| | |
|---|---|
| TITLE: | Taking Action for First Nations Post-Secondary Education: Access, Opportunity and Outcomes |
| SUBJECT: | Post-Secondary Education |
| MOVED BY: | Chief Candice Paul, St. Mary's First Nation, NB |
| SECONDED BY: | Chief Joseph Gilbert, Walpole Island First Nation, ON |
| DECISION: | Carried by Consensus |

WHEREAS:

A. Post-secondary education is an Inherent and Treaty right recognized and affirmed in International Law and in Section 35 of the *Constitution Act of Canada*;

B. First Nations were required by the Federal government to enfranchise in order to acquire a post-secondary education (PSE) for most of the past century;

C. The introduction of funding for First Nations people to attend post-secondary has led to a dramatic increase in the number of First Nations post-secondary students from approximately 3,600 in 1977-78 to 27,500 in 1999-2000;

D. The Federal Government changed the funding criteria in 1988 to restrict allowable expenditures and introduce a cap on total funds allocated to the PSE program;

E. First Nations launched a national effort of both diplomacy and civil disobedience to restore funding to all eligible First Nations students;

F. Another cap on funding was imposed in 1996-97 to limit annual expenditure increases to 2% per year despite dramatic increases in the costs of post-secondary tuition, fees, books, equipment, living expenses and the number of students eligible to apply for funding;

Certified copy of a resolution adopted on the 21st day of July, 2010 in Winnipeg, Manitoba

SHAWN A-IN-CHUT ATLEO, NATIONAL CHIEF

G. The number of First Nations PSE students has declined dramatically as a result of the 2% cap on PSE funding in 1996-97, with attendance falling from 27,500 in 1999-2000 to 22,000 in 2008-2009, which is a 20% decrease;

H. Although First Nations graduation rates in post-secondary have steadily risen, mainstream graduation rates have increased at a faster rate resulting in a significant and growing attainment gap. Among the 481,000 First Nations people of 15 years and over in the year 2006, 25,000 had a university degree, whereas among the same number of other Canadians, 90,000 have a degree;

I. The federal government has announced they will take "a new approach" to the Post Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) which will be "coordinated with other federal student support programs and will be part of an education submission to Cabinet as early as August, 2010;

J. First Nations have not been consulted about the Federal Government's "new approach" and potential changes to the PSSSP, which is a direct violation of federal constitutional responsibilities;

K. The federal government has commissioned a report on alternative delivery options for the PSSSP, and Federal Government officials continuously support a think tank that has made a highly publicized proposal to replace the PSSSP with a savings account with neither report respecting First Nations perspectives, realities or needs;

L. The AFN brought together a group of experts and leaders in post secondary education to develop a discussion paper on Maximizing Post-Secondary Education to provide guidance to the federal government and First Nations in considering the way forward in post-secondary education;

M. The *Taking Action for First Nations Post-Secondary Education: Access, Opportunity, and Outcomes Discussion Paper* provides sound recommendations for ensuring support for First Nations students and First Nations controlled post-secondary institutions.

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

1. Commend the First Nations educators who developed the *Taking Action for First Nations Post-Secondary Education: Access, Opportunity, and Outcomes Discussion Paper* for their excellence, timeliness, and commitment to strengthening opportunities for First Nations peoples;

2. Adopt and endorse the *Taking Action for First Nations Post-Secondary Education: Access, Opportunity, and Outcomes Discussion Paper* as a key resource for the development of a national First Nations' position on post-secondary education.

3. Confirm and support current goals, objectives and delivery structure of the Post-Secondary Education program.

4. Acknowledge that existing governmental management practices must be addressed and confirm that First Nations need to play a significant role in the development of policy solutions to improve and enhance the Post-Secondary Education program.

Certified copy of a resolution adopted on the 21st day of July, 2010 in Winnipeg, Manitoba