



The time is now: A declaration for children and youth

VICTORIA, BC (December 5, 2005)—Over the past 2-1/2 days, we have been privileged to share with and learn from more than 160 delegates committed to improving the health of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and youth. The planning committee of Many Hands, One Dream—which includes representatives of Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada, Assembly of First Nations, Canadian Paediatric Society, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, Health Canada (First Nations and Inuit Health Branch), Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Métis National Council, National Aboriginal Health Organization, National Association of Friendship Centres, National Indian & Inuit Community Health Representatives Organizations, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada—is honoured that you have shared personal and deeply thoughtful perspectives, as well as innovative ideas for fulfilling our collective dreams for children and youth.

We have heard a clear willingness to continuing these conversations and moving forward together. You have also called for immediate action. The current reality is not acceptable. Our children and youth cannot wait any longer.

This, therefore, must be the first decision. We must decide not to accept the status quo anymore. With First Nations, Inuit and Métis community-decision making at the centre, each of us on the planning committee will be asking our organizations to adopt the following declaration:

We will raise a generation of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and youth who do not have to recover from their childhoods. It starts now, with all our strength, courage, wisdom and commitment.

If we are to achieve a fundamental shift in the health of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and youth, this must be our first decision. We encourage you to ask your organizations and communities to adopt this declaration as well.

With this as our goal, the possibilities for action are endless. We have heard literally hundreds of them during this gathering alone: political engagement, community engagement, reclaiming culture and heritage, empowering children and youth, just to name a few.

When you return to your organizations and communities to fulfill the commitments made here, we encourage you to share with us your successes, challenges and lessons learned along the way. The planning committee will support your efforts by creating opportunities for information-sharing, and by expanding this movement of people committed to the health of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and youth.

The planning committee of Many Hands, One Dream is committed to taking the key learnings from this unique gathering back to our organizations, asking them to formally acknowledge the work done here, and to making long-term, sustained change. We ask you to do the same.

www.manyhandsonedream.ca