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## Assembly of First Nations

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## Assemblée des Premières Nations

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**SPECIAL CHIEFS ASSEMBLY**  
**DECEMBER 3 – 5, 2019, OTTAWA, ON**

**Resolution no. 93/2019**

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<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>National Gathering on Substance Use with Emphasis on Opioids and Crystal Methamphetamine</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Health
<b>MOVED BY:</b>	Margaret Swan, proxy, Pinaymootang First Nation, MB
<b>SECONDED BY:</b>	Chief Franklin Paibomsai (Shining Turtle), Whitefish River First Nation, ON
<b>DECISION</b>	Carried by Consensus

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**WHEREAS:**

- A. *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) states:*
- i. Article 15 (2): States shall take effective measures, in consultation and cooperation with the Indigenous Peoples concerned, to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among Indigenous Peoples and all other segments of society.
  - ii. Article 18: Indigenous Peoples have the right to participate in decision-making 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.
  - 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 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.

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- v. Article 24 (1): Indigenous Peoples have the right to their traditional medicines and to maintain their health practices, including the conservation of their vital medicinal plants, animals and minerals. Indigenous individuals also have the right to access, without any discrimination, to all social and health services.
  - vi. 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 to achieving progressively the full realization of this right.
- B.** The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action states:
- i. Call to Action (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. Call 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.
- C.** First Nations recognize the severe opioid, crystal methamphetamine and other substances addiction problem that has been steadily growing within our nations, and acknowledge the devastating, ongoing impacts on First Nations citizens, health systems, Child and Family Services cases, policing, housing and justice.
- D.** First Nation-specific opioid, crystal methamphetamine and problematic substance use data and culturally appropriate treatment services are severely lacking within our nations.
- E.** On September 5, 2017 the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council (DOTC) declared a state of emergency to combat the growing concerns related to opioid and substance use. A four-point strategy for their respective seven-member First Nation is under development. This includes: education and prevention strategies; treatment options; advocacy and support and enforcement.
- F.** The crisis of opioid, crystal methamphetamine and other problematic substance use is not limited to the DOTC region but is an emerging crisis affecting all First Nations without a coordinated and comprehensive response.
- G.** *The Health Status of and Access to Healthcare by Registered First Nations Peoples in Manitoba* Report states that First Nation people were twice as likely to be prescribed a single dose of opioids as other Manitobans. Other opioid specific statistics in the report include:
- i. twice as many opioid prescriptions were dispensed to First Nations people than all other Manitobans;

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- ii. First Nations were 4 times more likely to have multiple prescriptions than all other Manitobans; and
  - iii. the rates of drug and substance use disorder among First Nations are 3 times higher than the rates among all other Manitobans.
- H. The prevalence of problematic substance use is a direct result of colonization, systemic racism and multi-generational trauma. To reduce the incidence of prescription and illicit drug use faced by First Nations people - community-driven, multi-levelled government support and holistic approaches must be the focus of preceding efforts.
- I. Manitoba First Nations have not been engaged in response planning or participatory in external government tables to address this crisis.

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

1. Direct the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to call-upon Indigenous Services Canada including the First Nations Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) to support a National Gathering on Opioid, Crystal Methamphetamine and Other Substance Use hosted and administered by the centrally located First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba. The National Gathering will elevate existing culturally responsive, land-based treatment services that have been developed by First Nations and others will have the opportunity to replicate this work in their respective nations.
2. Direct the AFN to advocate and learn how to secure resources for all First Nations- including Manitoba First Nations, to develop their own respective Opioid and Crystal Methamphetamine Strategy implementing recommendations brought forward from the national gathering.
3. Direct the AFN to advocate and secure community-based human and financial resources for the implementation of each nations' strategy.

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