



Position Paper:

Implementation of Full Day Early Learning in Ontario

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“We were systematically stripped of our resources, religions and dignity. Indeed, we became resources of labor for goldmines and canefields. Life for us was unspeakable, cruel. Our black and dark-skinned brothers and sisters were brought here from distant lands to share our misery and suffering and death.

Yet we survived. I stand before you as a manifestation of the spirit of our people and our will to survive. The Wolf, our Spiritual Brother, stands beside us and we are alike in the Western mind: hated, admired, and still a mystery to you, and still undefeated.

So then, what is the message I bring to you today? Is it our common future? It seems to me that we are living in a time of prophecy, a time of definitions and decisions. We are the generation with the responsibilities and the option to choose the The Path of Life for the future of our children. Or the life and path which defies the Laws of Regeneration.”

*QUOTE BY HAUDENOSAUNEE FAITHKEEPER, CHIEF OREN LYONS
ADDRESSING DELEGATES TO THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION
OPENED "THE YEAR OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES" (1993)
IN THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY AUDITORIUM,
UNITED NATIONS PLAZA, NEW YORK CITY, DECEMBER 10, 1992.*

WHO IS KA:NEN OUR CHILDREN OUR FUTURE?

Founded in 1995, Ka:nen Our Children Our Future is an autonomous, non-profit, off-reserve Aboriginal organization with its head office in Thunder Bay.

Ka:nen's mission statement acknowledges "the gift of our children and their right to a good life; and the development of healthy children by strengthening families and communities based on a cultural perspective". The word 'Ka:nen' means "seeds" in the Mohawk language. Ka:nen's vision is to create healthy seeds in children so they will grow to become healthy adults.

Ka:nen administers and manages the off-reserve Community Action Program for Children (CAPC) and Canada Prenatal and Nutrition Program (CPNP) projects in Ontario that are funded by the federal government. Ka:nen also applies for funding that compliments CAPC/CPNP funding. All of Ka:nen's programming is delivered by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people. Ka:nen Our Children Our Future supports 77 projects in 40 communities to provide culturally appropriate children's programming. Ka:nen also promotes and provides support for the use of a community development model where parents and communities work together to deliver highly credible and necessary community programs for children.

PREAMBLE

In June 2009, Dr. Charles Pascal, Special Advisor on Early Learning, presented his report "*With Our Best Future In Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*" to Premier Dalton McGuinty for review. The goal of this report was to present recommendations on how to best implement full day learning for 4 and 5 year olds in Ontario. It is this report, its recommendations, and resulting Bill 242 "The Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act", that Ka:nen Our Children Our Future is responding to in this position paper.

As an Aboriginal organization that provides culturally appropriate programming and supports to young Aboriginal children and their families, there are several compelling questions that Ka:nen has identified in the report "*With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*"¹, by Dr. Charles Pascal - - Questions such as: Who does the "our" refer to?; Who determines what "our" best future is?; What do "we" stand to gain from it?; What might "we" loose in the process?; What does implementing Early Learning in Ontario have to do with "our" best future?; and, How exactly has this new Early Learning model been designed with consideration for Aboriginal culture and learning needs?.

The use of the term 'our' raises a number of debatable issues since many members in the Aboriginal community do not share Dr. Pascal's views on what 'our best future' should look like. Furthermore, attempts have been made by members of the Aboriginal community both individually and collectively to identify their issues with full-day early learning, to no avail. The submission by The Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC) to the Standing Committee of Social Policy is a prime example. OFIFC expressed their concerns and incorporated the concerns of eleven other agencies/individuals into this submission.

¹ Charles E. Pascal, *With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*, 2009.

(hereafter referred to as - C. Pascal, *OBF*)

While Pascal's definition of a successful society may aim for "the best educated and most innovative"², he, like many other proponents of Ontario's full-day early learning initiative, tend to forget that the driving force behind any successful society is rooted in its community and identity. Therefore, since this is something Aboriginal people advocate for and politically and actively promote, one might reasonably conclude that both Pascal and other proponents of Ontario's early learning initiative have comfortably forgotten or excluded 'us' (the Aboriginal community) from this 'future' of theirs. Logically, this then raises the question - Why or how can the government ignore or exclude the concerns of off-reserve Aboriginal people when 78% of First Nations children aged 0-6 live in urban areas, and, where many of these children are already receiving regular child care that promotes cultural values and language?³

The Aboriginal community endorses holistic (i.e. individual, emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual) lifelong learning that seeks to develop individuals "who can linguistically and culturally assume the responsibilities of their nation... while also preparing their children and youth to participate in Canadian society"⁴. It involves investing significant time and energy into building and sustaining a healthy community based on the values of kinship, community and reintegration of the individual's connection with nature; all of which are "often manifested in ways that are not registered in terms of economic development"⁵. It is important to note that the Aboriginal community does not in any way shy away from development and western knowledge. Conversely, it has been suggested by Inuit Elders that there is "great continuity between the past and the present; tradition and modernity", and in their words 'We do not just want to go back to the

² C. Pascal. *OBF*. p. 4.

