



For immediate release

Friday July 8, 2011

MOU signatories to focus on education issues for First Nations children and youth in B.C.

VANCOUVER – The Representative for Children and Youth British Columbia has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) to establish a joint dialogue and advocacy process regarding general and systemic issues relating to the education of B.C. First Nations children and youth, especially those in care and at risk. The MOU was signed at the FNESC Board meeting with the support of more than 60 First Nations representatives in attendance.

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond stated, “We are not doing everything we can to nurture the learning spirit of First Nations children throughout B.C.. FNESC is a national leader in improving achievement and outcomes and we are keen to continue to build on our mutual belief that more can and must be done. The investment of our time, money and determination to see First Nations children flourish is one of my biggest priorities.”

FNESC President Tyrone McNeil highlighted the importance of addressing First Nations education issues: “We have a public education system where just 51 per cent of Aboriginal students complete school, and only 30 per cent of Aboriginal children in a Continuing Custody Order complete school. We welcome the opportunity to engage with the Representative for Children and Youth to advocate for better education outcomes for our most vulnerable children and youth and ensure their voices are heard and valued.”

The next steps will include discussions about issues and opportunities for collaborative action, including the potential to jointly advocate for an education plan for all children in care and the possible creation of a Superintendent of Aboriginal Achievement.

-30-

For more information:

Marg LeGuilloux, Director of Communications
Representative for Children and Youth
Cell: 250-893-8244

Marg.LeGuilloux@rcybc.ca
www.rcybc.ca

Kristen Harvey, Manager of Communications
First Nations Education Steering Committee
Cell: 604-866-3409

kristenh@fnesc.ca
www.fnesc.ca

Quick Facts

- Approximately 10 per cent of the total student population in B.C.’s K-12 public school system self-identify as Aboriginal.
- There are 2,425 Aboriginal students, or 3.7 per cent of all Aboriginal students in public schools, in a Continuing Custody Order.
- The proportion of Aboriginal children in a Continuing Custody Order enrolled in school increased from 54 per cent in 2003/04 to 61.7 per cent in 2009/10.