



**VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL HEALTH SOCIETY LAUNCHES A
WOMEN'S MOBILE PRIMARY CARE PROGRAM IN THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE**
Community-driven project puts into motion a program to help vulnerable women find care.

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, March 29, 2023 - The Vancouver Aboriginal Health Society (VAHS) in partnership with the First Nations Aboriginal Primary Care Network has launched a Women's Mobile Primary Care Program in the Downtown Eastside to deliver critical healthcare in a culturally appropriate and holistically integrated way. The program's new mobile van includes Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, Elders and healers, alongside a team of doctors, nurses and social workers to provide clients with an Indigenous health and wellness perspective.

The Homeless Women's Needs Assessment conducted by the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre in 2021 found that 77% of the women surveyed cited healthcare and mental healthcare access as urgent and primary needs. "Due to the systemic racism and discrimination that so many Indigenous and self-identified women have experienced within our province's health care system, accessing health care has proven to be very difficult. Mobile primary care vans offer flexible and responsive care for isolated and vulnerable groups," says Rosemary Stager-Wallace, Executive Director for VAHS. "We are excited to be literally putting into motion a program that meets self-identified women where they are at, where they feel safe, and that can speak to the Indigenous way of physical, spiritual and emotional health."

"The VAHS van offers an important broad range of services that include cultural support, general health checkups to women-specific health care services such as pap smears, IUD insertion and removal, sexual health testing and birth control," says Jasheil Athalia, manager for the Women's Mobile Primary Care Program. "We have no doubt that this program will save lives. By supporting health promotion initiatives and building in preventative care measures, we can help narrow the health care gap that exists in this most vulnerable population."

The Women's Mobile Primary Care Program is a true community-driven program guided by many women and community partners in the Downtown Eastside and through the support of the First Nations Aboriginal Primary Care Network including the sovereign host Nations Musqueam Indian Band, Squamish Nation, and Tsleil-Waututh Nation.

The new van operates three days a week to start and is parked at the Cosmopolitan Hotel, Ravens Lodge and the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre. Designed to be as easy and accessible as possible, self-identified women are invited to drop by at any time. No appointments are necessary.

The Women's Mobile Primary Care Program adds to VAHS' list of services that includes a medical and dental clinic, an Indigenous Early Years program, and Elders and cultural programming. VAHS' approach to health is holistic and works to proactively address the social determinants of health rather than simply treating the illnesses they cause.

Since 1991, VAHS has provided culturally grounded health care for the urban Indigenous community of Vancouver to promote physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness. Today, VAHS has created a health system that reclaims and revitalizes traditional Indigenous health and wellness practices, incorporates the wisdom of Elders and the teachings of Knowledge Keepers, and creates pathways to healing that are trauma-informed, relevant, and unique to each person. VAHS has grown from an after-hours clinic to a leader in full-scope medical, dental, cultural, and social services. For more information, visit www.vahs.life.

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Images available for download here: [VAHS images](#)

Interview opportunities:

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