



First Nations  
Health Council

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**RE: Memorandum of Understanding on the Social Determinants of Health**

Dear Respected BC First Nation Chiefs and Leaders,

On behalf of the First Nations Health Council (FNHC), we are pleased to provide you with a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the FNHC and the Minister for Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR) on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.

Adding to the rich history and spirit of partnership with the Government of British Columbia (BC), this MOU sets out a pathway to partnership on the social determinants of health. This document embodies the shared commitment of the FNHC and the Government of BC to take the next step in our shared journey. We agreed to work jointly with BC First Nations to develop approaches that will address the social determinants of health.

When BC First Nations completed the transfer of federal health programs and funding to First Nations control in October 2013, the FNHC fulfilled a key commitment. At the beginning of 2014, the FNHC started a dialogue with First Nation leaders to determine how we would fulfill other commitments in the FNHC mandate. Over the past two years, we shared perspectives and we listened and learned from one another. During the last round of Regional Caucuses, Chiefs and Leaders considered priority areas for addressing the social determinants and supporting healthy child and family development. This MOU with the Government of BC is a direct reflection of those discussions. It is a starting point, not the destination. It is a shared commitment of the FNHC and the Government of BC to support an ongoing and regular process of engagement with BC First Nations that results in significant and culturally appropriate actions to address the social determinants of health.

As the FNHC take steps to implement this MOU with BC First Nations and the Government of BC, it is important to provide Chiefs with an overview of its contents. A copy of the MOU has been enclosed for your convenience.

The MOU with the Government of BC represents two significant steps forward. First, it reaffirms a shared commitment to work from a holistic perspective. It is an acknowledgement that coordinated and concerted action is required to address the related and underlying circumstances that determine individual and collective wellbeing. This encompasses the dimensions of physical and mental wellbeing, family income and food security, early learning and education, child safety, and connectedness to family, community, culture and language. Second, it serves as a shared commitment to support BC First Nations in building consensus, setting priorities and taking a staged approach to implementation. The social determinants of health are complex and require dialogue to set strategic direction for each area.

There will be many familiar elements to this MOU. At its core, this MOU represents a shared commitment of the FNHC and the Government of BC to support a process that is Community-Driven and Nation-Based. It serves as a shared commitment to use the Engagement and Approval Pathway endorsed by BC First Nations at Gathering Wisdom for a Shared Journey V as the process to engage BC First Nations at regional and provincial levels.

In the short-term, the MOU sets out a process of engagement, planning and priority setting. It means the FNHC will engage Chiefs at Regional Caucuses in spring and summer 2016 leading up to the Gathering Wisdom for a Shared Journey forum in fall 2016. Through this initial phase of engagement and planning, the FNHC envisions that First Nations will be able to set initial regional priorities related to the social determinants with a strong focus on supporting First Nation children, youth and families. For its part, the Government of BC has made a commitment to review the initial regional priorities identified by BC First Nations with the FNHC. The BC Ministers and FNHC will develop a list of priority actions for discussion and feedback by Chiefs. At the Gathering Wisdom for a Shared Journey forum, Chiefs will review, discuss and give feedback on these priority action items. The feedback provided will inform the Ministers and Deputy Ministers as they prepare respective Ministry service plans for the 2017-18 Fiscal Year. This is an important first step and represents a fundamentally new way of working with the Government of BC on issues of collective importance.

While this work proceeds, the FNHC and Government of BC will redouble our efforts to bring the Government of Canada to the table. We acknowledge that the Government of BC is only one part of the picture and that the Government of Canada must be a full partner in

this process. To this end, the MOU serves as a shared commitment to work jointly with BC First Nations and the Government of Canada in the design and development of a tripartite ten-year social determinants strategy that more fully describes actions to be taken to address the social determinants of health. We understand that the tripartite ten-year strategy will take time to develop and can only be developed once the FNHC engages Chiefs.

While these are important steps, the FNHC and Government of BC acknowledge that this is only a starting point. The constellations of lived realities that comprise the social determinants of health are complex and require many hands to do this work. In the coming weeks, the FNHC will sit down with Deputy Ministers for the Government of BC to discuss our approach over the next six months. In the months ahead, the FNHC will engage directly with Chiefs at Sub-Regional Caucuses, Nation Assemblies and Regional Caucuses. Through this dialogue, we will seek your guidance and leadership to design a strategic approach with clear milestones to guide the work.

We look forward to meeting with you soon.

In wellness,



Grand Chief Doug Kelly  
Chair



Warner Adam  
Deputy Chair