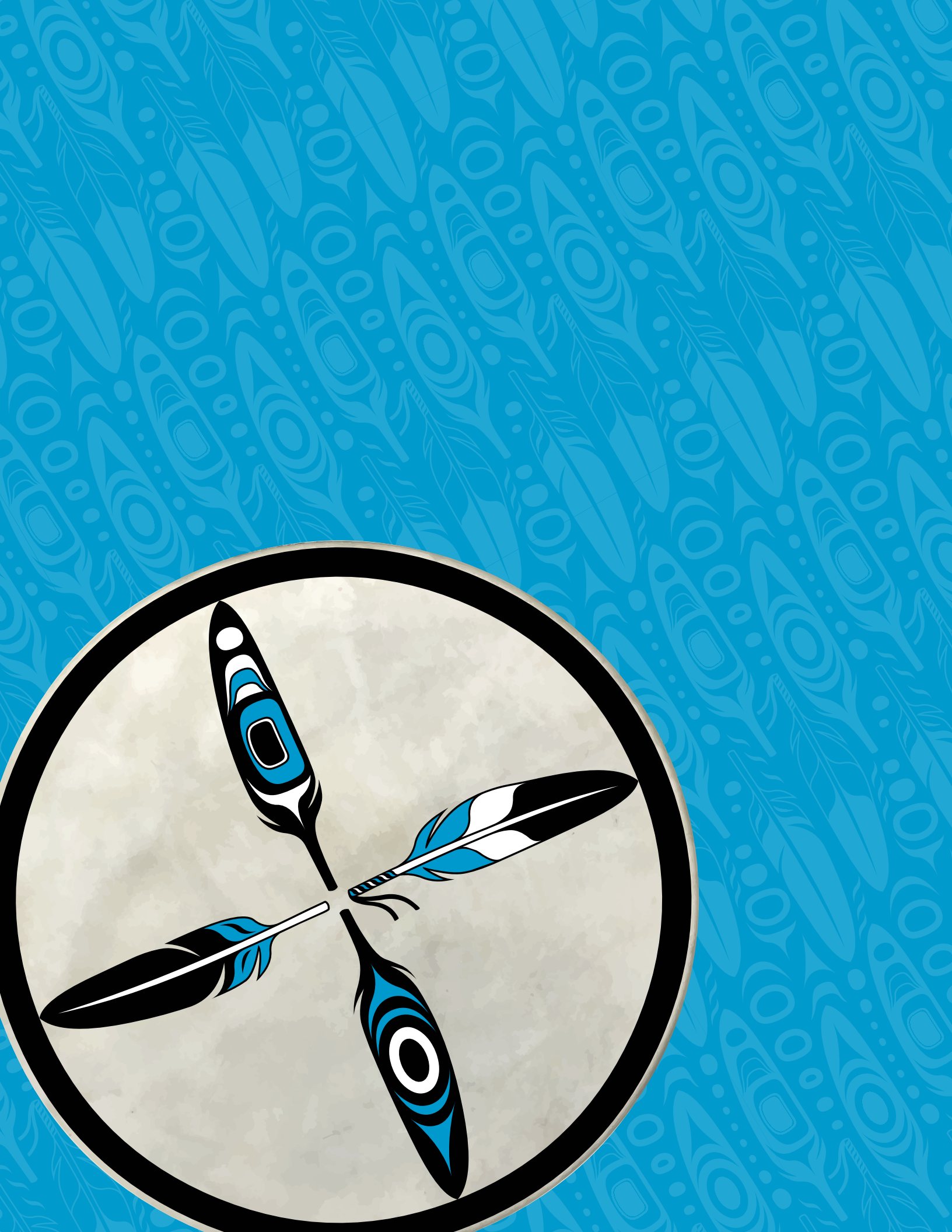
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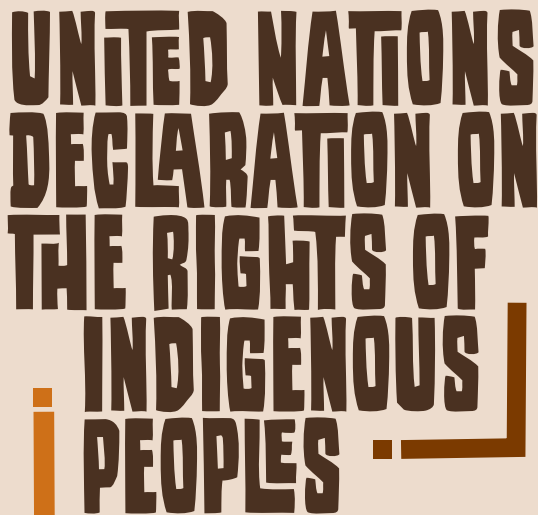

# PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS

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**UNITED NATIONS  
DECLARATION ON  
THE RIGHTS OF  
INDIGENOUS  
PEOPLES**



United Nations



# UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



United Nations



## Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 13 September 2007

*[without reference to a Main Committee (A/61/L.67  
and Add.1)]*

### **61/295. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**


*The General Assembly,*

*Taking note* of the recommendation of the Human Rights Council contained in its resolution 1/2 of 29 June 2006<sup>1</sup>, by which the Council adopted the text of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,

*Recalling* its resolution 61/178 of 20 December 2006, by which it decided to defer consideration of and action on the Declaration to allow time for further consultations thereon, and also decided to conclude its consideration before the end of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly,

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1 See Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No. 53 (A/61/53), part one, chap. II, sect. A.



**Adopts** the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as contained in the annex to the present resolution.

*107th plenary meeting  
13 September 2007*

## **Annex**


### **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

*The General Assembly,*

**Guided** by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and good faith in the fulfilment of the obligations assumed by States in accordance with the Charter,

**Affirming** that indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples, while recognizing the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different, and to be respected as such,

Affirming also that all peoples contribute to the diversity and richness of civilizations and cultures, which constitute the common heritage of humankind,



**Affirming** further that all doctrines, policies and practices based on or advocating superiority of peoples or individuals on the basis of national origin or racial, religious, ethnic or cultural differences are racist, scientifically false, legally invalid, morally condemnable and socially unjust,

**Reaffirming** that indigenous peoples, in the exercise of their rights, should be free from discrimination of any kind,

**Concerned** that indigenous peoples have suffered from historic injustices as a result of, inter alia, their colonization and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources, thus preventing them from exercising, in particular, their right to development in accordance with their own needs and interests,

**Recognizing** the urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of indigenous peoples which derive from their political, economic and social structures and from their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies, especially their rights to their lands, territories and resources,

**Recognizing** also the urgent need to respect and promote the rights of indigenous peoples




affirmed in treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements with States,

**Welcoming** the fact that indigenous peoples are organizing themselves for political, economic, social and cultural enhancement and in order to bring to an end all forms of discrimination and oppression wherever they occur,

**Convinced** that control by indigenous peoples over developments affecting them and their lands, territories and resources will enable them to maintain and strengthen their institutions, cultures and traditions, and to promote their development in accordance with their aspirations and needs,

**Recognizing** that respect for indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment,

**Emphasizing** the contribution of the demilitarization of the lands and territories of indigenous peoples to peace, economic and social progress and development, understanding and friendly relations among nations and peoples of the world,



**Recognizing** in particular the right of indigenous families and communities to retain shared responsibility for the upbringing, training, education and well-being of their children, consistent with the rights of the child,

**Considering** that the rights affirmed in treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements between States and indigenous peoples are, in some situations, matters of international concern, interest, responsibility and character,


**Considering** also that treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements, and the relationship they represent, are the basis for a strengthened partnership between indigenous peoples and States,

**Acknowledging** that the Charter of the United Nations, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>2</sup> and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>2</sup> as well as the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,<sup>3</sup> affirm the fundamental importance of the right to self-determination of all peoples, by

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2 See resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

3 A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III.




virtue of which they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development,

***Bearing*** in mind that nothing in this Declaration may be used to deny any peoples their right to self-determination, exercised in conformity with international law,

***Convinced*** that the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples in this Declaration will enhance harmonious and cooperative relations between the State and indigenous peoples, based on principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, non-discrimination and good faith,

***Encouraging*** States to comply with and effectively implement all their obligations as they apply to indigenous peoples under international instruments, in particular those related to human rights, in consultation and cooperation with the peoples concerned,

***Emphasizing*** that the United Nations has an important and continuing role to play in promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples,



***Believing*** that this Declaration is a further important step forward for the recognition, promotion and protection of the rights and freedoms of indigenous peoples and in the development of relevant activities of the United Nations system in this field,


***Recognizing and reaffirming*** that indigenous individuals are entitled without discrimination to all human rights recognized in international law, and that indigenous peoples possess collective rights which are indispensable for their existence, well-being and integral development as peoples,

***Recognizing*** that the situation of indigenous peoples varies from region to region and from country to country and that the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical and cultural backgrounds should be taken into consideration,

***Solemnly proclaims*** the following United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a standard of achievement to be pursued in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect:

### ***Article 1***

Indigenous peoples have the right to the full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all



human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>4</sup> and international human rights law.

### ***Article 2***

Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their indigenous origin or identity.

### ***Article 3***

Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

### ***Article 4***

Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions.

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4 Resolution 217 A (III).



## ***Article 5***

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State.

## ***Article 6***

Every indigenous individual has the right to a nationality.

## ***Article 7***

1. Indigenous individuals have the rights to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of person.
2. Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including forcibly removing children of the group to another group.



## *Article 8*

1. Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.
2. States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for:
  - (a) Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities;
  - (b) Any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources;
  - (c) Any form of forced population transfer which has the aim or effect of violating or undermining any of their rights;
  - (d) Any form of forced assimilation or integration;
  - (e) Any form of propaganda designed to promote or incite racial or ethnic discrimination directed against them.



### *Article 9*


Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right to belong to an indigenous community or nation, in accordance with the traditions and customs of the community or nation concerned. No discrimination of any kind may arise from the exercise of such a right.

### *Article 10*

Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. No relocation shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation and, where possible, with the option of return.

### *Article 11*

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature.


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2. States shall provide redress through effective mechanisms, which may include restitution, developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples, with respect to their cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free, prior and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs.

### ***Article 12***

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practise, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains.
2. States shall seek to enable the access and/or repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains in their possession through fair, transparent and effective mechanisms developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned.

### ***Article 13***

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future genera-




tions their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.

2. States shall take effective measures to ensure that this right is protected and also to ensure that indigenous peoples can understand and be understood in political, legal and administrative proceedings, where necessary through the provision of interpretation or by other appropriate means.

### ***Article 14***

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.
3. States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including




those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.

### ***Article 15***

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.
2. States shall take effective measures, in consultation and cooperation with the indigenous peoples concerned, to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among indigenous peoples and all other segments of society.

### ***Article 16***

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages and to have access to all forms of non-indigenous media without discrimination.
2. States shall take effective measures to ensure that State-owned media duly reflect indigenous




cultural diversity. States, without prejudice to ensuring full freedom of expression, should encourage privately owned media to adequately reflect indigenous cultural diversity.

### ***Article 17***

1. Indigenous individuals and peoples have the right to enjoy fully all rights established under applicable international and domestic labour law.
2. States shall in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples take specific measures to protect indigenous children from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development, taking into account their special vulnerability and the importance of education for their empowerment.
3. Indigenous individuals have the right not to be subjected to any discriminatory conditions of labour and, inter alia, employment or salary.

### ***Article 18***

Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect



their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision-making institutions.

### ***Article 19***

States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

### ***Article 20***

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities.
2. Indigenous peoples deprived of their means of subsistence and development are entitled to just and fair redress.



## ***Article 21***

1. Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.
2. States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.

## ***Article 22***

1. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities in the implementation of this Declaration.
2. States shall take measures, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, to ensure that indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination.



### *Article 23*

Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.

### *Article 24*

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to their traditional medicines and to maintain their health practices, including the conservation of their vital medicinal plants, animals and minerals. Indigenous individuals also have the right to access, without any discrimination, to all social and health services.
2. Indigenous individuals have an equal right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. States shall take the necessary steps with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of this right.



## *Article 25*

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.

## *Article 26*

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.
2. Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired.
3. States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples concerned.



## *Article 27*

States shall establish and implement, in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned, a fair, independent, impartial, open and transparent process, giving due recognition to indigenous peoples' laws, traditions, customs and land tenure systems, to recognize and adjudicate the rights of indigenous peoples pertaining to their lands, territories and resources, including those which were traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used. Indigenous peoples shall have the right to participate in this process.

## *Article 28*

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to redress, by means that can include restitution or, when this is not possible, just, fair and equitable compensation, for the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used, and which have been confiscated, taken, occupied, used or damaged without their free, prior and informed consent.
2. Unless otherwise freely agreed upon by the peoples concerned, compensation shall take



the form of lands, territories and resources equal in quality, size and legal status or of monetary compensation or other appropriate redress.

### ***Article 29***

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programmes for indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.
2. States shall take effective measures to ensure that no storage or disposal of hazardous materials shall take place in the lands or territories of indigenous peoples without their free, prior and informed consent.
3. States shall also take effective measures to ensure, as needed, that programmes for monitoring, maintaining and restoring the health of indigenous peoples, as developed and implemented by the peoples affected by such materials, are duly implemented.




### ***Article 30***

1. Military activities shall not take place in the lands or territories of indigenous peoples, unless justified by a relevant public interest or otherwise freely agreed with or requested by the indigenous peoples concerned.
2. States shall undertake effective consultations with the indigenous peoples concerned, through appropriate procedures and in particular through their representative institutions, prior to using their lands or territories for military activities.

### ***Article 31***

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the




right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions.

2. In conjunction with indigenous peoples, States shall take effective measures to recognize and protect the exercise of these rights.

### ***Article 32***

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources.
2. States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources.
3. States shall provide effective mechanisms for just and fair redress for any such activities, and



appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural or spiritual impact.

### ***Article 33***

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions. This does not impair the right of indigenous individuals to obtain citizenship of the States in which they live.
2. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine the structures and to select the membership of their institutions in accordance with their own procedures.

### ***Article 34***

Indigenous peoples have the right to promote, develop and maintain their institutional structures and their distinctive customs, spirituality, traditions, procedures, practices and, in the cases where they exist, juridical systems or customs, in accordance with international human rights standards.



