



For Immediate News Release:

New Report Supports Local Control of First Nations Education

In latest report from Northern Policy Institute, authors say a Community Schools model will improve the education and life chances of First Nation children and youth.

September 10, 2014, Thunder Bay, ON – Northern Policy Institute has today released a report on First Nations Education in Canada. **Picking up the Pieces: A Community School Based Approach to First Nation Education Renewal** provides timely recommendations for improving education conditions in First Nations.

Following the withdrawal of the proposed First Nations Education Act Bill C-33 earlier this year, a controversial debate continues about how to best develop a quality First Nations education system in Canada; a system that better reflects the learning priorities and needs of First Nations communities.

Today's report, co-written by Dr. Paul W. Bennett and Jonathan Anuik, recommends an entirely different approach that depends on a responsive model of First Nations self-governance. According to the report's authors, a community driven education model with local decision-making powers called, Community School-Based Management (CSBM), is the way forward.

"Increased capital funding, as was proposed in Bill C-33, may have brought modest short-term gains to on-reserve schooling, but replacing one bureaucracy with another rarely improves the state of education or quality of learning," says Paul W. Bennett. "A community school-based approach that shifts control of decision-making to local First Nations, stands a far better chance of making a difference and improving the achievement of all First Nations children and youth," he suggests.

The report offers 7 major recommendations to improve First Nation school conditions and ultimately, student success rates. A key recommendation is to embrace promising practices such as those enabling First Nations to develop their own educational programs based on local cultural traditions, languages, ways of learning and knowledge systems.



The importance of engaging parents, family and community in local governing boards is also emphasized. The report also calls for a review of the adequacy of the proposed implementation funding for First Nation schools, which only provided \$63,000 annually to each First Nation in Canada.

Concludes Jonathan Anuik; "Evidence proves that community school-based renewal rather than bureaucratic reform will build sustainable school communities, unlock the First Nations "learning spirit" at school and truly engage children and youth at schools on and off First Nations reserves."

To read the full report titled **Picking up the Pieces: A Community School Based Approach to First Nation Education Renewal** visit: www.northernpolicy.ca.

-30-

Notes to the Editor:

About the Authors,

Paul W. Bennett, EdD (OISE/Toronto), is Senior Education Fellow at the Northern Policy Institute., Founding Director of Schoolhouse Consulting and Adjunct Professor of Education at Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. Dr. Bennett is a widely recognized leader in Canadian education, the author of eight books, and a specialist in education governance.

Jonathan Anuik, PhD (University of Saskatchewan), is Assistant Professor, Theoretical, Cultural and International Studies in Education in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta, Edmonton. Over the past decade, Dr. Anuik has produced dozens of academic papers and book reviews on every aspect of First Nations and Métis education. Working under Dr. Marie Battiste, he emerged as a leading scholar instrumental in researching the "Learning Spirit" and implementing a holistic lifelong learning framework in education.

About Northern Policy Institute:

Northern Policy Institute is a not-for-profit organization with offices in Thunder Bay and Sudbury. Its founding funder is Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation.



**Northern
Policy Institute**

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politiques du Nord**

Northern Policy Institute provides proactive, evidence-based and purpose driven recommendations to government and industry on policies and programs that strengthen our communities and create a more competitive and productive Northern Ontario.

Northern Policy Institute has six key strategic areas of focus: Aboriginal peoples; Communities; Demographics; Economy; Environment and Infrastructure.

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