



Internationally Educated Teachers Engagement

Summary Report

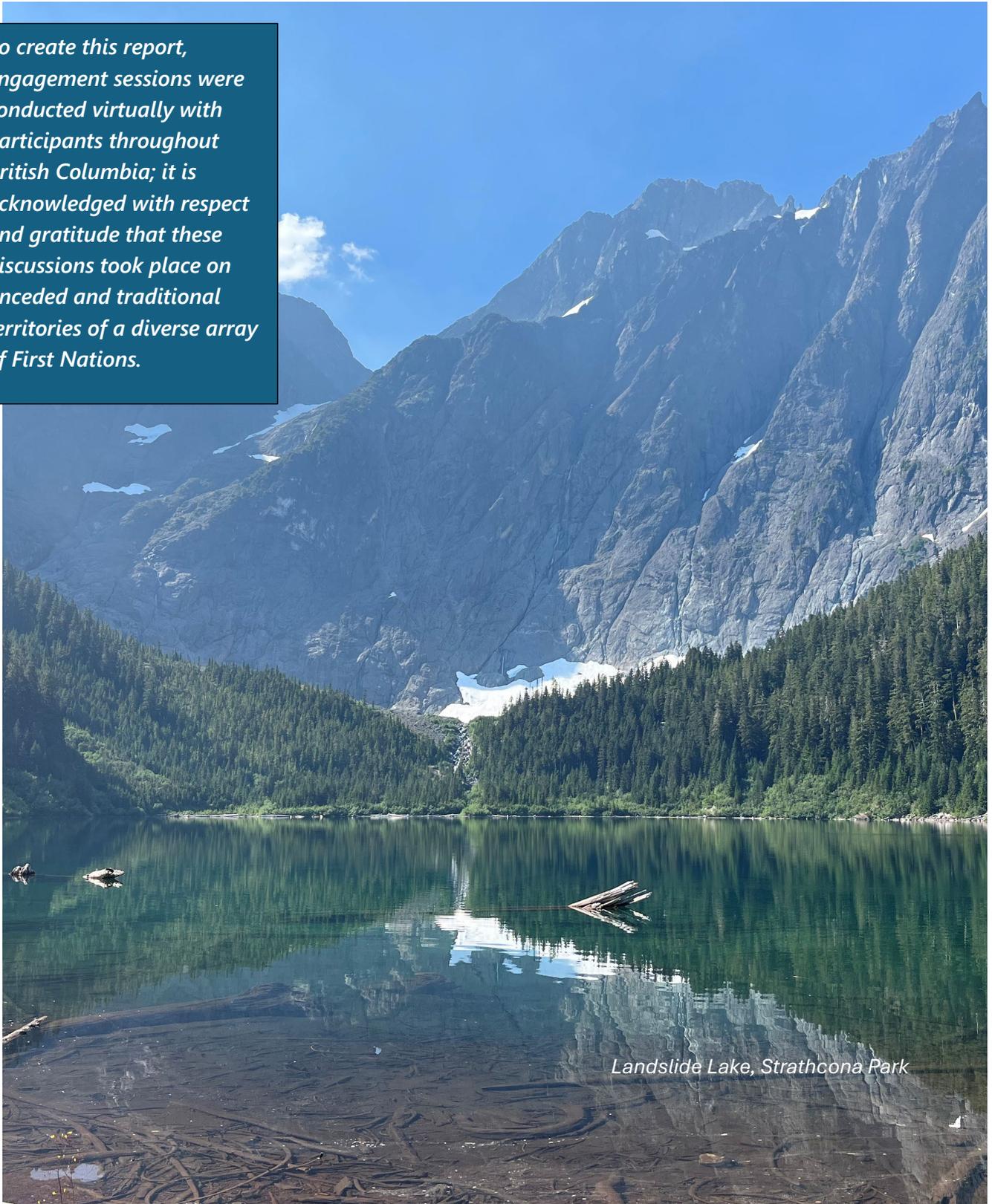
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Acknowledgement

To create this report, engagement sessions were conducted virtually with participants throughout British Columbia; it is acknowledged with respect and gratitude that these discussions took place on unceded and traditional territories of a diverse array of First Nations.



