

The Education Agreement

1. What subjects are covered in the Education Agreement?

The education agreement covers these items:

- First Nation jurisdiction over education on reserve, from junior kindergarten to grade 12.
- Continuing administration of the post-secondary education program that supports students in university, colleges and trades education
- Funding to support the new education system.
- The organization of the new education system, including its centralized administration.
- How First Nations education law will apply, and when there will be special exceptions.
- How the new education system will be launched if it is approved by First Nations voters.

2. How will the Education Agreement benefit the Anishinabek First Nations?

The Anishinabek First Nations would benefit by making decisions about how best to provide education. Today, these decisions are made by the federal Minister of Indian Affairs, and by the school boards that run schools off reserve.

The First Nations can build the Anishinabek Education System, which would help them to improve what schools teach, and how. The main benefit of the system will be the lessons and academic content curriculum taught in schools. Today, no school is required to teach students about Anishinabek culture, history or language. The new education system will change this by developing lessons and activities that are relevant to Anishinabe students, and by helping teachers to succeed in teaching Anishinabe students.

Education funding will also improve. Today, funding from the federal government is a mix of transfers for education in general and grants for specific programs and projects. It is difficult to predict which proposals the federal government will accept. That makes it difficult to find the teachers and other resources those programs would need.

Under the new system, all these transfers and grants are combined into a single amount. A contract between the education system and the federal government will define that funding amount well in advance. That means the First Nations can plan well ahead. They will have time to find the people and programs they need to

improve our schools. The First Nations will be completely in charge of how to spend these funds.

The education system will also help students do better in provincial schools, where most Anishinaabe students go for their education. The First Nations will have the exclusive authority to negotiate with Ontario about what Anishinaabe learn in schools, and how they receive instruction. Today only the federal Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs has that power.

The relationship between the Anishinabek Nation and Ontario will need to be worked out before anything changes. These negotiations have begun.

3. How does the Education Agreement benefit students?

Students will benefit from lessons and school content that will enable them to learn Anishinaabemowin, English and French. They will learn Anishinaabe culture and history, along with Canadian history. And they will benefit from the involvement of parents, elders and the community. Teaching Anishinaabe students about being Anishinaabe will help them to succeed. They will go to school more often, and more students will graduate.

The Mi'kmaw education system in Nova Scotia shows that this approach works. Its graduation rate for the last six years has consistently remained between 87% and 90%. The graduation rate in Nova Scotia schools is around 70%, so the Mi'kmaw students are clearly performing better than Nova Scotia students.

4. How will this Education Agreement be implemented?

The education agreement includes a plan that spells out who will do what and when. It would apply to the first ten years after the date the education agreement officially comes into effect. The federal government would pay for the implementation activities, and a committee will supervise the work. The committee's members represent the Anishinabek Nation and the federal government.

5. What law-making powers do the Anishinabek First Nations have under this new Agreement?

The First Nations have full authority over on-reserve education from junior kindergarten to grade 12. The federal and provincial governments keep their authority over post-secondary education, which includes universities, colleges and trades education. But the First Nations will control funding for post-secondary education. They will decide how best to support Anishinaabe students beyond high school.

6. How will on-reserve members be affected by this Education Agreement?

People who live on reserve will have a say in how their First Nation delivers education from junior kindergarten through grade 12. They will have input into the decisions the First Nation makes about schools on reserve, about the tuition agreements it makes with schools off reserve, and about funding for universities, colleges and trades education. Off-reserve members will receive the same annual reports that on-reserve members will receive on student achievement, the education system, and funding.

7. How will off-reserve members be affected by this Education Agreement?

Off-reserve members who are directly affected by a First Nation's laws or decisions will have a say in how those laws or decisions are made. All off-reserve members will have access to funding for universities, colleges and trades education. All off-reserve members will receive annual reports on student achievement, the education system, and funding.

8. Will the Education Agreement be treaty-protected?

No. The Education Agreement is not a treaty. It will not affect aboriginal or treaty rights.

9. How will those First Nations opting not to participate in the Anishinabek Nation Education Agreement be affected?

A First Nation that decides not to approve the education agreement will see no change in education. Its current agreements with education providers will continue just as they are today. The existing federal education funding programs will continue to apply, as will the education provisions of the Indian Act.

In other words, all decisions about education at that First Nation will remain with the federal Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs and whatever arrangements the minister makes with the province and school boards.