



# Indian Residential Schools (IRS) Resolution and Health Support Program (RHSP)

First Nations Health Managers Association  
November 15, 2017



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The Assembly of First Nations



# AFN Health Mandate

- To protect, maintain, promote, support and advocate for First Nations inherent, Treaty, and international legal rights towards ensuring the (w)holistic health and the well-being of First Nations.
- This is achieved through policy analysis, communications, and most importantly, advocacy on behalf of, and supporting First Nations communities and individuals.
- A central goal of the AFN Health team is First Nations' control of the development and delivery of all health services and programs.





# Background

- The AFN continues to advocate for and support the development of comprehensive mental wellness programming for First Nations. A key component of this landscape has been the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) Resolution and Health Support Program (RHSP) which provides mental health supports to former IRS students and families.
- There is a possibility that Health Canada will sunset this program soon, although the demand for the program has not declined. Some First Nations see IRS RHSP as irreplaceable in meeting the healing needs of IRS survivors and families.
- First Nations have the right and responsibility to determine their own programming on health and wellness. Self-determination on health includes First Nations-led and developed, community-based, trauma-informed service delivery, grounded in culture programming that focuses on holistic healing from the trauma and intergenerational trauma of residential schools, health and wellbeing.



# Purpose of this Session



- In order to place IRS RHSP within the broader discussion of First Nations self-determination and systems transformation, the AFN is seeking guidance and input from First Nation Health Directors to identify and articulate ongoing and future mental wellness needs of those currently utilizing the RHSP program.
- In addition to needs, we would like to identify program gaps and any suggestions for improvement.
- It is also important to understand how the IRS RHSP fits within the current *First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework* (FNMWCF).



# Current Program



- The program's recognition of traditional helpers and knowledge keepers has been recognized as imperative for the healing journey. For instance, the use of culture to heal complex trauma and the intergenerational impacts is essential.
- In addition to healing, access to Elders for delivery of cultural supports has assisted survivors and families in reconnecting to their culture and traditional practices. We know that strong cultural identity is a key ingredient of health and wellness.



# Some issues identified



- In addition to limited resources, some important and continued issues include:
  - Current structure of the IRS RHSP program provides short term solutions as opposed to addressing core issues. Healing from past traumas takes a profound mental, physical and emotional toll, requiring support to work through trauma in a way that does not have a timeframe
  - The potential loss of trained workers as a result of the end of the IRS RHSP would have an enormous impact on First Nations communities.
  - Challenges with discharge planning and aftercare: community members need to know the supports in place to welcome their community member back into the community



# Questions for Discussion



Looking Forward:

- What are the ongoing needs of the IRS RHS program?
- How IRS RHSP can be better integrated with other mental health services and opportunities to better apply aftercare and case management?
- What would need to be in place of IRS RHSP if it was no longer available?

