March 13, 2020

COVID-19 Update and Spring 2020 Regional Caucuses

This week the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a pandemic, signaling a greater risk to widespread populations.

The First Nations Health Authority is advising all communities to avoid unnecessary travel and attendance at large public gatherings because of the risk of spreading the COVID-19 at the gathering.

In partnership, the First Nations Health Council, First Nations Health Authority and the First Nations Health Directors Association support the postponement of FNHA-hosted public events and will avoid sending staff to any large events held during this public health emergency. This decision means that the spring 2020 Regional Governance Caucus gatherings, Nation Assemblies, and sub-regional and Family related gatherings will be postponed. To the extent possible, we will be engaging via conference calls, webinars or via other technologies. Details on the revised approach to engagement and lateral kindness training this spring will be shared as soon as possible.

We understand people will be disappointed at the postponement of events and travel plans, but our common priority now is to slow the spread of the disease, contain the chain of transmission and protect our most vulnerable family and community members.

Messaging from the Public Health Agency of Canada, the BC Public Health Officer and the First Nations Health Authority have said that attending large gatherings increases the risk of exposure and therefore the chance of participants getting infected and carrying the virus home to their communities and passing it on to their more vulnerable friends and family; particularly, Elders, seniors and those with other health conditions.

Recommendations include social distancing, forgoing usual greetings (such as handshakes, hugging, kissing etc.), consideration of virtual gatherings and importantly staying home if you are experiencing any illness.

The First Nations BC Health Governance Structure is guided by our shared goal of building healthy communities. The First Nations Health Council, First Nations Health Authority and First Nations Health Directors Association engage with BC First Nations and communities to collect their wisdom, advice, feedback and guidance on their health and wellness priorities. While gathering together is critical to our work – we must be diligent in the face of emerging developments around the novel coronavirus COVID-19 situation.

If you have any questions about your health, you are encouraged to call *811.

For more information, please go to www.fnha.ca/coronavirus.

In Wellness,

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FNHA Board Chair

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