
Assembly of First Nations

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ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
July 14-15-16, 2026, Ottawa, ON

Resolution no. 46/2026

TITLE: Support for a National Framework for Women's Health in Canada that Commits to a First Nations Distinction-Based Health Strategy

SUBJECT: Health

MOVED BY: Chief Betsy Kennedy, War Lake First Nation, MB

SECONDED BY: Chief Brent Niganobe, Mississauga First Nation, ON

DECISION Approved by the AFN Executive Committee by consensus.

WHEREAS:

A. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) states:

- i. Article 8(1): Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.
- ii. Article 8(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;
 - (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.
- iii. 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.

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CINDY WOODHOUSE NEPINAK, NATIONAL CHIEF

46 – 2026
Page 1 of 3

- 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 programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.
- B. First Nations across Canada hold an Inherent and Treaty Right to health, recognized and grounded in Section 35 of the *Constitution Act*, 1982, and reflected in Treaties 1 – 11.
- C. Section 3.2 in the Calls for Justice issued by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) calls upon all governments to provide adequate, stable, equitable, and ongoing funding for Indigenous-centered and community-based health and wellness services that are accessible and culturally appropriate, and meet the health and wellness needs of Indigenous women, girls, and 2-Spirit, Intersex, Queer, and Trans Indigenous People (2SIQTIP).
- D. Women's health outcomes in Canada have consistently lagged due to systemic gaps in research, data, treatment efficacy and access to care. The most recent Hologic Global Women's Health Index shows Canada has remained static and was ranked at 73/143 compared with other countries.
- E. First Nations women in Canada face ongoing, intersecting inequities rooted in colonialism, systemic racism, and gender-based discrimination—resulting in disproportionate harms to their health, safety, and wellbeing.
- F. This health gap is wider for First Nations women, girls, and gender diverse people in Canada, due to unique systemic barriers that limit access to timely care in our communities. The lack of health and wellness services within First Nations communities continues to force First Nations women, girls, and gender diverse people to relocate to access care. Governments must ensure that health and wellness services are available and accessible within First Nations communities and wherever First Nations women, girls, and gender diverse people reside.
- G. On March 26, 2026, Bill S-243 *An Act to establish a national framework for women's health in Canada*, completed its Second Reading and was referred to Committee in the Senate of Canada. Bill S-243 would establish a legislated national framework to address long-standing gaps in women's health.
- H. Bill S-243 is a timely opportunity to advance First Nations women and gender diverse peoples' health by creating a legal obligation to establish a national framework on women's health and fostering inter-jurisdictional collaboration and accountability measures that are essential to addressing gaps in the health of First Nations women and gender diverse peoples.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the First Nations-in-Assembly:

1. Direct the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to publicly support, in principle, Bill S-243, *An Act to Establish a National Framework for Women's Health in Canada*, with amendments to ensure a distinction-based approach to address health inequities experienced by First Nations women and gender diverse people.
2. Direct the AFN to advocate for additional amendments to Bill S-243 that address the unique barriers for First Nations women and gender diverse people and ensure that the development and implementation of the national framework are led by First Nations women, gender diverse peoples and women's health experts.

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CINDY WOODHOUSE NEPINAK, NATIONAL CHIEF

46 – 2026
Page 2 of 3

3. Direct the AFN to call upon the Government of Canada to prioritize Bill S-243 in the parliamentary process.
4. Direct the AFN to call on the Government of Canada to ensure accountability for recognizing and implementing the right of First Nations to the highest attainable standard of health, including distinctions-based measurable targets, transparent reporting, and First Nations-led evaluation that affirms First Nations data sovereignty.
5. Direct the AFN to call on the Minister of Health to work collaboratively with the Minister of Indigenous Services Canada and the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, in partnership with First Nations, to develop and implement a First Nations-specific national Framework for Women's Health that is grounded in First Nations rights, self-determination, and the leadership of First Nations women and gender diverse peoples.

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46 – 2026
Page 3 of 3