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**DENE NATION CONDEMNS AURORA COLLEGE'S PROPOSED CLOSURE OF COMMUNITY
LEARNING CENTRES IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE- [YELLOWKNIFE, DENENDEH – JANUARY 28, 2025] The recent announcement by Aurora College regarding the closure of all its community learning centres across the Northwest Territories (NWT) by June 30, 2025, has raised significant concerns among Dene Leaders, educators, students, and community agencies. This decision, which affects 19 community learning centres, is poised to have profound implications for education accessibility, particularly for Dene populations living in remote communities.

Dene National Chief George Mackenzie stated, "The Dene were not consulted on closing the community learning centres. These centres provide necessary adult upgrading and skill development for those who struggle in the NWT school system. These centers help Dene remain at home, connected to their land, and maintain a connection to family and their culture. Keeping our community learning centres is important for keeping our Dene languages and traditions alive while helping people develop their skills while contributing to local resources."

Closing these centres threatens to magnify existing educational disparities in the NWT. Many residents, particularly remote Dene communities, depend on local learning centres for foundational education and skills development. The loss of these facilities could lead to increased dropout rates and deter the ability of individuals to pursue further education or employment opportunities.

Aurora College has justified this closure as part of a larger plan to create a polytechnic university to enhance its educational offerings. The Dene Nation notes that this transition overlooks the unique needs of local communities that rely heavily on these centres for literacy programs and vocational training. The community learning centres have historically served as vital hubs for education, cultural preservation, and community engagement, particularly for Indigenous learners who face systemic barriers in accessing higher education.

Dene National Chief further stated, "These closures put more stress on people and families who must travel away from home to attend courses and affect local knowledge and cultural heritage. The NWT is home to the Dene, and the community learning centres have been important in promoting language education and cultural activities while remaining in their home community. The community learning centres give hope to those in the community. Closing these centres will result in impacts on young families with young children, those struggling to get out of addictions and other life circumstances. The Aurora College is about hope and providing programming relevant to the needs of the Dene. We must invest in our people; closing these centres will impact health and social service programs already receiving a failing grade."

The Dene Nation urges the GNWT and Aurora College to engage in meaningful consultations with affected communities to create alternative solutions that prioritize educational access and cultural preservation. It is important that the Dene's voices are heard and considered in the decision-making process. The future of education in the Northwest Territories depends on a commitment to inclusivity and respect for the unique needs of its diverse communities.

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