Our Engagement Story on the Social Determinants of Health and Wellness
2015-2018
We are *reclaiming* the wellness of our people.
We are reclaiming our wealth and prosperity.
We are reclaiming our traditional teachings and culture.
We are reclaiming our relationships to each other.
We are *reclaiming* our connection to the land.
Since 2015, the FNHC has engaged First Nations across BC on the social determinants of health - the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the broader set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. This summary report has been prepared by the FNHC based on the regional reports tabled at the Regional Caucuses this spring.

At every Regional Caucus, Nations were engaged in discussion on the concept of developing a ten-year strategy to transform the systems that serve First Nations children, youth and families. This has included discussions with federal and provincial partners that fund or deliver services to First Nations. Through this process, the FNHC has heard common concerns, challenges and opportunities. This summary report provides an overview of the discussions on the social determinants of health to date.
The social determinants of health are the things that influence the health of individuals, families and communities. It includes culture and language, self-determination, education, access to health services, income and social status, employment and working conditions, physical environment, genetics, gender, social support networks, early childhood development, personal health practices and coping skills, and social inclusion.

This is not a new concept for Indigenous people. We have always viewed health wholistically. Each Nation has stories, teachings and traditions that speak to the connection between the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions of wellbeing that are key to a healthy and balanced life. While there is diversity among First Nations in BC, we are united by the First Nations Perspective on Health and Wellness.
Our Engagement Story on the Social Determinants of Health and Wellness

Throughout discussions on the transfer of health services, many Chiefs, Health Directors and Elders spoke to the broader determinants of health and wellness – the cultural, political, economic and environmental forces that influence the health and wellness of children, families and communities. They talked about the traditional systems of care their Nations used for thousands of years to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the community. They talked about the need to revisit those traditions as we transform a sickness system into a wellness system. They talked about incorporating Indigenous models of health, healing and resiliency into this new wellness system. These discussions have been the guiding force for the dialogue we are having today on the broader determinants of health and wellness.
What we have heard

Since 2015, Regional Caucuses have been places for great discussion between First Nations, Canada, BC and the FNHC. Through this, we are able to reflect on current challenges and begin planning next steps in the process. The following summary was prepared by drawing out common themes from the discussions at Regional Caucuses from 2015-2018. The province-wide priorities represent big-picture themes that are common to all regions. The regional priorities reflect region-specific concerns, challenges and directions.

The discussions at Regional Caucuses were rich and in-depth. This summary offers a snapshot of the perspectives shared. The priorities we share below offer a chance to highlight similarities across regions, the opportunities for province-level strategies to address common challenges and, most importantly, the need to take these discussions back to each Nation to ensure strategies respond to community-specific needs.

This diagram on the social determinants of health is a visual description of what we have heard to date.
Our Health Governance Journey to Here

This timeline provides an overview of the history and major milestones that have brought us to the discussions on the social determinants of health today.
**Early 2015**
FNHC approves a 3-year Strategic Plan to guide the next phase of its mandate

**May 2015**
FNHC introduces idea of Wellness 2025 Strategy at Gathering Wisdom VII

**Mid-2015**
FNHA, BC Ministry of Health and BC Health Authorities sign Declaration of Commitment to Cultural Safety and Humility

**October 2015**
FNHC and FNLC sign Protocol on the Social Determinants of Health with a commitment to collaboration

**Late 2015**
FNHC discusses possible directions for social determinants of health strategy at Regional Caucuses

**October 2015**
Federal Liberals Win Majority

**February 2017**
FNHC and INAC sign MOU to engage First Nations on children, youth and family wellbeing

**March 2017**
BC Ministries introduce new strategies and investments in Ministry Service Plans as a result of Regional Caucuses

**Mid-2017**
INAC and ESDC engage First Nations through Regional Caucuses on children and family services, early learning and childcare, and poverty reduction

**June 2017**
BC NDP forms government through agreement with BC Greens

**July 2017**
Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould releases 10 principles to guide a new relationship with Indigenous peoples in Canada

**August 2017**
Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announces creation of Indigenous Services Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations to replace INAC

**Late-2017**
FNHC, Canada and BC continue engagement with First Nations on children and family services, early learning and childcare, and mental health

