



ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS BULLETIN ASSEMBLÉE DES PREMIÈRES NATIONS

473, RUE ALBERT STREET
9th FLOOR / 9^e ÉTAGE
OTTAWA ON K1R 5B4
(613) 241-6789 telephone / téléphone (613) 241-5808 fax / télécopieur

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AFN Supports Global Efforts to Close the Health Gap Between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples

(Ottawa, ON) – On March 24, *World TB Day*, Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo urged the federal government to work with First Nations to address overarching health needs in ways that will close the health gap between First Nations and other Canadians and pointed to Australia's *Close the Gap Day*, as a potential model for similar work in Canada.

“As First Nations work to address the inequities in health, health care and health services between First Nations and other Canadians, it's important to look at the overall factors in the health and safety of our peoples,” said AFN National Chief Shawn Atleo. “Australia's *Close the Gap* campaign is a good example of governments working in partnership with Indigenous peoples to address a wide range of immediate and long-term needs.”

Close the Gap Day is celebrated in Australia on March 24, marking the anniversary of a 2008 agreement between Indigenous peoples and the Government of Australia. Australia's *Close the Gap Agreement on Health* identifies \$1.6 billion over five years to reduce health inequities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia. It has also helped spark additional agreements in the areas of housing, early childhood development, Indigenous economic participation and remote service delivery.

March 24 is also International World TB Day, designed to build public awareness of the global threat of tuberculosis. Several million people die each year from the disease. While TB is more commonly associated with conditions found in developing countries, the Public Health Agency of Canada released figures in 2008 showing that national rates of tuberculosis among First Nations were 31 times higher than other people born in Canada.

“The high rate of tuberculosis in First Nation communities is a clear and stark illustration of the poor living conditions facing too many First Nation men, women and children. The fact we suffer this disease at a rate 31 times the Canadian average is shocking, but it is a direct result of things like overcrowded housing, poor nutrition, unsafe drinking water and a lack of access to health services,” said National Chief Atleo.

The AFN is continuing to identify opportunities and make recommendations for improved and equitable health care and health services for First Nations, particularly now that the renewal discussions for the 2004 Health Accord have begun. The current joint Health Accord is set to 2014.

The Assembly of First Nations is the national organization representing First Nations citizens in Canada.

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Contact information:

Don Kelly, Assembly of First Nations A/Communications Director
613-241-6789 ext. 334 or cell: 613-292-2787 or email dkelly@afn.ca

Jenna Young, Assembly of First Nations Communications Officer
613-241-6789, ext 401 or cell: 613-314-8157 or email jyoung@afn.ca

Alain Garon, Assembly of First Nations Bilingual Communications Officer 613-241-6789, ext 382 or cell: 613-2920857 or email agaron@afn.ca