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Dene Nation Supports Hotsii Ts'eeda's Call to Overhaul Aurora College's Governance to Better Represent Indigenous Students

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Yellowknife, Northwest Territories – November 19, 2020] – The Dene Nation stands behind the Hotsii Ts'eeda's call for changes to Aurora College's governance structures and planned teaching areas, in order to better support and represent its Indigenous student base.

Just last month, National Chief Norman Yakeleya penned a letter to Aurora College's administration, expressing disappointment in the College's newly developed Strategic Plan. The plan falls short on becoming an Indigenous staffed, led, and controlled education system embedded with content that reflects Indigenous values and beliefs. Furthermore, the Strategic Plan focuses on recreating a southern institution supplemented by Indigenous cultures, values and content -- with little to no co-creation or representation.

"This summer, Denendeh's leaders and educators came together at the Dene Nation Education Summit. Over the course of the Summit, they made their voices clear that there is an urgent need to reform the education system to create long-lasting systemic change. To do this, we require Indigenous leadership and representation embedded within the education system itself," said Yakeleya. "Unfortunately, what we have with Aurora College is the status quo. The status quo does not serve our people, it simply continues to contribute to the deepening void between Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students. It tokenizes Indigenous knowledge and culture, rather than taking a serious look at how to reform the system for supportive wellness and healing."

There is a significant gap in the leadership plans for Aurora College and the Dene Nation is echoing Hotsii Ts'eeda's calls for an Indigenous Chancellor, as well as an Indigenous University President. Indigenous students deserve to see themselves represented and to see their values, cultures, and histories reflected in their education systems. There is a wealth of knowledge and resources from across Denendeh which has been offered to the development and plans for Aurora College, but these continue to be passed over, resulting in the sorely lacking Strategic Plan we see today.

"The Dene Nation is committed to being a true partner in the development of Aurora College; working hand-in-hand to dismantle the colonial structures of the existing education system, in order to give way to a brighter and more prosperous future for Indigenous students across the NWT. I made my personal commitment clear in my letter - and I stand by that commitment today" concluded Yakeleya.

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