

News release

For immediate release

Canada invests an additional \$5.4 million to advance innovative Virtual Health Hub in Whitecap Dakota Nation

August 20, 2026 — Whitecap Dakota Nation, Saskatchewan — Indigenous Services Canada

Today, the Honourable Mandy Gull-Masty, Minister of Indigenous Services, announced \$5.4 million in new funding for the Virtual Health Hub (VHH) alongside Chief Darcy Bear and Virtual Health Hub CEO Dr. Ivar Mendez in Whitecap Dakota Nation.

The investment will support the VHH's 2026-27 operating budget and builds on the more than \$28.2 million already invested by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) toward the construction of the future facility located in Whitecap Dakota Nation, which is expected to open in early 2027.

The VHH is creating a new way to deliver health care to northern and remote communities. From a state-of-the-art command centre in Whitecap Dakota Nation, health professionals will use telehealth, artificial intelligence, robotics and other emerging technologies to connect patients with high-quality care without requiring them to travel long distances to access it.

The model is designed to help overcome some of the barriers that have made accessing health care difficult for people living in northern and remote communities. It will connect patients with health professionals in real time and bring more services directly into communities.

Once fully operational, the VHH will support 80 jobs and have the capacity to serve 30 communities. By 2029, that reach is expected to grow to as many as 90 northern and remote communities.

The VHH will also help build health-care capacity for the future. Through partnerships with the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies and the University of Saskatchewan, it will support training opportunities for Indigenous students and health professionals, helping more people develop the skills to deliver care in their own communities.

The Virtual Health Hub is a First Nations-led model that brings together health care, technology, training and community leadership to improve access to care.

Quotes

“With the construction of the Virtual Health Hub's new facility well underway, Whitecap is proud to partner and enable healthcare professionals to provide remote, effective and efficient solutions to remote and rural communities. When those doors open, people in rural and northern Saskatchewan will get public healthcare closer to home.”

Chief Darcy Bear
Whitecap Dakota Nation

“The Virtual Health Hub (VHH) represents an innovative solution to one of Canada’s most pressing healthcare challenges: delivering equitable, sustainable care to remote and underserved populations. The VHH is developing a specialized facility, the first of its kind in Canada, designed to house advanced virtual healthcare services, including virtual care technologies, remote-presence robotics, AI-supported diagnostics, and real-time access to medical specialists. By leveraging these technologies, the VHH aims to improve health outcomes, reduce the need for patient travel, and strengthen continuity and coordination of care across communities in Saskatchewan and beyond.”

Dr. Ivar Mendez
CEO, Virtual Health Hub

“I have been a strong supporter of the Virtual Health Hub since its conception, and I believe the future of health care is taking shape right here in Whitecap Dakota Nation through the innovation this community is leading. This new model will bring high-quality health services to some of the most remote communities across the province. It is another example of the vision and leadership of Whitecap Dakota Nation. Congratulations to Chief Bear, Dr. Mendez and everyone who has worked to bring this groundbreaking initiative to life.”

The Honourable Mandy Gull-Masty
Minister of Indigenous Services

Quick facts

- The Virtual Health Hub is an innovative Indigenous-led project that aims to improve health outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples living in rural, remote, and northern communities of Saskatchewan. The hub increases access to essential healthcare services and programs through the use of technology. It enables patients from remote areas to receive real-time screening, medical examinations, and diagnoses closer to home. The Virtual Health Hub will also increase the number of Indigenous health care technicians and professionals available to provide culturally safe and relevant care in Indigenous communities.
- The Virtual Health Hub is a partnership between both levels of government, University of Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT), and the Whitecap Dakota Nation.

Associated links[Whitecap Dakota Nation](#)[Virtual Health Hub](#)

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