TITLE: Condemnation of Human Biomedical Experimentation in Indigenous Communities and Residential Schools

SUBJECT: Health, Indian Residential Schools, Reconciliation

MOVED BY: Cliff Atleo, Proxy, Ehattesaht First Nation, BC

SECONDED BY: Ken Watts, Proxy, Tseshaht First Nation, BC

DECISION: Carried by Consensus

WHEREAS:

A. The recently published historical research article by Ian Mosby, *Administering Colonial Science: Nutrition Research and Human Biomedical Experimentation in Aboriginal Communities and Residential Schools, 1942–1952*, revealed that Indigenous communities and Indigenous children in residential schools were historically used as subjects in various “nutritional experiments” by some of Canada’s leading nutritional experts at the time, in cooperation with the Canadian government.

B. According to Mosby’s research, these disturbing experiments involved at least 1,300 Indigenous children. Government tests began in 1942 in a number of remote Indigenous communities in northern Manitoba. Following this, the initiative spread across the country. In 1947, research continued on at least 1,000 malnourished Indigenous children in at least six residential schools in Port Alberni, British Columbia; Kenora, Ontario; Schubenacadie, Nova Scotia, and Lethbridge, Alberta.

C. In his research, Mosby identified that Paulette Regan, the director of research for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, has forcefully argued real truth and reconciliation can only occur when settlers genuinely begin to understand and take responsibility for the legacy of systematic violence and oppression that characterized the residential school system and Indigenous-settler relations in Canada more generally.

D. These experiments, as described in Mosby’s research, are one example of a larger institutionalized and dehumanizing colonialist racial ideology which has plagued Canada’s policies towards Indigenous peoples.

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E. The Crown's historic attitude towards Indigenous peoples, which persists in more subtle forms today, is evidenced in the June 2008 apology issued by Prime Minister Harper in the House of Commons to survivors of Indian residential schools in BC and across Canada (the "Apology"). Although this Apology was an acknowledgement of the historic wrongs, it is important to note that it was only agreed-to after protracted litigation and appeals to the Supreme Court of Canada throughout which the Canadian government denied it had any responsibilities to the survivors.

F. In particular, the Apology fully acknowledges that “two primary objectives of the Residential Schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, ‘to kill the Indian in the child’.”

G. The Apology included a commitment by Parliament and all of Canada to join Indigenous peoples on a shared journey toward healing and reconciliation. There is mounting frustration across the country with the lack of tangible action and lack of sincere commitment on the part of the Canadian Government to work in real partnership with our peoples and governments. To date, in the spirit and intent of the Apology, there is an outstanding commitment for all governments and all Canadians to commit to reconciliation.

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

1. Condemn the action of the federal government for condoning, allowing and being involved in these deeply disturbing and shocking experiments involving Indigenous children.

2. Confirm that these experiments reveal Crown conduct reflecting a pattern of genocide against Indigenous peoples.

3. Will not accept the Apology as catch-all recognition for all federal policy past, present and on-going which have and continue to negatively impact Indigenous peoples.

4. Consider it imperative that residential school survivors, Indigenous peoples, and all Canadians need to know the truth and call on the federal government to work immediately to provide Indian Residential Schools Survivors, First Nations and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission full and complete access to all records held by the federal government on experiments conducted on Indigenous communities and Indigenous children in residential schools and Indian Hospitals.

5. Call on the federal government to develop a system for fair and just restitution for those persons and communities who suffered emotional and physical effects as a result of these experiments and to examine the extent of the residual impacts and intergenerational trauma caused by these experiments.

6. Call on the federal and provincial governments to initiate a strategic plan created in partnership with Indigenous Peoples, to ensure information regarding scientific experimentation on Indigenous peoples is made public and is reflected in the public education curriculum so that all Canadians can understand and be aware of the whole truth behind these and other similar experiments involving our communities and children in residential schools.

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7. Call on the federal, provincial and territorial governments to recognize First Nation jurisdiction over research and data collection processes involving our people and communities and that the First Nation principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP), as defined in this forum, be respected and adhered to in the development of any future partnerships involving research.