



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **Northern St'at'imc and Interior Health Forge New Health Partnership**

**ST'AT'IMC TERRITORY** – The six Northern St'at'imc communities; Xaxli'p, Xwisten, T'it'q'et, Tsal'alh, Ts'kw'aylaxw and Sekw'el'was, and Interior Health Authority have signed a Letter of Understanding (LOU); a relationship agreement that creates a new health partnership that will lead to better health outcomes for the Northern St'at'imc. This living document has a number of initiatives, milestones, and targets that will lead to closer collaboration, joint planning, cultural competency, a wellness approach to health services, and more.

This LOU is the seventh of seven agreements of its kind in the Interior Region of B.C. between Interior Health and First Nations to improve health outcomes of those who rely on Interior Health for their services. This mutually beneficial relationship will work towards shared responsibility, shared decision-making, and reduction of barriers to access health services within the St'at'imc Territory. Increased planning and participation of the St'at'imc in their health services along with a process for establishing, evaluating and reviewing the activities of the LOU will offer community-driven solutions to the health and well-being of the St'at'imc community members.

The St'at'imc Traditional Territory is 20,500 square kilometres and is home to 11 St'at'imc communities including Xwisten, Sekw'el'was, Tsal'alh, T'it'q'et, Xaxli'p, Ts'kw'aylaxw, Lil'wat, N'Quatqua, Samahquam, Skatin, and Xa'xtsa. Interior Health serves a large geographic area covering almost 216,000 square kilometres and includes 58 municipalities & 95 un-incorporated places, 55 First Nations communities and seven regional hospital districts.

**Chief Art Adolph, Xaxli'p, Northern St'at'imc Interior Health Governance Representative:** “The signing of the Letter of Understanding between Interior Health Authority and the Northern St'at'imc forges a new ongoing relationship that provides an innovative opportunity to improve health care to Aboriginal People by merging realms of traditional practices and medicines with modern medicine to create healthier individuals and communities.”

**Franny Alec - Health Director/CHR, T'it'q'et:** “This is an opportunity to work more closely with Interior Health Authority. Utilizing the Letter of Understanding will help both parties in strengthening our relationship providing First Nations an avenue to voice our concerns to the Health Authority with a more clearly defined process. We continue to view the Health Authority as the ones responsible for public health care, and want to continue building on the principles of the protocol agreement. Building on this relationship and partnership is important in order for change to happen.”

**Norman Embree – Board Chairman, Interior Health** – “Each Letter of Understanding that Interior Health signs with Aboriginal leaders is a significant and exciting event because it represents an important

commitment on both sides to work collaboratively toward enhancing health programs, services and delivery for First Nations people. Today, we celebrate the opportunity to work in partnership with the Northern St'at'imc Nation."

The LOU Signing Ceremony was attended by the LOU Signatories and Working Group Members, St'at'imc Elders, families and traditional singers. It was also attended by health service providers, and partners in health in the Northern St'at'imc Territory, as well as the First Nations Health Authority Regional Health Liaison, and the First Nations Health Council Interior Representative.

### **Media Contacts**

#### **Northern St'at'imc**

Sue Wilson Cheechoo, Northern St'at'imc Hub Coordinator

Phone: 250-256-7506 ext. 223

Email: [scheechoo@statimc.net](mailto:scheechoo@statimc.net)

#### **Interior Health Authority**

Brad Anderson, Director, Aboriginal Health, IHA

Phone: 250-851-7376

Email: [Bradley.anderson@interiorhealth.ca](mailto:Bradley.anderson@interiorhealth.ca)