



NEWS RELEASE

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First Nations Health Authority
BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres
Métis Nation British Columbia
BC Cancer
Provincial Health Services Authority
Ministry of Health

Strategy for improving Indigenous cancer health outcomes launched in BC

Squamish Nation Territory / North Vancouver - A new strategy to improve cancer care and supports for Indigenous peoples across British Columbia was announced today.

Improving Indigenous Cancer Journeys: A Road Map is the result of a multi-year partnership between BC Cancer, First Nations Health Authority (FNHA), Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) and the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC). Only the second of its kind in the country, its priorities are in line with the calls to action for health by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

The strategy addresses all aspects of cancer, from prevention through to survivorship with a focus on delivering culturally safe cancer care. Specifically, its six priority areas include:

- developing partnerships between the health system and Indigenous communities;
- working with Indigenous communities to help prevent cancer before it starts;
- increasing access and participation in colon, cervical and breast cancer screening;
- promoting cultural safety and humility in cancer care services;
- supporting Indigenous cancer survivorship and end-of-life experiences; and
- improving knowledge of Indigenous cancer experiences.

The strategy is reflective of B.C.'s unique Indigenous landscape and includes actions to directly improve the cancer experience for all Indigenous peoples, including First Nations with and without status living at home or away from home, Métis citizens or self-identified Métis and Inuit peoples. Insight was gained from engagement over a number of years with Indigenous cancer patients, survivors and their families.

The partners commit to support improved health outcomes for all Indigenous peoples in BC when it comes to cancer, and commit to support the ongoing partnership development between Indigenous peoples and communities and health system partners.

Quotes:

Joe Gallagher, Chief Executive Officer, First Nations Health Authority

“Culturally safe services and care are essential to increasing access and use of provincial prevention and cancer support services for Indigenous peoples. This strategy is an important component to the growing partnership emerging between health and cancer services and Indigenous organizations in BC. We encourage all service providers in BC to join us on our journey towards cultural safety, and to make cultural humility part of their everyday practice by pledging to support Indigenous peoples’ journey to better health.”

Adrian Dix, Health Minister, BC Government

"This strategy is among the newest of its kind, and a crucial step in addressing cancer survival disparities among Indigenous people in British Columbia. When we understand and address the cultural barriers experienced by Indigenous people, the health system can provide preventative care, culturally respectful treatment and be a true partner in saving lives."

Leslie Varley, Executive Director, BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres

“On behalf of BCAAFC, I hold my hands high in appreciation of those that helped us to develop an Indigenous cancer strategy. We heard many stories of our brothers and sisters who have been through the cancer journey, and we wanted to make sure the wisdom of Indigenous cancer patients, survivors and their caretakers are reflected in this strategy. As Friendship Centres, we often support families struggling with cancer. Each of us has been impacted by cancer. As an Indigenous person I feel better knowing that our Indigenous agencies have worked together with BC Cancer to map out, identify and address some of the issues and concerns I or my family might have. We sincerely hope this strategy is useful to those on their own personal cancer journey, and equally as useful to the service providers who we know are committed to culturally appropriate and safe services to Indigenous people.”

Susie Hooper, Minister for Health, Métis Nation British Columbia

Métis Nation British Columbia is committed to the goals, objectives and actions outlined in the Indigenous Cancer Strategy that was developed with our partners. MNBC recognizes the importance of working in a Nation specific way to achieve improved health outcomes for Indigenous people throughout the cancer journey. Through enhanced prevention, screening, health education and knowledge development in our Indigenous communities, we anticipate earlier detection and improved access to treatment. Collectively with our partners at BC Cancer, First Nations Health Authority and the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres; we want access and treatment to be equitable and culturally safe, which will lead to excellence in overall health and well-being for First Nations and Métis Communities.

Dr. Malcolm Moore, President, BC Cancer

“BC Cancer’s mission is to reduce the incidence and mortality of cancer and to improve the quality of life of those living with cancer, for all British Columbians. We recognize the unique cancer challenges and treatment outcome disparities faced by Indigenous people and we are working with our partners to ensure the delivery of culturally safe cancer care throughout the province. This strategy is a demonstration of our commitment to actions that directly improve the cancer experience for all Indigenous people; from prevention through treatment and survivorship, we are committed to continuing collaboration that improves the cancer journey for Indigenous cancer patients, for their families and their communities.”

Johnna Sparrow, Indigenous cancer survivor

“When it comes to cancer, knowledge is power. Everyone needs a treatment strategy that suits their disease and their physical and spiritual needs. Yet our communities are used to being disempowered and to losing battles. The Indigenous Cancer Strategy has the ability to turn that around. It can create a cultural of empowerment for Indigenous people to not only survive cancer but to thrive against cancer. I am grateful to BC Cancer and the First Nations Health Authority for their work in creating a culturally safe environment for our people to heal.”

Background:

The Indigenous Cancer Strategy is available online here:

www.fnha.ca/wellnessContent/Wellness/improving-indigenous-cancer-journeys-in-bc.pdf

Research comparing cancer between First Nations and non-First Nations people in British Columbia is available from the peer-reviewed journal, *Cancer Causes & Control*, here: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10552-017-0950-7>

The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) is responsible for planning, management, service delivery and funding of health programs, in partnership with First Nations communities in BC. Guided by the vision of embedding cultural safety and humility into health service delivery, the FNHA works to reform the way health care is delivered to BC First Nations through direct services, provincial partnership collaboration, and health systems innovation.

BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC) is a registered Society under the BC Societies Act, and is the umbrella association for 25 Aboriginal Friendship Centres across the province. BCAAFC’s mission is to improve the quality of life for Indigenous people in BC by supporting the activities of member Friendship Centres. This includes acting as a unifying body for Friendship Centres to engage all levels of government in addition to coordinating special projects and initiatives, events and programs, and providing information on resources and news.

Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) is the representative of 37 Métis Chartered Communities in British Columbia, and represents more than 16,500 provincially registered Métis Citizens and nearly 90,000 self-identified Métis people in the province. MNBC’s mandate is to implement culturally relevant social and economic programs and services to create opportunities for Métis communities, and its vision is to build a proud, self-governing, sustainable Nation in recognition of Inherent Rights for Métis Citizens.

BC Cancer, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, is committed to reducing the incidence of cancer, reducing the mortality from cancer and improving the quality of life of those living with cancer. It provides a comprehensive cancer control program for the people of British Columbia by working with community partners to deliver a range of oncology services, including prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment, research, education, supportive care, rehabilitation and palliative care. For more information, visit www.bccancer.bc.ca or follow us on Twitter [@BCCancer](https://twitter.com/BCCancer).

Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) plans, manages and evaluates selected specialty and province-wide health care services across BC, working with the five geographic

health authorities to deliver province-wide solutions that improve the health of British Columbians. For more information, visit www.phsa.ca or follow us on Twitter [@PHSAofBC](https://twitter.com/PHSAofBC).

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