



News Release

BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS, FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT AND UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS WELCOME FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL COMMITMENTS TO SUPPORT THE HEALTH AND WELLNESS OBJECTIVES OF BC FIRST NATIONS

For Immediate Release:

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Today, the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit and Union of BC Indian Chiefs (collectively referred to as the First Nations Leadership Council) and federal and provincial governments signed a First Nations Health Plan Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The Leadership Council and Province of British Columbia also released a joint BC First Nations Health Plan (Health Plan). The purpose of these agreements is to close the gaps in health outcomes between First Nations and other British Columbians, through increasing collaboration and joint decision-making.

“These agreements are concrete deliverables under the *Transformative Change Accord*,” said Regional Chief Shawn Atleo of the BC Assembly of First Nations. “Through these two agreements, and the completion of implementation plans for other areas of the *Accord*, we will be able to deliver on tripartite commitments to close the socio-economic gap faced by First Nations in 10 years.”

A key theme of the MoU and Health Plan is the need for improved collaboration between First Nations and federal and provincial governments on health-related matters. Some specific activities include holding cultural competency training sessions for health service providers; creating an Aboriginal Health Plan for each provincial health authority that is closely coordinated with First Nation community health plans; and instituting a tripartite process for health policy and program planning.

“We are pleased that governments have recognized the rightful place of First Nations in the decision-making process,” said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. “First Nations must be involved in the design and delivery of health services that are intended to address the dire, desperate and pressing needs of our people and communities.”

“These agreements are an important first step in acknowledging the need for improved partnerships at local levels – our long-term success in closing the health gaps will require sustained political will, resourcing, and collaboration among all parties involved,” said Grand Chief Ed John of the First Nations Summit.

A Health Forum between First Nations, regional health authorities, health professionals and others will be held in spring 2007 to begin the work of implementing of the MoU and the Health Plan.

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

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