

News Release

November 13, 2005 Immediate release
First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (RHS)



Minister of Public Health impressed by RHS, community-based approach to measure the health of First Nations.

Ottawa, ON – The Federal Minister of the Public Health Agency, Carolyn Bennett, heaped praise upon the First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey, or RHS, today at its national conference in Ottawa. Bennett said she has supported a community-based approach since her involvement with women’s health issues, and then hearing First Nations elders explain their views on health as a “horizontal approach that cuts across silos” and “involves citizens from the ground up instead of the top-down.”

“We are beginning to listen and to learn,” Bennett told the audience of about 300 community leaders, health directors, academics and researchers from across Canada and from many federal and provincial government departments. “We are now trying to get the rest of the country to catch up.”

“It is more than just a community-based survey,” said Jane Gray, National Coordinator of the RHS. “We trained people how to conduct a survey in their communities, using computer technology, working with databases, and how to protect the data they’ve collected. So it’s capacity-building at the community level as well. It is about First Nation peoples collecting and analyzing their own data from their own perspective, and driving with policies from the local community instead of a bureaucrat in Ottawa.”

“We need to know what works and what doesn’t, with facts and by measurement” said Minister Bennett. “Bad public policy results when people feel something needs to be done – even though they do not have the evidence to back up their decisions in a particular direction.” Bennett added that this was one reason why the RHS is key to the development of future decisions on First Nations health running up to a First Ministers’ Meeting in less than two weeks.

The RHS is unveiling its second-ever national report, the most comprehensive snapshot on the health of First Nations in Canada. The RHS delivered its first report in 1999 and is expected to file a total of four national surveys by 2014. This report is the result of more than 22,000 surveys in 238 First Nations communities across Canada between August 2002 and November 2003. The conference began Sunday, November 13, and runs until Tuesday, November 15.

-30-

For more information:



Colleen Toulouse, Communications Officer
First Nations Centre
National Aboriginal Health Organization
220 Laurier Ave. West, Suite 1200
Ottawa, ON K1P 5Z9
Tel.: (613) 237-9462 ext. 500
Email: ctoulouse@naho.ca

Jane Gray, National Coordinator
First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (RHS)
85 Boulevard Bastien
Wendake, Quebec G0C 4V0
Tel.: (418) 845-1492
Email: jgray@naho.ca