

The Future of Healthcare Empowers Local Communities

The Freedom to Manage Your Own Health Program

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A Shift Toward Self-Administered Health Programs

In Canada, health benefits for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples have historically been delivered through federal structures such as Indigenous Services Canada's Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program. Increasingly, communities are moving toward funding arrangements, such as contribution agreements, that allow them to design, fund, and operate their own health benefit programs directly. With over 600 First Nations bands across Canada, this represents a substantial and expanding shift in how health programs are governed and delivered.

This kind of control could bring better community outcomes. A 2020 review by the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health (NCCIH) found that control over health programs and services is considered key to closing the health equity gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. They note that self-determination empowers and enables communities to build capacity and gain control over the wide-ranging forces that affect Indigenous Peoples' health and well-being.¹

Separate research comparing multiple self-governing First Nations similarly found that self-governance is associated with improved trust in local institutions and stronger perceived service delivery, though outcomes vary with the duration of self-governance and community context.²

Government investment is following the same direction. In March 2026, Indigenous Services Canada announced \$738.9 million over five years to strengthen First Nations health services, governance capacity, and emergency management. This includes \$400 million specifically earmarked to maintain and expand digital health tools in remote and isolated First Nations communities.³

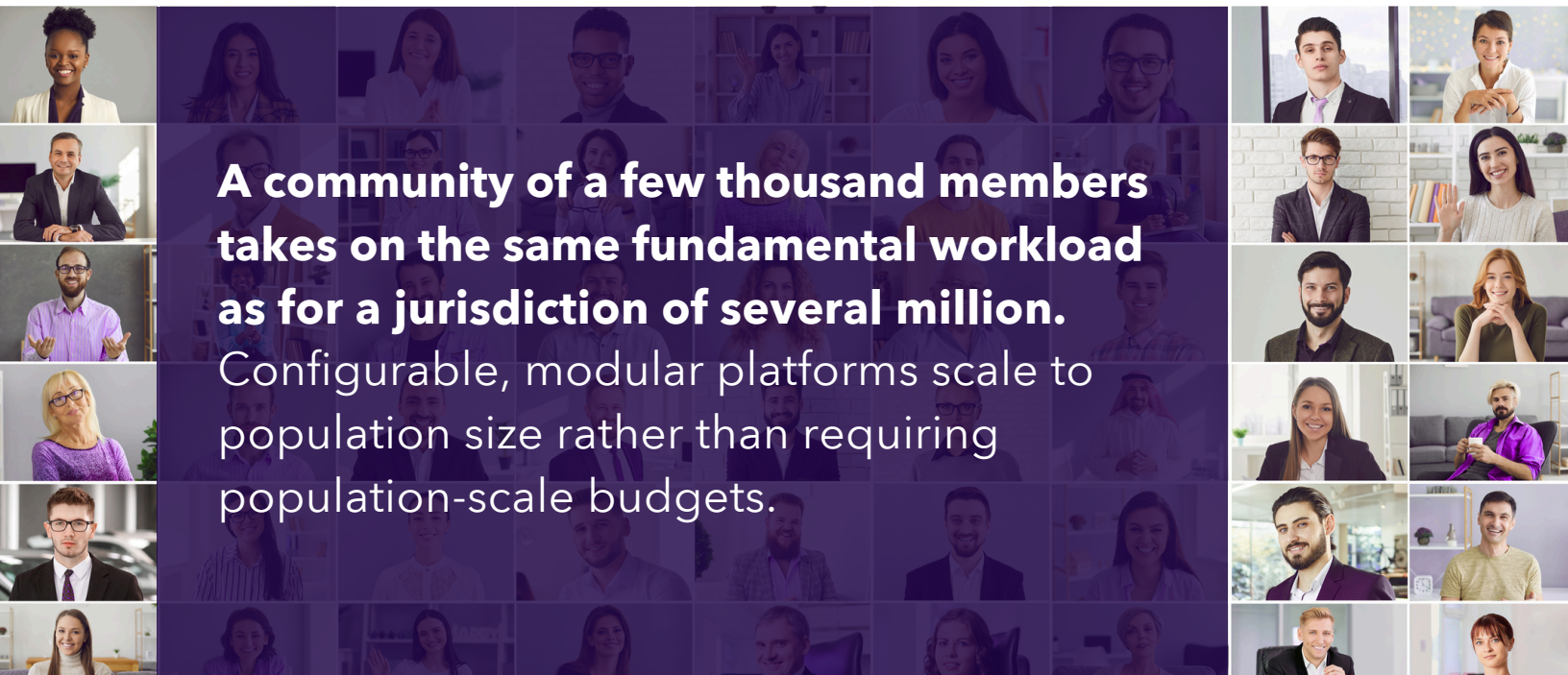
When a jurisdiction, community, or health commission decides to run its own program, they need to ask - how will we deliver it ourselves?

The Administrative Reality Behind Self-Governance

Running an independent health benefit program means owning the full administrative lifecycle: verifying member eligibility, enrolling and renewing beneficiaries, maintaining a network of registered providers, and adjudicating claims across categories that can include pharmacy, dental, vision, mental health counselling, and medical transportation. A community of a few thousand members takes on the same fundamental workload as that of a jurisdiction of several million.

Communities entering this space could inherit a patchwork of disconnected and aging platforms, they could attempt to procure and connect multiple new claims systems, or they may face the challenge of creating individual manual processes. Reconciling data across any of these systems consumes staff time that could otherwise go toward member service, and it can make it difficult to see a complete view of a beneficiary's health journey.

