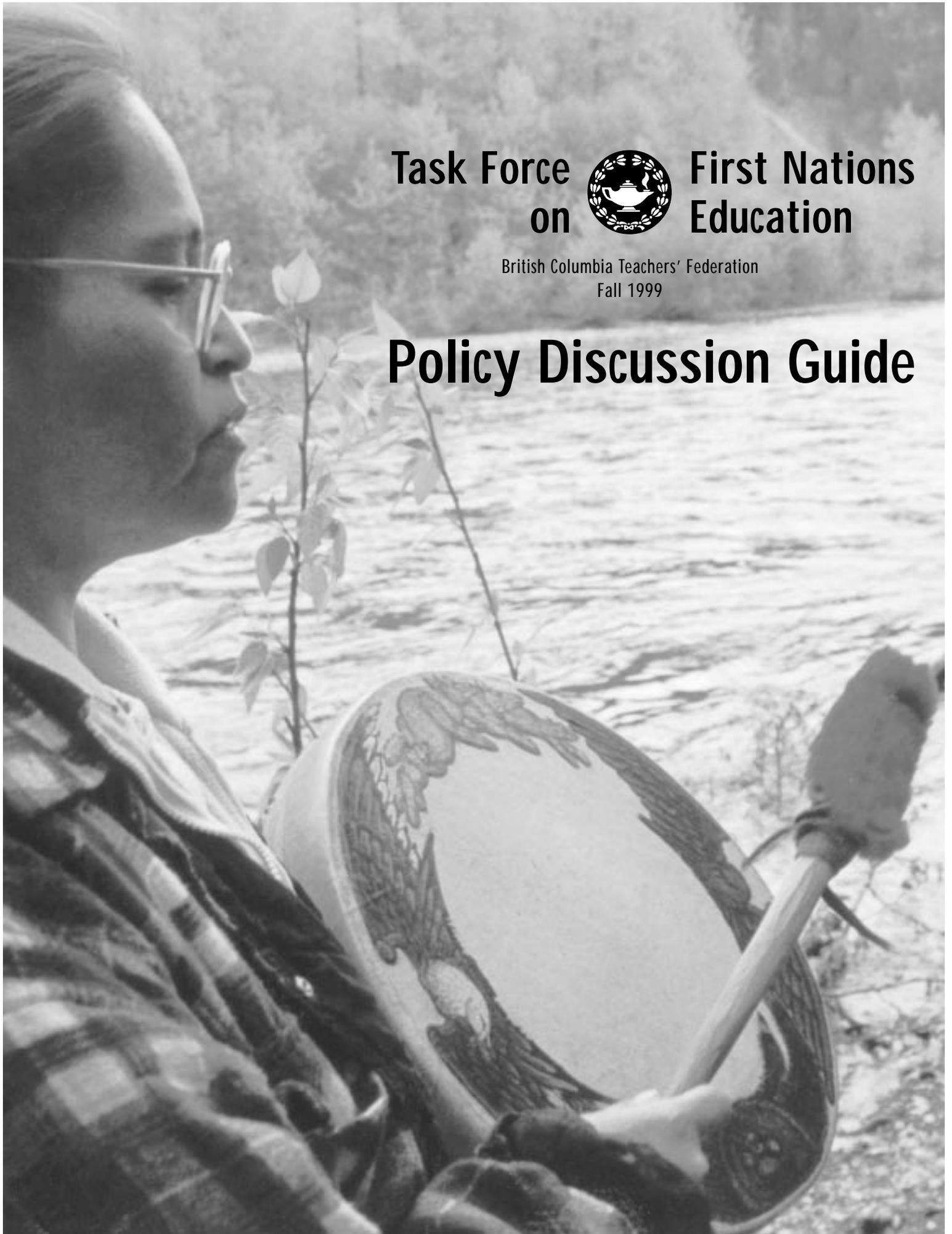


**Task Force
on**  **First Nations
Education**

British Columbia Teachers' Federation
Fall 1999

Policy Discussion Guide



Timeline History of Aboriginal Peoples in B.C.

Selected times and events important in the history of Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia

Pre-contact

Aboriginal settlements with increasingly complex cultures exist in all areas of British Columbia.

1400s

European settlement of North America begins.

1774

Royal Proclamation of 1763 proclaimed Aboriginal peoples as “nations or tribes” and acknowledges that they continue to possess traditional territories until they are “ceded to or purchased by” the Crown. The Proclamation has never been repealed and has the force of law in Canada, recognized in section 25 of the Constitution Act of 1982.

First recorded contact of Spanish explorer Hernandez and Honda people.

1778

Captain Cook lands on the coast of B.C. and claims the land for Britain.

1793

First recorded contact between George Vancouver and Nisga'a people.

1849

Vancouver Island becomes a British colony. British Crown gave trading rights to B.C., and placed it in charge of immigration and settlement.

1850

James Douglas made a series of 14 land purchases from Aboriginal peoples. The Douglas Treaties cover approximately 576 square kilometres of land on Vancouver Island. Aboriginal peoples were paid in blankets and promised the rights to hunt on unsettled lands and to carry on fisheries “as formerly.” A policy set to allow no more than ten acres of reserve land per Aboriginal family; settlers could pre-empt 320 acres.

1858

Mainland of B.C. declared a colony of Britain.

1859

New Westminster becomes first capital of B.C.

1862

Smallpox epidemic kills one of every three Aboriginal people.

1864

Joseph Trutch appointed commissioner of land and works. Trutch denies Aboriginal title and sets forth a policy of prohibiting rights of

pre-emption of Aboriginal people and adjusting the size of reserve land.

