

CHARTING OUR OWN PATH FORWARD

FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ROLL-UP REPORT

January – March 2018

Overview

Charting Our Own Path Forward: Options for an Ontario-wide Framework for First Nations Education is a synthesis of ideas and discussions solicited through activities and initiatives on education. In 2012, the Chiefs in Assembly ratified a resolution calling for the development of recommendations on systems and funding for First Nation education in Ontario. Work has been ongoing over the last five years gathering community input to inform possible options for First Nations to move towards control of the education of their own people.

The work of Charting Our own Path Forward (COOPF) is not intended to be policy or a legislating document. It is simply capturing ideas, concepts, options, and tools from collective participation of First Nation education leaders in Ontario. The document is “living”, growing and evolving and provides direction to the task of attaining our vision for First Nation education in Ontario. The Charting Our Own Path Forward initiative embraces the concept of holistic lifelong learning and does not replace or detract from any self-government negotiations in progress or other agreements in place.

The passing of Resolution 65/2017: New Interim Funding Approach for First Nation Education at the December 2017 AFN Special Chiefs Assembly, has modified the path for COOPF. The co-developed Policy Proposal appended to the federal Memorandum to Cabinet offers a new Interim Funding Approach and authorizes the Minister of Indigenous Services Canada to negotiate and conclude First Nation Regional Education Agreements. There is a common understanding that a First Nations education system in Ontario will evolve as we continue to support one another in our efforts to express our jurisdiction over education, whatever form that may take. Thus, the Charting Our Own Path Forward initiative will continue to evolve into the future.

PTO/IFN and Chiefs of Ontario staff facilitated the 2018 engagement sessions in February and March. Engagement tools were developed and utilized to present background information on the COOPF process and incorporated the two main elements of the co-developed Policy Proposal to lead discussions on funding and systems. PTO's/IFN provided recorders that captured the dialogue. This document is a roll-up and summary of the reports received from this round of engagement.

The intention of the sessions was to share information with communities of the impending changes and to discuss and share ideas with each other on how to implement the changes within their communities. These were very preliminary discussions; much more work will be required within communities to implement and move forward.

Charting Our Own Path Forward

Community Engagement Sessions

Input received from the engagement sessions demonstrated some commonalities. The following is a list of themes that developed from the reports submitted.

- 1. First Nation's Treaty Right to education must be upheld and respected in all negotiations and agreements.**
- 2. Education transformation must be a community based and led process. Important to involve Elders and Youth.**
- 3. Need a strong community vision for education and unity to move forward.**
- 4. There is a fundamental need to implement strong transparency, accountability and communication systems within communities.**
- 5. It is going to be a complicated and complex process. Communities need to start planning and preparing for implementation. Supports are required.**

Section A: Interim Funding Approach

Question for Discussion:

1. Who in your community is responsible for the development of the Education budget?

- Education Director / Administrator / Manager
- Finance Manager/Officer
- Chief & Council
- Director of Operations / Band Manager
- Education Committee / Authority / School Board
- School Principal
- Contribution Agreement dictates budget
- One community had a unique structure where different people developed the budget for specific grades &/or programs (ie/ K-3, 4 to 12, PSE, and FNSSP)

Question for Discussion:

2. Are there others that should be involved in the process? What knowledge would they contribute? How should roles and responsibilities be determined?

- Education Committee
- Local school boards
- Tribal Councils
- Chief and Council
- Language and Culture department
- Human Resources department
- Education Administration
- Childcare centre
- Private investors, corporations
- Communities should have information sessions and gatherings with a few different groups of people to talk about educational priorities, brainstorm new ideas and to provide updates.
- People who should be included are Education Portfolio Holders, Education Councillors, parents and extended families, students and youth, any and all staff from First Nation schools.
- INAC; they are under-funding First Nations and need to see that the money isn't going very far. They should come stay in communities for a week or two so they can experience it firsthand.

