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NEWS RELEASE

HISTORIC SIGNING TAKES PLACE DURING NATIONAL NURSING WEEK: VON ENTERS PARTNERSHIP WITH AFN TO ENSURE WELL BEING OF FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 8th, 2007 (Ottawa, ON) — At a ceremony this morning in Ottawa, Ms. Janice McCallum, Chair of the VON (Victorian Order of Nurses) Canada Board of Directors, Dr. Judith Shamian, President and CEO of VON Canada and National Chief Phil Fontaine of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) signed a Memorandum of Understanding that commits the two organizations to undertake joint efforts in the development of strategies and initiatives intended to advance and improve First Nations' health status.

"Partnerships in health care are fundamental to delivering high quality services," said National Chief Phil Fontaine. "The Assembly of First Nations is pleased to recognize the efforts made by the Victorian Order of Nurses to reach out to First Nations and support their improved access to home and continuing care.

"In 2005, VON highlighted the need for a comprehensive continuing care program in First Nations communities to be part of the First Ministers Meeting Accord," noted the National Chief. "We look forward to continuing our joint efforts to secure this important commitment."

The signing of this Memorandum of Understanding falls during National Nursing Week. Everyday VON nurses show tremendous commitment to the nursing profession and to meeting VON's shared mission of excellence and leadership in providing service to people in communities, including First Nations' communities, across Canada.

Both VON and the AFN believe that establishing relationships and networks to advance First Nations' health initiatives will provide greater assurances for success and relevancy to First Nations people and communities.

“Both VON and AFN were born out of the necessity to address the unmet needs of Canadians. This MOU will allow us to work more closely with the AFN to assess those needs and come up with feasible and concrete solutions,” said Dr. Shamian. “At VON, we are committed to working with the AFN and First Nations Peoples to explore ways that we can collaborate, with the intent of improving the health and wellness of First Nations Peoples. This partnership is a huge step towards achieving that goal.”

Representatives from VON, AFN, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada, National Indian & Inuit Community Health Representatives Organization and Health Canada were on hand to witness the signing.

VON and the AFN will use the MOU as an instrument in the collaborative and cooperative efforts towards mutually supported initiatives in the advancement and improvement of First Nations' health status in Canada.

VON is dedicated to being a leader in the delivery of innovative comprehensive health and social services and to influencing the development of health and social policy in Canada. We are a national health organization and registered charity offering a wide range of community health care solutions that meet the needs of Canadians from coast to coast. VON is committed to quality improvement and is accredited by the Canadian Council of Health Services Accreditation.

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