



First Nations Health  
Directors Association

Sharing experience for community wellness

# Standards of Excellence

The historic transfer of First Nations health services to First Nations ownership and control here in BC was completed on October 1, 2013. First Nations Health Directors in BC now operate within a First Nations health system that is truly unique.

Many First Nations Health Directors in BC have expressed that they require a set of standards that reflects the realities of the First Nations health system here in BC – particularly the distinct roles and responsibilities that Health Directors in BC now have.

The FNHDA Standards of Excellence is a standardized list of proficiencies for First Nations Health Directors in BC. It was created using feedback that Health Directors gave directly to the FNHDA during the spring 2013 Regional Engagement Sessions. For new Health Directors, the Standards of Excellence will provide clarity to their overall role; for experienced Health Directors, the Standards will serve as a refresher list.

These Standards should be viewed as a positive set of inspirational proficiencies that Health Directors can strive toward. Because each community is in a different stage of their health journey, such realities need to be understood when determining how quickly each of these Standards can realistically be achieved. Every community's health team has different abilities, levels of resources, opportunities, and challenges – and as such, these Standards are meant to be seen as ideal aspirations for community health leads, rather than firm expectations.

The FNHDA Standards of Excellence inform:

- Standardized job description toolkit for the Health Director position,
- A future certification program for First Nations Health Directors in BC, and
- The FNHDA 2015-2018 Training Plan.



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# Standards of Excellence

# 1

## Standard of Excellence: **Grounding Work within Culture and Tradition**

A BC First Nations Health Director is someone who is respectful of diversity and recognizes that there are different cultural ways of being within First Nations communities in BC. A Health Director invests time to learn about and is aware of the culture of the community that they serve. They respect and acknowledge the unique cultural/spiritual teachings of the community. A Health Director is knowledgeable of First Nations and other approaches to health and wellness, and incorporates these into community health programs. Respecting cultural protocols and acknowledging a variety of knowledge systems, this person navigates sensitively, confidently and flexibly to meet the health needs entrusted to them by the community.

### **Directive supported:**

Directive #3: Improve Services.

Directive #6: Be Without Prejudice to First Nations Interests.

### **A Health Director:**

- Has knowledge and understanding of the cultural and spiritual protocols of the First Nations communities they serve, is willing to learn the local indigenous languages, and ensures that these values inform the creation of health programs and services
- Is knowledgeable of health opportunities specific to the community they are working with
- Is knowledgeable of historical factors and trauma — such as residential schools and other aspects of colonization — that are responsible for the community's previous and current health and wellness
- Is willing to expand their awareness by learning from community members who hold traditional cultural and spiritual knowledge, such as by proactively interacting with Elders, and ensures that such knowledge is incorporated into holistic health and wellness programs and services
- Understands and upholds the vision of community leadership
- Maintains good relationships with community members
- Incorporates cultural safety into community health programs and services



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## 2. Standard of Excellence: **Providing Health and Wellness Leadership for the Community**

A Health Director is an active leader in the provision of health and wellness services to the First Nations community that they serve. This person recognizes the diversity of First Nations communities in BC and is able to serve them thoughtfully according to their unique health priorities and needs. A Health Director plans for existing and emerging health needs by soliciting input from the community and other health professionals, and creates and implements Nation-based community health and wellness plans. With the aim of improving the health and wellness of the First Nations community that they serve, this person creates health programs, implements them with qualified staff, as well as monitors and evaluates their progress. A Health Director abides by the values of trust, respect, honour, honesty, humility, courage, and truth. They carry out their role responsibly.

### **Directive supported:**

Directive #1: Community-Driven, Nation-Based.

Directive #3: Improve Services.

### **A Health Director:**

- Promotes community health, First Nations concepts of health and wellness, and healthy ways of being
- Advocates for the health and wellness needs of the community
- Leads consultative processes regarding community health needs and opportunities, and identifies relevant community health priorities by involving community leadership and community members
- Maintains a knowledge of changing community health needs by regularly engaging with community members about their health and wellness
- Is deeply involved in health provision by ensuring the delivery of culturally-relevant health service and treatment to community members
- Has knowledge and understanding of the social determinants of health (health services, housing, food security, education, social safety network, etc.)
- Holds insight on health opportunities and challenges particular to the community they serve
- Coordinates intervention, directly or indirectly, in trauma and crisis situations
- Believes in maintaining a healthy lifestyle grounded in cultural tradition, including achieving a work/life balance and engaging in self-care, and promotes this to community members and health staff



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## 3. Standard of Excellence: **Providing Informed, Technical Advice**

A Health Director is a key contributor to the transformation of First Nations health and wellness services, and is an important part of the overall BC First Nations Health Governance Structure. A Health Director's technical advice ensures that this transformation is informed by community-based health and wellness knowledge, and they are often called upon to share their wisdom at the community, regional and provincial levels. This person provides technical advice regarding health policies and programs, thereby contributing to the transformation of BC First Nations health and wellness services under the principles of self-determination, decolonization and indigenization.

### **Directive supported:**

Directive #2: Increase First Nations Decision-Making and Control.

