



First Nations Education Steering Committee

Suite 113-100 Park Royal South,
West Vancouver, BC V7T 1A2

T: 604-925-6087 F: 604-925-6097 www.fnesc.ca

For immediate release: December 9, 2009

First Nations Education Needs Fair Funding, Say BC First Nations

First Nations in British Columbia (BC) are calling on the federal government to show that its apology to residential school survivors was genuine by providing the education resources that today's First Nations students need. Specifically, they are demanding fair funding to let them exercise their legally-recognized authority for the education of First Nations learners on-reserve.

"For years, we've seen the chronic underfunding of our children's education and our schools, and how the government has side-stepped its education responsibilities," commented Tyrone McNeil, President of the First Nations Education Steering Committee in West Vancouver. "First Nations in BC have a strong vision and plan for how we will take on the responsibility of educating our children, but we have been stalled because the government hasn't been willing to provide fair resources to support our schools."

With the passage of federal jurisdiction legislation in December of 2006 and new provincial legislation in 2007, First Nations won recognition of their right to exercise authority over Kindergarten to Grade 12 education on reserve lands in BC. First Nations have also finished much of the groundwork required to implement their education rights, including developing a new and challenging high school English curriculum, First Nations school and teacher certification processes, data collection systems, education governance training and other supports.

Unfortunately, the jurisdiction process has not advanced as expected because the federal government and First Nations have been unable to reach an agreement on funding levels. The federal government has been reluctant to fund language and culture programs at the levels that First Nations say are necessary, and Canada has not been willing to promise that First Nations school funding will keep pace with increases in provincial school funding. Underfunding has been an ongoing struggle for First Nations schools in BC and indeed throughout Canada, with First Nations schools receiving significantly less funding per pupil than comparable provincial schools.

First Nations in BC want the Government of Canada to negotiate in the spirit of good faith that will allow a funding agreement to be reached, so that they can continue their ongoing efforts to offer high-quality, culturally-rich education opportunities to their children.

-30-

The First Nations Education Steering Committee (www.fnesc.ca) is an independent society committed to improving education for all First Nations learners in BC. It is directed by representatives of First Nations communities.

For more information:

Jennifer White

Interim Manager of Communications, First Nations Education Steering Committee

Cell: 604-417-8349 Office: 604-925-6087 jenniferw@fnesc.ca