³ Statistics Canada. *First Nations Children Under Six Years Old Living Off-Reserve*, 2008.

⁴ Canadian Council on Learning. *Redefining How Success is Measured in First Nations, Inuit and Métis Learning*. p. 5

⁵ Canadian Council on Learning. *Redefining How Success is Measured in First Nations, Inuit and Métis Learning*. p. 5

traditions of the past, but wish to integrate the good and useful traditions from the past into modern institutions'.⁶

This paper is the result of research, analysis and consultation with Elders and other Aboriginal individuals and organizations that support the work of Ka:nen and share Ka:nen's concerns regarding the Early Learning initiative undertaken by the Ministry of Education. This paper identifies the weaknesses and potential threats that the full-day Early Learning initiative will have on Aboriginal children and their families and to Aboriginal culture in general.

Ka:nen wants to continue to work with other off-reserve PTO's and Ministry of Education to help shape this Early Learning (EL) model and its implementation. Ka:nen, the Ka:nen Board of Directors and the Aboriginal community Ka:nen serves, is seeking a formal response from the Ministry of Education and the proponents of Early Learning to the questions and concerns identified in this position paper.

⁶ Canadian Council on Learning. *Redefining How Success is Measured in First Nations, Inuit and Métis Learning*. p 7

KA:NEN'S CONCERNS REGARDING FULL DAY EARLY LEARNING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

1. *BLATANT "COMMODIFICATION" OF OUR CHILDREN*

First and foremost, according to the stated rationale in the "Our Best Future" report (hereafter referred to as OBF) and threaded throughout the document, children are paralleled to profit-generating commodities, either directly or indirectly. Direct quotes where this is demonstrated include:

- "In partnership with parents, full-day learning will provide Ontario children with high-quality programs that help lay the foundation for a healthy and productive life"⁷
- "...a cost-effective return on our early learning investment will be clear to all Ontario taxpayers".⁸
- "...early learning provides a remarkable return in better outcomes for children and a healthier and more prosperous society for everyone"⁹.
- "...if we are to reap the benefits of this important investment in our future"¹⁰
- "...improv[ing]...returns on investment"¹¹
- "...the cost of vulnerability"¹²
- "...failure in school, child poverty, ... are enemies of prosperity for all of us."¹³

⁷ C. Pascal. *Summary of Our Best Future Report*. p. 1

⁸ C. Pascal. *OBF*. p. 7

⁹ C. Pascal. *OBF - Letter of Transmittal*. June 2009

¹⁰ C. Pascal. *OBF*. p. 51

¹¹ C. Pascal. *OBF*. p. 38

¹² C. Pascal. *OBF*. p. 40

Individually, these comments might be dismissible, but collectively this message is painfully clear. Without mistake, Pascal states over and over that our children are commodities that can either positively or negatively affect our economy and that full day Early Learning will maximize the chances for a more prosperous economic outcome. And it doesn't stop there. If one reads on, the intent of this report extends to parents of these children as well – a deliberate plan to facilitate getting more parents back into the workforce earlier and contributing to the tax base¹⁴. Implementing this full day EL plan also works toward bolstering school numbers and jobs for teachers and ECE's, in a nation where the population numbers are in decline and schools are being closed.