### ***Article 35***

Indigenous peoples have the right to determine the responsibilities of individuals to their communities.

### ***Article 36***

1. Indigenous peoples, in particular those divided by international borders, have the right to maintain and develop contacts, relations and cooperation, including activities for spiritual, cultural, political, economic and social purposes, with their own members as well as other peoples across borders.
2. States, in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples, shall take effective measures to facilitate the exercise and ensure the implementation of this right.

### ***Article 37***

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the recognition, observance and enforcement of treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements concluded with States or their successors and to have States honour and re-



spect such treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements.

2. Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as diminishing or eliminating the rights of indigenous peoples contained in treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements.

### ***Article 38***


States in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples, shall take the appropriate measures, including legislative measures, to achieve the ends of this Declaration.

### ***Article 39***

Indigenous peoples have the right to have access to financial and technical assistance from States and through international cooperation, for the enjoyment of the rights contained in this Declaration.

### ***Article 40***

Indigenous peoples have the right to access to and prompt decision through just and fair procedures for the resolution of conflicts and disputes with States or other parties, as well as to effective



remedies for all infringements of their individual and collective rights. Such a decision shall give due consideration to the customs, traditions, rules and legal systems of the indigenous peoples concerned and international human rights.

### ***Article 41***

The organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations shall contribute to the full realization of the provisions of this Declaration through the mobilization, inter alia, of financial cooperation and technical assistance. Ways and means of ensuring participation of indigenous peoples on issues affecting them shall be established.

### ***Article 42***

The United Nations, its bodies, including the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and specialized agencies, including at the country level, and States shall promote respect for and full application of the provisions of this Declaration and follow up the effectiveness of this Declaration.



### ***Article 43***

The rights recognized herein constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world.

### ***Article 44***


All the rights and freedoms recognized herein are equally guaranteed to male and female indigenous individuals.

### ***Article 45***

Nothing in this Declaration may be construed as diminishing or extinguishing the rights indigenous peoples have now or may acquire in the future.

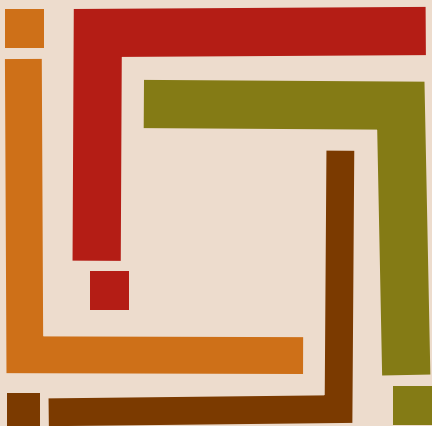
### ***Article 46***

1. Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, people, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act contrary to the Charter of the United Nations or construed as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismem-



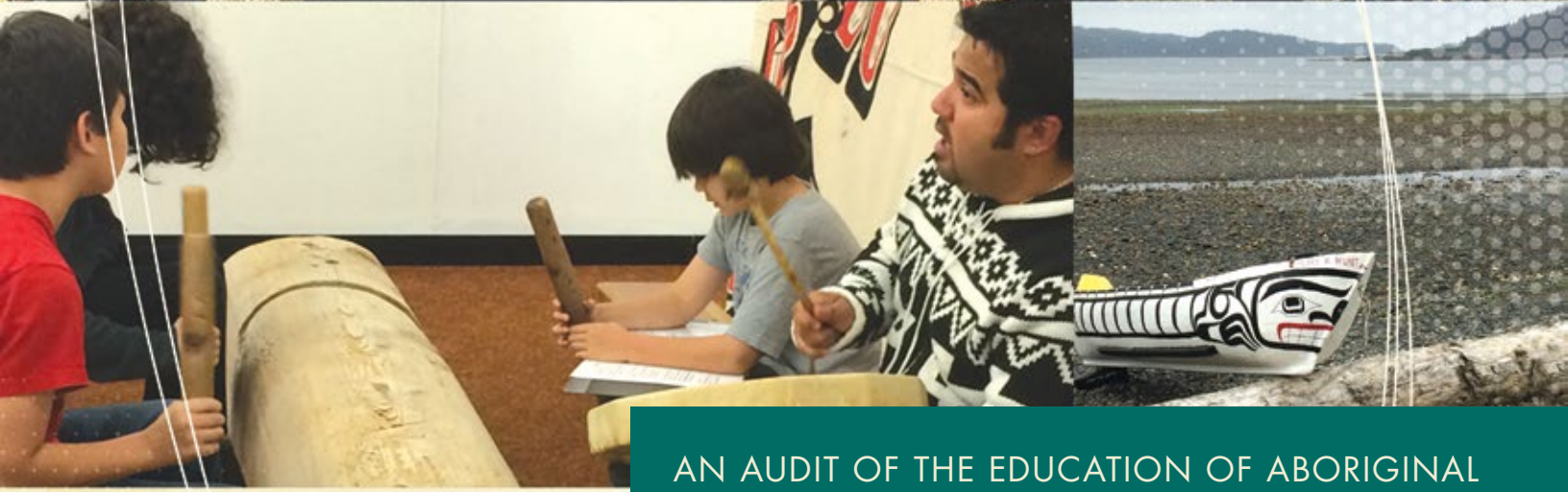
ber or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States.

2. In the exercise of the rights enunciated in the present Declaration, human rights and fundamental freedoms of all shall be respected. The exercise of the rights set forth in this Declaration shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law and in accordance with international human rights obligations. Any such limitations shall be non-discriminatory and strictly necessary solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for meeting the just and most compelling requirements of a democratic society.
3. The provisions set forth in this Declaration shall be interpreted in accordance with the principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, equality, non-discrimination, good governance and good faith.



Designed by the Graphic Design Unit, Department of Public Information, United Nations

November 2015



AN AUDIT OF THE EDUCATION OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN THE B.C. PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

[www.bcauditor.com](http://www.bcauditor.com)

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The Honourable Linda Reid  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly  
Province of British Columbia  
Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, British Columbia  
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Dear Madame Speaker:

I have the honour to transmit to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia my report, *An Audit of the Education of Aboriginal Students in the B.C. Public School System*.

We conducted this audit under the authority of section 11 (8) of the *Auditor General Act* and in accordance with the standards for assurance engagements set out by the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada (CPA) in the CPA Canada Handbook – Assurance, and in accordance with Value-for-Money Auditing in the Public Sector.



Carol Bellringer, FCPA, FCA  
Auditor General  
Victoria, B.C.  
November 2015

Cover Photos: Welcome dance (Tlasala) performed by the Kwakiutl (Kwagiulth) First Nation for the audit team on their fieldwork visit to Vancouver Island North, School District #85.

Kwak'wala Language and Cultural Teacher Harold Nelson (Sisaxolas) singing traditional songs with students Seth Hunt (left) and Roman Child (right).

Canoe photo taken at Tsaxis, Kwakiutl village at Fort Rupert near Port Hardy B.C., Vancouver Island.

# AUDITOR GENERAL'S COMMENTS

**TEN YEARS AGO**, the B.C. government committed to close the social and economic gaps between First Nations and other British Columbians – including a commitment to achieve parity in education outcomes for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students by 2015. At the time, the graduation rate for Aboriginal students was less than 50%, compared to more than 80% for non-Aboriginal students. Last year, 62% of Aboriginal students graduated with their peers. The gap is narrowing, but more can be done.

Although the Ministry of Education has made improvements and B.C. has better results for Aboriginal students compared to other jurisdictions, there are still districts in B.C. where less than 50% of Aboriginal students graduate with their peers. The ministry must collaborate with boards of education, superintendents, and Aboriginal leaders and communities on a single, shared, system-wide strategy to close the gaps for Aboriginal students. The ministry needs to intervene when results are not being achieved.

All levels of governments have recognized their social, moral and legal obligations to increase the number of Aboriginal students graduating. This was reinforced by the federal government's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on residential schools, which stated that "reconciliation must create a more equitable and inclusive society by closing the gaps in social, health and economic outcomes that exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians."

The Aboriginal population is one of the fastest growing in B.C. Graduating means greater opportunities: employment, health and overall well-being. And ultimately, a better educated population supports a stronger provincial economy.

The ministry can do more to support non-racist learning environments: every child should feel safe; Aboriginal history, language and culture need



**CAROL BELLRINGER, FCPA, FCA**  
*Auditor General*

## AUDITOR GENERAL'S COMMENTS

to be valued; and educators need to expect that all Aboriginal students will graduate. Although we emphasize graduation rates and provincial assessment results in our report, we recognize that education is more than academic achievement. Education should also achieve important social outcomes such as social responsibility, personal development, behaviour, attitudes and work habits.

I am encouraged that the ministry is working with boards and Aboriginal partners on a number of new and ongoing initiatives to improve education outcomes for Aboriginal students. In addition, the ministry has accepted our 11 recommendations. We focused on Aboriginal students, but our recommendations should improve the public education system in ways that will benefit all students.

I would like to thank everyone we spoke with during our audit, especially trustees, school district staff and Aboriginal people who invited us into their schools and communities to gain a greater understanding of their commitment to the success of Aboriginal students.



Carol Bellringer, FCPA, FCA  
Auditor General  
Victoria, B.C.  
November 2015

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**EDUCATION OUTCOMES FOR** Aboriginal students in the B.C. public school system have historically been poor, when compared to outcomes for non-Aboriginal students.

In 2005, the B.C. government publicly committed to close the gaps in education outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students by 2015. At the time, Aboriginal students graduated at a rate of 49%, compared to 82% for non-Aboriginal students.

Outcomes for Aboriginal students have improved and provincially, the gap is narrowing. The graduation rate for Aboriginal students increased to 62% in 2014, compared to an increase from 82% in 2005 to 87% for non-Aboriginal students. However, there continue to be persistent and significant gaps in many school districts and for certain groups of students, including First Nations students living on reserve and Aboriginal children in care.

## OVERALL CONCLUSION

Despite government's public commitment in 2005, the Ministry of Education (ministry) had not fully exercised its duties and powers to close the gaps for Aboriginal students. Specifically, the ministry:

- ◆ had not provided the education system with sufficient leadership and direction to close the gaps
- ◆ undertook limited analysis of the wide range of student outcome data it monitored, to understand trends and outcomes for Aboriginal students and inform change
- ◆ reported on outcomes but not what was effective in closing the gaps

## MINISTRY LEADERSHIP

The ministry has not developed a shared, system-wide strategy to close the gap in outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, in collaboration with boards, superintendents, and Aboriginal leaders and communities. A strategy, with distinct responsibilities and accountabilities for the ministry and boards, and specific actions, targets and timelines, would focus the system on a common goal and enable follow-up when expectations are not met. Actions should include evaluating the effectiveness of targeted funding and enhancement agreements as strategies to close the gaps in education outcomes. There should also be support to ensure boards have the capacity to achieve results.

In the absence of clear direction and a focused and shared system-wide effort, the education system may continue to fail many Aboriginal students by not closing the gaps as rapidly as possible, across all districts.

Welcoming and supportive learning environments are key elements of student success. Within its mandate, the ministry can do more to address obstacles to ensuring safe, non-racist and culturally relevant learning environments for Aboriginal students.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### UNDERSTANDING RESULTS

Educators, administrators and decision makers need to know what is working and what should change. For decades, the ministry has monitored student data, trends, and results and shared this information with boards and the public. However, its analysis of this valuable information has been limited. More in-depth analysis would help the ministry understand why Aboriginal students have poorer outcomes in some contexts and better outcomes in others. This understanding should be used to inform ministry policy decisions and guidance to boards.

Although the ministry has shared data, not all boards have the capacity to analyze and use it. There is a role for the ministry to support boards and district staff to understand and use the wealth of data available. There is also an opportunity for the ministry to monitor additional indicators to better understand outcomes and inform strategies to support Aboriginal student success.

### PUBLIC REPORTING

Performance reporting helps stakeholders make decisions about future goals and strategies. To be useful, performance reporting must be clear and accessible to the people who need it. Overall, we found that the ministry reported on student results for over 15 years, but not on how effective the system has been in closing the gaps in education outcomes between

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. In addition, the ministry had not ensured that boards were meeting ministry expectations for public reporting.

### SUBSEQUENT EVENTS

Subsequent to our main fieldwork, the ministry announced several initiatives that relate to supporting Aboriginal students, reflecting the ministry's ongoing work with boards and Aboriginal partners to improve outcomes for Aboriginal students. Announcements included revisions to the provincial K-12 curriculum to address the history and legacy of residential schools, and the signing of a protocol with the First Nations Education Steering Committee to guide further collaboration on improving education outcomes for B.C.'s Aboriginal students.

### LOOKING AHEAD

In our report, we make 11 recommendations to support the ministry in its ongoing work with boards of education, superintendents, and Aboriginal leaders and communities, to improve education outcomes for Aboriginal students and close the gaps.


# REPORT HIGHLIGHTS



**62,000**  
**ABORIGINAL STUDENTS**  
in public schools (11.5%)


Aboriginal student enrolment generates

**\$500+**  
**MILLION**  
in funding to boards



Nationally,  
ABORIGINAL POPULATION  
**GROWING**  
**5X FASTER**  
than non-Aboriginal

2005 commitment to  
**RAISE ABORIGINAL**  
**GRADUATION RATE**  
to 85% by 2015



**IMPROVING:**  
2005 = **49%**  
2014 = **62%**

**EDUCATION**  
**IMPROVES**  
**LIFE CHANCES:**  
JOBS  
HEALTH  
WELL-BEING

ABORIGINAL STUDENTS  
**WILL BENEFIT**  
from a  
**SYSTEM-WIDE**  
**STRATEGY**  
to close the gaps

ABORIGINAL HISTORY,  
LANGUAGE  
AND CULTURE  
**NEED TO**  
**BE VALUED**

# SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

## WE RECOMMEND THAT THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION:

- 1** collaborate with boards of education, superintendents, and Aboriginal leaders and communities to develop a system-wide strategy with accountabilities to close the gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student outcomes.
- 2** provide support to boards of education and superintendents to ensure they have the capacity to achieve results.
- 3** take action when school districts have not achieved expected results for Aboriginal students.
- 4** evaluate the effectiveness of targeted funding and enhancement agreements as strategies to close the gaps in education outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, and use the results to improve its policies to better support Aboriginal student outcomes.
- 5** work with boards of education to ensure School Completion Certificates are only granted to students who require a modified program due to a special need that prevents them from working toward graduation.
- 6** collaborate with boards of education, superintendents, and Aboriginal leaders and communities to:
  - ◆ provide all students with a curriculum that addresses the past and present effects of the colonization of Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia.
  - ◆ address obstacles to ensuring safe, non-racist, culturally relevant learning environments through teacher professional development, cultural awareness training, and strategies to hire the best people to work with Aboriginal students.
- 7** collaborate with boards of education, superintendents, and Aboriginal leaders and communities to define and implement standardized monitoring and assessment of key indicators of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students' progress at key stages throughout their school career.

# SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

## WE RECOMMEND THAT THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION:

- 8** establish responsibility within the ministry for developing a systematic approach to data analysis on Aboriginal student achievement.
- 9** use the evidence from ministry data analysis to inform decision making and clarify expectations of boards of education.
- 10** support superintendents in their work with boards of education, staff, Aboriginal leaders and communities and other districts, to develop capacity to use data and evidence to plan for Aboriginal student achievement.
- 11** collaborate with boards of education, superintendents, and Aboriginal leaders and communities, to define and implement expectations for regular provincial and district reporting on:
  - ◆ Aboriginal student (on- and off-reserve, First Nations, Métis and Inuit) achievement.
  - ◆ progress in meeting targets to close the gaps.
  - ◆ effectiveness of strategies for Aboriginal students.

# RESPONSE FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**THE MINISTRY OF** Education has a responsibility to Aboriginal students, as well as their parents and communities, to help improve their school experience, continue to increase their completion rates, and better celebrate their successes. This is an obligation that the Ministry takes very seriously. Furthermore, the Ministry understands that the task at hand is to change BC's public education system to better address the needs, interests, cultures, histories, languages, world views, and perspectives of Aboriginal students, knowing that by doing so all students will be more successful.

The success of Aboriginal students is one of the top priorities for government and the Ministry of Education. Ministry of Education shares with the Auditor General the commitment to do better for Aboriginal learners and for all learners. Not only does the Ministry agree with the recommendations provided by the auditors, the recommendations all align with the work the Ministry has undertaken and the goals we seek to accomplish working in partnership with Aboriginal partners such as First Nations Education Steering Committee and First Nations Schools Association.

"Education is a shared responsibility and the province has a formal commitment to work with FNEC to improve education outcomes for First Nations learners in BC. We look forward to continuing our positive working relationship with a focus on advancing the recommendations of the Auditor General and the priorities of First Nations Leadership." Tyrone McNeil, President, First Nations Education Steering Committee.

The Ministry's approach is based on respectful relationships, an approach that makes sense in a province so diverse. Specifically, BC has Canada's greatest diversity of First Nations representing more than 30 languages and 200 communities. There are approximately 15,000 Status First Nations students living on reserves, who are the funding responsibility of the federal government, and while nearly 6,000 choose to stay on reserve to study at approximately 140 First Nation band-operated schools, nearly 9,000 attend BC public schools.

Those 9,000 Status First Nations students are counted among the almost 62,000 students, or over 11 percent of B.C.'s public school student population, who self-identify as Aboriginal. This, too, speaks to diversity: Aboriginal is an inclusive term spanning Status First Nation, non-status First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students, all of whom the BC public school system is working hard to serve.

The release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's "Calls to Actions" in June 2015 provided the assurance that the Ministry's actions were aligned with the directions to bring about reconciliation.

## RESPONSE FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Regarding the Calls to Action specific to education, the Ministry has taken action to ensure age appropriate curriculum about residential schools is a part of the learning for all students. Expanding on this, the Kindergarten to Grade 9 curriculum now includes Aboriginal content at all levels. The Calls to Action also asked that all actions be taken in collaboration with Aboriginal people and, as the work to transform our education system has proceeded, Aboriginal people have played an integral role in all aspects.

Accordingly, from the development and implementation of agreements focused on improving results at the school district and community level to the introduction of memorandums of understanding and protocol agreements at the provincial level, the Ministry is building partnerships and networks. These agreements outline the shared goals and measurable indicators we want for our students. And this is creating an environment of innovation and exploration in which all parties are focused on the experience of Aboriginal students and their results.

It is because of this push for strong relationships, system-wide change, and Aboriginal student success that Aboriginal student performance has improved every year since 2000. More Aboriginal students are staying in school, performing better on provincial exams, graduating, and transitioning to post secondary institutions or training programs year after year.

Similarly, the Ministry's prioritizing Aboriginal student success in provincial programs such as Changing Results for Young Readers, and its collaborative work

with the First Nations Education Steering Committee and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada to improve results for Status First Nations students all speak to the efforts being made to collaborate and take action to change the education system and improve Aboriginal student results.

However, the Ministry knows that more must be done. Despite the improvements over the last 15 years, which include increasing Aboriginal student completion rates by 22 percent, Aboriginal students continue to meet with lower results overall than non-Aboriginal students, and they continue to face racism in our schools.

Our teachers need help in authentically integrating Aboriginal content into the learning experiences of all students and our Aboriginal parents need to feel they are a more integral part of the education system. Education has the potential to positively change the life trajectory of students and the Ministry is confident that the necessary relationships, understandings, and other foundational pieces we are building will do exactly that for all Aboriginal students.

The Ministry appreciates the efforts of the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) of British Columbia in their performance audit of the education of Aboriginal students with the objective of continuing to drive improvement in learning outcomes for Aboriginal students; one that we and our partners in the education sector share with them.

## RESPONSE FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Recommendation by OAG	Ministry Response
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 1:</b></p> <p><i>We recommend that the Ministry of Education collaborate with boards of education, superintendents and Aboriginal leaders and communities, to develop a system wide strategy with accountabilities for closing the gaps between Aboriginal and non Aboriginal student outcomes.</i></p>	<p>The Ministry agrees that collaboration is the key to effect system-wide change toward improving Aboriginal student success. Accordingly, the Ministry, working with school districts, provides an environment of flexibility for boards, superintendents, Aboriginal leaders and communities to work together to create strategies in response to their local situations.</p> <p>What this looks like, currently, is the Ministry working with boards and local Aboriginal communities to improve Aboriginal student performance through Aboriginal education enhancement agreements and complementary accountability reporting. With 56 of 60 districts having completed at least one agreement, this is a system-wide strategy but one implemented at the local level to better engage BC's many distinct school districts, 203 First Nations communities, Metis associations, many other Aboriginal organizations, and a wide variety of education partners.</p> <p>As recommended, the Ministry will also work with all Education partners to create a higher-level system-wide strategy for Aboriginal education, and it will include appropriate indicators of success as part of the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning. These results will be reported on annually.</p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 2:</b></p> <p><i>We recommend that the Ministry of Education provide support to boards of education and superintendents to ensure they have the capacity to achieve results.</i></p>	<p>Ministry agrees that providing supports at the local level to superintendents and boards of education will ensure strategies have the best chance for success.</p> <p>Accordingly, the Ministry currently second two Aboriginal education enhancement agreement coordinators to assist in the local development and implementation of those agreements. Furthermore, the Ministry provides targeted funding to school districts for the provision of enhanced services to self-identified Aboriginal students.</p> <p>To further support a community of practice, the Ministry will also put increased emphasis on providing advice to boards of education and superintendents on effective practices, problem solving, and resourcing being employed in other regions of the province. This will be communicated through provincial gatherings, publicly posting results, and providing feedback on annual reports submitted by boards. As well, the Ministry will directly engage with School Districts that are not achieving the desired outcomes to collaboratively implement actions to increase aboriginal student success levels.</p>

## RESPONSE FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Recommendation by OAG	Ministry Response
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 3:</b></p> <p><i>We recommend that the Ministry of Education take action when districts have not achieved expected results for Aboriginal students.</i></p>	<p>The Ministry agrees that it has an obligation to act when districts require assistance to improve the school experience and success of Aboriginal students. Indeed, the Ministry believes that school districts are in the best position to respond to individual student needs and so it looks for ways to provide districts with the best tools possible to improve results.</p> <p>Accordingly, the Ministry currently works collaboratively with school districts to analyze results and provides opportunities for districts to share and discuss successful strategies. These opportunities include provincial gatherings during the year and learning and resources shared by the Aboriginal education enhancement agreement coordinators as they travel the province.</p> <p>In response to a recognized need that more can be done to improve Aboriginal student success, the forthcoming Framework for Enhancing Student Learning will provide further opportunities for the Ministry to work directly with school districts that are not improving results for Aboriginal students. This may take the form, for example, of support teams being sent into districts to provide those districts with best practices and resources to help in reaching the desired outcomes. Student results will be reported annually and will be made publicly available.</p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 4:</b></p> <p><i>We recommend that the Ministry of Education evaluate the effectiveness of targeted funding and enhancement agreements as strategies to close the gaps in education outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, and use the results to improve its policies to better support Aboriginal student outcomes.</i></p>	<p>The Ministry agrees with this recommendation. While the Aboriginal student completion rate has climbed steadily since these strategies were introduced, a formal review could provide insights to better refine the related policies and more effectively promote best practices.</p> <p>Accordingly, a research study on the effectiveness of Aboriginal education enhancement agreements and future considerations toward systematic change was awarded October 1, 2015. This research is expected to be complete by April 2016. The results of this study will inform the direction of Aboriginal education enhancement agreements in the future.</p> <p>Furthermore, in keeping with this recommendation, the Ministry is undertaking greater evaluation and assessment of the programs it funds to ensure the desired outcomes are achieved and future funding is targeted at those areas delivering the best results.</p>

## RESPONSE FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Recommendation by OAG	Ministry Response
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 5:</b></p> <p><i>We recommend that the Ministry of Education work with boards of education to ensure School Completion Certificates are only granted to students who require a modified program due to a special need that prevents them from working toward graduation.</i></p>	<p>The Ministry agrees with this recommendation. The school completion certificate known as the Evergreen was intended to celebrate the efforts of students who had met learning goals other than graduation. While such recognition is important, the certificate was not intended to be awarded to students who could earn the Dogwood graduation certificate, and a disproportionately high number of Aboriginal students are receiving this non-graduation certificate. While a few districts are issuing the majority of these certificates, and the numbers of students in question is quite small, the use of the Evergreen certificate must only be used as originally intended. Every student matters. Moreover, almost all students should be aiming for a graduation certificate and the entire system should be supporting them on that path.</p> <p>Accordingly, the Ministry is actively reviewing the use of School Leaving Certificates with the intent to limit its use as originally intended in the near future.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Ministry will consider this recommendation in the broader context of its education transformation efforts. In other words, the Ministry is committing to work with all education partners to ensure that all students graduate with the necessary skills and knowledge to reach their potential in school and life.</p>

## RESPONSE FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Recommendation by OAG	Ministry Response
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 6:</b>  <i>We recommend that the Ministry of Education collaborate with boards of education and Aboriginal leaders and communities to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ provide all students with a curriculum that addresses the past and present effects of the colonization of Aboriginal people in British Columbia.</li> <li>♦ address obstacles to ensuring safe, non-racist, culturally relevant learning environments through teacher professional development, cultural awareness training, and strategies to hire the best people to work with Aboriginal students.</li> </ul>	<p>The Ministry agrees with the recommendation, and for the Province this is a priority. In short, BC is dedicated to ensuring that the cultures and contributions of Aboriginal peoples in our province are reflected in all provincial curricula.</p> <p>We are proud of the progress we have made in the area. The work began in 2013 and is well aligned with the subsequent recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation to jurisdictions across the country.</p> <p>First, during the recent and ongoing education transformation process, the Ministry has ensured that there is Aboriginal expertise on each of the subject area development teams, to embed Aboriginal perspectives and knowledge throughout the redesigned curriculum, and to reflect the First Peoples Principles of Learning in this redesign. Ministry curriculum revision teams were mandated with ensuring that the history and legacy of residential schools be included throughout the new provincial curriculum, from an Aboriginal perspective.</p> <p>Second, a resource document entitled “Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives in the Classroom—Moving Forward” was released by the Ministry to help educators embed culturally relevant learning into each student’s experience. This resource reflects the voices of Aboriginal leaders, teachers, community members, students, and education partners including First Nations Education Steering Committee.</p> <p>And, a third example: announced in June 2015, the non-instructional day for the 2015/16 school year was dedicated to Aboriginal education. School districts will use that day to better understand how to integrate Aboriginal content into the curriculum and how they might better support Aboriginal student achievement. (Note: this will reach existing teachers; in an effort to ensure that new teachers have a foundational understanding of Aboriginal content, teacher training programs in BC have already included Aboriginal content as a requirement for graduation.)</p> <p>As a further and future response to this recommendation, the Ministry will consider how it might promote other tools available to boards of education. For example, the hiring of teachers is within the exclusive jurisdictional authority of each board and many but not all have taken advantage of Human Rights Tribunal exemptions to hire Aboriginal teachers and other professionals with Aboriginal ancestry.</p> <p>Likewise, the Ministry, in collaboration with the First Nations Education Steering Committee, will be managing a research project on racism in BC schools. The research will provide recommendations on how the Ministry’s ERASE strategy can be more effective specific to racism against Aboriginal students. ERASE training has been provided to school district personnel over the last number of years to ensure that a safe learning environment is provided for all students.</p>

