What is Telehealth?
Telehealth is the delivery of health care/wellness services and education at a distance through live, interactive video, audio and computer technology “videoconferencing”.

Telehealth enhances the ability to provide and receive patient care and education regardless of geographic location.

Telehealth allows you to see your doctor, nurse, or specialist at a distance. Some of the telehealth services available in BC are in cancer care, arthritis, diabetes, maternal care, mental health and many other areas.

The First Nations Health Authority is developing a fully functional telehealth program for First Nations communities in BC. The First Nations Telehealth Expansion Project (FNTEP) team is working with our partners to deliver on the Transformative Change Accord: First Nations Health Plan, Action Item #23: ‘create a fully integrated clinical telehealth network’.

The following frequently asked questions are meant to begin a conversation about how telehealth programs may help you and your community.

How can telehealth help me and my family?
Telehealth can provide opportunities for increased access to health care/wellness services that may not be available in your own community. Telehealth can also provide access to health education and allow families to visit with one another over video when they are away from home.

Where can telehealth happen?
Telehealth can happen in your local Health Centre or nearest hospital.

Will my Doctor/Nurse still come to my community?
Yes – The telehealth program is meant to enhance and complement existing health and wellness services and not take away any services already being provided in the community.

Do I have to use telehealth?
If telehealth is available in your community, you will have the choice to travel to appointments or use telehealth.

Will I ever have to travel to see a Doctor?
Yes - You may have to travel to see your healthcare provider at times, for surgery and perhaps for specialist follow up appointments. Telehealth is not always appropriate for every patient or in all situations.

Will my privacy be protected?
Yes – Privacy, confidentiality and the security of your personal health information are of utmost importance. We are committed to protecting your information through the use of health-grade network security, and protecting your privacy by ensuring telehealth rooms are secure.

For more information about telehealth, please contact us by phone: 604.693.6500 or 1.866.913.0033 (toll-free) or email: telehealth@fnha.ca
How can my community join the FNTEP?
A community-driven process will be developed in mid-2015 to identify the next group of communities to be involved, based on interest and need. The FNTEP team is currently working with 45 communities across the province for this initial phase. By focusing our efforts on a smaller initial group ('Wave 1'), the team will be able to streamline the process to implement telehealth and make it easier for additional communities to participate in the future.

How is the project funded?
FNTEP is a fully funded project. The costs associated with the site assessments, establishing telehealth services that address community needs, equipment purchase, installation and training will be provided through our funding partner, Canada Health Infoway.

What is needed to participate?
Existing infrastructure with an appropriate space within the community (e.g. health centre, nursing station, band administration building) for telehealth and an internet connection that meets the minimum requirements for the telehealth equipment that is being deployed is needed to take part.

For communities that are currently working towards meeting these requirements, there are other initiatives and projects within and beyond FNHA that may be able to provide additional support.

What does participation involve?
Participation in the project involves setting aside time to meet with the FNTEP team, site visits, completing readiness and needs assessments, coordinating equipment delivery, participating in training, coordinating telehealth activity for your community and other needs as identified.

What are the anticipated timelines for the project?
This first stage of the project is anticipated to extend to the end of 2015. Planning for the second stage ('Wave 2') is anticipated to begin when funding is secured.

Upon completion of the project, telehealth services will be extended to communities where it is feasible and there is interest and support.

What does the equipment look like?
Different types of equipment will be used depending on unique community needs. Examples include boardroom-based videoconferencing units and clinical telehealth carts.

Examples include boardroom-based videoconferencing units and clinical telehealth carts. (Please see images to the left).

Please visit our website: www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/ehealth/telehealth
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