



BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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BCAFN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
September 19-21, 2023
Hybrid - In person & online via Zoom

Resolution 35/2023

SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR MORE ACCREDITED INDIGENOUS COUNSELLORS

Moved BY: KUKPI7 ROSANNE CASIMIR, TKEMLÚPS TE SECWÉPEMC

SECONDED BY: SEMPULYAN GONZALES, PROXY, SQUAMISH NATION

DECISION: CARRIED

WHEREAS:

- A. the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) estimates that 150,000 children were forced to attend Indian Residential Schools (IRS) nationwide, identifying that more than 4,100 children died at these facilities – although survivors and families say that number is much higher;
- B. the discovery of unmarked graves at former IRS across Canada, has confirmed our history and brought truth telling to the world;
- C. the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which the government of Canada has adopted without qualification, and has, alongside the government of BC, passed legislation committing to implement, affirms:
 - Article 7(2):** Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including forcibly removing children of the group to another group.
 - Article 8(1):** Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture;
 - (2): States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for:
 - (a): Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities;

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- (b): Any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources;
- (c): Any form of forced population transfer which has the aim or effect of violating or undermining any of their rights;
- (d): Any form of forced assimilation or integration;
- (e): Any form of propaganda designed to promote or incite racial or ethnic discrimination directed against them

- D. by BCAFN Resolutions, the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly has cited the numerous horrors of Residential Schools and the forced removal of Indigenous children from their homes, and has emphasized the need for comprehensive healing supports for survivors, families and communities;
- E. the federal government has committed funding to Tkemlúps te Secwépemc for a Healing House and it is anticipated there will be additional funding commitments for healing centres throughout the province of BC and Canada;
- F. the programs and services offered through these healing centres, will be grounded in our language, culture and ways of knowing and being, and should be led by indigenous counsellors and clinicians; and
- G. there is a province-wide shortage of counsellors and an even a narrower margin for indigenous counsellors. Many of the existing indigenous mental health and wellness workers are facing “burn out” and are leaving their field/profession.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly advocate for funding to support communities that partner with accredited post-secondary institutions to offer indigenized mental health/counselling programs in order to train their members to be registered clinical Counsellors;
- 2. the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly proactively work with First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) to identify funding specific to the creation of additional accredited Indigenous counselling programs to fill the positions that will be created through the formation of the new healing centres;
- 3. the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly support the Tkemlúps te Secwépemc initiative to create a dual graduate degree counselling program (Master and Doctoral) at TRU with an Indigenous cohort and will support any other communities working to establish similar programs with their local post-secondary institutions.
- 4. the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly will continue to advocate for and create opportunities to support healing processes.

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