



BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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Prince George, BC V2K 5S3
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BCAFN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
September 14, 15 & 16, 2021
Online via Zoom

Resolution 22/2021

SUBJECT: CALL FOR INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION AND REPORT INTO INDIGENOUS-SPECIFIC RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION IN PROVINCIAL PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

MOVED BY: JAYDE CHINGEE, MCLEOD LAKE FIRST NATION, PROXY

SECONDED BY: CHIEF GREG LOUIE, AHOUSAHT FIRST NATION

DECISION: CARRIED

WHEREAS:

- A. In June 2020, the B.C. Minister of Health launched an independent review into Indigenous-specific racism in the provincial health care system and empowered this Review to examine data, undertake key informant interviews, conduct surveys and document cases brought forward by Indigenous peoples and health care workers;
- B. On November 30, 2020, a final report entitled, *In Plain Sight* was released that described necessary pathways of change and 11 findings and 24 recommendations affirming the existence and impacts of racism against Indigenous peoples in health care in BC, and author Dr. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond stated that a number of comments and complaints about racism in the provincial public education system came forward during the process and recommended that the Minister of Education convene a similar investigation and report;

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- C. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which the government of Canada has adopted without qualification, and has, alongside the government of BC, committed to implement, affirms, among other things:

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. 2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination. 3. States shall, in conjunction with Indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for Indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.

Article 15:1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information. 2. States shall take effective measures, in consultation and cooperation with the Indigenous peoples concerned, to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among indigenous peoples and all other segments of society;

- D. In the 2015 Audit of the Education of Aboriginal Students in the BC Public School System, the Auditor General described “racism of low expectations” in BC public schools toward Indigenous students based on “preconceptions or biases stemming from social attitudes,” and the report stated that a potential indicator of the racism of low expectations is that “Aboriginal students were almost twice as likely as non-Aboriginal students to complete courses that limit their options for entry to post-secondary education. As a result, those students may need to take additional courses to upgrade, should they choose to attend post-secondary institutions, at a cost to themselves and/or their First Nation.” The report also pointed out the “lack of leadership” within the provincial system to address this;
- E. This racism is evident in data for Indigenous students which shows persistent gaps in education outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, including:

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- a. The 5-year high school completion rate of 47% for Indigenous students on-reserve in BC public schools is a stark example of racism against Indigenous peoples in BC.
 - b. Indigenous students comprise 40% of all students in Alternate Programs and young Indigenous learners are over-represented among recipients of the Adult Graduation Diploma.
 - c. Only 61% of surveyed Grade 7 Indigenous students reported that they felt safe at school all of the time or many times, and 15% of Indigenous respondents said they were bullied, teased or picked on.
- F. Events in recent months have increased awareness of the need to prioritize redressing and ending racism, including within schools and communities, and in order to effectively eradicate systemic racism and discrimination, we need a report, grounded in current data like the *In Plain Sight* report that will provide a clearer picture of the nature, scale, and scope of racism, support a comprehensive strategy to address racism and discrimination within the provincial public education system, and inform the development of programs and services to support students in their understanding and tolerance of diversity;
- G. Systemic and interpersonal racism and discrimination must be addressed and eliminated to uphold Indigenous human rights, to create safer learning environments for Indigenous students in public schools, to succeed in the implementation of the Declaration Act, and to fulfill the objectives of the UN Declaration in the context of education, taking a distinctions-based approach that ensures that the unique rights, interests and circumstances of Indigenous peoples in BC are acknowledged, affirmed, and implemented as required by section 35 and committed in the *Principles Respecting the Province of British Columbia's Relationships with Indigenous Peoples*; and
- H. The First Nations Education Steering Committee has consistently advocated for systemic changes to address ongoing and persistent racism and discrimination experienced by First Nation learners in the provincial public school system.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly fully support the First Nations Education Steering Committee in its continued advocacy for systemic changes to address ongoing and persistent racism and discrimination experienced by First Nation learners in the provincial public school system;

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2. The BCAFN Chiefs in Assembly call on the Province of British Columbia to commission an independent and distinctions-based investigation and report into systemic and Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination in the K-12 and post-secondary provincial public education system, similar to the *In Plain Sight* report into racism in the BC public health system, in order to:
 - a. draw attention to systemic discrimination and need to eliminate anti-Indigenous racism occurring within the BC public education system, and
 - b. support the identification of measures to eliminate such racism and discrimination and to uphold the minimum human rights standards in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, as mandated under the *Declaration Act on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.
 - c. The results of the report lead to an implementation plan to be co-developed with First Nations

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