

## 2012:02 ABORIGINAL YOUTH SUICIDE AND "LIFE PROMOTION"

**Whereas 1** suicide is the highest cause of death among Aboriginal youth: the rate of suicide being 5 to 7 times higher than among non-Aboriginal youth, and the rate of suicide for Inuit youth higher than that of First Nations and Metis youth; and

**Whereas 2** the reasons for the high suicide rate among First Nations youth include prior abuse in residential schools, broken treaties over many years, the inhumane living conditions on many reserves and the lack of economic and jurisdictional opportunities for First Nations to design and provide health and education programs; and

**Whereas 3** the *Trilateral First Nations Health Senior Officials Committee* has identified mental health and addictions as one of four priority areas, and

**Whereas 4** as of 2011 improvements in the living conditions of many Aboriginal peoples have not yet been achieved; and

**Whereas 5** First Nations Youth in Ontario have recommended changing the name and focus of the National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy to a "*Life Promotion Strategy*", to support life and engage youth in active healthy lifestyles; therefore be it

**Resolved 1** that the National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy that there be a comprehensive national strategy to prevent suicide among Aboriginal youth; and be it further

**Resolved 2** that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to:

- a. *fund a National Suicide Prevention Strategy, developed in conjunction with the Aboriginal community, such as those First Nations persons represented in the Trilateral First Nations Health Senior Officials Committee;*
- b. *provide funding for mental health and addiction services in Aboriginal communities, developed in cooperation with groups, such as the Trilateral First Nations Health Senior Officials Committee, with the goal of preventing youth suicide among Aboriginal youth;*
- c. *increase funding for well built, mold-free housing, schools and recreational facilities that are large enough to prevent overcrowding, to ensure that youth have the opportunity to develop good physical and mental health;*
- d. *ensure a supply of clean safe drinking water;*
- e. *provide training and employment opportunities; and*
- f. *support strong Aboriginal youth mental health by having them participate in the development of initiatives such as a Life Promotion Strategy, which not only increases their will to live but also helps them promote good mental health among their peers.*