

FAQ First Nation School Board

Q. Why do we need a First Nation School Board?

Every child matters. Creating a First Nation School Board in the Yukon is critical to producing better outcomes for Yukon First Nations students while also benefitting every Yukon student it serves. There are significant problems with the current delivery of education in the territory. This is an opportunity to change the system and do better for our students.

Q. Why change the current system?

The Yukon education system is failing too many students, especially rural, special needs, and First Nations students. There are many recent studies, reports and incidents that illustrate this:

- The 2009 and 2019 Auditor General's Reports on Education offered an alarming assessment of Government of Yukon's inability to meet the needs of First Nations, rural, and special needs learners in the territory.
- 2019/2020 Review of Inclusive and Special Education findings showed that, in many cases, students' learning needs were not being met, with devastating consequences.
- 2020/21 Attendance Audit by the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office identified six (6) areas of concern as systemic barriers to school attendance.
- Abuse at Hidden Valley School illustrates the government's incompetence at safeguarding our children or responding to incidents in a responsible or timely manner.

Q. What are the Indigenous methods and practices of teaching? What does a school taught through a First Nation worldview look like?

Indigenous methods and practices of teaching (pedagogy) incorporate Indigenous worldviews into engagement with subjects like Math, Science, or Social Studies, often through land-based cultural activities, Ceremony and Elder engagement, and immersion in First Nations languages. First Nations values of respect, collaboration and kindness are central. The advantages of learning from two worldviews equip students to be rooted in the culture of their home and prepared for the modern world.

Q. What curriculum will the Board follow?

Board-run schools will continue to use the BC Curriculum, but will tailor the programming, lesson delivery and assessment methods to include Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing.

Q. What kind of things will be different at a Yukon First Nation School Board school?

Each school will operate differently from the next, reflecting the needs of the particular community and student body, however, one can expect to see increased on-the-land and experiential learning, increased First Nation Language instruction, Elders in the classroom, and specialized teaching and assessment practices tailored to Indigenous pedagogy and ways of learning and doing. First Nations-run schools across Canada report significant improvements in academic outcomes and graduation rates for their students.

Q. How will the FNSB achieve its goals (e.g., better academic achievements, family inclusion, attendance, graduation rates etc.)?

The First Nation School Board will adopt a Strategic Vision including policies and programs that promote proven methods to achieve its targets – and conduct the data collection and analysis needed to track progress towards these goals (Yukon government is greatly lacking in this area). With the flexibility and localized control, the FNSB will be able to better meet the needs of each individual school community it serves.

Q. What kind of graduation certificates will students be able to achieve?

As the Board-run schools must be accountable to the *Education Act*, the same graduation requirements and certificates will be upheld (e.g., Dogwood, Evergreen, and Adult Grad).

Q. What systems will be in place to hold the FNSB accountable? What will ensure they act in the best interest of all students?

The new First Nation School Board is accountable to the *Education Act* including Section 7 which requires schools to care and look after all students to the highest standards. The Board will be accountable to both the Minister of Education as well as to the Community Committee established for any school community. If a parent or teacher has an issue, they raise it with the Community Committee, which can then bring the issue to the Minister if the Board is not responding adequately.

Q. How will the mandate of the Board be set and will it be able to change direction during its term?

The mandate of the Board is set through the *Education Act*. The priorities, strategic plans and vision documents will be developed by the new Board and will be renewed or revisited on a regular basis although Board are known to follow through with strategic plans and programming goals.

Q. Who is authorized for the local management of individual schools?

The First Nation School Board provides for the local management of schools through “Community Committee Agreements.”

The First Nation School Board may enter into agreements with a Yukon First Nation to set up these committees and specify their power and duties. These committees can be established to make most decisions around the operation and management of the school.

These committees would exercise agreed-to aspects of the First Nation School Board’s authority under the Agreement for their respective schools. This could include ensuring that the school supports Indigenous students and meets their education needs and aspirations; implements culturally-relevant curriculum and the use of Yukon First Nation languages; and provides for local participation and decision-making.

Q. Will the Community Committees be formed in the first year of Board operation?

The Board will determine the policies for the establishment and operations of Community Committees, including when they are created and whether its members are elected or appointed. There is also the option to create Parent Advisory Committees.

