

Our Commitment to Student Success

Responding to the B.C. Tripartite Education Agreement

“I-I he’ nem’q’uahin’tul = let’s walk together.”

Joe Thorne, BCSTA Elder and Knowledge Keeper (Hul’q’umi’num)

The Indigenous Education Committee represents boards’ interests in Indigenous education - at the same time, developing ideas and recommendations for the vital work of improving Indigenous student achievement.

The committee continually seeks to heighten knowledge, awareness and understanding of Indigenous values, cultures and perspectives in the education system to enhance learning. In keeping with this role, the committee disseminates information to foster an atmosphere that will promote dialogue at the local level between boards of education and Indigenous communities.

THE B.C. TRIPARTITE EDUCATION AGREEMENT (BCTEA): SUPPORTING FIRST NATIONS STUDENT SUCCESS

Signed in 2018, the BCTEA is intended to promote systemic shifts and collective efforts to support improved educational outcomes for all First Nations students in British Columbia, regardless of where they live or go to school. Boards across the province are in varying stages of implementation of the BCTEA.

B.C.’S BCTEA COMMITMENTS

- Administer the federal transportation fund.
- Support the negotiation and implementation of Local Education Agreements (LEAs).
- Improved accountability and reporting.
- Enriching First Nations Student Data.

First Nations students, at all education levels, must have access to educational opportunities that:

- Ensure that they are confident in their self-identity, their families, their communities and traditional values, languages and cultures;
- Give them the skills they need to thrive in contemporary society, including 21st century technological skills; and
- Prepare them to access any opportunities they choose for higher learning, employment and life choices.



B.C. DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACT

In November 2019, British Columbia passed the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA), becoming the first province in Canada to pass legislation implementing the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration). This legislation recognizes the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples and requires the alignment of provincial laws with the internationally recognized standards of the UN Declaration. In the spirit of collaborative partnership and the government-to-government relationship between the Province and First Nations, work is underway to significantly improve outcomes for First Nation students.

Indigenous peoples include the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

Areas being considered include:

- Recognizing and honouring traditional territories
- Establishing structures and processes for shared decision-making
- Maintaining an active Indigenous Education Council in each school district
- Signing and implementing effective Local Education Agreements (LEAs)
- Implementing Language Programs in partnership with First Nations
- Creating locally-developed Board Authorized courses in partnership with First Nations
- Incorporating First Nations culture into school ceremonies in partnership with local First Nations

(BCTEA Progress Update June 2020)

For more information contact Gordon Li, Director Education Services, gli@bcsta.org

Resources of interest include:
BC Tripartite Education Agreement (BCTEA)

B.C. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA)



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“Tutuleen’utul – sharing our Snuw’uy’ulh teachings.”