Landslide Lake, Strathcona Park

Introduction

Project Context

The Ministry of Education and Child Care (MECC) is working with K to 12 education sector partners on developing a comprehensive K-12 workforce plan. One part of this plan is to explore ways to enable more internationally educated teachers (IET) to be employed in British Columbia and help address school districts and independent schools' hiring needs.

In the context of this project, IETs are those who successfully completed an approved teacher education program outside of Canada. These professionals must obtain Canadian immigration status (i.e., a work permit or permanent resident status card) and a BC teaching certificate before they can work in BC schools.

The current certification and immigration processes for IETs are quite complex for individuals to navigate and as such, there are opportunities to streamline these processes to better meet the hiring needs of school districts and independent schools.

Further, there is limited guidance and support services for international professionals in terms of navigating the certification and immigration system together.

Project Overview

Between September of 2023 and January 2024, engagement-driven research was carried out on IETs in BC by MNP LLP (MNP) on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Child Care (MECC). The project aimed to identify challenges faced by IETs in the immigration and certification process in BC and provide recommendations for streamlining these processes. Consultations with IETs, employer groups, and relevant organizations were conducted through various methods such as online surveys, interviews, and facilitated group sessions. In addition, the project also included an analysis of MECC's public-facing communications about the certification and immigration processes for IETs.

This summary report highlights the key themes that emerged through the consultations, especially the main challenges and opportunities for improvement that participants identified, as well as recommendations to streamline the immigration and certification processes for IETs. MECC will use this report to inform future policies related to IETs. A review of MECC's public-facing communications for IETs was also conducted; the key findings and recommendations are presented the section titled 'Communications Review'.

Engagement Approach

MNP engaged individuals and organizations through facilitated groups sessions, one-on-one interviews, and an online survey. To enable the exploration of the complex processes of immigrating to Canada and applying for BC teaching certification, discussion questions were grouped into the five key themes illustrated below. These themes helped organize and structure the consultations.

Engagement activities took place throughout November and into early January 2024, and were structured as follows:



Preparation

The period of time before an IET takes any formal steps towards immigrating to Canada and/or applying for a BC teaching certificate.



Application – Immigrating to Canada

The process of an IET immigrating to Canada (i.e., work permit or permanent residency).



Application – BC Teaching Certificate

The process of an IET applying for their BC teaching credentials.



Employment

The process of an IET finding teaching employment opportunities and securing a teaching job in B.C.



BC Teaching Experience

The period of time after an IET has secured employment, their teaching credentials, and (if applicable) their immigration status.

Groups who participated in engagement activities included:

- The Association of BC Deans of Education
- The BC Teachers’ Council
- The BC Teachers’ Federation
- IETs
- K-12 employer associations
- MECC program areas
- The Ministry of Municipal Affairs
- The Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills
- School districts

What We Heard Summary

Through one-on-one interviews and the online survey, which had over 730 responses, IETs described long wait times, confusion about how to apply, and high costs as barriers. Many described that they were close to giving up on the potential of teaching in BC (considering instead to teach in another

province or pursue a different profession altogether), due to the complexities and long duration of the immigration and BC teaching certification application processes.

Most employers explained that they do not have the capacity or resources to assist IETs with navigating either the immigration or BC teaching certification application process. However, employers also said that when IET candidates have permanent residency or a work visa, and a BC teaching certification, they are treated as any other candidate for a teaching position.

There was some regional variation with respect to recruiting IETs. Northern areas and the Metro Vancouver area are struggling to recruit teachers and are keen to hire IETs, whereas urban Vancouver Island school districts are not experiencing the same degree of teacher shortages so are not looking at the pool of IET candidates as closely.

In addition, insights from both group engagements and one-on-one interviews revealed a clear trend: participants often referenced outdated information believing that it was still accurate. These inaccuracies seemed to be arising from misinformation. Participants' feedback highlighted the confusion surrounding the immigration and certification processes and the need for clearer and more effective public communication.