**Late-2017**
FNHC introduces Discussion Paper on Ten-Year Determinants of Health Strategy that introduces proposals and ideas for long-term change

**2015 - 2016 - 2017 - 2018**

**March 2016**
FNHC and Province of BC sign MOU to develop ten-year strategy to address the social determinants of health

**Mid-2016**
FNHC and BC Deputy Ministers meet to plan engagement with First Nations on the social determinants of health

**Late 2016**
Ministries responsible for children and family development, justice, public safety, education and advanced education engage First Nations through Regional Caucuses

**October 2016**
FNHC begins to meet with federal Deputy Ministers

**December 2016**
BC Deputy Ministers report back on what was heard at Gathering Wisdom VIII

**February 2018**
Prime Minister Justin Trudeau commits to recognition and implementation of rights legislation

**February 2018**
Province of BC commits to a new relationship and reconciliation with First Nations through Throne Speech and Budget

**Early-2018**
FNHC engages First Nations on proposal for tripartite partnership on mental health and wellness and direction of social determinants of health strategy
Province-Wide Priorities

Through Regional Caucuses, common priorities needed to address the broader determinants of health and wellness emerged across all regions. Together, these priorities are meant to support discussions on how Nations can work together and move towards improving health and wellness for all.

CULTURE AND LANGUAGE
First Nations build strength and identity from their cultures and languages. Nations across BC are calling for reliable and accessible funding to support culture and language revitalization. This includes the integration of culture and language in all community programming, building infrastructure for recreation, cultural and community activities, engaging Elders as knowledge keepers, making connections across all generations, and ensuring traditional wellness workers are part of all care planning and support for children and their families. As described by many communities, culture and language are at the core of individual, family and community wellness.

THE HEALTH OF THE LAND AND WATER
The health of the land is equal to the health of the people. First Nations connection to the land has been disrupted through dislocation, loss of access to traditional territories, and industry impacts. Nations across BC are asserting their inherent rights and responsibilities for the land and are incorporating land-based activities into health and wellness programming. More discussion with BC First Nations is needed to understand how the health governance structure can support community responses to environmental contamination and other environmental health concerns.

DECISION-MAKING AND SELF-DETERMINATION
First Nations communities have inherent knowledge to guide their children and families to live healthy lives. First Nations across BC are beginning to redesign their governance to support a more wholistic approach to health and wellness. Nations across BC are calling for renewed relationships and direct dialogue with Canada and BC where ‘no decision is made about us without us’. To address the broader determinants of health and wellness, federal and provincial governments need to be partners in community development where communities define their own service delivery structures that build on their cultural knowledge and strengths.

CHILDREN AND FAMILY SUPPORTS
First Nations have the inherent rights, responsibilities and strengths to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their children, youth and families. Nations are reclaiming their traditions and teachings for the care of their children. Nations across BC are calling for new funding for community-based prevention activities that strengthen family relations and ensure families have the tools and supports they need. This will require significant changes to the way the federal and provincial government work with First Nations.
ACCESS TO HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERVICES
As we take steps to address the broader determinants of health and wellness, we need to maintain a focus on health services. First Nations continue to face challenges in accessing necessary health services due to remote living locations, travel, inadequate numbers of healthcare providers, and discrimination. A key priority for all First Nations in BC is improving access to addictions treatment, trauma-specific services, and mental health services. Increased funding is needed to support the growth of community-based services with an increased focus on cultural safety training for professionals that work with communities.

POVERTY REDUCTION
For many First Nations in BC, poverty is a key issue that requires more attention. Poverty is linked to issues of housing, income, employment, food security, and mental health and wellness. In too many cases, poverty has been the reason for child apprehensions by MCFD. Nations across BC are calling for new approaches that will alleviate poverty. More discussion with BC First Nations is needed to understand how the work on health can support community-led actions on poverty.

HEALING TOGETHER THROUGH TRADITIONAL WELLNESS
First Nations people are incredibly strong and resilient. Nations across BC are calling for new resources to interrupt the intergenerational transmission of trauma with a focus on longer-term healing, community development, capacity building and culture and language revitalization. Throughout the Regional Caucuses, First Nations shared their stories of reclaiming and incorporating their traditional and cultural approaches into community programming.

