FIRST NATIONS TELEHEALTH
ANNOTATED RESOURCES AND WEBSITES

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Part I: Resources

First Nations Centre (NAHO). (2005). First Nations Tele-health: A Primer for Strategic Planners. Ottawa: NAHO.

While this is not a policy document per se, it does provide an interesting glimpse into major themes and concerns regarding telehealth as they come to bear upon First Nations communities. The document is set up as a framework to stimulate discussions regarding the implementation of telehealth at a localized, First Nations level. The document is carved into three sections: (1) a detailed description of potential telehealth applications (2) issues to take into consideration when planning telehealth systems and (3) a lexicon of technical terms. The document carefully considers the pros and cons of various telehealth applications and stresses that telehealth is not a health care panacea. The paper clearly states "indeed it is *not*" (emphasis in the original, 2005:1). As it would be quite laborious to detail the telehealth applications, I will, instead, focus on the major discourse themes stemming from the document. First, the document repeatedly stresses that telehealth "is *not* a replacement for in-person attendance by a health professional, and must not be perceived that way. In-person attendance must always be the first choice. However, when that is impossible, tele-health sometimes offers an acceptable alternative" (emphasis in the original, 2005:2). The document also states "tele-care, like tele-medicine, may be a double-edged sword for a FN community. The more that can be offered long-distance, the less that will be offered locally" (2005:5). The document also stresses that telehealth, as a support measure in clinical decision-making, can function as a tool to retain and attract medical professionals to First Nations communities. The document also highlights that electronic data, which is created and/or transmitted via telehealth is "filtered" through a number of organizations. It is important to be clear about secondary research uses for this data and to set-up frameworks to ensure First Nations communities have access to these data sets. The final theme which emerged from the document is the jurisdictional quagmire that telehealth can present, given that most telehealth providers will be of a provincial or territorial nature. The document poses the question "if tele-health requires requesting or accepting provincial or territorial funding, is erosion of the federal treaty of fiduciary role taking place?" (2005:4). At first look, this document may not have appeared to be relevant to this literature review, however, I found the document was useful in determining, from the perspective of a national Aboriginal organization, some issues of concern regarding telehealth.

First Nations Technology Council. (2008). Report of Meeting, April 2008. Vancouver: Author. Retrieved November 2, 2008 from the World Wide Web at http://www.quaaout.com/index.html.

This particular meeting was convened in order for the First Nations Technology Council (FNTC) to establish the First Nations Information Technology Society (FNITS). Both organizations

operate within the province of British Columbia. Throughout the meeting the roles of each body were defined and distinguished. The purviews of each organizations are explained as "the role of the FNTC was to focus on policy, relationships and the future – 'looking at the forest'. FNITS was seen as primarily an operational agency focused on delivery of services" (2008:3). The FNTC is tasked with developing eHealth on a conceptual basis, but when programs become operational they are to be overseen by FNITS (2008:7). The other issue area to be overseen strategically by the FNTC is VoIP (voice over Internet protocol; this is a relatively inexpensive method of delivering phone and data services over the Internet and is considered an emerging technology for, while it is widely available, there are reliability issues with these types of services).

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. (2008). 07/08 Annual Report. Ottawa: Author.

In this almost 100 page annual report, which is presented in three languages, there is a paragraph dedicated to e-health. The annual report references a document called The e-Health Status in Inuit Regions: Environmental Scan. This report "maps out regional Inuit e-Health status. It also provides a high-level analysis of priority areas, identifies concrete steps in the development of a comprehensive Inuit e-Health transformation plan, and critical success factors and opportunities to feed into a future e-Health business plan" (2008:38). The report mentions that "connectivity" and adequate numbers of trained health professionals are an obstacle to a major e-health roll-out (2008:38).

Part II: Web-based e-health portals:

Please note: There are so many health portals out there vis-à-vis Aboriginal health, that some have been, unintentionally, overlooked.

Government -

Federal Government. - Canadian-health-network.ca – dismantled by Harper government in March, 2008.

First Nations and Inuit Health Branch. First Nations, Inuit and Aboriginal Health – Mental Health and Wellness – http:www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fnian-spnia/promotion/mental/index-eng.php. While this page is geared towards Aboriginal populations, I am not certain if Aboriginal populations use it. The page starts out will a series of statistics on Aboriginal health, which I suspect are fairly familiar to Aboriginal peoples. This could come across are reinforcing stereotypes regarding Aboriginal peoples and health. The bottom half of the page provides links to resources regarding mental health. There are links to the Aboriginal Youth Network (which was not working when I checked it), the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Canadian Psychological Association and NAHO. The very bottom of the page offers additional links to information regarding suicide prevention.

