



## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

### OVERVIEW

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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.

*Honouring Promises*, the 2019 Federal Election Priorities for First Nations and Canada, is a comprehensive set of commitments aimed at the federal government towards building a stronger Canada by working with First Nations. To support the commitments outlined in *Honouring Promises*, the Chiefs Committee on Health convened a strategic planning meeting, including priority setting to better equip 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. A Strategic Plan final draft will be tabled for validation in by the CCoH in December 2019, after which it will be tabled with the AFN Executive Committee.

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.
- Continuing to explore First Nations federal health legislation, NIHB Legislation and litigation.
- Enhancing communications with First Nations, government and partners.
- Promoting the AFN Health Partnerships Guide.
- Implementing the AFN First Nations Opioid Strategy.
- Promoting midwifery and bringing birthing closer to home.
- Continuing to advocate for the recognition and implementation of culturally safe practices by practitioners delivering health and wellbeing services to First Nations.
- Researching the potential development of a *Seven Generations Continuum of Care for First Nations by First Nations* (Resolution 19/2019).
- Advancing the deliverables of the AFN and Heart and Stroke Foundation Partnership Protocol.
- Advocating for the enhancement of capacity in Primary Health Care.

The AFN will continue advocacy efforts to improve First Nations health and wellbeing 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

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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. 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 the most recent Resolution 74/2018 *Non-Insured Health Benefits: Ongoing Commitment to a Joint Process*, as well as existing 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 focus on assessing achievements, shortfalls and overall benefit improvement resulting from the Joint Review Process. The recent completion of the evaluation and monitoring framework allows the AFN to continue the conversation with FNIHB/NIHB on monitoring and evaluation of the NIHB program and inform future work. The framework can also provide support to communities and assist them on their journey to transformational change.

Budget 2019 allocated \$8.5 million over two years for long-term care engagement. Currently, there is an opportunity to re-allocate these funds to explore a more holistic approach to care. The structure of the investments should be accountable to First Nations and must move away from siloed and

short-term funding and towards sustainable and long-term funding that is responsive to and that is based on First Nations needs and priorities. Resolution 19/2019 mandates the AFN to explore the development of a Seven Generations Continuum of Care for First Nations by First Nations. Through work such as this, the AFN will continue to advocate for sustainable and flexible funding, and the development of a continuum that moves towards narratives that highlight First Nations strengths in the area of health and wellness.

The Mental Wellness Committee convened this fall in Wendake, Quebec, to discuss: Thunderbird Partnership Foundation's work on their Cannabis National Report and their current project on Substance Misuse on Opioids and Methamphetamines; the First Peoples Wellness Circle's Comprehensive Needs Assessment report; Indian Residential School Resolution Health Support Program (IRS RHSP); and a presentation from Save the Children, which is a global charity organization that is meant to help children reach their full-potential. One of the main action items for this meeting was to have two in-person meetings dedicated to the work on the IRS RHSP to discuss the transition of this program into a suite of services akin to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities (SSDIC) through Sport Canada, formed an Advisory Committee tasked to ensure funding was allocated in a way that best aligns with First Nations needs and priorities. The AFN participated on the Advisory Committee to review submissions for the delivery of sport through social

development projects in Indigenous communities. Specifically, proposals targeted at Improved Health; Improved Education; Reduced At-Risk Behaviour; and Improved Employability. A total of approximately \$3.6 million, was available for two years of funding. Approximately 200 applications were

received, some very promising First Nations-led initiatives were recommended for funding, and if strong favourable outcomes are observed, there is a possibility that these new funding streams will be subsequently renewed.

### NEXT STEPS

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

- Finalizing and advancing the Chiefs Committee on Health 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 response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action on Cultural Safety, AFN is working with the Chief Public Health Officer, Health Canada, Indigenous Services Canada, Canadian Indigenous Nurses Association, and the Health Standards Organization to provide input into the development of standards to address anti-Indigenous racism in the health care system
- The AFN is working with ISC to arrange a meeting between youth from 'We Matter' to discuss Life Promotion and issues related to improving awareness and access to eHealth/mental wellness services.
- 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 be more inclusive of substance use and include information and best practices to approach methamphetamine use.
- The AFN Health and Environment Sectors continue to work together to address the growing concern of Chronic Wasting Disease through the established working group mandated to through Resolutions 70/2010, First Nation-controlled Awareness, Training & Surveillance Program for Chronic Wasting Disease, 13/2017, Chronic Wasting Disease, and 58/2018: First Nations Response to Chronic Wasting Disease. As set out in these resolutions, the AFN will continue to work with concerned First Nations, organizations, and governments to develop and strengthen First Nations wildlife and human health programs, including those that deal with Chronic Wasting Disease.
- 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.
- The Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Joint Review Steering Committee (JRSC) is aiming to complete the final NIHB benefit review of Medical Transportation by March

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2020. Following the completion of all benefit area reviews the JRSC will conclude their process by engaging in a review of general NIHB Administrative and Operational Irritants which will aim to further streamline service delivery and increase program efficiencies. Moving forward, Resolution 74/2018 acknowledges the fundamental program short-comings and the need for continued meaningful engagement with the AFN, First Nations and NIHB that is responsive to the high rates of illness and diseases, changing health priorities, growing populations and on the ground realities.

- Continue to explore the development of a *Seven Generations Continuum of Care for*

*First Nations by First Nations* (Resolution 19/2019). Immediate next steps include supporting First Nations to define what a continuum of care means to First Nations and, an environmental scan to identify strengths among First Nations.

- Finalize the terms of reference, governance structure and shared priorities (joint workplan) as outlined in the AFN and Heart & Stroke Foundation Partnership Protocol.
- Continue to advocate for increased capacity in Primary Health Care through participation in initiatives that focus on building First Nations capacity, advocating for increased flexible and sustainable funding and, building meaningful partnerships.

