

News Release

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First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey



Roberta Jamieson tells First Nations health conference to call for a “parliamentary commissioner” on Aboriginal issues

Ottawa – Roberta Jamieson, former chief of the largest First Nation in Canada, told a national conference on First Nations health that for years she has heard about targets to improve the health of Aboriginal peoples, and report cards that are supposed to measure progress. These initiatives are mostly ineffective since there is no independent office able “to keep First Nations health concerns on the agenda regardless which political party is in power.”

According to Jamieson, the creation of a parliamentary commissioner on Aboriginal issues, similar to the federal human rights commissioner, would ensure that when targets for improving Aboriginal are set and goals are identified for improving the lives of First Nations, that “funds are allocated in a way that the process is transparent and go where they should – to the communities.”

Jamieson’s comments come as a federal election appears imminent and a First Ministers Meeting on Aboriginal issues is scheduled for in late November. Jamieson, now Executive Director at the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, has also been active with the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and parliamentary commissions on Aboriginal issues for more than twenty years. Jamieson, a keynote speaker at a national conference where one the most comprehensive surveys on the state of First Nations health, praised the work presented at the conference as a model of self-determination and a building block for self-reliance.

The First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey, or RHS, is presenting its second report at this conference, built around the theme “The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly.” Jane Gray, the National Coordinator of the RHS, said Jamieson’s comments underline her hope that the RHS “will be used and not shoved aside and forgotten.”

“First Nations peoples from across the country have confidence in and support the RHS,” Gray added. “They should because they developed the survey. They collected, analyzed and interpreted the data. First Nations know governments want solutions and want to help. They participated in this survey because they also know that solutions must come from their own communities. They hope governments are listening because the RHS is the best tool we’ve got.”

“We all know the statistics,” Jamieson told the audience of more than 250 First Nation health care workers, researchers, federal and provincial health officials. “We hear a lot about closing the gap, improving health, housing, and education of First Nations. We have all heard the promises to bridge jurisdictions, cut across silos, deal with the issues. We have seen the commitment of resources and watched efforts fail time after time. The issue falls off the agenda until a new crisis brings the matter back to public attention.”

The RHS conference continues today at the National Conference Centre and runs until Tuesday, November 15.

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