1866

Colony of Vancouver Island merges with the mainland colony of B.C.

1867

The British North American Act of 1867 creates the Dominion of Canada.

1871

B.C. joins Dominion of Canada; control of Indians is assumed by Canada. B.C. retains authority over land and resources.

1876

Indian Act is created. The Act consolidates all previous Indian legislation; defines Indian status and the superintendent general is given administrative powers over many aspects of Indian life.

1880

Removing of Aboriginal children from home and family for education and “civilization” begins.

1881

Chief Mountain leads a Nisga'a protest delegation to Victoria.

1884

An amendment to the Indian Act prohibits the potlatch and sundance. Although the first conviction under this law comes in 1890, it is not enforced on a large scale until the 1920s. The law is rescinded in 1951.

1899

Treaty 8 is signed with the Beaver, Cree, and Dene peoples located in the Peace River District of the province.

1906

Delegations from several Aboriginal nations travel to Victoria, Ottawa, and London, England regarding land rights.

1912

The federal and provincial governments agree that a royal commission should re-examine the size of every reserve in the province.

1916

Allied Tribes of B.C. formed.

McKenna-McBride Commission recommends changing and redistributing of reserve lands. Recommendation for enlargement of some reserves and reduction of others.

1920

McKenna-McBride recommendations implemented.

1927

Joint parliamentary committee in Ottawa finds that land claims have no legal bases. The committee also recommends a prohibition on the raising of money for land claims.

1931

Native Brotherhood of B.C. formed.

1949

B.C. Indians receive the right to vote in provincial elections. Frank Calder is elected to the provincial legislature.

1951

The Indian Act is amended, and laws prohibiting the potlatch, sundances, and land claims activities are repealed.

1955

Nisga'a Land Committee is re-established as Nisga'a Tribal Council.

1960

Aboriginal people given the right to vote in federal elections.

Phasing out of Indian residential school begins.

1969

Ottawa introduces the “White Paper” (Statement of Government of Canada on Indian Policy), which seeks to eliminate certain “privileges” of Aboriginal people, by abolishing the Indian Act and federal obligations to Aboriginal people.

B.C. Association of Non-Status Indians is formed. Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs is formed to proceed with a land claim on behalf of all B.C. status Indians.

1973

Calder decision: the Supreme Court of Canada rules that the Nisga'a held Aboriginal title before settlers came, but the judges split evenly on the question of the continuing existence of that title.

1974

Federal government starts negotiations with Nisga'a peoples.

1982

New Canadian Constitution guarantees Aboriginal and treaty rights.

1985

Bill C-31, enacted by parliament, restoring status and band membership to Native women, lost under section 12(1) (b) of the Indian Act. The bill also restores status to their children. Bands gained control over membership.

1987

Native Affairs Secretariat created by the Government of B.C.

Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en tribal nations launch a legal action in the B.C. Supreme Court, claiming right of ownership jurisdiction to their ancestral lands. The case is known as Delgamuukw.

1988

Native Affairs Secretariat becomes the B.C. Ministry of Native Affairs.

1991

Delgamuukw decision: The B.C. Supreme Court rejects the tribal nations claim. Chief Justice McEachern finds that Aboriginal title has been extinguished in B.C. The Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en appeal the decision.

B.C. Claims Task Force releases its report recommending a six-stage treaty negotiation process and the formation of the B.C. Treaty Commission to facilitate negotiations.

B.C. Ministry of Native Affairs is renamed B.C. Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs.

Government of B.C. officially recognizes the inherent rights of First Nations to Aboriginal title and to self-government and pledged to negotiate just and honourable treaties.

1992

Representatives of the First Nations Summit and the federal and B.C. governments make a formal commitment to negotiate treaties in B.C. by signing the B.C. Treaty Commission Agreement.

1993

The B.C. Court of Appeal recognizes the continuing existence of Aboriginal rights in Delgamuukw case.

1994

The Nisga'a Agreement in Principle is initialled and signed by representatives of the Nisga'a Tribal Council and the federal and B.C. governments.

1997

Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples released.

1998

Supreme Court ruling on Delgamuukw: a new trial must be held because the oral histories of the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en were not assessed correctly.

Statement of apology from the federal government for its treatment of Aboriginal peoples, based on the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

The Nisga'a Final Agreement is initialled.

1999

Nisga'a Final Agreement is approved by the Nisga'a and the B.C. government.

From the President

Dear Colleagues:

At the BCTF Annual General Meeting in the spring of 1999, teachers from all over the province took a courageous and decisive step. They committed our Federation to a thoroughgoing program with the goal of improving the success of Aboriginal students in the public schools of British Columbia.

We are tremendously proud that our organization has taken on this important task. It is vital that we heed the words of our Task Force on First Nations Education. They warned, "If the public schools cannot or will not serve the needs of Aboriginal students or communities, they will be forced to create alternatives that better meets those needs."

This fall we begin a discussion among our members in each of our locals across the province. This guide is meant to facilitate that discussion. The process will, no doubt, include some heartache and some pain. But I know that it will also result in growth, in better understanding and, most important, in a public education system more able to meet the needs of our Aboriginal students.

I encourage every member to participate in the discussion, the debate and the learning process. I look forward eagerly to the results.

Yours truly,



David Chudnovsky

That the goals of the BCTF in Aboriginal education be to improve the success of Aboriginal students in the public schools and to build a new relationship with Aboriginal students and communities, and that these be pursued through:

- working with Aboriginal organizations and other groups in the public schools to define success and appropriate indicators of success;
- building awareness and commitment of teachers to practices that will improve the success of Aboriginal students;
- identifying and supporting practices that help achieve success for Aboriginal students;
- working to make schools inclusive of and for Aboriginal students, parents, teachers and support workers;
- building positive relationships of teachers and schools with Aboriginal communities.

