

AUGUST 2025

# Tâilhqot'in Nation Education Strategy

TOWARDS THE 40X40 GOAL

Tâilhqot'in  
NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

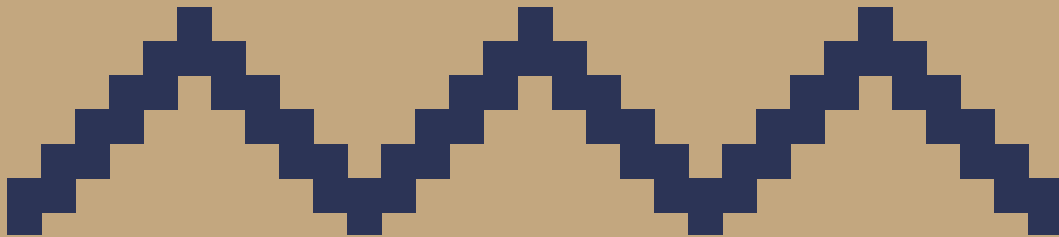


## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The T̓silhqot̓'in National Government (TNG) would like to raise our hands to all of the students, families, Elders, educators, leadership, and community members who shared their voices, stories, hopes, and ideas to help shape this Education Strategy. Your knowledge, experiences, and vision are the heart of this work.

We also acknowledge the efforts of the T̓silhqot̓'in Education Department, who have guided this Strategy with wisdom, dedication, and a deep commitment to the future of our Nation. Your leadership has ensured that this Strategy truly reflects the needs and aspirations of our people.

This document stands as a testament to the strength, resilience, and vision of the T̓silhqot̓'in Nation. Together, we are building a future where education strengthens our people, our communities, and our sovereignty for generations to come.



# Education Strategy

TOWARDS THE 40X40 GOAL





## INTRODUCTION

The TNG Education Strategy comes from our Nation's deep commitment to self-determination, community well-being, and cultural strength.

For generations, education has always been part of T̓šilhqot'in life – shared through stories, teachings, and our deep connection to our land, language, and culture. But colonial policies have disrupted these ways, creating barriers, breaking connections, and leaving lasting gaps in our education systems.

This Strategy is our response; a step forward to rebuild education in a way that reflects who we are. It is shaped by the voices of our communities, guided by our Elders, and grounded in our values. It lays out a vision for an education system that uplifts every T̓šilhqot'in learner, whether they are in Head Start, high school, or returning to schooling as an adult. It recognizes that education is a lifelong journey – one that should build confidence, pride, and opportunity at every stage.

The Strategy also bolsters our broader goals as a Nation as outlined within the Gwets'en Nilt'i Pathway Agreement through the 8 pillars: governance, education, healthy communities, healthy children and families, language and culture, economic development, justice, and nen (lands and resources). With efforts like the 40x40 Goal – supporting at least 40 T̓šilhqot'in members to earn degrees, designations, or certifications by the year 2040 – we are laying the groundwork for a strong and self-determined future. This Strategy is a living document, meant to grow and change alongside us, as we move forward together.

### Why an Education Strategy?

An Education Strategy is like a roadmap; it helps guide our planning, decision-making, and actions across all parts of our education system. It is a tool to help us move forward together in a way that stays true to who we are as T̓šilhqot'in people.

A good strategy gives us a clear direction but leaves enough flexibility to adapt as our needs and priorities grow and change.

“We are laying the groundwork  
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self-determined future.”





For the T̓silhqot̓in Nation, this Education Strategy is about promoting the unique needs and dreams of our six communities and all our members. At its heart, it is a commitment to building an education system that honours T̓silhqot̓in ways of knowing, being, and learning – where education is not just about academic achievement, but about strengthening identity, belonging, and Nation-building for generations to come.

## Approach

The development of the T̓silhqot̓in National Government Education Strategy was undertaken using a multi-phase, community-driven approach designed to ensure that the final strategy is grounded in both established best practices and the lived experience of our communities.

