

# Aboriginal Education Program

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Since the beginning of time, Aboriginal people have had a high regard for education. We nurtured all children, encouraging them to achieve to the best of their abilities. Aboriginal children with challenges and exceptional abilities would find a position within the community, and their contributions were also valued and respected.

Euro-Canadian contact with Aboriginal peoples has, and continues to have, devastating effects. The encroachment on our traditional territory has affected the lands and resources forever. The trauma of colonialism experienced by past generations continues to influence every aspect of our lives, from infancy through childhood and adolescence, to parenthood and even grandparenthood.

Family systems were shattered. The role of grandparent was displaced because children were taken from the community and placed in residential schools. Parenting models were all but lost. When children returned home from the residential schools, the responses were often mixed; children and families felt confused and unsettled.

Generations of experience within the residential school system have greatly impacted Aboriginal families and their attitudes toward schooling.

Aboriginal people still struggle to obtain an education that responds to the needs of their children. Today, many teachers, parents, and communities want to see our children be successful, within a definition of success that is meaningful to the child and community. However, we still don't see ourselves in the textbooks or in the classroom in sufficient numbers.

But things are changing. The teachers of British Columbia are pulling together for Aboriginal education. We want Aboriginal educators to be present to tell our stories and work together to redress the damaging legacy of the colonial period.

We want to see our children graduating from Grade 12 as responsible citizens, ready and eager to contribute to society on their terms. We want to create school cultures where we can be proudly Aboriginal, where our own traditional teachings are honoured. We aim to build a system that integrates our teachings and values so all students will benefit.

I look forward to working with all of you to make these dreams a reality for all students—Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike.

—Gail Stromquist

## **Aboriginal education overview**

Aboriginal education continues to move ahead at the BCTF. Positive changes are being made to improve the success rate for Aboriginal students. We continue the dialogue with locals and Aboriginal communities. The voice of the Aboriginal people is heard and will continue to be heard.

The Aboriginal Education Program works with teachers to improve the success rate of Aboriginal students, and supports Aboriginal teachers in their professional development.

The BCTF continues to find ways to improve conditions that assist teachers and schools by providing high quality professional development programs.

## **Aboriginal territory Protocol**

### **Welcome and acknowledgement of traditional territory**

Recognizing Aboriginal people as traditional stewards of the land is an important part of showing respect for the First Nations of British Columbia. There are a variety of ways to acknowledge Aboriginal traditional stewards, which fall into two categories:

- Welcome to the (shared) traditional territory
- Acknowledgment of (shared) traditional territory.

In the context of Aboriginal cultures, “traditional territory” refers to a specific place within British Columbia and not British Columbia itself. Over 30 Aboriginal language groups are represented across British Columbia. Traditional territory refers to “this” place, the traditional language group of the area where the event is held. The welcome follows a traditional protocol for Aboriginal nations where people entering another’s traditional territory (language area) would seek permission from the traditional stewards and they would be welcomed to the area through an opening ceremony. Today, non-Aboriginal populations who are not originally from British Columbia are also welcomed to the traditional territory for the purpose of the events, and as a part of a continuing protocol, which is maintained and observed through Aboriginal communities across British Columbia.

Practices such as *welcome to the traditional territory* and *acknowledgement of the traditional territory* enable the wider community to share in Aboriginal cultures, and lead to better community relationships and understanding. Observing these practices connects participants with the traditional territory, and provides a welcoming atmosphere and spiritual presence to the land upon which people are meeting. It also reinforces the place of Aboriginal perspectives within policies and procedures.

In efforts to improve relationships with Aboriginal people and communities, locals should take the responsibility of finding out who the local Aboriginal people are. Invite the Aboriginal people to open your meeting with traditional words or a song. If you are hosting a local meeting or a workshop, take the time to acknowledge the Aboriginal people on whose territory you are speaking. This gesture pays respect to the Aboriginal people in your local.

They are:

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Traditional territory</b>	<b>Sounds like</b>	<b>Location</b>
Kootenay	Ktunaxa Kinbasket Treaty Council	Tunaka Hinbasket	Kimberley
Okanagan	Westbank First Nation	Westbank	Kelowna
North Coast	Tsimshian Nation	Sim Shee Ann	Terrace Or
	Wet'suwet'en	Wet so wet en	Smithers
North Central	Lheidle T'enneh Band	Klay lee Ta'nay	Prince George
Peace River	Treaty 8		
Metro/Fraser Valley	Chehalis	Chehalis	Harrison Hot Springs
Metro West	Musqueam Nation	Mus queam	Vancouver
	Sto:lo Nation	Sto Low	Vancouver
	Tsleil Waututh Nation	Slay Waa tooth	Vancouver
	Squamish Nation		Vancouver
Vancouver Island N.	Snuneymuxw First Nation	Snun ni Mic	Nanaimo
	Te'mexw Treaty Association	Tay muck	Nanaimo
Vancouver Island S.	Te'mexw Treaty Association	Tay muck	Victoria

### **Who are the Aboriginal students?**

The term First Nations is used to identify the original inhabitants of this land, Canada. Indian is a term used in the *Indian Act* to identify those registered as Status Indians with the Department of Indian Affairs in Ottawa. Section 35(2) of the Constitution, defines who is an Aboriginal (Indian, Inuit, and Métis people of Canada). Native Indian (includes status and non-status) is a term often used to define a person of Aboriginal ancestry. We are using the term Aboriginal here in the broadest sense to represent the ancestors of Canada's indigenous or First Peoples, including First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and non-status Aboriginal people.

