



EDUCATION

OVERVIEW

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Education Sector continues to work closely with the National Indian Education Council (NIEC) and the Chiefs Committee on Education (CCOE) on the implementation of AFN Resolution 65/2017, *New Interim Funding Approach for First Nation Education* and AFN Resolution 45/2019, *Additional Funding for First Nations Elementary and Secondary Education* to support First Nations students, schools and communities throughout Education Transformation.

Transforming First Nations K-12 Education

As of April 1, 2019, First Nations across the country have entered into a new approach to funding First Nations K-12 Education on reserve. The new approach to funding gives First Nations to have the option to establish Treaty based, regional and/or local education agreements that provide sufficient, predictable, and sustainable funding to better meet the needs of students, schools and communities.

First Nations across the country are engaging in regional technical table meetings to further examine their interim formulas to determine next steps, as the provincial comparability standards are inadequate to achieving substantive equality and improved outcomes. As a result, First Nations are at various stages of implementation, experiencing diverse challenges and successes. As of October 2019, across Canada, there are 24 active local and/or

regional education agreement discussions and three concluded agreements. AFN Resolution 45/2019, *Additional Funding for First Nations Elementary and Secondary Education*, calls on the Government of Canada to provide additional investments in 2020 for First Nations elementary and secondary education in order to complete local, Treaty and/or regional education agreements that accurately and adequately reflect the diverse needs and circumstances of First Nations learners, schools, communities and education organizations.

There are three remaining K-12 proposal-based funding programs: Education Partnership Program (EPP), High Cost Special Education Program (HCSEP) and Research & Innovations.

EPP was established in 2008 as a proposal-based program designed to advance First Nations student achievement in First Nations and provincial schools. Since its inception, the EPP has been criticized for a variety of issues, such as being too prescriptive, failing to account for the pre-existing funding gaps for on-reserve schools, and having rigid guidelines that do not offer enough flexibility to First Nations. The NIEC supports changing the program to a regionalized funding approach that includes the territories.

ISSUE UPDATE

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On a national scale, HCSEP is funded at \$257.48 million through regional allocations. It is recognized that this program is underfunded and does not meet the needs of First Nations learners. The CCOE passed a motion to accept a NIEC recommendation that the HCSEP take a regional approach. While a program review was supposed to take place starting in March 2019, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) has not provided funding for this review.

The Research and Innovation in Education Program supports innovative projects that allow First Nations to try new and innovative educational programs, strategies, and technologies, and develop evidence-based solutions that can be shared with other schools. The Research and Innovation Program Guidelines were finalized by the NIEC

and Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). The CCOE motioned that the Research and Innovation Program be regionalized and up to First Nations to determine their implementation approach, eliminating the national-selection committee.

The AFN Education Sector held two successful K-12 Education Transformation Forums in 2019. The first forum was held in Toronto, Ontario on May 22-23, 2019, and the second forum was held October 8-9, 2019, in Calgary, Alberta. These two forums hosted approximately 230 delegates, including principals, directors of education, and education analysts. The forums provided a platform for sharing information, exchanging best practices and highlighting regional experiences.

UPDATE

Post-Secondary Education (PSE) – The work and progress in the area of First Nations PSE is guided by direction from the Chiefs-in-Assembly through AFN Resolution 48/2018, *First Nations Post-Secondary Education Policy Proposal*, and the long-standing goal of achieving First Nations control of First Nations Education. First Nations control of First Nations education means respecting, protecting and enforcing First Nations inherent rights and Treaty rights, title and jurisdiction. It means First Nations Education systems designed by First Nations, under First Nations control and supported by direct transfers from the Federal Government.

Budget 2019 announced \$320M to support First Nations post-secondary education students through the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) and \$7.5M for First Nations post-secondary education

engagement over three years for the development of First Nations PSE models. The distribution will be \$2.5M each year, nationally, beginning in 2019-2020.

- **July-September 2019:** CCOE passed motions to support the regional allocation of funds for engagement, as well as the associated guidelines for engagement with the intention to access these funds immediately.
- **April – June 2019:** First Nations worked jointly with ISC on a Treasury Board Submission in order to quickly access funds announced in Budget 2019 prior to the 2019 Federal Election.

The AFN Education Sector will to develop a national communications initiative to assist in the long-term strategy to advocate for increased investments in First Nations post-

secondary education. The project would consist of the conducting and distribution of journalistic material, sharing students' experiences with or without a lack of PSSSP funding. A First Nations Post-Secondary Education Institutions Think Tank is planned for January 2020 to bring First Nations Institutions from across Canada together to inform the long-term PSE strategy of the AFN Education sector.

The Unique Needs of Northern and Remote Communities – This Joint Task Team met on October 23-24, 2019. The Joint Task Team will continue to expand on the work plan and critical path for 2019-2020, including prioritizing the development of a paper around recruitment and retention in remote First Nations schools. The Joint Task Team will continue to provide recommendations and feedback to other Education policy areas including education infrastructure policy affecting teacherages.

Education Infrastructure - The work and progress in the area of First Nations education infrastructure is supported by AFN Resolution 34-2019, *First Nations Education*

Infrastructure Review, which mandates the CCOE, NIEC and AFN to engage and lead a review of federal policies concerning education infrastructure. This resolution also supports federal policy and program changes that exercise First Nations' Treaty and inherent rights to education, honours and advances First Nations control of First Nations education and conforms to and upholds the Crown's Treaty and legal obligations to First Nations.

In August 2019, the AFN began drafting a short term and long-term critical path with ISC regarding First Nations education infrastructure. On September 4-5, 2019, the NIEC discussed the next steps for education infrastructure and met with ISC's Community Infrastructure Branch to determine short term and long-term education infrastructure changes. Following the NIEC meeting in September, AFN and ISC began making edits to the *School Space Accommodation Standards* in order to reflect First Nations education transformation, including regional and/or Treaty education agreements. Short term policy change is scheduled to be implemented by March 31, 2020.

NEXT STEPS

In the upcoming months, the following activities will be undertaken directly from or supported by the AFN:

- **December 2, 2019** – NIEC/CCOE Meeting, Ottawa, ON.
- **December 3-5, 2019** – AFN Special Chiefs Assembly, Ottawa, ON.
- **January 14-15, 2020**- Post-Secondary Education Think Tank, Ottawa, ON.