

Assembly of First Nations

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ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
September 3-4-5, 2025, Winnipeg, MB

Resolution no. 28/2025

TITLE:	Advancing Federal Recognition and Investment in First Nations Post-Secondary Institutions
SUBJECT:	Post-Secondary Education
MOVED BY:	Chief Coreen Sayazie, Black Lake Denesuline First Nation, SK
SECONDED BY:	Chief Kirby Constant, James Smith Cree 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) states:
- Article 5: Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State.
 - 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.
 - Article 21(1): Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.
- B. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* provides a legislative framework for recognizing the constitutional and human rights of Indigenous Peoples, including post-secondary education (PSE).
- C. Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Resolution 21/2020, *First Nations-Led Local, Regional and Treaty-based Post-Secondary Education Models*, directed the Chiefs Committee on Education, National Indian Education Council and the AFN to work in partnership with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to co-develop a policy proposal, as demonstrated through the *2021 PSE Policy Proposal on First Nations*

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Models (V12), which was to supplement a Memorandum to Cabinet to obtain authority for First Nations to negotiate and conclude First Nations led, local, regional and Inherent/Treaty rights-based PSE models.

- D. ISC continues to recognize PSE as a social policy and does not fund First Nations based on the Treaty and Inherent right to education. Furthermore, since 2021, federal budgets continue to disregard programming and policy changes requested by the First Nations-in-Assembly to improve PSE processes and funding for institutions and students.
- E. First Nation-led Post-Secondary Institutes in Canada play a critical national role in advancing First Nation self-determination in education, supporting First Nations language revitalization, and contributing to the social and economic wellbeing of First Nations across the country.
- F. Despite this role, they do not receive sustained, predictable core funding from the Government of Canada, and lack federal recognition through a charter to protect its academic autonomy and institutional integrity.

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

- 1. Direct the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to urge the Government of Canada to work with First Nations, the AFN National Indian Education Council, AFN Chiefs Committee on Education, and First Nations-led post-secondary institutions to recognize, affirm, and protect the academic autonomy, self-determined governance, and role of those First Nations post-secondary institutions.
- 2. Call on the Government of Canada to uphold the funding shortfall commitments identified in the 2018 Policy Proposal: *First Nations Post-Secondary Education*, and the 2021 Policy Proposal: *First Nations-led, local, regional and/or Treaty-based Post-Secondary Education Models*, to advance sustainable, equitable, and distinctions-based funding for First Nations post-secondary education students and institutions.
- 3. Call upon the Government of Canada to prioritize investments in First Nations-led post-secondary infrastructure by establishing a dedicated capital funding stream for First Nations post-secondary institutions, recognizing these projects as essential components of Canada's nation-building agenda and as foundational to reconciliation, economic development, and First Nations self-determination—consistent with the federal commitment to support First Nations-led infrastructure and nation-building projects that close socioeconomic gaps and advance shared prosperity.
- 4. Urge the Government of Canada to recognize that, for First Nations students as well as for all learners, the high school diploma no longer constitutes a sufficient minimum threshold to guarantee autonomy, skills development, and full participation in society, and that, consequently, the extension of the right to education up to the college level (K4 to 15) represents a structural and necessary measure to meet current socio-economic realities and requirements, well beyond the standards established in 1961.
- 5. Affirm that nothing in this resolution is meant or shall be interpreted to diminish, limit, impact or supersede the ability of a First Nation or Region to exercise their inherent jurisdictions, to exercise and fulfill their rights and authorities under Treaties, or to engage in their unique relationship with Canada.

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