Health Canada, Healthy Living – http://www.hc-sc.gc/hl-vs/jfy-spv/index-eng.php. This portal, sponsored by Health Canada, is intended for the general public. There are fact sheets and resources for numerous health topics ranging from smoking to violence and abuse. There is a

"just for you" section, which is set up by population groups, including children, parents, rural Canadian, etc. This section provides links to "educational kits", including recipes, the Canada food guide, etc. The portal also features a search engine. This is a very informative site with an abundance of information. This is to be expected as the site is federally funded.

Public Health Agency of Canada – www.phac-aspc.gc.ca. This federally sponsored site has a wealth of public health information. The home page has a revolving window addressing topical health issues. At the time I viewed the site, the topical issues related to melamine in baby formula and listeria. On the right hand side of the home page there is a menu geared to public health issues surrounding children, youth, adults, seniors and Aboriginal peoples. The youth section provides a sidebar linking to information regarding First Nations and Inuit youth. The Aboriginal section provides links to information regarding diabetes, healthy living, substance use and treatment of addictions, suicide and suicide prevention. If these topic-specific links are followed, one finds connections to NAHO and a list of resources for health professionals and educators working with or for Aboriginal peoples.

Medical professions -

As there is a shortage of First Nations health professionals, there are a number of sites dedicated to supporting these workers and/or recruiting more First Nations individuals into these careers. Some of the sites are restricted to members-only, while others can be viewed by the general public. Nevertheless, some of the sites feature health and well-being information that would be of interest to First Nations individuals/communities who do not necessarily wish to pursue these types of careers.

Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada – anac.on.ca. Their site is positioned to actively recruit Aboriginal people into the nursing profession and to support Aboriginal nurses. There is a members only log-in. I could not find a reference to e-health on the site and there was no search mechanism.

Aboriginal Nutrition Network – www.nutritioncareerinfo.ca. While this site is clearly geared towards recruiting Aboriginal individuals into a career as a dietician, as can be seen with profiles of Aboriginal women nutritionists, it also contains a resource library with information on food guides. Additionally, there is a link for information on traditional foods, however, it was not working when I viewed the site.

Aboriginal Telehealth Knowledge Circle (ATKC) – www.cst-sct.org/en/index.php?module+pagemaster&PAGE-user-op=view-page&PAGE-id=97. This portal is restricted to members only. However, the sign-in page states that the mandate of the portal is to "improve the health of Indigenous People by expanding the use of Telehealth and supporting Indigenous health providers through information and knowledge transfer and sharing; promotion and professional development; change management and implementation tools; and advocacy and strategic alliance" (2008:1).

Assembly of First Nations – afn.ca/article.asp?id=103. This page on the AFN site provides links to two portals: (1) a health technicians portal and (2) a health directors' portal. Unfortunately, I could not get access, but it is important to note that the text just above these links states "the ultimate goal is First Nations' control of the development and delivery of all health and social services, and programs" (2008:1).

Canadian Nurses Association - Can be found at nurseone.ca. While it is a sign-in portal, it is interesting to note that the home page made an appeal for nurses working within Aboriginal contexts and how the site can provide support for their informational needs. A press release dated June 19, 2006, which discusses the launch of NurseOne, mentions that the CNA is "leading an e-nursing strategy aimed at bringing the nursing community up to speed with other industries" (1). The press release points to Canada's e-health system being behind other Canadian industries, such as banking by about ten years. NurseOne "was developed in partnership with the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada and in collaboration with nurses, students, governments and employers" (2006:1).

First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada – http://fncfcs.com/home.html. While this site could be considered to be geared towards Aboriginal child and family workers and those who are non-Aboriginal and immersed in such issues, it does provide a wealth of informational resources that can be make use of by those outside this profession. The site features newsletters, fact sheets, an on-line journal and a searchable database. There is also an interesting section that promotes the involvement of non-Aboriginal voluntary organizations in Aboriginal child and family programming. The home page urges for support for various related causes, including the building of a school in a remote Ontario community, one that has been without a school since 2000. This site is full of information and the portal's pages are replete with full colour images of Aboriginal children and motifs.

First Nations Health Managers – www.gestionnaires-sante-pn.ca. The welcome page of this site states "this is your place as First Nations health mangers to network and share information and best practices, and to find information on core competencies" (2008:1). The site includes links to publications, including general Aboriginal health facts and statistics, a discussion board (which did not appear to be used) and a members-only log-in. The mental health page was, unfortunately, blank.

Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada – www.ipac-amic.org. This site has a members only portal and at the time of my search there was no mention of e-health, nor was there a search mechanism.

Irnisuksiiniq Inuit Midwifery Network – www.inuitmidwifery.ca. This is a very informative site, which is geared towards "supporting Inuit midwives and maternity care workers and those who work with them with a variety of information services (2008:1). The network "seeks to advance the cause of returning birthing to Inuit communities" (2008:1). The interactive site features a multitude of video-based resources and text-based publications. Information is available in English, French and Inuktitut. The site is mean to support those who currently work in midwifery and related fields, but also to recruit new members into the profession. From a visual perspective, the site features pictures of women and children. It is interesting to note that this site resides on

the NAHO domain. This site would appeal to individuals/communities interested in birthing practices and not just those who are involved in a professional sense.

National Aboriginal Health Organization – www.naho.ca/english/blogs.php. NAHO has an interesting series of blogs on their site depicting the work of staff involved in health-related communications and research. The blog follows three staff members as they travel to Aboriginal communities across the country to work in collaborative health-related projects. Each staff member's pages present numerous pictures of their work in action and details the projects. These blogs would be of interest to anyone working in Aboriginal health or individuals/communities who wish to see how these types of Aboriginal health programs are being implemented, on a community level, across the country. It is interesting to note that the link for the blogs is featured just above the link for the role model program. The role model program also has its own set of blogs. This placement clearly suggests the blogs are intended as not just an information vehicle for NAHO, but as a recruitment tool.

National Indian & Inuit Community Health Representatives Organization – www.niichro.com. As this site is under construction, many of the old links do not work. It appears as though the site is more geared towards professional development, than providing resources to the public. However, this assessment may not be accurate due to the limited data available on the site at present.

Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada – www.sogc.org. This web site is geared towards promoting the organization's activities to members, but there is a section geared towards the "general" public. The section provides a substantial amount of information regarding pregnancy, general health, contraception and infections, clinical practice guidelines and an on-line bookstore. There is a section where a physician answers, in a recording video stream, common questions women may have after leaving their doctor's appointment. A search of the term "Aboriginal" revealed guidelines for health professionals dealing with Aboriginal peoples, a partnership with the organization and the Wabano Health Centre (an Ottawa-based Aboriginal health centre) and a statement of support for an Aboriginal birthing strategy for Canada.

Portals Geared towards "general" First Nations audiences -

Aboriginal Canada Portal – www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca. Thought it was important to mention this portal, although I am certain you are already familiar with it. The portal has a section dedicated to mental and spiritual health, which provides links to various programs, including NAMHR. The search mechanism is quite useful and reveals numerous programs across the country dedicated to Aboriginal health. Searches can be conducted by region.

Aboriginal Women on the Move – www.aboriginalwomenonthemove.org. This site is dedicated to a 2006 across Canada cycling trip that was organized and carried out by three Quebec-based Aboriginal women. While, the cross-country trip has already taken place, the site is maintained to explain the motivation for the activity – to raise awareness of family violence. To that effect, the site has statistics about family violence. The site also features profiles of the cyclists, who are clearly leaders in their communities, and pictures of the women training. Not only does the site draw attention to family violence, but also is a fitness promotions vehicle.

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network – www.caan.ca. This site describes the workings of the organization and serves as a generalized information resource on AIDS and Aboriginal Peoples. The site provides links to health clinics and AIDS advocacy organizations across the country and a resource section with a myriad text-based sources, such as fact sheets, publications (including the Canadian Journal of Aboriginal Community-based HIV/AIDS Research), newsletters and press releases. There is also a link to an on-line Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Information network – linkup-connexion.ca – which features a resource library and an announcement thread called the "meeting centre". This is an information rich source, which may appeal to Aboriginal peoples from across the country.

Centre d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions a caractere sexuelle, North Shore – http://www.lumiereboreale.qc.ca/english/principal/doc2.jsp?id=13. This site is geared towards individuals seeking information regarding sexual assault. The site features sections explaining the nature of sexual assault, support for victims, helping those who have experienced an assault and providing general resources about sexual assault. Native art is featured throughout the pages and there is a link to Quebec Native Women Inc.

First Nations Breast Cancer Society – www.fnbreastcancer.bc.ca. This site is geared to "offer breast cancer education and support to First Nation women" (2008:1). The site provides a list of B.C. based healing circle events, but offers resources, which may be of interest to Aboriginal women across the country. Site visitors can order copies of the documentary *Echoes of the Sisters: A Broadcast Documentary* and a breast cancer awareness video. Additionally there is a page dedicated to breast self exams, which clearly explains different approaches through accompanying pictures and diagrams. There is also an "in memory" page, which provides details of a Métis singer/songwriter who succumbed to breast cancer. The layout is clear and easy to read, with little emphasis on graphics, save for a feather motif that is featured throughout the site.

