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## Assembly of First Nations

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## Assemblée des Premières Nations

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**SPECIAL CHIEFS ASSEMBLY  
DECEMBER 6, 7, & 8, 2016; GATINEAU, QC**

**Resolution no. 109/2016**

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**TITLE:** Working Towards a New Urban First Nations Strategy

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**SUBJECT:** Urban

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**MOVED BY:** Chief Cameron Catchway, Skownan First Nation, MB

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**SECONDED BY:** Chief Jean Guy Whiteduck, Kitisgan Zibi Anishinabeg, QC

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**DECISION** Carried; 1 abstention

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### WHEREAS:

A. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states:

- i. Article 4: Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions.
- ii. Article 21 (1): Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.
- iii. Article 21 (2): States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.

B. In 1998 the Government of Canada introduced its Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) which was categorized as a government-wide policy. Even as late as the spring of 2003 no publicly available document specified the actual "strategy". However, the federal government indicated that the UAS was the means by which it would address urban Aboriginal issues "through greater internal coordination of federal activities and through partnerships with provinces, municipalities and Aboriginal stakeholders."

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- C. Previous funding authorities for the UAS have not adequately provided programs and services to properly address the needs of urban First Nations residents.
- D. In 2006 the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) for the purposes of delivering services to urban First Nations.
- E. In 2010 the AFN Chiefs-in-Assembly passed AFN Resolution 18/2010, which supports the development of a First Nation Urban Strategy and the establishment of a First Nation Urban Strategy Advisory Committee.
- F. As of April 2014, the Government of Canada provides \$43 million per year to the NAFC, which launches an annual call for proposals from urban Aboriginal and other non-profit organizations for the purpose of Community Capacity Support and Urban Partnerships. The NAFC is required to post all accepted proposals on its website. Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) administers \$8.1 million of UAS funding through a targeted call for proposals, which supports the development of regional and community strategic plans to guide funding provided by the NAFC.
- G. Budget 2016 announced \$23.7 million for the UAS in 2016-2017, which included an engagement process mandated by the Government of Canada to identify ways to strengthen the UAS and more effectively meet the needs of urban Aboriginal peoples.
- H. The engagement process undertaken by INAC had a limited scope and insufficient timeframes and was not designed in a manner that would effectively address long term First Nation needs. As a result, the AFN received funding to conduct two engagement sessions (one in Edmonton and one in Montreal) that had limited participation and did not allow for fulsome review and discussion of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN)/ NAFC Memorandum of Understanding, or to develop a First Nations position on the UAS.
- I. Recommendations received from First Nation participants at these two forums included: the need to engage with AFN membership and relevant First Nation stakeholders on urban priorities, programs and services consistent with the AFN Resolution 18/2010; that "urban" is not limited to major cities but also includes smaller rural cities; and the need to address the lack of accountability and transparency with the current UAS funding delivery mechanism.
- J. The current UAS extension is set to expire on March 31, 2017 with no new strategy in place or plan to extend the current strategy. The extension of the UAS for 2016-2017 reduced the overall budget available to \$23.7 million.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Chiefs-in-Assembly:**

1. Call on Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) to extend the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) through 2017-2018 with funding restored to \$51 million per year.

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2. Call on INAC to ensure that 2017-18 UAS funding be provided to and administered by First Nation governance structures that are nation based, regionally supported, relevant to local circumstance, able to deliver urban First Nation services, and acceptable to First Nations.
3. Call on INAC to rename the UAS to the Urban and Rural Indigenous Strategy.
4. Direct the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to carry out AFN Resolution 18/2010 and create a First Nation Urban Strategy through a First Nation Urban Strategy Advisory Committee with regional representation.
5. Call on INAC to fund additional AFN regional engagement to assist the development of a long term, sustainable First Nations Urban and Rural Strategy by November 2017, to be included in AFN's federal budget submission for 2017-18.
6. Direct the AFN to continue to advocate for a nation to nation relationship between the Crown and First Nations governance structures to ensure that the needs of First Nations are met regardless of residency.

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