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

Resolution no. 39/2009

TITLE:	First Nations National Business Institute
SUBJECT:	First Nation Economies / Business Development
MOVED BY:	Chief Don Moses, Lower Nicola Band, British Columbia
SECONDED BY:	Chief Shane Gottfriedson, Kamloops Indian Band, British Columbia
DECISION:	Carried by Consensus

WHEREAS:

A. Various studies have been carried out to confirm the reality that poverty is still ongoing in First Nations communities and there is an increasing gap in living conditions with other Canadians, which were reported during the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) hearings.

B. RCAP made recommendations in the area of economic development for the development of Federal/Provincial/Territorial (FPT) long term economic development agreements with Aboriginal nations or institutions; these recommendations have not been implemented; there are no new fiscal arrangements; and there has been no transfer of economic programs and capacity to First Nations.

C. Authority and control over economic programs continues to be maintained at federal levels, and there is extremely limited support to communities to establish policies.

D. There have been studies such as the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development that consistently found sustained development was a result of the recognition and effective exercise by tribal governments of their right and capacity to govern themselves.

E. First Nations leaders have been advocating for greater joint policy and program development with federal departments, but there has been a lack of long-term political commitment to providing adequate and equitable funding and strengthening of First Nations governments' economic self sufficiency.

F. Structural change that gets beyond the outdated Indian Act and an ill equipped economic policy framework is essential to build and invest in, stable, capable, and accountable First Nations control of their economic development and support for FN business ventures.

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G. In 2007-08 the Federal Government spent $124 Million on Aboriginal economic development programs that can be accessed by First Nations (approximately $53 Million to CEDOS to support economic development planning and capacity development initiatves, $35 Million to projects that identify economic opportunities and measures to promote hiring of Aboriginal People, $17.4 Million through Aboriginal Business Canada, and $18.9 Million through Aboriginal Financial Institutions). Although the Federal Government provides funds in the economic development program area, the First Nations people still remain in poverty. 1 in 4 First Nations children live in poverty, compared to 1 in 6 Canadian children, Unemployment is over 50%, and rises to over 60% for those without high school completion; the First Nations population has a growth rate that is over three times the Canadian rate.

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

1. Direct the AFN to urge the federal government to follow up on the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in the area of economic development (RCAP 2.5.1-2.5.5).
2. Commit to work together to form a First Nation owned and managed national entity, known as a First Nation National Business Institute, that would focus on capitalization of First Nation business opportunities.
3. Explore public and private resource opportunities for new funding to support this initiative, from federal, domestic and international sources, with the objective of building a $1.0 billion fund.
4. Agree that the First Nations National Business Institute organization carry out the following roles:
    a. support First Nation drafted and designed policy to support First Nation plans for development, and a system to support consultation and accommodation needs;
    b. provide capital funding for major projects in the form of grants, contributions, and loans;
    c. support and complement economic institutions and corporations where viable; and
    d. provide specific support towards First Nation businesswomen, youth, and entrepreneurs.
5. Ensure that the First Nations Business Institute focus on capitalization of First Nation business opportunities and with the objective of being in place by 2012, establish a national board to represent the First Nation population amongst the ten First Nation regions across Canada; and during this period the newly formed First Nation owned and managed organization ensure the necessary action to complete policy development planning.
6. Direct the Regional Chief Portfolio holders and Chiefs Committee on Economic Development to oversee an action plan, and report back to Chiefs in Assembly.

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