- First, a **comprehensive scan** of best practices, tools, and research was conducted to examine the broader educational landscape for First Nations across Canada. This review provided a data-driven foundation and helped identify approaches that have been successful in similar contexts, while also highlighting systemic barriers faced by Indigenous learners.
- Building on this foundation, extensive **community engagements** were carried out across the T̓silhqot̓in Nation. These included in-person gatherings in each of the six T̓silhqot̓in communities and in Williams Lake, as well as a Nation-wide community survey, key informant interviews, and focus groups with the TNG Education Committee and staff. These engagements created space for T̓silhqot̓in members – including students, parents, Elders, educators, and leadership – to share their perspectives on education, articulate community priorities, and shape the direction of the strategy.



- Insights from these engagements were synthesized into a **Needs Assessment** that identified core strengths, challenges, and opportunities within the current education system. This assessment serves as the foundation of the Education Strategy.

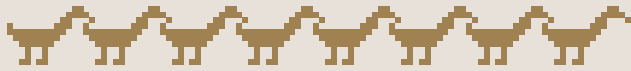
The learnings from each phase were then carefully analyzed and brought together to shape the Vision, Guiding Principles, and Strategic Goals outlined in this Strategy. Every part of the

Strategy reflects what we heard from community members and is built to move us forward in a way that honours the hopes, knowledge, and priorities of the T̓silhqot'in Nation.

ENGAGEMENT TYPE	DATES	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Community Gatherings	→ November 18 to November 27, 2024	→ 42
Community Survey	→ October 15 to December 20, 2024	→ 129
Education Comittee Focus Groups	→ November 7 and December 3, 2024	→ 8
Staff Interviews	→ December 2024	→ 5







## BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

T̓silhqot'in communities have always seen education as a powerful path toward wellness, cultural strength, and self-determination.

Across the Nation, there are many important local initiatives already in place – like Head Start programs, Language Nests, culture camps, and tutoring – that reflect our commitment to encouraging learners in our own ways. But even with these strengths, many of our students still face challenges when it comes to accessing and thriving in the current education system. Too often, students have to leave their home communities for high school or post-secondary, and in doing so, face barriers that include a lack of housing, transportation, racism, and mental health struggles. These transitions can be hard, especially for younger students without strong support systems around them.

Through community gatherings, surveys, and conversations, we heard clearly that there are challenges and gaps at every stage of the learning journey for T̓silhqot'in learners. Families spoke about the need for more early learning options, better academic supports, and educational content that reflects our language, culture, and ways of life.

We also heard how adult learners face financial pressure, childcare challenges, and limited access to programs that fit their lives. Many students, especially those navigating trauma or discrimination, said they felt alone or unsure of how to move forward. And yet, what stood out most in every community was

a deep sense of hope: the desire for an education system that is truly ours, and that helps our people grow, succeed, and feel proud of who they are.

This Strategy builds on that hope. Grounded in the voices of our people, it lays out a clear and community-driven path forward – one that upholds student success, builds up our local capacity, and brings education back under T̓silhqot'in control. It is both a vision for the future and a practical plan to get us there, together.

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## OUR VISION

Education is a vital pathway to T̓silhqot'in self-determination, community well-being, and cultural revitalization.

Guided by our ancestors' knowledge and the aspirations of our youth, we envision a future where all T̓silhqot'in learners are encouraged to thrive – culturally, academically, and personally

– within education systems that reflect and respect who we are.

This strategy lays the foundation for healthy, safe, empowered, autonomous, and resilient T̓silhqot'in communities, for this generation and for generations to come. By 2040, we aim to empower at least 40 T̓silhqot'in members to achieve significant educational milestones – including advanced degrees, professional designations, and Red Seal certifications – building our Nation's capacity, strengthening its leadership, and promoting success in all fields.

Rooted in T̓silhqot'in values, this vision embraces education as a lifelong journey, championing learners of all ages to pursue their goals, reclaim traditional knowledge, and shape a future built on pride, strength, and sovereignty.







## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding Principles are the values that guide the Education Strategy.

