BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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BCAFN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
October 14, 15 & 16, 2026
In person & online via Zoom

Resolution 22(c)/2026

SUBJECT: **SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF INDIGENOUS EDUCATION COUNCILS IN BC PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

MOVED BY:

SECONDED BY:

DECISION:

WHEREAS:

A. Indigenous Peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions, as affirmed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ("UN Declaration"), and as an aspect of their inherent right of self-government as recognized and affirmed under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982;

B. The UN Declaration, which the government of Canada has adopted without qualification, and has, alongside the government of B.C., passed legislation committing 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 learning.
(2): Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.

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(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.

C. Item 4.3 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act) Action Plan commits the Ministry of Education and Child Care to "Co-develop and implement a framework for the involvement of Indigenous Education Councils in school district financial planning and reporting;"

D. The School Amendment Act, which received Royal Assent on November 8, 2023, was co-developed with the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) with the intention of supporting a more relevant and responsive public education system that appropriately recognizes First Nations as the inherent title and rights holders in their respective territories in what is now referred to as British Columbia;

E. The School Act requires Indigenous Education Councils in all 60 school districts in British Columbia;

F. FNESC and the Ministry of Education and Child Care co-developed an Indigenous Education Council Ministerial Order and Indigenous Education Council Policy to support implementation of Indigenous Education Councils;

G. Indigenous Education Councils formalize a structure and process to specifically support Boards of Education on matters affecting Indigenous students attending B.C. public schools and have a mandate to support Indigenous student outcomes and attendance while also respecting the distinct languages, cultures, customs, traditions, practices, and histories of the First Nation(s) in whose territory(ies) Boards of Education operate;

H. First Nations learners continue to face the racism of low expectations in B.C. public schools, as evidenced by student outcomes data, including declining numeracy and literacy rates, low five-year completion rates for First Nations learners, extremely high rates of chronic absenteeism, the over-representation of First Nations students in Alternate Programs, and the disproportionate number of First Nations students receiving Evergreen (School Completion) and Adult Dogwood Certificates;

I. The Auditor General's 2015 Audit of the Education of Aboriginal Students in the B.C. Public School System states: "To close the gaps means to achieve education outcomes for Aboriginal students that are the same as outcomes for non-Aboriginal students. This language does not imply any failure by Aboriginal students, but rather, a failure of the education system to meet their needs";

J. The School Act states that Indigenous Education Councils are stand-alone bodies and not committees of Boards of Education whose purposes include advising Boards of Education on the provision of comprehensive and equitable educational programs and services to Indigenous students, improving Indigenous student achievement, and integrating Indigenous world views and perspectives into learning

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environments, in particular those of the First Nations in whose traditional territory Boards of Education operate;

K. Indigenous Education Councils are comprised of members from local First Nations, non-local First Nations, and may include additional persons who bring perspectives relevant to the Indigenous student population served by the Board of Education;

L. A Board of Education must invite each local First Nation in whose territory the Board of Education operates to designate two persons as members of the Indigenous Education Council and must appoint those persons;

M. A Board of Education must invite each non-local First Nation, if an eligible First Nation person of the non-local First Nation is funded by Canada and enrolled in an educational program provided by the Board of Education, to designate one person as a member, and must appoint that person;

N. After seeking advice from each local First Nation, a Board of Education may appoint additional persons who bring perspectives relevant to the Indigenous student population served by the Board of Education;

O. Boards of Education must make reasonable effort to ensure that the number of members who are not representatives of local First Nations is not greater than the number of members who are representatives of local First Nations;

P. An Indigenous Education Council must acknowledge its work is undertaken in the local First Nations' territory and have deference to the views and perspectives of members representing local First Nations;

Q. The Ministry of Education and Child Care has a responsibility to appropriately fund Indigenous Education Councils so that they may fulfill their mandate as described in the School Act;

R. Ongoing capacity funding is necessary to support the operations and preserve the independence of Indigenous Education Councils;

S. Ongoing capacity funding will ensure that Indigenous Education Councils are not dependent on Boards of Education to fund their operations and that the financial burden will not fall on First Nations to fund their members participating on Indigenous Education Councils, particularly those First Nations that sit on multiple Indigenous Education Councils;

T. The Ministry of Education and Child Care provided $5,670,203 in the 2024/25 school year, $6,392,183 in the 2025/26 school year, and will provide $2,400,000 for the 2026/27 school year to public school districts as Indigenous Education Council Funding, under section 106.4 of the School Act, to cover costs associated with establishing and maintaining Indigenous Education Councils, including secretariat support, activities, and costs related to Indigenous Education Councils carrying out their purposes;

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U. Each Indigenous Education Council must have a secretariat to assist in Indigenous Education Council membership tracking, meeting, and agenda setting, providing information to the Indigenous Education Council, and liaising between the Board of Education and Indigenous Education Council;

V. Currently the Ministry of Education and Child Care has not committed to providing Indigenous Education Council capacity funding beyond the 2026/27 school year;

W. Without consistent and adequate funding, Indigenous Education Councils cannot fulfill their mandate as set out in the School Act;

X. Indigenous Education Councils should be funded in a manner that ensures their success, while not taking from resources for other core educational activities that support student learning;

Y. Ongoing, sustainable capacity funding is crucial to ensuring that Indigenous Education Councils can be effective in their role as shared decision-makers in the K-12 public education system in B.C. and in supporting improved education outcomes and attendance of First Nations learners attending B.C. public schools; and

Z. A commitment to ongoing, sustainable capacity funding will indicate that B.C. has identified Indigenous Education Councils as a priority matter in public education for Boards of Education and First Nations and that B.C. is committed to supporting Indigenous Education Councils in fulfilling their responsibilities as set out under Action 4.3 of the Declaration Act Action Plan.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly call on the Ministry of Education and Child Care to:
   a) provide appropriate and sustainable ongoing capacity funding to Indigenous Education Councils beyond the 2026/27 school year.
   b) appropriately monitor and oversee the implementation of Indigenous Education Councils, and formally intervene as necessary in cases where school districts are not acting in alignment with the School Act, Indigenous Education Council Ministerial Order, and Indigenous Education Council Policy;
   c) support the capacity of Indigenous Education Councils through ongoing and open communication and by committing to an annual in-person gathering of Indigenous Education Council representatives to be co-hosted with the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC); and
   d) work with FNESC to co-develop an Indigenous Education Council Capacity Funding Policy that provides clear direction on the appropriate use of Indigenous Education Council capacity funding, and guidance on the role of the Indigenous Education Council secretariat.

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