Q. What is different about this Panel? Haven’t we had enough studies?
A. 
- This panel is not another study. It is a focused effort to move forward on an education guarantee for our communities. This panel will issue a JOINT report. Previously, reports have made recommendations just to INAC and there has not been a satisfactory implementation process.
- AFN also feels that this Panel is an opportunity to move forward on the implementing the Aboriginal and Treaty right to education and standards established in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (“the right may be defined as education that is well resourced, culturally sensitive, respectful of heritage and takes into account history, cultural security, community and individual development and is designed in a way that is implementable”)

Q. We already know what is required. What can this Panel tell us that we don’t know?
A: 
- The Panel is not developing ideas on its own. It will have one national session and 8 regional sessions to hear directly what is needed within each regional context to move forward on First Nation education systems that will ensure stability, equity and culturally appropriate education that our learners deserve. The Panel will focus on the systems needed to enable education success. AFN will ensure that the Panel and participants have the benefit of all previous recommendations so that this process builds on, takes forward and enables or supports progress that has already been identified or is underway.

Q. Have Terms of Reference been formulated for the Panel of Experts?
A: 
- No terms of reference have been drafted. This is still a matter for discussion. AFN will take forward direction and all recommendations from CCOE and as consistent with the mandate and resolutions passed by Chiefs in Assembly. A discussion will take place with the Chiefs Committee on Education on January 12, 2011 via teleconference.

Q. What is the process for the selection of Experts?
A:
• It is anticipated that the Panel will be a small group – possibly three people – all non-political and with direct and extensive background in education. Many suggestions have already been received and AFN will take forward recommendations from the National Executive. Beyond the Panel, AFN is considering how best to ensure full engagement through the establishment of other mechanisms including ensuring full representation on CCOE and their full engagement as well as a possible advisory group of First Nation Champions to ensure that the National Executive and ultimately all First Nations and Chiefs-in-Assembly have the benefit of advice reflecting First Nation expertise.

Q: Can we have a copy of the formal agreement signed by the National Chief and the INAC Minister?
A:
• The Panel was announced by the INAC Minister in the House of Commons on December 9, 2010. AFN participated in a joint press release expressing support of the announcement as a positive response to First Nation direction given the commitment for joint reporting and a focused mandate. A signed agreement does not exist.

Q: The press release says that the panel will “explore and advise on the development of options, including legislation, to improve elementary and secondary education outcomes for First Nation children who live on-reserve.” Will the panel be addressing the issue of a new statutory base for First Nations education?
A:
• Yes. Education legislation will be the primary focus of the panel.

Q: Will Provincial and Territorial governments be directly involved on the Panel?
A:
• No. However, it is envisioned that there will be communication with the Aboriginal Affairs Ministers Working Group and the Council of Ministers of Education to ensure coordination and linkages as appropriate. Each of these processes has responsibilities which affect First Nations students.

Q. Who will comprise the secretariat for the Panel?
A:
• This is still a matter for discussion. It is possible that the technical support for the panel will be provided by INAC and AFN staff. It is also possible that it will have separate staff support contracted from outside government or the AFN.

Q: What will the CCOE members / political and technical lead in each region be required to do?
A:
CCOE suggested that CCOE members take a lead role in organizing / hosting each Regional session. AFN is pursuing this direction and ensuring preparation of background material as directed by CCOE.

Q: Will travel and accommodation to the regional gatherings be paid for?
A:
- Details have not been finalized however it is anticipated that financial support for regional sessions will be facilitated directly by INAC to regions to address all costs associated with hosting regional gatherings.

Q: Can the timelines be extended?
A:
- No. The National Panel will be finishing their work by June 2011. Regional sessions will need to be scheduled as soon as possible. First Nations have called for a short, focused process. This will mean that we have to ensure that all previous studies and reviews form the basis upon which this effort is built. AFN will work with CCOE immediately to identify, analyze and summarize this material immediately.

Q: How will regions be involved in this process?
A:
- The AFN will host weekly conference calls with the Chiefs Committee on Education. In addition, the AFN Executive Committee will receive regular briefings. The Panel’s report will be tabled to both the Minister and the National Chief. This will ensure a full discussion by First Nations, anticipated for the Annual general Assembly in July or a Special Assembly as directed.

Q: Are the sessions open forums or are Education Authorities the only ones to make presentations?
A:
- The scope of the national and regional sessions is still to be confirmed however it is anticipated that these will be open forums. The purpose of the regional sessions is to provide the opportunity for First Nations governments, organizations, schools, educators and students to express their perspectives on how to implement high quality, culturally relevant First Nations education.

Q: Can formal papers/presentations be made to the panel of Experts?
A:
- Yes, both in person and online. The details will be forthcoming.