



Backgrounder

FIRST NATIONS HEALTH PLAN AND FIRST NATIONS HEALTH PLAN MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

For Immediate Release:

November 27, 2006

On November 27, 2006, the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit and Union of BC Indian Chiefs (collectively referred to as the First Nations Leadership Council), Government of Canada and Province of British Columbia signed a First Nations Health Plan Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), and the Leadership Council and BC released their First Nations Health Plan (Health Plan). These two agreements are based on the signed tripartite *Transformative Change Accord* and the *BC First Nations Health Blueprint* and are designed to close the gaps in health outcomes that exist between First Nations and other British Columbians.

First Nations in British Columbia live an average of seven years less than other British Columbians, have a diabetes rate 40% higher than the rate of the general population, and have higher rates of youth suicide – these disparities are, in large part, a reflection of the lack of involvement of First Nations in decision-making regarding their own health care. Recognizing the authority of First Nations over the health of our peoples through direct participation in the design and delivery of health services in and for our communities is essential to closing the gap, and is a central theme of the MoU and Health Plan.

Some of the specific activities in the MoU and Health Plan to support the health and wellness objectives of BC First Nations, and encourage collaborative decision-making at all levels include:

- Support for local First Nation community health plans;
- Creation of an Aboriginal Health Plan for each provincial health authority that will allow for improved coordination between First Nation community health plans and plans of the health authorities;
- A tripartite process for health policy and program planning as well as the monitoring of health outcomes in First Nations communities;
- Development of curriculum and mandatory training sessions for cultural competency of health service providers;
- Coordination of efforts in chronic disease management, such as in diabetes, HIV/AIDS, cancer, and hepatitis C; and
- A spring 2007 Health Forum between First Nations, regional health authorities, health professionals and others to provide advice on the implementation of the MoU and the Health Plan.

There are a large number of other activities set out in the four key MoU and Plan areas (Governance, Relationships and Accountability; Health Promotion and Disease and Injury Prevention; Health Services; and Performance Tracking). These documents also commit the Parties to achieve specific targets, and measure and report on progress.

These agreements demonstrate the willingness of the parties to be proactive and work together in closing the gaps in health outcomes between First Nations and other British Columbians; our long-term success in closing the health gaps will require sustained political will, resourcing, and collaboration among all parties involved.

For copies of the MoU and Health Plan, please visit www.bcafn.ca; www.fns.bc.ca; www.ubcic.bc.ca.

- 30 -

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Regional Chief Shawn Atleo, BC Assembly of First Nations, (604) 220-5822

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Union of BC Indian Chiefs, (250) 490-5314

Colin Braker, First Nations Summit, (604) 926-9903 or (604) 328-4094