



HEALTH SECTOR

What has the AFN's Health Sector worked on over the last quarter?

As part of its mandate to support First Nations' mental wellness, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Health Sector continued working on the Indian Residential School Resolution Health Support Program. This included contracting services for a document that coalesces recommendations from three key reports: the AFN's *Healing Beyond 2021*, the First Peoples Wellness Circle's *Comprehensive Needs Assessment*, and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation's *Survivor's Perspective*. The document would then be used to advocate for the continuation of the Residential School Resolution Health Support Program.

With its focus on improving First Nations' public health, the AFN's Health Sector, along with the AFN's Communications Department, has created and supported the development and dissemination of fact sheets related to COVID-19 for First Nations audiences. The fact sheets and other documents were produced for posting to the AFN's COVID-19 website and social media. Additionally, the Health Sector participates on calls with the Chiefs Committee on Health.

Acting as a liaison, the AFN continues to foster effective communication between Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Navigators and First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB), which has been an essential part of supporting client needs during this time. The AFN Health Sector has been working with FNIHB and partners to undergo document reviews including Oral Health, Continuum of Care, nominations for 2020 Nursing Excellence Awards, Nursing Now report, and the State of the World Nursing report. There is ongoing development of planning activities for the 7 Generations Continuum of Care, including a shared discussion paper on developing the Continuum. The Sector will continue to support Nursing Now Global and Canada activities from a COVID-19 perspective.

The AFN Health Sector also works with its regional partners and Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) on Digital Health policy and collaborative models through regular meetings and development of frameworks and recommendations. The First Nation Digital Health Advisory (FNDHA) meets frequently with partners and stakeholders and has convened meetings with Canada Health Infoway and other ISC stakeholders. The health sector continues to ensure proper engagement occurs with rights-holders around the potential transformation of the FNIHB. The Sector continues to advance the priorities within *Honouring Promises* and the First Nations Health Transformation Agenda.

Other initiatives and action include:

- The First Nations Digital Health Advisory committee met to discuss increasing investments into Digital Health in First Nations communities. The committee is working on developing a Request-for-Proposals for a costing exercise to fund First Nations digital health.
- The AFN-FNIHB Joint Administrative Forum has continued their work on developing First Nations Health Indicators to support the revamping the Community Based Reporting Template.



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- The Mental Wellness Committee met to discuss regional suicide prevention and/or Life Promotion strategies. The information gathered would ultimately be used for a national strategy on Life Promotion/Suicide Prevention.
- The Health Sector continues to support the work of the Advisory Committee on Indigenous Women's Wellbeing and will continue to move forward in the co-development of distinctions-based Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) policy suggestions.
- The AFN Health Sector has also developed an analysis and presentations on the impacts of food insecurity in First Nations. A resource on First Nations food security has been developed and shared through social media and website.
- A proposal was submitted to ISC to host a national forum on Substance Misuse for May 26-28, but the forum is on hold until further notice due to COVID-19. Discussions with ISC colleagues are ongoing regarding how best to proceed hosting a national forum under a pandemic.

What is the Health Sector planning for the future?

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the government's workflow. However, the AFN has continued to advocate and push for positive progress on First Nations priorities and initiatives.

Along with partners, the AFN's Health Sector is in the process of developing a national strategy on Life Promotion/Suicide Prevention.

Currently, the NIHB Joint Review Steering Committee (JRSC) is working towards completing the Medical Transportation Benefit Review which will be followed by a review of general Administrative and Operational Irritants. Due to COVID-19, the committee is determining the best way to host the next JRSC meeting virtually.

The First Nations Digital Health Advisory committee will be issuing a Request-for-Proposals for a costing and analysis to fund First Nations digital health.

The Health Sector continues to promote cultural safety on behalf of the HCC nurses, and is working with the Legal Sector on a Cannabis Fact Sheet. The Sector is also in discussions with the Social Development Sector to collaborate on issues such as Midwifery, Child Welfare and Fathering in Early Childhood Development programs. The sector participates in weekly/bi-monthly meetings with the Food Security Indigenous Working Group, and in bi-monthly calls with the Food Security ISC program officer.

Under the leadership of National Chief Perry Bellegarde and the AFN's Executive Committee, the AFN's Health Sector is also finalizing partnership agreements with the Canadian Indigenous Nurses Association, Diabetes Canada, the National Collaborating Centre on Indigenous Health, the First Nations Health Managers Association, and the First Nations Information Governance Centre.

Upcoming Events

- **Date TBD** – National Forum on Substance Misuse – Location or format TBD



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- **Date TBD** - meeting with FNIHB Staff responsible for Long Term Care in First Nations - Location or format TBD