First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission – www.cssspnql.com. This site does not necessarily appear to appeal to audiences looking for general health information. However, the site does feature health tips on its home page and an on-line health news bulletin. Numerous Aboriginal health publications can be found on the site, including research publications.

The Information Centre on Aboriginal Health (ICAH) – www.icah.ca. This NAHO sponsored site provides ample information on health as it relates to Aboriginal peoples. The health topics section features an exhaustive list of health issues, ranging from abortion to food gathering to midwifery to women. Each of these subject areas provides listings of programs and services that are relevant to the topic, along with fact sheets, reports, videos and links to relevant web sites. The site also features a glossary, search mechanism, information about health careers, scholarships for health careers, health-related programs and services and links to NAHO's three research arms – the First Nations Centre, the Métis Centre and the Ajunnginiq centre. There is a wealth of information on this site, however, many of the links I tried did not function. The graphical presentation is clear and text oriented and there are few Aboriginal symbols or motifs on the site.

Kahnawake School Diabetes Prevention Project – www.ksdpp.org. This web site is geared towards elders, academics, health care workers and the general public. There is general information regarding type 1 and 2 diabetes and healthy everyday recipes. Each page features full colour photos of Aboriginal children. This site adequately addresses professional and "lay" audiences.

Keewaytinok Okimakanak Telehealth Project – http://telemedicine.knet.ca. This portal serves Aboriginal communities in the Sioux Lookout Zone in Ontario. This is an interesting portal as it serves as an information resources for interested Aboriginal peoples and communities, but also operates as a central point through which to schedule telemedicine appointments. Thus, the portal is positioned not only as a resource, but a facilitating mechanism for telemedicine. According to a June 2005 Information Report (which can be found on the site), the KO telehealth project has expanded to serve just over 20 communities, with additional take-up from some communities outside the Sioux Lookout Health Zone. In 2005, a 2.75 million budget accounted for a full-time telehealth representative in each community and the requisite network costs. However, the report states that the project was near its funding cycle at that time and needed to obtain long-term funds from Health Canada and stakeholder Aboriginal communities. But as the site is still operational, I assume funding was secured, however I am not aware of the amount and duration of such funds. The report estimates that approximately 200 telemedicine sessions will take place a month over the network. It is important to note "KO Telehealth is committed to a First Nations operated Telehealth program that meets the needs of the community members, workers, elders and youth"(2005:1). The informational aspect of the portal provides links to other e-health sites, community-based training or educational sessions and log-in capabilities for members. The welcome page of the site states "KO Telemedicine will improve health for all First Nations Communities through a sustainable First Nations Telemedicine Program that is holistic, community driven and culturally appropriate" (2008:1). In terms of design or form, the site is quite basic with few native artistic rendering. There are, however, rotating photos of various communities and their members, which appear on the welcome page. The design is clear and streamlined, which suggests educational/informational and service delivery goals take priority over identity building.

Many hands, one dream – new perspectives on the health of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and youth – www.manyhandsonedream.ca. This portal seems to be geared more toward advocacy than information provision, although reports and an e-newsletter are available. The site does, however, provide data and stats regarding the health and well-being of Aboriginal children in Canada, highlighting health inequities and inequalities vis-à-vis "mainstream" children. The site results from a partnership between the ANAC, AFN, Canadian Pediatric Society, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, FNIHB, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Métis National Council, NAHO, National Indian and Inuit Community Health Representatives Organization, National Association of Friendship Centres and Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada. Visually, the portal threads Aboriginal motifs, such as the feather and Innushuk, across each page and there are many vibrant photos of Aboriginal children throughout.

Métis Nation Health/Well-Being Research Portal – http://healthportal.metisnation.ca. This portal is described as "a comprehensive site on health information for the Métis peoples throughout Canada. This site reflects the holistic understanding of the Métis Nation about what things are

important when considering the health and well-being of our people and when designing policies and programs to address our population health needs" (2008:1). The home page prominently features a graphic, which is designed to visually interpret a Métis version of holistic health and well-being. The graphic depicts four circles – which highlight the themes of health determinants, health status and demographics, health and well-being needs and programs and services – that link up to make an overarching circle. This site appears to have potential, but many of the links only provide limited information. It appears as though this portal is still in development.

