

Inventory of Aboriginal Services, Issues and Initiatives in Vancouver

Health

Relevant Details

- For many complex reasons, including the historical loss of cultural and political institutions, colonialism, racism, and residential school experiences that have had multigenerational impacts, Aboriginal people continue to be challenged by the poorest health status among identified populations [in BC] (*BC Ministry of Health Website*).
- A shift to a sedentary lifestyle, drastic change to diet, and mass poverty has led to problems in areas such as diabetes, heart disease, and obesity.
- Generations of negative traumatic experiences have led to alcohol and drug use, mental health issues, and a skewed sense of sexuality.
- The Non-Insured Health Benefits Program is Health Canada's national, needs-based health benefit program that funds benefit claims for eligible First Nations and Inuit people (*Health Canada Website*).
- Improvements - The 2002 BC Provincial Health Officer's Report shows that there are some significant improvements in the health of Aboriginal people in BC. Example: for infant mortality, unintentional injuries, suicide and most other major causes of death, death rates are improving steadily, often at a rate of improvement that exceeds the provincial average.
- Vancouver - Life expectancy is between 9-13 years less, few mental health or addiction services, frequent distrust of non-Aboriginal services and health care providers - based on past experiences of discrimination, racism, lack of respect and inferior services (*Vancouver Community, Aboriginal Health Services 2005*).

Who's Involved?

Vancouver Native Health Society (449 East Hastings Street)

- Medical Clinic is open to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.
- DTES services include a walk-in clinic, dental clinic, early childhood development programs, diabetes prevention, HIV/AIDS program, Sheway, and dual diagnosis.
- Urban Aboriginal Community Kitchen Garden Project. Musqueam shares their garden plot at the UBC Farm with Aboriginal people living in East Van.

Aboriginal Wellness Program (255 East 12th Avenue)

- Programs and services offered by Vancouver Coastal Health's Aboriginal Services
- Satellite location in the Downtown Eastside.
- Programs vary to meet the needs of the community.

Aboriginal Patients Lodge - Luma Native Housing Society (1254 East 8th Avenue)

- Coordinates with patient advocates to support visiting patients.
- Accommodations for Aboriginal patients and their families while they are receiving medical treatment in Vancouver. Five units within a larger facility. Daily rental fee applies.

Indian Residential School Survivors Society (100 Park Royal South, West Vancouver)

- Many of the survivors of the Indian Residential Schools are now Elders.
- Support includes crisis counselling, court support, info and referrals, workshops, media, conferences, supports & conducts research, advocates for justice and healing

Healing Our Spirit BC Aboriginal HIV/Aids Society (2425 Quebec Street)

- Mandate is to prevent and reduce the spread of HIV and AIDS and provide care and support services to Aboriginal peoples infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.
- Services include education/prevention workshops and providing support to individuals living with HIV/AIDS and their families.

Redroad HIV/AIDS Network (100 Park Royal South, W. Vancouver)

- Brings together on and off reserve organizations and projects dealing with HIV/AIDS.
- Works to increase the network of those living with HIV/AIDS, the professionals working in the field and those who have an interest in addressing HIV/AIDS in their community.

Institute for Aboriginal Health (2194 Health Sciences Mall, UBC)

- Objectives are to assist health and human service faculties, schools and departments to develop courses and programs, laddering programs for high school students, host seminars, maintain a computer network of those working on Aboriginal health, and work with Aboriginal communities and agencies to help further community health education and research.

Aboriginal Women's Health at BC Women's Hospital & Health Centre

- First Nations Patient Advocate offers services to improve the quality of health care delivery to Aboriginal inpatients and outpatients through staff education and on-site patient support.
- Outreach program supports Aboriginal communities with education on women's health issues, cervical and breast cancer screening, nurse training, and assistance with workshops.
- Offers workshops and information for Aboriginal women, trains nurses and medical workers to be sensitive to the special needs of Aboriginal women, and to help support Aboriginal communities to become self-sufficient in meeting their women's health care needs.

BC Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (Victoria)

- Province-wide organization which offers a variety of support services and resources to help aboriginal people with disabilities, and others associated with the disabled.
- Includes advocacy, online resources, conferences, and a library.

Musqueam Health Department

- The Administrator interacts with government's agencies, medical professionals, and Band members on health service issues; identifies community health issues and develops programs to address them; identifies outside sources of funding and develops proposals.
- Health Program includes a Drug & Alcohol Counsellor, Health Promotion and Youth Worker.

Partnerships

- None

Committees

- None

Trends

- More research is being conducted by Aboriginal people in the health field.
- There is an increased emphasis on traditional medicines and foods.

Gaps

- Vancouver Native Health is the only Aboriginal specific health centre in Vancouver. Their location in the Downtown Eastside and the open door policy for non-Aboriginal people has lead to lower usage than what is truly needed.
- There are very few youth-focused health initiatives despite 60% of the Aboriginal population being under the age of 25.

Contact Information

Addresses, phone, fax, email, and website information for any of the organizations above can be found in the Contact Information section of this manual.