At the same time, most enterprise health administration platforms were historically built, and priced, for large provincial or national programs. That leaves a real gap for smaller, self-governing jurisdictions that want the same modern capability without a provincial-sized budget or a provincial-sized IT department behind it.



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How Modern Cloud Platforms Help Empower Communities

Modular, cloud-based health administration platforms can give communities of all sizes a new advantage. Three characteristics matter most for communities considering self-administration.

Automation	<p>Automation reduces administrative burden without removing human judgment. It brings gains in processing speed and accuracy when routine eligibility checks and claim adjudication are automated, freeing skilled staff to focus on complex cases and exceptions rather than repetitive data entry. Applied well, automation does not replace the administrator; it clears the routine work off their desk so their judgment is reserved for the cases that need it.</p>
Configurable, modular platforms	<p>Configurable, modular platforms scale to population size rather than requiring population-scale budgets. Where legacy systems often assumed a large, fixed customer base, modular SaaS platforms let a jurisdiction adopt only the modules it needs today. Pharmacy and dental could come first, for example, with more capability, such as vision or mental health claims, added as the program grows. This also allows billing models to scale with membership, rather than requiring the same fixed investment regardless of size.</p>
Standards-based interoperability	<p>Standards-based interoperability protects a community's long-term flexibility. Platforms built on open standards such as HL7 FHIR can exchange data securely with pharmacies, clinics, and other providers without locking a jurisdiction into a single proprietary data format. Combined with cloud hosting, this also reduces the IT infrastructure burden on program staff and supports the kind of Nation-based data control that data sovereignty frameworks are designed to protect.</p>

Two Communities, Two Paths to Independent Administration

The following examples are drawn from Maximus Canada's work supporting self-governing health programs.

CASE STUDY

A Self-Governing Inuit Jurisdiction

- Has administered its own Non-Insured Health Benefits program for nearly 20 years as a self-governing Inuit jurisdiction.
- Supports roughly 7,200 beneficiaries who are located across Canada, not concentrated in a single region.
- Uses a shared platform for Beneficiary Management, Provider Registration, Dental, and Pharmacy & Supplementary Benefits claims, processing claims from wherever its members happen to live.
- Has partnered with the same claims automation platform for approximately 15 of its 20 years of self-governance.

As a jurisdiction with members located coast-to-coast, the community also needed to support members wherever they lived, while keeping eligibility and claims rules consistent.

CASE STUDY

A First Nation Health Commission in Alberta

- Represents roughly 10,000 members, and recently signed a long-term agreement to modernize health benefit administration.
- Previously relied on four separate, unintegrated systems to manage its claims, some more than a decade old.
- Consolidating Beneficiary Management, Provider Registration, Pharmacy, Dental, Vision, and Mental Health Counselling claims onto a single cloud platform.
- Delivering the transition through a joint "two-in-the-box" model, pairing each community role with a technology counterpart so operational knowledge and local ownership grow alongside the new system.

Here, the priority was consolidation: replacing a fragmented, aging technology footprint with one connected platform, while building new capability the community had identified as a gap in its members' care.

Considerations for Jurisdictions Exploring Self-Administration

Communities exploring this path are rarely starting from a blank page, and a handful of practical considerations can streamline transition.

- **Start with the foundation.** Eligibility, enrolment, and provider access form the base that every claim type depends on; getting these right first makes each additional benefit category, such as dental, pharmacy, and vision, a lower risk to introduce.
- **Look for platforms priced and configured for your population.** A system that issues invoices based on millions of beneficiaries will rarely fit a program serving a few thousand. Find platforms that scale to meet you and your community.
- **Embrace interoperability.** Platforms built on open standards make it easier to keep control of program data in line with community-defined governance principles, rather than leaving that data siloed in a vendor's or third party's proprietary format.
- **Plan for the people, not just the platform.** Automation changes how staff spend their time, not whether they are needed. A change management approach that is transparent about what is shifting, and why, will help your teams champion the change.

Conclusion

Self-administration of a health program is about communities defining and delivering care on their own terms. The technology decisions that follow should serve that goal. Modern, modular, cloud-based platforms can give communities and jurisdictions new freedoms for self-governance. These platforms can remove some of the processing delays, fragmented systems, budgetary issues, and data incompatibility, which might otherwise face community leaders.

Medigent is the health administration foundation that can support your community's health program needs today and grow with it for years to come.



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Delivered by Canadians. Powered by Experience.

Alain Tremblay, Vice President, Product, leads the ongoing growth of Medigent, the best-in-class suite of health administration, claims automation and adjudication modules. Under his guidance, the Maximus Product Division helps jurisdictions modernize their healthcare systems by integrating Medigent into their unique health environments, supported by continued innovation and end-to-end customer care.



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About Maximus Canada

Maximus Canada helps move people, technology, and government forward. It manages, modernizes, and expands public programs, with a focus on customer experience services, technology & consulting services, and health services. Driving their results is a citizen-centric approach, which is paired with modern digital solutions to reveal new efficiencies and improve the citizen experience.

About Medigent®

Medigent is the leading cloud-based solution to modernize health administration automation and is wholly owned by Maximus Canada. Learn more; visit: www.medigent.ca

Sources

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3. Indigenous Services Canada. Minister Gull-Masty Announces \$738.9 Million to Strengthen First Nations Health, Governance, and Emergency Management. March 2026. <https://www.canada.ca/en/indigenous-services-canada/news/2026/03/minister-gull-masty-announces-7389-million-to-strengthen-first-nations-health-governance-and-emergency-management.html>