In Aboriginal culture, children are not a commodity. They are viewed as precious gifts from the Creator and their potentials are invaluable. Children are central to all aspects of life and they are the foundation of a healthy Aboriginal culture. Many Aboriginal Elders view this plan for Early Learning as an urbanized residential school system with the only difference being that “our kids can sleep at home this time”¹⁵

Although Pascal expects Early Learning implementation to facilitate “supporting parents to work or upgrade their job skills”¹⁶, it fails to acknowledge that many Aboriginal parents will not be able to move into the labor market or start contributing to the tax base any quicker since jobs are few and the jobs that are available require education and skills that many Aboriginal people lack¹⁷. Often, if there are qualifying available jobs,

¹³ C. Pascal. *OBF*. p. 4

¹⁴ C. Pascal. *OBF*. p. 11

¹⁵ Kim Harder, Executive Director, Red Lake Indian Friendship Centre. *pers. com.*

¹⁶ C. Pascal. *OBF*. p. 11

¹⁷ Statistics Canada. *The Aboriginal Labour Force Series*, Cat no. 71-588-X, no.2, p. 9

they are low paying, service industry and evening work. In an off-reserve setting, where many young families are headed by a single mother, this is not a viable option. Upgrading job skills requires more education and training and this requires money. Already most off-reserve parents are living below the poverty level¹⁸ and INAC's post secondary funding is woefully inadequate. It is unlikely that there will be any additional dollars for education and training in the near future¹⁹ from INAC. Very few Aboriginal parents will see Early Learning as an option to facilitate employment, or education and training.

Full-day early learning also accentuates the "schoolification" process by making children, at an even younger age, by-products of a system that imposes, teaches, and indoctrinates its own mainstream values, beliefs and philosophies on other individuals - - a system where the "unmet expectations of new Canadians and their children" are considered to be 'enemies of prosperity'²⁰, and emphasis is placed on assimilation. This new, more formalized mainstream Early Learning education model serves to further shift our Aboriginal children away from their parents, their culture, their language, as well as the physical, nature-based world and the important Aboriginal teachings about their connectedness to Mother Earth. Children are becoming more "screen-oriented than nature-oriented"²¹ and suffer from "nature-deficit disorder"²². These conditions not only deprive children of healthy physical and emotional development, it promotes a more sedentary life style which will only exacerbate the growing obesity and diabetes concerns within the Aboriginal population both young and old²³.

¹⁸ Statistics Canada. *The Aboriginal Labour Force Series*. Cat no. 71-588-X, no. 2

¹⁹ Usher, A. *The Post Secondary Student Support Program (for INAC)*. 2009

²⁰ C. Pascal. *An Early Years Vision for Ontario: Our Best Future Report*. p. 4

²¹ L. Monke. *Alliance for Childhood*, 2005

²² R. Louv. *Last Child in the Woods*, 2008

²³ Statistics Canada. *The Health of First Nations Living Off-Reserve, Inuit and Métis Adults in Canada: The Impact of Socio-economic Status on Inequalities in Health*. Cat no. 82-622-X-no. 004, June 2010

2. CULTURAL EROSION

Perhaps the most contentious of all concerns originating from the Aboriginal community are concerns about the erosion of culture through the implementation of Ontario's full-day early learning initiative.

Culture, as many (both aboriginal and non-aboriginal) see it, is a way of life and is "based on social tradition embodied in its institution and its literature"²⁴. Part of the problem is that there are fundamental differences between national (or provincial) governments and Aboriginal peoples regarding what true success and accomplishment mean. This may stem from the two groups having different perspectives on what constitutes successful learning outcomes. For instance, while western culture typically uses graduation and attendance rates as measures of success, Aboriginal communities on the other hand, express some of their culturally appropriate learning outcomes by involving themselves in certain measures of ancestral language efficacy and exposure to festivals and ceremonies²⁵.

According to Statistics Canada²⁶, 46% of aged 0-6 years off-reserve Aboriginal children participated in First Nations, Inuit or Métis activities such as singing, drum dancing, fiddling, gatherings and ceremonies. 45% of these children had someone who helped them to understand First Nation culture and history; these children were being taught by their parents (60%) and grandparents (50%). How will these kinds of activities be continued in this new provincial full day EL system? Non-Aboriginal education systems such as Ontario's full-day early learning initiative will lack the capacity to teach growing children Aboriginal cultures, languages,

²⁴ A.T.M.Nurun Nabi. *Culture: A Way of Life*. The New Nation. http://nation.ittefaq.com/artman/publish/article_26889.shtml. April 2006

²⁵ Canadian Council on Learning. *State of Aboriginal Learning in Canada: A Holistic Approach to Measuring Success*. 2009

²⁶ Statistics Canada. *Aboriginal Children's Survey 2006: First Nations Children under Six Years of Age Living Off-Reserve*. Cat. no. 89-634-x, Nov. 2008

traditions, values and approaches to learning²⁷. There are legitimate concerns about the secularization of traditions and a “pan-Indian” approach to any Aboriginal curricula that might be designed and delivered in the absence of Aboriginal involvement.

