

**HEALTH AND WELLNESS****OVERVIEW**

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Health Sector continues to advance and promote the First Nations Health Transformation Agenda (FNHTA). The FNHTA sets out 85 recommendations to federal, provincial and territorial governments. These cover a wide range of policy areas all aimed at stabilizing profoundly underfunded health programs, and increasing self-determination of First Nations health in keeping with inherent, Treaty and international rights.

In June 2018, further to finalizing an operational plan for the AFN Health Sector, the Chiefs Committee on Health members discussed potential regional planning processes that would assist in identification of regional health priorities to better prepare themselves for the new reality of First Nations Health as the transfer of First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) to Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) is finalized. Regions were provided funding to use for Regional Strategic Planning Processes to define their priorities in the areas of, but not limited to, FNIHB transformation, health transformation, and regional health priorities. Following an in-person report back session in February 2019, the AFN Health Sector will utilize this work to guide their work moving forward.

Other areas of work underway to support the implementation of the FNHTA includes, but is not limited to:

- Advancing the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework.
- Ongoing efforts by the AFN-FNIHB Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Joint Review.
- Developing an NIHB monitoring and evaluation plan to ensure the actions from the Joint Review are carried out and produce the desired outcomes.
- Continuing exploratory work on First Nations federal health legislation, NIHB Legislation and litigation.
- Enhancing communications with First Nations, government and partners.
- Promoting the AFN Health Partnerships Guide.
- The development of a new AFN Health Sector 4 Year Operational Plan.
- Sharing the AFN First Nations Opioid Strategy.
- Promoting midwifery and bringing birthing closer to home.

The AFN will continue advocacy efforts to improve First Nations health and well-being in areas such as public health, communicable disease control, chronic disease, family wellness, mental health, food security and cannabis by pushing for distinctions-based and culturally relevant approaches that are sustainably funded and driven by First Nations.

UPDATE

As the work on the AFN-First Nations and Inuit Health Branch's (FNIHB) Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Joint Review continues and comes closer to completion, it has been recognized that there is the need for First Nations to have ongoing input into NIHB and the work being completed by the Joint Review will be used to help inform the next stage of work required for health benefit transition and transformation as mandated by Resolutions 126/2016, *Ongoing Commitment for the Non-Insured Health Benefits Joint Review Process*, and 49/2017, *Non-Insured Health Benefits Equitable Access to Health Services*. To support this work, the AFN secured a contractor to develop an NIHB evaluation and monitoring framework to assess and monitor the outcomes and activities of the Joint Review and inform future work on transformative change. An update and dialogue session on the NIHB Joint Review and next steps was provided at the SCA in December 2018.

An Advisory Committee on Indigenous Women's Wellbeing has been formed by Indigenous Services Canada and First Nations Inuit Health Branch. The AFN has been invited

by the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister of FNIHB to join the committee. The objective of the committee is to provide high level guidance and direction on women's health and wellbeing, addressing such issues as Forced Sterilization, the Prevention of Child Apprehension, Social Determinants of Health. The Committee will be chaired by Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Valerie Gideon.

Budget 2018 included significant new investments in Indigenous health in the order of \$1.5 billion over five years starting in 2018–19, and \$149 million per year ongoing. Notable areas of investment include new dollars for Health Transformation (\$235 million), a critical extension of the Indian Residential School Resolution Health Support Program (\$248.6 million/3 years) and investments in addictions treatment centres and staff (\$200 million/5 years). Notably, Budget 2018 signaled that a number of FNIHB programs will be shifted into A-based funding including clinical client care, accreditation, eHealth infostructure, and the addictions treatment funding. The AFN will continue to seek details on budget implementation including regional allocations.

NEXT STEPS

A number of key next steps in advancing the AFN health agenda include:

- Finalizing and advancing the AFN-FNIHB shared work plan to support health transformation.
- Sharing exploratory work done on First Nations federal health legislation and associated work with AFN Executive Committee and the Chiefs Committee on Health. This will also include an update on the work being done on options relating to NIHB legislation and litigation. This

information will also be provided to First Nations to support their own work as they consider potential health legislation.

- In order to continue to work towards the conclusion of the AFN-FNIHB NIHB Joint Review, the AFN will convene meetings of the National Navigators Network, the Joint Review Steering Technical Working Group and Implementation Table in 2019. These meetings will focus on finalizing the reviews and approvals of the remaining benefit areas that will inform the next piece of work

ISSUE UPDATE

March 2019

to bring transformative changes in benefit delivery and governance, as well providing input into the development of the NIHB monitoring and evaluation framework.

- The Mental Wellness Committee met in January 2019 to draft, finalize the Terms of Reference, discuss regional activities, and provide input to the upcoming Mental Wellness forum.
- A Mental Wellness forum is in the planning stages to bring together Health Directors, mental wellness team representatives, and peoples with lived experience. The purpose of this forum is to share and gather information that will inform the work of the AFN's Mental Wellness file.
- In response to Resolution 91/2018, *Action for Experimentation Survivors*, and Resolution 13/2013, *Condemnation of Human Biomedical Experimentation in Indigenous Communities and Residential Schools*, research is being done to develop a preliminary report to inform next steps.
- Sharing the *First Nations Health Priorities to Reducing Problematic Opioid Use – Discussion Document: A First Nations Specific Opioid Strategy*.
- In response to Resolution 89/2018, *Response to the Ongoing Opioid and Methamphetamine Crisis*, work will begin to

expand on the AFN's existing Opioid Strategy to include a response to the methamphetamine crisis.

- The AFN Health and Environment Sectors continue to work together to address the growing concern of Chronic Wasting Disease through the development of a working group and through on-going communications activities.
- First Nations continue to carry the substantial burden of communicable diseases such as HIV/Hep C, tuberculosis, and sexually transmitted infections; efforts to reduce the impact on First Nations requires investments into primary and public health systems and simultaneous actions on the social determinants of health.
- Tuberculosis (TB) is most prominent in northern First Nations in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. In March 2019, the AFN and FNIHB will dialogue with First Nations leaders, health clinicians, and community-based representatives to elaborate a plan for a First Nations TB Elimination strategy.
- The AFN Health and Environment Sectors continue to work collaboratively to share the results of the First Nations Food and Environment Study with First Nations.

