

# Cross Border Collaboration 2003-2010 Report

June 2010



## MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

The purpose of this report is to capture the evolution of border health collaboration in the Pacific Northwest: from the genesis, “as a good idea” in 2003, through the annual series of cross border workshops, supported by an assortment of collaborative working groups, to the newly-established Pacific NorthWest Border Health Alliance (PNWBHA). None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the funding assistance of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Early Warning Infectious Disease Surveillance Program.

In addition, we would like to acknowledge the support and contributions made by the Washington State Department of Health; the British Columbia Ministries of Health Services and Healthy Living and Sport; and the Public Health Agency of Canada.

We have come a long way in seven years; however, many challenges remain. To accomplish our mission we must continue to work in close concert with regional public and private health sector entities and other government agencies to facilitate the development, evaluation and validation of effective border health plans and programs.

Building on this overview of our 2003-2010 activities, it is the intention of the Joint Coordination Committee to produce an Annual Report for the subsequent years ahead.

John Lavery  
Co-Chair (CA)

John Erickson  
Co-Chair (US)

Pacific NorthWest Border Health Alliance  
Joint Coordination Committee

## HISTORY

The State of Washington (WA) and the Province of British Columbia (BC) have been leading Pacific North West public health collaboration since 2003. The initial focus of this state and provincial collaboration rested on an annual cross border workshop to address emerging public health threats, including pandemic influenza preparedness and tracking infectious disease across borders. This successful partnership has strengthened and the workshops have continued to evolve, now being in its eighth year.

In 2004, BC and Alberta (AB) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with respect to collaboration on the use of available public health and health services resources during emergencies. A similar MoU was signed between BC and WA State in 2006.

Building on the original collaboration between Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia, the creation of the Pacific NorthWest Border Health Alliance (PNWBHA) has provided a framework for further collaborative work, including mutual assistance and interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration in the Pacific North West. The PNWBHA has institutionalized the previously ad hoc cross border working groups to ensure sustainability of the collaborations.

The new alliance is intended to replicate the Pacific North West Economic Region with Alberta, Saskatchewan and Montana having been invited to join the original partners Alaska, British Columbia, Idaho, Oregon, Washington State and the Yukon.

## MISSION STATEMENT

### **Vision:**

A seamless cross border and cross jurisdictional public health surveillance and emergency response network in the Pacific Northwest.

### **Mission:**

To provide a forum for inter-jurisdictional collaboration in the identification and promotion of “best practices” in addressing the capability of parties to prepare for, respond to and recover from the impacts of any public health or other emergencies or disasters.

## GOALS

The goals of the Alliance are to:

- Maintain an organizational structure that provides leadership in the integration of public health preparedness and response initiatives at all levels of government, including Tribal and First Nations, throughout the Pacific Northwest.
- Prevent and/or mitigate, through dynamic and open collaboration, the potential impact of a catastrophic health event<sup>1</sup>, such as; a naturally-occurring pandemic; a devastating environmental or geological event; or a terrorist attack with chemical, biological or radiological weapons.
- Respond to surge capacity demands on health systems and health resources efficiently and in a cost effective manner when public health emergencies arise in any jurisdiction party to this MOU; and
- Assess current and explore future areas of collaboration that could result in efficiencies when providing health services in all Alliance jurisdictions.

## OBJECTIVES

Since its inception, the objective of the Pacific Northwest border health collaboration has been to serve as a catalyst to:

- Raise awareness about public health issues and challenges in the Pacific Northwest.
- Create the necessary venues and partnerships to mobilize the actions needed to improve public health preparedness, and
- Serve as a reliable information portal about border health issues.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

The following paragraphs describe the primary Pacific NorthWest border health collaboration achievements from 2003 to the present:

### Initiatives:

- ***Cross Border Public Health Collaboration Committee***  
An informal 2003 initiative initiated to enhance public health preparedness in the Pacific Northwest through consultation, collaboration and cooperation.
- ***Pandemic H1N1 Information Sharing and Consultation***

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<sup>1</sup> Any natural or manmade incident, including terrorism, that results in a number of ill or injured persons sufficient to overwhelm the capabilities of immediate local and regional emergency response and health care systems. Homeland Security Presidential Directive -21, October 2007

During the 2009 pandemic H1N1 event there was open and ongoing information sharing among Pacific Northwest jurisdictions based on ever- evolving collaborative relationships.

- ***V2010 Border Health Coordination Group***

The Coordination Group was established to ensure integrated cross border public health preparedness for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games by:

- maintaining inter-jurisdictional situational awareness;
- identifying potential border health issues;
- reviewing and/or resolving cross-jurisdictional health emergency management issues; and
- providing leadership in the identification of 2010 border health legacy initiatives.



