
Assembly of First Nations

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Assemblée des Premières Nations

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**ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JULY 11, 12, & 13, 2023; HALIFAX, NS**

Resolution no. 57/2023

TITLE: National Unity on Education

SUBJECT: Education

MOVED BY: Chief Linda Debassige, M'Chigeeng First Nation, ON

SECONDED BY: Chief Dylan Whiteduck, Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, QC

DECISION Carried; 1 opposed

WHEREAS:

- A. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) states:
- i. Article 14 (1): Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
 - ii. Article 14 (2): Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.
 - iii. Article 19: States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the Indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.
 - iv. Article 23: Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.

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- B.** On November 25, 2020, Ontario Region notified the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) of the decision to withdraw from the AFN education process because of recommendations made by the National Indian Education Council (NIEC) and the Chiefs' Committee on Education (CCoE) to regionalize proposal-based funding for the Post-Secondary Partnership Program and Education Partnership Program resulting in a decrease in funding from historical amounts for the Ontario region. Grave concern was expressed that these decreases would negatively affect established program delivery to support First Nation learners in Ontario.
- C.** A letter was sent from the Ontario Regional Chief to the National Chief on April 7, 2022, requesting the Chiefs of Ontario (COO) Leadership Council to meet with the AFN Executive Committee to discuss recommendations to repair the damaged relationship between the COO and the AFN as it relates to First Nations education.
- D.** In November 2022, COO Chiefs in Assembly passed Resolution 22/39S at the COO Fall Chiefs Assembly, calling for the AFN National Chief and the AFN Executive Committee to meet with representatives from the COO Leadership Council to review and discuss the recommended revisions to the Terms of Reference for the AFN NIEC and CCoE. This was a result of receiving no response to the April 2022 letter to the National Chief.
- E.** At the AFN Special Chiefs' Assembly in April 2023, a discussion ensued regarding opposition of First Nation leadership in Ontario to AFN Draft Resolution 35/2023, Unilateral Education Programming Decisions by Indigenous Services Canada, which called to recognize the CCoE's recommendations to decentralize all funding in education programming and support regional model approaches, implementation, and equitable funding methodologies, primarily base plus per-capita allocations. Leadership in Ontario objected that the resolution inferred that the AFN CCoE was the sole voice of First Nations across Canada on education related matters. Despite hours of discussion, the matter was not resolved, and the resolution was deferred until the July AFN Annual General Assembly (AGA) and was to be worked on jointly by the movers and representation from First Nations in Ontario. No activity or action has taken place to resolve the differences of opinion regarding this resolution and it is being introduced at the AFN AGA unchanged.
- F.** First Nations leadership in Ontario have repeatedly attempted at various levels to resolve differences to enable unity to be re-established at the NIEC and the CCoE.

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

- 1.** Agree that it is paramount that unity be re-established at the AFN National Indian Education Council (NIEC) and the Chiefs Committee on Education (CCoE).
- 2.** Agree that the Terms of Reference for the NIEC and the CCoE must immediately be amended to include:

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- a. Under Roles and Responsibilities:
 - i. Ensure that any recommendations made to the AFN Executive or First Nations-in-Assembly are accompanied by details regarding any non-consensus regarding the recommendation.
 - b. Under Composition:
 - i. The list of NIEC and CCoE representation should be updated to reflect any change and be publicly accessible.
 - ii. Composition must be updated to reflect accountability structure and how this process is to be followed.
3. Agree that over the next year the Terms of Reference for the NIEC and CCoE be revised to ensure:
- a. That meetings are conducted in a manner that identifies and addresses conflict of interest issues;
 - b. Voting representation is consistent between the NIEC and the CCoE;
 - c. A formal process is articulated for making recommendations;
 - d. Recommendations reflect consensus or non-consensus of the committee, and that building consensus is paramount even for committee members who are not present at the meetings;
 - e. Communications are a key function of the committees; and
 - f. The role of the Chair and/or Co-Chairs is clearly articulated.
4. Direct the Chiefs' Committee on Charter Renewal to review and provide recommendations in the AFN Charter Report regarding Chiefs' Committee composition that considers size and unique regional elements in determining regional representation.

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