These principles reflect what is most important to our Nation when it comes to learning – things like culture, community, and taking care of each person’s physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. They help make sure that every part of the Strategy stays true to who we are and what we believe in.

### 1. CULTURAL SPECIFICITY, RELEVANCE, AND CONTINUITY

Education must reflect and strengthen T̓silhqot̓in language, culture, and traditions. Learning opportunities must be rooted in T̓silhqot̓in ways of knowing and being, ensuring that students remain connected to their identity and ancestral knowledge. Strengthening cultural continuity through education will help sustain and carry forward the T̓silhqot̓in way of life for generations to come.

### 2. COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACHES

Learning must be anchored in the realities, strengths, and needs of each T̓silhqot̓in community. Community-based education ensures that learners can access relevant, meaningful programming close to home, while building local capacity and leadership. Education initiatives must be flexible and adaptable, responding to community voices and priorities.

### 3. SELF-DETERMINATION

Education must uphold the T̓silhqot̓in Nation’s inherent right to govern and define our own educational systems. Through self-determined education, communities will reclaim authority over curriculum, decision-making, and institutional partnerships, shaping a path that reflects T̓silhqot̓in sovereignty, values, and aspirations.



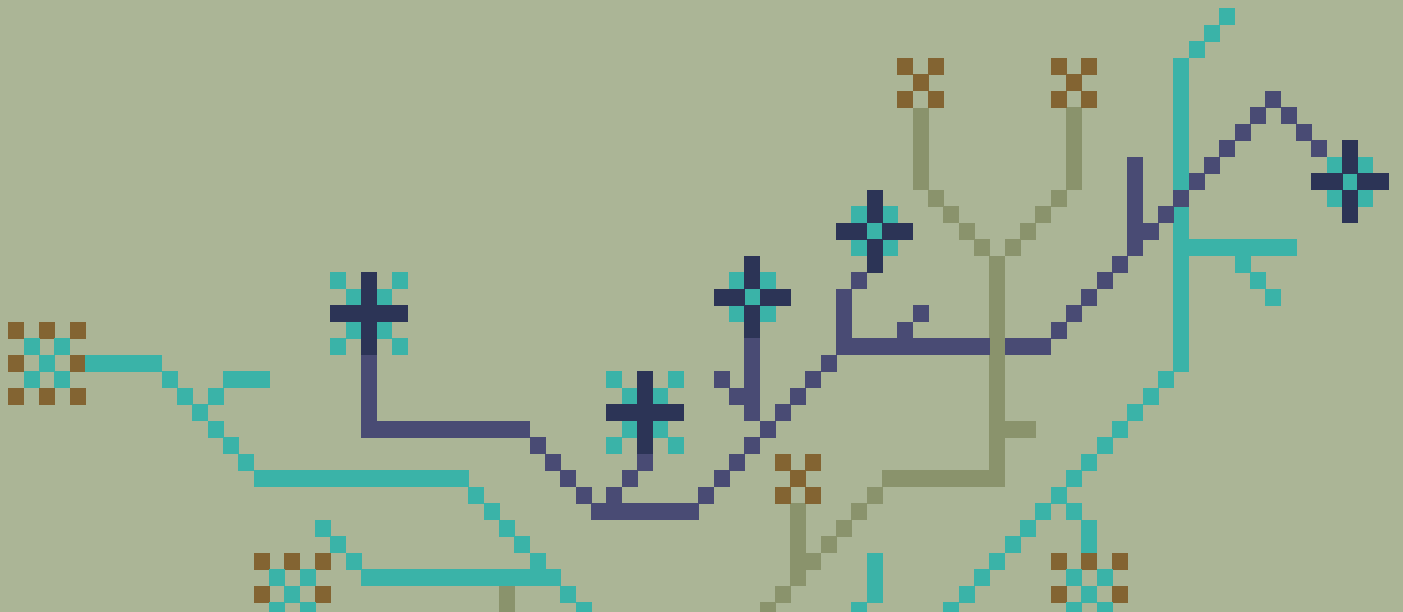
### 4. INCLUSIVITY

Education must be accessible and welcoming to all T̓silhqot̓in learners, recognizing and addressing the barriers some community members face. Particular attention will be given to ensuring equity for students of all ages, genders, abilities, and backgrounds. An inclusive approach will create safe, supportive learning environments where every learner can thrive.