- ***V2010 Public Health and Emergency Management Situational Awareness Teleconferences***

During the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Pacific Northwest public health partners participated in daily teleconferences with updates provided by key agencies and service providers.

- ***PNWBHA Web Site*** [www.pnwbha.org](http://www.pnwbha.org)

The Alliance web site is intended to keep members informed and current on:

- Alliance activities
- Regional health news
- Conferences/workshop notices
- Status of agreement and arrangements
- Publications/articles of interest

### **Workshops:**

2010 Seattle WA

*Public Health Collaboration: Global Challenges, Regional Solutions*

2009 Vancouver BC

*Health Resiliency: A Collaborative Challenge*

2008 Bellingham WA

*Cross Border Public Health Collaboration: Mass Gatherings and Major Events*

2007 Victoria BC

*Cross Border Public Health Collaboration: Opportunities and Challenges*

2006 Bellingham WA

*Emerging Public Health Threats: Building Cross Border Infectious Disease Surveillance and Response Partnerships*

2005 Vancouver BC

*Emerging Public Health Threats: Pandemic Influenza Preparedness – A Public Health Perspective*

2004 Bellingham WA

*Emerging Public Health Threats: Tracking Infectious Diseases Across Borders*

### Exercises:

#### ***V2010 Border Health Table Top Exercise (TTX)***

The theme of this exercise was: “How do we manage large health events that affect the border?” This exercise was designed to facilitate:

- Discussion on current capabilities within the health sector, as well as within both border agencies, and to explore how screening and triage are conducted in the event of an incident that generates a high number people crossing the border who may be seeking medical care;
- Examination and resolution of gaps in existing cross border health sector communications and response activities; and to
- Demonstrate due-diligence in achieving clarity on the various perspectives from all agencies involved if there be an event at the BC/WA border during the 2010 Winter Games.

### Agreements/Arrangements:

- ***Washington – British Columbia Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Respect to a Collaborative Approach to the use of Available Public Health and Health Services Resources to Prepare for, Respond to and Recover from Public Health Emergencies***

The MOU provides for a collaborative approach to resource utilization to respond to surge capacity demands on health systems and health resources efficiently and in a cost effective manner when public health emergencies arise in Washington State or British Columbia.



Secretary of Health Mary Selecky and Minister of Health George Abbott sign WA-BC MOU

- ***Pacific NorthWest Border Health Alliance MOU***  
 The MOU, currently signed by the Provinces of British Columbia and Saskatchewan, the Yukon Territory, and the States of Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington, institutionalizes previously informal cross border working groups to ensure sustainability of the collaborations and provide a framework for further collaborative work, including mutual assistance and inter-agency and interdisciplinary collaboration.
- ***Operational Plan for Moving EMS Staff and Resources Across the BC – WA Border***  
 The plan ensures the timely and efficient movement and utilization of emergency Medical Services (EMS) staff and resources across the Washington and British Columbia border.
- ***BC-WA MOU to Share and Protect Health Information to Assure Prompt and Effective Identification of Infectious Disease and Other Public Health Threats***  
 The MOU facilitates the sharing of health information for the purpose of preventing, detecting, or responding to a public health event, recognizing that neither jurisdiction commits to information collection, use, and/or disclosure beyond that which is authorized by each jurisdiction's respective laws. Information shared will not include personal information, except in rare instances when that information might be needed to protect an individual or the public's health.
- ***BC-WA MOU on Sharing of Laboratory Resources***  
 The MOU facilitates mutual aid and cooperation during a disease outbreak, food borne contamination or suspected biological or chemical terrorism that spans borders, or requires the expertise or capacity of the other Party's laboratories.



## FUTURE PLANS

As this report has shown we have made considerable progress over the past years however there are more challenges ahead. Plans for 2010-2011 include:

- expanding the Alliance's area of interest to all health sectors, including health services, health protection and promotion and psychosocial services;
- enabling the extension of current agreements, arrangements and plans to all Alliance jurisdictions;
- implementing protocols to operationalizing both the public health information sharing and protection and the laboratory resource sharing MOUs;
- advocating for a federally supported CA-US border health coalition;
- seeking opportunities to advance cross border collaboration on aboriginal health; and

- supporting the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Cross Border Conference and Workshop scheduled for May 2011 in Victoria, BC Canada.

For additional information regarding the Pacific NorthWest Border Health Alliance and its activities contact the Executive Director, Wayne Dauphinee, at [wayne@pnwbha.org](mailto:wayne@pnwbha.org)

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