



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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BCAFN SPECIAL CHIEFS ASSEMBLY

Resolution 08/2020

Vancouver Island Conference Centre, 101 Gordon St., Nanaimo, BC
March 4 & 5, 2020

SUBJECT: ACTION PLAN FOR FIRST NATIONS HOMELESSNESS ON AND OFF-RESERVE

MOVED BY: MELINDA SWAN, PROXY, AHOUSAHT FIRST NATION

SECONDED BY: CHIEF ROSEANN CASIMIR, KAMLOOPS INDIAN BAND

DECISION: CARRIED

WHEREAS:

- A. The United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration) states:
- i. *Article 3: Indigenous Peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.*
 - ii. *Article 21 (1): Indigenous Peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.*
 - iii. *Article 21 (2): States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of Indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.*
 - iv. *Article 23: Indigenous Peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, Indigenous Peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social*

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A blue ink signature of Terry Teegee, BC Regional Chief.

Terry Teegee, BC Regional Chief

programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.

- v. *Article 24 (2): Indigenous individuals have an equal right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. States shall take the necessary steps with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of this right;*
- B. There is an urgent need to address homelessness for First Nations both on and off reserve;
- C. Vancouver's Downtown Eastside is Canada's most poverty-stricken urban area, where 40% of homeless individuals identified as Indigenous in 2018;
- D. In 2014, Statistics Canada reported that 18% of homeless people were Indigenous- more than twice the rate of non-Indigenous peoples;
- E. The number of First Nations people becoming homeless is increasing every year;
- F. First Nations who are homeless face significant barriers in finding adequate and affordable homes and accessing the proper medical and mental health care they need due to a lack of housing on -reserve and affordable housing off -reserve;
- G. Government programs and policies have failed to provide sustainable long- term positive housing outcomes and have led to persistent substandard living conditions with negative impacts on health, education, economic development, and child welfare, etc. These substandard living conditions are felt more deeply by First Nations women and girls, seniors, youth, 2SLGBTQIA+, the homeless, people with disabilities and First Nations people in the North;
- H. First Nations have the right to freely pursue our social development, including the urgent need to address homelessness of our citizens, put in place measures and institutions to help our people without homes and provide them with the means of subsistence or development;
- I. The federal government, provinces and municipalities must ensure adequate housing is available to deal with the homelessness crisis facing First Nations;
- J. Section 15 of, *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* states that "no child shall be apprehended solely on the basis of his or her socio-conditions, including poverty, lack of adequate housing or infrastructure..."
- K. In 2018, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) in partnership with Canada, finalized a National First Nations Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy. The Strategy seeks to ensure First Nations are able to care, control and manage their housing and infrastructure;
- L. The AFN Ten Year National First Nations Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy aims to address one cause amongst many that results in homelessness on and off -reserves and in the north; and

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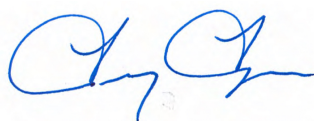
Terry Teegee, BC Regional Chief

- M. The Strategy also seeks to coordinate housing governance delivery systems across all jurisdictions to better serve First Nations members living away from their community in urban, rural and Northern settings.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly directs the Regional Chief and staff to identify resources to conduct research, with key partners where possible, to:
 - i. gather data to determine the number of First Nations people experiencing homelessness;
 - ii. analyze the data to determine the causes and the gaps in services, including the shortage of housing on-reserve that contributes to members leaving their communities and the reasons that prevent the homeless from accessing adequate shelter on and off -reserve;
 - iii. Develop a mechanism to allow First Nations to access data collected for their own future utilization;
2. Direct the BCAFN to seek resources to develop a draft provincial First Nations Homelessness Strategy to address BC-specific gaps, issues and systems that contribute to high rates of homelessness among BC First Nations people. This strategy will identify comprehensive, multi -partner, short, medium and long-term solutions, and an advocacy plan for presentation to Chiefs -in -Assembly for their input, approval, and occasional updating as required;
3. Work in collaboration with the National AFN Office to develop a draft national First Nations Homelessness Strategy that is in alignment with the National First Nations Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy;
4. Direct the Regional Chief to advocate for an inclusive multi-partner solution which does not impact Nation-based approaches to address First Nations homelessness and its related causes;
5. Urge the federal government to immediately develop with First Nations, and the AFN Chiefs' Committee on Housing and Infrastructure measures to improve the delivery of federal government homelessness programs into the transition to First Nations care, control and management of First Nations housing and infrastructure;
6. Urge the federal government to work with First Nations and the AFN on immediately improving social programs and fiscal mechanisms to address homelessness; and
7. Urge Employment and Social Development Canada to amend criteria to access the rural budget component to enable First Nations to build shelters and group homes on-reserve.

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