ABORIGINAL HEALTH

2016/17

YEAR IN REVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

This 2016/2017 Year in Review is to share updates on the progress of our work, key engagement activities, reflect on our accomplishments of our collective work. As the Executive Advisor of the Aboriginal Health program I am very pleased with the milestones that we have achieved in the past year. Many of the changes we made this year in Aboriginal Health will help us take a big step forward in our ultimate goal to improve the health of Aboriginal people in our region.

This year we embarked on a journey to establish our program’s visual identity, develop foundational pieces and make necessary changes to move ahead in our work to embed cultural safety into every program and department within VCH. This aligns with our commitments and partnership with FNHA as outlined in the Regional First Nations Health & Wellness Plan 2016-2021 to jointly address barriers to health care access and advance the cultural humility of practitioners delivering to and the culturally safety of health services delivered for Aboriginal people.

We have started our approach to bring Aboriginal voices, teachings and traditional health knowledge into the health system, and as we work together with First Nations communities and health-system partners we are making meaningful in-roads toward our shared vision. We look forward to continuing this journey to ensure Aboriginal families and communities have a culturally safe system of care that respects and honours Aboriginal cultural practices.

Kw’ as hoy, [thank you]

Leslie Bonshor
Executive Advisor
ABORIGINAL WELLNESS PROGRAM

The services of the Aboriginal Wellness Program are delivered by Aboriginal Master’s-level trained therapists who use their lived experience of colonization in the service of supporting Aboriginal clients’ healing from the impact of colonization.

The therapists draw on Aboriginal worldviews, traditional Ceremony and cultural practices while also utilizing cutting edge Western clinical methods in service of clients. The program offers services in different modalities (individual, couple and family counselling; workshops; psychoeducational groups; therapy groups; community events), all of which have the objective of supporting healing from the intergenerational trauma and attachment disruption of colonization.

One of the unique aspects of the program is its emphasis on breaking isolation among program members by offering a variety of group experiences, through which people have an opportunity to experience strong and healthy community connections. This year the program delivered three ten-week therapy groups, all of which are co-facilitated by two therapists and one Elder, who offers teachings in each group session. Traditional ceremonies are included in each therapy group.

AWP hosted four special events this year:

- The tenth annual Winter Celebration welcomed 50 program members with their families to come together to hear cultural Teachings from an Elder and enjoy a meal with other community members.
- Dream Interpretation Workshop, registration of 15
- Healing Day, which called on Aboriginal Healers to provide their respective practices to attendees. Fifty clients participated in the Healing Day.
- The Intergenerational Trauma Workshop, facilitated by an Elder, is an annual event which attracts high interest. Twenty-five clients participated in the workshop.

LEFT TO RIGHT: Elder Mahara Allbrett, Elder Gerry Oleman, Jennifer-Lee Koble, Riel Dupuis-Rossi
WHAT PEOPLE ARE saying...

“AWP saved my life, I don’t know where I would be without this program”

“I am forever grateful for everything AWP has given me.”

“This group has given me the tools to heal and live”

“There is a shared sense of knowing and understanding sitting with an Aboriginal therapist.”

“AWP is my trusted safety net at a critical point in my life. AWP creates a safe place for Aboriginal people, from all walks of life, to share and to learn from one another. I wish a place like this existed when I was 26.”
ABORIGINAL PATIENT NAVIGATORS

One of the most significant roles the APNs play is to facilitate cross cultural understanding within the health care setting and supporting medical staff.

Over the past six months the APN Program has been developing a concrete strategy for incrementally establishing on-site programs providing a range of educational and consultative supports to health care providers that will maximize the systemic impact achieved by the program.

APNs will be working more closely with staff to help them better support Aboriginal people to access and use health services across the various facilities. APNs will shift their role to focus more on supporting, guiding and advising staff who admit, work with and discharge Aboriginal clients to ensure the clients and their families have a culturally safe experience of VCH services. APNs will support social workers, admitting staff, frontline nurses and physicians and discharge personnel to provide culturally appropriate support and navigation to Aboriginal clients, and to link the clients with external Aboriginal resources and services. The APN Program will focus on developing specific educational, consultative, and resourcing strategies to achieve sustainable changes in how health care for Aboriginal peoples is understood and how it is offered.