In addition to this, children will be spending less time at home with parents, family and Elders – as a matter of fact, up to 11 hours a day may be spent at school should a parent opt for before and after school programming. This will only serve to promote the reduction in cultural transmission and uptake by our children. It is reasonable to conclude that if children are spending less time at home with family members, less culture, language and tradition will be passed down. It is simple – less time at home and more time with non-native others = less cultural transmission.

Many new Aboriginal parents are just now regaining their parenting skills following a few generations where the aftermath of colonization and residential schools rendered many of their parents dysfunctional and poor role models. There are legitimate concerns about the reengineering process and nullification of the efforts of organizations such as Ka:nen, Ontario Native Women’s Association (ONWA), Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC), and the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO). These organizations seek to revive and strengthen traditional parenting styles, and to reconnect Aboriginal children with their culture, language and rich knowledge. Many new Aboriginal parents/caregivers are just beginning to relearn their parenting skills through such programs. These newly learned skills will be lost or forgotten with their children being handed off earlier to the school system. In the absence of parenting skills being learned now, there is real fear and concern that parenting skills in the next generation will be non-existent.

²⁷ Battiste, Marie. *State of Aboriginal Learning - Background Paper for the National Dialogue on Aboriginal Learning*. (Ottawa: Canadian Council on Learning, November 13-14, 2005).

Other age-related and busing concerns were also raised during the research process for this position paper. Some individuals and organizations expressed concerns that children aged 3-5 are still too young to potentially be away from home and in school for up to 11 hours a day. Questions around the value, success and quality of the learning experience in this scenario were brought forward. There were also significant issues raised around school busing for children 3-6 yrs of age: length of time on school buses; school bus safety issues; challenges for bus drivers with managing a wide age range of riders; and lack of adult supervision. There have already been several documented deaths of JK/SK aged children on school buses because of similar issues. Placing even greater numbers of these young children on school buses will only serve to increase the chances of these incidents occurring again.

3. FAILURE TO ACKNOWLEDGE EXISTING OFF-RESERVE INITIATIVES

Ontario's full-day EL initiative fails to recognize in a meaningful way, the importance of the already existing off-reserve education and family initiatives such as Community Action Programs for Children (CAPC) and the Canada Prenatal and Nutrition Program (CPNP). Furthermore, although Pascal makes claims that his report "represents the ideas and expertise of thousands of people in Ontario and beyond"²⁸, it is clear that Pascal (as stated earlier in this paper) did not seek the opinions of those affected the most by this initiative. The lack of proper Aboriginal representation in regard to the newly legislated full-day early learning bill demonstrates that the claim of "ensuring all Ontario children have an even-handed opportunity to succeed in school"²⁹ is not an accurate reflection.

²⁸ C. Pascal. *OBF*. p. 1

²⁹ C. Pascal. *OBF*. p. 4

It is critical that the Aboriginal community have input to the proposed changes and that they see a solid connection between the Aboriginal Education Office, and the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework document³⁰, in order to experience some level of confidence around Aboriginal content and delivery methods. It is also critical that the Aboriginal community see solid proof that the programs like the ones Ka:nen successfully manages, that have been developed by and for Aboriginal people, will remain in tact. These programs have been in existence for seventeen years and should also be “deserving of continued support” in the same way Pascal salutes and selectively supports Francophone schools.³¹

Thus, a broader level of Aboriginal engagement and community consultation is needed before legitimate claims can be made with regard to the participation or representation of the full Ontarian community in this government initiative. Pascal’s report falls very short of achieving this and Ka;nén urges the government to take the appropriate action on this now.

4. THE EDUCATION SYSTEM’S STATE OF READINESS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EXISTING EARLY LEARNING PROVIDERS AND CLIENTS

While Ka:nén in general does not support the full day EL implementation in the way it is being planned, it does believe that access should be fair and equitable for those who chose it. Early Learning Ontario estimated the number of its available full-day institutions (for ages 3-4) in Ontario at inception to be around 600 (each with a maximum capacity of 58 children) by September 2010³². There are well in excess of this number of children aged 3-5 in Ontario. In the event that parents of all these children feel an unprecedented need to enrol their

³⁰ *Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*, Aboriginal Education Office, Ministry of Education, 2007

³¹ C. Pascal. *OBF*. p. 46

³² *Full-Day Learning For 4- and 5- Year – Olds: time to learn, grow and play*. www.ontario.ca/earlylearning.

children in these institutions perhaps as a result of societal and peer pressure, not all would have access. And, this won't be fully rectified until 2015-16. How does the Ministry of Education envision accounting and compensating for the differences in these EL educational attainments?

