

## **Government of Canada, Government of British Columbia, and First Nations Health Council Reaffirm Commitment to Tripartite First Nations Health Plan**

### **News Release**

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For immediate release

**VICTORIA** - The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Federal Minister of Health, the Honourable Ida Chong, British Columbia's Minister of Healthy Living and Sport, and representatives of the British Columbia First Nations Health Council (FNHC) met today to receive an update on the progress of the BC Tripartite First Nations Health Plan, and to reaffirm their commitment to this agreement.

"This meeting today is an important step in moving forward. Working together, the Government of Canada, the Province of British Columbia and the First Nations Health Council will ensure the success of the BC Tripartite First Nations Health Plan," said Minister Aglukkaq. "Our goal is to enable First Nations to take the lead in designing and delivering healthcare for BC First Nations, thereby ensuring culturally-relevant and more effective health services that improve the health and well-being of BC First Nations."

Signed on June 11, 2007, the Tripartite First Nations Health Plan is intended to improve health services and enhance First Nations involvement in the delivery of health services and to help close the gaps in health status between First Nations people and other British Columbians. The Plan is already generating tangible and measureable changes that are positively impacting the health outcomes of BC First Nations in key areas such as mental health, e-health, and maternal and child health. First Nations are taking an active role in creating culturally appropriate health promotion initiatives.

The management of H1N1 for BC First Nations demonstrates how new approaches are generating enhanced outcomes. Since it was formed in July, a Tripartite H1N1 Health Partners Group co-chaired by two First Nations physicians, Dr. Evan Adams and Dr. Shannon Waters, has been proactively responding to the pandemic in British Columbia and is completing an Action Plan for remote and rural First Nations communities to address their unique needs.

"The Province is committed to the continued partnership with First Nations and the federal government to realize the goals of the Tripartite First Nations Health Plan in reducing the gap in health status between First Nations and other British Columbians," said Minister Chong. "This tripartite plan leads the way in Canada, and the relationships that exist because of it have enabled a coordinated and efficient response by partners to the H1N1 issue."

The three partners will also work together to create a new governance structure that will give First Nations control of health services for First Nations, and promote better integration and coordination of federally and provincially funded health services.

"H1N1 is a great concern for First Nations peoples. We must ensure that we continue working together to address any service gaps in order to help protect First Nations people as an outbreak occurs," said Grand Chief Ed John, First Nations Health Council, Interim Health Governance Committee Co-Chair. "This will require both governments to align their efforts in a manner that works with and supports First Nations communities."

"The prospect of a new governance structure that recognizes the role of First Nations in the governance of their own health services is a positive one. However, this will require adequate and sustained resourcing to ensure that the provision of First Nations health services are

effective and efficient," said Grand Chief Doug Kelly, First Nations Health Council, Interim Health Governance Committee Co-Chair.

"This inaugural meeting today signals a positive beginning in our collective commitment to ensure sustained political will and collaboration of all parties involved. We have many pressing issues in front of us, and our relationships must remain strong if we are to ensure improved health outcomes for First Nations," said Chief Lydia Hwitsum, First Nations Health Council Co-Chair. "We look forward to meeting frequently to further strengthen the implementation and success of this important plan."

Moving forward, all parties confirmed their intention to work together to meet the goal of an agreement on a new governance structure. They also committed to maintaining and enhancing their partnership in providing better health services to First Nations in British Columbia.

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**Media Enquiries:**

Josée Bellemare  
Office of the Honourable Leona Aglukkaq  
Federal Minister of Health  
(613) 957-0200

Jeff Rud  
BC Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport  
(250) 952-2387

Heather Squire  
First Nations Health Council  
(604) 787-4159