



First Nations
Health Council

First Nations Health Council and Indigenous and Northern Affairs Sign MOU on Root Causes

February 15, 2017

On February 14, 2017, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the First Nations Health Council (FNHC) and the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) to improve supports and increase investments for BC First Nations children, youth and families. The MOU will enable BC First Nations to address the root causes of the disproportionate rate of Indigenous children in care.

This achievement represents an important milestone in our work, which began in 2014. At that time the FNHC commenced meeting with BC Deputy Ministers to make progress on social determinants of health as per our mandate.

Significant progress was achieved a year ago when, on March 3, 2016, the Government of BC and the FNHC signed an MOU on the Social Determinants of Health. In September, the Premier announced \$2 million in funding to implement this MOU. We want to be absolutely clear: the FNHC is not spending health funding to make progress on the social determinants of health.

So what is this new agreement and why does it matter? In an era of reconciliation we have a willing government partner at the table ready to address historic wrongs. These wrongs contributed to conditions within our communities that have attacked the family unit. The purpose of this agreement is to create space for communities to engage in direct dialogue with INAC on funding, policy and programs to improve the way services for children and families are funded, designed and delivered. With the intent of keeping our families whole, the goal is to increase investment for community-based preventative services.

It is also important to talk about what this agreement is not. Importantly, the FNHC has not discussed the transfer of child and family services with the Government of Canada or the Province of BC. As per Directive 6, the FNHC is without prejudice to First Nations interests and would not enter into discussions on behalf of BC First Nations without clear direction from BC First Nations.

As decision makers, Chiefs and leaders have a responsibility for the safety of their children in their communities as a whole. We need their leadership to come together to provide a clear vision of change on how to break the cycle of collective trauma. By addressing the root causes of children going into care, we have an opportunity to work with our partners to make a substantive generational change.

1) FNHC INAC Memorandum of Understanding letter to BC First Nations

To seize this opportunity, we look forward to immediate engagement at Regional Caucus sessions this spring (May 2017). The dialogue will pick up where we left off at Gathering Wisdom for a Shared Journey VIII with a specific focus on early childhood development, identifying where investments are needed and agreeing on accountability measures. This is a dialogue that we know we can't have alone. The FNHC will continue to work with the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) as per the Protocol on the Social Determinants of Health (2015) as well as other First Nation organizations to ensure we bring our best thinking to the table.

In closing, the FNHC and INAC have agreed to find new funding to support the engagement process. This new funding stream will be used for engagement purposes only and will not take away from funding available to communities for health, children or families.

We hope you will join us in celebrating this significant achievement and look forward to engaging leadership in the coming months. If you have any questions at all, please contact your regional representative below.



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