The objectives of the APN program include maximizing the systemic impact through addressing the causal factors that have generated the need for APN services in the past - namely, an absence of cultural safety in health services and programs for Aboriginal peoples accessing health care. As one of a number of strategic initiatives through VCH’s Aboriginal Health Department, the APN Program is being reconceived as the on-site, hands-on professional, consultative, educational, and resourcing support to service providers in order to reinforce formal cultural safety trainings and to provide on-going guidance as service providers learn to become allies to Aboriginal peoples and learn how to offer culturally safe care.
The Aboriginal Navigators have been an amazing support to the Intensive Care Unit families and staff. The Aboriginal Navigators help us facilitate and understand cultural sensitivity and help in supporting our Aboriginal population in a respectful appropriate manner.

Sophia Phillion-Hunter, MSW, RSW  
Social Worker, ICU, VGH

It has been a tremendous help to have the APN program and the amazing people who work within it available to assist both in-patients and out patients (clients) who are connected to VCH. I have worked on many different units with Vancouver Acute and have found regardless of which area I work in the expertise of the APNs have been invaluable. Knowing that there is a person or a team of people who can assist with some of the complexities of supporting First Nations folks is a must.

Shelley Madill RSW, Acute Care for Elders, VGH

The APN role as educators to members of the health team in cultural awareness topics, is beneficial to help us establish a strong relationship that enhances our work with aboriginal clients.

Rachael Best, Social Worker Case Manager, Robert & Lily Lee Family CHC, VGH

Interventions are the activities the APNs undertake when they accept a client. These activities include health care case planning, intake to APN program, hospital visitation, FNHA health benefits, referral to culturally supportive programs, traditional cultural supports, health advocacy, referral to an Elder/spiritual advisor or to clinical services.
INDIGENOUS CULTURAL SAFETY

Cultural safety considers the social and historical contexts of health and health care inequities and is not focused on understanding “Aboriginal culture.”

IN-PERSON WORKSHOPS

The holistic Indigenous Cultural Safety (ICS) Curriculum model houses five overarching ways of learning ICS that are represented as circles: Virtual, Workshops, Activities, Community and Ceremony. The three hour in-person workshop has been successfully offered over the past seven months to over 400 VCH staff throughout the Central Coast, North Shore, Pemberton, Richmond and Vancouver regions. Aboriginal ways of teaching and learning grounded the facilitators in their ICS teaching practice.

CARLILE 3-PART TRAINING

Aboriginal Health facilitated a tailored Indigenous Cultural Safety Training to Carlile Youth Concurrent Disorder Unit at HOpe Centre. The AH Team provided nine hours of training in total over three training sessions. The team heart-fully engaged in teaching such as Aboriginal History, Aboriginal Cultural Competency Policy, Traditional Land Acknowledgment, Allyship and Self-Reflective Practice. Each participant made a personal declaration of commitment to Cultural Humility and received a certificate of completion. The AH Team was also part of the Carlile Unit Implementation Committee to develop a referral process that includes risk indicators unique to Aboriginal communities, increasing the level of cultural safety experienced by Aboriginal youth accessing concurrent disorder treatment in VCH.

COMMUNITY-LED HEILTSUK INDIGENOUS CULTURAL SAFETY TRAINING

Aboriginal Health facilitated a connection between RW Large Hospital and the Heiltsuk community, and supported the development of a Heiltsuk-led cultural safety training session for hospital staff. The community engaged Pauline Waterfall, a well-respected Heiltsuk knowledge keeper and educator, to develop and facilitate the training. Fourteen staff from RW Large attended, including RNs, LPNs, MDs, clerks, housekeeping, lab, x-ray, and management.

A second training is planned to ensure that incoming and rotating staff can also receive the training. Heiltsuk is making this training part of their regular practice to orient newcomers to their community.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING...

VCH IN-PERSON WORKSHOPS

“Excellent, excellent workshop. Valuable and engaging information, fantastic presenters. Thank-you.”

“I realized how little I know and how much more I want to learn.”

“It would be great if it was part of orientation for all VCH hires”

HEILTSUK INDIGENOUS CULTURAL SAFETY TRAINING:

“It was an excellent training”

“I haven’t stopped thinking about it since”

“Even though none of the information was ‘news’ to me, it was certainly more compelling than anything I have ever heard before”
CULTURAL SAFETY PROOF OF CONCEPT

Over the past year significant preparation has gone into developing a comprehensive cultural safety campaign. The campaign will include a visual poster series ‘Cultural Safety starts with me’ with staff and leadership in posters and stories in VCH news. There will also be learning opportunities including a lunch n learn series, self-directed learning resources such as webinars, recommended online videos, resources and news sources. Also to be rolled out will be a curriculum package, a Cultural Protocols guidebook for staff as well as a strategy for celebrating cultural safety champions within VCH. A key outcome of this campaign will be increased access and utilization of hospital services by the local Aboriginal population.

