



# NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

## The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #MSP-15-011

### **TITLE: Creating an Annual National American Indian and Alaska Native Hope for Life Day (Suicide Prevention Awareness Day)**

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**WHEREAS**, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

**WHEREAS**, Native communities experience higher rates of suicide compared to all other racial and ethnic groups in the United States of America, with suicide being the 8<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death for American Indians and Alaska Natives across all ages; and

**WHEREAS**, for Native youth ages 10 to 24, suicide is the second leading cause of death; and the Native youth suicide rate is 2.5 times higher than the overall national average, making these rates the highest across all ethnic and racial groups; and

**WHEREAS**, NCAI recognizes that historical disenfranchisement through genocide and institutional racism has resulted in American Indians and Alaska Natives experiencing poorer health and socioeconomic outcomes; these social determinants of health intersect to create a situation in which the general and mental health of Indian communities needlessly suffer; and

**WHEREAS**, the aforementioned histories of trauma have resulted in increased risk factors for suicide such as cultural disconnection, alienation, and pressure to assimilate, which all contribute to higher rates of suicide among American Indians and Alaska Natives; and

**WHEREAS**, it is imperative that we address suicide in Indian Country especially now as clusters of suicide are devastating our communities, as we are currently witnessing in several communities in Indian Country; and

**WHEREAS**, suicide is a preventable public health issue and research has demonstrated that strengthening protective factors is potentially more important than reducing risk factors to address suicide risk among Native youth; and

**WHEREAS**, given that suicide disproportionately affects American Indians and Native youth in particular, a suicide awareness day targeting Native communities would help to increase public awareness, promote the will to live and support current prevention and education efforts; and

**WHEREAS**, having an annual national American Indian and Alaska Native Suicide Awareness Day would be an opportunity to focus on Native youth specifically, help bridge generational gaps within Native communities, foster community partnerships, bolster national, regional and community-level efforts to prevent suicide in Indian Country and promote the will to live; and

**WHEREAS**, supporting the leadership efforts of our youth and community advocates, celebrating culture and traditional values, and cultivating resilience and community strengths, will create a pathway towards reducing suicide in Indian communities.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the NCAI requests a Presidential Proclamation to declare an annual national American Indian and Alaska Native Hope for Life Day (Suicide Prevention Awareness Day) to be held each year during the month of September; and

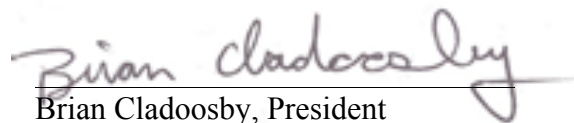
**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the NCAI does hereby encourage collaboration with federal agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Indian Health Service (IHS), the Bureau of Indian Education and the Department of Education, and national Indian and non-Indian organizations, and others to support this effort; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NCAI work with other national Indian organizations to launch the AI/AN Hope for Life Day (Suicide Prevention Awareness Day) toolkit to assist community leaders; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

#### CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2015 Midyear Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the St. Paul River Centre, St. Paul, MN, June 28 to July 1, 2015, with a quorum present.

  
Brian Cladoosby, President

**ATTEST:**

  
Aaron Payment, Recording Secretary