

PETITION TO THE CANADIAN PARLIAMENT CONCERNING THE RIGHT OF FIRST NATIONS TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

CONSIDERING THAT Indian and Northern Affairs is seriously considering the removal of the Post-Secondary Student Support Program from First Nations community management control to place it under the supervision of the Canada Student Loans Agency or another 3rd party;

CONSIDERING THAT the removal of the Post-Secondary Student Support Program from First Nations management control and providing it to another entity would yet be another action to demonstrate that the Government of Canada is creating a covert environment to forcibly have First Nations assimilated into mainstream Canadian society;

CONSIDERING THAT the federal government continues to ignore the underfunding of First Nations' postsecondary education, despite the report of its Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, published in February 2007: "*No Higher Priority: Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education In Canada*";

CONSIDERING THAT, between 2001 and 2006, more than 10 500 First Nations students did not have access to post-secondary education due to lack of funding, and that merely in 2007 this statistic already exceeded 2 800;

CONSIDERING THAT the report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development also mentions an unsteady and inadequate funding which jeopardises the future of First Nations post-secondary institutions, which via their high graduation rate contribute in reducing the education gap;

CONSIDERING THAT Indian and Northern Affairs is turning the discussion away from the core problem whereby the Government of Canada is refusing to live up to its obligation to fully fund First Nations post-secondary education to confirm the obligation of the Crown;

CONSIDERING THAT Indian and Northern Affairs continues to deny its fiduciary responsibility towards First Nations when it comes to fully funding a comprehensive Post-Secondary Student Support Program and that it seeks to discredit First Nations in regards to the management and use of presently allocated funds.

We, the undersigned, bearing in mind that:

- several studies have demonstrated that human and socioeconomic costs related to low education levels are higher than the costs pertaining to investment in education as a means of prevention;
- there is an important education gap between First Nations and the Canadian population, which the government of Canada has pledged to reduce;
- the improvement of the level of education for First Nations is a priority and a prerequisite in order to promote the development of their individual members and communities, and to thereby enable them to contribute to Canadian society in general.

We urge the government of Canada:

- to make the First Nations post-secondary *student* the number one priority as regards its actions in tackling this critical issue;
- to confirm the Post-Secondary Student Support Program as a permanent First Nations community-level funded program which is comprehensive and available to all First Nations post-secondary learners;
- to fully shoulder its responsibility in adequately funding the right to post-secondary education for First Nations by taking immediate action in following up the recommendations of its Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development in the report published in February 2007;

Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation Community and the First Nations Education Council

We, the undersigned,

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Signatures

(Please sign below. Do not write in block letters)

Addresses

(Write your full postal address or indicate your town and province or your province and postal code)

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Please return the petition with the original signatures as soon as possible to
First Nations Education Council, 95 rue de l’Ours, Wendake (Québec) G0A 4V0

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