



Our Ref. 113418

July 16, 2018

Mr. Gordon Swan  
President  
British Columbia School Trustees Association  
4th Floor - 1580 W. Broadway  
Vancouver BC V6J 5K9

Dear Mr. Swan:

Thank you for your correspondence of June 20, 2018, sent to the Honourable Melanie Mark, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training, written on behalf of the British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA), regarding increasing opportunities for teacher training at the local level and to encourage Indigenous teachers to work in rural and remote areas. Your letter has been forwarded to me for response on behalf of Minister Mark.

Government continues to work with education partners to ensure teacher training matches regional and specific education needs, including priorities for addressing shortages in remote and rural regions and increasing the number of Indigenous students in education programs.

While the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training (AEST) provides funding for public post-secondary institutions, under the *University Act*, institutions are responsible for setting program priorities, including establishing and adjusting program offerings in response to student demand and employer needs. School districts are encouraged to work with local post-secondary institutions to identify needs and determine potential adjustments or expansion of programs.

In addition to the West Kootenay Rural Teacher Education Program mentioned in your letter offered in Nelson by the University of British Columbia (UBC), there are two other longstanding rural teacher education programs in the province. The University of Victoria works with College of the Rockies to offer the East Kootenay Teacher Education Program in Cranbrook, and Simon Fraser University partners with Northern Lights College to offer the Alaska Highway Consortium on Teacher Education in Fort St. John.

UBC also offers an Indigenous Teacher Education Program (NITEP). The first two to three years of the program are offered at regional field centres, allowing Indigenous teacher candidates to remain near their home community.

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In February 2018, Government announced one-time funding of \$270,000 for initiatives supporting Indigenous teachers throughout British Columbia. This funding will provide curriculum development for new pathways for Indigenous students to enter teacher education programs, and will also enable UBC to pilot community delivery of all 4 years of NITEP in Williams Lake/Quesnel to approximately 20 Indigenous students.

Government is also supporting a review, led by the British Columbia Public School Employers' Association, which will look at long-term labour market outlooks for rural and remote teachers so that targeted region-specific strategies can be further refined.

In addition, AEST is working with key partners, including the First Nations Education Steering Committee and the Association of B.C. Deans of Education to identify strategies to increase the number of Indigenous students in teacher education programs.

Thank you for sharing the BCSTA's resolution and supporting initiatives to increase Indigenous teachers and ensure the needs of rural and remote schools are met.

Respectfully,



Jeff Vasey  
Assistant Deputy Minister

pc: Honourable Rob Fleming  
Minister of Education

Honourable Melanie Mark  
Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training

First Nations Steering Committee