



National Consortium on Aboriginal and Rural Public Health Education

Located at University of Northern British Columbia

Room 3602 TL Building 3333 University Way Prince George, BC V2N 4Z9

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BACKGROUND

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National Consortium on Aboriginal and Rural Public Health Education

The National Consortium on Aboriginal and Rural Public Health Education (NCARPHE) is a collaborative project between: Memorial University, Lakehead University, Northern Ontario School of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan and University of Northern British Columbia. NCARPHE was formed in an effort to assist in building the capacity for populations in rural, remote, and Aboriginal communities to improve their own health.

1. While many of the recent examples of threats to public health have occurred in non-urban areas (e.g., substance abuse in Aboriginal communities, contaminated water), there is a lesser local capacity to anticipate, plan for, and respond quickly to these threats in rural and Aboriginal contexts. Therefore, when a crisis occurs in these settings without adequate public health training or education, the consequences for the communities and the people in those communities are more likely to be catastrophic.
2. Although many of the recommendations from the Naylor, Kirby and Walker Reports call for greater cooperation among municipalities in setting public health policy, rarely do rural jurisdictions, Aboriginal communities, and public health educators in rural settings have the same political or community-based voice to participate in, and shape debate and policy.
3. The *National Consultation on a Pan-Canadian Framework for Public Health Human Resources Planning* gave high priority to collaboration between the education system and the regulatory system to develop a range of appropriate training options for public health professionals based on the public health competencies (e.g., short courses, diplomas, BHSc, MPH/MSc, PHD; distance, part-time, full-time; continuing education; inter-professional; education including management leadership and emerging issues). To be truly effective in remote and rural regions, training and/or education must take a multi-pronged approach.
4. Many of the existing, large metropolitan-based universities in Canada are embarking on ambitious public health education and training, primarily at the graduate level. Although aspects of the need for Aboriginal and rural health education sometimes forms a component of these programs, rural, isolated and Aboriginal contexts are often peripheral to the overall curriculum. In addition, the ability of representatives far from the communities themselves is constrained to engage in meaningful dialogue with stakeholders in non-urban locations on a day to day basis.
5. As noted above, the partner institutions have all embedded the issue of health care needs in rural, isolated and Aboriginal communities as a critical component within their institutional mandates. They bring individual strengths in programming, format of course/curriculum delivery, and existing partnerships with other stakeholders that can be shared to expand capacity across Canada.



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Each of the Universities has pooled their resources to increase options to students which range from Social workers to Nurses to Physicians. In a true inter-professional collaboration, to encourage and support Aboriginal and Rural students to enter the health sciences, NCARPHE institutions also recognize that they must increase access through distant and online offerings. All of the courses offered will be online and cover topics such as: Health & Healing; Grief and Loss; Rural Community and Health Issues; Health Literacy, Community Well-Being; Aboriginal Health and Chronic Disease and Aboriginal Health and Environmental Impact. Course development options also mirror the public health core competencies of:

- ✓ Analysis and Assessment
- ✓ Policy and Program Planning
- ✓ Partnership and Collaboration
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Social-Cultural Competencies
- ✓ Leadership and Systems approaches

NCARPHE will support capacity through:

- ✓ Collaboration between education and communities
- ✓ Strengthening relationships between NCARPHE institutions through memorandum of understanding
- ✓ Responding to community needs through supporting development of Aboriginal and Rural specific courses
- ✓ Increasing access to education and training through online and distant options
- ✓ Offering summer sessions and intensive workshops
- ✓ Ability to develop a specialty elective focus through specific Aboriginal and Rural Public Health choices
- ✓ Transferability of courses to undergraduate and graduate degrees
- ✓ Offerings from across Canada but completed in your home community

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