Adopted 1999 BCTF Annual General Meeting

Dear Colleagues:

First Nations children, like all children, deserve the opportunity to develop their full potential in school. For decades, there has been disproportionately low levels of achievement and graduation rates for First Nations learners. This must change. The role of the BCTF is to work in partnership with First Nations to grapple with issues concerning First Nations learners and focus on what can be done within the classroom to improve the quality of education for First Nations children. There is a call for courage and commitment to make things better for First Nations children in the future.

The BCTF Task Force on First Nations Education has provided opportunities for discussion and action in a wide variety of areas which received support at the 1999 AGM. The Task Force was extended for another year to continue discussions in three key areas. The three key areas for discussion include Teacher Awareness and Commitment Principles, School Inclusiveness Practices and Employment Equity for First Nations Teachers. The purpose of this discussion guide is to help focus and facilitate discussion in those three areas within each local. According to the resolution passed at the 1999 AGM, each local will submit a report and results will be compiled and shared at the 2000 AGM.

The B.C. Teachers' Federation has a long and proud history of working to meet the needs of all children in British Columbia. A sustained commitment is required to meet the challenge of improving the quality of education for First Nations learners. This will require new understandings and action based on new relationships. The relationship between First Nations and Canadian society can change based on four principles of a renewed relationship: mutual recognition, mutual respect, sharing, and mutual responsibility (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples). The discussion items contained in this handbook should incorporate these four principles.

On behalf of approximately 40,000 First Nations children in our public schools, we thank you for your commitment to First Nations education.

*Deborah Jeffrey,
co-chair Task Force on First Nations Education*

Aboriginal Education Teacher Awareness and Commitment Principles

The most important changes in the school for Aboriginal students will come about with greater understanding by teachers. Not all the elements on this list may be widely understood, or even accepted as correct by everyone. Nor does agreement with all or most of the items necessarily easily translate into obvious practices. The purpose of putting them forward is to have a beginning point for an extended dialogue that includes teachers and Aboriginal communities, and to identify the basis for research, development and communication on how to change teaching practice in ways that will assist the learning and success of Aboriginal students.

1. The teacher expects that Aboriginal students will succeed and seeks the strengths of each student and builds success through nurturing of those strengths.

Like all children, First Nations children are bright and have the potential to achieve success in school. Upon entering school, they have acquired a knowledge base and several skills that cannot be measured on tests nor valued by a system that does not understand the importance of having this knowledge and skills. Teachers need to find time to learn what knowledge and skills the student brings to the classroom and encourage First Nations students to excel. The teacher's attitude in the development of self-image of First Nations learners is crucial. The overall lack of value placed on First Nations culture is causing problems of identity and self-esteem for First Nations learners.

In general, the majority of First Nations students in the public school system have a disproportionately low level of academic achievement with a low graduation rate overall. First Nations are over represented in special education and alternate programs. Often, the public education system operates on a deficit model approach regarding First Nations learners and works to "bring First Nations learners up to standard." This negative attitude must change. Teachers must encourage all children to develop intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically by believing they can and will be successful in school.

2. The teacher recognizes that there are many forms of success, and that these include, but are not limited to, academic success.

All facets of public schools reflect Western culture. Recognition that public schools are culturally specific in design, delivery and evaluation of their programs and services will assist in the dialogue concerning students who do not fit the specific Western cultural profile. Criteria for success needs to be broadly based and flexible. Many First Nations children have acquired traditional knowledge and skills which can be recognized and celebrated in the school context by administering a prior learning assessment strategy. A variety of assessment strategies can be employed to gauge student ability. For example, an oral test can be substituted for a paper and pencil test.

All First Nations parents and communities want their children to succeed academically and have a strong sense of themselves as First Nations. Also, there are over 30 First Nations in B.C. who may differ somewhat about what constitutes success for their children.

3. The teacher recognizes that Aboriginal communities and families have the key role in defining what constitutes success for their children, and that success includes recognition of their identity and pride in their culture.

First Nations parents want a voice in defining what constitutes success for their children. For decades, First Nations parents and communities have articulated similar hopes and aspirations for their children. The Indian Control of Indian Education document published in 1972 by the National Indian Brotherhood summarized the two primary goals of First Nations education for their children to be to reinforce their Indian identity and to provide the training necessary for making a good living in modern society. Recently the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples stated two similar goals concerning education of Aboriginal children. Firstly, they want education to prepare their children to participate fully in the economic life of their communities and in Canadian society. Secondly, education must develop children and youth as Aboriginal citizens, linguistically and culturally competent to assume the responsibilities of their nations. School districts could provide avenues for First Nations parents to get involved with schools by participating on First Nations Education Advisory Councils or district First Nations Parent Advisory Councils.

“Success” is a value laden term with many meanings, especially for those from a different culture. Some people interpret the desire to ensure the survival of First Nations cultures as a rejection of Canadian culture. This is not so. First Nations want to be accorded the same opportunities for their children but not at the expense of compromising their identity.

4. The teacher creates a welcoming atmosphere in the classroom and school for Aboriginal parents.

Teachers and other school personnel often remark that First Nations parents do not visit schools. There is a long history of distrust of public education institutions. First Nations parents often state that their children are compelled to adapt to the culture of the school, with little evidence that the reverse occurs (*Legacy for Learners*, p 207). Like all parents, First Nations parents want the best for their children, including success at school.