### 5. HOLISTIC EDUCATION

Education must nurture the whole person; mind, body, spirit, and heart. The T̓silhqot̓in approach to education will support the academic success of students while also promoting their mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being. Holistic education acknowledges the interconnectedness of all aspects of life and fosters balance, resilience, and pride among learners.

# Strategic Goals



# STRATEGIC GOALS

Strategic Goals show what we are working toward: the big-picture changes we want to see in education for our Nation. Each Goal is backed by Key Actions, which are practical steps we can take to move forward. Together, the Goals and Actions help turn our vision into real change for students, families, and communities.

## 1. Root Education in T̓silhqot̓'in Language, Culture, and Traditions

We will weave T̓silhqot̓'in language and culture into every part of the learning journey – from early childhood to adulthood. By grounding education in who we are, we strengthen identity, ensure cultural transmission, and create safe spaces where our learners feel proud and connected. Each T̓silhqot̓'in community is unique, and our education system should reflect and celebrate that. Reclaiming language and culture through education will uplift our people and promote success in all areas of life.

### KEY ACTIONS

- 1.1**—Develop T̓silhqot̓'in language and culture curricula that can be taught in schools and community programs.
- 1.2**—Support T̓silhqot̓'in speakers to become certified language teachers and mentors to encourage language revitalization across the Nation.
- 1.3**—Offer annual on-the-land learning programs and cultural camps in each community and at all levels of education.
- 1.4**—Create opportunities for Elders and Knowledge Holders to teach, guide, and share their knowledge in schools and community settings.

## 2. Open Doors to Education for Every T̓silhqot̓'in Learner

We will break down the barriers that keep people from learning – whether it is a lack of transportation, childcare, housing, or funding. Everyone in our Nation deserves access to education that works for them, no matter their age or life stage. That means flexible options for adult learners, assistance for students who need to leave home to study, and more resources in our own communities so people do not have to choose between their education and making ends meet.

### KEY ACTIONS

- 2.1**—Create scholarships, bursaries, and financial support programs for learners at every stage, from early learning to adult education.
- 2.2**—Expand flexible, community-based learning options, including online and part-time programs for adult learners.
- 2.3**—Invest in safe, reliable, and Nation-owned transportation for students traveling to school or training.
- 2.4**—Develop housing supports and partnerships for students studying away from home.
- 2.5**—Offer wraparound supports, including childcare, meal programs, and wellness services, to reduce barriers to learning.



### 3. Nurture a Holistic Approach to Student Mental Health and Wellbeing

Learning is shaped not only by what's taught, but by how it's taught – and whether we feel safe, encouraged, and seen along the way. We will create spaces that care for the whole person: mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. This includes addressing racism and bullying in schools and making sure our students have access to culturally safe mental health supports that truly meet their needs.

#### KEY ACTIONS

- 3.1**—Develop and promote trauma-informed education practices across all learning environments.
- 3.2**—Expand access to culturally safe, long-term mental wellness supports in all communities.
- 3.3**—Confront racism in education by empowering T̓silhqot'in youth, families, and communities to speak out and lead change.
- 3.4**—Create community-led programs that promote wellness through culture, nutrition, and connection to land.
- 3.5**—Develop Nation-wide policies on anti-bullying, mental health and wellness, and creating safe school environments.

### 4. Guide Students Through Every Step of Their Educational Journey

Transitions – like starting high school or moving to a big city for university – can be hard. We will walk with our students through every step of their journey, so they feel confident and held up, wherever learning takes them. That means having mentors, planning tools, and systems in place to help students navigate new environments and make informed decisions about their futures.

