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For Immediate Release:



**Parliamentary Committee proposes to recognize Aboriginal controlled post-secondary institutions**

OTTAWA—“We cannot emphasize enough the established importance of these institutions and of Aboriginal programming for post-secondary learners. The successes of Aboriginal-controlled institutions should be acknowledged by government, supported and built upon. In our view, government’s objective should be to put in place measures that strengthen and promote the long-term viability of these key institutions for the future of Aboriginal post-secondary education,” says an all party report on Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education

The ground-breaking report, called **No Higher Priority – Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada**, was tabled Monday Feb. 12 in the House of Commons. Endorsed unanimously by the all party committee, **No Higher Priority** calls upon the federal government to remove its decade long cap on post-secondary funding for First Nations people, and begin the process of providing adequate resources to First Nations people.

“It’s about time” said Trevor Lewis, Chair of the National Association of Indigenous Institutes of Higher Learning (NAIHL), an organization representing the interests of 64 Aboriginal controlled post-secondary institutions across Canada. “The greatest barrier facing First Nations post-secondary students is the funding cap which has been in place for over a decade.”

The funding cap has adversely affected Aboriginal controlled post-secondary institutions. The all party report calls upon the federal government to work with Aboriginal post-secondary institutes to develop an improved approach to ensuring actual needs are met. “I am pleased that the committee has recognized that the post-secondary environment has evolved to include a country-wide network of Aboriginal controlled post-secondary institutions, and that federal support must also evolve to meet the needs which exist,” said Lewis.

The all party report notes that provincial and territorial governments also have a responsibility with respect to the accreditation and funding needs of Aboriginal post-secondary institutions. “It is time to end the jurisdictional wrangling between the federal and provincial governments in the matter of Aboriginal post-secondary institutions,” said Lewis. “Aboriginal institutions are a little known success story in this country, providing Aboriginal access to post-secondary diploma and degree programs for over three decades. The Standing Committee is to be commended for its challenge to the federal, provincial and territorial governments to recognize and fully support the development of Aboriginal institutions.”

**For more information please contact: Trevor Lewis, Chair, 613-396-2122 ext. 151**