

School District 70 Pacific Rim

K-12 Education Restart Plan: Stage 2

Indigenous Consultation

In April 2020, the SD70 IEC (co-chaired by the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council and SD70 Board of Education Chair) met to review the learning and health and safety needs of the 1300 Indigenous Learners within our district. Representatives from the Metis Nation, our LEA nations, indigenous organizations and local indigenous communities provided input into the emergency learning plan and provided feedback on what their families, students and communities needed to feel and be successful and safe in the evolving conditions of COVID.

In June 2020, the SD70 IEC met to review what a return to school would look like and provided feedback on SD70's return to school plans, graduation processes, student-family support processes and potential 2020-2021 plans.

In early July 2020, SD70 staff communicated with our three major LEA groups: Huu-ay-aht First Nation, Yuclulath First Nation and the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council who represents Tseshaht First Nation, Hupacasat First Nation and Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation. SD70 staff asked for input for what is needed for students-families for a return to school "of some kind" in September 2020. As well, SD70 staff communicated with individual First Nations, Metis Nation, Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council and USMA (delegated authority for MCFD in Nuu-Chah-Nulth communities) to gather input about lessons learned and concerns about a school restart in September 2020.

The breadth and depth of this communication and consultation with respect to COVID planning set the stage for consultation between SD70 and our Indigenous rightsholders in developing the Stage 2 plan. SD70 staff reached out to individual First Nations, indigenous organizations, Metis Nation, USMA and the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal council to discuss the needs of students-families, health and safety plans and educational options for Indigenous learners communities. The SD70 IEC met in mid-August and hosted a Zoom meeting with expanded representation from many indigenous communities and organizations including representatives from USMA and the Vice President of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council.

In addition to the ongoing district-First Nation dialogue between SD70 Indigenous Education staff and nations, the SD70 Superintendent liaised directly with the Director of Education, Training and Social Development with the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council who represented both LEA nations within SD70 and Nuu-Chah-Nulth nations whose students attend SD70 schools. These conversations had a direct impact on the creation of the SD70 Stage 2 plan.

SD70 Indigenous Education staff will continue to communicate weekly with indigenous rights holders, the SD70 Superintendent will continue to discuss issues on an as needed basis with

political leaders of our Indigenous communities and the President and Vice President of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council and SD70 will convene the IEC monthly to ensure there is ongoing collective communication between all indigenous rightsholders and indigenous partners. SD70 will continue to be flexible with learning supports and resources to meet the needs of Indigenous communities.

SD70 has over 1300 students of Indigenous descent; approximately 32% of the total student population of our school district. SD70 geographically spans the territories of seven Nuu-Chah-Nulth nations, operates schools on the traditional territories of five Nuu-Chah-Nulth nations and has students from all 14 Nuu-Chah-Nulth nations as well as 40 other Canadian First Nations attend its schools. SD70 has three Local Education Agreements:

1. Huu-ay-aht First Nation LEA: Treaty Nation (Maa-Nulth Treaty)
2. Yuclulath First Nation LEA: Treaty Nation (Maa-Nulth Treaty)
3. Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council: Representing Tseshaht, Hupacasath and Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation

The rights holders that sit at the Indigenous Education Advisory Committee (IEAC) table include and have active consultation with SD70 are:

1. Huu-ay-aht First Nation
2. Toquaht First Nation
3. Uchcuklesah First Nation
4. Ahousah First Nation
5. Tseshaht First Nation
6. Hupacasath First Nation
7. Yuclulath First Nation
8. Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation
9. Metis Nation
10. USMA: Delegated authority for MCFD In Nuu-Chah-Nulth territory
11. Port Alberni Friendship Centre
12. Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council (Director of Education, Training and Social Development, NTC VP, NTC President, NTC Cultural Supervisor)

The rights holders and Indigenous organizations belonging to the SD70 IEAC consult as a group monthly and meet individually with senior SD70 staff and SD70 Indigenous Education staff, usually weekly to discuss issues; In this case, COVID. As outlined in question number 1,

extensive consultation has occurred and will continue to occur with our Indigenous rights holders and Indigenous organizations and partners.

Our Indigenous partners and local First Nations were unanimous in the declaration that their communities were fearful of coming back to school, regardless of the health and safety procedures, practices and processes that SD70 had in place and which were made clear by the BCCDC, Worksafe BC, Ministry of Education and SD70. All First Nations, without exception, asked for alternatives to both bricks and mortar school attendance and alternatives to regular Distributed Learning. The prevalence of this request from individual students and families suggests 50% or more of Indigenous students-families felt strongly about not returning to school and wanted to explore options not contemplated in Stage 2.

In the IEAC meeting on August 19th, the Vice President of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council spoke of the prevalence of multi-generational families residing in the same homes, the high rate of immune compromised elders and indigenous peoples in general living with school aged children, the need to protect the health and wellness of knowledge keepers and knowledge holders and the responsibility of SD70 to create equitable options for Indigenous learners; particularly in these times of distress.

In further consultation between the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal and SD70, and individual First Nations and SD70 it became very clear that alternative school based options had to be created to ensure our Indigenous learners, particularly those learners living in remote or reserve communities, had the support needed to continue moving forward; regardless of their learning needs. The following excerpt from the NTC Director of Education, Training and Social Development summarizes the position of our Indigenous partners:

Conservatively, 50% of Nuu-Chah-Nulth families will not be sending their children back to school on September 10th with an additional 10% who are not sure. In some regions, it is 60% of Nuu-Chah-Nulth families who will not be sending their children to school on September 10th or higher. The remaining 40% of families are comprised of those who simply perceive no other option and a small number who are confident to send their children to school on September 10th. Using Nominal Roll data from 2019, this amounts to upwards of 230 students who will not be attending. Indicators from families who are living away from their communities (off-reserve) are consistent with the results from those living in communities (on-reserve) and if we look to SD70's number of Self-Identified Indigenous students in 2019 at 1042 as a baseline, we are looking at 625 Indigenous students who will not be attending SD70 schools due to concerns for student safety with the majority of them being from Nuu-Chah-Nulth First Nations.

It is the position of the NTC after engaging in the meeting yesterday with the Indigenous Education Advisory Committee, and having follow-up discussions internally, with Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation Education Manager, Tseshaht First Nations Education Lead, and others, that School District 70 provide the following to support Nuu-Chah-Nulth families who will not be sending their children back to schools on September 10th:

1. Models for distance learning be implemented which are reflective of the Stage 3 delivery of remote learning opportunities for families and independent from the CHOICES program and the Distributed Learning school.
2. Plans be developed to provide outreach teachers and academic support to students who will not be attending classes in person due to safety concerns.
3. That these supports be put into place on an interim basis for the remainder of the calendar year of 2020 to be reviewed jointly at the end of November 2020 to assess the need for continuation into the 2021 portion of the 2020/21 academic year.
4. Communication to Nuu-Chah-Nulth First Nations and Nuu-Chah-Nulth families is clear in regard to these above options that are available to them for their children's educational needs and what requirements will be needed from families to enroll their children in these education services.

Thus, our indigenous partners have suggested school-based options needed to be created which include outreach or one-on-one school-based appointments, interaction with Inclusion Support Teachers, literacy specialists, numeracy specialists, speech and language and ongoing Special Education assessment. All of the feedback has informed our Stage 2 plan.