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# FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

## News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**December 13, 2006**

### **ROYAL ASSENT OF BILL C-34 WILL RESULT IN IMPROVED OPPORTUNITIES FOR FIRST NATIONS LEARNERS IN BC**

**Coast Salish Traditional Territory/Vancouver, BC** – The First Nations Leadership Council is viewing yesterday's passage of Bill C-34, *First Nations Jurisdiction over Education in British Columbia Act*, as a critical step in improving opportunities and success rates for Aboriginal learners in BC. The federal legislation provides First Nations with authority and jurisdiction over decisions affecting First Nations learners in BC. In a rare event prior to receiving Royal Assent, Bill C-34 was passed unanimously by all parties in Parliament following third reading.

"The passage of Bill C-34 marks a new beginning for First Nations education in BC. We congratulate and commend all members of Parliament for putting aside partisanship and for having the foresight to recognize this legislation will lead to greater educational opportunities within our communities", said Grand Chief Edward John, a member of the First Nations Summit Political Executive and the BC First Nations Leadership Council.

"We congratulate the executive and staff of the First Nations Education Steering Committee for their diligence and hard work over the past three years which has culminated in Bill C-34 receiving Royal Assent today. Their efforts will ultimately result in improved educational opportunities and success rates for our children for generations to come", said Shawn Atleo, BC Regional Chief of the Assembly of First Nations and a member of the First Nations leadership Council.

"We sincerely believe this legislation will lead to greatly improving success rates of First Nations learners in BC. Ultimately the increased opportunities and improved success rates of First Nations learners will assist in strengthening First Nations communities", said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and a member of the BC First Nations Leadership Council.

On July 24, 2003, First Nations representatives, along with representatives of the federal and provincial governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining the elements of First Nations education jurisdiction. Over the past three years negotiations have continued and in November 2005, the negotiators initialled the

respective agreements. An official signing of the package of Agreements by BC First Nations, British Columbia and Canada took place on July 5, 2006 in North Vancouver, BC. Detailed information on the legislation and agreements can be found on the education jurisdiction website at [www.fnesc.bc.ca/jurisdiction/index.php](http://www.fnesc.bc.ca/jurisdiction/index.php).

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The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the First Nations Summit, Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the BC Assembly of First Nations. The Council works together to politically represent the interests of First Nations in British Columbia and develop strategies and actions to bring about significant and substantive changes to government policy that will benefit all First Nations in British Columbia.

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