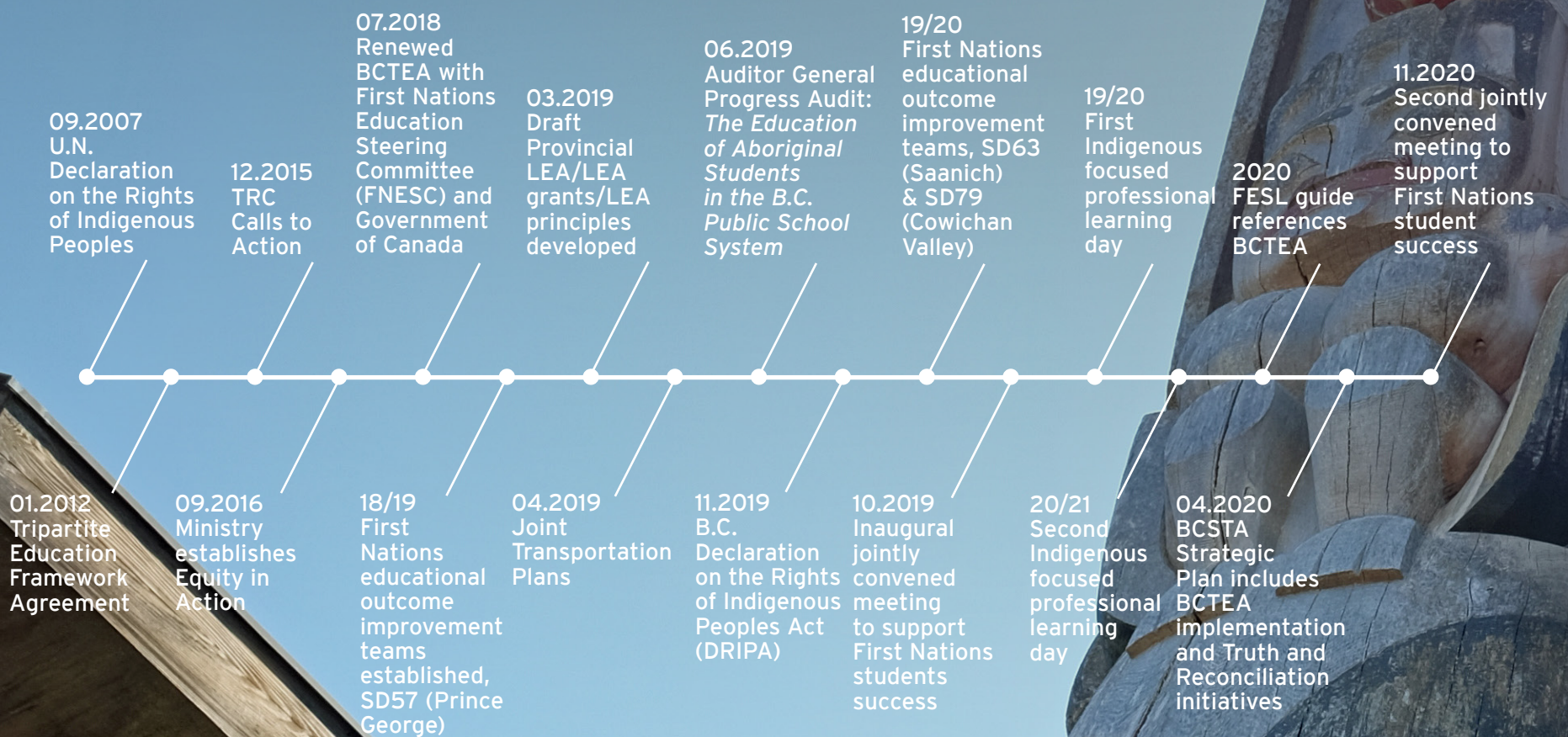
Joe Thorne, BCSTA Elder and Knowledge Keeper (Hul’q’umi’num)

A vibrant, productive Indigenous Education Council / Committee embodies a collaborative relationship allowing Indigenous communities greater autonomy in deciding for themselves how to heighten student success.

Each district is unique and boards are at different stages in implementing the BC Tripartite Education Agreement (BCTEA).

Key questions boards may reflect on:

- What professional learning would support your implementation of the BCTEA?
- How has the BCTEA impacted your strategic plan and Framework for Enhancing Student Learning (FESL)? The implementation of those plans? (e.g. enhanced language, culture and/or equity.)
- What mechanisms have you found successful when engaging First Nations to enhance student success?



HOW ARE THE UN DECLARATION AND THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION'S CALLS TO ACTION RELATED?

Both the UN Declaration and the Calls to Action focus on improving the rights and well-being of Indigenous peoples, covering areas such as child welfare, education, language and culture, health, social and economic outcomes and justice.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) Calls to Action in 2015 are specific to Canada and are focused on addressing the historical and ongoing damage caused by the residential school system. The TRC called on all governments in Canada to fully adopt and implement the UN Declaration as a framework for reconciliation.

B.C. DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACT

In 2019, B.C. passed the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA), becoming the first province in Canada to pass legislation implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration).

The UN Declaration emphasizes the Indigenous rights to live in dignity, to maintain and strengthen Indigenous institutions, cultures and traditions and to pursue self-determined development, in keeping with Indigenous needs and aspirations.