Learnings and Challenges

Throughout this project, there were several key themes that were heard by both internationally educated teachers and employers:

Communication and Transparency

- Information for IETs about teaching in BC is not clearly presented or organized in a central location. Language barriers, the ambiguity of relationships between multiple organizations involved, the number of acronyms used, and the duplication of steps along with documents required between processes contributes to the confusion.
- IETs cannot easily determine the status of their BC teaching certification application which makes it difficult for them, and often their families, to plan for next steps.
- IETs struggle to provide documentation to the Teacher Regulation Branch (TRB) in specified formats that do not exist in their respective countries, which leads to confusion and further processing delays.
- Most employers do not have the capacity to support IETs in their navigation of the immigration or teaching certification processes and are hesitant to provide advice given how quickly these processes along with requirements can change.

Processing Times

- The long processing times for immigration and obtaining BC teaching certification is a significant frustration for IETs and has resulted in some pursuing alternative careers, abandoning their

aspirations of teaching in British Columbia. Compounding this frustration is that both processes often require the submission of original and/or paper documents and applicants cannot easily verify whether these materials have been received. The certification and immigration processes are viewed by IETs as expensive, time-consuming, and difficult.

- Employers are also frustrated by the long time it takes to hire an IET, as well as the amount of administration and related complexities involved. Labour Market Impact Assessments and becoming a registered employer were noted as barriers to recruiting IETs, especially for urgent hiring needs.

Costs

- IETs indicated that costs associated with immigrating and obtaining their BC teaching certification can be prohibitive. They raised that language tests that expire every two years, sourcing original documents to submit to multiple organizations, and mandatory university courses that require IETs to pay international student tuition and take time away from work to attend, were the main financial challenges.
- Participants highlighted that the cost of housing and living in many Canadian communities, especially in Vancouver, is a barrier for IETs to obtain and sustain employment.
- Limited public transportation, both within a community and between communities, and especially in rural and remote locations was raised as a barrier.

BC Teacher Certification Requirements

- Some IETs stated that the current requirements to obtain their BC teaching certification presents insurmountable barriers for international applicants. For example, completing a practicum in BC, and courses at a Canadian university, were cited as barriers.
- Participants were concerned that a conditional teacher certificate, only valid for up to five years, is a contributing factor to retention challenges that employers face.

Cultural Differences Can Be Stark

- Several employers shared that IETs often struggle with inclusive education and assessment, adding that the teaching culture in BC is very different when compared to other countries. Similarly, IETs shared that BC schools' emphasis on inclusive education is unlike school systems in other provinces.

Recommendations for Consideration

This section summarizes key items for consideration to address the challenges as raised by IETs and employers, notably when it comes to the immigration and certification processes for IETs.

Communication and Transparency

- **Centralize and Simplify Communications**
 - Create a central repository with plain language information and graphics covering Canadian immigration (e.g. Provincial Nominee Program) and BC teacher certification for IETs.

- Host regular online meetings for IETs interested in teaching in BC, addressing immigration and teacher certification processes, FAQs, available resources, insights into teaching in BC, and expectation management.
- Explore opportunities to provide personalized supports (e.g., concierge services, “help line”) for IETs to inquire about their unique circumstances.
- Develop resources to support employers and answer their questions about hiring.

Provincial-Federal Coordination

- **Develop partnerships**
 - Explore opportunities to better align processes between provincial and federal levels to support more coordination and reduce duplicating steps.

Processing Times

- **Reduce Document Gathering and Processing Times**
 - Enable digital document submission to reduce costs and processing time for IETs applying for BC teaching certification.
 - Create standard forms and templates for IETs to complete and submit their information when applying for their BC teaching certification.
 - Create an online portal whereby IETs can easily monitor which documents have been received as well as the overall the status of their BC teaching credential application.

Costs

- **Reconsider Additional Mandatory Courses**
 - Explore ways to lower costs associated with mandatory courses for IETs who receive their Conditional Certificate of Qualification. Offering these courses online could help to reduce the costs associated with mandatory courses.
 - Provide upgrading opportunities through distance learning to allow IETs to proactively address any areas of need.

Pathways

- **Create Flexible Pathways to Support IETs to Join BC’s Teacher Workforce**
 - Explore ways take into consideration the breadth of IETs’ skills and experience when they seek to become certified in BC.
 - Identify mechanisms to support the retention of IETs while supporting them to work/ladder towards a Professional Teacher Certificate.

Cultural Differences Can Be Stark

- **Provide Supports for IETs who have recently joined the BC K-12 workforce**
 - Work towards the creation of supports for IETs to assist with their transition,

fostering guidance and community integration (e.g., mentorship).