## RESPONSE FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Recommendation by OAG	Ministry Response
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 7:</b></p> <p><i>We recommend that the Ministry of Education collaborate with boards of education and Aboriginal leaders and communities to define and implement standardized monitoring and assessment of key indicators of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students' progress at key stages throughout their school career.</i></p>	<p>The Ministry agrees that key indicators spanning K-12 are an invaluable tool. Accordingly, it currently provides school district and provincial-level data on Aboriginal student performance indicators at various grades. This data is used in monitoring and annual reporting at all levels.</p> <p>Also in relation to this recommendation, the Ministry has already recognized that the accountability framework had become less informative despite being reporting intensive, and so the Ministry is collaboratively implementing a new framework with a cross section of K-12 sector partners including FNEESC and the BC School Trustees Association. The selection of appropriate and informative indicators is part of this collaborative effort and these indicators must be such that action can be taken to ensure each student is meeting with success. The Ministry has committed to including specific reporting on indicators of aboriginal student success as part of the new framework.</p> <p>Further, the Ministry will keep this recommendation front of mind when working with all partner groups to build for the education system a new assessment framework: one that reflects the goals of education transformation.</p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 8:</b></p> <p><i>We recommend that the Ministry of Education establish responsibility within the ministry for developing a systematic approach to data analysis on Aboriginal student achievement</i></p>	<p>The Ministry agrees that data is best managed in a systemic way and that more can be done in this regard. Under the new provincial Framework for Enhancing Student Learning, the Ministry will implement a more focussed approach for data analysis and reporting that is directly tied to province-wide continuous improvement efforts. System-wide strategies for analyzing and interpreting local data are a key part of the new framework, and include such things as the development of school- and district-based rubrics and analytic tools connected to BC's student information system.</p> <p>In addition, the Ministry is developing a systematic approach to evaluate educational program outcomes and student achievement, and will establish specific responsibilities in the Ministry in this regard.</p> <p>As an additional response to this recommendation, in consultation with education partners, the Ministry will produce a public report of key provincial evidence for the province, each district and, as appropriate, for particular groups of districts; on all indicators. This will include reporting of specific results for Aboriginal students.</p> <p>As part of their annual planning and reporting efforts, districts will be expected to make use of both local and provincial evidence and will be required to report annually on Aboriginal student outcomes.</p>

## RESPONSE FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Recommendation by OAG	Ministry Response
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 9:</b></p> <p><i>We recommend that the Ministry of Education use the evidence from its data analysis to inform ministry decision making and clarify its expectations of boards of education.</i></p>	<p>The Ministry completely supports this recommendation and is taking deliberate action in this regard.</p> <p>The Ministry will add resources and develop more effective evaluation procedures to evaluate the impact of ministry decisions and programs, and further inform ministry decision-making with respect to improving student outcomes.</p> <p>Through multiple accountability and communication strategies (e.g., accountabilities with respect to student achievement, funding, and reporting, and regular conference calls and written communications with trustees and superintendents), the ministry will work to better outline its expectations of boards of education based on available evidence.</p> <p>As part of the new provincial Framework for Enhancing Student Learning, the Ministry and its education partners will continue to work together in 2015/16 to clarify and implement province-wide expectations with respect to student learning. This includes a system-wide focus on students' intellectual, human, social, and career development; multi-year district and school planning for continuous improvement; reporting meaningful and effective evidence at least annually by districts and the province; system-wide capacity building to enhance student learning; and, linkages with existing local agreements to ensure the consistent and meaningful support of Aboriginal students.</p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 10:</b></p> <p><i>We recommend that the Ministry of Education support superintendents in their work with boards of education, staff, Aboriginal leaders and communities, and other districts to develop capacity to use data and evidence to plan for Aboriginal student achievement.</i></p>	<p>The Ministry agrees with this recommendation and will take further action to support superintendents in this regard.</p> <p>Through secondees working directly with school district staff, workshops focused on data analysis, and responses to district reports to the Ministry, school districts have received support to increase their capacity to analyze and plan, and this important work will continue.</p> <p>As part of an initial capacity-building and implementation strategy for the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning, the Ministry is working with the BC School Superintendents Association and its chapters to develop and share capacity in evidence-based planning and to involve their local education partners, including boards of education, staff, and Aboriginal community members, in the planning process.</p> <p>Under the new Framework, the Ministry will also work with all education partners in 2015/16 to identify meaningful and effective evidence, both provincial and local, that can inform district plans and actions for improving achievement for Aboriginal students, and for enhancing learning for each student in BC's K-12 education system.</p>

## RESPONSE FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Recommendation by OAG	Ministry Response
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 11:</b>  <i>We recommend that the Ministry of Education collaborate with boards of education, superintendents, and Aboriginal leaders and communities to define and implement expectations for regular provincial and district reporting on:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Aboriginal student (on- and off-reserve, First Nations, Métis and Inuit) achievement</li> <li>◆ progress in meeting targets to close the gaps</li> <li>◆ effectiveness of strategies for Aboriginal students.</li> </ul>	<p>The Ministry agrees that reporting is essential to the education system, and an essential part of being accountable to British Columbians. Accordingly, the Ministry has collected data on self-identified Aboriginal students since 1991, and, since 1998/99, it has published an annual report called <i>Aboriginal Report—How Are We Doing?</i> to help the public school system serve Aboriginal students.</p> <p>At the same time, the Ministry agrees that there is room for improvement in the area of reporting: specifically, the Ministry and education system as a whole can better connect reporting to responses that help each student reach his or her full potential. Accordingly, the Ministry continues to work with provincial education partners to improve accountability in BC’s K-12 education system. Boards of education, superintendents, Aboriginal leaders and community members, principals and vice-principals, secretary treasurers, teachers, parents, students, special educators, and the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth have all played important roles in shaping our provincial directions, resulting in the development of a draft Framework for Enhancing Student Learning.</p> <p>This means that, in line with this recommendation, future school years will have a different look. For example, key components of this new framework (which will be used in draft form in 2015/16 and refined as needed in May 2016) are multi-year district and school plans, updated annually, and meaningful and effective evidence to improve student outcomes. Under this framework, districts and the province will be expected to report at least annually on overall results, as well as Aboriginal students, children in care, and students with special needs. District plans will be expected to reflect local efforts to support each student, as well as to continuously improve outcomes for these groups of students.</p> <p>Furthermore, another key component of this new framework is system-wide capacity building through team-based supports. The Ministry will work with its education partners to better utilize existing structures (e.g., regional and provincial partner meetings, noninstructional days, etc.) to discuss and promote effective practices for Aboriginal students. It will also work with its education partners to build new team-based supports to act on provincial and local priorities and needs (e.g., a provincial success team focussed on Aboriginal learners).</p>

# BACKGROUND

**ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN** Canada face higher levels of poverty and a lower quality of life than non-Aboriginal Canadians. Researchers agree that the best way to alleviate poverty and address the marginalization of Aboriginal peoples in Canada is through improving education. Graduating from school greatly improves a person's life chances, particularly for employment and income-earning prospects.

There is a wide and historically persistent gap in school graduation rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada. According to Statistics Canada's 2011 National Household Survey, 29% of Aboriginal people aged 25-64 in Canada had not completed secondary school, compared to 12% of non-Aboriginal people.

The Canadian Constitution references three groups of indigenous peoples: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. The term *Aboriginal* is used broadly to encompass these groups.

The B.C. school system is responsible for supporting all students to develop their individual potential, and to graduate from school with the knowledge and skills to make choices about post-secondary education and their careers. This responsibility includes all Aboriginal students attending provincial schools.

*Education outcomes* for Aboriginal students enrolled in B.C.'s school system have been historically poor when compared to outcomes for non-Aboriginal students. There are persistent gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, including:

- ◆ lower scores in provincial assessments for reading, writing and numeracy
- ◆ higher rates of special needs designations
- ◆ higher rates of enrolment in alternate education
- ◆ lower graduation rates
- ◆ lower rates of post-secondary enrolment

**First Nations:** including Status and non-Status Indians (as per the *Indian Act*) living both on- and off-reserve. There are 634 First Nations in Canada, speaking more than 50 distinct languages. Approximately 60% of those languages are spoken in B.C., and B.C. has around 200 First Nations. First Nations people are the original inhabitants of the land that is now Canada.

**Métis:** people of mixed European and Indigenous ancestry, and one of the three recognized Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

**Inuit:** an Aboriginal people, the majority of whom inhabit the northern regions of Canada. The Inuit homeland is known as Inuit Nunangat, which refers to the land, water and ice in the Arctic region.

**Education outcomes:** Refers to both academic and social outcomes of the education system. Academic outcomes include student graduation rates, performance on standardized assessments, attendance, incidence of special needs, and participation in secondary school courses that allow access to post-secondary education. Social outcomes include social responsibility, personal development, behaviour, attitudes and work habits.

## BACKGROUND

Through Royal Commission studies and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, governments have recognized the significant role the education system played in the colonization of First Nations people. Residential schools and assimilation policies had, and continue to have, a traumatic impact and contribute to significant socio-economic inequities between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians.

“*Accommodation of Aboriginal culture and identity should be regarded as a core responsibility of public institutions rather than as a special project to be undertaken after other obligations are met. Educational institutions have a pivotal role in transforming the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian society.*”

~ 1986 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

Addressing these inequities requires multiple approaches, and the provision of quality education is key. Formal agreements, and most recently the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, have called for education systems that integrate Aboriginal cultures and languages to support Aboriginal student success. The education system is significant to student success and can reduce the impact of pre-existing socio-economic factors, such as poverty.

## PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT FOCUS TO CLOSE THE GAPS

The provincial government has publicly acknowledged that the gaps in education outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students are unacceptable, and has committed, on several occasions, to work with Aboriginal stakeholders to close the gaps ([see Exhibit 1](#)). To close the gaps means to achieve education outcomes for Aboriginal students that are the same as outcomes for non-Aboriginal students. This language does not imply any failure by Aboriginal students, but rather, a failure of the education system to meet their needs.

“*If we subscribe to a belief that socio-economic status limits the ability of learners, you start from a deficit position. The first thing we have to start with is our role as educators. At the top of the list of factors of effectiveness is teacher quality, educator effectiveness. Way down the list is family background. We can't use excuses. It's important to accept our role.*”

~ Superintendent

**The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)** was one element of the federal government's agreement to address the damage inflicted by its Indian Residential School system. The TRC was intended to contribute to truth, healing and reconciliation for all those affected, including former Indian Residential School students, the people and institutions involved in running the schools, and ultimately, all the people of Canada. It ran from 2008 - 2015, and resulted in several reports with 94 calls to action.

## BACKGROUND

**Exhibit 1:** Key provincial government commitments to close the gaps in education outcomes

1999	The provincial government publicly acknowledges that Aboriginal students are not experiencing school success in B.C., and signs a <b>Memorandum of Understanding</b> with First Nations leaders and public education partners to improve the situation.
2005	The provincial government signs the <b>Transformative Change Accord</b> with First Nations and the federal government, and commits to working collaboratively with First Nations to close the social and economic gaps between First Nations and other British Columbians over the next 10 years. This includes an explicit commitment to close the gaps in education.
2005	The provincial government, Aboriginal people, and communities throughout the province establish a vision for a new government-to-government relationship based on respect, recognition and accommodation of Aboriginal title and rights. The <b>New Relationship Vision Statement</b> includes the goal to eliminate the gap in standards of living with other British Columbians in education and other areas.
2005	The provincial government and the British Columbia Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners Group commit to work collaboratively to improve post-secondary participation and success rates for Aboriginal students. In response, the Ministry of Advanced Education develops an <b>Aboriginal post-secondary education and training strategy</b> (2007-2010), and a <b>policy framework and action plan</b> (2012). Goal 4 of the action plan is that Aboriginal students transition seamlessly from K-12 to post-secondary education.
2006	The provincial government and the Métis Nation of B.C. establish a <b>Métis Nation Relationship Accord</b> intended to close the gaps in quality of life, including education, between Métis people and other British Columbians.
2012	The provincial government, First Nations and federal government sign the <b>Tripartite Education Framework Agreement</b> , which re-states the provincial government's commitment to close the gaps in education outcomes between First Nation and other students.

## ACCOUNTABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

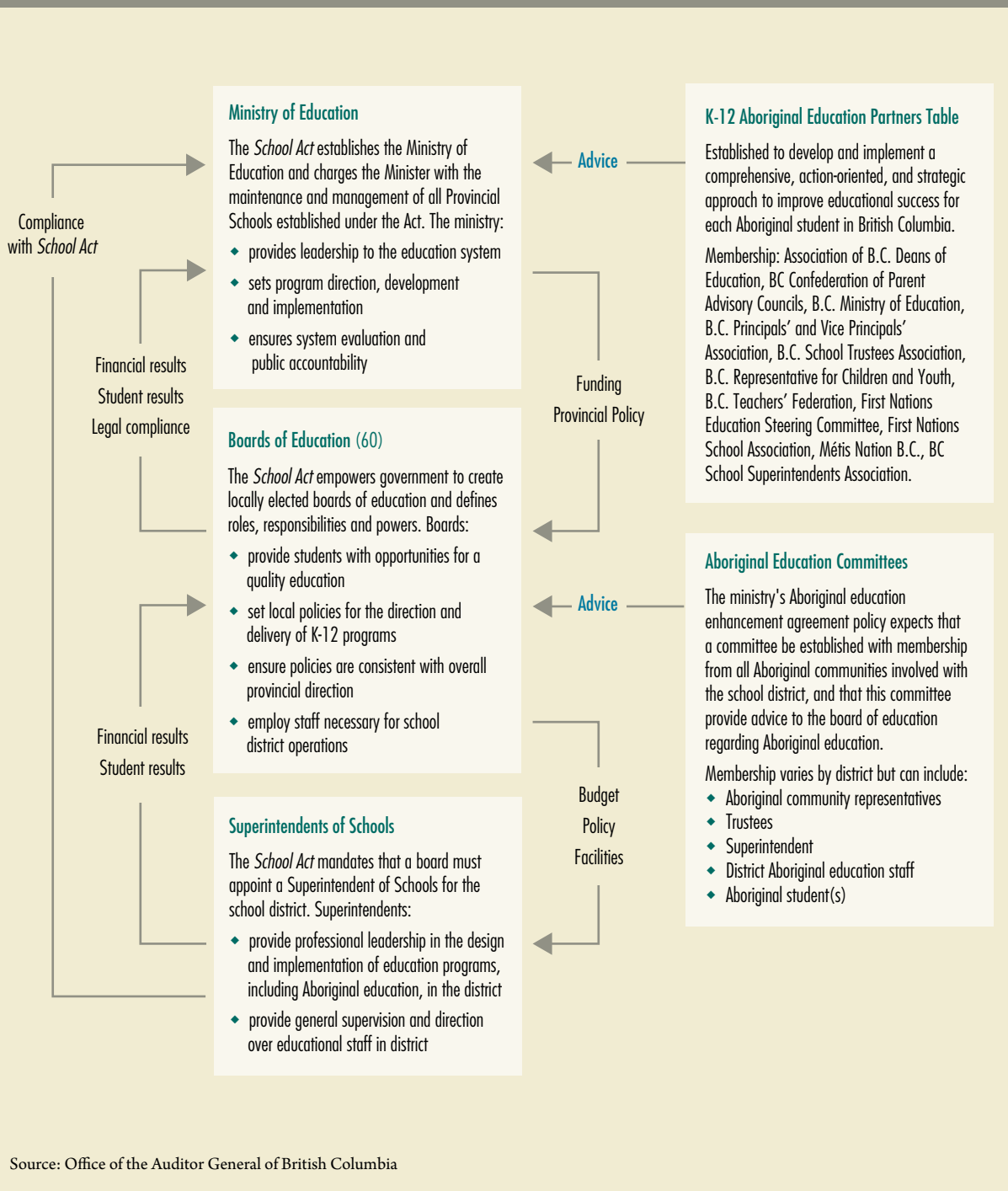
The Ministry of Education (ministry) has responsibility for public and independent schools in B.C., and has committed to share expertise and learning resources with federally-funded First Nations' schools as well. For the public school system, the *School Act* and the *Statement of Education Policy Order* set the mandate and legislative framework for the delivery of education to Aboriginal students. This framework defines the duties, rights and

responsibilities for all key partners in education – from students to the ministry.

