

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

STATEMENT

December 3, 2019

First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) statement on the suicide crisis afflicting the Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation

Coast Salish Traditional Territory/Vancouver: The First Nations Leadership Council expresses our profound sorrow over the state of crisis declared by the Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation after a series of suicides and suicide attempts involving children and teens devastated the Northern Saskatchewan community. Our hearts go out to all of the families and loved ones impacted by this terrible crisis.

The FNLC joins Makwa Sahgaiehcan Chief Ronald Misuing in his call for the federal government to implement a long-term suicide prevention strategy; for too long has Canada neglected the welfare of First Nation youth and erected barriers to culturally competent and accessible mental health services in Canada.

Indigenous leaders across the nation have continually spoken out about how insufficient mental health services and a lack of funding from the government have contributed to a national Indigenous youth suicide crisis. The crisis has become so prevalent and destructive that it now accounts for more than a third of all deaths amongst Indigenous youth. Suicide for First Nations youth across Canada is also five to six times higher than non-Indigenous youth.

The alarming statistics and unacceptable rates of suicide have long been tied to the mental health inequities and intergenerational trauma that stem from historical and current discriminatory policies and frameworks, including the Indian Residential School System.

Our children and youth are precious and deserve to know they are loved and have unimpeded access to the supports and services they need for their mental and physical wellbeing. The FNLC will hold Canada to its commitment to work with Indigenous people across the country to halt the suicide crisis, including providing the suicide assessment and prevention training, resources, and services desperately needed by communities.

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The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).



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Where to get help:

[Canada Suicide Prevention Service](http://www.crisisservicescanada.ca/): 1-833-456-4566 (phone) | 45645 (text) | <http://www.crisisservicescanada.ca/> (chat)

In Quebec (French): [Association québécoise de prévention du suicide](http://www.association-quebecoise-de-prevention-du-suicide.ca/): 1-866-APPELLE (1-866-277-3553)

Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 (phone), Live Chat counselling at www.kidshelpphone.ca