### **Aboriginal education workshops**

1. Aboriginal History and Culture, Part 1 and 2
2. BC Blanket Exercise - Exploring historical relationships **NEW**
3. Beyond words - Creating racism-free schools for Aboriginal learners
4. Deconstructing Myths **NEW**
5. Employment equity for Aboriginal teachers- Phase 1
6. Inclusive schools and teaching practices for Aboriginal students - Part 1, English-as-a-Second Dialect - Part 2
7. Indigenous perspectives
8. Infusing Aboriginal Content **NEW**
9. Legacy of residential schools **NEW**
10. Project of Heart **NEW**
11. Working with Aboriginal youth

## **BCTF Aboriginal Education Committees and Associations**

### **Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee (AEAC)**

The committee has nine members, from locals throughout British Columbia. The committee meets three times per year and serves as advisor to the BCTF Executive Committee.

### **Aboriginal Education Association (AEA) PSA**

The Aboriginal Education Association webpage can found at <https://abedassociation.wordpress.com/>  
The Aboriginal Education Association holds a conference on the PSA day in October of each year.

### **Local teacher union contacts for Aboriginal education**

A province-wide network of local contacts for Aboriginal education.

### **Aboriginal education facilitators**

Aboriginal teachers trained to facilitate all the BCTF Aboriginal education workshops.

### **Grants**

Local social justice grants and the Ed May grants are available for supporting Aboriginal initiatives. Aboriginal initiatives grant—see Mary Ellen Bullock, Budgets and Grants Co-ordinator, [mebullock@bctf.ca](mailto:mebullock@bctf.ca) or 604-871-2222 for further information.

## Aboriginal education statistics

From *Grade 12 Graduation Rates 2001–02 to 2005–06*, written and distributed by the BC Ministry of Education.

The table below shows the improvements that have been made in the graduation rate for Aboriginal people.

Year	Number of Aboriginal graduates (Dogwood certificate)
1993–94	691
1994–95	740
1995–96	880
1996–97	875
1997–98	970
1998–99	1,038
1999–2000	1,223
2000–01	1,261
2001–02	1,431
2002–03	1,613
2003–04	1,611
2004–05	1,907
2005–06	1,981

### Six-year completion rate, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, 2001–02 to 2014–15, public schools

	Aboriginal	Non-aboriginal
2001–02	42%	79%
2002–03	47%	82%
2003–04	46%	83%
2004–05	49%	82%
2005–06	48%	83%
2006–07	48%	83%
2007–08	47%	82%
2008–09	49%	82%
2009–10	51%	82%
2010–11	54%	83%
2011–12	57%	84%
2012–13	60%	86%
2013–14	62%	86%
2014–15	63%	86%

Source: Ministry of Education, *Aboriginal report: How are we doing?* p.29. Reports dated 2005–06 to 2014–15;  
<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/province.php>

Note: Includes only Aboriginal students who have self-identified as being of Aboriginal ancestry (First Nations: status and non-status, Métis, and Inuit) on September 30th.

For further information about Aboriginal education issues, please contact Gail Stromquist, Co-ordinator, Aboriginal Education Program, Assistant Director, Professional and Social Issues Division, [gstromquist@bctf.ca](mailto:gstromquist@bctf.ca), 604-871-1854 or toll-free, 1-800-663-9163, local 1854.

## **Aboriginal Education Partners Group**

In early 1998, an invitation was extended to all education organizations in the province to join forces in order to build strategies of reform and support that would enable Aboriginal learners to achieve equity in the system. The following organizations formed the Education Partners Committee:

- BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) Aboriginal Education Program 604-871-1854
- BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA) 604-734-2721
- BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA) 604-689-3399
- Teacher Regulation Branch—BC Ministry of Education 604-731-8170
- BC School Superintendents' Association (BCSSA) 604-687-0590
- First Nations School Association (FNSEA) 604-925-6087
- First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) 604-925-6087
- Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) 604-775-5100
- Ministry of Education (MOE) 1-888-879-1166

## **Dates to remember**

Aboriginal Day—June 21

AEA PSA Day— October (Provincial Pro-D day)

## **National Aboriginal Day**

In 1996, the Governor General of Canada proclaimed June 21 of every year to be known as National Aboriginal Day. All Canadians are invited to recognize the diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. To learn more about the history of National Aboriginal Day, please go to <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/>