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## Assembly of First Nations

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## Assemblée des Premières Nations

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**ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
JULY 11, 12, & 13, 2023; HALIFAX, NS**

**Resolution no. 63/2023**

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<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>Conduct a Longitudinal Study on Strengths-Based Indicators of Mental Wellness</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Health
<b>MOVED BY:</b>	Chief Rachel Manitowabi, Wikwemikong Unceded First Nation, ON
<b>SECONDED BY:</b>	David Pratt, proxy, James Smith Cree Nation, SK
<b>DECISION</b>	Carried; 1 abstention, 1 opposed

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**WHEREAS:**

- A. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) states:
- i. Article 5: Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the state.
  - ii. Article 7 (1): Indigenous individuals have the rights to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty, and security of person.
  - iii. Article 17 (1): Indigenous individuals and peoples have the right to enjoy fully all rights established under applicable international and domestic law.
  - iv. Article 17 (3): Indigenous individuals have the right not to be subjected to any discriminatory conditions of labour and, inter alia, employment or salary.
  - v. 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.

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**JOANNA BERNARD, INTERIM NATIONAL CHIEF**

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- vi. 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.
  - vii. 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 of achieving progressively the full realization of this right.
- B. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action states:**
- i. #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.
  - ii. #21: We call upon the federal government to provide sustainable funding for existing and new Aboriginal healing centres to address the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual harms caused by residential schools and to ensure that the funding of healing centres in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories is a priority.
  - iii. #23: We call upon all levels of government to:
    - a. Increase the number of Aboriginal professionals working in the health-care field.
    - b. Ensure the retention of Aboriginal health-care providers in Aboriginal communities.
    - c. Provide cultural competency training for all healthcare professionals.
- C. The Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls also speak to healing from trauma including:**
- i. 7.2 We call upon governments and health service providers to ensure that health and wellness services for Indigenous Peoples include supports for healing from all forms of unresolved trauma, including intergenerational, multi-generational and complex trauma. Health and wellness programs addressing trauma should be Indigenous-led or in partnership with Indigenous communities and should not be limited in time of approaches.
- D. In the Prime Minister's 2021 Speech from the Throne, Building a Resilient Economy: A Cleaner and Healthier Future for Our Kids, it states that:**

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- i. To support communities, the Government will also invest significantly in a distinctions-based mental health and wellness strategy, guided by Indigenous Peoples, survivors, and their families.
- E. The 2021 Mandate Letter from the Minister of Indigenous Services states:
  - i. Co-develop and invest in a distinctions-based Mental Health and Wellness Strategy to meet the needs of First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation, including culturally appropriate wraparound services for addictions and trauma, suicide and life promotion and the building of treatment centres.
- F. Research is typically founded on a western deficits-based perspectives and approaches; However, First Nations' worldviews and approaches rely on our traditional teachings, language, and culture, which is inherently strengths-based. Having a parallel approach to research that is wholistic and incorporates both approaches and worldviews would benefit not only Canada, but ultimately First Nations.
- G. In 2015, regional engagements were held with First Nations on the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework. Priorities that emerged from this discussion include culture as foundation, community development, ownership and capacity development, enhanced flexible funding, and partnerships. These priorities support health systems focused on governance, research, workforce development, change and risk management, self-determination, and performance measurement.

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

1. Direct the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to work with First Nations Mental Wellness Partners, including Thunderbird Partnership Foundation, First Peoples Wellness Circle, and other First Nations researchers to identify pathways of research that are strengths-based, wholistic, and in alignment with First Nations worldviews and that any and all data collection activities abides by the Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP®) Principles so that the research findings directly benefit First Nations.
2. Direct the AFN to provide technical support to ensure the research process supports, empowers, and involves, Knowledge Keepers, women and girls, 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples, men and boys, people with lived/living experience, persons with disability/accessibility needs and that processes, protocols, and methodologies are reflective of First Nations inherent and Treaty rights, values, languages, and cultures.
3. Direct the AFN to call on Indigenous Services Canada, Health Canada, and the office of the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to fully support First Nations-led research initiatives by providing adequate funding, capacity development, access to resources, and networks and mechanisms that support the development of strengths-based approaches to the mental wellness of First Nations led by First Nations and that a sustainable and cooperative research process is in place that imbues the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework.

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