### **A Health Director:**

- Provides technical advice to First Nations leadership (Chief and Council, regional caucus, FNHDA, etc.) to improve health services and to promote self-determination
- Provides input into First Nations community strategic planning and visioning processes
- Embraces change and demonstrates flexibility
- Acts as a facilitator or as an advocate of change
- Understands the role that Health Directors play in transforming First Nations health and wellness services in BC
- Builds and maintains current knowledge of the First Nations health system in BC as well as the tripartite relationship between Health Canada, BC Ministry of Health and FNHA
- Builds and maintains knowledge of key First Nations Governance documents
- Builds and maintains knowledge of various services, structures, processes and regulations relating to First Nations health and wellness in BC
- Builds and maintains knowledge of the structure of health and wellness organizations and how health systems interact
- Builds and maintains knowledge of the health and wellness services and related resources offered by First Nations organizations as well as by federal and provincial governments, and knows how to interact with these organizations for maximum benefit



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## 4. Standard of Excellence: **Establishing and Maintaining Beneficial Partnerships**

A Health Director is a person who builds and nurtures relationships with health and wellness partners, and who can utilize these relationships as part of assisting their community to achieve its health and wellness goals. A Health Director creates a foundation for communicating, networking, and sharing knowledge. The Health Director can connect and communicate with partners, community members and colleagues in a respectful and collaborative manner. Through this open and skillful exchange of ideas, the Health Director is motivated to create improved health and wellness outcomes for the communities served.

### **Directive supported:**

Directive #4: Foster Meaningful Collaboration and Partnership.

Directive #6: Be Without Prejudice to First Nations Interests.

### **A Health Director:**

- Has the ability to foster significant internal and external relationships
- Proactively seeks to establish collaborative partnerships and sustainable relationships between First Nations in BC, health and wellness organizations, and government agencies to achieve the goal of improving health and wellness in BC First Nations communities
- Collaborates with neighbouring Health Directors, FNHDA Regional Representatives, FNHA Regional Offices, etc.
- Works with FNHDA, FNHA, FNHC, Regional Health Authorities, municipalities, etc., to build effective partnerships that will improve the health and wellness of the community they serve
- Facilitates communication with partners, particularly in terms of addressing community health and wellness opportunities and challenges
- Serves as a liaison, connector, and convener between the community and its health partners
- Has strong interpersonal skills and communicates effectively with people from diverse backgrounds
- Can communicate effectively with community members and diverse partners about health opportunities and challenges in an informed and knowledgeable manner
- Organizes and hosts community health events and engagements
- Engages in health promotion and awareness building of health services
- Has the ability to negotiate with and influence our health partners



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## 5. Standard of Excellence: **Providing Effective Health Administration**

A Health Director provides culturally-relevant health and wellness programs, as necessitated by the First Nations communities they serve. They also build and maintain knowledge of financial management skills, particularly accounting principles and financial terminology. This person creates a health and wellness budget that they adhere to (as best as they can considering their degree of budget control).

### **Directive supported:**

Directive #7: Function at a High Operational Standard.

Directive #5: Develop Human and Economic Capacity.

### **A Health Director:**

- Has the knowledge and ability to construct an achievable budget for a First Nation's health department and health centres
- Proactively seeks out diverse funding sources to sustain health and wellness programs, including grants and funding opportunities
- Manages the finances of health services and programs
- Efficiently utilizes the funding that is within their control
- Ensures accurate accounting reports and audits
- Plans, implements, and evaluates community health and wellness programs by involving community members
- Develops health and wellness policies for First Nations communities in BC, evaluates the effectiveness of such policies, and amends policies as needed
- Has the ability to access and apply research and innovation to community health and wellness policies/programs
- Has the ability to report on health programs to funders and community members



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## 6. Standard of Excellence: **Being a Supportive Manager and a Health Team Leader**

A Health Director is fully aware of the uniqueness of the communities they serve, and is responsible for hiring people of merit to fulfill these health and wellness needs in a proficient manner. A Health Director is invested in building up the health human resources capacity of the community and taps into the existing strengths and knowledge inherent in the communities to fill health positions as appropriate.

### **Directive supported:**

Directive #5: Develop Human and Economic Capacity.

### **A Health Director:**

- Builds an effective community health and wellness team by recruiting and retaining capable staff
- Manages and supervises personnel
- Provides support to staff in terms of training, coaching and mentoring as part of knowledge transfer and capacity building
- Encourages community health staff to have a personal self-care plan
- Ensures that health department staff have professional learning plans with challenging goals, and encourages staff to take the time and make the effort to achieve such goals
- Conducts regular performance reviews as part of staff development to assist them reaching their professional goals
- Acts as mentor and as a positive role model
- Engages in succession planning, ensuring that capable internal employees are given the skills and experience to potentially become Health Directors in the future
- Is the community health and wellness team's "go-to person"
- Demonstrates a healthy lifestyle grounded in cultural tradition to other health staff and community members, including achieving a work/life balance and engaging in self-care
- Performs administrative duties diligently
- Has the ability to effectively resolve conflicts
- Has the ability and willingness to delegate duties
- Fosters a co-operative working environment through team activities and professional incentives



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## 7 Standard of Excellence: **Participating Actively in Professional Development & Continuous Learning**

A Health Director is committed to building skills to effectively participate in the transformation of the First Nations health and wellness system in BC. This person has functional knowledge of human rights, labour law and legislation, and ensures that these are adhered to when working with health employees and community members. A Health Director embraces the use of technology such as computers, and uses information technology to benefit this role as a health and wellness policy contributor/planner/implementer and evaluator. This person is also interested in regularly updating their skills and knowledge, and is open to using new technologies to assist them in their role.

### **Directive supported:**

Directive #7: Function at a High Operational Standard.

### **A Health Director:**

- Creates a personal learning plan with challenging goals, and has the interest and time management skills to achieve such goals
- Utilizes current and relevant technology skills, such as word processing, spreadsheets, basic accounting software, and social media
- Has a knowledge of the principles behind accurate data-keeping, and how this affects health planning and reporting
- Is knowledgeable of legislation relating to health and other related areas
- Builds and maintains a knowledge of agreements/contracts and political protocols
- Has a knowledge of the legal framework within which First Nations health and wellness operates here in BC
- Builds and maintains a knowledge of on-/off-reserve jurisdiction and provincial law