

The logo for Canada, featuring the word "Canada" in a serif font with a small Canadian flag to its right.The logo for British Columbia, featuring a stylized sun rising over mountains and the words "BRITISH COLUMBIA" in a sans-serif font.

NEWS
RELEASE
COMMUNIQUÉ

For Immediate Release
2011HLTH0083-001283
Oct. 13, 2011

Ministry of Health
Health Canada
First Nations Health Council

Partners sign historic First Nations health agreement

VANCOUVER – The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, federal Minister of Health, British Columbia Minister of Health Michael De Jong, the B.C. First Nations Health Council and the B.C. First Nations Health Society today signed a landmark legal agreement that will ensure B.C. First Nations have a major role in the planning and management of health services for First Nations through a new First Nations health governance structure.

“Today marks an important and historic milestone for the Harper government, B.C. First Nations and the Province of British Columbia,” said Minister Aglukkaq. “This will streamline administration, integrate the federally and provincially funded health services and allow health-care decisions to be made closer to home. We’re proud to partner with B.C. First Nations and the Province of British Columbia on this important initiative.”

The British Columbia Tripartite Framework Agreement on First Nation Health Governance paves the way for the federal government to transfer the planning, design, management and delivery of First Nations health programs to a new First Nations Health Authority over the next two years.

The First Nations Health Authority will incorporate First Nations’ cultural knowledge, beliefs, values and models of healing into the design and delivery of health programs that better meet the needs of First Nations communities.

“This agreement is the first of its kind in Canada and advances B.C.’s New Relationship commitments to close the gaps, including health, that separate First Nations people from other British Columbians,” said B.C. Health Minister Michael de Jong. “The relationships we’ve built between governments, First Nations and communities are the foundation for improving the health of First Nations communities that benefit all British Columbians.”

B.C. First Nations Chiefs overwhelmingly endorsed the agreement in May, moving another step toward assuming greater control over their health and wellness.

“B.C. First Nations are demonstrating incredible leadership,” said Grand Chief Doug Kelly, Chair of the First Nations Health Council. “We will be the first in Canada to take over provincewide health service delivery from the federal government and will work closely with the provincial health system to enable it to better meet First Nations health needs and priorities. Through this new health governance approach, we will see remarkable improvements in the health and well-being of First Nations people in B.C. within one generation, and contribute to the health services accessed by all British Columbians.”

“This agreement is a result of years of work by B.C. First Nations to bring forward a First Nation vision of health care,” said Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo. “We cannot be passive observers in our own lives and the lives of our families and communities – this agreement enables First Nations to take a step forward in taking back responsibility for our own lives and for our own communities and Nations.”

“It is deeply satisfying to see this agreement coming to fruition. This agreement means that First Nations will have a strong voice in identifying their health-care needs, and the power to address those needs as they see best,” said federal Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development John Duncan.

Today’s signing of the B.C. Tripartite Framework Agreement on First Nation Health Governance is a key milestone in the Tripartite First Nations Health Plan, which was signed in 2007 with the goal of improving the health and well-being of First Nations in B.C. and closing the gap in health between First Nations people and other British Columbians.

Learn More:

A copy of the full agreement is available at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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B.C. Tripartite Framework Agreement

The Framework Agreement on First Nation Health Governance is the conclusion of negotiations that began in 2006 between the federal government, the Province of British Columbia and B.C. First Nations, when they signed the First Nations Health Plan: Memorandum of Understanding.

The purpose of the framework agreement is to support better health for B.C. First Nations through a new governance structure and a new relationship among the three parties.

The new governance structure includes:

- First Nations Health Authority, to take on responsibility for the planning, management, delivery and funding of health programs currently provided for First Nations in B.C. through Health Canada.
- Tripartite Committee on First Nations Health, to co-ordinate and align planning and service delivery between the First Nations Health Authority, the B.C. health authorities, and the B.C. Ministry of Health.
- First Nations Health Directors Association, to represent health directors and managers working in B.C. First Nations communities and to be an advisory body in research, policy and program planning.
- First Nations Health Council, to support health priorities and objectives of B.C. First Nations and provide leadership for implementation of tripartite commitments.

Under the framework agreement, the Government of Canada agrees to transfer its programs and resources for First Nations health in B.C. to the First Nations Health Authority.

With the signing of the framework agreement, work will begin to complete sub-agreements on details of the transfer, such as human resources and information management systems.

The federal government will provide up to \$17 million to support B.C. First Nations in preparing for the transfer.

The federal transfer is planned to take place within two years, or later if necessary, to ensure a smooth transition. A transfer of federal health programs in 2013 would include the transfer of federal funding totaling approximately \$380 million per annum. This amount is based on federal expenditures for First Nations programs and services in British Columbia with an escalator to reflect expected population and cost increases.

The B.C. government has agreed to provide \$83.5 million as part of its commitments in the framework agreement.

B.C. health authorities will work with First Nations to better co-ordinate, plan and deliver an integrated health service that better meets the needs of First Nations.

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