

s7ulh wa nexwniwéyah

Our Ways of Education

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

These frequently asked questions were received from Members through community engagement from May to November 2022. With the help of the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), subject matter experts, and those supporting this initiative, we have provided the best available responses. If we have a positive vote in December, many of these details will be confirmed in collaboration with Members through the development of our Education Law.

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Overview of Reclaiming Education

1. What does reclaiming education mean?

- Reclaiming education means taking back control over the education of our méhmen (children), from preschool to Grade 12. If we reclaim our education, then we will have law-making authority over our in-community education system, including school and teacher certification, graduation requirements, curriculum and course approvals.

2. Why should we vote yes?

- Residential schools aimed to take our language, culture, and heritage from us. After decades of work to overcome this, we now have an opportunity to reclaim our community's right to educate our méhmen, our way.
- By overseeing our education system, we can make decisions in the best interest of our méhmen. We will also be held accountable to ourselves. This is our chance to return to Skwxwú7mesh ways of education and work as a community to build an education system that promotes, protects, and revitalizes our language and culture. Our méhmen will be taught based on Skwxwú7mesh worldview and will grow up confident in their values and heritage.

3. Why are we doing this now?

- This vote is a culmination of generations of work and the efforts of our ancestors that came before us. We are carrying on the legacy of those who have been working towards reclaiming our inherent right to govern the education of our community for decades.
- In 2021, Council made the decision for our Nation to begin the process of reclaiming education, and this vision is stated clearly in the updated Strategic Plan (2026) under the pillar "For the People" where we set out to "Connect Skwxwú7mesh Stélmexw to our values, history, language, culture, and ways of knowing" by using "our collective power as the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw and Skwxwú7mesh Stélmexw to reclaim jurisdiction in child & family services, education, and rights & title."

4. What schools will we have control over?

- If we reclaim our education, then our law-making powers will cover community (on-reserve) schools and students from preschool to Grade 12.

5. How much decision-making control will the Nation have?

- We will have administrative control of school operations through the Community Education Authority (CEA) and the administration of the Education Law.

6. How much input will parents/guardians of students have on decisions affecting the education of their méhmen (children)?

- If we vote yes in December, we will continue to engage and consult with community Members as we develop our Education Law. It is through this process where we begin to shape and make choices around curriculum and teacher certification. All the input we receive will be used to guide the development of the Education Law. You are in this process with us and we will ensure we are designing this together.

7. Are there other options to reclaiming education?

- Staying with our current education system would mean the Nation remains accountable to the federal government and consequently at the whim of any federal legislative or policy changes.

8. Is this moving us away from the Indian Act? Is there a section that we're replacing?

- Sections 114 to 122 of the Indian Act will no longer apply to the Nation after it has passed an education law. (See <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/i-5/page-9.html#h-332928>.)

Voting Information

9. How many votes are needed for the vote to be successful?

- The vote will be successful if at least 60% of votes cast are in favour.

10. Why is the voting threshold 60%?

- Acting on the desire of membership, Council voted to set the threshold for approval at 60% to be in line with the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw Election and Referendum Law.

11. What happens if the vote isn't successful?

- If the community vote is unsuccessful, then the Nation's education will not change. We will have the same funding and control over our education as we do today.
- We can hold another community vote in five years' time, or choose not to reclaim authority over our education and remain accountable to the federal government and any federal legislative changes.

12. What happens next if the vote is successful?

- If Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw votes yes in December, we will continue to engage and consult with Members to develop our Education Law. Together, we will ensure that our community education meets the needs and desires of our méńmen and our community by shaping our curriculum, teacher certification, and graduation requirements.

Jurisdiction Agreement

13. What is the Jurisdiction Agreement?

- The Jurisdiction Agreement is an education agreement between Canada and Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw. Members must vote to approve this agreement, along with our Law-Making Protocol, for us to move forward reclaiming education.

14. Does this agreement with Canada represent a treaty?

- The Jurisdiction Agreement is not a treaty or a land claims agreement within the meaning of sections 25 and 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, and does not affect the Constitution of Canada.

15. Will signing the Jurisdiction Agreement limit our ability to self-govern?

- Reclaiming education will not limit Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw's ability to self-govern.

16. Is there an end date for the Jurisdiction Agreement?

- There is no end date for the Jurisdiction Agreement. Our authority will not expire, so we can be confident that our méńmen's education will never again be taken away from us.