A real and sustained commitment to positive change for First Nations learners and increased representation of First Nations in all aspects of the school will lead to improved communication and involvement between First Nations parents and schools. First Nations cultural programs and events jointly planned by First Nations and schools will go far in increasing participation in schools by First Nations parents and community members. With First Nations involvement, some school-based activities can be hosted in the local First Nations community. More positive communication with the home can also help improve relationships long term. An example might be a good news newsletter sent home periodically.

5. The teacher acknowledges and respects different world views and the implications for what is valued knowledge and what are ways of knowing.

The public school system privileges Western values and knowledge. Assimilation and conformity are issues in schools which need to be addressed. Public education institutions need to be inclusive of the multiple ways of knowing that exist within Canadian society. Often First Nations stories and historical narratives are relegated to the status of myths and legends and receive cursory attention in schools at best. The Supreme Court of Canada has acknowledged the validity of First Nations knowledge and history in the recent Delgamuukw decision. It is time schools followed suit. First Nations people, the original inhabitants of North America, are integral to Canada and continue to play a primary role in its development.

Knowledge production and transmission is culturally based and cross-cultural sharing of this knowledge can be enriching for all. For example, the knowledge of sustainability of resources traditionally practiced by First Nations could benefit Canadian society today. Respectful inclusion of First Nations stories and history into the classroom, not under the guise of foretell or folklore, will help all students understand there are multiple world views and all contribute to the value of society. Inviting elders into the classroom to share local stories and history will assist in broadening this understanding with students and teachers.

6. The teacher incorporates Aboriginal history and culture into the curriculum and teaching practice on an ongoing basis.

Curriculum and learning resources that are relevant and respectful of Aboriginal culture should be available for use at all levels with adequate support for implementation. These should be included as integral parts of the curriculum and Integrated Resource Packages, not as add-ons marginal to the regular program. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples states, “We maintain, however, that recognition of the distinct place of Aboriginal nations in the Canadian federation and accommodation of Aboriginal culture and identity should be regarded as a core responsibility of public institutions rather than as a special project to be undertaken after other obligations are met. Education institutions have a pivotal role in transforming the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian society” (*Gathering Strength*, Volume 3, p 515).

The Task Force recognizes the crowded curricular program and the increasing demands placed on teachers. However, it is essential that schools be inclusive for Aboriginal students by incorporating First Nations culture and history at all levels and in a range of subjects. There has to be a commitment to purchase relevant resources to support curriculum from core funding, not just First Nations funding. More First Nations quality resources are made available each year. The Ministry of Education recently published *Shared Learnings: Integrating BC Aboriginal Content K-10* which can be used as a starting point for some schools for inclusion of First Nations content. Districts in partnership with First Nations can also develop more locally developed units and courses specific to the First Nations of the area.

7. The teacher is respectful of protocols about specific cultures and recognizes the situations in which it is appropriate or inappropriate for the sharing of stories, dances and other forms of cultural representation.

Use and authorization of specific First Nations cultural practices operate similarly to copyright law and cannot be infringed upon. Regarding First Nations cultural practices, “it is important to recognize that cultural protocols exist. Permission for use of cultural materials or practices such as legends, stories, songs, designs, crests, photographs, audiovisual materials, and dances should be obtained through consultation with individuals, families, Elders, hereditary chiefs, chiefs, Band Councils, or Tribal Councils. This authorization must be obtained prior to the use of any educational plans or materials” (*Shared Learnings*, p 14). Protocols may be different for each community and schools can be informed of some of the protocols through discussion with the First Nations person who has responsibility for First Nations education in the district.

The lack of historical understanding of First Nations and their cultural practices has led to the trivialization and marginalization of significant First Nations cultural practices and events. Teachers should guard against this by maintaining open communication with First Nations people within the district and community. For example, invitations for First Nations to dance in schools is not entertainment, it is cultural sharing and should be regarded and respected as such. Respectful inclusion of First Nations content should go beyond the “diet, dance and dress” approach.

8. The teacher acknowledges the importance of First Nations languages to both individual development and maintaining cultures and recognizes the expertise of First Nations language teachers.

Language and culture are intertwined. The single most important element in the practice and transmission of a culture is language. The long-standing federal government policy of assimilation has resulted in disaster for most First Nations languages. Many First Nations languages in B.C. are in danger of extinction. There have been increased efforts by various First Nations to reverse this trend. Restoring and maintaining a viable base of speakers of these languages is an essential part of any program of cultural maintenance.

Under current Ministry of Education second language policy, it is now possible for students to receive First Nations language instruction in public schools. First Nations fluent speakers now have an opportunity for certification by the B.C. College of Teachers to instruct First Nations languages in public schools. These First Nations language teachers have an expertise very few can duplicate and they need to be supported by teachers in the system. Due to the possibility of language extinction for some First Nations languages, it is imperative that the school system in partnership with First Nations encourage and support the development and delivery of First Nations language programs in schools. Support for First Nations languages can be demonstrated through signage in the local First Nations language posted in the school. There are multiple advantages for individuals who can speak more than one language.

9. The teacher recognizes that Metis and different First Nations have many different cultures and languages and avoids presenting curriculum on a “pan-Indian” basis.

It is essential that teachers recognize that British Columbia has many diverse First Nations cultures and languages—more so than all the rest of Canada. In addition, many First Nations from other parts of Canada now reside in B.C. Learning resources should reflect these differences as well as similarities. Material should be available so that both First Nations and non-First Nations students learn about the traditions of the people who live in their region of the province. This may require the development of new resources. Some resource material lumps all First Nations together and uses outdated or politically incorrect labels. Teachers need to be aware of these differences and focus student learning on the First Nations people of the area. Schools can purchase resources about First Nations written by First Nations people to ensure stories and other aspects of culture are included in the classroom. Classrooms and libraries should have First Nations maps indicating First Nations language groups on the walls.

