



# Backgrounder – New Funding and Policy Approach for First Nations Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education

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From: [Indigenous Services Canada](#)

On January 21, 2019, the Honourable Seamus O'Regan, Minister of Indigenous Services, and National Chief Perry Bellegarde of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), announced a new, co-developed policy and funding approach that will better support the needs of First Nations students on-reserve.

## First Nations Control of First Nations Education

This new approach is a starting point to better meeting the unique needs of First Nations students and improving outcomes. It will also further strengthen First Nations efforts to ensure high quality and culturally appropriate education systems for their students.

## Engagement process

This co-developed approach is the result of an extensive engagement process undertaken in 2016 and 2017 with representatives from Indigenous Services Canada, the Assembly of First Nations, the National Indian Education Council and the Chiefs Committee on Education. The engagement process included community-level discussions, an online survey, technical task teams, leadership dialogues and regional technical discussions.

## A new co-developed approach

Beginning in April 1, 2019, Indigenous Services Canada will implement a series of new formula-based regional funding models for elementary and secondary education, replacing a number of proposal-based programs. This new funding approach will significantly reduce the administrative and reporting burden on First Nations schools, communities and organizations.

Each regional model is aimed at ensuring that students attending First Nations schools are supported by predictable base funding that is directly comparable to what students



enrolled in provincial education systems receive. On top of this base funding, Indigenous Services Canada will be providing expanded supports for full-time kindergarten and increased language and culture programming at on-reserve schools.

Indigenous Services Canada will work with First Nations to further refine formula-based regional funding models that will better address the unique needs of First Nations students. This will include annual updates to account for student population growth and other education cost changes. It will also include collaborative work with First Nations to support the creation of new Treaty-based, regional and/or local education agreements that respond to the education goals and priorities set by First Nations.

The new funding approach will:

- replace outdated proposal-based programs with improved access to predictable core funding;
- ensure base funding is comparable to provincial systems across the country while working towards additional funding agreements based on need to better account for factors such as remoteness, school size, language, and socio-economic conditions;
- provide First Nations schools with \$1,500 per student, per year, to support language and culture programming;
- provide new resources to support full-time kindergarten in every First Nations school for children aged four and five;
- ensure special education funding is more predictable, with fewer application-based requirements;
- support ongoing discussions with First Nations across Canada to further refine the new formula-based regional funding models in order to better address the unique needs of First Nations students, and;
- enable new Treaty-based, regional or and/local education agreements that respond to the education goals and priorities set by First Nations.

## Regional and/or local education agreements

Indigenous Services Canada will work in partnership with First Nations to develop additional Treaty-based, regional and/or local education agreements that respond to the education goals and priorities set by First Nations. These will be co-developed at a regional level through discussion tables. These agreements will vary from region to region and will:

- be comprehensive and cover all federal support for First Nations elementary and secondary education, including special education;
- establish clear roles and responsibilities for First Nations-led service delivery; and



- co-develop mutual accountability mechanisms.

The new funding and policy approach announced today and taking effect on April 1, 2019 will act as an interim measure as these regional and/or local education agreements are developed and implemented.

## Improving Education Infrastructure

In addition to the \$2.6 billion that Budget 2016 provided for elementary and secondary education on-reserve, \$969.4 million over five years was provided for First Nations education infrastructure. Together with previous budget commitments, approximately \$1.47 billion has been committed to support First Nations education infrastructure.

These investments have supported:

- 70 new school construction projects completed or underway since April 2016;
- 103 additional projects, including 87 renovations and upgrading projects, seven feasibility studies and nine supporting projects;
- Overall, 173 school-related infrastructure projects benefitting over 41,000 students in 225 communities.
- Examples include:
  - Southeast Collegiate in Winnipeg
  - Manitoba Schools Initiative: Construction to begin in spring 2019 on four new schools and a major renovation in four First Nation communities in Northern Manitoba
  - New kindergarten – grade 12 school in Lake St. Martin: The Government of Canada and Lake St. Martin First Nation are working together to ensure that residents displaced by severe flooding in 2011 return to a community that will meet their needs for generations to come. This new school will accommodate up to 324 students.

## Facts & Figures

- The federal government provides funding to First Nations to support approximately 107,000 eligible students who are 4 to 21 years of age, ordinarily live on-reserve, and who are enrolled in and attending an eligible elementary or secondary program.
- Budget 2016 announced historic investments in First Nations elementary and secondary education starting in 2016-17. In 2016-17 and 2017-18, the Government of Canada invested more than \$3.6 billion in elementary and secondary education on-reserve.



- Since 2016, federal funding per year for education on-reserve has increased by more than 30%.
- The new funding approach announced today was co-developed with First Nations to fix an outdated funding structure.
- The new funding approach will be implemented April 1, 2019, and will replace proposal-based funding with more predictable, base funding that is directly comparable to what students enrolled in provincial education systems receive.
- Other funding that will continue to be available outside the new formula includes:
  - A component of the High Cost Special Education Program
  - Innovation and Research Programming
  - The Education Partnerships Program
- Regional education agreements will vary from region to region but will include improved results frameworks and mutual accountability mechanisms that reflect First Nations' needs and priorities.
- Indigenous Services Canada is already working with interested First Nations in developing regional education agreements and will be announcing the first concluded agreement very soon.

## Associated Links

- [First Nations Education Transformation](#)
- [Investing in education infrastructure](#)
- [Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer](#)
- [Office of Auditor General](#)