INDIGENOUS ELDERS IN HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The Elders program is an integral part of supporting Aboriginal clients, as well as VCH staff in their ICS journey. Elders/ Knowledge Keepers are respected sources of wisdom and experience. Each Elder/Knowledge Keeper has a different gift, which is identified by their community. Five key areas where the Elders/Knowledge Keepers have been involved over the past twelve months at VCH:

- Providing teachings, prayers, drumming/singing, welcomings, openings and/or closings at VCH events, gatherings, conferences, and meetings.
- Facilitating the Elders in Residence [EIR] Program where they work with small groups of Aboriginal clients in health care settings on a regular basis.
- Providing cultural support and teachings in time of crisis to Aboriginal patients with their families for one or two visits.
- Providing Indigenous Cultural Safety teachings and support to VCH staff.
- A monthly gathering of Elders/Knowledge Keepers provides a full morning of teachings, guidance, and protocols while we discuss relevant and challenging subject matter.

FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS & DESIGN

Aboriginal Health recognizes that Facility and Aboriginal design impact the wellness of Aboriginal people seeking services at VCH sites. When RW Large was brought into the Vancouver Coastal Community of Care from First United Church, Heiltsuk Chief and Council spoke with VCH about securing funds towards making culturally safe spaces within the hospital. Aboriginal Health worked with community-identified local artist, Ian Reid, and the Rural and Remote Project Lead to draft a plan to bring Heiltsuk carvings, masks, and paintings into the hospital and morgue. The pieces are grounded in a traditional Halızaqv story of how Orca heals a Heiltsuk Elder. The project will bring culture into the facility and uplift the people receiving care. In addition we have contracted an expert to build on this project and develop a business case outlining the importance and benefits of developing health authority-wide Aboriginal design guidelines to inform all new builds and renovations.
PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

Equal partners with a shared vision and respectful collaborative relationships are key to improving the health of Aboriginal people.

OVERDOSE RESPONSE
SAA-UST SHQALAWIN (Lifting up the Hearts and Minds)
INDIGENOUS FEAST

On the afternoon of February 16, 2017, Vancouver Coastal Health Aboriginal Health, Culture Saves Lives, and the Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society (WAHRS) partnered to hold a gathering to address the ongoing opioid crisis. It included ceremony, songs, dances, talking circles, and a community feast for those who had been impacted by the opioid crisis. It was an opportunity for the community to collectively recognize those they had lost, as well as engage with their partners on solutions to the crisis. Participants called for more access to traditional healing and culture, removal of barriers for injectable heroin and hydromorphone, and services that respect Aboriginal community members’ strength, honour, and dignity. The afternoon ended with a ceremonial cedar brushing of all community members in attendance.

BY THE NUMBERS

| PARTNERSHIPS WITH ABORIGINAL AGENCIES IN THE DTES AND VANCOUVER TO ADDRESS OPIOID CRISIS | 6 |
| PARTNER AGENCIES TRAINED IN OVERDOSE RESPONSE AND PROVIDED WITH NALOXONE KITS | 11 |
| PARTNER AGENCIES CERTIFIED AS NALOXONE DISTRIBUTION SITES | 3 |

SOUTHERN STL’ATL’IMX WELLNESS COORDINATOR

The Southern Stl’atl’imx Wellness Coordinator is a joint project between VCH and FNHA, and stands as an example of a new and innovative way to do business between health authorities. The position became operational in January 2017 and is intended to promote health care continuity through complex discharge planning between VCH and five Southern Stl’atl’imx communities. The WC is actively providing transitional care support to community members. An action plan was completed with Health Authority and Community Stakeholders on March 20, 2017 to fully integrate the WC into VCH and Southern Stl’atl’imx communities.
ABORIGINAL PRIMARY HEALTH CARE PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

VCH supports the Urban Aboriginal Primary Care Network, an innovative partnership between three First Nations clinics – Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh – and three urban Aboriginal clinics – Vancouver Native Health Society, Lu’ma Medical Clinic, and UNYA Clinic – that provide culturally safe, holistic primary health care in greater Vancouver. The vision of the network is to improve Aboriginal Health outcomes in greater Vancouver, both on- and off-reserve. The Network began in October 2016 through an invitation from the three First Nations clinics to the urban Aboriginal clinics to explore opportunities. The partners were quick to see huge potential in creating a network to increase access to primary health care and wrap-around services for Aboriginal people across greater Vancouver, as well as opportunities for supporting each other in planning, service delivery, and evaluation initiatives.

