



Grand River Post Secondary Education Office

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The Future of the Post Secondary Student Support Program

The release of the Helin-Snow policy proposal *Free to Learn: Giving Aboriginal Youth Control over Their Post-Secondary Education* had once again sounded alarm to all First Nations regarding the future of the post secondary student support program (PSSSP). Helin-Snow claims the PSSSP is “signally failing in its objective of helping Indian and Inuit students to enrol and succeed in colleges and universities. It does not empower them to help themselves...This funding system is failing the tests of accountability and transparency.” Helin-Snow suggests that the Post-Secondary Students Support Program gradually be phased out, and replaced with an Aboriginal Post-Secondary Savings Account created at birth for all Registered Indians.

Our Message

GRPSEO objects to the Helin-Snow proposed Aboriginal Post-Secondary Savings Account (APSSA).

GRPSEO does not object to the message of saving for your child’s future. Every year available post secondary funding falls short of what is required; and, every year students have to cover part or all of their costs of going to college or university.

GRPSEO does not object to accountability. In achieving our collective purpose, the GRPSEO places a high value on organizational integrity and efficiency. GRPSEO strives to operate in an accountable and consistent manner.

Six Nations of the Grand River is the largest populated of the First Nations in Canada and has successfully administered the post secondary education program locally since mid-1992.

We understand that INAC has several internal historical systemic issues. For example, funding allocation methods vary by region across the country. The department lacks accurate comprehensive data systems to track outcomes and gaps. We are willing to help create solutions.

Six Nations has no problem responding to reporting requirements in a timely manner and has in fact set a high standard of data collection and reporting capacity as demonstrated in our Annual Report each year (see our website for the 2008/2009 Annual report). This report is an example of the GRPSEO’s accountability processes.

In 2008/2009, seven hundred eighty-six (786) Six Nations students received PSSSP funding. However, of the overall applications received, over 30% of these applications could not be funded.

Six Nations students make significant economic investments (over 6 million dollars) to the economies of the communities, cities and provinces they attend. Six Nations along with all First Nations in Canada are capable of making significant contributions to a stronger sustainable economy.

Other important statistics to note about our students from the 2008/2009 academic year:

- ✓ Six Nations students are enrolled at all levels of study:
349 at college; 437 at university; 63 at graduate; 17 at PhD/Dr.
 - ✓ 93 graduates
 - ✓ 96% of students were enrolled full time
 - ✓ 44% were over the age of 25
- The number of Six Nations post secondary graduates increased significantly from the initial tracking of data in 1992:

Recorded Graduates						
1992-93	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
19	124	116	108	83	121	121

With over 30% of our student applications going unfunded due to lack of funds – imagine what our graduate numbers could be like!

Six Nations post secondary graduates can help meet the needs of the changing labour market while building a vibrant and sustainable Canadian economy. This cannot be achieved if First Nations are excluded from creating solutions that work.

INAC states it wants to increase student access to post secondary education and to ensure the maximum number of students are benefitting **from the resources that are currently available**.

GRPSEO continues to function within the realities of limited resources and increasing demands.

We must maintain First Nation community-based Post Secondary Education funding delivery and supports – they are critical to student success and enrolment.

INAC has not made any commitment to lift the 2% annual funding cap that has resulted in over 200 unfunded eligible Six Nations post secondary students each year.

INAC states the review of the PSSSP will also look to ensure that funding reaches students **who need it most**.

GRPSEO agrees that increased funding to the Post Secondary Student Support Program should be provided to every student who needs it most to ensure:

- 1) Every eligible Six Nations post secondary student will receive adequate funding. (NOTE: increased Six Nations participation in post secondary education comes from the growing Six Nations post secondary age population and increased high school completion rates).
- 2) Funding will cover the actual costs of being enrolled in post secondary education (tuition, books, cost of living and necessary technology supports).
- 3) Funding will support the needs of Six Nations learners (e.g. mature students with dependents).

The Six Nations Council is the political advocate for post secondary at Six Nations. The Grand River Post Secondary Education Office supports the Council in its advocacy efforts.

Yours truly,



Justine Henhawk-Bomberry
A/Director
Student Services and Counselling