Indigenous peoples include the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

For more information contact Gordon Li, Director Education Services, gli@bcsta.org

RESOURCES
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Committee

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“Tth’ele Mukw’ihwet – Heart of the People.”

Joe Thorne, BCSTA Elder and Knowledge Keeper (Hul’q’umi’num)

Indigenous students must have access to educational opportunities that ensure they are confident in their identity, their families, their communities and traditional values, languages and cultures.

The BCTEA:

- recognizes that all students, particularly those of Indigenous ancestry, should have the opportunity, when possible, to learn an Indigenous language with the support of the Indigenous community;
- commits to better understanding communities’ needs for language revitalization initiatives, and how it can support initiatives, particularly those related to Indigenous language learning curriculum, program development, teacher training, professional development, and policy; and
- continues to ensure a collaborative, co-created process to support K-12 Indigenous language learning, including consultation with Indigenous language learning educators and experts, Indigenous communities, and school districts

B.C. is home to 34 Indigenous languages, half of Canada’s Indigenous languages. Today, fewer than 4,200 people speak one of B.C.’s original languages.

Boards are working with local First Nations towards realizing the first principle outlined in the BCTEA: “Indigenous families and communities have the right to retain shared responsibility for the upbringing, training, education and well-being of their children, consistent with the rights of the child, and 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.”

Districts are also working to add endangered languages to the provincial curriculum (such as SD57, 91 and 28, where the Dakelh language spoken by the Lheidli T’enneh First Nation in Prince George and by other communities in north central and northwest B.C.).

Indigenous members of our committee invite you to review resources from their districts:

School District 28 (Quesnel) ✦

School District 79 (Cowichan Valley)

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

The First Peoples’ Language Map
Native Land

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION: LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s (TRC) Calls to Action are focused on addressing the historical and ongoing damage caused by the residential school system.

Recommendation 13: “Language and culture - We call upon the federal government to acknowledge that Aboriginal rights include Aboriginal language rights.”

Recommendation 14 reinforces that “the preservation, revitalization, and strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures are best managed by Aboriginal people and communities.”

In 2018, B.C. made a historic \$50 million investment to support the First Peoples’ Cultural Council’s work to revitalize Indigenous communities language and culture. The First Peoples’ Cultural Council (FPCC) is an Indigenous-led, provincial crown corporation that works in partnership with Indigenous communities to support their cultural revitalization goals. In 2019/20, FPCC provided \$15.68 million to communities and created 3,134 language immersion opportunities across B.C.

There are 18 First Nations languages with curriculum approval to be taught in B.C. schools, with more in development.

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) Annual Report. ✦

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Education
Committee

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“Xe’ xe’ smun’eem: Our Sacred Children.”

Joe Thorne, BCSTA Elder and Knowledge Keeper (Hul’q’umi’num)

LOCAL EDUCATION AGREEMENTS (LEA)

First Nations express what they want their children to learn and how they wish them to learn through a Local Education Agreement (LEA). A key principle for developing a local education agreement (LEA) is access to quality education. Indigenous students must have educational opportunities that ensure that they are confident in their self-identity, their families, their communities and traditional values, languages and cultures. In considering ways to support an LEA, reflect on the land.

PHYSICAL CONNECTION

Indigenous cultures have a traditional way to use land and what is on it. Cultures have a traditional diet which includes immense knowledge of plants, animals and their properties. Traditional stories tell the generations about the significance and symbolism that connect their culture to the land.

SPIRITUAL CONNECTION

Indigenous cultures share a common belief that the earth is alive and that all things are related. Culture teaches us how to communicate with all things including the land. Before we can see how a relationship with the land is fostered, we must understand culture in a way that encompasses Indigenous knowledge and belief systems. For more information, see [Learning the Land](#).

BCTEA’s Schedule H commits the parties to taking actions to improve Indigenous student outcomes. LEAs increase accountability and promote effective working relationships between First Nations and boards of education, enabling them to work collaboratively to support Indigenous students.