- Bussing and transportation; many First Nations deal with unique transportation situations due to geographical distance from schools, special needs, etc. It would be helpful if they could be a part of the conversation too.
- Youth and Elders should always be involved. The youth because they are the ones who are most affected by the education budget, they know what they want and need in terms of services, and they are creative. Elders because they have a lot of knowledge and wisdom to share, and they have that experience working with their community.
- Educated professionals in communities can offer: analysis, legal support, best practices, budgeting information, data collection processes, language skills, teachings, curriculum development, proposal writing, policy development
- Community committee to determine roles and responsibilities
- Potluck Project Management (resources in one pot)

Question for Discussion:

- 3. What factors need to be considered when developing an education budget? How could these factors be determined?**

- Teacher, Education Assistants and staff salaries, benefits and vacation and retention
- Guidance Counsellors – career planning
- Population and projection
- Infrastructure needs
- Geographic location – remoteness factors
- Small school factors, class size
- Tuition agreements, reverse tuition agreements
- Resources (books, tablets, computers, supplies, etc)
- Curriculum development
- Special Education (services, assessments, professionals, etc)
- Differentiated learning
- Land-based programming
- Alternative education
- Specialized courses (i.e. pre-health, college and university prep courses)
- Sports, extracurricular activities, field trips
- Transportation, bussing costs; transportation for parents (i.e. some parents do not have vehicles and cannot attend parent-teacher meetings, pick their kids up from afterschool sports, etc)
- Training and professional development for teachers
- Technical training, IT
- Nominal role: student numbers help you project/forecast; need to recognize in-year NR changes
- Capacity building needs
- Nutrition programs
- Proper winter clothing (jackets, snow pants, boots)

- Advisory committee meeting costs (travel, honorariums; as of right now this money comes out of the 'general funds' pot and takes away from the First Nation)
- Transition programs for students switching from on-reserve schools to off-reserve
- The rising cost of post-secondary/cost of living
- Tutoring and mentorship programs and initiatives
- Maintenance and operation of facility
- Language and cultural support staff
- Mental Health supports
- Professional services, specialized supports
- Data collection
- Proper financial management
- Policies and guidelines
- Community needs determined through community surveys and meetings
- Student needs identified by teachers and staff
- School Board and Chief and Council establish vision

Question for Discussion:

**4. What are the barriers to developing a community-based education budget?
How can barriers be addressed?**

Barrier	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community involvement and engagement - Staff retention - Lack of leadership, political support - Lack of trust, accountability, transparency - Unwillingness to collaborate - Lack of communication and planning - No consistency or continuity - Financial – limited funds, restrictions, money spent elsewhere - No resources, supports or infrastructure - Lack of qualified specialized program staff - No school board or education committee - O & M emergencies - INAC guidelines - How funding is dispersed: Fiscal year vs School year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage youth - Cross-training to increase commitment and staff retention - Identifying clear deadlines - Immediate action - Clear policies and procedures in place and enforced - Community consultations - Remove Chief and Council from this process - Strong community vision - Accounting systems and management structure - Direct Education funding agreements to FN - Infrastructure funding – schools, services, lodging, technology) - Include real/fixed costs into budget, not formula

Question for Discussion:

5. How would you measure the success of an established community-based education budget?

- If successful, wouldn't have to do rush spending
- Knowing the education budget ahead of time gives ability to plan ahead, regular budget meetings and budget reviews
- If the community is engaged and contributes to planning (not very much collaboration right now, mostly just one person working in silo)
- Established work plan and objectives met
- Program evaluation standards
- Performance evaluations
- Baseline evaluations
- Student success
- Increased: graduation rate (Secondary & Post-secondary) , attendance, parental involvement, community engagement, staff retention
- Improved Student Well-being
- Overall positive support for education / school
- Language fluency
- Competitive / Innovative Teaching Practices
- No deficits, tuitions paid
- Fully funded extra-curricular activities

Question for Discussion:

6. What skills, support and/or training is required to successfully develop, negotiate and maintain community-based education budgets?

