



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

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Communique

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For the Child Taken, for the Parent Left Behind

First Nations Health Authority Statement on Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report

Coast Salish Territory - As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) presented its final report yesterday, the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) acknowledges the strength and resilience of residential school survivors. It has been made clear by this historic report that the legacy of the residential school era and the intergenerational effects of these schools continue to affect the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health of First Nations and Aboriginal people.

"We support each of the 94 calls to action and commend the Government of Canada for committing to them. Renewal of the relationship between First Nations and Aboriginal people and the Government is necessary for change to happen in this country," said Lydia Hwitsum, Board Chair of the FNHA. "The FNHA is committed to supporting the process of reconciliation and looks forward to working with governments, communities and our partners in improving health outcomes for our people."

A review of Residential Survivor support services completed by the FNHA in 2014 recommends that FNHA: increase training and cultural competency for support workers and counsellors; increase efficiency of access to services and communications with clients on available services; and, strengthen relationships with the Indian Residential School Adjudication Secretariat. The FNHA will also look at the broader context of reconciliation and the desire to create a full continuum of care by leveraging available funds and services for mental wellness and healing.

Many of the recommendations of the TRC relate to much broader goals of reconciliation and will require sustained action from federal and provincial authorities and from Indigenous organizations with mandates in the areas of health, child welfare, education, justice, and so on.

The health recommendations of the report call for governments at all levels to work with First Nations to improve First Nations health and wellness outcomes. Importantly, the report recognizes and acknowledges that First Nations people continue to suffer the impacts of ongoing jurisdictional gaps. In this province, the British Columbia Ministry of Health has stepped up to the plate and committed to equal services for First Nations and Aboriginal people. The FNHA looks forward to seeing more of this in other provinces and territories.

FNHA fully supports the recommendation for all levels of government to provide appropriate cultural safety training for all public sector providers, preferably in partnership with the specific communities and Nations that they serve. Today, most health providers in BC have not yet completed cultural safety training, leaving the broad majority of healthcare interactions in the hands

of those untrained. Commitments made by health leadership to do better are a first step. Reconciliation—and cultural humility—needs to take place in every doctor's office, walk-in clinic and nursing station. This requires professionals trained to deliver culturally safe care.

While work in BC is underway to address the health recommendations of the report there is much more still to do. We have heard clearly from First Nations communities in BC that the healing is not done. These survivors became parents, and the intergenerational impacts of parents who grew up in parentless societies remain legacy issues that First Nations are focused on today. Appropriate supports for intergenerational counselling, and focus on early childhood development and community safety are needed to address this legacy and support family unity and wellness.

We applaud the TRC and the commissioners for undertaking this important work for residential school survivors, their children families and communities. The FNHA looks forward to playing a role in the reconciliation effort to support greater control and decision-making in the area of health by First Nations, for First Nations and with First Nations in British Columbia.

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