Until this EL model is fully rolled out, there will be differences in the EL delivery model from school to school across Ontario. Parents deserve to more fully understand what this means, including financial implications, in order to make well informed decisions now. For example, mass exodus from day-care centres, native-run or non-native, will inevitably lead to day-care closures. If parents find out after the fact, that the school system does not meet the needs of their child or their work schedule (year-round), or that it is more expensive than their previous providers(s), it may be too late to return to their previous day-care provider. The day-care may be closed or perhaps the place filled by another child. Conversely, if a school decides that a particular Aboriginal child is not ready for school, or can no longer attend that school due to delinquent band transfer payments, parents may be left stranded. As an example, this was found to be the case in BC where their Early Development Instrument (EDI) clearly identified that 39% of Aboriginal children are "not ready" for school in at least one of the five domains of child development, compared to 25% of non-Aboriginal children³³. It would be wise for parents to realize now "that access to early learning institutions will be subject to filtering both at inception and at full implementation"³⁴.

³³ Kershaw P, Irwin L, Trafford K, Hertzman C. (2005) *The British Columbia Atlas of Child Development. Human Early Learning Partnership*. Western Geographical Press, Vol 40.

³⁴ C. Pascal. *OBF*. p. 45

It is important for Aboriginal parents to understand that some of these full-day early learning “school boards reserve the right to deny students attendance at their schools if the First Nation from which students come falls into arrears”³⁵. So as eagerly as the Ministry is currently promoting this EL initiative in their print materials, on their website and other forms of the media, the Ministry should as part of their fiduciary responsibility, be informing Aboriginal parents the whole story. This story should also include:

- your child is not legally required to be in school until he/she is 6 yrs of age (or turning 6 by Dec 31st of that school year);
- the needs of your child, particularly emotionally and culturally, may be better met in whatever system your child is currently in;
- by moving your child, you may ultimately jeopardize a system that works well and is culturally designed to be the best fit for your child, and;
- you may lose the daycare spot you currently rely on, that ensures you/your child year-round coverage.

5. CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE MEASURES OF SUCCESS

If the Ministry is going to encourage the Aboriginal population to participate in the provincial education system, there needs to be recognition on behalf of the Ministry that there are significant differences in how each group (native/non-native) defines success. First Nations, Inuit and Métis have long advocated for lifelong holistic learning that affirms their own ways of knowing, cultural traditions and values. Therefore, careful consideration must be given to any tool(s) that measures learning outcomes. In *Our Best Future*, it is proposed that the Early Development Instrument (EDI) be used. This tool will measure emotional maturity, social

³⁵ C. Pascal. *OBF*. p. 45

competence, physical health and well-being, language and cognition, communication and general knowledge. As it stands now, this EDI tool reflects mainstream non-native values and for the scope of this position paper, such pedagogical debates are too lengthy for pen-to-paper arguments. Suffice to say, it does not consider for example, cultural knowledge and language. A more appropriate evaluation model for Aboriginal children would include “culture and language” and put it first. Formal and informal aspects of learning need to be measured. A more appropriate EDI model for Aboriginal learners might encompass elements such as: school readiness, health promotion, nutrition, knowledge of the land, social support and parental/family involvement. These are components that are more culturally appropriate for measuring EL outcomes for Aboriginal children.

The government needs to actively seek input from the Aboriginal community on the “who, what, how, when” of developing a more culturally appropriate evaluation tool for Aboriginal children. Without a comprehensive understanding of Aboriginal peoples perspective on learning and a culturally appropriate way of measuring it, the aspirations of Aboriginal people will continue to be misrepresented and misunderstood.³⁶

6. REENGINEERING AND CONSOLIDATION OF EXISTING FUNDING

In terms of the “consolidation and reengineering of existing agencies and services”³⁷, the Early Learning plan that is being proposed will be a logistical and jurisdictional nightmare since some of the existing programs being implicated are federally-funded programs.

³⁶ Canada Council on Learning. *State of Aboriginal Learning in Canada: A Holistic Approach to Measuring Success*. 2009.