-Planning

- Determine goals and objectives
- Establish roles and responsibilities
- Build capacity of knowledge
- Policy Analysis
- Public confidence
- Research and access to researchers
- Dispute Resolution
- Samples of agreements
- Need more information and process for block funded communities
- In-year nominal roll changes need to be taken into account
- Need to know how to deal with non-status or non-FN students in FN schools
- Remoteness factors must be factored in and addresses adequately
- Growing rise of special needs students must be addressed

- Knowledge of Treaty Rights
- Financial Management**
 - How to budget, spend and balance budgets
 - Budget templates
 - Inflation rates
 - Account coding
 - Audit requirements
 - Financial accountability
- Structures and Resources**
 - Information sharing / Communications strategy
 - Lobbyists, need strong political voice, advocacy and negotiators
 - Project Management
 - Legal support
 - Active / Supportive Board of Education
 - IT Support and Technology
 - Data collection, analysis and management
 - Recruitment, retention and incentive
 - Curriculum development and training
 - HR issues to be addressed
 - Board training
 - Tuition Agreement

Section B: First Nation Education Agreements

Question for Discussion:

- 1. Is there value in developing a First Nation Education Agreement?**

YES

- Strength in numbers, become more of a Nation
- Organizers and spokespeople for greater group, bigger group can hire lawyers, negotiators
- Ability to negotiate a better deal
- Secures base funding; more money and freedom on how its spent
- Local control, easier to address community issues
- Can create structures and policies relevant to community
- Increases overall resources through sharing and cooperation
- Access to 2nd and 3rd level support services
- Strengthen shared cultural values and language
- Increased accountability

NO

- No, as it's an inherent right. What would it be agreeing to?
- Will this result in sovereign Nations, or will we still be yelling at INAC in 40 years?
- More information is necessary to answer this question.

Question for Discussion:

2. What further information or tools does your community require to begin discussions on developing a First Nation Education Agreement?

- Draft template for community's education law
- Elder and community discussions to build capacity and knowledge
- Development of community profile, community asset mapping, needs assessment, evaluations
- Information on funding, resources and school boards
- Task list
- Political advocacy, negotiators, lawyers
- Professional analysts
- Access to data
- More information on tuition agreements
- Ratification officer and deputy
- Information sessions and sharing sessions with other FN's to develop areas of commonality
- Simplified and consistent information (i.e. constitution; everyone needs to be on the same page)
- Website (members only forum, database, online chat room)
- Postcard, a hotline
- Presentation on the education landscape to all communities
- Presentation from the French school system
- Find out how the Toronto First Nation school worked things out
- Research; hard to get people to come out to information/engagement sessions so it's hard to establish priorities
- First Nations have the education and capacity to do the work but need supports from the federal government to help us develop our models.
- Consultation with other provinces to view their funding mechanisms and systems
- Copies/templates of existing agreements
- Comparative studies (ie/ Provincial, Private, Catholic, French)
- Skilled and knowledgeable facilitators
- Ceremony, Elders, Protocols

Question for Discussion:

3. What are the strategic steps involved in planning, negotiating and implementing an Education Agreement for a First Nation?

Planning

- Readiness toolkits (information, guides, options, financial management models, etc)
- Needs assessment for 3rd & 4th level support services
- Structural readiness review for existing schools and new builds
- Infrastructure needs cannot be ignored
- Need FN Representation at all levels of transformation process
- Develop an engagement process
- Clear definition of roles and responsibilities of parties involved in process
- Having a clear vision statement
- An audit of existing programs and services
- Develop language immersion programming
- Develop community based constitution
- Decide if stand alone or form collective
- Communication strategy
- Terms of reference

Community Involvement

- Have a First Nations advisory board and revise every two years
- Regional reps: representation of all communities
- Unfair expectation for communities to understand technical issues or documents (i.e. Master Education Agreement) there needs to be plain language documents and conversations with communities
- Reaching off-reserve membership is a challenge; they need to be involved as well
- Working with communities to build resources
- Community discussion and support
- Working groups from First Nations (political reps, Elders, youth, etc)
- Establish and strengthen education committee

Negotiating

- Changing tuition agreements from four years to one year for more flexibility
 - AES agreement is a template; most would be similar, just small changes required
 - Post-secondary: high living costs, books, ensure that FNs can cover the full tuition cost
 - One lead negotiator
 - Negotiations committee
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- The idea of developing a FNEA is extremely daunting and unfamiliar. Most do not have the capacity to plan and negotiate for a FNEA, and although funds will be provided to support First Nations in this process, do not know where to start.
 - There is also a sense of 'fear of change'; First Nations have had to figure out how to make things work with what they've been given over the years, and the idea of all that changing is stressful.
 - There will need to be a lot of support for First Nations to enter FNEAs in the next few years.