The public education system is co-governed by the ministry and locally elected boards of education (boards). In 2014, a Co-Governance Relationship Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the ministry and boards (as represented by the B.C. School Trustees Association), to define their working relationship. Both parties recognize their individual and shared accountabilities, at the same time as the ministry's right to determine public education policy for the province ([see Exhibit 2](#)).

# BACKGROUND

**Exhibit 2:** Structure of the B.C. public education system, including Aboriginal education



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

## BACKGROUND

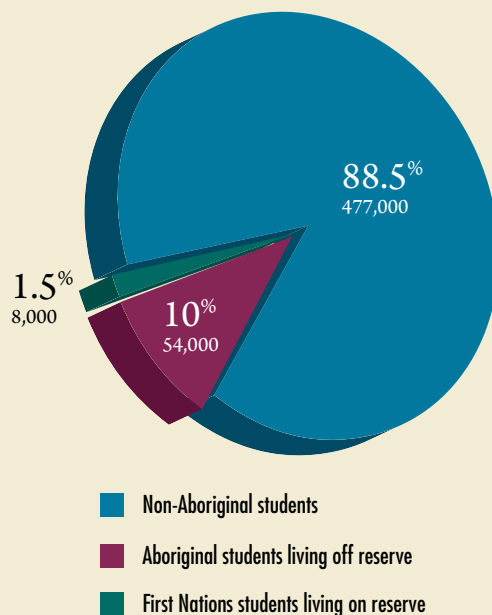
In the 2012 Tripartite Education Framework Agreement, the ministry, First Nations (as represented by the First Nations Education Steering Committee), and the federal government, formally agreed to a collaborative partnership on education initiatives. The First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) is an independent society that advocates for First Nations' education interests in B.C. Its board is comprised of 105 First Nations community representatives. The Agreement included a commitment for the ministry to consult with FNESC about proposed changes to provincial education policy.

## ABORIGINAL STUDENTS AND EDUCATION FUNDING

In 2014/15, 72,000 Aboriginal students were enrolled in B.C. schools: 62,000 in the public school system and 10,000 in provincial independent schools and band-operated schools.

The province is responsible for funding education programs for all students with one exception: under the federal *Indian Act*, the federal government is responsible for funding education for Status First Nations students living on reserve. In 2014/15, there were 15,000 First Nations students living on reserve in British Columbia: 8,000 attended public schools and 7,000 attended provincial independent schools or band-operated schools.

Exhibit 3: Students in B.C. public schools, 2014/15



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia based on Ministry of Education data

As shown in Exhibit 3, total enrolment in public schools for 2014/15 was 539,000, with 62,000 Aboriginal and 477,000 non-Aboriginal students. Aboriginal students, including Status First Nations students living on reserve who attend public schools, represent 11.5% of public school enrolment.

Each year, the province determines grant funding for public education, and uses student enrolment data and a funding formula to allocate these funds to boards. The funding formula is an allocation model and not a spending model. Boards are responsible for managing and dedicating funding based on local priorities.

## BACKGROUND

In 2014/15, the province provided boards with \$4.725 billion in operating grants. More than \$500 million was based on Aboriginal student enrollment and included \$64.6 million in targeted funding to develop and deliver Aboriginal education programs and services to Aboriginal students. All Aboriginal students, including First Nations students living on reserve, qualify for provincial targeted funding.

Federal education funding for Status First Nations students attending public schools goes to the First Nation, who then pays the board, when there is a local education agreement between the First Nation and the board. In 2014/15, boards received \$59.9 million in federal funding under local education agreements. When there is no local education agreement between a First Nation and a board, the ministry advances education funding for Status First Nations students to boards as part of their grant allocation, and the federal government reimburses the province. In 2014/15, that amount was approximately \$30 million.

Aboriginal students regularly move between schools and between school systems, which adds to the complexity of funding arrangements. The majority of First Nations students living on reserve will attend a public school at some point in their school career. In addition, almost 1,200 students eligible for a provincially funded education chose to attend a band-operated school in 2014/15. Under a reciprocal tuition agreement, the province provided approximately \$14 million to First Nations for education programs delivered to these students attending band-operated schools.

## RECENT CHANGES TO LEGISLATION AND POLICY

In 2015, as we were carrying out our audit, the ministry introduced two changes that will likely impact the framework within which policies, programs and initiatives relevant to Aboriginal students are delivered. Specifically, the ministry:

1. Is replacing the 2002 public school Accountability Framework with the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning. The ministry acknowledged that previous accountability efforts had become compliance exercises, where districts submitted multiple annual reports to the ministry, instead of concentrating efforts on system-wide improvements to student learning. Aboriginal students' learning and outcomes are intended to be a specific focus of this new framework.
2. Introduced Bill 11 – Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2015, which amends the *Independent School Act*, *School Act*, and *Teachers Act*. Several of the amendments made to the *School Act* correspond with the new Framework for Enhancing Student Learning, including: repealing the role of Superintendents of Achievement, reducing the number of reporting requirements, and strengthening the ability of the Minister of Education to carry out administrative directives.

# AUDIT OBJECTIVE

**WE CONDUCTED THIS** audit to determine whether the Ministry of Education (the ministry) had exercised its duties and powers to meet government's public commitment in the Transformative Change Accord to close the gaps in education outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students by 2015. Specifically, we expected that the ministry, as per its mandate, had:

- ◆ provided leadership and direction to the public school system to close the gaps
- ◆ monitored and analyzed outcomes and trends to inform strategies to close the gaps
- ◆ reported publicly on outcomes and the effectiveness of its strategies to close the gaps

We developed our objective and criteria for this audit based on:

- ◆ the *School Act* and the *Statement of Education Policy Order*
- ◆ the 1999 Memorandum of Understanding
- ◆ the 2005 Transformative Change Accord
- ◆ the 2012 Tripartite Education Framework Agreement
- ◆ discussions with ministry staff and key stakeholders
- ◆ advice received from five subject matter experts who have held a range of senior positions in First Nations organizations, the Ministry of Education and school districts
- ◆ good practices in public sector governance and results management

# AUDIT CONCLUSION

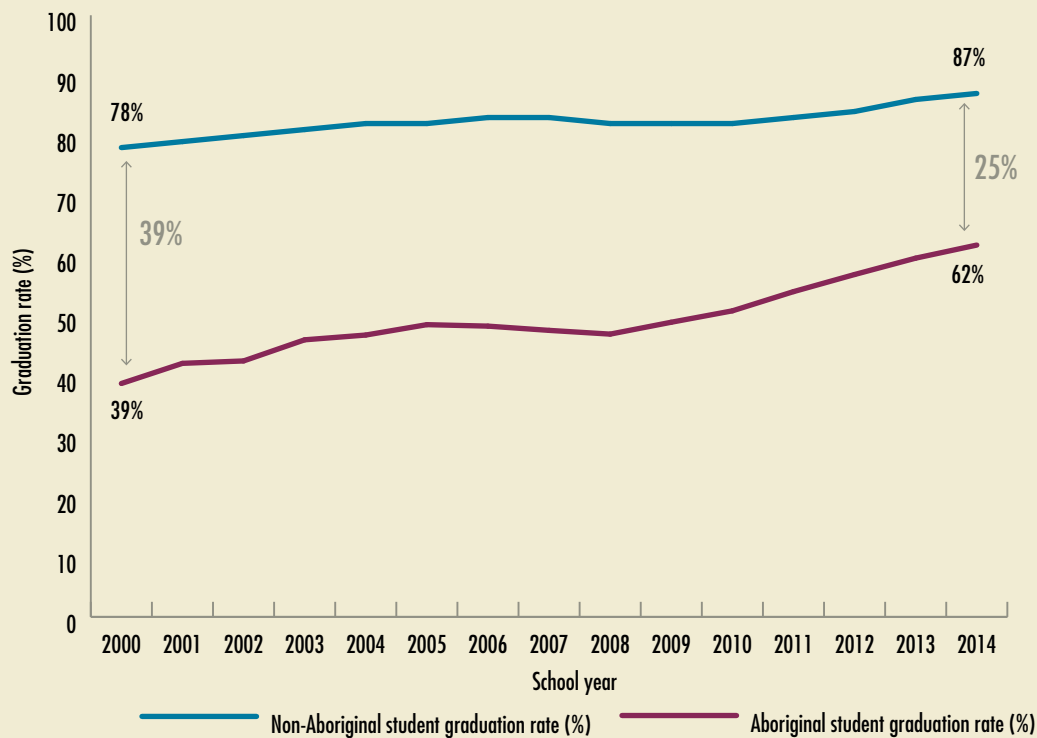
**EDUCATION OUTCOMES FOR** Aboriginal students improved between 2000 and 2014, and the gaps are narrowing province-wide. Exhibit 4 presents the improvement in the provincial graduation rate for Aboriginal students during those 15 years: an increase from 39% in 2000 to 62% in 2014.

However, there continue to be persistent and significant gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in many districts and for certain groups of students, including First Nations students who live on a reserve.

We found that, despite their long-term goal to close the gaps by 2015, the ministry had not fully exercised its duties and powers to close the gaps for Aboriginal students. Specifically, the ministry:

- ◆ had not provided the education system with sufficient leadership and direction to close the gaps
- ◆ had undertaken limited analysis of the wide range of student outcome data it monitored, to understand trends and outcomes for Aboriginal students and inform change
- ◆ had reported on outcomes but not what was effective in closing the gaps

**Exhibit 4:** Provincial graduation rate\* trends for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, 2000-2014



\* The graduation rate is measured as the percent of first time Grade 8 students who receive a certificate of graduation within 6 years.

Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia based on Ministry of Education data.

# AUDIT SCOPE

**WE CARRIED OUT** our audit work between February 2014 and May 2015, and we substantially completed the work on September 3, 2015. Our work involved:

- ◆ reviewing agreements, legislation, policies and other documents
- ◆ conducting interviews with ministry staff, representatives of education partner groups and individuals involved in Aboriginal education
- ◆ analyzing ministry data on education outcomes and targeted funding from 1999 to 2014
- ◆ reviewing studies related to Aboriginal education in B.C., Canada and other jurisdictions. [See Appendix B](#)
- ◆ visiting four diverse school districts (Vancouver, Prince George, Fort Nelson and Vancouver Island North) where we met with district staff, representatives of local Aboriginal communities, and board trustees, to see how ministry policies for Aboriginal education operate in the public K-12 system

The role of provincial independent schools and First Nations band-operated schools in educating Aboriginal students was excluded from our audit scope.

We analyzed Ministry of Education student achievement data, along with factors such as socio-economic vulnerability, number and proportion of Aboriginal students, funding, and geographic characteristics to determine which four school districts to visit. [Appendix A](#) explains the statistical analysis we carried out and how we applied the results.

We conducted the audit in accordance with the standards for assurance engagements set out by the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada (CPA) in the CPA Handbook – Assurance and Value-for-Money Auditing in the Public Sector, Section PS 5400, and under the authority of Section 11 (8) of the *Auditor General Act*.

## SUBSEQUENT EVENTS

Between June and September 2015, subsequent to our main fieldwork, the ministry announced several initiatives that relate to supporting Aboriginal students. We have not audited these initiatives and therefore can offer no audit opinion on them. However, they are important to acknowledge as they reflect the ministry's ongoing work with boards and Aboriginal partners to improve outcomes for Aboriginal students. They are also consistent with our recommendations. Recent announcements have included:

- ◆ revisions to the provincial K-12 curriculum to address the history and legacy of residential schools
- ◆ signing a protocol with the First Nations Education Steering Committee to guide further collaboration on improving education outcomes for B.C.'s Aboriginal students
- ◆ establishing a non-instructional day for teachers to learn more about supporting Aboriginal learners and integrating Aboriginal content in the classroom

# KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## LEADERSHIP AND DIRECTION

In the 2005 Transformative Change Accord, the Ministry of Education (ministry) made a public commitment to close the gaps in education outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students by 2015. We examined whether the ministry had provided leadership and direction to the public school system to meet this commitment. Specifically, we expected that the ministry had:

- ◆ established a system-wide strategy, jointly with boards, and Aboriginal leaders and communities, with clear accountabilities for closing the gaps
- ◆ evaluated the effectiveness of its policies to close the gaps
- ◆ ensured learning environments were safe, supportive and culturally relevant

We found that ministry policies for Aboriginal education did not change in response to this 2005 commitment. Despite ministry and board intentions to improve Aboriginal student results, the ministry did not work with boards, superintendents, and Aboriginal leaders and communities to develop a shared, system-wide strategy to close the gaps with distinct responsibilities and accountabilities for the ministry and boards, and specific actions, targets and timelines. Further, the ministry did not evaluate existing policies for Aboriginal education to understand their effectiveness in closing the gaps.

The ministry's enhancement agreement policy continued after 2005 to encourage on-going collaboration between boards and Aboriginal

communities to set local goals to support Aboriginal student outcomes. However, there was no requirement that these local goals align with the ministry commitment to close the gaps in education outcomes by 2015. The ministry has also led initiatives to contribute to safe, supportive and culturally relevant learning environments. However, we found that more can be done.

In the absence of clear direction and a focused and coordinated system-wide effort to close the gaps, the system risks failing many Aboriginal students by not closing the gaps as rapidly as possible across all districts. This is particularly the case for First Nations students living on reserve, whose results have been persistently lower than results for other Aboriginal students, although they have improved more rapidly in recent years.

