



Dene National / Assembly of First Nations Office (NWT)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DENE NATION RESPONDS TO GNWT'S MISREPRESENTATION OF UNITY AND SCHOOL FUNDING INITIATIVES

[SEPTEMBER 3, 2025 – WINNIPEG, MB] – The Chiefs and Proxies of the Dene Nation, in attendance at the AFN annual general assembly in Winnipeg, MB dispute the August 28th, 2025, statement that "Indigenous governments, MLAs, and families are united with the GNWT in calling for action." This assertion is misleading and does not accurately reflect the position of the Dene Nation. These Dene Chiefs were neither consulted nor informed about the GNWT's pursuit and acquisition of school funding, specifically the \$14 million allocation under the Support Assistants Initiative for the 2025–26 school year.

The source of the \$14 million funding, intended to bridge the gap left by changes in Jordan's Principle, is a GNWT allocation. This initiative is a stopgap measure, and the Dene Nation insists on transparency regarding the monitoring of these funds and the specific support provided to Dene communities.

The Dene Nation calls for a collaborative approach in addressing these educational challenges. Indigenous Services Canada, responsible for administering Jordan's Principle funding, must engage directly with Indigenous governments to develop a sustainable, federally supported model that meets the needs of all Indigenous students in the territories.

In alignment with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, the Dene Nation highlights the importance of Call to Action #7, which urges the federal government to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. Furthermore, Call to Action #10 emphasizes the need for culturally appropriate curricula and the protection of the right to Indigenous languages, which are crucial for the educational success of Indigenous students.

The Dene Nation remains committed to advocating for the rights and needs of our communities. We urge the GNWT and federal authorities to engage in meaningful dialogue with Dene Chiefs to ensure that all decisions reflect the voices and priorities of the Dene people. It is imperative that the GNWT and federal government work in partnership with Indigenous communities to fulfill these Calls to Action, ensuring that educational policies and funding initiatives are developed collaboratively and transparently.

The Dene Nation stands firm in its dedication to ensuring that the educational needs of Indigenous students are met with respect and integrity, honoring the spirit of reconciliation and the commitments outlined in the TRC's Calls to Action.

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George Mackenzie, Dene National Chief /AFN Regional Chief for the Northwest Territories

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