



BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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Prince George, BC V2K 5S3
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BCAFN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

October 8, 9 & 10, 2024

Hybrid - In person & online via Zoom

Resolution 39/2024

SUBJECT: CALL FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION TO ADDRESS THE TOXIC DRUG POISONING CRISIS

MOVED BY: CHIEF COUNCILLOR WILLIAM YOVANOVICH, SKIDEGATE

SECONDED BY: CHIEF VICTOR ISAAC, NAMGIS FIRST NATION

DECISION: CARRIED

WHEREAS:

- A. The ongoing impacts of colonization, including the legacy of the Residential School system have created disproportionate impacts on First Nations peoples' health and wellness.
- B. B.C. continues to experience an unprecedented and escalating overdose and illicit drug toxicity crisis, which has been declared a public health emergency, that is claiming multiple lives every day.
- C. In 2023, B.C. faced an unprecedented drug poisoning crisis with at least 2,511 deaths attributed to toxic, unregulated drugs, marking the highest number ever recorded in a single year with First Nations persons dying at a rate 5.9 times higher than non-First Nations in B.C.

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- D. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration), which the government of Canada has adopted without qualification, and has, alongside the government of BC, passed legislation committing to implement, affirms:

Article 7(1): Indigenous People have the right to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of the person;

Article 18: Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision-making institutions.

Article 19: States shares consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior, and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

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.

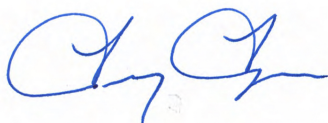
Article 23: Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, Indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programs affecting them, and as far as possible, to administer such programs through their own institutions.

Article 24(2): Indigenous people 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.

- E. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action state;

18. We call upon the federal, provincial territorial and Aboriginal governments to acknowledge that the current state of Aboriginal health in Canada is a direct result of previous Canadian government policies, including residential schools, and to recognize and implement the health-care rights of Aboriginal people as identified in international law, constitutional law and under the Treaties.

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19. We call upon the federal government, in consultation with Aboriginal peoples, to establish measurable goals to identify and close gaps in health outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, and to publish annual progress report and assess long-term trends. Such efforts would focus on indicators such as: infant mortality, maternal health, suicide, mental health, addictions, life expectancy, birth rates, infant and child health issues, chronic diseases, illness and injury incidence and the availability of appropriate health services.

- F. The *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan*, which was developed in partnership with rights and title holders and the Province of BC, commits 89 long-term cross-ministerial actions to support the provincial implementation of the UN Declaration, which includes the following action items to be achieved by 2027:

4.8. In alignment with the tripartite health plans and agreements, continue to strengthen and evolve the First Nation health governance structure in B.C. to ensure First Nations are supported to participate as full and equal partners in decision-making and service delivery at local, regional and provincial levels, and engage First Nations and the government of Canada on the need for legislation as envisioned in the tripartite health plans and agreements.

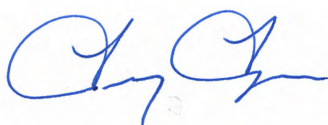
4.11. Increase the availability, accessibility and the continuum of Indigenous-led and community-based social services and supports that are trauma-informed, culturally safe and relevant, and address a range of holistic wellness needs for those who are in crisis, at-risk or have experienced violence, trauma and/or significant loss.

4.13. Increase the availability and accessibility of culturally safe substance use services, including through the renovation and construction of Indigenous-run treatment centres and the integration of land-based and traditional approaches to healing.

- G. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan*, which was developed in partnership with rights and title holders and the Government of Canada, commits 181 long-term cross-ministerial actions to support the federal implementation of the UN Declaration, which includes the following action items to be achieved by 2028:

81. Improve health equity through access to culturally appropriate health and wellness

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services and support for holistic approaches to healing, including community-based, land-based, culturally relevant and trauma informed mental health services addressing – among other things – suicide and addictions crises.

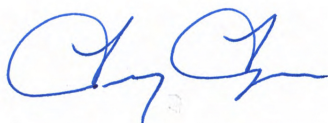
89. Work with partners and Indigenous organizations on mental health promotion programming and prevention initiatives, including using distinctions-based approaches where feasible to support culturally safe, relevant and trauma-informed initiatives.

- H. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan, which was developed in partnership with rights and title holders and the Province of BC, commits 89 long-term cross-ministry actions to support the implementation of the UN Declaration, which includes the following action items to be achieved by 2027:
- I. On September 19, 2024, Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council declared a state of emergency due to the opioid crisis for all 14 First Nations represented by the Council.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly call on the provincial and federal governments to provide First Nations and, where designated, First Nations service providers, with adequate, long-term and sustainable resourcing to address the toxic drug poisoning crisis and the mental health and wellness needs of First Nations in B.C.
- 2. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly call on the Province of B.C. and the Federal Government to issue a provincial and national State of Emergency to engage all resources necessary to fulsomely address the drug poisoning crisis.
- 3. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly call on the Province of B.C. and the Federal Government to provide full support for any First Nation who has declared a State of Emergency for their Nation.
- 4. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly direct BCAFN to work with the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), and the First Nations Summit (FNS), as the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) to:
 - i. host an All-Chiefs Meeting to identify priorities, key issues and recommendations to holistically address the toxic drug poisoning crisis.
 - ii. develop a strategy following the All-Chiefs Meeting, including developing immediate measures required for collective action and;

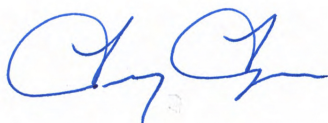
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- iii. call on the Provincial, Federal and municipal governments to work with First Nations in full partnership on the implementation of the strategy.
5. The BCAFN Chiefs-In-Assembly direct BCAFN to work with UBCIC and FNS, together as the FNLC, to work with the federal, provincial and municipal governments, the First Nations Health Authority, and other like-minded organizations to continue advancing drug policy reforms that:
- i. seek to address the root causes of addiction and,
 - ii. reduce overdose fatalities, drug-related harms and the overrepresentation of First Nations peoples in the criminal justice system centres the health and wellness of First Nations through First Nations-led decision-making, service delivery, and policy implementation.
6. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly direct BCAFN to provide regular updates on progress and developments to the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly.

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