National Aboriginal Diabetes Association – www.nada.ca. This Winnipeg-based organization's web site is set-up to showcase its activities. However, there is a section dedicated to providing public health information on diabetes. This information includes symptoms, prevention and healthy living. There is also an on-line library of newsletters, reports and community based projects. Each page features a feather motif positioned within a circle.

National Native Addictions Partnerships Foundation – http://nnapf.org. While this site is geared towards health policy, research and restructuring, its links section is exhaustive and could be a good resource for Aboriginal women looking for general health related information regarding addictions. The links section features national health-related Aboriginal organizations, provincial health-related Aboriginal organizations and related international information sources.

Native Women's Association of Canada – nwac-hq.org. While this site features the activities and programs of the organization, it also provides health-related information. There is a health section of the site, which provides information on type 1 and 2 diabetes, information on health careers, links to the Canadian Strategy for Cancer Control and a Cancer Plan for Canada. In terms of "everyday" health information, their newsletter, along with covering the goings-on of the health unit, highlights health tips, such as nutritional guides and recipes.

Northern Links – www.northernlinks.org. This portal is designed to provide "recreational connection for rural, remote and Aboriginal communities" (2008:1). The portal contains the following sections: what's new; resources; success stories; photos; links; and a listserv. The what's new section provides announcements from community-level recreation organizations and other bits, such as job postings. The resources section provides a searchable "knowledge bank" of information that is collated from numerous web sites, journals and other sources. The success stories section is intended to highlight what has worked, but this section is presented in searchable form and the search mechanism did not work when I tried it. The photos section links to a flickr program with plenty of photos depicting community-based recreational activities in the last few years. Additionally, there is a links section and a subscriber-based listserv.

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada – www.pauktuutit.ca - This site provides details on the organization's mandate and activities, but it also offers health resources. The site offers links to information on various health issues, including abuse, fetal alcohol syndrome disorder, HIV/AIDS, midwifery and an Inuit women's health series. There are also resources addressing teen pregnancy, tobacco reduction, sexual health and youth rights and issues. A regular newsletter on Inuit social and cultural issues is also available through the site.

Public Health Department of CBHSSJB – creepublichealth.org. This site is full of resources for individuals looking for health-related information. A section called "health topics" provides issue-based links in areas ranging from addictions, dental health, mental health, gambling to women's health. Each topic leads to various resources, including help-line phone numbers, videos, audio feeds and textual information. It would be interesting to obtain traffic statistics as this site is user-friendly and full of up-to-date information.

Quebec Native Women Inc. – www.faq-qnw.org. While this organization does address health as a priority, its web site does not feature health-based information. However, there is a useful links section, which provides connections to a myriad of Aboriginal health sites (which are featured is this bibliography). Thus, from a connectivity perspective this site may be useful to Aboriginal women.

Turtle Island Network – www.turtleisland.org/healing/healing-wellness.htm. This portal features a health section dedicated to various health issues. There is a section dedicated to children and families and diabetes prevention. Additionally, there are links to Aboriginal organizations based across Canada. The health home page features pictures of Aboriginal health professionals with links to brief biographies. There are also links to books on Aboriginal health, which can be purchased. One of the books featured when I visited the site was Waldram's *Revenge of the Windigo*. The design of the site is a bit haphazard and, thus, hard to follow.

Aboriginal Tobacco Strategy (ACCU) – www.tobaccowise.com. This web site is set up as a resource for Aboriginal youth in Ontario, however, its reach could be much wider. The web site features past radio and poster campaigns, to add a multimedia flavour. The site also features information on the commercial vs. traditional tobacco campaign and general health facts on commercial tobacco use. There is a section incorporating youth stories surrounding tobacco and teachings from elders. The site features full colour photos of a female Aboriginal elder and female Aboriginal youth. This site is visually pleasing and easy to follow, however, rests on the premise that most Aboriginal communities engage in traditional tobacco use. This could limit the potential reach of Aboriginal smoking campaigns in Ontario as some communities, such as evangelical-based groupings, may not engage in traditional tobacco practices.

Visions Aboriginal Health Resource Directory – www.visions.ab.ca. This web site is funded by FNIHB. It is a full colour site with lots of native imagery, including nature-based photos and drawings. The site prominently features a blog and the current entry discusses addictions and mental health. Older blog posts address issues like education, culture and gender. There are also prominent photos of native men and women who have overcome addiction of some sort and links are provided to brief vignettes describing their stories. Additionally there is a sidebar, which emphasizes holistic health perspectives by offering links to information in cultural, physical, mental and emotional subject areas. Furthermore, the site features a daily wisdom column highlighting current events in addictions and mental health research.