RECOGNITION, RESPECT AND ACCOUNTABILITY
First Nations continue to affect change in the health system and there is growing awareness of cultural safety and humility. However, racism and discrimination are still pervasive and results in disrespectful treatment of First Nations people. Throughout the Regional Caucuses, First Nations shared their experiences with the health, justice and child welfare systems. In this new era of reconciliation, the federal and provincial government must recognize and respect the inherent rights of First Nations to be part of decisions about their health and wellness and for service providers to be held accountable for their actions. More discussion is required with BC First Nations about how accountability can be built into relationships between service providers and communities at the local level. In particular, this includes the RCMP, MCFD, CLBC, BC Health Authorities and BC School Districts.

NATION REBUILDING
BC First Nations have a historic opportunity to advance a new relationship with the federal and provincial government. Each Nation is on its own journey towards self-governance. The decision to pursue Nation rebuilding and a renewed Nation-to-Nation relationship with Canada is a decision that each Nation will make when they are ready. First Nations communities from across BC are calling for more resources to begin collaborating and planning together as Nations.
Northern Region

The following is a snapshot summary of the draft Northern Region Report shared at the Northern Caucus this spring:

**Common Themes**

**ACCESS TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERVICES**
To alleviate high operational costs and long wait times for Northern communities, Nations recommend creating equitable funding formulas and incentives to deliver services closer to their communities.

**EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING**
Northern Nations want to see more community members trained to fill positions in health and wellness service delivery.

**INCREASE INVESTMENT IN PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION**
Northern Nations are calling for more resources that focus on assessing needs, creating coordinated care plans, providing direct support to parents, addressing the root cause of child protection cases, and keeping children and youth connected to their family and community.

**INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS IN THE NORTH**
Northern Nations are calling for a new approach to infrastructure funding that is more responsive to community needs – this includes childcare centers, safe houses and shelters, recreation centres, transition houses, and treatment centers.

**ADDRESSING CHILD AND YOUTH TRAUMA**
Northern Nations are advocating for a child advocacy centre in the North and increased mental health and wellness supports for children and youth that are proactive and preventative.

**◆** Support First Nations in the Northwest to explore options for a Nation-based planning and decision-making structure

**◆** Support Nation-based planning, collaboration and capacity building around health and mental health and wellness service opportunities

**◆** Improve communications with First Nations in the North on the work of the FNHC

**◆** Strengthen engagement with other social sectors to support partnership and relationship building at the local level

**Reflections on Next Steps for the Northern Region**

- Support First Nations in the Northwest to explore options for a Nation-based planning and decision-making structure
- Improve communications with First Nations in the North on the work of the FNHC
- Support Nation-based planning, collaboration and capacity building around health and mental health and wellness service opportunities
- Strengthen engagement with other social sectors to support partnership and relationship building at the local level
The following is a snapshot summary of the draft Interior Region Report shared at the Interior Region Caucus in the spring:

Common Themes

**STRENGTHENING CULTURAL SAFETY ACROSS ALL SERVICES**
Interior Nations cited concerns about discrimination when accessing services and advocated for mandatory training for cultural safety and trauma-informed practice for all frontline workers.

**EMPOWERING CHILDREN AND YOUTH**
To empower their children to be champions of positive change, Interior Nations are calling for more resources for early learning and childcare, language and culture, child and youth mental health, leadership development, and children and youth involvement in decision-making.

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**
Interior Nations are calling for more discussion on solutions and issues related to food security and access to traditional foods and non-timber forest products on their territories.

**SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES**
Interior Nations are calling for more resources for community-based parenting programs and approaches that rebuild traditional family structures and focus on family wellbeing.

**EMERGENCY PLANNING AND SAFETY NEEDS**
Interior Nations are calling for more resources to ensure communities can respond to emergency events in a safe, coordinated and effective way.

**DECISION-MAKING**
Interior Nations have been clear that federal and provincial governments must build relationships directly with the Nations to ensure communities are full partners in decision-making and policy development.

