
Assembly of First Nations

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Assemblée des Premières Nations

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**SPECIAL CHIEFS ASSEMBLY
DECEMBER 4, 5, AND 6, 2018, OTTAWA, ON**

Resolution no. 58/2018

TITLE: First Nations Response to Chronic Wasting Disease

SUBJECT: Environment, Health

MOVED BY: Chief Craig Makinaw, Ermineskin First Nation, AB

SECONDED BY: Chief Byron Louis, Okanagan Indian Band, BC

DECISION: Carried by Consensus

WHEREAS:

A. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states:

- i. Article 18: Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in 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.
- ii. Article 19: States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative and administrative measures that affect them.
- iii. 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.
- iv. Article 29 (1). Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programs for indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.

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PERRY BELLEGARDE, NATIONAL CHIEF

58-2018

Page 1 of 3

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- B.** Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) affects ungulates, such as deer, moose, elk and caribou, in a manner similar to Mad Cow Disease. It is an infectious disease that is always fatal and can remain present in soil for years. There is no known cure or treatment. The disease has been confirmed in ungulate populations in 24 American states and 3 Canadian provinces where it continues to spread. Transfer of CWD via plants has been demonstrated.
- C.** First Nations have a greater reliance on ungulates for food, social, and ceremonial purposes than the average Canadian, and will be greatly impacted by changes in wildlife populations.
- D.** Current provincial/territorial recommendations regarding CWD include the mandatory testing of carcasses prior to consumption in areas with known presence of CWD and the restriction of the movement of carcasses across provincial/territorial and international boundaries.
- E.** Trade and transport of harvested animals across provincial, territorial, and international borders is an everyday exercise of Treaty and Aboriginal rights.
- F.** International trade restrictions on Canadian agricultural products have already been established due to the impacts CWD might have on food supply chains.
- G.** New scientific evidence indicates that consuming infected deer, elk, moose, or caribou meat can potentially transmit CWD to humans. While no human cases have been reported to date, it is highly recommended that all harvested animals in affected areas be submitted for testing. The World Health Organization and Health Canada recommends that animals testing positive for CWD not be consumed or used for any purpose.
- H.** Only one percent of wildlife samples sent to the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre for testing come from First Nations even though wildlife-human health interactions are the largest potential source of disease transfer.
- I.** First Nations' involvement in the development of regulations and policies surrounding CWD have been largely non-existent. Communications tools to inform First Nations about the presence of and threats from CWD do not exist. There is a severe lack of access to testing for CWD by First Nations hunters.
- J.** As directed by Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Resolutions 70/2010, *First Nations-Controlled Awareness, Training and Surveillance Programs for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)* and Resolution 13/2017, *Chronic Wasting Disease*, the AFN Health and Environment Sectors have initiated work on this issue. Advocacy efforts to date have focused on outreach to multiple federal departments. Outreach has resulted in the federal government's recognition for the need of broader consultation with First Nations and the need to review federal efforts regarding CWD.
- K.** The World Health Organization, the World Trade Organization, World Organization for Animal Health and Food and Agriculture Organization require vigilance and transparency in detecting, identifying, reporting and containing CWD.

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

1. Direct the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to work collaboratively with all concerned First Nations, regional representative bodies, non-government organizations, industry, federal, provincial and territorial governments to:
 - a. advocate for the development of funding programs for First Nations to develop, maintain, and strengthen their own conservation, surveillance, wildlife health, and human health programs
 - b. promote on-going research to better understand the risks associated with the potential transmission to humans from the consumption of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) infected meat
2. Direct the AFN to work with the Government of Canada to develop the National Wildlife Disease Strategy.
3. Direct the AFN Environment and Health Sectors to seek membership through the Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment and the Chiefs Committee on Health to establish a First Nations CWD working group with the mandate to:
 - a. develop a position paper outlining First Nations' concerns and recommend responses or solutions to dealing with the spread of CWD and the potential impacts it will have
 - b. develop and advocate for First Nations-specific communication tools and workshops to raise awareness about CWD
4. Direct the AFN to call on the relevant federal ministers and departments to provide the necessary funding to support the capacity of the AFN and First Nations to support a CWD working group and associated work products.
5. Direct the AFN to investigate advocacy opportunities regarding international standard setting through the World Health Organization, the World Organization for Animal Health, and the Food and Agriculture Organization as well as the United Nations mechanisms relating to rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
6. Call on federal, provincial and territorial governments to take immediate steps to close all game farms in Canada, as a means of preventing the spread of CWD.

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