VCH Aboriginal Health and VCH Professional Nursing Practice have partnered to support Nurse Practitioners working in Aboriginal clinics. On May 4 2017, five Nurse Practitioners came to the Aboriginal Health office for cultural sharing with Chief Ian Campbell of Squamish First Nation, followed by a discussion of how best to support their Aboriginal clients in a good way. Since that meeting, all Nurse Practitioners working in Aboriginal clinics meet regularly to build their community of practice.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF LISTENING TO YOUTH VIDEO AND CONVERSATION TOOL

Aboriginal Health has recognized that youth are under-represented in health resources. In collaboration with youth attending the 2-Spirit 1-Heart 1-Mind 1-Nation Youth Conference, the first Listening to Youth video was developed. It features a number of Aboriginal youth sharing what wellness means to them, how they support their wellness, and what they need from organizations to support their wellness. The video is publicly available on our YouTube channel and was shared on our Facebook. It is the first step to making Aboriginal youth both seen and heard on Aboriginal Health resources. It also acts as an excellent discussion tool and has been shared with youth organizations as well as committees tasked with both youth and equity work. A second video is being developed in partnership with the Richmond Youth Services Agency’s Pathways Aboriginal Program exploring the youth understanding of what reconciliation means, and what one’s role is in the reconciliation process.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0Tqg77wTk0&t=9s
RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

VCH Aboriginal Health is participating in research through a number of key roles. Our team takes a role in research as leading grants, collaborating on larger research projects, supporting and guiding the interpretation of research findings for the Aboriginal population and conducting projects evaluating current initiatives and programming. In 2017, VCH AH in partnership with Dr. Alexandra King and other Aboriginal women researchers was awarded a CIHR Catalyst Grant titled: “Resiliency and Culturally Grounded Approaches for Urban Aboriginal Women: Towards Developing Land-Based Interventions to Mitigate Chronic and Infectious Disease Risk in Urban Settings.” VCH Aboriginal Health has partnered with researchers at the Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS on a CIHR grant which aims to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the health service redesign on Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. In partnership with this same research team a grant from the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research was also awarded to fund a series of workshops with people of lived experience to develop supplemental survey instruments to measure patient experiences at the newly launched health services on the Downtown Eastside. VCH AH are also involved as research team members on a Component 2 CIHR Pathways Grant investigating land based resiliency approaches to suicide prevention for First Nations Youth. Evaluation activities include building evaluation plans for measuring the impact of cultural safety training taking place throughout the VCH region. A group of Aboriginal women researchers have been connected with the goal of convening for the creation of an Aboriginal women’s research group which will influence and guide research taking place for and with women in the VCH urban communities. Going forward planning for the development of a comprehensive community-driven Aboriginal research strategy for the VCH Region will be a priority for next year.

DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE WOMEN’S VILLAGE OF WELLNESS

On October 6, 2016, Vancouver Coastal Health Aboriginal Health held Nəcəmat, the inaugural Urban Aboriginal Women’s Village of Wellness. The day began with a smudging and cedar brushing to cleanse the space and prepare for the work ahead, followed by a welcome to the traditional homeland from local Nations. Approximately 300 Aboriginal women from the DTES and neighbouring areas joined us and enjoyed the many services available, including haircuts, manicures, pedicures, health information and testing, and Aboriginal healing. Free books, clothing, and grocery gift cards were available. Aboriginal women leaders from across BC spoke throughout the day. The day ended with a closing prayer from Elders representing the local Nations, and the room was once again brushed down. Participants left feeling grateful, happy and thankful. Many participants asked for this to be an annual event. A second annual Nəcəmat is planned for September 14, 2017. Nəcəmat Video -https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mR921wi92tQ
ABORIGINAL WOMEN’S WELLNESS WORKSHOP

