

ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR NON-STATUS IMMIGRANTS



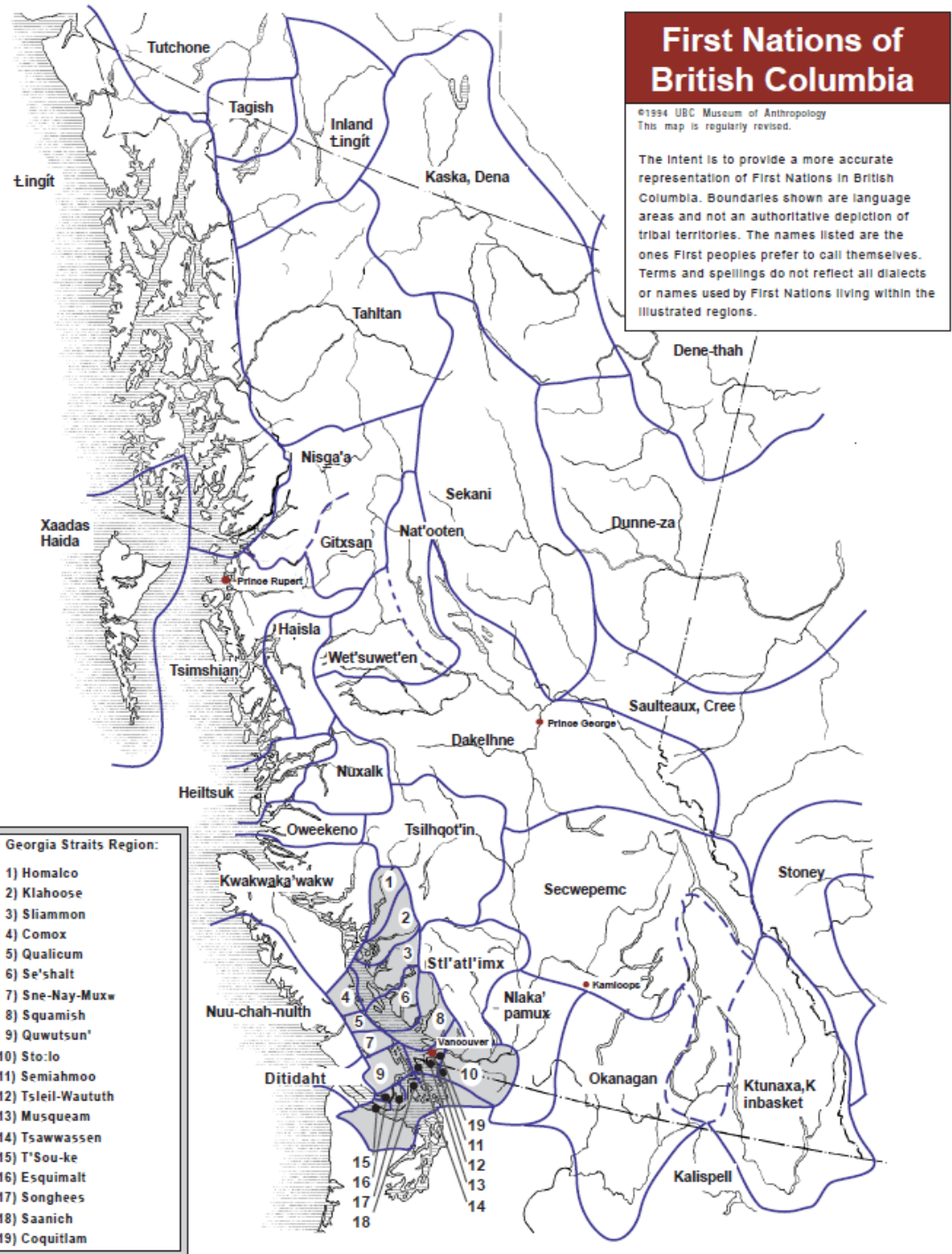
A Sanctuary School Policy Proposal



**British Columbia
Teachers' Federation**

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Acknowledgment of Traditional Territory



Why are we here?

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In March 2014, the BCTF Executive Committee approved the following motion:

“That the BCTF encourage locals to work with school boards to adopt a ‘sanctuary school’ policy.”

Why a sanctuary school policy?