### No shared system-wide strategy

We found that the ministry had not engaged boards, Aboriginal leaders and communities, and other education partners to develop a shared system-wide strategy for Aboriginal education, with goals and

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

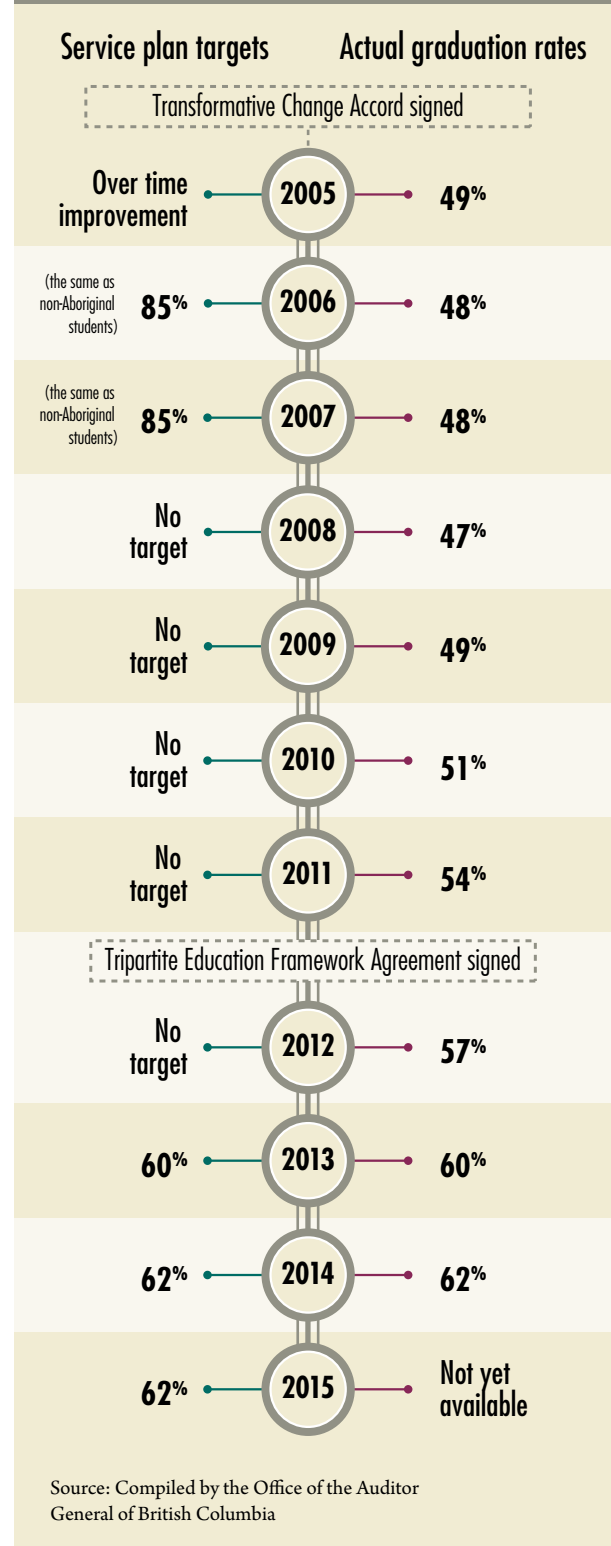
targets focused on closing the gaps. The ministry did set graduation rate targets between 2005 and 2014, but in the absence of a clear strategy, its approach to setting targets for Aboriginal students was inconsistent.

As presented in Exhibit 5, provincial targets for Aboriginal student graduation rates have varied significantly since the Transformative Change Accord was signed. In 2006, the year after signing the agreement, the ministry set a target for Aboriginal student graduation of 85% by 2015. This target reflected an expectation of reaching parity with non-Aboriginal students by 2015. In 2008, this 2015 target was dropped. Recent ministry targets have been 1% improvement each year. At the same time, the ministry shifted its focus from “closing the gaps” to “improving Aboriginal student success.” The vagueness of this target makes it more difficult for the ministry to measure results and determine whether strategies need to change.

The ministry expected boards to set local goals and targets for Aboriginal student achievement in their annual district achievement contracts, but did not require these goals to focus on closing the gaps. For 2013/14, we found that 21 of 60 boards had not complied with this requirement to set local goals for Aboriginal education.

We also found that the linkage between provincial targets, district achievement contracts and school plans was inconsistent and limited, accountabilities were unclear, and the ministry did not take action when results were poor.

**Exhibit 5:** Timeline of provincial service plan targets for Aboriginal student graduation by 2015



# KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## SETTING TARGETS

Since the mid-2000s, the Fort Nelson School District has had a target to close the achievement gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students for each of the goals in its district achievement contract. Between 2008/09 and 2013/14, the Aboriginal student graduation rate increased from 55% to 100%. In 2013/14 the graduation rate for Aboriginal students was 2% higher than that of non-Aboriginal students. Our data analysis confirmed that the district's results were consistently better than expected, given its characteristics as a small, remote school district with a significant proportion of Aboriginal students.

## Unclear accountability for Aboriginal student achievement

We found that the ministry had not set clear and distinct accountabilities to close the gaps. In the ministry's governance model, responsibility and accountability for student achievement are shared between the ministry and boards: the ministry is responsible for the system and each board is responsible for their district. The complexity of this shared accountability, compounded by the lack of a system-wide plan, resulted in neither party taking clear responsibility for closing the gaps in education outcomes for Aboriginal students.

## ACCOUNTABILITY FOR TRANSPORTATION FOR FIRST NATIONS STUDENTS

In our interviews with district staff and Aboriginal communities, the issue of transportation for First Nations students often came up as an area where accountability was complex. Responsibility for providing transportation to and from school for on-reserve students is negotiated between each First Nation and the local board. Transportation for First Nations students living on reserve was identified as a challenge in the majority of the nine school districts we spoke with. The ministry also informed us of several situations in the province where responsibility for transportation was an issue of significant concern between First Nations communities and school districts.

Students in remote areas, as is the case for many First Nations reserves, have long commutes for schooling, are not able to participate in extra-curricular activities, or most challenging, have to leave their rural homes to go to school in an urban area. The following example highlights how a lack of clarity in responsibility and accountability within the system has the potential to leave students without adequate access to schooling.

*In an isolated First Nation community, there are four education options for the children: a public school in the catchment district, a public school in a neighbouring*

*district, a band-operated school, and home schooling.*

*Other than home schooling, all options require the children to travel a significant distance. For a number of years, the community chose to send the children to school in the neighbouring district. They had to travel at least an hour and a half each way to school with considerable challenges, such as poor roads, winter conditions and limited access to fuel.*

*When the bus, which was owned and operated by the First Nation community, could no longer run, the students could not get to school.*

*The superintendent chose to send a teacher into the community on a weekly basis. But given that this area is outside of district boundaries, the ministry's funding model does not provide funding to establish a remote school, and therefore a remote school was not a viable option. It is unclear who is accountable for these students getting access to school: the ministry, the district where the students had been attending school, the district where the students reside, or the First Nation (that relies on funding from the federal government). Complex accountabilities should not impact student access to education.*

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Lack of action to address low Aboriginal student achievement

Although the provincial graduation rate for Aboriginal students increased over 15 years, the graduation rate for many districts continues to be below the provincial average of 62%. [Exhibit 6](#) illustrates the gap between graduation rates for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, by school district, for 2000 and 2013, and the positive trend between those years.

If there is no gap between outcomes for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students (i.e., the graduation rate is the same) the district would plot its point on the equity line. If all points on the charts were at the top right corner, it would mean that 100% of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students had graduated.

Overall, the charts highlight improvement over time, with the cluster of points moving toward the top right corner and toward the equity line. More Aboriginal students graduated in 2013 than in 2000, and their graduation rates more closely matched those of non-Aboriginal students.

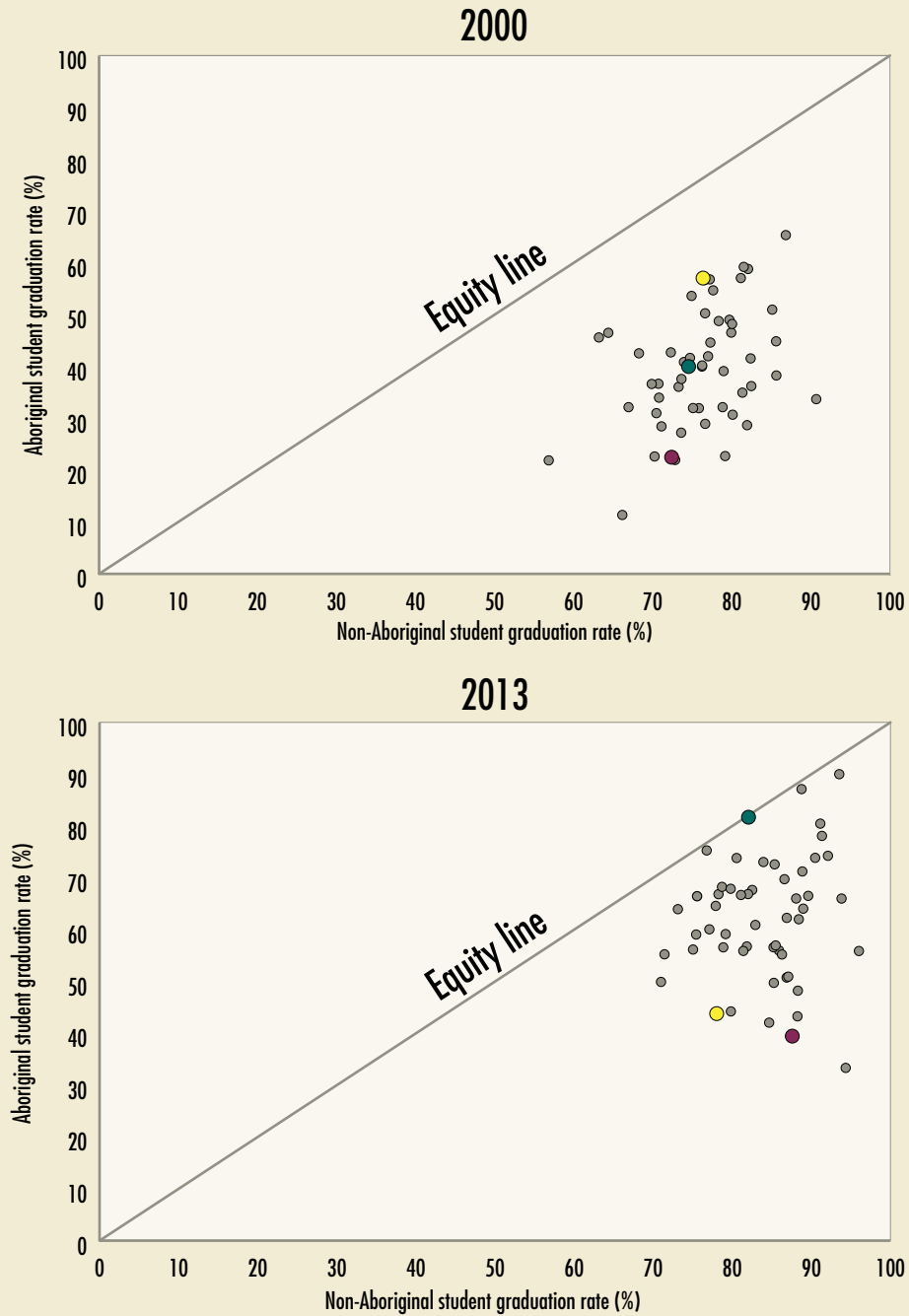
However, this progress was not consistent across all districts. For example:

- ◆ green point: this school district has effectively eliminated the gap, with a graduation rate of over 80% for all students in 2013
- ◆ red point: this school district has experienced a persistent gap in its graduation rates for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students
- ◆ yellow point: this school district has seen the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students increase between 2000 and 2013

The school districts highlighted in [Exhibit 6](#) were selected for illustrative purposes. They are not the school districts that we visited during the audit.

# KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Exhibit 6:** Graduation rates for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, 2000 and 2013



*Note: Only districts with 10 or more Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students expected to graduate are included in the graphs.*

Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia based on Ministry of Education data

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We found that the ministry had not used the full extent of its legislated powers to take actions to address poor Aboriginal student achievement, even in districts where achievement had been persistently low.

The *School Act* enabled the ministry to appoint Superintendents of Achievement. Between 2007 and 2014, senior educators – usually school district administrators – were seconded to the ministry to fill this role. Superintendents of Achievement had the power to make recommendations to improve outcomes. However, we found no examples of Superintendents of Achievement directing districts to improve their Aboriginal student results. In 2015, the *Act* was changed to eliminate the position of Superintendent of Achievement.

The *Act* also enabled the ministry to appoint a Superintendent of Aboriginal Achievement, which it did, in 2012. However, we did not see evidence that the ministry gave the position the opportunity to exercise its authority to require action when school districts had poor results for Aboriginal student achievement. This position became vacant in July 2014, and was later eliminated as part of the legislative changes in 2015.

In addition to the role of Superintendents of Achievement, the ministry had the legal authority to appoint a special advisor, issue administrative directives or replace the board of trustees with a ministry appointee to address lower than expected student achievement. These legal tools were also available to address concerns with board financial performance. While we noted many examples of the ministry appointing a special advisor to address poor financial results, there was only one instance between

1999 and 2014 where a special advisor was appointed to address problems with student achievement.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** *We recommend that the Ministry of Education collaborate with boards of education, superintendents, and Aboriginal leaders and communities to develop a shared, system-wide strategy with accountabilities to close the gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student outcomes.*

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** *We recommend that the Ministry of Education provide support to boards of education and superintendents to ensure they have the capacity to achieve results.*

**RECOMMENDATION 3:** *We recommend that the Ministry of Education take action when school districts have not achieved expected results for Aboriginal students.*

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### EFFECTIVENESS OF MINISTRY POLICIES

The ministry has implemented two policies focused specifically on Aboriginal education: *targeted funding* and *enhancement agreements*. We expected that the ministry would evaluate and, if necessary, change these policies to help close the gaps in education outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

We found that the ministry had not evaluated the effectiveness of targeted funding or enhancement agreements.

#### Targeted Aboriginal education funding

The provincial government introduced targeted Aboriginal education funding in 1993 for boards to provide culturally appropriate programs and services to support the success of Aboriginal students. The model provides funding to boards based on the number of Aboriginal students in their district each year. For the 2015/16 school year, targeted funding increased from \$1,160 to \$1,195 per student. Boards must provide a targeted program or service to each student they claim for funding. However, students or their families can choose not to receive these services, in which case the board cannot claim them for funding.