On June 22nd, 2017 VCH Aboriginal Health held a workshop titled “Supporting and Prioritizing Aboriginal Women’s Wellness in VCH Regions.” This workshop invited key stakeholders within VCH to hear from guest speakers on Aboriginal women’s wellness. The following goals and objectives were outlined for participants: build understand leads to improved community wellness within the Vancouver Coastal Region, explore global and local examples of women’s wellness initiatives and understand the link between Aboriginal women’s right to health and moving towards reconciliation. The workshop was facilitated by Kisha Xiomara Palmer, a Seattle based facilitator and educator with international social justice and leadership building experience. The workshop was opened and co-led by Elder Roberta Price from the Snuneymuxw and Cowichan Nations. Presenters included: Leslie Bonshor, to set the stage of VCH Aboriginal Health’s focus on Aboriginal women’s wellness; Kisha Xiomara Palmer to discuss global examples of supporting women to build community wellness; Chastity Davis, to present the work of the Ministerial Committee on Aboriginal Women; Brittany Bingham, to discuss research with and for Aboriginal women in Vancouver; Ginger Gosnell-Myers, to present the reconciliation work conducted by the City of Vancouver. Participants were led in discussion and called to action to determine how they can support Aboriginal women’s wellness in their own work objectives.

CONFERENCE: LEADERSHIP TO ACTION: STRENGTHENING OUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

On February 6-7, 2017, VCH Aboriginal Health supported the Metro Vancouver Urban Aboriginal Executive Council (MVAEC) in holding a policy engagement gathering for the urban Aboriginal community of Metro Vancouver. Roundtable sessions were held on the following topics: Arts, Culture, and Language; Justice; Health and Wellness; Housing and Homelessness; Education, Training, and Employment; and Children, Youth, and Families. Common themes from the conference included collaboration/partnership, cultural connection, and reconciliation.

HEALTH SURVEILLANCE WORKSHOP

On March 9, 2017, VCH Aboriginal Health partnered with VCH Population Health and FNHA to hold a Health Surveillance Workshop featuring three guest presenters from U.S. Tribal Epicentres: Kevin English from the Albuquerque Tribal Epicentre; Ellen Provost from the Alaska Tribal Epicentre; and Abigail Echo-Hawk from the Seattle Urban Health Institute. The three presenters shared their experiences collecting, analyzing and disseminating population-level health data with 40 workshop participants from across VCH and FNHA. The day after the workshop, Senior Leadership from VCH held a day-long meeting to discuss embedding lessons learned from the Tribal Epicentres in to the development of an Aboriginal Epicentre at VCH.
WHO WE ARE

VISUAL IDENTITY/BRANDING

To further our goal of raising awareness about the Aboriginal Health team and their roles within VCH we have focussed on developing a strong brand identity by refreshing our logo, and branding all of our promotional items with our name and new logo. To support the team in promoting our services throughout VCH and within Aboriginal communities, we have created up to date brochures and booklets to increase access to culturally safe care, such as the What to do with questions, concerns and complaints booklet, the Sacred Space booklet and the Cultural Practices guidebook for staff. We also had a 12 month calendar designed with photos of each team member, a description of what they do along with contact info; these were given to 200 staff to hang in their workspace. The external website was moved from an external hosting site to VCH.ca and updated with our current logo, staff and program information. An internal staff hub of resources, news and information is also being finalized on VCH Connect.

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY & VCH NEWS

Social media and storytelling are opportunities for our program to connect and interact with our audiences. They are an opportunity to further build our brand and let our audiences know all of the good work that we, our partners and stakeholders are doing. In April we launched our new Facebook page with the goal to have our program become recognized as a leader and advocate in Aboriginal health providing information, news and updates that help Aboriginal people navigate the health system. 16 stories have been shared in VCH news to highlight the work of the team, and Aboriginal approaches to health care including the work of Elders in the hospital, traditional healing, program and sacred space openings.
We recognize that our places of work and Vancouver Coastal facilities lie on the traditional homelands of the fourteen First Nation communities of Heiltsuk, Kitasoo-Xai’xais, Lil’wat, Musqueam, N’Quatqua, Nuxalk, Samahquam, Sechelt, Skatin, Squamish, Tla’amin, Tsleil-Waututh, Wuikinuxv, and Xa’xtsa.

VCH began committing financial and human resources to the area of Aboriginal health in 1999, in order to work towards meaningful change in Aboriginal communities in our region. Our goal is to work closely with both urban and rural Aboriginal communities to help close the gap between the health status of Aboriginal community members and non-Aboriginal community members in our region.