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FNEC Press Release

For immediate release

**Funding for First Nations schools:
Time for the Federal Government to do its Homework**

Wendake, May 22, 2007 – The First Nations Education Council (FNEC) is today launching an extensive communications and public relations campaign, designed to inform Quebec public opinion on the realities of funding for First Nations schools and to influence the federal government. “As part of our campaign, we will be collecting the support of various Quebec associations to persuade the federal government to have another look at funding for First Nations schools, which are at a serious disadvantage when compared to other schools in the province,” explained Lise Bastien, Director of the FNEC. “Our schools are trying to survive with an outdated funding formula that has not been reviewed in 20 years. This situation is completely unacceptable and utterly deplorable,” declared Chief John Martin of the Gesgapegiag First Nation community, who will be playing an active role in the public relations campaign.

Last week, the FNEC met with fifty or so representatives from Quebec organizations in the field of education, in order to inform them about the current situation and obtain their support as part of the present awareness campaign. “I was delighted to witness the sincere support that we have among a number of important groups in Quebec. This support will help us transmit our message to the Quebec public more clearly and to influence the federal government more easily,” explained Ghislain Picard.

Lise Bastien recalled that numerous studies confirm that the funding formula used by the federal government since 1988 is outdated and fails to meet current needs in education. “For years, the government has been telling us that they are revising these

programs. This answer is unsatisfactory. Time has come to take action in order to offer essential services in First Nations schools as of September 2007,” she stated.

The First Nations funding formula was created in 1988 and it completely ignores the following costs:

- Costs connected with the integration of technology in schools;
- Costs connected with running school libraries;
- Costs connected with vocational training;
- Costs connected with extracurricular sports and recreation activities;
- Costs connected with implementation of provincial reforms, which have considerable impact on the curriculum, teaching hours and support measures such as homework assistance, etc.

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In addition, the funding of First Nations schools has not been indexed since 1996.

Contrary to the situation in all schools in all the provinces, the federal government has never invested to equip First Nations with modern management systems. “Its refusal to provide First Nations with the means to accede to a quality education means that the Canadian government is deliberately closing the door on our future. We will be unequivocally condemning this state of affairs,” concluded Ghislain Picard.

All information about this campaign can be found on Internet at the following address:
www.avenir-future.com.

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