



For Immediate Release

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Innovative Primary Care Teamlet Offers Continuum of Care for Enhanced Health Services in Cowichan Valley

Holistic Approach Supports Patient Physical, Mental, Spiritual and Emotional Wellness

(Cowichan Territory - Duncan, BC) - A new community-based primary care teamlet is now seeing patients at Cowichan's Ts'ewulhtun Health Centre. The teamlet model allows community members to access most medical services in one location, avoiding lengthy referrals, and with health care professionals they know and trust. This unique program was designed in partnership by Cowichan Tribes, Island Health and First Nations Health Authority (FNHA), and funded through the Province and FNHA Joint Project Board.

The collaborative team currently includes a general practitioner (GP), nurse practitioner, registered nurse/clinic manager and two registered nurses in part-time health promotion and prevention roles. The group is rounded out by three health coaches, all licensed practical nurses, who provide individualized support and advocacy for the centre's clients before, during and after medical appointments.

Health coaches provide follow-up services, ensuring that patients understand their consultations and feel heard, giving socioeconomic support, including arranging transport to and from appointments, and are available Monday to Friday by phone for on-call advice and support. These services empower community members to have greater involvement in their own care.

The program will eventually expand to include a full-time GP, medical office assistant, social determinants of health expert, wider paramedical services such as physiotherapy and a traditional healer. Cultural safety, enhanced patient communication, relationship-building and accessibility are cited as early benefits to the project.

Prior to the teamlet many community members reported barriers to better health outcomes in access to a consistent GP, culturally respectful care and ongoing clinical support. As a result, the local emergency room was overused in situations where preventable symptoms escalated after chronic-care conditions were left untreated.

The holistic model of care champions a personalized, client-centred approach to support individual's physical, mental, spiritual and emotional health and wellness. With an expanded definition of primary care to include traditional paramedical services, the teamlet maximizes flexibility and provides community members with the best-possible care, while reducing overall reliance on emergency room and walk-in clinics.

For more information on the teamlet, please contact Ts'ewulhtun Health Centre.



Partner Quotes:

"The Coast Salish Primary Care is a new and innovative way of improving our community member health experience, by creating & improving better outcomes. The Teamlet model provides enhanced health care delivery of care service in a culturally safe manner and environment."

Jennifer Jones, Health Director, Ts'ewulhtun Health Centre

"The Ts'ewulhtun teamlet model is an exciting and promising approach to delivering expanded primary care to First Nations clients. This development is made possible by the new funding arrangements underpinning the FNHA, and the partnerships with the Ministry of Health and the Vancouver Island Health Authority."

Richard Jock, Chief Operating Officer, First Nations Health Authority

"When we work to reduce existing barriers to care for First Nations communities, we are also developing a strong partnership that will improve the health of all First Nations. Announcements like today's teamlets help develop these relationships to provide personalized, culturally-sensitive patient-centered care."

Health Minister Terry Lake

"The teamlet model currently being adopted at Ts'ewulhtun Health Centre is promising to be a revolutionary way in which to deliver culturally safe, community-member centred care that is very high quality. In only a few short months, our team has woven itself together to create an incredibly supportive and healing environment for community members and our team members. There's no doubt in my mind that this collaborative, culturally-grounded model is the way of the future for Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities alike."

Dr. Daniele Behn Smith, GP at Ts'ewulhtun

"The Coast Salish Primary Care Teamlet is a good example of Island Health working in partnership with the First Nations Health Authority and Cowichan Tribes to improve health outcomes for First Nations people living in the Cowichan Valley. I would like to acknowledge the innovative work of Cowichan Tribes to develop this holistic, inter-disciplinary model of care."

Alice Gelpke, Executive Director for Geography Three (Cowichan Valley and surrounding area), Island Health



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