

Assembly of First Nations

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Assemblée des Premières Nations

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SPECIAL CHIEFS ASSEMBLY
December 2-3-4, 2025, Ottawa, ON

Resolution no. 78/2025

TITLE: Call for Advocacy on Cuts to First Nations Programs

SUBJECT: Health, Education, Specific Claims

MOVED BY: Chief Shelley Bear, Ochapowace Cree Nation, SK

SECONDED BY: Chief Mark Fox, Piapot First Nation, SK

DECISION: Approved by the AFN Executive Committee by consensus.

WHEREAS:

- A. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration), Articles 3, 4, 20, 21, and 23, recognizes the right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination, to maintain their political, economic, and social institutions, and to have access to adequate financial and technical assistance for the enjoyment of their economic and social rights.
- B. First Nations across Canada continue to experience chronic underfunding in essential areas such as health, education, mental wellness, infrastructure, and specific claims research, resulting in ongoing disparities between First Nations and non-Indigenous populations.
- C. The 2025–2026 Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) Departmental Plan forecasts a 2% reduction in federal spending, which will further strain First Nations' ability to deliver critical services and uphold the health, safety, and well-being of their citizens.
- D. First Nations have endured generations of imposed poverty and systemic underfunding since being dispossessed of lands and resources, and historical government actions—including deliberate starvation policies in the 1880s—reflect a long pattern of discriminatory fiscal decisions that continue to echo today.
- E. Federal program reductions in health, education, mental health, and specific claims research will disproportionately impact First Nations children and youth by reducing suicide prevention programming, mental health supports, post-secondary opportunities, and the capacity of First Nations to pursue justice through specific claims research.
- F. ISC's reductions to specific claims research funding—by as much as 70% in some regions—undermine First Nations' pursuit of redress and Canada's obligations under reconciliation and Treaty implementation.

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- G.** Provinces and Territories have benefited from stable health escalators averaging 6% annually, with no accountability and reporting mechanisms, First Nations populations are growing faster than health funding envelopes, capped at 3%, resulting in a widening gap now approaching 35 cents on the dollar compared to provincial and territorial health systems.
- H.** First Nations leadership across Canada must be prepared to take precautionary steps to respond to significant federal reductions and to protect the Inherent and Treaty rights to health, education, and natural justice.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the First Nations-in-Assembly:

1. Demand that the 2025–2026 reductions in federal funding for First Nations constitute a violation of Inherent and Treaty Rights and are inconsistent with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and Canada's reconciliation commitments.
2. Direct the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to urgently advocate to the Prime Minister of Canada, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Indigenous Services, and the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations to immediately reverse all planned cuts to First Nations funding in health, education, mental health, and specific claims research.
3. Mandate the AFN to initiate national and international awareness efforts regarding the impacts of federal funding reductions, including engagement with the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and other international bodies.
4. Call on the AFN, should the Government of Canada fail to reverse the cuts, to formally request international assistance and intervention from global partners, human rights and humanitarian organizations, to ensure First Nations' basic human rights and Treaty rights are upheld.
5. Direct the AFN to support First Nations in developing regional and national preparedness plans to mitigate the impacts of federal reductions, ensuring community safety, continuity of services, and protection of vulnerable populations.

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