³⁷ C. Pascal. *OBF*. p. 21-22

According to Pascal's report, "consolidating and reengineering existing stand-alone services will expand learning opportunities for younger children"³⁸. Pascal also envisions that "Resources devoted to child care for children (ages 4-12) will be released... as schools assume full responsibility for this age group"³⁹. Although to Pascal and other full-day early learning proponents this may sound like a reasonable course of action, it does not consider how this action will affect 'our' (the Aboriginal peoples) programs. It is important for both the government of Ontario and Aboriginal communities to realize that programs such as Ka:nen Our Children Our Future, CAPC, and CPNP which are tailored to the needs of Aboriginal children and their families, have a proven track record of success. Much stands to be lost by 'consolidating and reengineering' programs that are specially designed by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people that promote culture and language into a mainstream provincially controlled curriculum.

It would also stand to reason that as more money - 790-990 million⁴⁰ - gets funnelled to provincial schools, there will be a negative impact and reduced funding for on-reserve federally-funded schools. The federal school system is already experiencing significant challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers due to salary and working condition differences. A more compromised system will only make these matters worse. The Aboriginal community wonders if there could be other intentions in the "reengineering"... i.e. "leave the remaining on-reserve children and families little choice but to move their children to the provincial system and full assimilation to mainstream education (and culture)".

³⁸ C. Pascal. *OBF*. p. 22

³⁹ C. Pascal. *OBF*. p. 22

⁴⁰ C. Pascal. *OBF*. p. 44

7. LACK OF TRAINED ABORIGINAL TEACHERS AND ECE'S; SHORTAGE OF ABORIGINAL FACULTY

To ensure appropriate curriculum content and delivery for Aboriginal children, it is imperative to have sufficient Aboriginal qualified teachers and ECE's in the provincial system. At present, there is a shortage of INAC funding for post secondary education⁴¹. Many students who seek band funding, are placed on wait-lists and never qualify even though they are very capable. This means that even if Aboriginal people chose to pursue an education that would seek to fill this employment need, there will be even tighter competition for existing INAC post secondary funding than there already is.

To help ensure that the post-secondary education curriculum, placement process and evaluation methods are culturally appropriate, it is also similarly important that Aboriginal students who do enter college and university, are taught by professors who are of Aboriginal ancestry. According to CAUT, only 2.1% of all faculty in Canada are of Aboriginal descent⁴². This figure does not lend assurance that there is now or will be anytime soon, a focus on Aboriginal specific content and processes. Recruitment efforts for both Aboriginal staff and students within post secondary settings are most often insufficient and/or ineffective. Much work in this area needs to be done.

Arguably then, without the assurance of qualified Aboriginal instructors in the JK/SK classrooms, this could lead to insufficient and inappropriate Aboriginal content and methods in full-day early learning institutions.

⁴¹ Usher, A. *The Post Secondary Student Support Program: An Examination of Alternative Delivery Methods*. 2009 (for INAC)

⁴² CAUT. *Ed. Review*. Jan. 2010, Vol 12, No. 1

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Ka:nen identifies the following main concerns with the implementation of Early Learning for young Aboriginal off-reserve children and their families:

- “Commodification” of children
- “Schoolification” of children
- Lack of bonding and emotional isolation of children from their parents/family/guardians
- Erosion of the role of parents
- Loss of newly-learned parenting skills
- Cultural and linguistic erosion due to time away from parents/family/guardians in the formative learning stages
- A provincial education system that currently lacks the capacity to teach Aboriginal culture, languages, traditions, values and approaches to learning and evaluation
- Cultural and physical safety
- Dissolution of existing off-reserve initiatives and funding.
- Declining funding and resources for on-reserve schools
- Lack of qualified Aboriginal teachers, ECE’s , and post-secondary faculty

Since Full Day Early Learning in Ontario has now passed through legislation, it is no longer a question of “if” or “when” it will happen. Bill 242 – “The Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act” is now law. Therefore Ka:nen is formally requesting to have a role in the “how’s” of the roll-out over the full course of the Early Learning implementation.

Ka:nen Our Children Our Future requests that the Ministry of Education undertake a full and formal consultation process with Aboriginal people, groups, Elders and agencies to ensure Early Learning implementation will meet the needs and address the concerns identified in this position paper.

Ka:nen will continue to work with off-reserve PTO's and formally requests involvement on the Special Advisor's Early Learning Implementation Reference Group to provide input to decisions regarding major aspects of implementation. This includes identifying and removing barriers, professional development strategies, consolidated funding, the development of culturally appropriate processes, and accountability issues - as they apply to full day early learning for Aboriginal children.

Ka:nen Our Children Our Future looks forward to a reply on this matter as soon as possible.

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