



## Coast Mountains Board of Education School District 82

3211 Kenney Street, Terrace, BC V8G 3E9  
Tel. (250) 635-4931 or 1-855-635-4931 • www.cmsd.bc.ca

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March 12, 2019

### **RE: An Open Letter from the Board of Education of Coast Mountains School District 82**

In light of the recent renewal signing of the *BC Tripartite Education Agreement: Supporting First Nation Student Success*, the Board of Education for Coast Mountains School District 82 wishes to publicly declare its commitment to ongoing collaboration with communities in the school district to close the education outcome gaps between First Nations and non-First Nations students.

The renewed *BC Tripartite Education Agreement* is the result of an extensive engagement process between BC's First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), Canada's Ministry of Indigenous Services and BC's Ministry of Education. The agreement benefits First Nations students across the province, recognizing that First Nations people have the right to make educational decisions that affect their students, within their education institutions, consistent with their unique needs, experiences, beliefs and values.

The Board of Education further recognizes the importance of breaking down barriers and ensuring all students are provided skills and opportunities to achieve success. The school district continues its focus on Indigenous cultural and traditional learnings including enhancing Indigenous languages for our learners. Currently Indigenous language learning in Coast Mountains School District includes mentorship and collaboration with Dr. Lorna Williams, University of Victoria Professor Emerita of Indigenous Education (Curriculum and Instruction) and recipient of the Indspire Award that represents the highest honour the Indigenous community bestows upon its own people.

Coast Mountains School District 82 is located in the northwest of British Columbia and includes the main communities of the Hazeltons, Kitimat, Kitwanga, Stewart, Terrace and Thornhill serving a student population of approximately 4,300 students. The school district is located on the traditional territories of three Indigenous Nations: the Gitksan, the Haisla, and the Tsimshian. The Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en Nation of the Hazelton area is made up of seven First Nations communities consisting of Gitanmaax, Gitanyow, Gitsegukla, Gitwangak, Glen Vowell, Hagwilget and Kispiox located through the Hazelton communities and the Kispiox Valley. The Haisla Nation is centered in the Kitamaat Village and the Tsimshian Nation has two distinct First Nations communities, the Kitselas and Kitsumkalum, in the Terrace and Thornhill areas.

The Board of Education for Coast Mountains School District recognizes Section 35 of the *Canadian Constitution* which defines the rights of Indigenous peoples of Canada.

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The Board of Education reinforces its commitment to work in partnership with Indigenous communities in support of the *Calls to Action* from the *Truth and Reconciliation Report*. It further commits to working in partnership with the First Nations to affirm Indigenous voice in decision making in accordance to the implementation of the *BC Tripartite Education Agreement: Supporting First Nation Student Success*.

Further, the Board of Education recognizes its responsibility to ensure ongoing public dialogue and actions to support the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

As a public institution, the Board of Education for Coast Mountains School District recognizes the responsibility of all its employees and Canadian citizens to work with Indigenous peoples to ensure we achieve reconciliation by honouring the truth of Indigenous peoples' historical and current experiences in Canada.

The Board of Education is committed to learning from all First Nations it serves to continue enhancing the curriculum in our schools with local Indigenous history, language and culture. The importance of our partnerships is greatly valued and the ongoing collaborative work to elevate success levels for Indigenous learners in our schools.

Respectfully yours,

Shar McCrory  
Chairperson, Board of Education

Open Letter distribution:

- Chief Councillors & Education Coordinators: Gitanmaax, Gitanyow, Gitsegukla, Gitwangak, Glen Vowell, Hagwilget, Haisla, Kispiox, Kitselas & Kitsumkalum First Nations
- Calvin Albright, Executive Director, Kermode Friendship Society
- Sid Peltier, Interim President, Northwest BC Metis Association
- Regional Chief Terry Teegee, British Columbia Assembly of First Nations
- National Chief Perry Bellegarde, Assembly of First Nations
- Honourable Seamus O'Regan, Federal Minister of Indigenous Services
- Honourable Rob Fleming, BC Minister of Education
- Tyrone McNeil, President, First Nations Education Steering Committee
- Nathan Cullen, MP for Skeena-Bulkley Valley
- Ellis Ross, MLA for Skeena

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Open Letter distribution: *(continued)*

- Cindy Lindley, Executive Director, Indian Residential School Survivors Society
- Gordon Swan, President, BC School Trustees Association
- Tina Last, President, North West Branch, BC School Trustees Association
- Mayor Carol Leclerc, City of Terrace
- Mayor Philip Germuth, District of Kitimat
- Mayor Gail Lowry, District of New Hazelton
- Mayor Gina McKay, District of Stewart
- Mayor Dennis Sterritt, Village of Hazelton
- Board Chair Philip Germuth, Regional District Kitimat-Stikine
- Glen Hansman, President, British Columbia Teachers' Federation
- Michael Wen & Kim Meyer, Co-Presidents, Coast Mountain Teachers' Federation
- Monica Brady, President, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 2052
- Krystal Miller, Chairperson, Coast Mountains District Parent Advisory Council
- Local and Regional Media Outlets

Coast Mountains Board of Education School District 82:

- Board of Education School Trustees
- Katherine McIntosh, Superintendent of Schools
- Raymond McDonald, Secretary Treasurer
- All Employees