Reflections on Next Steps for the Interior Region

- Support Nation-based planning on mental health and the broader determinants of health and wellness in a way that respects the readiness of each Nation. At the request of Nations, provide tools and resources to support these planning processes.
- Continue to build upon and strengthen the Nation-based structures and processes that First Nations in the Interior have established.
Vancouver Island Region

The following is a snapshot summary of the draft Vancouver Island Region Report shared at the Vancouver Island Regional Caucus this spring:

Common Themes

MAKE PREVENTION THE PRIORITY
Nations on Vancouver Island know the power of prevention and are calling for more resources for family wellness workers, community-based child advocates, culture and language programming, and approaches that address the root causes that contribute to children being taken into care.

FOCUS ON FAMILY WELLBEING
Nations on Vancouver Island are calling for greater collaboration among federal, provincial and First Nations agencies that provide services to children and families and a stronger focus on community-led approaches to prevention that build on the strengths and the traditional structures of families.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS
First Nations want to see a stronger focus on mental health and wellness services on Vancouver Island, including more resources for culturally-based counselling, trauma-specific services, suicide prevention for people of all ages, land-based healing, harm reduction approaches to addictions, and increased treatment centre capacity.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING
Nations on Vancouver Island are calling for a greater focus on relationship building with federal and provincial governments. This includes stronger protocols with federal, provincial and First Nations agencies that serve communities and larger discussions directly between the Nations and the federal and provincial governments on reconciliation.

Reflections on Next Steps for the Vancouver Island Region

- Support each of the Families (Nuu-chah-nulth, Coast Salish and Kwakwaka’wakw) to meet, plan and set priorities for the broader determinants of health and wellness. At the request of the Families, provide tools and resources to support these planning processes.

- Improve communications with First Nations on Vancouver Island on the work of the FNHC, including a process for FNHC members to engage directly with Chiefs and Councils within their Families

- Support a procedure to review and strengthen processes for regional engagement and decision-making, including support to review and renew the Regional Caucus Terms of Reference.
Fraser Salish Region

The following is a snapshot summary of the draft Fraser Salish Region Report shared at the Fraser Salish Regional Caucus this spring:

Common Themes

COLLABORATION TO SUPPORT CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING
First Nations in the Fraser Salish are calling for closer collaboration among federal, provincial and local agencies to meet the needs of children and their families, including assessments for children and youth, in-school mental health and wellness supports, family wellness workers, resources for care planning committees, and care coordination through case management.

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELLBEING
First Nations in the Fraser Salish are advocating for more capacity to address community safety concerns.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS
First Nations in the Fraser Salish are calling for increased accountability from agencies that provide services to their children, families and communities, including clear protocols with MCFD that set standards for information sharing, decision-making and dispute resolution.

INCREASED INVESTMENT IN PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION
First Nations in the Fraser Salish want to see family-focused, culturally based prevention approaches that address root causes that contribute to children being taken into care, including mental health, substance use, poverty and untreated trauma.

Reflections on Next Steps for the Fraser Salish Region

- Support opportunities to expand engagement on the broader determinants of health and wellness to include community members, families, and partners.
- Support opportunities for community capacity building and healing through discussions on Nation rebuilding.
The following is a snapshot summary of the draft Vancouver Coastal Region Report shared at the Vancouver Coastal Caucus this spring:

Common Themes

CHILDREN AND YOUTH WELLBEING
Nations in the Vancouver Coastal Region want to see a reinvestment in their children and are calling for more resources for early learning and childcare, culture and language, in-school health and wellness supports, mentorship and peer supports, and infrastructure that supports wraparound services for children and their families.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS, SUBSTANCE USE AND TRAUMA
Nations in the Vancouver Coastal Region are calling for flexible funding that supports community-based mental health and wellness approaches, including culturally based approaches to addictions treatment, resiliency based programs that promote healing, and approaches that interrupt the intergenerational transmission of trauma.

INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS
Nations in the Vancouver Coastal Region are calling for a new approach to infrastructure funding that is more responsive to community needs – this includes investments in higher bandwidth to improve telehealth options, safe houses and shelters that provide on-site counselling services, recreational and cultural centres, and treatment centre capacity.