10. The teacher recognizes the positive contribution that elders and role models from Aboriginal communities can make to the content of education, to creating pride among Aboriginal students and to building respect for Aboriginal culture among all students.

We need to increase representation of First Nations people in all facets of the public school system. Involvement of First Nations elders and role models in classrooms can enrich the learning experience for all and increase the pride and self-esteem for First Nations learners. First Nations role models can bring the First Nations perspective into the classroom by describing aspects of history or culture. Some districts have developed specific First Nations role model programs which are impacting positively on all learners and have been highlighted under best practices resource material. School districts can actively involve elders in First Nations Education Advisory Councils. Schools and First Nations can jointly host role model speaker series or other activities within the district to increase the profile and involvement of First Nations communities.

11. The teacher participates, where possible, in events in Aboriginal communities to gain understanding and to show respect for Aboriginal cultures and people.

There are many First Nations events and activities throughout the year hosted in many communities. Aboriginal communities often invite non-Aboriginal people to attend these events to gain better understandings and build new relationships. Too often, only Aboriginal people attend these events. Regarding these relationships, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples states, “We emphasize the need to correct erroneous assumptions and to dispel stereotypes that still abound in the minds of many Canadians... Teachers cannot convey accurate information about Aboriginal people and instill respectful attitudes unless they have been prepared to do so” (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples). Experiential learning through direct participation in First Nations community events will contribute to better understanding and improved relationships.

National Aboriginal Day celebrated June 21 is one of many excellent opportunities for teachers to participate in local events as well as attending provincial First Nations education conferences. For those districts with schools in First Nations communities, district teacher exchanges can take place between those who teach in First Nations communities and the urban community. There are also provincial and regional First Nations education conferences which teachers can attend to broaden the basis of understanding of First Nations.

12. The teacher contributes to a welcoming atmosphere in the school and classroom for Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal support workers.

Cross-cultural communication is complex and requires sustained commitment to succeed. There should be ample opportunities provided for all educators to interact and discuss all aspects of education. Like all educators, Aboriginal teachers and support workers contribute to the overall effectiveness of education programs and services. There are very few First Nations educators in the public education system and it is important to value the contributions they bring to the system. Enlisting the support of First Nations support workers will assist schools with improving understanding and communication with parents and communities. Sometimes non-First Nations educators focus their discussions solely on First Nations issues with First Nations educators. These discussions can sometimes be broadened to be more flexible and friendly. Schools should strive to be inclusive, making everyone feel comfortable and valued.

13. The teacher recognizes that treating all students just the same is not a form of social justice, but is a form of submerging the Aboriginal student in a culture that is based on European patterns.

Because the Eurocentric cultural approaches are so dominant in Canadian society, they are often invisible and seem like “common sense” to those from the majority culture. Any values, beliefs and practices that do not conform can seem to be strange or challenging. Treating First Nations students like all other students is not social justice. It can challenge and negate the identity and self worth of First Nations students and alienate them further from the public school system. One First Nations education study indicated that, “As our research progressed, it became evident that there is a great deal of discontinuity between the world view of First Nations families and public schools. Many of these discontinuities come from culturally based assumptions about child-rearing practices, the role of community, family responsibilities, ways of teaching and learning, and methods of communication” (*We Are All Related*, part 1). First Nations children and families will not fit a Eurocentric mold.

Teachers need to grapple with some deeply rooted assumptions about First Nations children and families. Some parents feel frustrated that they are talked at rather than talked with about their children. Sometimes there are different communication styles at work which require patience and commitment to understand.

14. The teacher is aware that any single particular Aboriginal student or adult should not be expected to be expert on all Aboriginal cultures or peoples.

Given the history of First Nations people, there have been many factors which impact the degree to which various First Nations individuals know or practice their culture. It should not be assumed that any First Nations child or adult will know about all aspects of their culture or any aspects of other First Nations cultures. Students may know but are unwilling to share the information in the classroom context.

Often, First Nations education material is automatically given to the First Nations teacher on staff. Like all teachers, the degree of involvement will depend on the individual.

15. The teacher recognizes that the development of the whole child includes physical, intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual development.

“Learning goes on throughout the life cycle, from infancy and early childhood to old age. Aboriginal people see education as a process that begins before birth and continues long after formal education is over. Learning at one stage has implications for subsequent stages...Lifelong learning and learning aimed to balance all dimensions of the person are intermeshed. At each stage of life, learning should develop the whole human being” (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples). Spirituality is integral to all cultures and is practiced in a variety of ways and varying degrees by individuals and groups. The role of schools regarding spirituality should be to acknowledge and respect that it exists but it is up to the particular family and their culture to teach it to their children. Some First Nations students are actively involved in cultural or spiritual events within their communities and can be absent for extended periods of times.

16. The teacher recognizes that the academic language of the school may require a form of second-language learning.

There is a great deal of cultural discontinuity between First Nations and schools. The language of schools is culturally specific and teachers should not assume that all students have the same cultural background or context for understanding terminology and routines of schools. Teachers need to spend time with individual First Nations students to gain an understanding of their English language proficiency and provide additional support when necessary. Cross-cultural communication can be a challenge at times but consistent effort and a positive attitude can overcome most difficulties.

17. The teacher recognizes the negative impact that the residential school experience had on many individuals and the ongoing impact on the relationship of many First Nations people to the schools.

