



First Nations  
Health Council

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Dear Respected BC First Nations Chiefs and Leaders,

The members of the Collaboration and Partnership Working Group of the First Nations Health Council (FNHC) are pleased to provide this update regarding plans for our annual meetings with federal and provincial Deputy Ministers, and plans for regional engagement on a 10-year Wellness Strategy.

We also want to take this opportunity to set the record straight on false rumours circulating about the work of the FNHC. It is rumoured that the FNHC and the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) are negotiating the transfer of the First Nations Child and Family Services program from the AANDC and MCFD to First Nations control – and thereby jeopardizing the decision of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal case on First Nations child welfare. Another rumour is that the FNHC is operating outside the mandate approved by BC Chiefs and Leaders. We assure you that these rumours are all wrong.

The FNHC and the FNHA are not negotiating the transfer of First Nations child and family services. While the FNHC and FNHA [share a vision and values](#) as partners in the [First Nations health governance structure](#), we operate independently of each other. BC First Nations gave us different mandates along with a directive to keep business and politics separate. The [FNHA mandate](#) and [work](#) focuses on the delivery of First Nations health programs and services, while the FNHC focuses on political advocacy and is accountable to BC First Nations. The [FNHC mandate](#) is outlined in detail within a series of Consensus Papers, and political and legal agreements endorsed by resolution of BC First Nations. The [work](#) of the FNHC is dedicated to fulfilling its powerful mandate to contribute to the shared vision of “Healthy, Self-Determining, and Vibrant BC First Nations Children, Families, and Communities.” The FNHC is interested in supporting BC First Nation Chiefs and Leaders in the areas of wellness determinants such as housing, justice, environment, and healthy child development. The FNHC has not been given a specific mandate to negotiate the transfer of First Nations child and family services.

We have been hard at work, implementing the direction BC First Nation Chiefs and Leaders provided within the [British Columbia Tripartite Framework Agreement on First Nations Health Governance](#) (BC Tripartite Framework Agreement). Within this agreement, the FNHC, federal and provincial government committed to establish tables to make progress on the social determinants of health. In the coming months, FNHC members will meet with federal Deputy Ministers to plan a productive annual meeting between FNHC and federal Deputy Ministers. FNHC members are making significant

## First Nations Health Council

progress with the planning for a productive annual meeting between FNHC and provincial Deputy Ministers.

At the BC First Nations Leadership and Health Directors Day at Gathering Wisdom for a Shared Journey VII, we began a dialogue about the need to improve the social determinants of health as part of a holistic [First Nations Perspective on Wellness](#). We also began a dialogue about a plan for a 10-year Wellness Strategy to achieve progress in these areas. Respected Elder Shane Pointe told us that the first job of a leader is to keep the children safe. To keep our children safe, leaders and warriors must look after our women. Chief Charlene Belleau and Irene Johnson gave Grand Chiefs, Tribal Chiefs, Hereditary and elected Chiefs a commitment stick to end violence against First Nations women and girls. We talked about the need to improve outcomes for all First Nations children and youth, from the strongest to our most vulnerable. Chiefs, Leaders and community members had their first opportunity to voice their fears, concerns, questions, and feedback in an open forum.

To support the work on healthy First Nations child and youth development, the FNHC has asked for help and expert advice from our best and most passionate champions of First Nations children and youth – [Cindy Blackstock](#) of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, and [Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond](#) of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth.

During the 2015 Fall Regional Caucus engagement sessions, the FNHC will continue a dialogue, and Chiefs and Leaders within each region will have the space to begin creating their own 10-year Regional Wellness Strategy. By working together within regions, Chiefs and Leaders can fully participate in community-driven and Nation-based decisions about improving policies, programs and services to better support children, youth, and families within communities. By working together within regions, Chiefs and Leaders can substantially improve wellness outcomes, and create a better future for First Nations children, families, and communities.

In order to do this important work, we need our Chiefs and leaders in each of the regions to develop a 10-year Wellness Strategy to give the FNHC direction on priorities and strategies for the FNHC meeting with federal and provincial Deputy Ministers. Should you have any additional comments or questions, please feel free to reach out to your regional FNHC Collaboration and Partnership Working Group representative listed below.

We also encourage you to visit the FNHC website at [www.fnhc.ca](http://www.fnhc.ca) for updates on our progress, the upcoming fall engagement sessions, and other latest news. Wishing you a safe and healthy summer, and we look forward to seeing you at the next regional caucus sessions.

Sincerely,

On behalf of the First Nations Health Council  
The FNHC Collaboration and Partnership Working Group

First Nations Health Council



Grand Chief Doug Kelly  
Fraser Region



Kukpi7 Wayne Christian  
Interior Region



Bev Lambert  
Northern Region



Ernest Armann  
Vancouver Coastal Region



Nick Chowdhury  
Vancouver Island Region

- cc:
- First Nations Health Council Members
  - Chiefs in the North, Interior, Fraser Salish, Vancouver Coastal and Vancouver Island
  - First Nations Summit
  - BC Assembly of First Nations
  - Union of BC Indian Chiefs
  - Honourable Bernard Valcourt, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
  - Honourable Rona Ambrose, Minister of Health
  - Colleen Swords, Deputy Minister, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
  - Simon Kennedy, Deputy Minister, Health Canada