
Assembly of First Nations

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Assemblée des Premières Nations

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Annual General Assembly
July 5, 6, 7, 2022, Vancouver, BC

Resolution no. 16/2022

TITLE: Supporting First Nations Pandemic Recovery

SUBJECT: COVID-19

MOVED BY: Chief Rod Travers, Kinonjeoshtegon First Nation, MB

SECONDED BY: Chief Cornell McLean, Lake Manitoba First Nation, MB

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 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
- ii. Article 19: States shall 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.
- 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.
- iv. Article 21 (2): States shall take the 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.

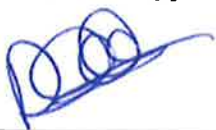
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- v. Article 23: Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.
- B. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada states:**
- i. Calls to Action # 19, We call upon the federal government, in consultation with Aboriginal peoples, to establish measurable goals to identify and close the gaps in health outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, and to publish annual progress reports 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.
- C.** Since the smallpox epidemic in North America, the historic patterns of rates of infection and mortality have not been favourable to First Nations in Canada. In the 1918-1919 Spanish flu pandemic, along with the 2009 H1N1 Influenza A pandemic, First Nations populations were over-represented in Canadian case counts.
- D.** First Nations have been at greater risk of contracting and developing severe complications from COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic due to the greater health, social and economic inequities faced by First Nations compared to the rest of Canadians.
- E.** The First Nations Inuit and Health Branch reported on November 04, 2021, that the rate of cumulative and active cases and rate of death in First Nations communities remains higher than the rate in the general population.
- F.** Jurisdictions where data-sharing agreements with First Nations are in place have shown that COVID-19 is impacting First Nations in urban and off-reserve areas at a higher rate than in the general population.
- G.** Public health restrictions and measures to contain the spread of the virus came at a great cost for many Canadians, but for many First Nations, these measures further stressed flawed systems and exacerbated inequities. The long-term impacts of these measures remain unknown.
- H.** First Nations responded to the pandemic through the introduction and enactment of public health measures to maintain and protect the well-being of community members. These measures were most effective when supported by federal, provincial, and territorial governments and in coordination with regional health authorities.

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- I. Conversations across the country on post-pandemic recovery and an economic restart have begun to take place, and in most cases, provincial and territorial governments have not included First Nations in their discussions. A renewed start requires new relationships with all levels of government and a full acknowledgement of the role that First Nations play in recovery.
- J. An intersectional gender lens in recovery efforts is required to ensure that no one is left behind, including persons with disabilities, seniors, children, and youth, and gender-diverse populations.
- K. As per Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Resolution 03/2020, *Addressing Priority Concerns and Needs of First Nations Around COVID-19*, the Chiefs-Assembly directed the AFN COVID-19 National Task Force to provide on-going support to the AFN Executive Committee for the duration of the pandemic to support the mitigation of impacts of COVID-19 on First Nations.
- L. The National Chief's 100-day plan emphasized the importance of securing resources from the federal government so that First Nations pandemic plans have strong components for health, economic and social recovery by working with the AFN COVID-19 National Task Force to develop a national advocacy plan.

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

- 1. Call on Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and other federal departments to work with provincial and territorial governments to ensure First Nations are included in discussions related to the post-pandemic recovery and the economic restart.
- 2. Direct the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to call upon ISC to provide the necessary funding required by First Nations to guide their own recovery and healing processes.
- 3. Direct the AFN to call upon ISC to fund First Nations to review and re-design their Pandemic Plans to reflect learnings from the pandemic and a focus on health, economic and social recovery.
- 4. Direct the AFN to develop a national advocacy plan to support the work of First Nations in reviewing their Pandemic Plans and supporting work focused on recovery.

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