Law-Making Protocol

17. What is the Education Law?

- If we vote yes in December, we begin building and shaping our education system through the development of our Education Law. This law will describe what our

education system will look like, including governance processes, education standards, graduation requirements, certification of teachers and schools, consultation and decision-making requirements, and much more.

18. What is the Law-Making Protocol?

- The Law-Making Protocol is one of the two documents that community will be voting to approve in December 2022. The protocol describes the process for passing and amending our Education Law, challenging the validity of that law, amending the protocol itself, and addressing conflicts of interest.
- This document must be approved during the vote, so we can develop our Education Law, which describes how we will run our community's education.

19. What is the process for developing the Education Law? Who will be involved and when will we begin?

- If we vote yes, we will begin the process of building and shaping our Education Law through specific, deep community engagement as it will require input and ideas from our Members. Although we have already received input from members through our engagements the last year, we will continue that engagement right after the vote.

Students and Academic Standards

20. What kind of graduation certificate will students get?

- The following options will be available for students graduating from our schools, as long as students meet the specific requirements established for each certificate:
 - i. The Dogwood or Adult Dogwood Diploma, with requirements set by the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care
 - ii. A First Nations Graduation Certificate, with requirements set by the FNEA
 - iii. A Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw Graduation Certificate, with requirements set by our Nation and approved by the FNEA
- The certificates we offer our graduating students will be a community decision.

21. What happens if a student wants to transfer to a different school?

- Our education system will allow students to transfer to an equivalent grade in another school in the province. Students will be able to move freely between Skwxwú7mesh's education system and the public school system.

22. Can parents/guardians choose to send their mé'nmén to schools outside of our community?

- Yes. Parents/guardians will not be required to send their mé'nmén to our community schools.

23. Will we be providing education up to Grade 12?

- Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw will work to build our school system, including building and expanding facilities, so that we can eventually provide education up to Grade 12.
- If Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw reclaims control of our community education, then that control will extend to both our current school and any future schools established in our community.

24. Will there be testing to validate that our school system is on par with other schools?

- To ensure our school system and standards are on par with other schools, Squamish Nation will explore developing processes to validate, track and potentially evaluate programs and graduate students to ensure appropriate education, skills and curriculum for our students.

25. If we vote yes, will anything change with currently operated Squamish Nation schools?

- There will be no changes in the short term. If we vote yes in December, then we will begin the work of developing our Education Law through community engagement. It is through this process that we will determine whether any new changes will be made to existing programs and schools.

26. Will the schools be open to non-Nation members?

- In the short term, our focus will be on Members only, but reclaiming education does not preclude the Nation from including non-Nation members. We will ask Members this question throughout our engagement after the vote to seek your input into this question.

27. Is this a form of segregation?

- No, regardless of the outcome of the vote in December, you will always get to decide where you want to send your méhmen for school, whether that's in our community schools or elsewhere.

28. Will schools be upgraded and or expanded? Will this mean a new school in the Valley?

- Yes, expanding and developing more education facilities in Squamish Valley and the North Shore will be part of this process.
- Although we have not made these decisions yet, we are working towards this goal and we have completed a feasibility study to expand our facilities on the North Shore. Making these improvements, particularly an expansion in the Valley will make a difference for the future of our méhmen.

Curriculum

29. How will we decolonize the classrooms? Are we adding Indigenous knowledge to existing curriculum or are we dismantling our curriculum and re-building?

- This will be part of our engagement with Members as we develop our Education Law. We will seek input on what kind of education we want for our méhmen and this includes whether we rebuild our education or integrate knowledge into our existing education.

30. If we already have language and culture, why do we need this in the schools?

- Through our engagement, we have repeatedly heard that the community wants more of our language and culture in our education.
- We want to build on our successes we have had with our Littlest Ones School and the land-based learning there, our outdoor learning programs in Squamish Valley, and other successful programming and expand language and culture throughout our education. This will be part of our engagement with Members as we develop our Education Law.

31. Will we develop all of our own curriculum?

- We, through the FNEA, will collaboratively develop curriculum, among other things such as teacher certification, school certification, graduation requirements.
- We will also develop our own language and culture curriculum, including land-based learning.

Funding

32. Will reclaiming education affect our ability to get government funding in the future?

- The Nation will continue to receive the same funding and supports that are currently available, including direct First Nations School funding, as described in the BC Tripartite

Education Agreement. The funding is greater than or equal to funding for education that the Nation currently receives.

