

B.C. Health Funds Cariboo Hospital Expansion Plan

The B.C. Ministry of Health recently announced funding to support the redevelopment plans of the Cariboo Memorial Hospital, which provides health care for the Cariboo-Chilcotin region. Currently, many Northern Secwepemc rural community members have to travel long distances to Vancouver, Kamloops, Kelowna, and other areas to receive services and care. The Cariboo Memorial Hospital, which is situated on Williams Lake Indian Band traditional territory, is long overdue for an expansion that would enable it to meet the region's long-term health care needs. The ministry is reviewing Interior Health's concept plans for the facility, and once approved, a business plan will be prepared that will focus on costs and services (estimated between \$80 and \$100-million). The ministry will consult with physicians, nursing staff, the community, and First Nations partners to determine the facility's details and long-term sustainability.

(Northern Shuswap Tribal Council – Media Release, March 24)



One in Four People on Reserves Don't Have Clean Water

The Council of Canadians' (COC) analysis of Health Canada and B.C.'s First Nations Health Authority data shows that as much as one in four people on First Nations reserves may lack clean drinking water. Among the more than 600 First Nations in Canada, 127 were under drinking water advisories (DWA) as of December 2016. "There hasn't been a measurable change in years; the number of drinking water advisories remains at roughly the same level as in 2010," said COC national chairperson Maude Barlow. The data shows that up to 72,000 people have been affected by DWA's in First Nations at the start of 2017. Adequate funding is a crucial first step, but reducing barriers for First Nations to accessing funding, restoring and enhancing water protections, and government obtaining free, prior and informed consent for projects that threaten water sources, as required by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, are critical to ensuring clean water for future generations, said Emma Lui, water campaigner for COC.

A small, but growing number of First Nations are finding unique ways to tackle their water problems.

Following the installation of a mobile, state-of-the-art water treatment plant on its reserve in 2016, the Lytton First Nation (LFN) can now drink straight from their taps. The plant was built at the University of British Columbia by RES'EAU-WaterNET. LFN had been under periodic DWA's for years because of aging infrastructure or contamination. In 2010, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada turned down a \$1.3-million quote to upgrade their water plant, because it "wasn't cost-effective." The response was to partner with RES'EAU-WaterNET, which began community consultations in 2013, backed by federal funding, and the plant was completed in 2015 for less than half of LFN's initially quoted cost. The system draws water from a nearby creek and uses a variety of filtration and purification tools.

(Nation Talk, March 20; CBC News, March 22)

