BACKGROUNDER

COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS

- There have been more than 500 suicides across in NAN First Nations from 1986 to 2016. More than 70 were children aged 10-14; nearly 200 were youth aged 15-20.*

- A State of Emergency was declared by NAN Chiefs 1992 calling for crisis support, community-based programs and other resources to address an epidemic in suicide and suicide attempts.

- A report on suicide by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) identified four key contributors to suicide amongst Aboriginal Peoples: mental illnesses (depression), anxiety, schizophrenia and unresolved grief.

- The jury from a coroner’s inquest into the suicide death of 15-year-old Selena Sakanee from Neskantaga First Nation delivered 41 recommendations on suicide prevention for First Nations youth in 1999.

- In 2006, Nishnawbe Aski Nation developed a Mobile Crisis Unit Framework Proposal following a series of youth suicides and community emergencies to assist families and communities. The proposal was submitted to Health Canada but funding was denied.

- The 2009 inquest into the deaths of two young men who burned to death while in police custody in Kashechewan First Nation in 2006 resulted in 86 recommendations to improve community safety, the majority of which still have not been implemented.

- Nishnawbe Aski Nation Chiefs-in-Assembly declared a Prescription Drug Abuse State of Emergency in 2009 and developed four Strategic Directions for Action to address the increasing addiction and social unrest in NAN First Nations.


- Cat Lake First Nation declared a State of Emergency in 2012 due to widespread opioid addiction affecting 70% of community members as young as 11 years old.
Neskantaga First Nation declared a State of Emergency in 2013 after four suicides, 20 suicide attempts and seven other tragic deaths while crippled with prescription drug abuse, inadequate policing and no access to mental health and addictions treatment.

NAN has worked for years to address the growing crisis of suicide, especially among youth, and has led conferences, reports and community-based programming including:

- Community Response to Suicide: A Model for Caring and Sharing for our Young (1990) - The first NAN-wide conference to develop suicide prevention strategies.
- Taking Care of Our own Through Community Healing (1993) - Workshop to provide education on suicide prevention.

*According to statistics available to NAN. Does not include suicide attempts.*