

Aboriginal Perinatal Health Committee

The Ministry of Health Aboriginal Health Division in partnership with the Maternal Child Health Division initiated a discussion with BC Women's/ PHSA about the challenges in ensuring high quality, culturally appropriate maternity care services for women in aboriginal communities across BC (2004). After meetings with community representatives and other stakeholders resources were allocated to carry out a survey of elders, aboriginal communities, women and to review the literature. Once the results were presented to the ad hoc committee they were invited to develop a set of strategic priorities.

At the same time, the First Nations Leaders and the Provincial Government were developing the Transformation Accord and ultimately signed off on an aggressive joint agenda, to improve the health of First Nations in B.C. This has subsequently become a Tri-Partite Agreement with the federal government becoming a full partner. One deliverable articulated in this plan is the Aboriginal Maternity Strategy, a deliverable for which the Ministry of Health, Health Authorities and the First Nations Leadership share accountability.

The Aboriginal Maternity Care Access Project began just after presentation to the MOH in late 2004 of the Maternity Care Enhancement Report, a report generated by a strong collaboration among providers, provider organizations, all health authorities and government. MOH has asked health authorities to continue work on the MCEP's recommendations, and the BC Perinatal Health Program (BCPHP) (formerly the BC Reproductive Care Program), an agency of PHSA, has a strong provincial coordinating role in these efforts.

The BCPHP has been asked by PHSA/Women's to assume responsibility for coordinating the Aboriginal Maternity Access Project. The Aboriginal Perinatal Health Committee is the BCPHP advisory body that will further develop the strategic directions and implementation strategies to ensure improvement of maternity care access for aboriginal women in B.C. The role of BCPHP and PHSA/Women's in this process is facilitative.