SPECIAL CHIEFS ASSEMBLY
DECEMBER 8, 9 & 10, 2009, OTTAWA, ON

Resolution no. 35/2009

TITLE:	Transition to the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS)
SUBJECT:	Human Resource Development
MOVED BY:	Chief Marjorie McRae, Gitanmaax Band, British Columbia
SECONDED BY:	Chief Joseph Gilbert, Walpole First Nation, Ontario
DECISION:	Carried by Consensus

WHEREAS:

A. Since 1991, the Government of Canada, through Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC), has supported federal strategies for delivery of employment, training, and human resources development programs to increase First Nation and other Aboriginal Peoples' participation in the national workforce and to ultimately enjoy employment and wage parity with the rest of Canada.
B. In the past ten years, the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Strategy (AHRDS) provided over $330 million in funding annually through Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement (AHRDAs) holders.
C. This federal initiative also sought to provide First Nation urban and off-reserve citizens with access to programs.
D. More than 53 First Nation AHRDA holders have become experts at addressing employment and training, literacy, numeracy, and support for child care needs within our respective traditional territories, First Nation communities, or in rural and urban areas.
E. An increase to core funding for the First Nation program delivery infrastructure is needed, as the same funding level since 1991 has been provided, despite inflation, and rapid demographic growth in First Nations.
F. The AFN has worked with a First Nation Technical Working Group on Human Resources Development (TWG) and with First Nation AHRDAs (Caucus) nationally to draft a National Action Plan for the "Post 2009 First Nations Human Resources Development Strategy", whose main objectives are:
    a. To develop and maintain a functional working relationship with HRSDC at both the political and technical levels;

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b. To establish common human resource development policy objectives between Canada and First Nations regarding long term outcomes such as the achievement of employment parity;
c. To commit sufficient resources to advance the achievement of employment parity; and
d. Via the strategy, to increase private sector initiatives and engagement with First Nations.

G. Chiefs-in-Assembly supported the strategic themes of the national action plan at their Annual General Assembly in July 2007.
H. On September 4, 2009, HRSDC Minister Diane Finley formally announced the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) to become effective April 1, 2010, requiring a transition from AHRDS to ASETS.
I. A series of informal sessions on the new ASETS were conducted by HRSDC and Service Canada in September 2009, at which time HRSDC indicated it would also plan a national workshop on "accountability" and another for planning templates.
J. First Nation AHRDAs have been informed by federal officials of the need for 5-year operational plans to be submitted to HRSDC very soon in order to permit a smooth transition to ASETS.
K. Some First Nation AHRDAs have stated very serious concern over the absence of First Nation leadership's involvement in negotiating specific delivery agreements and the lack of preparation time for operational plans.
L. First Nation AHRDAs generally have indicated that there is not an adequate acknowledgement federally of their National Action Plan; nor the required new resources to address new areas proposed under ASETS; and that new federal programs must work with and not undermine existing and established First Nation AHRDAs program delivery platforms.

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

1. Recommend to the federal government an increase in funding and resources under the new ASETS.
2. Recommend that Regional Chief Portfolio Holder(s), the Chiefs Committee on Human Resource Development (CCHRD), or their designates (AFN and Technical Working Group (TWG), work with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) immediately to:
    a. Establish a bilateral relationship protocol that includes, but is not limited to, objectives, principles of work cooperation, good governance, mediation process, and processes to help improve/elevate the work relationship with HRSDC and other federal departments; and
    b. Identify solutions to critical deficiencies in the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) and agreement template negotiation process that will respect First Nation self-determination principles.
3. Urge HRSDC to involve First Nation AHRDAs in discussions for the design of a new agreement and related planning templates.
4. Direct Regional Chief Portfolio Holders and CCHRD to work with First Nations to determine whether to support ASETS, and report these results to the National Chief and AFN Executive Committee, along with recommended actions as may be required.

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