Events of the past have a direct impact on today and the future. The history of First Nations in Canada has been one of colonization and oppression. Aggressive government policies sought to destroy First Nations culture and the primary vehicle was education through residential schooling. Residential schools were in operation from the mid-1800s until as recently as the early 1970s. Residential schools caused tremendous cultural devaluation and disruption for First Nations people and communities and their impact is still being felt today.

As a result, there is a long history of distrust with public schooling and it will take time and considerable commitment to rectify. First Nations people are committed to healthier communities but the negative impact of the residential school experience will take generations to heal. Many changes are underway in First Nations communities aimed at strength and self-sufficiency. Teachers, with the co-operation of First Nations, can undertake to find out more about the local residential school experience or examine some of the literature available.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples identifies four principles that are required for a renewed relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian society; mutual recognition, mutual respect, sharing and mutual responsibility. Acceptance and acting on these principles will go far in changing the future relationship between Aboriginal people and the rest of Canadian society.

18. The teacher uses culturally sensitive teaching strategies.

First Nations students, like all students learn in a variety of ways and at different rates. There is no one strategy that will fit all students. Teachers should practice strategies that engage the students and strengthen the gifts that each student brings to the classroom. There is no magic in good teaching, it is primarily caring about each individual student and nurturing their strengths. Students should be afforded choice and diversity with an opportunity to learn about themselves in the context of schools. Teachers must encourage students to celebrate and explore their identities, not treating it as a deficit which has to be ignored and overcome. Teachers respectfully interested in the identity and culture of First Nations students will assist with promoting pride and self-esteem.

“You got three ears you know. Two on the side of your head and one in your heart. Make sure you always use that one too!” (*Courageous Spirits*, p XXV).

School Review of Inclusiveness for Aboriginal Students

Many elements make a school environment feel safe and welcoming—or cold and alien—for an Aboriginal student. Some of these are small and relatively easy to accomplish. Others are more difficult, and may require special resources or attention. They all add up, though, to the success of the school contributing to the success of the student.

The Task Force on First Nations Education has identified 19 items that they feel contribute to a school environment that is inclusive of Aboriginal students. Please go through the items:

Identify the degree of importance that each item has to contributing to an inclusive environment using 1, 2 or 3.

Then consider the current situation in your school. Does the school meet this condition? “Yes,” “no” or “partially.”

For those areas where the answer is “no” or “partially,” what are the barriers to the school taking this action or having this quality? What are the conditions that would lead to success in this area, e.g., knowing who to contact, resources?

Finally, what action could you and others at your school take to make the school more inclusive in the way identified.

Topic	Importance <small>(high? medium? low?)</small>	Current Situation
1. Does the school physical environment include visible representation of Aboriginal culture and people?		
2. Are there Aboriginal people working in the school as teachers, support workers or in other positions? Do they feel comfortable in the school?		
3. Does an Aboriginal advisory committee exist and is it consulted about the policies and practices of the school?		
4. Do students feel comfortable in self-identifying as Aboriginal?		
5. Do parents feel comfortable in coming to the school?		
6. Does the school encourage and support teachers including elements of Aboriginal culture and heritage in their teaching?		

Topic	Importance <small>(high? medium? low?)</small>	Current Situation
7. Do Aboriginal students participate in extra-curricular activities?		
8. Are Aboriginal students achieving academic success?		
9. Are there appropriate supports to assist students who are not succeeding academically?		
10. Are Aboriginal students overrepresented in special education?		
11. Are Aboriginal students included in gifted programs?		
12. Is targeted funding for Aboriginal students, for special needs and for ESL getting to the school in ways that help the intended students?		
13. Has the school offered cross-cultural training for teachers?		

Topic	Importance <small>(high? medium? low?)</small>	Current Situation
14. Does the school invite elders into the school to participate in programs? Does it recognize their expertise and cultural knowledge with an honorarium?		
15. Are Aboriginal students graduating from secondary school with courses that allow them to go to post-secondary programs?		
16. Are language and culture programs offered in physical facilities that are central in the school or in rooms or portables that are on the margins of the school?		
17. If Aboriginal languages are offered, are students meeting the objectives?		
18. After secondary school, are Aboriginal students experiencing success in post-secondary education and careers?		

Topic	Importance <small>(high? medium? low?)</small>	Current Situation
19. Are parents informed about programs that are available and about the implications of choosing particular programs?		

Employment Equity for Aboriginal Teachers

A boriginal students are a significant and growing portion of the student population in British Columbia. In 1998 there were 38,144 students who were self-identified as Aboriginal. This is more than six percent of the total student population.

Because there is no process of identifying the ethnic background of B.C.'s teaching force, no one can say exactly what percent of teachers are Aboriginal in ancestry. However, if the same percentage of the teaching force were Aboriginal as the percentage of the student population, more than 2,100 Aboriginal teachers would be working in our schools. It should be obvious to anyone that the number is much lower than that. UBC's NITEP, the oldest of the teacher training programs specifically designed to encourage Aboriginal people to enter teaching, has graduated only something over 200 in more than 20 years.

Does it matter that Aboriginal students—indeed, all students—see so few Aboriginal teachers in their schools? Many think that it does.

There is a long history of exclusion and cultural destruction in our country. One of the symptoms of that experience is the alienation of many Aboriginal students in our schools. This is reflected in the low school completion rates, lower rates of participation in post-secondary education, and ultimately in the relatively small number who become teachers.

The schools need more teachers of Aboriginal origin to help break that cycle. They are needed to provide models of success for all students, and to offer particular support to students of Aboriginal origin.