Support opportunities for collaboration and planning among communities in each Sub-Region (Central Coast, South Coast and Southern St̓átəl′imx) on mental health and the broader determinants of health and wellness.

Create opportunities for community-to-community learning about best practices, including health and wellness planning, mental health and wellness services, and traditional wellness.

Support direct discussions with First Nations communities on the work of the FNHC.

Reflections on Next Steps for the Vancouver Coastal Region
Proposed Partnership on Mental Health and Wellness

Through discussions on the social determinants of health at Regional Caucuses, mental health and wellness emerged as a top priority. At the Regional Caucuses this spring, the FNHC engaged communities on a proposal to transform mental health and wellness services. The FNHC is advocating for a long-term funding commitment from Canada and BC to create a flexible funding envelope that BC First Nations can use for community-based mental health and wellness services.

First Nations across BC are developing strategies and solutions that interrupt the intergenerational transmission of trauma. In many cases, untreated trauma, mental health and substance use are the root causes and risk factors that contribute to the current situation in the child welfare and criminal justice systems, higher occurrences of family violence, and higher rates of chronic disease, depression and substance use disorders. The current crisis in the child welfare and criminal justice systems perpetuates pain and trauma for children and their families.

The FNHC is proposing a partnership with Canada and BC to facilitate a government-wide approach to prevention and mental health and wellness promotion. This new partnership includes:

- Secure a long-term funding commitment from Canada and BC for mental health and wellness
- Create a pool of federal and provincial funding that First Nations can use to plan, design and deliver community-based mental health and wellness services.
- Support an ongoing process of engagement in order to align new investments with the health plans and priorities of First Nations.
- Create new partnerships at regional and provincial levels to facilitate collaboration.

The key focus of this proposal is providing First Nations communities with flexible and reliable funding, free of unnecessary restrictions, to develop and deliver mental health and wellness services designed to address community-specific needs.
Role of the First Nations Health Council

When BC First Nations endorsed Consensus Paper 2011 and Resolution 2011-01, Chiefs called upon the FNHC to continue as a province-wide political and advocacy body with the mandate to:

- Provide political leadership for the implementation of the health plans
- Support First Nations to achieve their health and wellness priorities
- Build partnerships to make progress on the social determinants of health
- Ensure communication, transparency, cost-effectiveness and accountability of the FNHC to First Nations

In the health transfer process, the FNHC were builders of the health governance structure. In discussions on the social determinants of health, the FNHC are facilitators of change. Nations are the (re)builders. The role of the FNHC is to advocate for changes that advance the health and wellness priorities of First Nations.
Looking Forward

This summary report proposes a number of directions for further discussion on the social determinants of health. Through this process, we have heard common challenges, concerns and opportunities. We have heard that First Nations want to work wholistically and require flexible funding to design and deliver services in ways that work for them. We have heard that First Nations want to reduce silos, remove rules and restrictions on funding, and significantly simplify the process to access new federal and provincial funding for prevention. We have heard how the process of healing and rebuilding will take time and that more must be done to improve services today.

In this next phase of planning, the FNHC is proposing the following:

SUPPORT COMMUNITY-DRIVEN AND NATION-BASED PLANNING
- Support First Nations communities and Nations to develop, renew or redesign their health and wellness plans in ways that reflect their vision of health and wellness.

BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITY
- Create opportunities for First Nations to plan, design and deliver a full continuum of community-based mental health and wellness services through a new approach to federal and provincial funding for mental health and wellness.
- Explore innovative approaches that support the implementation of Nation-based health and wellness plans that address the broader determinants of health and wellness.
- As requested by First Nations, provide technical assistance and support for communities to design enhanced service delivery models for mental health and wellness.
- Create opportunities at Sub-Regional and Regional Caucuses for community-to-community learning and peer-to-peer networking.

FACILITATE COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP
- Advocate for new funding approaches that simplify funding and reporting structures and streamline the process for First Nations to access new federal and provincial funding for prevention activities.
- Advocate that the federal and provincial government align funding with the health plans and priorities of First Nations.
- Facilitate greater cross-government collaboration on health through meetings with federal and provincial Deputy Ministers as set out in the Framework Agreement (2011).