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## Assembly of First Nations

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## Assemblée des Premières Nations

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**ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
JULY 25, 26, & 27, 2017, REGINA, SK**

**Resolution no. 02/2017**

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**TITLE:** Federal Response to the Crisis of Suicide

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**SUBJECT:** Mental Health

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**MOVED BY:** Chief Elaine Johnston, Serpent River First Nation, ON

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**SECONDED BY:** Chief Byron Louis, Okanagan First Nation, BC

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**DECISION** Carried by Consensus

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**WHEREAS:**

- A. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states:
- i. 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.
  - ii. 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. Call to Action # 18 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada calls upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Indigenous peoples and governments to acknowledge that the current state of Indigenous health in Canada is a direct result of previous Canadian government policies, including Indian Residential Schools, and to recognize and implement the health-care rights of Aboriginal people as identified in international law and constitutional law, and under the Treaties.

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**Certified copy of a resolution adopted on the 26th of July 2017 in Regina, Saskatchewan**

  
**PERRY BELLEGARDE, NATIONAL CHIEF**

**02 – 2017**  
Page 1 of 2

- C. First Nations communities across Canada are declaring a state of crisis due to high incidences of suicide. Suicide rates are five-to-seven times higher than the Canadian population and addiction and prescription drug abuse rates are also reaching crisis levels in many communities.
- D. Many First Nations have found the federal response to be slow and inadequate.
- E. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN), Thunderbird Partnership Foundation (TPF), First Peoples Wellness Circle (FPWC), Indigenous mental health leaders and Health Canada have worked collaboratively to develop a First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework that uses culture as the foundation and provides a roadmap to address mental health needs along a continuum of care.
- F. The First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework is a strength-based approach to prevention, intervention and healing, and outlines opportunities to strengthen existing mental wellness programming within our communities. This work is based on the social determinants of health, and more importantly demonstrates that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to community wellness.
- G. Chiefs-in-Assembly supported the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework in AFN resolution 26/2015, resolution 22/2014, and resolution 30/2013; however, to date very little funding has been dedicated to the implementation of the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework.
- H. In June of 2017, the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs issued a report entitled "Breaking Point: The Suicide Crisis in Indigenous Communities" which provides recommendations to the government on addressing suicide which span the determinants of health and implicate multiple federal departments.
- I. While implementation of the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework is necessary to ensure long-term community-driven mental wellness services in First Nations, there is an immediate need to adequately respond to the suicide crises that are ongoing and as they arise.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Chiefs-in-Assembly:**

- 1. Call on the federal government to recognize the First Nations suicide crisis as a priority of the highest order, and, as such, to develop a whole-of-government response, in partnership with First Nations, to support communities in all areas related to suicide including prevention/life promotion, intervention, postvention and crisis response.

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