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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Education

### **AGREEMENT SIGNED TO IMPROVE ABORIGINAL ACHIEVEMENT**

**NORTH VANCOUVER** – The Province, Aboriginal leaders and North Vancouver school district officials today signed an enhancement agreement to help Aboriginal students succeed in school, North Vancouver-Lonsdale MLA Katherine Whittred, North Vancouver-Seymour MLA Dan Jarvis and West Vancouver-Capilano MLA Ralph Sultan announced.

“The signing of this agreement demonstrates the dedication of the school district and the Aboriginal community to make the education system work for Aboriginal students,” said Whittred. “We want to make B.C. the best-educated, most literate jurisdiction in North America, and agreements like this are a vital part of helping us reach that target.”

The Aboriginal enhancement agreement sets out a number of specific goals to help Aboriginal students, including:

- improving academic achievement
- improving school completion rates
- giving Aboriginal students a better sense of belonging in the public school system by honouring and supporting the history, traditions and culture of First Nation communities served by the North Vancouver school district.

“The Aboriginal communities on the North Shore have a rich culture and long history,” said Jarvis. “This agreement will allow students in the district – both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – to learn more about that culture.”

The Province, school district and Aboriginal community also agree to collaborate to improve Aboriginal students’ readiness to learn through physical, social and emotional well-being and development, as well as to improve reading and numeracy skills.

“Our government pledged in the throne speech to work closely with First Nations leaders to close the gaps that have disadvantaged Aboriginal children and families in the past,” said Sultan. “This agreement helps fulfil that commitment.”

“Our Aboriginal students have made great strides in the last five years – especially in the area of school completion rates,” said Education Minister Shirley Bond. “Our government is working with Aboriginal communities, educators, parents and students to ensure that Aboriginal students throughout the province continue to improve in school.”

The agreement was developed collaboratively by local Aboriginal groups, the Ministry of Education and the school district. Signatories to the agreement include Squamish Nation Chief and Council, Tsleil-Waututh Nation Chief and Council, the school district, the school district's Aboriginal advisory council and the Ministry of Education.

“This enhancement agreement is a powerful tool that builds trust and relationships,” said Angela Uren, district administrator for Aboriginal education with the North Vancouver school district. “This agreement is about empowerment, having a voice, and strength – the strength that shared respect can bring to all participating communities. This is our commitment to all First Nations students in the North Vancouver school district.”

Of B.C.'s 60 school districts, 26 have now signed Aboriginal enhancement agreements, 15 are in draft, and the remainder are in the planning stage. The Province provides \$47.5 million a year – \$950 per student – for Aboriginal education. The funding supports Aboriginal language and culture programs, Aboriginal support service programs, and local Aboriginal education programs.

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