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PRESS RELEASE

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MCK to cover private school tuition costs for special needs students amid Jordan's Principle funding suspension

For Immediate Release

(Kahnawake – 21 Seskéha/August 2025) The Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK), in collaboration with the Kahnawà:ke Education Center (KEC) and Onkwata'karihtatshera, are announcing a one-time emergency measure to cover the private school tuition costs for the identified twenty-five (25) Kahnawa'kehró:n students with special needs for the 2025/2026 school year. The MCK decision comes in response to significant delays, resulting from the suspension of Jordan's Principle funding that is administered by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). This has left families in our community without the financial support they rely on for their children's education.

Despite ongoing collaboration with the Kahnawà:ke Education Center (KEC) and Jordan's Principle Liaisons of Onkwata'karihtatshera, there has been no exception approved by ISC for private school tuition for First Nations children with special needs. These students, all of whom are diagnosed, attend institutions uniquely equipped to meet their complex learning, developmental, and emotional needs. Without immediate intervention, they risk losing their placements, facing disruptive relocations, and suffering long-term setbacks in their educational and mental health progress.

In light of this urgent situation, the MCK will pay the full remaining tuition costs for these students for the portion that the KEC does not cover, totaling \$325,754.85, with the expectation of full reimbursement once Jordan's Principle funding resumes. This action reflects our commitment to investing in our community members and ensuring that no child is left behind due to bureaucratic delays. Which actually, is the core principle of the program.

Additionally, contact has been made with the Minister of ISC, Mandy Gull-Masty, urging that funding allocations through Jordan's Principle continue immediately.

"We are seeing the emotional toll this uncertainty is taking on our students. The anxiety, the fear of losing their school environment, and the disruption to their routines are deeply affecting their mental health," said Education Portfolio Lead, Ratsénhaienhs Jeffrey Diabo. "This decision is about protecting their well-being and ensuring continuity in their care and education, and ensuring ISC prioritizes continuation of funding these important services."

This measure is limited to the 2025/2026 school year and applies only to the twenty-five students diagnosed with special needs and registered on the Kahnawà:ke Kanien'kehá:ka Registry. While many more students benefit from Jordan's Principle, the current funding pause has forced the MCK to prioritize those most at risk.

We urge families to continue working with the KEC and Jordan's Principle Liaisons to ensure all documentation is submitted and up to date. The MCK remains committed to transparency and collaboration and will continue to advocate for the reinstatement of full funding as soon as possible.

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