



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

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Important Health Services and Benefits Information for First Nations Clients on Vancouver Island

*For enquiries about health benefits you can call the FNHA toll-free number at: **1-855-550-5454**. Phone lines are staffed Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.*

The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) has put in place a third-party manager Ganhada Management Group, to oversee health service delivery to Inter Tribal Health Authority (ITHA) member communities. Ganhada has taken responsibility for administering payments and ensuring continuity of service delivery through February and March of this year and will also work with FNHA and individual communities to support local health and wellness goals going forward.

ITHA's refusal to cooperate in a transition to alternative service arrangements forced the FNHA to step in to ensure service continuity for First Nations clients.

What is happening to First Nations Health Benefits?

First Nations clients will continue to receive the First Nations Health Benefits, funding and services that they are entitled to. Eligibility, rates and policy for FNHA-funded programs and services haven't changed.

First Nation clients have the option to access Health Benefits including vision, medical supplies and equipment (MS&E), and mental health directly from the FNHA. The FNHA is working with the providers of vision, medical supplies and equipment, and mental health services to make sure they remain ready to serve their First Nations clients. (For information on mental health and medical transportation benefits, see below.)

Which Island Nations may be affected by this change?

- The ITHA administers the vision, MS&E, and mental health benefits for 30 communities. It also administers medical transportation benefits for three of those communities.
- The communities that may be affected by this change are:
 - Da'naxda'xw First Nation
 - Dzawada'enuxw First Nation (Tswataineuk/Kingcome)
 - Esquimalt First Nation
 - Gwa'Sala-Nakwaxda'xw

- Gwawaenuk Tribe
- Homalco First Nation
- Klahoose First Nation
- K'ómoks First Nation (Comox)
- Kwakiutl First Nations
- Kwiakah First Nation
- Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis (Kwicksntaineuk/Gilford Island)
- Lake Cowichan First Nation
- Lyackson First Nation
- Mamalilikulla- First Nation
- Namgis First Nation
- Nanoose First Nation (Snaw-Naw-As)
- Oweekeno/Wuikinuxw
- Quatsino First Nation
- Penelakut Tribe
- Qualicum First Nation
- Scia'new First Nation (Beecher Bay)
- Snuneymuxw First Nation
- Songhees First Nation
- Stz'uminus First Nation (Chemainus)
- T'Sou-ke
- Tla'Amin First Nation (Sliammon)
- Tlatlasikwala First Nation
- Tseycum First Nation
- We Wai Kai First Nation (Cape Mudge)
- Wei Wai Kum First Nation (Campbell River Indian Band)

How can we access First Nations Health benefits?

Vision Care and Medical Supplies and Equipment (MS&E)

- Clients will be able to access benefits as they did previously -- through their health care providers. Prior approval requests and invoices submitted by health care providers can be sent to FNHA Health Benefits.
- Clients can submit requests for reimbursement to FNHA Health Benefits.

Mental Health

- Clients seeking counselling can book an appointment with a mental health provider registered with the FNHA. The list of registered providers can be found on our [website](#) or clients can call FNHA Health Benefits for support.
- Mental health providers can submit prior approval requests to the FNHA Health Benefits.

Medical Transportation

- Members of the Dzawada'enuxw First Nation (Tswataineuk/Kingcome), Gwawaenuk Tribe, and the Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis (Kwicksntaineuk/Gilford Island) can now call the FNHA Health Benefits Plan at **1-855-550-5454** to organize travel for a medical appointment outside of their community of residence.

What about delivery of other health services including nursing services in my community?

FNHA will partner with each community to ensure continuity of care and to maintain professional practice support for all nurses serving communities. Communities receiving direct nursing service will be supported in service model planning with an interest to support community in how they want their services to be delivered.

Questions related to Nursing Services can be directed to: Kathleen Harris, Regional Nurse Manager, Vancouver Island at: 250-924-6125.

Why did the FNHA terminate its service agreement with ITHA?

First and foremost, the FNHA is committed to safe and quality care and services for First Nations clients. This decision follows a three-year process that began partly in response to complaints from over one third of communities served by ITHA about recurrent service delivery failures.

A 2016/2017 independent audit identified operational concerns at the Board and management level. ITHA Leadership did not accept or remedy the issues identified in the audit. FNHA issued termination notices for its funding agreements with ITHA effective April 1, 2019.

ITHA's refusal to cooperate in a transition to alternative service arrangements forced the FNHA to step in to ensure service continuity for First Nations clients. For clients who wish to learn more you can read the [details here](#).