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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **RE: Amid Federal Funding Challenges CRPS Forced to Reduce Seats for Stoney Nakoda Nation Students**

Canmore, AB – After exhausting all options to secure consistent, sustainable federal tuition funding, the Canadian Rockies Public Schools (CRPS) Board of Trustees made the difficult decision, April 30, 2025, to reduce approximately 150 seats from the 306 currently dedicated for Stoney Nakoda Nation students beginning September 2025 - with further reductions possible in future years.

The decision follows a prolonged pattern of uncertainty and broken commitments from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), which, despite approving a comprehensive Education Services Agreement (ESA) between CRPS and SEA in 2022, informed both parties it could only commit to 50 per cent of the agreed tuition amounts for the upcoming school year, with no guaranteed funding beyond March 2026.

“Our board has been left with no choice,” said CRPS Superintendent of Schools Christopher MacPhee. “Without full and reliable funding under the ESA, we cannot ensure the quality of education our students deserve - neither those who live on the Stoney Nakoda Nation, nor the students we serve throughout the Bow Valley. Continuing under these conditions would have risked the entire division’s financial stability and, more importantly, the success of all students.”

For over 50 years, CRPS has proudly partnered with SEA to support students in Exshaw and Canmore, achieving graduation rates and student well-being outcomes that exceeded provincial averages. As recently as this past year, 84 per cent of Stoney Nakoda Nation students attending Canmore Collegiate High School graduated within five years - significantly higher than the Alberta average of 69.4 per cent. CRPS' model of service to Indigenous students had been cited by ISC itself as an example for other divisions to follow.

“Despite our demonstrated success, we have been placed in an untenable situation,” said MacPhee. “The pattern of broken commitments, last-minute communication, and funding instability from ISC has shattered the trust necessary to move forward. The board’s decision to reduce seats is not a reflection of our students and staff. It is the direct result of ISC’s unwillingness to uphold agreements critical to students’ success.”

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## **Federal Funding Challenges - 2**

According to MacPhee, CRPS will continue to provide services for approximately 150 Stoney Nakoda Nation students attending Alpenglow, Elizabeth Rummel, and Lawrence Grassi schools, along with Grade 8 students transitioning to Canmore Collegiate High School.

Looking ahead, CRPS remains hopeful that a lasting solution can be found, ideally through the development of a formal Tripartite Agreement among CRPS, SEA, and ISC. A long-term agreement, rooted in collaboration, good faith, and mutual respect, would create a stable foundation for First Nations education within the division and honour the true spirit of Truth and Reconciliation.

“We remain committed to supporting Indigenous students and strengthening our partnerships,” added MacPhee. “A legally binding Tripartite Agreement represents a way forward; one that places students at the centre and ensures that promises made are promises kept.”

CRPS remains deeply committed to providing a welcoming, supportive, and high-quality education for all students entrusted to its care.

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### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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