#### KEY ACTIONS

- 4.1**—Establish 'away from home' education supports, including dedicated staff (virtual and in-person) and safe gathering spaces – for students studying in towns and cities.
- 4.2**—Create mentorship programs that connect students with role models, both in community and beyond.
- 4.3**—Develop age-appropriate career exploration and life skills programs starting in elementary school.
- 4.4**—Offer transition planning and application support for students moving into high school, post-secondary, or training.
- 4.5**—Provide culturally grounded graduation and recognition ceremonies that celebrate student milestones at every level.





## 5. Empower Families and Communities to Play a Vital Role in Education

Learning doesn't only happen in classrooms; it happens in homes, on the land, and in community. We will support parents, families, Elders, and mentors to take an active role in education, creating a circle of care around each learner. When families and communities are involved, students do better – and our whole Nation grows stronger.

### KEY ACTIONS

- 5.1**—Create welcoming spaces and programs where parents, Elders, youth, and educators can come together to support learning, share knowledge, and access workshops and resources for learning at home and in community.
- 5.2**—Create opportunities for parents and caregivers to be involved in school activities, planning, and decision-making.
- 5.3**—Encourage community-driven curriculum that reflects local teachings, stories, and values.
- 5.4**—Support Elders and cultural mentors with honoraria, resources, and recognition for their role in education.

## 6. Provide Specialized Support for Every Learner's Unique Needs

Every learner is different, and we want to make sure each one receives the support they need to succeed. That includes students with learning differences, those who are gifted, and those who thrive in alternative ways of learning. We will invest in specialized educators and services, so that no one is left behind and everyone has the chance to reach their full potential.

### KEY ACTIONS

- 6.1**—Expand access to special education services, including assessments, learning plans, and one-on-one support.
- 6.2**—Train and retain local educators and support staff with expertise in neurodiverse learning needs.
- 6.3**—Develop mobile teams of specialists, such as speech therapists, counsellors, and occupational therapists, to serve all communities.
- 6.4**—Create safe, stigma-free pathways for students and families to access learning and mental health supports.
- 6.5**—Provide individualized education plans and flexible programming for gifted learners and students needing alternative approaches.



## 7. Strengthen Pathways to Employment, Training, and Nation-Building

We will create strong pathways from education into good jobs, meaningful careers, and roles that strengthen our Nation.

Whether someone wants to earn a Red Seal certification or a university degree, start a business, or work in community – we will help make that journey possible. This goal is at the heart of our 40x40 vision: supporting at least 40 T̓silhqot'in members to reach major education and career milestones by 2040, and ensuring they can bring their skills home.

### KEY ACTIONS

**7.1**—Partner with post-secondary schools, trades programs, and employers to create clear, supported pathways into jobs and careers through education and training.

**7.2**—Offer hands-on opportunities, like job shadowing, internships, and community-based training, for youth and adult learners.

**7.3**—Develop career navigation services and Nation-wide job boards for T̓silhqot'in members.

**7.4**—Create supports for returning graduates to find meaningful work and leadership roles within the Nation.

**7.5**—Align education programs with Nation-building goals, including governance, language, health, economic development, and land stewardship.

**7.6**—Establish a skilled workers registry to share skilled professionals across all T̓silhqot'in communities.





## NEXT STEPS

This Strategy will guide the work of the TNG as we move forward.

Our next steps include developing a detailed implementation plan, securing resources, and building partnerships to help turn these goals into reality. We will continue to work closely with our communities, families, and learners to ensure the Strategy remains a living document. As we grow, as our needs evolve, and as new opportunities emerge, we will continue to revisit, renew, and strengthen this path forward.



## CONCLUSION

This Strategy is a commitment to our people, our culture, and our future.

It reflects the hopes of our communities, the knowledge of our Elders, and the dreams of our young people. It lays out a clear path to create an education system that supports every T̓silhqot̓in learner to succeed, grounded in who we are and where we come from.

By working together – students, families, communities, leadership, and partners – we can create opportunities for all our people to learn, grow, and thrive. The 40x40 Goal is just the beginning; with determination, connection, and pride in our identity, we will continue to build a stronger, healthier, and more self-determined Nation for generations to come.