- The amount of education program funding provided by Canada to Squamish Nation will not be less than the amount received by First Nations that are not PFNs.
- If the Education Jurisdiction Funding Agreement is terminated and not replaced, funding for education will be provided to the Nation on the same terms as it was before, and that funding amount will not be less than the amount received by First Nations that are not PFNs.

33. Will we receive additional funding to operate our own school system?

- Under jurisdiction, we will continue to receive the same funding and support available to other First Nations in BC for pre-school to Grade 12 education, which includes:
 - Direct First Nations School funding, including school staff salaries, which is calculated using the BCTEA methodology
 - Additional support from FNEESC (known as Second and Third Level Services) including language and culture and Special Education Programming
 - Any other funding or support that is available to other First Nations now or in the future

34. Does the funding we get affect our ability to get government funding in the future?

- Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw will continue to receive the same funding and supports currently available and does not preclude our Nation from receiving other funding.

35. Will the funding provide support for capital projects, e.g., a new school, or do we need to raise those funds on our own?

- Capital funding, such as funding to start a new school, is provided separately from operational funding. Our Planning and Capital Projects Team would engage Indigenous Services Canada through a separate process to obtain necessary funding. Squamish may wish to raise its own funding for capital expenditures.

Teachers and Staff

36. What would reclaiming education jurisdiction mean for our current teachers and staff?

- Our schools will continue to employ certified teachers. This will include those with a teaching certificate issued by the BC Ministry of Education or a certificate issued by another Canadian province. Teachers who are already certified will not have to go through a new certification process.

37. If we vote yes, what happens to staff currently working in Squamish Nation schools?

- Over time staff may move under the Community Education Authority (CEA), if this was set out in the law (division of powers); however, this still needs to be determined by community members.

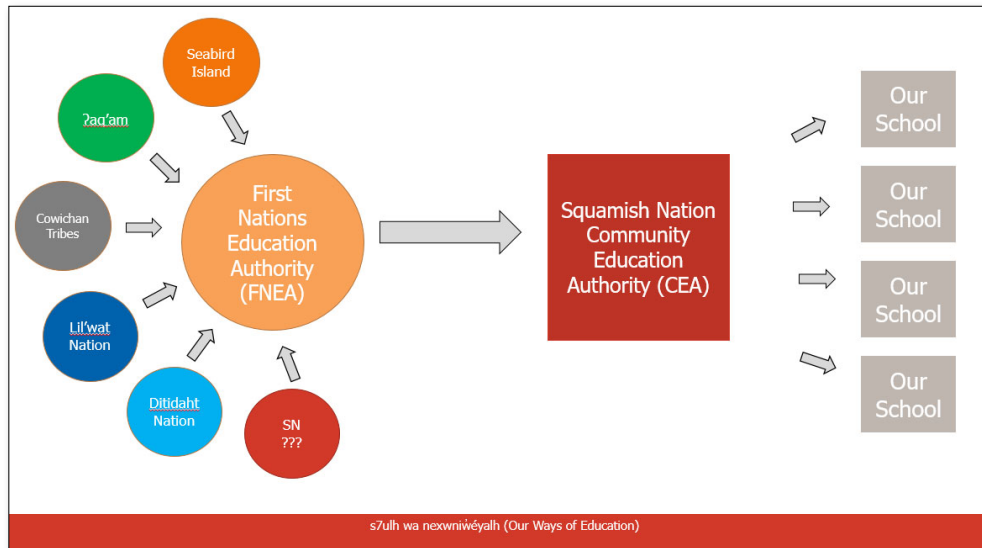
38. What authority will staff be accountable to?

- Staff will be accountable to the Community Education Authority.

39. Will staff salaries and benefits remain the same?

- Staff salaries and benefits will remain the same.

Education Governance and Operation



40. What is the First Nations Education Authority (FNEA)?

- The FNEA is comprised of, operated by, and directed by First Nation appointees with jurisdiction (Participating First Nations) only. These are Nations that have ratified education jurisdiction. Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw will appoint directors to the FNEA.

41. What does the First Nations Education Authority (FNEA) do?

- The FNEA develops the certifications and standards that will be included in our Education Law. This may include standards for school certification, teacher certification, and graduation requirements.

42. Who controls the FNEA?

- The FNEA is entirely made up of and controlled by directors appointed by Nations with education jurisdiction—not government representatives.
- If our community vote is successful, then Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw will appoint two directors to the FNEA.

43. What is the Community Education Authority (CEA)?

- Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw will create an education authority under the provincial *Societies Act* to operate in-community schools.
- The CEA is similar to a local school board. It may report to the Nation and be responsible for: employing school staff, holding school assets (such as buildings), and administering funds received from Canada. The role of the CEA will be defined in our Education Law.