Among the recommendations from the Task Force on First Nations Education that the BCTF has adopted is “That each local work with its board of school trustees and Aboriginal communities to develop a district plan for recruiting, retaining and supporting Aboriginal teachers.”

In Canada, employment equity programs are in place in most of the public sector. To achieve equity through these programs, different treatment may be provided, aimed at redressing imbalances. Identifying barriers and taking action to remove them is a key part of employment equity.

Canadian programs are generally described as employment equity, rather than affirmative action, because they are based on goals and targets and removing barriers, rather than on hiring quotas.

An employment equity program for the public schools might include several elements:

Who should be involved?

1. Setting goals and a timetable

An employment equity plan often begins with an employment systems review and collection of data that can help in setting targets. Targets are not quotas, but rather goals to work toward. They are generally developed by reviewing factors such as the makeup of the community and of the school population. A timetable for achieving targets should be ambitious but realistic.

2. Recruitment to teacher training

The hiring of Aboriginal teachers is possible only if there are trained teachers available. Increasing the pool of Aboriginal people with teaching certificates is crucial to redressing the current imbalance. Aboriginal college and university students could be encouraged to enter teacher training. Individuals already working in the schools as Aboriginal support workers could be supported to take the teacher training program.

3. Hiring of teachers

School boards have responsibility for the hiring of teachers. The BCTF and locals can work with the B.C. School Trustees Association, school boards and Aboriginal communities to promote board policies and practices that lead to the hiring of Aboriginal teachers. Policies and practices that act as barriers should be identified and approaches developed to remove barriers.

An employment equity program for the public schools might include several elements:

Who should be involved?

4. Retention of teachers

An important aspect of retaining teachers is a welcoming and supportive work environment. Policies, practices and training can all contribute to awareness and action that helps to provide such an environment in the schools.

Provisions in the collective agreement may also create barriers to retention. Possible responses to this should be examined by the BCTF and locals.

5. Monitoring the goals and timetable

Most employment equity programs covered by legislation call for an annual report setting out the initiatives taken to promote equity and describing the success in working toward the goal. This provides an opportunity to identify further actions and appropriate modification of goals and timetables.

Some resources to find out more information

Shared Learnings—Ministry of Education

Shared Learnings was developed by the B.C. Ministry of Education to provide teaching ideas related to Aboriginal peoples in most subject areas at both the elementary and secondary levels. Some 40,000 copies were distributed to school districts and schools, and the materials can also be found on the Ministry web site.

Understanding the B.C. Treaty Process: An opportunity for Dialogue

This 36-page booklet provides information about the B.C. Treaty Process and the stages of negotiation. Individual copies or class sets are free on request. Contact Anne Field at the BCTF to order copies.

BCTF Lesson Aids Service

The BCTF Lesson Aids Service has books and teaching materials related to Aboriginal history and culture appropriate for elementary and secondary students. Check the Lesson Aids catalogue sent to your school, or the Lesson Aids section of the BCTF web site: www.bctf.bc.ca/LessonAids/

First Nations and Metis Education Web Page: www.bctf.bc.ca/Social/FirstNations/

The BCTF web site has a section of materials produced by BCTF Provincial Specialist Associations related to Aboriginal education, as well as links to other web sites with relevant materials.

The full text of the report of the BCTF First Nations Education Task Force is also available on the BCTF web site.

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First Nations of British Columbia

Peoples of the First Nations have always recognized themselves by names in their own language. These names denote their identities: village, house, clan or tribe. Following European contact 200 years ago, the majority of tribal groups in British Columbia were given arbitrary English names or identified under generic terms created by early explorers and ethnographers. The inevitable mis-identifications have created serious concerns for First Nations, as well as confusion in much of the published texts. Today, as First Nations take control of their own destiny and strive for self-determination, they have asked the non-Native public to recognize them by the names they prefer. We are striving to present these names on this map. To recognize our First Nations neighbours with whom we share the Georgia Straits region, we have focussed on distinctive local names.

Corrections and additions may be forwarded to:

Map Project, Museum of Anthropology, 6393 N.W. Marine Drive, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z2. Fax (604) 822-2974.

This table lists languages in what linguists refer to as *language families*. Names in **bold** print are those currently preferred by First Nations. Names in parentheses are discontinued or inappropriate names often found in earlier literature.

Members of the ATHAPASCAN language family:

1. **Dalkelh** (Central and Southern Carrier)
2. **Dene-thah** (Slavey)
3. **Dunne-za** (Beaver)
4. **Kaska, Dena**
5. **Sekani**
6. **Tagish**
7. **Tahltan**
8. **Tsilhqot'in** (Chilcotin)
9. **Tutchone**
10. **Nat'ooten, Wet'suwet'en** (Western Carrier)

Members of the SALISHAN language family:

1. **Comox**
2. **Halkomelem**
3. **Nlaka'pamux** (Thompson)
4. **Nuxalk** (Bella Coola)
5. **Okanagan**
6. **Secwepemc** (Shuswap)
7. **Se'shalt**
8. **Squamish**
9. **Stl'atl'imx** (Lillooet)
10. **Straits Salish**

LANGUAGE ISOLATES

Three languages are unrelated to any other. Each is termed a *language isolate*. They are:

Xaadas, Haida

Ktunaxa (Kootenay)

Lingit

Members of the WAKASHAN language family:

1. **Haisla** (Northern Kwakiutl)
2. **Heiltsuk** (Bella Bella, Northern Kwakiutl)
3. **Kwakwaka'wakw** (Kwakiutl)
4. **Nuu-chah-nulth** (Nootka)
5. **Oweekeno** (Northern Kwakiutl)
6. **Dididaht, Pacheedaht** (Nootka)

