



SUMMARY UPDATE ON THE VANCOUVER ISLAND HEALTH AUTHORITY'S ABORIGINAL HEALTH PLAN

September 15, 2008

Overview of the Aboriginal Health Plan

- The Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) Board of Directors approved the Aboriginal Health Plan on December 20, 2006. The Plan describes 30 initial Actions under three strategic themes:
 1. Building stronger relationships with First Nations and Aboriginal communities;
 2. Improving access and removing barriers to service; and
 3. Enhancing capacity of First Nations and VIHA itself to provide appropriate, effective, and culturally safe health services.

What is the status of VIHA's Aboriginal Health Plan?

Once the Aboriginal Health Plan was approved in December 2006, implementation activities commenced immediately. Examples of implementation activities include:

- Establishment of an Island-wide Aboriginal Health Council (AHC). The AHC provides strategic guidance to the relationship between the Aboriginal people and the Vancouver Island Health Authority. The next meeting of the AHC is scheduled to take place on September 24, 2008;
- Continued support of Working Groups throughout Vancouver Island. Working groups are comprised of First Nations and other Aboriginal representatives, VIHA officials/providers, and other stakeholders who meet to identify and resolve local and regional issues;
- Development of strategies to provide services in a more accessible way, e.g. Primary Health Care teams and integrated services;
- Building on existing relationships to develop curriculum that addresses Aboriginal peoples' health needs in a culturally safe environment; and
- Increasing the number of Aboriginal Nurse liaison positions in VIHA's hospitals.

Just as critical as the 30 initial Actions, the Aboriginal Health Plan also defines a new approach to the development and provision of health services for First Nations people and continues to support a dialogue between VIHA and First Nations people.

In the coming months, VIHA plans to engage First Nations and other Aboriginal groups to update its Aboriginal Health Plan. One of the goals of updating the Plan will be to enhance the consistency between the Tripartite First Nations Health Plan and VIHA's Aboriginal Health Plan.

How does VIHA's Aboriginal Health Plan align with the Tripartite First Nations Health Plan (TFNHP)?

The TFNHP states "Health services delivered by First Nations, when appropriate, will be effectively linked to and coordinated with provincially-funded services, such as those provided by the regional health authorities." Working within the three strategic themes identified in the Aboriginal health Plan – building stronger relationships, improving access, and enhancing capacity of First Nations - VIHA engages with First Nations to reduce the health discrepancy and improve the health of First Nations people. For example, on September 17th a number of VIHA Directors and Program Managers met with the Kwakiutl District Council – one of the major First Nations tribal organization on Vancouver Island – to identify new opportunities to work together, review successes and plans for areas that require more attention. It is anticipated that this meeting will be the first of a series of discussions between the KDC and VIHA.

How is success being measured?

VIHA draws on the seven performance indicators, identified in the bilateral *Transformative Change Accord: First Nations Health Plan*, to track progress on closing the gap in health status between First Nations people and other British Columbia citizens.

Consistent with the TFNHP, VIHA also measures success through new and improved management and service delivery relationships as evidenced through the development of Memorandums of Understanding that promote and support: protocols, proposals and research partners, development of policies and procedures, and improved access to information.

Progress is also being measured through the increase of VIHA's cultural competency to provide services in a manner that is safe and respectful of First Nations people.

What is working well with the Tripartite process?

All parties are highly motivated. Tripartite activities are taking place at the community, health service delivery level, and on an Island-wide basis. The VIHA Board of Directors is scheduled to receive a cultural orientation on the North Island on September 29th. VIHA staff are involved with a number of First Nations' Integration projects throughout the Island including the Cowichan Tribes Health Project, the Namgis' Building Healthier Communities, and the Nuuchaltnan Integration Project.

What are the areas where improvements are required?

The pace of tripartite relationship building is not as rapid as the parties would prefer but it is recognized that systemic change takes time. VIHA continues strive to ensure a consistent level of health care is provided to First Nations people regardless of where they live on Vancouver Island. A significant gap in the health status of people living in the Local Health Areas of Vancouver Island North, Vancouver Island West, and Alberni exists when compared to the population on the rest of Vancouver Island. This gap will be addressed, in part, through ongoing tripartite discussions.

NEXT STEPS:

- Continue implementation of VIHA's Aboriginal Health Plan;
- Continue engaging in tripartite activities at the local, health service delivery area, and on an island-wide basis; and
- Update VIHA's Aboriginal Health Plan with input from First Nations and other Aboriginal peoples.