



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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BCAFN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Musqueam Community Centre, Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Vancouver, BC
September 18-20, 2019

Resolution 21(c)/2019

SUBJECT: FIRST NATIONS CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE EDUCATION STRATEGY

MOVED BY:

SECONDED BY:

DECISION:

WHEREAS:

- A. Despite widespread recognition that the disproportionate number of Indigenous children and youth in child welfare has become a national human rights and humanitarian crisis, Indigenous children and youth remain vastly over-represented in British Columbia's child welfare system. In British Columbia, Indigenous children and youth comprise 64% of all of the students in government care, while Indigenous students only compose 11% percent of the province's total student population that is not in care;
- B. First Nations leadership in BC have consistently called for an overhaul of the child welfare system and resumption of First Nations' jurisdiction over child and family well-being;
- C. Through BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) resolutions 06/2017 "Indigenous Nations Jurisdiction over Children and Families" and 22/2016 "Draft Action Framework: Reconciliation, Self-Determination and Self-Government for Indigenous Children, Families and Nations in BC", the BCAFN Chiefs in Assembly have directed the BCAFN, working with

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Terry Teegee".

Terry Teegee, BC Regional Chief

the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the First Nations Summit, to seek reform of the current Indigenous child welfare system in BC, including working with the governments of Canada and British Columbia, to develop First Nations-supported legislation, policies, and practices that recognize and affirm Indigenous child welfare systems;

- D. The Governments of Canada and British Columbia have finally responded to these calls and have embarked upon systemic reform, in partnership with First Nations through tripartite political processes, with focus on the implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.
- E. The UN Declaration, which the government of Canada has adopted without qualification, and has, alongside the government of BC committed to implement, affirms:
- 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 meaning;
- F. The First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) has a mandate to serve as the lead policy and advocacy body on First Nations education in BC, and has a formal working relationship with the First Nations Leadership Council through a protocol entered into in 2015 as directed by the Chiefs through resolution, whereby FNESC and the First Nations Leadership Council agree to work collaboratively based on their respective technical and political mandates;
- G. FNESC has long called for systemic changes in the provincial child welfare and education systems to better support Indigenous children and youth in care to achieve improved education outcomes. Data has continued to demonstrate that not only are Indigenous children and youth over-represented in the welfare system, but these same children and youth (“Indigenous students in care”) also have significantly poorer educational outcomes than their non-Indigenous counterparts;
- H. The provincial public education system has not paid sufficient attention to the systemic barriers that persist and that prevent Indigenous students in care from realizing their potential and benefitting the most from their education. A cross-government approach, developed jointly with First Nations, is required to improve education outcomes for Indigenous students in care;

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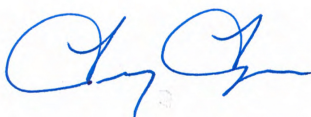
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- I. Many studies and reports collectively highlight the urgent need for all levels of government to address the educational outcome gaps experienced by Indigenous students in care through a comprehensive and coordinated strategy, inclusive of new policy, practices and, potentially, new laws. The strategy must include both immediate and long-term actions; must be developed in partnership with Indigenous communities; and needs to include the voices of affected children and youth; and
- J. It is in response to this urgent need, and within the evolving political and legal landscape, that FNEC seeks to develop, in collaboration with the First Nations Leadership Council, a comprehensive strategy to improve the education outcomes of First Nation children and youth in care, which is supportive of and complementary to the tripartite work to reform Indigenous child welfare in British Columbia.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

1. That the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly fully support the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNEC) in the development of a First Nation children and youth in care education strategy that focuses on:
 - i. Achieving systemic shifts that support improved education outcomes of First Nation children and youth in care; and
 - ii. Addressing the Province's legal obligations to First Nation children and youth in care in relation to education;
2. That the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the BCAFN, together with the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the First Nations Summit as the First Nations Leadership Council, to work in collaboration with FNEC to effectively advance the strategy through engagement with the Province and Canada, as appropriate, consistent with the protocol between the First Nations Leadership Council and FNEC, the UN Declaration and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action; and
3. That the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly call on the BCAFN and FNEC to provide progress reports on this strategy.

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