



EDUCATION SECTOR

What has your Sector worked on over the last quarter?

Under the leadership of National Chief Perry Bellegarde and Assembly of First Nations (AFN) portfolio holder, Saskatchewan Regional Chief Bobby Cameron, the Education Sector has continued to advocate for First Nations to have access to safe, sustainably funded, secure, culturally appropriate, and quality education. This has meant engaging in a number of related initiatives, projects, and meetings.

On May 8, 2020, Minister Marc Miller of Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) met with the Chiefs Committee on Education (CCOE). The Minister confirmed there would be no delay in funding for First Nations education programs due to COVID-19, he outlined the eligibility requirement for First Nations post-secondary students for the Canada Emergency Student Benefit, and mentioned that Regional Education Agreements and the improving of education infrastructure are a priority. The CCOE stated additional support is required in the territories to support their jurisdiction over education. It was requested that there be a meeting between Minister Miller, Minister Bennett, the Territorial governments, and First Nations to address these issues.

The Education Sector has been supporting First Nations' need for post-secondary education (PSE) through the *First Nations Post-Secondary Policy Proposal (2018)*, the Post-Secondary Partnership Program has been regionalized starting 2020-2021. In April 2020, the CCOE recommended in order to support 2020-2021, funding be regionally distributed based on First Nations population over 18, with a \$100K base per region.

The company MediaStyle is creating a communication strategy to inform different audiences on the post-secondary education gap for First Nations and highlight the importance of First Nations institutions. The strategy is a three phased approach with the first phase set to launch September 2020.

Mandated by Resolution 34/2019 *First Nations Education Infrastructure Review*, First Nations Engineering Services Ltd. was contracted to provide a 15-year capital needs assessment for First Nations schools and teacherages. Over a 15-year period, the overall capital costs required for schools is \$5,068,630,612 and \$1,250,528,346 for teacherages. Policy co-development with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to improve First Nations school standards continues by looking at the *School Space Accommodations Standards* and the teacherages' policy.

The High Cost Special Education Program Review is an action item of the K-12 Policy Proposal – *Transforming First Nations Elementary and Secondary Education (2017)*. INdsight Consulting has been hired to conduct the national review with a regional lens. The High Cost Special Education Program Review will assess the current program funding provisions including cost drivers, quality, strengths, gaps, and how it compares to other special education funding. The review will provide costing and recommendations for policy change.

The co-development of First Nations education policies continues between the National Indian Education Council (NIEC), the AFN, and ISC. The following policy guidelines for 2020-21 continue to be edited: Education Partnership Program, Regional Education Agreements (REA), Research and Innovation, and K-12 National Program Guidelines.

A media campaign on the Raised Voices: Carriers of Hope, *Calls to Action on First Nations Education* is set to launch in September 2020. In addition, a *How-To-Guide* will be released to outline actions that First



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Nations and non-First Nations students, teachers, leadership and politicians can take to support the mental, spiritual, physical and emotional health of First Nations students.

The Education Sector is committed to ensuring that First Nations education authorities have the proper capacity to ensure a safe return to an education environment either in person and or online. Recognizing the need for increased funding, the Education Sector completed national costing for both K-12 Education and First Nations post-secondary institutions on the new costs related to COVID-19 for technology, and resources, personal protective equipment, and one-time costs such as plexiglass and thermometers.

Are there recent current events or government action affecting your Sector or its priorities?

On April 22, 2020, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced \$65.5 million to support existing First Nations post-secondary students affected by COVID-19. On April 30, 2020, the CCOE provided a recommendation for a regional allocation of the \$65.5 million. It remains unclear how the Government of Canada determined the \$65.5 million in funding as First Nations leadership was not consulted. The allocations will be administered through the Post-Secondary Student Support Program and University and College Entrance Program (PSSSP/UCEP).

What is your Sector planning for the future?

The Education Sector is exploring the possibility of seeking a mandate from First Nations-in-Assembly in December 2020 to enter into a new Memoranda to Cabinet (MC) process with ISC. The MC would provide First Nations with the funding and authority to start implementing their own PSE models and to ensure that First Nations students have PSE supports tailored to their unique needs.

Additionally, the Education Sector will review the REA Guidelines and the PSE Engagement Guidelines as their funding is set to sunset in 2022-23. A plan must be developed to support First Nations who have not entered into a REA by 2023 and First Nations who are require more time to create their PSE models before the funding sunsets.