

**Northwest (Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en)
Community Engagement Area Communique
Fall 2015**



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

**Verna Howard, Community Engagement Coordinator,
Northwest Community Engagement Area (Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en)**

INTRODUCTION

The Northwest Community Engagement Area (Hub) has one full time Community Engagement Coordinator (CEC) to support the eight Community Engagement Area communities: Moricetown, Hagwilget, Kispiox, Sik-e-dahk, Gitanmaax, Gitsegukla, Gitwangak and Gitanyow.

The areas of focus in terms of Community Engagement with the communities is to support the communities in identifying their health priorities in the following areas: 1) Mental Wellness & Substance Use, 2) Primary Care, 3) Traditional Wellness, and 4) Environmental Health.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The CEC hosted a Community Engagement meeting where she presented to the Gitsegukla Elders an update on the work of FNHA with regard to the Transition and Transformation process; and, what has been implemented to date since FNHA has been in place.

In addition to the above, the CEC hosted the quarterly Advisory Committee Meeting which is made up of the health directors and community Elders from the eight communities. The CEC invited four key resources to provide information to the health directors on what services they provide and to provide an opportunity for health directors to ask questions.



WORKPLANS

Primary Care

The Gitxsan West communities of Gitsegukla, Gitwangak and Gitanyow have been working to implement the Nurse Practitioner Services. Moricetown Health has also been working with Northern Health to ensure they have the services of a Nurse Practitioner in their community.

Gitxsan Health Society is seeking to expand on its Home and Community Care services by supplementing their Home and Community Care (HCC) program with the services to include an Occupational Therapist and a Physiotherapist.

Moricetown and Hagwilget are working with FNHA to ensure they receive the services of a Community Health Nurse that will be in place on a long-term basis to serve their community

Medical Transportation

The needs of all Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en members are shared with FNHA by connecting the Health Directors directly with the Health Benefits and Medical Transportation team at FNHA and by connecting individuals, either through email or telephone calls to the FNHA Medical Transportation or Medical Benefits Team. If at any time communities require support or have questions, CEC is available to provide support in connecting with services. The FNHA Health Benefits website is also a valuable resource for information and contacting FNHA Health Benefits: <http://www.fnha.ca/benefits>.

Mental Health and Traditional Wellness

All of the communities served in the Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en Community Engagement area are looking forward to implementing their traditional wellness programming which have a strong Mental Wellness and Substance Awareness and Prevention component built in to their plans to support the health and wellness of their community members.

Environmental Health

The Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en communities are still keeping a close eye on the developments that are planned or being planned on their territories, including safety issues that may have surfaced due to the hot summer weather that we had this year. To learn more about Environmental Health, please visit: <http://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/environmental-health>.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

The Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en Community Engagement Coordinator has been actively involved at the local and regional level to share the voices of the First Nations people from her Community Engagement Area. She accomplishes this by participating at Committee Meetings, by supporting the Health Directors and Chief Councillors and/or Proxy's at Sub-Regional and Regional FNHA meetings

and by attending the Aboriginal Health Improvement Committee (AHIC) meetings which are hosted by Northern Health. At Regional AHIC meetings, CECs can support communities in voicing their concerns to Northern Health and together, work on solutions with Northern Health. The CEC also does community presentations at Health Fairs, Elders Luncheons, Community Health Events - Aboriginal Day, Heart Health Fair, Annual General Meetings of the Health and Band Council; and any other health related events and activities.

Aboriginal Health Improvement Committee

The Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en Community Engagement Coordinator participates on both the East and West Cluster AHIC meetings, which are held on a quarterly basis. All AHICs in the Northern Region are



supported by Aboriginal Health Services of Northern Health to work on strengthening the working relationship between Northern Health and First Nations communities in the north. The Aboriginal Health Improvement Committees each identified their area of focus to support closing existing health gaps between the Hospitals in the region and the communities. This was accomplished by having a number of Process Mapping Exercises take place with the participation of key hospital staff and select health staff from the FN communities. The process identified areas that needed to be strengthened and there were numerous recommendations to support closing the health gaps.

Other Work Supported in Communities

The following capacity building activities were implemented to support the work of the health professionals and health directors:

- Fall Prevention training for the Home and Community Care Nurses and the Personal Care Aides which was held in Hazelton in May of 2015
- Leadership, Community Engagement & Local Planning (SPARC BC) which was implemented for Health directors & Community Engagement Committee Community Elders

CONTACT INFORMATION

Verna Howard
Gitksan & Wet'suwet'en Community Engagement Coordinator
Verna.Howard@fnha.ca