



**First Nations Summit**  
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***Joint Statement: December 3, 2009***

### ***Federal Government's First Nations Post-Secondary Report Earns a Failing Grade***

First Nations are frustrated that, once again, the federal government is dictating how First Nations education should operate without consulting or working cooperatively with First Nations.

First Nations have recently uncovered a new federal government report, developed apparently without meaningful consultation, which proposes new mechanisms for delivering the federal government's Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) funding. The PSSSP is the main source of financial support for First Nations students across Canada who wish to pursue higher education. (The report: [\*The Post-Secondary Student Support Program: An Examination of Alternative Delivery Mechanisms\*](#). Alex Usher. Educational Policy Institutes. November, 2009)

While we can agree that it is time for an overhaul of the federal government's archaic post-secondary education policies, any review and reforms **must** be undertaken in partnership and with detailed consultation with First Nations. Any plan that removes authorities from First Nations is unacceptable.

The lack of consultation involved in developing this report is a major concern. Furthermore, more appropriate approaches are outlined in the national First Nations education policy, *Indian Control of Indian Education*, developed by First Nations and endorsed by the federal government in 1973. That policy calls for local First Nations control of education and for the federal government to fulfill its fiduciary obligations regarding First Nations education.

It is vital that we provide greater support for First Nations post-secondary students. The federal government's own post-secondary report notes that First Nations students are far less likely to enter into post-secondary education than their non-Aboriginal peers. Only 3 percent of registered Indians have a university degree, compared with 18 percent of the entire population. Despite the 29 percent growth in the First Nations population since 1996, the money available for PSSSP has stayed nearly constant over the past fifteen years.

Unilateral decisions by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada will not assist in closing the education gaps faced by First Nations learners. First Nations must play a leading and active role in any and all education reforms to properly address these gaps.

It is time for the federal government to meet with the First Nations of British Columbia to discuss how to achieve meaningful post-secondary education reforms based on the real needs of First Nations and First Nations learners.



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*The First Nations Education Steering Committee ([www.fnesc.ca](http://www.fnesc.ca)) is an independent society committed to improving education for all First Nations learners in BC. It is directed by representatives of First Nations communities.*

*The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. Further background information on the Summit may be found at [www.fns.bc.ca](http://www.fns.bc.ca).*

**Background Report:**

[The Post-Secondary Student Support Program: An Examination of Alternative Delivery Mechanisms.](#) Alex Usher. Educational Policy Institutes. November, 2009.

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