



NEWS RELEASE

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Think Tank Recommends Continued Underfunding of Aboriginal Education

OTTAWA—Recommendations put forward in a new Macdonald-Laurier Institute report entitled “Free to Learn” would negatively impact access to post-secondary education for Aboriginal Students.

“Over the past decade more than 15,000 Aboriginal students have been shut out of the post-secondary education system,” said Jaden Keitlah, Chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students National Aboriginal Caucus. “What Aboriginal students need is a funding model that keeps pace with population growth and skyrocketing tuition fees, not the savings gimmicks suggested in this report.”

The report recommends replacing the Post Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP), the current funding mechanism for Aboriginal students, with an individual savings scheme that would maintain current, inadequate levels of funding. At its peak, the PSSSP funded nearly 30,000 students, up from just over 2,000 in 1989. Recently, fewer Aboriginal students have received financial support from the PSSSP due to a cap on annual funding increases of two percent imposed in 1996. The report also recommends undermining the rights of Aboriginal Governments by shutting them out of the decision making process entirely.

“Adequate funding increases that reflect the needs of Aboriginal learners must replace the outdated cap on the Post-Secondary Student Support Program,” said Keitlah. “As the fastest growing demographic in the country Canada’s future hinges on Aboriginal access to post-secondary education.”

Founded in 1981, the Canadian Federation of Students is Canada’s largest student organisation, uniting more than one-half million students in ten provinces. The National Aboriginal Caucus is the voice of Aboriginal students in Canada, with members on campuses from St. John’s to Victoria.

- 30 -

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