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Schools should be safe places for learning. It is necessary that all students feel welcome and that they will be able to learn without fear of being denied entry into school or of being detained while at school.



Access to education for all children or youth under the age of 16 is both a right and a requirement under provincial law, regardless of immigration status.

Who does it impact?

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- A non-status student is someone who resides in Canada, but lacks any form of Canadian immigration status.
- A student who is non-status is not an immigrant, a refugee, an asylum-seeker, or an international student.
- Being non-status is also a feminist issue.



Marginalized voices

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“Just that fear that they might tell me sorry, no...just a fear of neglect. Because you feel like a nobody in this country. Even like when I went to have my baby here, they put a tag on my arm—‘non-resident’—and I carried this throughout the hospital...and I felt like a nobody in this country. That’s what it felt like even trying to walk through the principal’s door; will I feel that feeling again? But after she (the school principal) smiled, the lady smiled to me and it felt...the fear faded away.”

—a non-status mother of three

Some reasons behind non-status

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- Overstaying a work, student, or visitor's visa
- Having a claim for refugee status or status based on humanitarian and compassionate grounds denied
- Increasing trend towards temporariness
- Experiencing sponsorship breakdown
- Issues in home country (extreme poverty, military conflicts, lack of opportunities, escape from physical harm due to abusive relationships or persecution from the state)
- Government policies.

Challenges and fears of non-status families

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- ❑ Lack of access to education
- ❑ Lack of access to healthcare
- ❑ Lack of access to social programs (social assistance and social housing)
- ❑ Ineligible for a Social Insurance Number
- ❑ Inability to report
- ❑ Often forced to work “under the table” and subject to employer exploitation.

Marginalized voices

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“Without status, you feel insecure...even the children, they talk sometimes, they speak out with their mom...even they’re born here, they find their mom should be allowed to live here with them, so they’d be happier, you know, because they love their mom. They find immigration very hard. It’s a sad thing to do, to separate children from their mom. And they were born in the land of opportunity...to send them out is not right. It’s a sad thing.

—a non-status grandmother caring for her grandchildren because their mother was deported

FAQ

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- Why should we allocate already meagre resources to students for whom we are not officially funded?
- Is this a way for international students to avoid paying fees?
- Why should our school be considered places of sanctuary?
They are places of learning, not refuge!
- How are we to be equipped to teach non-status students who may have a number of challenges?
- Is this legal?

Why it matters...

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- Every child has the right to access an education without fear.
- Children learn poorly in environments where they are concerned about their security.
- Schools should be safe and inclusive places.
- We are all impacted when non-status individuals are treated poorly.



Next steps

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- Create awareness of the issues facing non-status individuals.
- Contact your local and collaborate to create a sanctuary school policy for your district.
- Work towards policy implementation.
- Ensure that public information and materials reflect this new policy.

“It was very frustrating as a student to have to deal with (immigration) paperwork, but at the same time, I had to be my own parent. Since I was an orphan, I didn’t have anyone to take care of me...it was a very heavy weight on my back to carry around.”

–one non-status youth, having lived in Canada for nearly nine years

Resources

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- http://socialplanningtoronto.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/right_to_learn.pdf
(Research from Toronto School District)
- [www.amssa.org/sites/default/files/kcfinder/files/AMSSA%20Info%20Sheet%20Issue%2013%20-%20Sanctuary%20Cities\(1\).pdf](http://www.amssa.org/sites/default/files/kcfinder/files/AMSSA%20Info%20Sheet%20Issue%2013%20-%20Sanctuary%20Cities(1).pdf)
(Information sheet about sanctuary cities)
- www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3084189/
(A literature review on undocumented migrants in Canada)
- www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/cd/bqrd/backgroundfile-55291.pdf
(Report on undocumented workers in Toronto)
- www.hamilton.ca/NR/rdonlyres/FDD884F4-9872-494C-A323-673E3A1E893A/0/Feb1081CES14003.pdf
(Report on undocumented individuals from Hamilton)

Education without fear for all!

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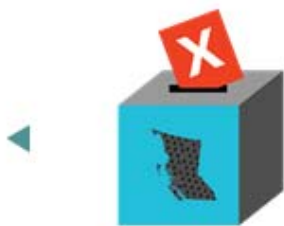
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