44. How will the CEA work? Does it replace the current education department?

- The role and responsibilities of the CEA and the relationship it has with Ta7Inewás (the Squamish Nation Education, Employment & Training Department), and with Ta na wa Ch'awat ta S̓xwéxwel (Squamish Valley Operations), will be determined through community engagement.
- Through our engagement, we have heard from Members that Squamish Valley should be represented in the Community Education Authority.

45. Are we to take this on and grow our own education system?

- Yes, through our educational programming in Squamish Valley and the North Shore over the last several years, we have demonstrated capability and readiness to run successful education programs.

Council

46. How will Council be involved in the CEA? Will the CEA report to Council?

- This will be determined through community engagement and the development of the Education Law.

Five Other Nations in BC Advancing Education Jurisdiction

47. What other Nations are pursuing Education Jurisdiction?

- ʔaq'am, Cowichan Tribes, Lil'wat Nation, Seabird Island and Ditidaht First Nation are all Participating First Nations who have signed Education Jurisdiction Agreements with Canada.

48. Have we learned anything from their experience so far? How are we working with them?

- We are in contact and working with other Participating First Nations (see above), sharing lessons learned, wise practices, and learning from one another.
- If we are successful, we will work with them formally through the FNEA.

Spotlight on Members Living Outside Community (Off-Reserve)

49. How can members living off-reserve be involved in the process of reclaiming education?

- We continue to engage all Members both on and off reserve for their input into reclaiming education. All Members are invited to participate in engagement events and learn more through the resources we have set up.

50. Why should we vote yes if we're living off-reserve?

- Even if you live off reserve and may not have direct access to the reservation education system, many members of your family and of the Nation will. We encourage you to vote as this vote will have an impact on the lives of our méhmen (children) and our future méhmen. This vote is an opportunity for us to work together to uplift Skwxwú7mesh Stélmexw and support the continued growth of our language, culture, and ways of knowing.

51. Will members living outside community be able to attend Squamish Nation schools and/or access Squamish Nation education?

- Yes, Squamish Nation schools and programs are open to all Nation members.

Glossary

- **Community Education Authority (CEA):** The independent authority that will operate Sḱwḱwú7mesh Úxwumixw education system. Its responsibilities will be laid out in our Education Law.
- **Education Law:** A Sḱwḱwú7mesh Úxwumixw law that describes what our education system will look like, including governance processes, education standards, graduation requirements, certification of teachers and schools, consultation and decision-making requirements, and much more.
- **First Nations Education Authority (FNEA):** A legal entity directed by directors appointed by Participating First Nations. Through the FNEA, Participating First Nations, including Sḱwḱwú7mesh Úxwumixw, will jointly exercise and regulate teacher certification, school certification, and graduation requirements, including approval of courses for graduation purposes.
- **First Nations Graduation Certificate:** A certificate available to all the schools operated by Nations that have reclaimed control of their education (Participating First Nations). The requirements for this certificate will be collectively established by the FNEA.
- **First Nations Schools Teaching Certificate:** A new certificate specifically for Participating First Nation schools. The requirements for this certificate will be collectively established by the FNEA.
- **First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC):** A policy and advocacy organization that represents and works on behalf of First Nations in B.C. to support First Nations students and advance First Nations education in the province.
- **Jurisdiction Agreement:** A sectoral self-government agreement for First Nations who choose to assume jurisdiction over education in B.C. This agreement is not a treaty with the federal government.
- **Jurisdiction (over education):** The formal recognition by the federal and provincial governments of First Nations' inherent rights to make laws related to the education of their children. This includes law-making authority over curriculum development, graduation requirements, teacher certification, and school certification.
- **Law-Making Protocol:** A document that specifies how our Education Law will be developed and approved. The Law-Making Protocol will cover the following matters:
 - procedures for the passage and amendment of First Nation Education Laws;
 - challenging the validity of First Nation Education Laws;
 - the amendment of the First Nation Education Law-Making Protocol;
 - conflict of interest rules; and
 - other matters, as determined by Sḱwḱwú7mesh Úxwumixw.
- **Participating First Nation (PFN):** A First Nation that has reclaimed control over their education by ratifying and signing a Jurisdiction Agreement with Canada.
- **Preschool to Grade 12:** The scope of education jurisdiction applies to age four of preschool to Grade 12.