



April 13, 2021

Ref: 243798

Terry Teegee  
BC Regional Chief  
First Nations Leadership Council  
**c/o Email: cbraker@fns.bc.ca**

Dear Chief Teegee:

Thank you for your letter of January 12, 2021, on behalf of leaders representing the First Nations Summit, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the BC Assembly of First Nations where you shared with me serious concerns First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) has with the changes to the *School Act* last March that enables the assignment of Personal Education Numbers (PEN).

During our meeting on January 21, 2021, I committed to you, First Nations Leadership Council, and the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), that the Ministry would pause on the expansion of assigning PENs to provide the needed time and space for our teams to create a path forward that works for First Nations children.

I have directed my team to reach out to FNESC to restart the conversation related to PEN, and specifically the approach to defining “a child who is a resident in British Columbia”. All other sections of the *School Act* which reference the Personal Education Number remain unchanged.

PEN has been used in BC’s education systems for over 30 years and it is important to note how it is used today both at the provincial and district levels.

Currently a PEN is assigned to:

- All students enrolled in BC K–12 public, independent and offshore schools;
- All applicants to BC public post-secondary institutions; and
- Children aged birth to 5 years old who attend StrongStart BC programs.

PENs are also used to link provincial assessment and graduation results and are the foundation for the annual “How Are We Doing? Report”. This report is noted as important to both the Ministry and FNESC as it provides a snapshot of child development for First Nations and Indigenous learners. More importantly, it shines a light on areas that require additional action.

.../2

The PEN is also the foundation for the Student Learning Survey (SLS) that gathers information on student experiences and school culture. For example, the SLS informs FNESC, the Ministry, and school districts of how safe and welcome Indigenous students feel in their school and how prepared they feel for life after Grade 12.

The Ministry will continue to engage with First Nations Leadership around any potential new uses that are associated with the PEN.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Whiteside". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Jennifer Whiteside  
Minister

pc: D. Scott MacDonald, Deputy Minister  
Eleanor Liddy, A/Assistant Deputy Minister, Services and Technology Division  
Jennifer McCrea, Assistant Deputy Minister, Learning Division  
Keith Godin, Assistant Deputy Minister, Governance and Analytics Division