Members of the TSIMSHIAN language family:

1. **Tsimshian**
2. **Gitksan, Nisga'a** (**Giksan-Nass**)

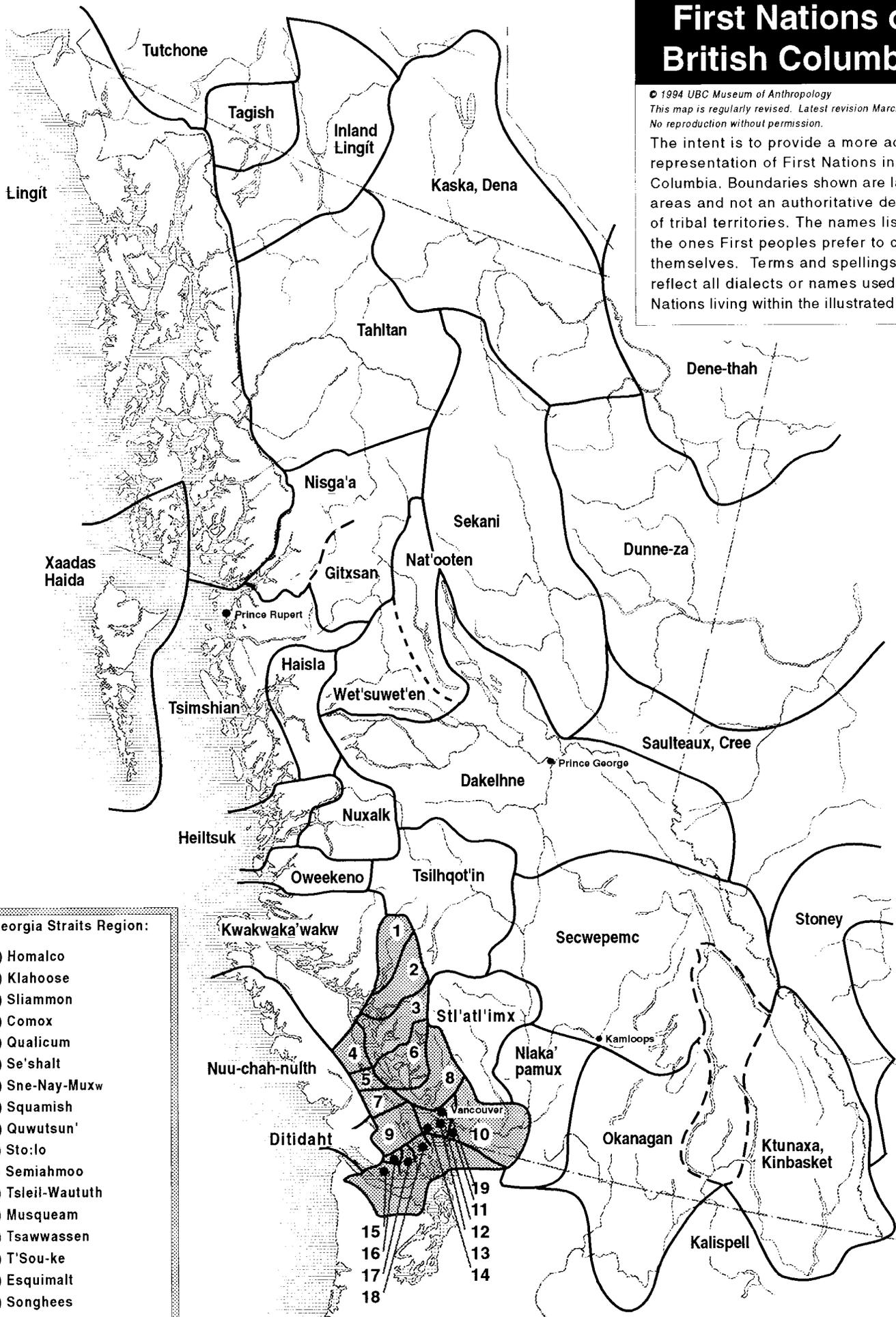
Members of the ALGONKIAN language family:

1. **Cree**

First Nations of British Columbia

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The intent is to provide a more accurate representation of First Nations in British Columbia. Boundaries shown are language areas and not an authoritative depiction of tribal territories. The names listed are the ones First peoples prefer to call themselves. Terms and spellings do not reflect all dialects or names used by First Nations living within the illustrated regions.



- Georgia Straits Region:**
- 1) Homalco
 - 2) Klahoose
 - 3) Sliammon
 - 4) Comox
 - 5) Qualicum
 - 6) Se'shalt
 - 7) Sne-Nay-Muxw
 - 8) Squamish
 - 9) Quwutsun'
 - 10) Sto:lo
 - 11) Semiahmoo
 - 12) Tsleil-Waututh
 - 13) Musqueam
 - 14) Tsawwassen
 - 15) T'Sou-ke
 - 16) Esquimalt
 - 17) Songhees
 - 18) Saanich
 - 19) Coquitlam

Response Form

For the Task Force on First Nations Policy Discussion Guide

The online version of this form is available at

www.bctf.bc.ca/cs/forms/FN-PolicyDiscussionGuideForm.html.

Individual BCTF members may provide responses to the policy proposals up to November 30, 1999. Please submit this e-mail form with your comments, or download, print and fax the form to Leona Dolan, 604-871-2294.

Provide feedback and recommendations on each section of the Discussion Guide?

A. **Teacher Awareness and Commitment Principles**

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B. **School Inclusiveness**

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C. **Employment Equity**

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What advice do you have for the Task Force?

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