



**YUKON
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Subject: Letter of Support for amending the *Education Act*

To Kate White, Leader of the NDP

The Yukon First Nation Education Directorate wholeheartedly supports the removal of clause 43(2) of the *Yukon Education Act* so that we can allow more locally-developed courses to count towards graduation.

There are far too many barriers facing our Indigenous students in the Yukon education system. YFNED determines that only 3 out of 10 First Nations kindergarten students will make it to graduation. One of the first things we can do to improve education outcomes for our students, is to make changes to outdated policies and legislation – the low-hanging fruit of solutions.

We have heard from First Nations Education Commissioners, families, students and education professionals that we need more locally-developed courses to count towards graduation – courses that could include land-based learning or that involves Knowledge Keepers and language teachers in novel formats and that are more accessible and relevant to our students.

Currently, clause 43(2) of the *Act* allows for only 20% of locally developed courses to count towards graduation. For many students, their schedules do not allow them to take locally-developed courses at all. Not only does this fail Indigenous students who want to take culturally-relevant coursework but it also deprives non-First Nations students from taking courses that teach them about subjects relevant to their home: courses on land claims, leadership, traditional technologies etc.

Recently, BC amended their education act in this exact area. They broadened the policy on locally developed courses so that BAA or FNA courses can fulfill elective graduation requirements. We should make similar changes here, first by dropping the section of the *Act* that says locally developed courses cannot represent more than 20% of course-load. And second, by allowing Grade 11 and 12 BAA and FNA courses to count towards required electives for graduation.

I am excited to see this change come to fruition. I predict a surge in development of new locally developed courses that have the opportunity to ignite an interest in school-based learning for our children, and encourage greater educational outcomes.

Mahsi' Cho,

Melanie Bennett

Executive Director, Yukon First Nation Education Directorate

