



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

Resolution no. 57/2025

TITLE:	Condemning Canada's Specific Claims Research Funding Cuts
SUBJECT:	Specific Claims, Lands
MOVED BY:	Chief Dalton Silver, Sumas First Nation, BC
SECONDED BY:	Judy Wilson, Proxy, Osoyoos Indian Band, BC
DECISION:	Carried by consensus

WHEREAS:

A. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration) states:

- i. Article 8(2)b: States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources.
- ii. Article 18: Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own Indigenous decision-making institutions.
- 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 27: States shall establish and implement, in conjunction with Indigenous peoples concerned, a fair, independent, impartial, open and transparent process, giving due recognition to Indigenous peoples' laws, traditions, customs and land tenure systems, to recognize and adjudicate the rights of Indigenous peoples pertaining to their lands, territories, and resources, including those which were traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used. Indigenous peoples shall have the right to participate in this process.
- v. Article 28(1): Indigenous peoples have the right to redress, by means that can include restitution or, when this is not possible, just, fair and equitable compensation, for the lands, territories and

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resources which they have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used, and which have been confiscated, taken, occupied, used or damaged without their free, prior and informed consent.

- vi. Article 28(2): Unless otherwise freely agreed upon by the peoples concerned, compensation shall take the form of lands, territories and resources equal in quality, size and legal status or of monetary compensation or other appropriate redress.
- B. The specific claims process is one of the few mechanisms available for First Nations to exercise their right to redress for historical breaches by the Crown, and specific claims research funding is a fundamental access to justice pathway to the process.
- C. According to data provided by Canada's specific claims research funding agency to the National Claims Research Directors, since at least 2021, total annual demand for the Specific Claims Research Funding Program has increased steadily to 34.5 million in 2025-2026 against a program envelope of \$12 million; this has left First Nations and their mandated Claims Research Units (CRUs) oversubscribed and underfunded.
- D. In the 2025/2026 fiscal year, Canada unilaterally altered allocation methods for the \$12 million in research funding available according to a unilaterally devised and non-transparent process which allocated funding to individual First Nation applicants, and then to mandated CRU applicants with the result that:
 - i. Individual First Nations applicants have received insufficient funding (25 percent less than the maximum claim allowance of \$40,000 per claim and, on average, 50-75 percent less than they requested); and
 - ii. CRUs have received severe and debilitating cuts to their budgets (up to 83 percent), directly impacting 80 percent of all First Nations claims in research and development.
- E. In October 2025, the National Chief wrote on an urgent basis to Prime Minister Mark Carney regarding the unilateral allocation of Specific Claims Research Funding. Deputy Minister of Crown – Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC), Valerie Gideon wrote the National Chief indicating that CIRNAC had allocated an additional \$2 million for the 2025/2026 fiscal year, however, this top-up does not remedy systemic shortfalls.
- F. As of April 1, 2026, the Specific Claims Research Funding Program will revert to \$4 million per year due to sunseting of the already inadequate \$8 million top-up that First Nations have come to expect since 2019.
- G. This funding cut will curtail First Nations ability to research and advance specific claims, precipitate closures of First Nation–mandated CRUs, push unresolved grievances into costly litigation, and further undermine trust between First Nations and Canada.
- H. Canada's actions contravene the UN Declaration, breach the Honour of the Crown, and contradict public commitments to reconciliation and meaningful redress. Adequate, publicly-funded specific claims research and development is essential to remedy historic breaches of Crown promises, Treaties, and other agreements.

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

1. Unequivocally condemn Canada's decision to cut the Specific Claims Research Funding Program to \$4 million per year, which effectively denies meaningful access to justice for First Nations.
2. Direct the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief, the Portfolio Holder for Lands, and the Chiefs Committee on Lands, Territories and Resources to coordinate with First Nations and the National Claims Research Directors on an urgent advocacy campaign.
3. Direct the National Chief to call on Canada to commit to immediately increase the specific claims research funding envelope, starting in the 2026-2027 fiscal year, to reach a minimum of \$35 million to better reflect First Nations actual needs and to ensure First Nations are able to exercise their right to redress for their historical losses through their delegated claims research organizations or directly as they so choose.
4. Direct the National Chief to call on the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations to co-develop, in full partnership with First Nations, a reformed specific claims research funding model that is transparent, equitable, needs-based, and grounded in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Treaty rights, and First Nations' right to choose their own representatives and research mechanisms.
5. Call on Canada to maintain a \$35 million research funding envelope until a reformed specific claims research funding model has been fully co-developed and endorsed by First Nations.

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