



ALBERNI DISTRICT TEACHERS' UNION

Sanctuary Schools

Presentation to Board of Education for School District 70 (Alberni)
November 10, 2015

Summary Notes

- a. Access to Education to Non-Status Immigrants— A Sanctuary School Policy Proposal
- b. Some reasons behind non- status
 - i. Increasingly difficult acceptance into Canada as a refugee or an immigrant, Canada only accepts 0.1% of the world's refugees, in 2012 there was the lowest rate of accepted refugee claims in 14 year, refugee claims are down by 70%, map with disparity of immigration posts worldwide, between 30–60 days to be processed now but was eight months before so less time to gather documents, pay back flights, hire lawyers, etc., 20,000–500,000 undocumented migrants living across Canada in 2007, why we no longer use the term illegal immigrant.
- c. In March 2014, the BCTF Executive Committee approved the following motion: “That the BCTF encourages locals to work with School boards to adopt ‘Sanctuary School’ policy.”
- d. School should be safe for all children
- e. UN—every child has the right to an education, immigration/refugee policies of the federal government make it difficult for low-income individuals who don't have legal representation.
- f. Article 28 and article 29 of the UN Convention on The Rights of the Child— education is a basic right.
- g. Access to education for all children or youths under the age of 16 is both a right and requirement under provincial law regardless of immigration status.
- h. Non status student is someone who resides in Canada, but lacks any form of Canadian immigration status.

i. Example of Policy:

1.0 OBJECTIVE

To establish the Board's commitment to providing a safe and welcoming environment for its students regardless of immigration status.

2.0 POLICY

2.1. All children who are qualified to be resident pupils of the board, including those who are without immigration status in Canada, shall be entitled to admission to school.

2.2. All children shall be welcomed, regardless of immigration status, and information about them or their families shall not be shared with immigration authorities.

2.3. Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) officials and outside immigration authorities shall be strongly discouraged from entering public schools. All public school employees shall be informed of the board's commitment towards non-cooperation with the CBSA.

3.0 SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES

3.1. The policy and sections 2(1) and 2(2) of the BC Education Act regarding the obligation to admit students without full immigration status will be communicated annually to all school administrators, school office staff, and school teachers. The school will implement admission procedures in accordance with these requirements.

3.2. The board will provide orientation and training for all staff regarding the policy in order to promote expertise and the appropriate degree of sensitivity required concerning the admission of students without immigration status in Canada who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances.

3.3. Where there is a need to verify a student's name, home address, or date of arrival in Canada, and where the usual documentation is not available, the Board will accept letters from lawyers, notary publics, and medical doctors confirming their personal knowledge of this information pertaining to the student.

3.4. Schools will continue to comply with current Ministry of Education requirements in the case of students for whom ESL funding claims are made, but will not disseminate students' personal information.

3.5. All student registration forms, including electronic databases, which refer to immigration status in Canada, will have that section removed or deemed strictly confidential. If a student does not provide information regarding immigration status, this student will not be prevented from admission into a school or access to ESL school resources.

3.6. The appropriate instructions for staff and public information materials concerning

admission procedures will be revised to reflect the above policy; such revisions will also be included in all training and orientation programs for staff and community agencies that have responsibilities in this area.

j. Frequently asked questions

1. Why should we allocate already meager resources to students who don't pay taxes or have status in Canada?

Every child has the right to an education (UN declaration article 28 and 29). The immigration policies of the Federal government have made it increasingly difficult to qualify for immigration status, particularly for low-income families who don't have legal representation.

This same government is responsible for the cuts that have resulted in schools having insufficient resources in the first place.

Non-status people do pay taxes! (You pay a tax every time you purchase anything.)

2. Is this a way for international students to avoid paying fees?

International students and non-status students are completely different groups. International students generally have a great deal of resources and wealth to pay for their international education, whereas non-status students are among the most marginalized groups in our society (poverty, no medical insurance, lack of housing, etc.). Nobody chooses to live without status, particularly when it means that you cannot access healthcare, cannot contact the police in case of an emergency, etc.

3. Why should our schools be considered places of sanctuary? They are places of learning, not refuge!

Teachers are not immigration authorities; we are there to teach.

Create a sense of safety and inclusion for all.

Children need to feel safe in order to learn.

Deportations destroy classroom communities and increase anxiety for all learners.

4. How can we equip ourselves to teach non-status children?

That's a responsible question to ask because you want to be able to provide for your students. This response also reveals the Ministry of Education's responsibility to give all teachers the resources they need to adequately provide for their students, as well as adequate funding to school boards so that we have the resources and the staffing to reach and teach all learners. There are several resources aimed at supporting refugee learners, including a 2009 guide for teachers and students released by the Ministry of Education.