



June 17, 2016

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Dear Colleagues,

As the end of the school year approaches, I want to take this opportunity to extend my thanks and appreciation for the daily work you do to make a difference in the lives of students. The BC education system continues to be one of the best in the world — despite all of the challenges we face every day — and our students are the beneficiaries.

This year has been an eventful one in Aboriginal Education. At the Ministry, we have conducted three research projects to help inform where we will be focusing our attention over the next two years: a review of the impact of Enhancement Agreements, a research project on effective anti-racism strategies, and a research project on effective support of Indigenous language learning. Coupled with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action and the Office of the Auditor General's recommendations, the Aboriginal Education team at the Ministry will be implementing a number of strategies to help support the work under way in schools and districts.

Enhancement Agreements and New Directions

For over 15 years, the Ministry has supported the development and implementation of Enhancement Agreements (EAs) as a primary tool to increase student success and to bring Aboriginal learning to all students. This tool is well established as a way to include Aboriginal people in decision-making and focus on measurable student outcomes. As of this summer, **the Ministry will no longer be involved in the development of Enhancement Agreements**, believing that school districts and Aboriginal communities understand their value and no longer need Ministry support. Recognizing that some EAs are near signing, **the Ministry will attend any signing celebrations already scheduled and any that are planned for the Fall.**

I want to acknowledge the work of Colleen Hannah over the past six years and for her incredible support of school districts and the Ministry in so many ways beyond what was required for her role as Enhancement Agreement Coordinator. I also want to thank Juanita Coltman for her help in supporting EAs over the past year, coming new into her provincial role and providing fresh ideas and direction. Both will be returning to their districts and continuing to influence Aboriginal student success.

As a support to school districts and the Ministry, the Aboriginal Education team has seconded **Dr. Scott Benwell and Kaleb Child from School District No. 85 (Vancouver Island North).**

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Ministry of Education

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Scott and Kaleb will be working with school districts to help the Ministry implement some of the recommendations provided by the Office of the Auditor General. More details will be coming on this work later in the summer and into the Fall.

Strategic Plan Development

The Office of the Auditor General has recommended that the Ministry of Education develop a strategic plan for Aboriginal Education. To assist in this work, **Don Avison** has been contracted to provide advice to the Deputy Minister. Don comes with a strong background in education and specifically Aboriginal Education. He is currently the chair of the Aboriginal Education Post-Secondary Partners table and is a previous Deputy Minister of Education. Don will be working with all areas of the Ministry, including Aboriginal Education, to develop the plan over the course of this year.

This year has been a very busy one and I expect that the new school year will bring exciting new challenges. B.C. is seen as a true leader in innovation for Aboriginal Education and that is because of the work you do each day, the efforts you make to build strong relationships with each other, your staff and students and with Aboriginal communities, and your willingness to be leaders in our overall work of education system change.

Please take time for yourselves, your families and your friends this summer.

Gilakasla.

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