Communications Review

Communications Review Overview

Another aspect of this research was conducting a communications review of MECC’s public-facing information and to provide recommendations for improvement. The following MECC websites were included in this review:

Webpage Name
Teacher Regulation Branch
Become a British Columbia certified teacher
Requirements to apply for a Certificate of Qualification (COQ)
Teaching in British Columbia
Understanding the teacher certification application process
Required documents details for completing a teacher certification application

At the outset of the review, the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) website was identified as a strong model of how MECC’s information regarding IETs could be presented and is referenced as such.

Overall Observations and Related Considerations

Currently, the information for IETs is spread across different websites along with webpages, and the content on them is not consistent, appears in some cases to be outdated, and can be difficult to locate. In addition, the phrasing, diction, and use of acronyms complicates the ability to understand the processes involved. When it comes to the templates and forms that IETs are required to complete, these should be available for download for IETs whose countries do not have the equivalent forms.

These findings suggest that a dedicated webpage with information for IETs, or a centralized list of resources for IETs, would be helpful. Also, simplified language should be used and supplemented with infographics and images wherever possible. Furthermore, to reduce confusion, downloadable templates should be provided so that IETs, and their respective post-secondary institutions, can submit the correct information.

Conclusion

The report highlights significant challenges faced by internationally educated teachers (IETs) in BC, including long wait times, confusion, and high costs during the immigration and teacher certification process. Many IETs express frustration and contemplate abandoning the idea of

teaching in BC due to these complexities. Employers, while acknowledging the difficulties, often lack the capacity to assist IETs in navigating these processes.

MECC has proactively initiated measures to tackle some of the issues outlined in the report:

1. The TRB is exploring and putting forward a proposal to lessen the teacher certification application fees for IETs.
2. BCTC continues to upgrade the Certificate of Qualification's Certification Standards with aim to update language and modernize and remove barriers for international teachers. The latest modifications was effective in December 2023.
3. MECC staff is offering concierge service for IETs to help them navigate through the teacher certification process.
4. MECC is working collaboratively with other organizations and government offices on the following initiatives:
 - a. Hosting information sessions with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MUNI) and Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to inform employers on how to support an IET through the immigration and teacher certification process.
 - b. Providing funding to BCPSEA to support the creation of resources, communication materials, and tools to support IETs joining BC's K-12 workforce, including materials designed to support employers in recruiting international candidates.
 - c. Collaborating with post-secondary institutions, Post-secondary Education and Future Skills (PSFS), and BCTC to explore the possibility of micro-credentials for IETs.
 - d. Collaborating with MUNI to explore BC PNP eligibility criteria for teachers in the northern school district and/or TTOC.
5. MECC will continue to actively engage key partners in the K-12 education sector on addressing recruitment and retention issues.

Appendix A: Participating Organizations

Participating Organizations, Groups
Association of BC Deans of Education (ABCDE)
BC Association of School Business Officials (BCASBO)
BC Principals and Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA)
BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA)
BC School Districts - Kootenay Boundary Chapter
BC School Districts – Metro Chapter
BC School Districts – Fraser Valley Chapter
BC School Districts – Thompson-Okanagan Chapter
BC School Districts – Northern Chapter
BC School Districts – Vancouver Island Chapter
BC School Superintendents Association (BCSSA)
BC School Trustees Associations (BCSTA)
BC Teachers' Council (BCTC)
BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF)
Federation of Independent Schools (FISA)
Internationally Educated Teachers*
Make A Future (BCPSEA)
Ministry of Education and Child Care, Teacher Regulation Branch, Certification Unit
Ministry of Education and Child Care, Teacher Regulation Branch, Professional Excellence Unit
Ministry of Education and Child Care, French Education Team
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills (PSFS)

* Internationally Educated Teachers who applied for a BC teaching certificate since 2020.

Appendix B: Acronyms

IET	Internationally Educated Teacher
LMIA	Labour Market Impact Assessment
LOP	Letter of Permission
MECC	Ministry of Education and Child Care
PNP	Provincial Nominee Program
TRB	Teacher Regulation Branch
TTOC	Teacher Teaching On Call