

**For immediate release
June 20, 2014**

Past, present and future celebrated as First Nations Health Programs mark 20 years of service at Yukon's hospitals

Whitehorse – Celebrations are being held today at Whitehorse General Hospital to honour a landmark agreement signed nearly 20 years ago between First Nations, Yukon hospitals and the territorial government that established widely recognized health programs that support, advocate for and work with First Nations people.

Yukoners from all communities will join the festivities to commemorate the founding agreement that closed the circle and created the First Nations Health Programs. An open house will be held from 10am-2pm on June 20 in the WGH cafeteria. There will be refreshments, food and information displays.

A special outdoor ceremony will honour the signing of the agreement and its continuing legacy. Several special guest speakers will be on hand, including Ruth Massie, Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations. There will also be a moment of remembrance for several individuals who, over the past two decades, have been instrumental in ensuring First Nations continue to have access to the health services and support they need.

The agreement that created the program is just as significant today and for future generations as when it was signed 20 years ago, notes Laura Salmon, Director of First Nations Health Programs.

“We are fortunate in the Yukon where promoting and providing quality culturally sensitive holistic healthcare to First Nations has become an important part of health care services,” she says. “We have an opportunity to not only provide patient support throughout the hospital, but also work to increase understanding of Aboriginal culture and provide Aboriginal Peoples with social and spiritual support, which is so essential to health and well-being.”

Known for its culturally based services that respond to community identified needs, the FNHP within Yukon's hospitals has been highlighted in a report by the Health Council of Canada and named as a leading practice by Accreditation Canada. The program provides a number of services including advocacy, patient support and health planning as well as social and spiritual support. This includes access to traditional food, medicine and healing practices within the hospital environment.

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