

**Questions and Answers for March 25, 2014**  
**Vancouver Island Regional Caucus/Partnership Accord Steering Committee**  
**Tigh Na Mara Resort, Parksville**

**How are First Nations involved in the planning for the new hospitals being built in Campbell River and Comox?**

- A Working Group comprised of First Nations representatives (i.e. Chiefs, health directors, Elders) has been formed to provide input into the design of the new hospitals in Campbell River and Comox. All Nations Healing Rooms are planned for both hospitals. As well, the North Island Hospitals Aboriginal Working Group has provided extremely valuable suggestions about the design of clinical space such as the labour and delivery rooms. Finally, the First Nations Health Authority, local First Nations, and Island Health are also in discussions about creating a Centre of Excellence for Aboriginal Maternal Health in Campbell River.

**What planning documents is the FNHA and Island Health using to direct their work?**

- The First Nations Health Authority and Island Health are drawing from the Vancouver Island interim Health and Wellness Plan, feedback received through the mental wellness forums and Island Health's Aboriginal Health Plan. As well, the input provided through our ongoing work with First Nations helps inform the work of the Partnership Accord Steering Committee.

**What is Island Health doing to provide services in a more culturally safe manner?**

- Island Health recognizes the importance of ensuring that everyone – including First Nations – feel welcome and respected when they receive services. Island Health's Aboriginal Health program is working to enhance Island Health's capacity to deliver services in a culturally safe manner. Part of this includes training that encourages staff to examine their attitudes, knowledge and skills about working with Aboriginal people. Island Health also recognizes the importance of working with local First Nations when undertaking this training.

**What are Island Health and the First Nations Health Authority doing to improve access to physicians?**

- The First Nations Health Authority and Island Health recognize the need to enhance First Nations peoples' access to primary care services. In the last couple of years, Island Health has been successful in securing General Practitioner Sessional Funding to support doctors to travel to First Nations communities to provide services.

- As well, Island health, local First Nations and the First Nations Health Authority have collaborated to submit proposals through the provincial NP4BC (“Nurse Practitioner for BC”) initiative.
- Finally, the First Nations Health Authority and Island Health developed a joint proposal to create a “teamlet”, or inter-disciplinary team, which would provide primary care services to First Nations people.

**In the North Island, (Port Hardy, Port McNeill, and Alert Bay) we occasionally receive public notices about the temporary closure of health care facilities. Why is this and what is Island Health doing to address this issue?**

- Occasionally, the emergency departments at the hospitals in Port Hardy and Port McNeill, and the health centre in Alert Bay have to temporarily close due to temporary physician or nursing shortages. We know this is not ideal for community residents and we regret any inconvenience that this causes. To address this, the Mount Waddington Health Stabilization Local Working Group has been formed to develop strategies to minimize the possibility of closures and enhance services.

**We’ve heard talk about a new facility being built in Mount Waddington. Can you tell us more about this?**

- The first phase of a new Primary Care Health Care Centre is being built in Port Hardy. This centre will include physician, nurse practitioners and other services.
- Island Health is moving toward a more integrated model of services that includes inter-disciplinary teams that work together in one building, creating better access to care.
- Phase two of the Primary Health care Centre will co-locate and fully integrate all the community programs in Mount Waddington to work closely with the physicians and NP’s. This will result in more coordinated care for patients. For more information, vie the news release at the following link:  
[http://www.viha.ca/about\\_viha/news/news\\_releases/NR\\_NI\\_PHCareCentre\\_April2014.htm](http://www.viha.ca/about_viha/news/news_releases/NR_NI_PHCareCentre_April2014.htm)

**Some First Nations people have had bad experiences at the Port Hardy Hospital. What is Island Health doing to ensure people feel respected and welcomed when they visit the Port Hardy Hospital?**

- Island Health is aware of the feedback First Nations people have recently given regarding the care received by some individuals at the Port Hardy Hospital. Island Health is extremely concerned about what we have heard and we take this matter seriously.
- Island Health has begun discussions with local First Nations and the First Nations Health Authority about how we can improve relationships and offer services in a more culturally safe manner. We are committed to address this issue and ensure

people feel welcome and respected when accessing services. This issue is a priority for Island Health and the First Nations Health Authority.

**There is lots of talk about planning in the Alberni / Clayoquot (West Coast). Can you tell me more about this planning?**

- Island Health has heard we need to better integrate and coordinate the services we offer. One area where Island Health is focusing its efforts to better coordinate care is in Alberni/Clayoquot. Two community planning meetings have been held so far. Island Health was very pleased to see representatives from Aboriginal partner organizations at these planning sessions. As well, Island Health met with the Nuu-chah-nulth Health Caucus on Feb 26 and is committed to addressing the important key points that we heard, including:
  - “Don’t make decisions that affect us without us.”
  - Enhance cultural competency all the way up the system.
  - Feeling safe is important. Introductions to other services/programs with trusted people works.
  - Holistic health is important. Mental and spiritual health affects other health issues. Medical doctors don’t always identify the root cause of a health issue. Would like a holistic health/healing centre and/or approach.
- Island Health will continue to work with First Nations partners as the work in the Alberni / Clayoquot region continues.

**Mental wellness is a priority focus in many communities. Some communities are experiencing high rates of suicide and attempted suicide. What is happening to address mental wellness issues?**

- The Partnership Accord Steering Committee recognizes that mental wellness has been identified as a priority for many First Nations. Island Health and the First Nations Health Authority recently coordinated their planning processes when the three mental wellness forums were held in the three regions. Given the impacts of colonization, the Steering Committee also recognizes the important of providing “Trauma informed Care” that is culturally safe.
- Regarding suicide and suicide attempts, Island Health Mental Health and Substance Use program has provided ASIST - Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training – in a number of First Nations communities. ASIST is the "gold standard" in suicide first aid training and is used by health care organizations world-wide. This two-day workshop is available to all who have direct contact with patients and clients. The training is practice-oriented, highly interactive and practical and will include small group discussions, skills practice and videos on suicide intervention. Participants will

leave the workshops with tools and materials to help them in their suicide intervention practice. Island Health will make this training available to additional communities.