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## Assembly of First Nations

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## Assemblée des Premières Nations

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**SPECIAL CHIEFS ASSEMBLY**  
December 6,7,8, 2022, Ottawa, ON

**Resolution no. 33/2022**

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**TITLE:** Healing Forum for Residential School Survivors/Veterans/Thrivers

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**SUBJECT:** Justice

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**MOVED BY:** Kúkpi7 Judy Wilson, Neskonlith Indian Band, BC

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**SECONDED BY:** Chief Roberta Joseph, Trondék Hwëch'in, YT

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**DECISION** Carried by consensus

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**WHEREAS:**

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

- i. Article 7 (2): Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including forcibly removing children of the group to another group.
- ii. Article 8 (1): Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.
- iii. 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;

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**33 – 2022**  
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- B.** The recent discovery of the remains of thousands of children who were forced to attend the former Indian Residential Schools across Canada in unmarked graves has provided evidence of state-sanctioned genocide, human rights and humanitarian law violations and further proves an ongoing pattern of violence inflicted upon Indigenous peoples by the government of Canada and the churches through the Residential School system and colonial laws and policies.
- C.** Those that experienced and lived through the atrocities of the Residential School system, including Day Scholars and Day Students, endured the loss of culture and language and were subjected to emotional, spiritual, sexual, physical, and psychological abuse and other injustices that severely affected them and their families for generations – for which many have not been compensated or received reparations due to many survivors dying before the settlement agreements are approved by the courts, the settlement agreement deadlines, lack of public awareness on the settlements and arbitrary guidelines and dates that determine eligibility.
- D.** The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) estimates that 150,000 children were forced to attend Indian Residential Schools (IRS) nationwide, identifying that more than 4,100 children died at these facilities – although Survivors and families have maintained that number is much higher.
- E.** Some Residential School Survivors, including intergenerational survivors, prefer to be referred to by other terms, including “veterans” and “thrivers,” to better reflect their resiliency and agency, to better capture the respect and honour they deserve to be treated with, and to better reflect the calculated, violent cultural eradication and hostile forces they confronted and emerged from with their dignity and strength intact.
- F.** The ongoing recoveries of missing and unidentified Indigenous children at former Residential School sites have triggered and re-traumatized Residential School survivors, veterans and thrivers, including intergenerational survivors, and have highlighted and brought to public attention the immense trauma, violence, and abuse Indigenous peoples and communities continue to heal from with strength, courage, and resolve.
- G.** The need for healing supports is greater than ever before, yet existing services and resources for survivors/veterans/thrivers remain piecemeal, inadequate, and not widely available within communities. The lack of a coordinated approach to ensuring culturally appropriate healing services to all survivors has put an undue financial and social burden on First Nations, community-based organizations, families, and survivors to resource and offer their own healing spaces. Survivors are often forced to heal on their own, where services are

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not offered in a culturally safe manner, or there is a lack of understanding of their experiences. They deserve unfettered access and funding for every possible healing support, including cultural, mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical.

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

1. Call upon the federal and provincial governments to fully resource and provide capacity support for First Nations-led and hosted healing forums in alignment with their obligations under the UN Declaration and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.
2. Direct the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to advocate for and seek appropriate resources to engage in or carry out activities to support hosting national and regional forums for residential school and day school survivors/veterans/thrivers, intergenerational survivors, and their invited guests and supports, to come together and identify their collective needs for healing.
3. Direct the AFN to call on like-minded organizations, including the Indian Residential School Survivors Society, to help plan and host the national and regional forums to ensure that a "trauma informed" approach is used.
4. Direct the AFN to approach the Government of Canada to develop a National Recognition Pin for Survivors of the Indian Residential School System to honour their bravery, courage, and strength, designed in collaboration with Survivors, Indian Residential School organizations, and the arts community.
5. Direct the AFN to advocate for a National honouring ceremony to bring Survivors to the forefront to receive these National Recognition Pin for Survivors, if they so wish

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