



**MEDIA RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 5, 2025

RE: SEA and CRPS Respond to Contradictory Statement from Indigenous Services Canada

Canmore, AB – Stoney Education Authority (SEA) and Canadian Rockies Public Schools (CRPS) are calling attention to conflicting communications from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) that continue to put the education of Stoney Nakoda Nation students at risk.

On March 24, during a virtual meeting attended by SEA and CRPS leadership, along with Senator Karen Sorensen, Senior Director of the Education Branch at ISC, Jonathan Allen, explicitly stated that only 50 per cent of funding for the 2025/26 school year could be guaranteed, with no commitment beyond March 2026. Despite that meeting record, ISC has released a public statement that outlines “There have been no changes to tuition funding from Indigenous Services Canada to the Stoney Education Authority (SEA) and tuition will be funded according to the bilateral agreement between the SEA and the Canadian Rockies Public Schools (CRPS).”

Superintendent of SEA, Bill Shade said the situation has become untenable. “ISC’s assertion that full tuition for all students has always been paid does not reflect the reality on the ground,” said Shade. “Just this past year, full tuition funding from ISC was not received from April 2024 to March 2025, leaving both school divisions in arrears to the tune of several million dollars. It was not until April 2025 that full funding was restored after both divisions extensively lobbied the department for payment. We are disheartened that ISC continues to shift blame and evade responsibility.”

Superintendent of CRPS Christopher MacPhee agreed with Shade stating that ISC’s public statement is misleading. “We were told directly, and in the presence of a federal senator, that ISC could only commit to half of the funding for next year, and that no funding was guaranteed past March 2026. Our board was forced to act on that reality. We cannot run schools on vague assurances that shift depending on the audience.”

For two years, both parties have followed the agreement in good faith, and now Stoney Nakoda Nation students are paying the price for inconsistent federal commitments. To avoid any negative impacts in the future, ISC needs to provide direct and timely assurances about future funding.

“Given ISC’s public statement, it should not be a problem for the department to provide written assurance that ISC will provide full tuition according to the agreed-upon payment cycle,” said MacPhee. “To provide clarity and commitment, ISC should also provide written confirmation that it will provide a four year notice period to both SEA and CRPS of its intent to make any funding changes that would impact our Education Service Agreement.”

“This notice period will allow SEA and CRPS sufficient time to make staffing reductions or staffing increases, to provide required termination notices to teaching staff, if required, and to avoid either party from incurring unnecessary costs and potential legal challenges under contractual agreements from aggrieved staff. It also provides for sufficient time for our divisions to address required planning in the provision of educational services and programming for the Stoney Nakoda Nation students.

“Delayed or unpredictable funding jeopardizes both party’s ability to sustain consistent supports for students and places their educational partners in an unacceptable position of financial instability,” added MacPhee.

CRPS and SEA have together supported strong academic and emotional outcomes for Stoney Nakoda Nation students. Their partnership has been cited as a model for other divisions - including by ISC itself.

As it stands, without full and sustained funding CRPS Board of Trustees made the difficult decision, April 30, to reduce approximately 150 seats previously dedicated to Stoney Nakoda Nation students beginning September 2025.

“Nothing about our board’s decision reflects a loss of belief in our students or our partnership with SEA,” stated MacPhee. “It reflects a broken funding process. Our students deserve better than political wordplay. They deserve consistency, respect, and a commitment to their success.”

Both parties are hoping to receive a long term federal funding commitment in the next few days. Such a guarantee would reflect the true spirit of Truth and Reconciliation and honour the autonomy of First Nations ensuring students are not left behind.

-30-

BACKGROUND

- [CRPS Board of Trustees April 30 Board Meeting](#) (Start 7:10)
- [Amid Federal Funding Challenges Board Forced to Reduce Seats for Stoney Nakoda Nation Students](#) - April 30, 2025
- [ISC Backgrounder - April 30, 2025](#)

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