
Assembly of First Nations

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Assemblée des Premières Nations

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**ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JULY 12, 13, & 14, 2016; NIAGARA FALLS, ON**

Resolution no. 39/2016

TITLE: First Nations National Working Group on Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC)

SUBJECT: Education

MOVED BY: Chief Maureen Chapman, Skawahlook First Nation, BC

SECONDED BY: Chief David Crate, Fisher River Cree Nation, MB

DECISION Carried by Consensus

WHEREAS:

- A. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states:
- i. Article 21: Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.
- B. The 2016 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's report also urges the federal government as part of its reconciliation agenda to work with Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for young children and their families.
- C. In November 2015, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau mandated the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development to launch consultations with provinces and territories and Indigenous Peoples on a National Early Learning and Childcare Framework as a first step towards delivering affordable, high-quality, flexible and fully inclusive child care..
- D. A March 2016 budget commitment of \$100 million for Indigenous communities beginning in 2017-18 provides First Nations with an unprecedented opportunity to identify priorities, strategies and actions for improving access to quality early childhood and other family strengthening supports while developing First Nations capacity to re-assume control of early childhood and child care pursuant to their inherent and human rights.

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- E. Few early childhood development and child care policies have been created by the federal government since the mid-1990's. Policies to support young First Nations children and families are in valuable and have the potential to transform the lives of children, families and communities. However, the lack of a comprehensive policy or funding approach has resulted in limited and unequal access to programs and comprised the quality and effectiveness of those programs. Yet there is increasing scientific evidence from the United States regarding the effectiveness of quality ECD programs in increasing high school graduation rates and improved health outcomes, reduced incidence of substance abuse, and fewer criminal arrests among children who attended these programs.
- F. A strong policy approach supported by First Nations leadership and informed by community and stakeholders from health, early childhood education, child and family services and education, offers a real opportunity to transform and shape early childhood development, education and care policies to ensure First Nations children aged from birth to six years and their families are supported to achieve optimal health, development and well-being.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Chiefs-in-Assembly:

1. Direct the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), National Chief and Executive Committee to obtain funding from Canada to immediately establish a national expert working group on Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC), comprised of experts from across disciplines of health, education, child and family services and early childhood, with a mandate to oversee a 4-6 month community engagement process that would identify and confirm the key principles, priorities and actions of a First Nations ELCC framework along with an action plan that takes into account regional priorities, needs and circumstances.
2. Request the AFN National Chief and Executive Committee to:
 - a. Strongly advocate in writing to Ministers Bennett and Duclos for a separate First Nations ELCC framework and funding stream; and
 - b. Collaborate with the federal government on an accountability framework to ensure current and future investments in early learning and child care reach the children and families who need them.

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