

First Nations Education Steering Committee

Jurisdiction: British Columbia

Contact: Deborah Hull

Level: Post-Secondary

Theme: Community Based Practice

Description of Practice:

The **First Nations Education Steering Committee** (FNESC) is mandated to: “facilitate discussion about education matters affecting First Nations in BC by disseminating information and soliciting input from First Nations.”

Approximately 63 First Nations education technicians from throughout British Columbia provide overall direction for the Steering Committee’s activities. The work of FNESC is also supported by a BC Strategic Action Committee (SAC). A number of other individuals are directly involved with FNESC through a number of subcommittees, including:

- The Aboriginal Languages Subcommittee; and
- The Special Needs Subcommittee

FNESC also works to provide relevant and up-to-date information to First Nations about federal and provincial government policies and programs, to undertake research to support effective First Nations education, and to facilitate communication amongst First Nations and with other education organizations.

Background:

The First Nations Education Steering Committee was established in May of 1992 by participants at a Provincial First Nations Education Conference held at the Vancouver Friendship Centre.

In 1999, the FNESC applied for and received status as a non-profit society.

Development:

The activities identified for a provincial education organization and those undertaken by FNESC on an ongoing basis, include:

- Facilitate communication (newsletter, policy updates, etc)
- Provide liaison for First Nations with government and other agencies.
- Coordinate information sharing, to enable First Nations to do more with less money for education, as education demands increase while funding diminishes.
- Coordinate Provincial Conferences, Regional Workshops and Information workshops to increased communication and support amongst First Nations communities.

- Conduct research on broad topics to support First Nations education initiatives (Aboriginal Language programs, legal aspects of control and jurisdiction, Best Practices in First Nations education, gathering data regarding First Nations education for use by First Nations educators). This includes the work of the various subcommittees.
- Undertake some policy discussions, with explicit direction from, consultation and communication with First Nations communities themselves.
- Provide a forum for a united First Nations voice.
- Serve as a clearinghouse for information resources and models for First Nations education activities.
- Provide administrative and technical support to ensure First Nations control and administration of First Nations education programs such as youth initiatives.
- Provide support for First Nations involved in the treaty process.

Evidence:

FNESC is supported by a trilateral agreement between the provincial and federal governments and the First Nations Summit. The Committee conducts community-based research and consultation on First Nations education in BC and is a key partner in the Tripartite and Education Partners Committees. Unique in Canada, the Tripartite Committee is comprised of representatives from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, FNESC, and the Ministry of Education, and provides opportunities to share information and discuss common issues.

The First Nations Education Steering Committee played a key role of the establishment of the BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on March 11, 2005.

Adaptability:

Generally, FNESC works to facilitate First Nations support for one another in the area of K-12 and post secondary education to ensure that First Nations concerns are being addressed. The organizational structure could be adapted in other jurisdictions.

Further information:

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