LEAs outline objectives for Indigenous students living on reserves and attending public schools. LEA principles include:

- First Nations’ Central Role in First Nations Education
- First Nations’ Access to Quality Education
- Reconciliation & Collaboration
- Parental Choice
- Student Safety
- Shared Accountability and Data-Sharing

FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCING STUDENT LEARNING (FESL)

Articulated within FESL policy is B.C.’s commitment to true, lasting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. The commitment is aligned with:

- the *Draft Principles That Guide British Columbia’s Relationship With Indigenous Peoples*
- the *Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, and
- the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

When developing educational goals, objectives, strategies and measures for strategic planning, the ministry will collaborate with Indigenous peoples and key education stakeholders in the process, including partners, parents, students, teachers, support staff, and representatives for Indigenous students, children and youth in care, and students with disabilities or diverse abilities. The ministry will align the work with the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act \(B.C.\)](#). Boards should take a similar approach

to collaboration with Indigenous peoples to identify specific actions to support equitable outcomes and opportunities for Indigenous students.

Within the FESL policy, boards of education are to set, create and maintain a strategic plan, annually report on student outcomes and put systems in place to continuously improve the educational outcomes for all students and improve equity for Indigenous students, children and youth in care, and students with disabilities or diverse abilities. Specifically, boards are expected to participate in a continuous improvement review program, including:

- a. The alignment of school district strategic plan and the results of the educational outcomes for the school district to address student outcome deficiencies and inequities.
- b. Acting on findings coming out of the continuous improvement review.
- c. Collaborating with Indigenous peoples and key education stakeholders throughout the process.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES INCLUDE THE INDIAN, INUIT AND MÉTIS PEOPLES OF CANADA.

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“Thuy’she’num Tu Smun’eem – better prepare the children.”

Joe Thorne, BCSTA Elder and Knowledge Keeper (Hul’q’umi’num)

TRUTH TO RECONCILIATION / ACTION

In June 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) released its 94 Calls to Action. This took place at the final of seven national events held across the country between 2010 and 2015 and marked the culmination of a process which saw the TRC hold 238 days of local hearings in 77 communities across the country. In all, the TRC collected 6,750 statements from survivors, their families and others directly affected by residential schools.

As the TRC commissioners made clear, the process of reconciliation would only be possible through meaningful action on the part of non-Indigenous people in Canada.

“A critical part of this process,” they argued, “involves repairing damaged trust by making apologies, providing individual and collective reparations, and following through with concrete actions that demonstrate real societal change.”

The 94 Calls to Action represent these concrete actions. Key actions for education include:

- 7. ... to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.
- 10. ... to draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples. The new legislation would include a commitment to sufficient funding and would incorporate the following principles:
 - i. Providing sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation.
 - ii. Improving education attainment levels and success rates.
 - iii. Developing culturally appropriate curricula.

- iv. Protecting the right to Aboriginal languages, including the teaching of Aboriginal languages as credit courses.
- v. Enabling parental and community responsibility, control, and accountability, similar to what parents enjoy in public school systems.
- vi. Enabling parents to fully participate in the education of their children.
- vii. Respecting and honouring Treaty relationships.
- 11. ... to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking a post-secondary education.
- 12. We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families.
- 57. We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

Trustees can play a powerful role within their district by supporting initiatives addressing the Calls to Action.

For an update on the status of the Calls to Action see **Yellowhead Institute**. ✨

Resources for those who want to learn more: Perceptions on Truth and Reconciliation Series, available at: **National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR)**. ✨

BC TEACHER COUNCIL PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

On July 19, 2019 Indigenous students in B.C. were supported and connected in school with the addition of a new **professional standard** that requires teachers to commit to truth, reconciliation and healing. ✨

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 the ways of knowing and being, histories, and culture of First Nations, Inuit and Métis.”

Standard 9 further requires that: “Educators critically examine their own biases, attitudes, beliefs, values and practices to facilitate change. 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 worldview and perspectives into learning environments.”

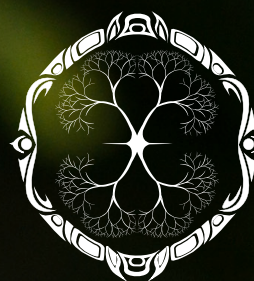
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