

British Columbia First Nations Health Blueprint

Visions and Principles

Purpose

The British Columbia First Nations Health Blueprint is a strategic tool for use in the ongoing development of the First Nations health sector. It is expected that the document will provide the basis for a renewed dialogue with Canada and British Columbia, which will seek to increase the lifespan and improve the quality of life for our people, families and communities. The Blueprint will chart a path towards the reduction of disparities with other Canadians, through defining and strengthening the First Nations health sector and the concepts of self-determination, partnership and cultural values and practices.

Background on Format and Process

The British Columbia First Nations Health Blueprint will follow the *Template for Submissions* that has been prepared by the Assembly of First Nations in collaboration with the federal and provincial governments. The B.C. Blueprint will be “rolled up” into a national First Nations Blueprint by the A.F.N. On June 22, 2005, B.C. First Nations representatives will participate in a dialogue concerning the essential questions that are asked in the *Template*. The final Blueprint document will reflect this dialogue and other input gathered from the directions of First Nations leaders and the findings and recommendations of studies on First Nations health conducted at community, regional and national levels.

Vision

It is the vision of British Columbia’s First Nations that our people will be served by our own *distinct yet interdependent* health system, which ensures a full continuum of care for our people and their families and, that:

- Is founded on the holistic principles of our cultures and traditions and respects the integrity of our healing practices;
- Respects the rights of our people and our families to realize our full potential for healthy lives on our own lands or, wherever we may chose to live;
- Supports a quality of living that includes the right to clean air, clean water and food and healthy children;
- Facilitates shifts in the current health system from disease models of care to First Nations community development and wellness models;
- Recognizes the value of an empowered First Nations population that assumes responsibility for its own individual and collective well being;
- Establishes responsive First Nations health organizations, agencies and institutions that train, employ and promote our own people in the pursuit of community-defined goals and, are accountable to First Nations; and,

- Commits to viable relationships with Canada and British Columbia, which include shared accountability for attaining a First Nations health status that meets our own standards of wellness.

Principles

1. All health sector providers must respect that British Columbia's First Nations have a special relationship with the Crown as recognized in the Canadian Constitution and further defined by Treaties and self-government agreements. The fiduciary responsibility of the Crown to the health of First Nations people is central to this special relationship.
2. First Nations people must have universal and timely access to health services regardless of their economic status or place of residence.
3. All jurisdictions and their health sector providers must recognize that culture, including language and tradition, is essential to the growth of First Nations as independent, self-supporting people and, that all services to First Nations people, families and communities will be culturally competent in their design and delivery.
4. The network of First Nations managed and governed health service organizations represents a distinct and essential jurisdiction within the health system of British Columbia.
5. First Nations, Canada, British Columbia and its regional health authorities all have interests in the health of First Nations people. And, all of these jurisdictions have critical roles to play in achieving the desired vision for healthy First Nations. All will work with integrity to achieve efficiencies and optimal effectiveness through partnership, collaboration and co-operation at all levels.
6. British Columbia First Nations must fully participate in meaningful ways at all levels of the health sector, in the governance, decision-making, planning, delivery and evaluation of health services to our people.
7. Canada and British Columbia must work in partnership with First Nations in the development of public policy aimed at improving First Nations health through the eradication of poverty in our communities and amongst our people. This will include commitments to: quality education, employment and economic opportunity, suitable housing, appropriate policies to nurture and protect our families and children, safe working conditions, and the elimination of systemic barriers such as institutional racism.

June 21, 2005