Q. Will First Nation School Board-run schools only allow Yukon First Nations students or give them special priority?

No. All students in the Yukon will be welcome at these schools. They will provide a vigorous education meeting a high-level of academic standards – taught through the cultural worldview and pedagogy of Yukon First Nations.

First Nations students will not have priority enrollment over any other student living in the attendance area of the school. No students will be bumped out of a school to free spaces for First Nations students.

Q. Will First Nation School Board-run schools only allow First Nations teachers?

No. This is an inclusive model whereby all qualified teachers are welcome to teach in these schools.

Q. What types of training will be provided for school staff/teachers working under the new school board?

This will be determined once the Board is established. It can be anticipated that all staff under the new Board will receive ample training to equip them with the skills, knowledge and support to teach under the new programming.

Within the *Education Act* and Yukon government mandates, all teaching staff are to receive 6 Professional Development days a year. The Board can negotiate with the Minister of Education for specific training commitments. As well, the Board anticipates applying to the Yukon Teacher's Association for training. Indigenous-teaching specific training is likely to be a big part of the ongoing training for teaching staff.

Q: How will staffing be addressed by the First Nation School Board?

Staffing and Human Resources policies and procedures will be determined by the new Board and will be negotiated with the Minister of Education around specific recruitment and retainment policies. For example, a policy might include hiring teachers in December and January instead of the current practice of hiring in May and June.

Q. How disruptive will this be to teachers currently employed at the school?

It will not be a drastic change at first, but likely, a gradual one. The Board will support teachers in the transition to teaching with the new Board. It will take time for the process of training teachers and staff in Yukon First Nations ways of teaching and learning and we can anticipate it will require support and patience.

Q. Would it be better to form the First Nation School Board and all its policies and procedures first, before a school community or School Council is asked to sign on to it?

Yes, but in this case, the *Education Act* determines the process and we are beholden to it. Yukoners can be confident that the First Nation School Board is the necessary next step for education in the territory. First Nations have been asking for this for decades. We are obligated as Yukoners to support this step forward.

Q. What is the advantage of schools joining the Board right now, as opposed to waiting until the Board is established?

If Schools don't join right now, they will have to wait until the 2023/24 school year. At that point, the school council has to seek permission from both the Board and the Minister before entering into the referendum process for the school attendance area.

The benefit of joining now is that the school has an opportunity to play an active role in shaping the new Board, by closely working with it to determine its programming, budgeting and staffing needs. These schools will sooner reap the benefits of a new school system.

Q. How does the new First Nation School Board reflect Reconciliation?

It honours the rights of Yukon First Nations to have authority of education while also enabling true collaboration with Yukon government and the wider Yukon community.

Q. Can non-Indigenous people run for election as trustees for the First Nation School Board?

Yes. In the establishment of the Board, five (5) trustees are first elected (must be residents of the Yukon whose ancestral language is a Yukon First Nations language). Once the Board is established and the schools are assigned to the FNSB, all parents that have a child attending the school(s) will have the ability to run to be a trustee. This will happen in the second round of trustee elections (after the first three years of establishment).

Q. Do I have to speak a Yukon First Nations language to run for election as a trustee for the Board?

No, you don't have to speak a First Nations language. In the first round of election, you must have an ancestor who spoke a Yukon First Nations language, which essentially means, anyone belonging to a Yukon First Nation can run for election.

Q. Does the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate (YFNED) run the Board?

No. YFNED is a separate organization from the new First Nation School Board. Under the direction of the Chiefs Committee on Education, YFNED has been tasked with supporting the process for the establishment of the FNSB. Once the Board is established, YFNED can continue to support the Board, but the extent to which will be determined by the elected trustees and appointed CEO.

Q. Can a school in the FN School Board decide to leave/opt out after joining?

This process will be developed by the new Board.

Q. What are examples of successful First Nation School Boards and Schools in Canada?

Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey: <https://www.kinu.ca/>

Northern Cree School Board: <https://eeyoueducation.ca/>

WSANEC School Board: <https://wsanecschoollboard.ca/>

sənsisyustən: <https://www.wfn.ca/our-community/schools/sensisyusten-house-of-learning.htm>

SenPokChin School: <https://senpokchin.ca/>

The Anishinabek Education System: <http://aes-keb.com/about-aes/>