

# FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

November 16, 2022

Clint Johnson  
President  
BC Teachers' Federation  
Via Email Only: [presidentoffice@bctf.ca](mailto:presidentoffice@bctf.ca)

BC Teachers' Federation Locals 1 through 93  
Via Listed [Emails](#)

## RE: Foundation Skills Assessment Campaign

Dear Mr. Johnson and representatives of Locals 1 through 93,

The First Nations Leadership Council is writing to the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) locals to express our disappointment and frustration with the union's continued campaign to discredit and cancel the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) in BC provincial public schools.

We have previously expressed our concerns on this matter to the Minister of Education and Child Care, including in correspondence dated November 18, 2021, on which the BCTF was copied. Given that the BCTF is aware of our perspective regarding the harm of this campaign, it is particularly distressing that materials calling on parents to withdraw their children from the assessments were distributed immediately prior to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30th, 2022.

This targeted attack on provincial assessments explicitly contradicts the stated position of First Nations leadership and the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), who support the assessments as a mechanism to address the systemic racism experienced by First Nations learners and families within public education system. The call for parents to excuse their children from FSAs jeopardizes the quality and reliability of data intended to inform system-wide interventions to support the needs of First Nations learners as well as other populations underserved and marginalized by public education systems. In their 2015 Audit of the Education of Aboriginal Students in the BC Public School System, the BC Auditor General specifically noted that "the value of these assessments is undermined when a high proportion of students do not participate."

As articulated in our correspondence to the Minister, FSAs are key to identifying system-wide strengths and weaknesses within the education system, and help us to measure and advance equity for students through planning, intervention, and support. They are one



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among many tools necessary to address the “racism of low expectations” experienced by First Nations learners as identified by the BC Auditor General in their 2015 report.

We also remind the local chapters that the BC Tripartite Education Agreement (BCTEA), signed by the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care, Indigenous Services Canada, and the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), commits the Province to providing aggregate FSA data to FNESC, including participation rates, which the current campaign seeks to undermine.

Articles 14, 17, and 21 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration) uphold the education rights of Indigenous peoples and children, including the right to their own culturally-appropriate educational systems, institutions and methods of teaching and learning, the right to all levels and forms of education without discrimination, the right to improvement of social conditions and education, and the obligation of the state to take measures to provide access to culturally-appropriate education and protect children’s right to education.

The actions of the BCTF in this campaign are contrary to the UN Declaration and our collective goals to advance reconciliation. It is worrisome that, in distributing these divisive materials, the BCTF has failed to acknowledge the now well-known perspective of First Nations and First Nations organizations who use this data to inform our action and advocacy efforts.

The First Nations Leadership Council is calling on the BC Teachers’ Federation to immediately cease this campaign in recognition of the authority and perspective of First Nations to determine the priorities of First Nations education. We respectfully ask that this letter be shared with your local membership.

Sincerely,  
**FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

**On behalf of the FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT**



Cheryl Casimer



Robert Phillips



Hugh Braker

**On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS**



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip



Chief Don Tom



Kukpi7 Judy Wilson

**On behalf of the BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS:**



Regional Chief Terry Teegee

- CC. Ministry of Education and Child Care
- BC Association of School Business Officials
- BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils
- BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner
- BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association
- BC School Superintendents Association
- BC School Trustees Association
- BC Teachers' Federation
- First Nations Education Steering Committee