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## Assembly of First Nations

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## Assemblée des Premières Nations

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### OPEN LETTER TO ALL CHIEFS February 19, 2014

After many years of hard work and disappointing results, we now have hope for a better way forward.

The Government of Canada's landmark announcement that it will invest \$1.9 Billion in new funding in First Nation's education and remove the 2 percent funding cap enables us to prepare more of our children for success, and more of our First Nations communities for prosperity.

Working together, from the bottom up and inclusive of all voices and viewpoints, we need to strengthen opportunities for our children to gain the knowledge and skills they need to succeed, in an environment that embraces and celebrates our First Nation history, culture, heritage, language and identity.

The recent progress we made in our discussions with the federal government is a major step forward but just the beginning of a long journey. There is a lot more work ahead of us before we can rest knowing the education of our children is in proper hands, and properly attended to.

Working together, we need to continue to work for a better future for our children by ensuring the Federal Government enacts mutually-agreeable legislation that honours its commitment to surrender control over First Nations education to First Nations communities, where it properly belongs.

Working together, we need to demonstrate that we will be responsible caretakers of our children's education by establishing high standards of learning, and by being accountable to our communities, elders, parents, and, most especially our children, for the results we achieve.

Working together we need to continue to honour and respect the diverse interests of Canada's First Nations People. Regions that wish to pursue their own self-government or treaty negotiations must be encouraged to continue to do so. Our new approach cannot be about limiting regional or community control, it must be about empowering First Nations people to take control; a vital step in our efforts to better protect the interests of First Nations children, First Nations culture and First Nations communities. In this regard, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is available to assist all regions in whatever capacity it can, as they move forward with an education plan that meets their communities' unique cultural, social, political and economic goals. Building on our Resolution 21/2013 from our Special Chiefs Assembly in December we developed a draft framework and circulated it among our Chiefs Committee on Education to help us map our way forward. The framework is based on our conditions of respect and recognition of First Nations rights, title, Treaties and jurisdiction; a statutory guarantee of funding including a predictable annual growth rate to ensure funding to keep pace with costs of delivering quality education; support for First Nations languages and cultures; the development of mechanisms for reciprocal accountability with no unilateral federal oversight or authority; ongoing meaningful dialogue and development of options by First Nations and Canada for an enabling framework that will ensure the success of First Nations students and schools.

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And working together we must re-examine the administrative and governance structures we need to have in place as we move forward. To that end, at our most recent Chief's Committee on Education (CCOE), we agreed to review our terms of reference, as well as those of the National Indian Education Council (NIEC) and that proposed changes, if any, would be brought as recommendations before the next meeting of the AFN Executive scheduled for February 27<sup>th</sup>.

There is nothing more important to our people than finding a way to give our children and grandchildren a chance to own their future, and that starts with a good education.

We have an opportunity before us to demonstrate that we can deliver the education our children need, deserve and want. And has always been our way as First Nations people, we will seek consensus on the best path forward , one that helps them achieve success and take pride in their culture and heritage.

Sincerely,



Morley Googoo  
Regional Chief Nova Scotia and Newfoundland  
AFN Education Portfolio Holder

