

**For Immediate Release**

**February 8, 2018**

## **\$20 Million to Support Community-Driven Solutions to Overdose Emergency**

**COAST SALISH TERRITORY** – Vancouver, B.C. – The Province of B.C. will provide the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) with \$20 million over three years to support First Nations communities and Indigenous Peoples to address the ongoing impacts of the overdose public health emergency.

The funding will be administered by FNHA and provided to frontline service providers and First Nations communities to support work already underway, and develop new community-driven approaches and solutions.

Funding includes \$4 million in 2017-18 to support activities falling within the four goal areas of the FNHA's *Framework for Action on Responding to the Overdose/Opioid Public Health Emergency for First Nations*: 1. Prevent people who overdose from dying; 2. Keep people safer when using; 3. Create an accessible range of treatment options; and 4. Support people on their healing journey.

The funding will support immediate initiatives including: expansion to naloxone training for First Nations communities; peer to peer engagement to support persons using substances with better health care access and stigma reduction; increased access to opioid agonist therapy in rural and remote communities; and telehealth services to increase access to culturally safe pharmacy services.

\$2.4 million of year one funding is supporting community-driven, Nation-based innovative and culturally relevant responses to the overdose public health emergency, both on- and off-reserve through FNHA Indigenous harm reduction grants. An open call for projects grants was issued in December 2017, which resulted in 183 applications. Out of those applications, fifty-five community projects have been approved for First Nations communities and urban service providers.

Successful projects are supporting a range of non-judgmental approaches and strategies to enhance the knowledge, skills, resources and supports for individuals, their families and communities to make informed decisions to be safer and healthier. Projects were assessed based on incorporation of harm reduction principles, involvement of people with lived experience, cultural relevance, and geographic equity.

The funded projects support the four goal areas and include a range of cultural and medical interventions and include back-to-land camps, development of Urban Aboriginal harm reduction services, enhancing client care for hard to reach populations, promoting utilization of local harm reduction services including safe injection sites, community-based educational campaigns and more.

In August 2017, the FNHA and provincial partners released preliminary data that showed overrepresentation of First Nations peoples in the overdose public health emergency in B.C. A subsequent patient journey mapping session held in Vancouver October 2017, illustrates that intergenerational trauma and racism continue to be barriers for First Nations accessing mental health and treatment services.

## Quotes:

### **Judy Darcy, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions**

“In my role as Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, I have heard from people about the heartbreaking toll that the overdose crisis is taking on First Nations communities throughout B.C. We know that these devastating losses are part of a much larger problem that has roots in colonization, dispossession of lands and resources, inter-generational trauma, racism and stigmatization. Together with the First Nations Health Authority, the funding announced today will help us to build a seamless and coordinated system of mental health and addictions services that support culturally-based treatment and recovery options for First Nations and Indigenous people.”

### **Grand Chief Doug Kelly, Chair - First Nations Health Council**

“Our people are deep in pain. The way forward to achieving mental wellness in our families and communities requires new approaches. This investment gives our communities and caregivers opportunities to design initiatives and services to help our citizens heal. Listen, learn and act is what our leaders and Elders have told us. I’m grateful that our partners are working with us to address and resolve the historical legacy of the residential schools and assimilation policies.”

### **Dr. Shannon McDonald, Acting Chief Medical Officer - First Nations Health Authority**

“These investments are supported by an evidence-base of findings that have shown First Nations peoples are overrepresented in the overdose public health emergency in B.C. Knowing this, we have come together as partners to target these funds where they are needed in rural and urban areas, in line with our priority areas of action. We all have a part to play in supporting our community members, family and friends to be well. In this emergency there is no one way to respond. These funds will be used in a variety of ways to meet people where they are at on their journey.”

## Background:

View a full list of funded harm reduction projects here: [www.fnha.ca/about/news-and-events/news/twenty-million-to-support-community-driven-solutions-to-overdose-emergency](http://www.fnha.ca/about/news-and-events/news/twenty-million-to-support-community-driven-solutions-to-overdose-emergency)

FNHA Overdose Information Web Portal: [www.fnha.ca/overdose](http://www.fnha.ca/overdose)

Province of B.C. Overdose Information: [www.gov.bc.ca/overdose](http://www.gov.bc.ca/overdose)

Patient Journey Mapping Report: <https://bcpsqc.ca/documents/2017/12/Journey-Mapping-Substance-Use-Treatment-Report.pdf>

## Media Contacts:

First Nations Health Authority  
604-831-4898  
[media@fnha.ca](mailto:media@fnha.ca)

Lori Cascaden  
Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions  
778-698-2892  
[lori.cascaden@gov.bc.ca](mailto:lori.cascaden@gov.bc.ca)