We found that the ministry had not evaluated either the relationship between the use of targeted funding and outcomes for Aboriginal students, or the effectiveness of its funding model. The ministry did monitor enrolment, eligibility for funding, and compliance with spending policy, but not

whether Aboriginal students had benefitted from improved education opportunities. After 2005, when government made its commitment to close the gaps by 2015, the ministry made no change to its targeted funding policy.

An evaluation of the effectiveness of targeted funding as a policy to close the gaps for all Aboriginal students is important to inform future funding policy decisions.

#### TARGETED FUNDING

B.C. was the first jurisdiction in Canada to provide targeted funding based on the number of Aboriginal students enrolled in the school district. A number of other jurisdictions in Canada have since followed suit.

#### Aboriginal education enhancement agreements

The ministry's Aboriginal education enhancement agreement policy was introduced as a strategy to develop collaborative partnerships between boards and local Aboriginal communities. Enhancement agreements (EAs) are five-year plans focused on improving Aboriginal student outcomes. The first EA was signed in the Kamloops/Thompson school district in 1999.

#### EVALUATING PROGRAMS

To identify areas of strength and growth opportunities, the Vancouver Island North School District hired a consultant to use the goals of its enhancement agreement as a framework to review the programs it was providing to Aboriginal students through targeted and district funding.

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The ministry's expectation of boards was that they develop an EA, establish an Aboriginal Education committee, and involve Aboriginal communities in the implementation of their EA. However, the ministry did not clearly define or monitor its expectations for what successful district collaboration with Aboriginal communities should be. Not surprisingly, practices varied across the province, with some Aboriginal communities more engaged in planning and decision making than others. For example, there was no expectation that boards involve Aboriginal communities in discussions on how district resources would be used to meet the goals of the EA.

Although the establishment of an EA is voluntary, we found that 56 of 60 districts had finalized at least one EA over the last 15 years. We did note that, as of January 2015, half of these EAs were out-of-date. However, the ministry informed us that they continued to support these districts to develop their next EA.

Without an EA, there is no other formal ministry strategy to facilitate district collaboration with Aboriginal communities on priorities for Aboriginal students. In addition, a third of districts did not have an Aboriginal Education committee in place.

“*There is slow progress from the schools becoming more involved with our community and being open to our input. We are right here and we can offer so much to the process. We want to play a huge part caring and supporting students as much as possible.*”

~ First Nation community member

The ministry did not have information identifying which district practices had been most effective, or how effective the overall EA policy has been. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the EA policy would inform improvements to both the policy and guidance, and identify successful practices that can be shared with all districts.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:** *We recommend that the Ministry of Education evaluate the effectiveness of targeted funding and enhancement agreements as strategies to close the gaps in education outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, and use the results to improve its policies to better support Aboriginal student outcomes.*

## ENSURING SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Welcoming and supportive learning environments are key elements of student success. The importance of high quality learning environments and culturally appropriate curriculum for Aboriginal students has been noted in government studies and agreements, including the Transformative Change Accord.

Many Aboriginal students within the public school system have reported feeling ostracized, marginalized and misjudged. When students feel accepted and comfortable, and that their culture is reflected in their school environment and curriculum, they are more likely to learn and engage with others in school activities and events.

# KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## CREATING SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The Vancouver Island North School District partnered with the First Nations Education Council and the Gwa-sala-Nakwaxda'xw local First Nation to create an on-going vision for the Eke Me-Xi learning centre. The school is operated by the district and located in a building owned by the First Nation. The learning environment focuses on ensuring students feel welcome, safe and supported, to keep them engaged with learning.

We expected the ministry to have integrated Aboriginal content into the curriculum to improve its cultural relevance to Aboriginal students. We also expected the ministry to set and monitor expectations for boards to actively promote safe, non-racist learning environments for Aboriginal students.

Although progress has been made, we found that there are opportunities to improve the learning environments for Aboriginal students through the development and delivery of culturally appropriate curriculum and continuing efforts to address racism.

## Curriculum

In 2008, the ministry developed several courses with Aboriginal-focused content, in partnership with the First Nations Education Steering Committee. Together, they created BC First Nations Studies 12, and English First Peoples 10, 11 and 12. However, during our district visits, we heard that the ministry needs to do more.

During our district visits and interviews, we learned that:

- ♦ offerings of, and enrolment in, BC First Nations Studies 12 and English First Peoples 10, 11 and 12 had been very limited
- ♦ from the perspective of Aboriginal leaders and communities, the curriculum did not yet sufficiently reflect Aboriginal history, knowledge and culture; in particular, issues regarding residential schools, racism and the *Indian Act*

At the time of this audit, the ministry was working on further integration of Aboriginal content, knowledge and worldviews into its curriculum redesign, and has published new resources for teachers to help bring Aboriginal culture, history and perspectives into the classroom.

We also heard about challenges to delivering a curriculum strong in Aboriginal content. For example, non-Aboriginal teachers may lack the confidence or knowledge to comfortably deliver a curriculum rich in Aboriginal content. Professional development could strengthen teacher confidence. B.C. universities now require teachers-in-training to take a course on Aboriginal education to increase awareness and knowledge. However, there is no mandatory professional development on Aboriginal education for teachers who were trained before that requirement was introduced.

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“*When we have new employees, they sit with elders to understand the role of children in the community, to hear those voices. We need to understand the moral imperative we have as a place of learning; without understanding that we don't stand a chance. The work is not done, it continues.*” ~ Superintendent

Also, there are barriers to hiring the best people to work with Aboriginal students. For example, there are requirements to hire qualified teachers based on seniority rather than on their relevant experience with Aboriginal education. To give Aboriginal candidates preference in hiring, each board needs to apply individually to the Human Rights Tribunal for a human rights exemption, which is inefficient.

Student responses to the province's satisfaction survey reveal the impact of the challenges of integrating Aboriginal content into the curriculum. While a majority of Grade 4 Aboriginal students reported they are being taught about Aboriginal peoples in Canada, fewer than 40% of students in Grades 7, 10 and 12 answered the same. Aboriginal content in provincial curriculum, particularly content that addresses Aboriginal history, is important for all students.

### Non-racist learning environments

We found that the ministry had set policies for safe and non-racist schools, but had not monitored district compliance. All four districts we visited had established policies that complied with ministry requirements. However, we found that these district policies had not been consistently translated into explicit codes of conduct and practices to address racism at a school level. More importantly, district staff were not aware of the extent of racism that the First Nations people we spoke with had experienced.

The ministry has provided *ERASE Bullying* training to all districts since 2012. The training makes clear to boards that they are expected to actively support non-racist learning environments for Aboriginal students, as well as for all other students. However, the effectiveness of this training is unknown, as the only evaluations the trainers had done were focused on participants' satisfaction with the course.

In the education system, racism can take the form of educators having low expectations for students based on preconceptions or biases stemming from social attitudes. This is the concept of the *racism of low expectations*, and we were told about it in our interviews with ministry staff, district staff, and members of Aboriginal communities. In addition to interviews, we observed two outcomes that could be influenced by this kind of racism.

### PROVIDING CULTURAL AWARENESS TRAINING

Several districts we visited have delivered professional development and training for staff to improve cultural awareness. For example, the Prince George School District began delivering cultural awareness training to principals and vice-principals in the fall of 2014. The district plans to offer the training to teachers starting in the fall of 2015. The Vancouver Island North School District holds a mandatory new employee orientation that includes cultural awareness. The session focuses on regional history and the Kwakwaka'wakw story, and is led by First Nations elders.

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For example, Aboriginal students, especially First Nations students living on reserve, were more likely than non-Aboriginal students to be granted a School Completion Certificate, even when these students did not have a *special needs* designation.

A School Completion Certificate is intended to recognize the achievement of a student who completes a modified education program, typically because of a significant special need that leaves them unable to meet the criteria for graduation. It does not give access to post-secondary education and is not the equivalent of a graduation certificate in the job market.

Ministry policy does not prohibit the granting of School Completion Certificates to students without special needs. However, given that the intention of the policy is to recognize students who are unable to meet the criteria for graduation, we would not normally expect to see boards grant School Completion Certificates to students who do not have a special needs designation, or whose special need does not prevent them from working towards graduation. This would indicate that the students had not achieved their full potential.

“*Teachers need to be willing and courageous enough to examine their own biases and expectations of Aboriginal learners. It’s about the students knowing that the teachers they had in grades 1, 2, 5 etc... knew that they would be successful.*” ~ School principal

**Special needs:** The ministry has defined 12 categories of special need. Students with certain special needs normally require a modified program with an individualized education plan that sets out the goals they are working towards. For example, students who are physically dependent and require assistance with feeding, dressing, toileting and mobility might have individualized education plan goals such as learning to feed and dress themselves. Students with other special needs, such as a learning or behaviour disability, would typically still be capable of working towards graduation. Their individualized education plans would describe the adaptations and support they require to address their needs.

Another potential indicator of the racism of low expectations is that Aboriginal students were almost twice as likely as non-Aboriginal students to complete courses that limit their options for entry to post-secondary education. As a result, those students may need to take additional courses to upgrade, should they choose to attend post-secondary institutions, at a cost to themselves and/or their First Nation.

**RECOMMENDATION 5:** *We recommend that the Ministry of Education work with boards of education to ensure School Completion Certificates are only granted to students who require a modified program due to a special need that prevents them from working toward graduation.*

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**RECOMMENDATION 6:** *We recommend that the Ministry of Education collaborate with boards of education, superintendents, and Aboriginal leaders and communities to:*

- *provide all students with a curriculum that addresses the past and present effects of the colonization of Aboriginal people in British Columbia*
- *address obstacles to ensuring safe, non-racist, culturally relevant learning environments through teacher professional development, cultural awareness training, and strategies to hire the best people to work with Aboriginal students*

## MONITORING AND ANALYZING STUDENT OUTCOMES

Monitoring and analyzing student results is important at all levels of the education system, for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. However, monitoring performance is only the first step in evidence-based decision making. Data must be analyzed to show trends, patterns, successes and challenges to inform practice.

We expected to find that the ministry:

- ♦ monitored outcomes for Aboriginal students and ensured that boards assessed and monitored data on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student outcomes
- ♦ analyzed outcomes and trends and used this evidence to inform policy and actions

Overall we found that the ministry had monitored key outcomes for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, but did not have a clear strategy for analyzing trends and outcomes. Also, there is an opportunity to monitor additional indicators and outcomes for groups of students to better understand outcomes and to inform decisions about strategies to support student success.

### Monitoring outcomes for Aboriginal students

We found that the ministry had consistently monitored Aboriginal student results for decades, across a range of key performance indicators, and had shared this data with school districts. Ministry monitoring has included graduation rates, results on provincial assessments and exams, and incidence of special needs.

District staff we spoke with found value in the data because they could track their trends and plan for improvement. However, one common concern regarding data we heard in our interviews was the impact of low participation in provincial assessments on the validity of the data.

We also found that the ministry had not monitored, or required districts to monitor, indicators that can highlight where Aboriginal student achievement has been lowest. Although the overall trend for Aboriginal student graduation had improved at the provincial level, this improvement was not consistent across the system. In 2014, 10 of B.C.'s 60 school districts had Aboriginal graduation rates of less than 50%. For Aboriginal children living in government care, the provincial graduation rate was only 40%.

# KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Gaps in monitoring

As shown in Exhibit 7, education research has highlighted a number of key indicators for Aboriginal student achievement, but ministry monitoring of these indicators has been limited.

Exhibit 7: Key indicators relevant to Aboriginal student achievement	
Key indicator	Ministry monitoring practice
Readiness to learn in kindergarten	There is no ministry requirement for districts to assess student readiness to learn when they first enter school or to carry out any assessments of student skills in primary grades. We found that district practices for early assessment varied, and the first assessment of student achievement required by the ministry happens when students are in Grade 4.
Education outcome trends of on-reserve First Nations students attending public schools	Students living on reserve have consistently experienced lower success in the provincial school system, although their graduation rate has improved more rapidly in recent years than other Aboriginal students (see <a href="#">Exhibit 8</a> ). This gap is more significant for boys. The ministry has this data but had not highlighted this trend for district attention.
Student movement patterns between schools, districts and school systems (not including normal transitions from elementary to middle and secondary school)	There has been no provincial tracking of students who leave public schools and no requirement for districts to track or report drop-out rates. Students may have gone to a different school system, a different province, or dropped out of education altogether.  The ministry assigns a provincial education number to students in public and independent schools, but not to students in all band-operated schools. The province and First Nations are working towards the consistent use of provincial education numbers across all school systems. This will ensure better information on where students are, whether they are attending school, and support tracking of student outcomes.
Patterns of student self-identification as Aboriginal within the school system	In any one year, an average of more than 10% of Aboriginal students attending public schools have chosen not to self-identify, and therefore are not eligible for enhanced services. The ministry has not done analysis to understand why students have chosen to self-identify and receive Aboriginal education services in one school or district and not in another, or in one year, but not the next.
Student attendance	Research shows that regular absence from school creates a barrier to academic success. Each board monitors and reports attendance to parents, as per board policy. There is no required reporting to the ministry, and there is no provincial monitoring. Attendance has been a persistent problem for many First Nations students, often affected by limited transportation.

Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There have been pockets of students whose results have been persistently poor. Better provincial and district monitoring of additional indicators, such as the ones presented above, could help identify, understand and address the needs of these students. It would encourage districts to:

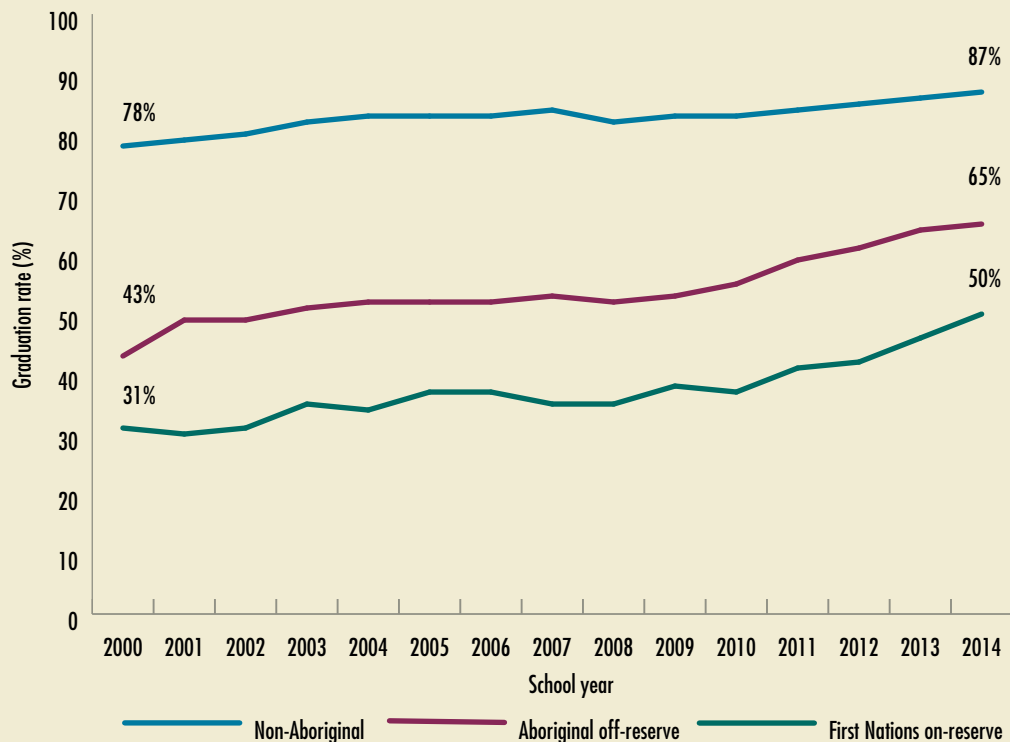
- ◆ intervene earlier to meet student needs
- ◆ focus more attention on Aboriginal students who most need support
- ◆ develop better informed strategies
- ◆ use data to evaluate the effectiveness of ministry and board initiatives

### Participation in provincial assessments

The Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) is an annual, province-wide assessment that shows how well Grades 4 and 7 students have learned foundation skills in reading comprehension, writing and numeracy.

These annual assessments are intended to provide the ministry and districts with a point-in-time measure of achievement, a view of trends over time, and a comparison of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student results. The assessments can also provide districts with an opportunity to compare their trends to those of other districts. The ministry has identified Aboriginal

**Exhibit 8:** Graduation rates in B.C. public schools, 2000 - 2014



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia, based on Ministry of Education data.

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

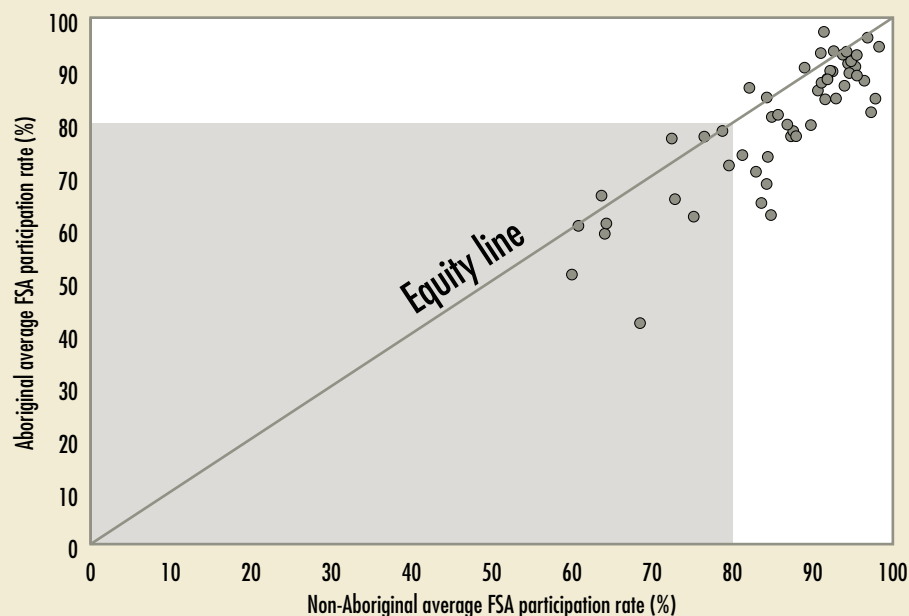
student participation in the FSA as a strong predictor of graduation, likely because it ensures schools pay attention to individual student progress.

However, the value of these assessments is undermined when a high proportion of students do not participate. According to ministry staff, only 5% of students would have a legitimate reason not to participate in the FSA. They also noted that participation should be 80% or higher for the results to be useful and reliable for educators. The ministry's FSA participation data shows that a number of school districts have participation rates of less than 80% for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

We found that participation in the FSA varied between districts, with a persistent gap between the rates at which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students participated. We also found that the ministry had not taken action when student participation in the FSA was low.

Exhibit 9 presents FSA participation rates for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students for 2013. Most districts were below the equity line, indicating that non-participation was more of an issue for Aboriginal students.

**Exhibit 9:** District participation rates in the 2013 FSA, averaged across Grades 4 and 7 reading and numeracy assessments



The results for districts inside the grey rectangle may be invalid due to low participation

Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia based on Ministry of Education data

# KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## ASSESSING STUDENT PROGRESS

The Fort Nelson School District set strong expectations that all students would write the Foundation Skills Assessments, in addition to district-wide assessments of literacy and numeracy skills at the beginning and end of each year. This has ensured they have good information to plan student learning. The district has achieved participation rates of between 83% - 95% in the FSAs for last two years. The Prince George School District has also achieved high rates of participation in the FSAs in recent years, between 90% - 100% for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

**RECOMMENDATION 7:** *We recommend that the Ministry of Education collaborate with boards of education, superintendents, and Aboriginal leaders and communities to define and implement standardized monitoring and assessment of key indicators of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students' progress at key stages throughout their school career.*

## Analyzing data to understand outcomes

We found that the ministry did not have a clear and consistent strategy for using available data to analyze trends and outcomes for Aboriginal students. However, we did find examples of good data analysis.

For example, when the *How Are We Doing?* report was first published in 1999, it included results of

the ministry's analysis of outcome data. The report explained the data on Aboriginal student outcomes and identified what needed to improve. Over time, this analysis decreased and by 2007, the ministry no longer provided an interpretation of the data. This report is a useful monitoring tool, but would be strengthened with analysis and reporting of trends, patterns, successes and challenges.

Researchers and practitioners have identified a number of other significant factors correlated with student success, which should be analyzed to better understand results, including:

- ◆ peer effects
- ◆ special needs
- ◆ socio-economic variables
- ◆ culturally responsive programs and services

We found that the ministry had not analyzed these factors. Better evidence about these factors, based on rigorous evaluation of the impact of different approaches and programs on student outcomes, would be valuable to inform the ministry's policy decisions. Better-informed policy decisions could lead to better outcomes for students and a more efficient and effective education system.

More recently, the ministry created a tool to help districts identify when to intervene with students who are at risk of not graduating. The ministry's analysis showed a strong correlation between participating in the Foundation Skills Assessment for Reading in Grade 4, writing the English 10 exam on time, and graduating from secondary school within six years

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

of entering Grade 8. Although this tool has not been rolled out to all school districts, many districts have been working with the ministry over the last two years, individually or in cohorts, to apply this analysis.

### District capacity to analyze data

We also found that districts varied in their capacity to collect, analyze, understand and use performance data for evidence-based planning and decision making. We heard from superintendents that there were not enough opportunities to share good practices with other districts. Ministry staff also told us that they had fewer opportunities to share with other staff across the ministry the information they gathered on district progress, or to plan collaboratively. There is opportunity for the ministry to take a leadership role in supporting district data collection and analysis practices.

Experts highlight the importance of involving Aboriginal communities and organizations in discussions about data. Aboriginal communities have knowledge of local conditions that affect learning, and have their own priorities for Aboriginal learners. They can improve the quality of data on self-identification, and contribute to evaluation.

Three of the four districts we visited had discussed data with local Aboriginal communities – typically through their Aboriginal Education committees. However, there was room for further improvement, as we heard from several Aboriginal communities and provincial stakeholders that they would like more information than they had been receiving.

For example, a number of First Nations communities would find it useful to have results for their students to better tailor their own support to student needs. The ministry has sought ways of sharing and reporting data that respect the principles of First Nations ownership of data ([OCAP principles](#)), or locally agreed-upon terms, and also protect personal information.

### USING DATA FOR DECISION MAKING

In the Fort Nelson School District, teachers use both provincial and district-wide assessment information to plan their work with students. Administrators use the information to allocate resources to classrooms and students. The district has implemented a low-cost literacy program which is provided to any student whose reading is below the level expected for their grade. For non-Aboriginal students, this intervention ends when students are reading at grade level.

For Aboriginal students, the district provides the literacy intervention more regularly and keeps it going until the student is reading at a grade level higher than expected.

### SHARING DATA WITH ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

The enhancement agreement between the Kamloops/Thompson School District and its local Aboriginal communities lays out what indicators they will monitor, what their targets are, and what data they will use to measure success. The strength of this approach is that the partnership gives the First Nations Education Council the ability and power to decide what aspects of performance are important, and use the data to inform their decision making.

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**RECOMMENDATION 8:** *We recommend that the Ministry of Education establish responsibility within the ministry for developing a systematic approach to data analysis on Aboriginal student achievement.*

**RECOMMENDATION 9:** *We recommend that the Ministry of Education use the evidence from its data analysis to inform decision making and clarify its expectations of boards of education.*

**RECOMMENDATION 10:** *We recommend that the Ministry of Education support superintendents in their work with boards of education, staff, Aboriginal leaders and communities, and other districts to develop capacity to use data and evidence to plan for Aboriginal student achievement.*

Overall, we found that the ministry had reported on student results for over 15 years, but not on system effectiveness to close the gaps. In addition, the ministry had not ensured that boards were meeting ministry expectations for public reporting.

### Ministry public reporting

The content of the ministry's *How Are We Doing?* report changed over time, but it consistently included key performance indicators, such as graduation rates, and provincial assessment and exam results.

In the mid-2000s, in response to stakeholder recommendations, the ministry reported additional information, including results for children in care and numbers of School Completion Certificates provided to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. However, during that time, the ministry dropped other elements of data it reported – most significantly, the comparison of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students outcomes, by district. The ministry did not have historic information to explain why the reporting had changed.

The ministry published performance data annually, but because of its limited analysis and evaluation of results, it had not reported on the effectiveness of its strategies to close the gaps in education outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. In addition, we found that there was an opportunity for the ministry and districts to share more information on Aboriginal student results with local education stakeholders and Aboriginal communities.

We also found that the ministry had not clearly distinguished outcomes for First Nations, Métis, and

## PUBLIC REPORTING

Performance reporting helps stakeholders make decisions about future goals and strategies. To be useful, performance reporting must be clear and accessible to the people who need it.

We expected the ministry to have reported publicly on Aboriginal student achievement and to have ensured that boards report publicly on their districts' progress. We also expected the ministry to monitor board reporting on Aboriginal student achievement and take action when boards have not met ministry expectations.

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Inuit students in its reporting. Other B.C. ministries – and most other provinces – have shown data for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people separately, rather than combined under the broader heading of “Aboriginal.”

### District reporting

The ministry set expectations for boards to report publicly on an annual basis through the Superintendent’s Report on Student Achievement and their Aboriginal enhancement agreement (EA) annual report. However, district practices were varied.

In May 2015, we reviewed ministry and district websites to determine whether the Superintendent’s Report on Student Achievement and EA annual reports for 2013/14 were publicly available. We considered posting reports on the internet to be the primary way to make them accessible to the public. We did not verify with districts whether they had made their reports available to the public by other means. We found that practices varied and not all reports were available on websites.

**RECOMMENDATION 11:** *We recommend that the Ministry of Education collaborate with boards of education, superintendents, and Aboriginal leaders and communities to define and implement expectations for regular provincial and district reporting on:*

- *Aboriginal student (on- and off-reserve, First Nations, Métis and Inuit) achievement*
- *progress in meeting targets to close the gaps*
- *effectiveness of strategies for Aboriginal students*

### MAKING REPORTS ACCESSIBLE

We observed several examples of reports that were accessible and easy to read. For example, the Fort Nelson School District had colour coded its results to highlight exactly which outcomes had or had not met expectations. The Rocky Mountain School District has published its District Achievement Contract in an interactive, online format that allows it to update information as results come in throughout the year. This is significant in a system where the *School Act* has required the Superintendent’s Reports on Student Achievement to be submitted in July, even though key elements of key performance information are not available until November.

# APPENDIX A:

## OUR APPROACH TO SELECTING SCHOOL DISTRICTS

**EDUCATION RESEARCH SHOWS** that a range of factors can influence student achievement. Some factors are related to student characteristics, such as their family's socio-economic status. Other factors are related to the education system, such as aspects of school quality, and education policies.

School quality factors include the experience level of the teachers, student/teacher ratio, expenditure per student and academic performance of students. Specifically for Aboriginal students, research highlights factors such as:

- ◆ parental income and education levels
- ◆ student mobility
- ◆ peer effects
- ◆ district leadership making Aboriginal education success a priority
- ◆ engaging Aboriginal leaders and community
- ◆ making use of objective data

We used Ministry of Education (ministry) student achievement data, along with information on factors such as socio-economic vulnerability, number and proportion of Aboriginal students, funding, and geographic characteristics in our analysis to better understand school district results for Aboriginal students.

Our advisor carried out statistical analysis to identify which factors had the highest correlation with student achievement – specifically, we focused on graduation rate as the main result of interest.

Our analysis found that the model with the greatest predictive power explained 50% of the variation between districts' graduation rate results for Aboriginal students. We used a 5-year mean for the completion rate to smooth out the annual fluctuation for districts with small student numbers. The predictors in this model were the amount of Aboriginal student targeted funding provided by the ministry (which is based on enrolment and therefore can be seen as a proxy for the number of Aboriginal students in the district), the proportion of the targeted funds that were spent (lower spending was correlated with higher results), and student achievement on the Grades 4 and 7 Foundation Skills Assessment tests (higher results were correlated with better graduation rates).

Using this model, we identified school districts that were achieving better, or worse, results for their Aboriginal students than would normally be expected based on their existing characteristics. We used this information to inform our selection of school districts to visit for our audit work. The ministry could be doing this type of analysis to identify areas of focus, including both good practice and challenges.

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