



## Tripartite First Nations Health Plan

February 1, 2012

### ***Information Bulletin: Tripartite First Nations Pertussis Working Group***

**Dear First Nations Community Members,**

As you may be aware, there is currently an outbreak of pertussis or 'whooping cough' in eastern Fraser Valley communities. Pertussis is very contagious and has the potential to spread quickly within B.C. First Nations communities and around the province.

The close community interaction and living situations among First Nations people may in some cases increase the risk of minor outbreaks turning into serious public health concerns. Important communal activities like family gatherings, attendance at community events and facilities (ie children's care facilities) can increase interactions and the possibility of spreading pertussis.

Pertussis causes severe coughing that can turn into severe illness and may last for months. It spreads easily through the air when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or laughs. Symptoms appear about 7 to 14 days after infection and can be spread easily during this time. Early symptoms are similar to a cold but the cough gets increasingly worse often ending with a "whoop" when breathing in.

There is a vaccine that protects against whooping cough which is given to children at 2, 4, 6, and 18 months, and again at school entry. There is a booster vaccine for people 7 years of age or older which is routinely given in Grade 9. Pertussis vaccine is not routinely provided to adults unless there is a pertussis outbreak. Your community health nurse will inform you if this is being recommended for your community.

The Tripartite First Nations Pertussis Working Group is very pleased to report that analysis of **pertussis immunization rates for one, two and six year olds residing on-reserve in BC for the latest year available (2010), is quite high at over 90%**. Immunization continues to be the best protection against getting sick from pertussis or passing it on to others.

This achievement speaks to the hard work of the many community health and public health nurses, community health staff, volunteers and community leaders that regularly ensure vaccination programs are delivered at high standards in B.C. First Nations communities. **You all deserve our thanks and congratulations.**

In certain First Nations communities, enhanced pertussis immunization is being recommended by Public Health Specialists. Making sure that babies and children are up to date for their routine immunizations is most important to protect them against this pertussis outbreak. Youth and adults whose last pertussis vaccine dose was more than 5 years ago are encouraged to receive a pertussis booster for protection. We are working closely with community nurses and health staff and will share the most up to date information with them about which communities are affected.

All communities are strongly encouraged to educate themselves on the facts of pertussis and to take regular precautionary measures such as careful hand washing, covering your cough, and staying at home when you are sick. Let's work together to protect and keep safe First Nations families and communities. A pertussis factsheet can be found attached to this document and online at:

[http://www.fnhc.ca/pdf/Pertussis\\_Tripartite\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_-\\_FIN.pdf](http://www.fnhc.ca/pdf/Pertussis_Tripartite_Fact_Sheet_-_FIN.pdf)

**We thank you for your continued support and commitment.  
Together we can build healthier First Nations communities.**

**Questions?** Please contact your local Community Health Nurse, health care worker, community health centre, or call Health Link B.C. at 8-1-1 with any questions you have related pertussis and vaccination clinics.

**For more information about pertussis, visit:**

<http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/kb/content/mini/hw65653.html#hw65655>

<http://www.bccdc.ca/dis-cond/a-z/w/WhoopingCough/overview/default.htm>



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