

**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.

As part of its continuing efforts to advance the regional health transformation initiatives, the AFN presented at the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Health Ministers' Meeting (HMM) in late June 2018. The AFN, along with our Inuit and Métis colleagues, presented on key priority areas on health in order to seek firm commitments to address these priorities. Specifically, the AFN sought commitment on mental wellness and Jordan's Principle implementation. For too long, the provinces and territories have denied their responsibility for ensuring access to services for First Nations. The HMM is an important opportunity to remind all jurisdictions that their Canada Health Transfer dollars include First Nations populations and that they continue to hold a responsibility to ensure First Nations have timely, equitable and culturally-safe care within provincial and territorial systems.

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

- Exploratory work on federal health legislation.
- Advancing the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework.
- Ongoing efforts by the AFN-First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (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.
- Exploratory work on NIHB Legislation and litigation (as directed by Resolution 126/2016 and 49/2017).
- 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.
- Launching the AFN Opioid Strategy.

The AFN will continue advocacy efforts to improve First Nations health and well-being in areas such as public health, communicable disease, 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

At the December 2017, Special Chiefs Assembly, the AFN received a mandate from the Chiefs in Assembly (Resolution 69/2017, *Exploring a*

Legislative Base for First Nations Health) to explore the concept of federal health legislation and develop tools to support First Nations in their own

ISSUE UPDATE

October 2018

deliberations about the potential for legislation. Proposed areas of inquiry include developing basic myth busting about legislation, a risk/benefit analysis, and a discussion around the relationship between Treaty rights and legislation. The AFN has secured legal experts to assist in this work and will share information with local First Nations to support their health transformation activities. The AFN hosted a dialogue session on exploring health legislation at the July AFN 2018 Annual General Assembly, and will share the outcome of that session with the AFN Executive Committee and the Chiefs Committee on Health.

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.

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 infrastructure, 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 the outcomes of the health dialogue session held at the July AFN 2018 Annual General Assembly 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.
- Launching the *First Nations Health Priorities to Reducing Problematic Opioid Use – Discussion Document: A First Nations Specific Opioid Strategy.*
- 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 throughout 2018 and early 2019. These meetings will focus on finalizing the reviews and approvals of the remaining benefit areas that will inform the next piece of work to bring transformative changes in benefit delivery and governance, as well providing input into the development of the NIHB monitoring and evaluation framework.
- An update on the Joint Review Steering Committee and next steps will be provided at the SCA in December 2018.