



MEDIA RELEASE | September 25, 2020

On the Way to Transforming Primary Care

tkwəlniwt (Westbank), Syilx Territory: The Syilx Okanagan Nation Chief's Executive Council is pleased to support the recent implementation of Primary Care Networks (PCNs) on Syilx territory, in collaboration and partnership with Syilx communities. Kootenay Boundary and Central Okanagan PCNs have already been announced, adding to the previously implemented South Okanagan PCN partnership with Penticton Indian Band. The upcoming actions includes South Okanagan PCN Planning with Lower and Upper Similkameen Indian Band and Osoyoos Indian Band; North Okanagan PCN with Okanagan Indian Band; Nicola Valley with Upper Nicola Band; and Revelstoke PCN. Access to community-based, culturally appropriate primary care services is crucial to the ongoing health of our Syilx citizens and Aboriginal people residing throughout our territory.

Accessibility is an ongoing challenge, with many of our member communities not having regular access to culturally appropriate primary care services. Trauma, colonization and poverty have played key roles in the limited access to primary care. The relationship between Indigenous people and health care services has been tenuous. With the recent announcement of Minister Dix on addressing racism in health care settings, collaborative, culturally appropriate planning and services remains a priority.

While the Primary Care planning process has had its challenges, there are some major achievements — additional FTE's of family physicians, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, Aboriginal health coordinators and allied health professionals are to be celebrated. Our members are able to access service in their own community, community relationships with health care providers are able to be built upon, overall improving the health of our members.

The planning process has allowed relationships to be developed and enhanced with the sharing of the reality of health care services in our communities and addressing our community priorities. Our community health teams have been managing with very little resources and with partnerships are able to provide fuller primary care services in community.

The Kootenay Boundary Aboriginal Services Collaborative was developed to provide a space for Aboriginal people in the area to collaborate for PCNs and other service planning that is a major accomplishment for collaborative planning in the area. While our Nation continues to advocate for a level playing field for health care planning in terms of resources, time, capacity building partnerships, we remain hopeful about the transformation of primary care in Syilx territory.

"Access to health care is crucial to the ongoing wellbeing and social determinants of health for Syilx members, early and good access to primary care can minimize ongoing health and mental health concerns," Allan Louis, Syilx Health Governance Representative stated.

Article 21.2 of the UN Declaration Indigenous Peoples outlines that "states shall take effective measure and where appropriate, special measures to ensure the continuing improvement of economic and social conditions. With particular attention to rights and special needs of indigenous youth, children and persons with disabilities."

To read about Primary Care Strategy in BC visit: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018PREM0034-001010>

For further information please contact:

Allan Louis, Syilx FNHA Representative
1-250-306-8360