



# COMMUNITY UPDATE

*The latest from Northern Health*

**July 2024**

Welcome to the Northern Health community update! Stay connected as we bring you monthly updates and valuable insight into health care in the North.

## **Heat alerts and wildfire resources**

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### **Understanding Heat Alerts: what they mean**

June 20 was the first official day of summer, and we're getting some warmer weather to mark the beginning of the season. While temperatures are still fairly mild in BC this week, summer brings the potential for heat events. Knowing what the different types of heat alerts mean for you and your community can help you prepare. Taking steps ahead of time to make sure you can stay cool can help keep yourself and others safe in the heat.

Visit <https://Gov.bc.ca/ExtremeHeat> for resources to help you prepare.

### **Helpful wildfire resources**

Wildfire season has arrived and we have compiled a list of resources to help you stay informed and prepared:

- [Northern Health – Wildfires and your health](#)
- [Extreme heat and heat warnings](#)
- [Wildfire preparedness](#)
- [Latest air quality advisories](#)
- [BC Wildfire fire list](#)
- [Emergency Info BC Advisories](#)
- [Heat Warning in BC](#)
- [Disaster stress](#)
- [BCCDC – Wildfire smoke](#)
- [FireSmoke Canada – BC smoke forecasts](#)
- [Recover after a wildfire – Re-entering your home or business](#)

### **Wildfire smoke information**

Poor air quality can be harmful to health, especially for those with chronic conditions like

asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), heart disease, diabetes, and for pregnant people, infants and children, and older adults.

Take steps to keep you and your loved ones safe and healthy:

- Reduce the amount of time spent outdoors
- Stay hydrated
- Avoid rigorous outdoor activities, like exercise
- Keep windows closed in vehicles and homes
- If you have one, use an indoor air cleaner or filtration system, or recirculate indoor air in a forced air system that is filtered (turn on your furnace fan)

For more information on how to stay safe in smoky conditions visit the [BCCDC Wildfire Smoke page](#).

### **Staying informed during an emergency**

When emergencies happen, people need up-to-date information. The newly designed [EmergencyInfoBC](#) website shares this information in one place so it's easy to access on a computer or phone.

New features include the latest evacuation alerts and orders at the top, an interactive map, and links to other resources that will help you prepare for an emergency. You can also share information directly from the website to Facebook or X. By sharing from the website, you can be sure it's verified and up-to-date.

Visit <https://EmergencyInfoBC.ca> now, before you need it, so you know where to look in case of an emergency.

## **Organization and community news**

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### **Terrace and Kitimat students explore health care careers in collaborative program**

Adventures in Health Care Northwest was recently held in Terrace, with students from both Terrace and Kitimat taking part. A Rotary initiative, this three-day program provides a hands-on learning experience for students in grades 10 and 11 to explore careers in the health care field. [Read the full story on our website](#).

### **The BC Cancer Screening and Prevention mobile mammography coach is coming to a community near you!**

Women 40+ book your free screening mammogram while they're in town. Don't have a primary care provider? You can still access screening. Call 1-800-663-9203 to book an appointment. [Learn more](#). See the Clinic Locator for the appointment location and most up-to-date visit dates.

### **National Indigenous Peoples Day**

On June 21, for National Indigenous Peoples Day, we recognize and celebrate the history, heritage, resilience and diversity of First Nations, Inuit and Métis across Canada.

For generations, many Indigenous groups and communities have celebrated their culture and heritage on June 21 or around that time of year because of the significance of the summer solstice as the longest day of the year.

National Aboriginal Day, now National Indigenous Peoples Day, was announced in 1996 by then Governor General of Canada, Roméo LeBlanc, through the [Proclamation Declaring June 21 of Each Year as National Aboriginal Day](#). For more information, please visit the Government of Canada [website](#).

## Appropriate use of the emergency department and options for accessing health care

Emergency rooms in the North are under increasing strain. Help take the pressure off the doctors and nurses that serve our communities by seeking care through these options, when you can:

- Call your family care provider
- Visit an urgent primary care centre or primary care clinic if one is available in your community
- Check out [HealthLinkBC.ca](https://www.healthlinkbc.ca) or speak to a nurse at 8-1-1
- Talk to your local pharmacist about their expanded services [Book an appointment with a pharmacist](#).
- Book an appointment with the [Northern Health Virtual Clinic](#) at 1-844-645-7811
- Call 1-855-344-3800 to book an appointment with the [First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day](#)

For life-threatening emergencies like chest pains, difficulty breathing, broken bones, or severe bleeding, the ER is the place to be. Call 9-1-1 for transport to your nearest available and appropriate facility. For more information, please visit our [service interruptions page](#).

## Have you heard about #SnapsByStaff?

Introducing #SnapsByStaff! Once a week we'll be sharing photos of our picturesque Northern BC communities taken by none other than our Northern Health staff members! For our first photo, we have a [beautiful Prince Rupert sunset](#) taken by Suraj Gopal, Relational Security Services Officer.

## Health Human Resources (HHR)

The items in this Health Human Resources (HHR) section highlight some of NH's efforts to strengthen health care in the North by improving staff recruitment and retention as part of [BC's Health Human Resources Strategy](#).

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## New Recruitment and Retention Incentives

Northern Health has several incentives available to help recruit and retain staff!

### **Provincial Rural Retention Incentive (PRRI)**

An expanded list of NH positions now qualify for the [Provincial Rural Retention Incentive \(PRRI\)](#). The PRRI of up to \$2,000/quarter (to a max of \$8,000 for the year) will be available to regular full and part-time employees in communities outside of Prince George, based on hours worked up to 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE). Connect with NH Recruitment at [nhjobs@northernhealth.ca](mailto:nhjobs@northernhealth.ca) for more information on eligibility.

### **Rural and Remote Recruitment Incentive**

Northern Health launched a new \$30,000 [Rural and Remote Recruitment Incentive \(RRRI\)](#) for eligible positions under the Nurses' Bargaining Association (NBA), Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association (HSPBA), Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA), and Community Bargaining Association (CBA). A 2-year return of service is required for eligible positions new to a rural and remote community, who previously worked in urban/metro centre, or who are new to BC's public health sector.

### **GoHealth BC Recruitment and Retention Incentive**

GoHealth BC is now offering a recruitment and retention incentive designed to encourage nurses to join the BC public sector. Eligible nurses who join the program between April 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025 can receive up to \$15,000! [Visit our website for more information](#) and share with anyone who might be interested.

### **Bursaries Supporting Training and Licensing**

Northern Health has a number of financial supports available to students and new graduates! [Visit our website for more information](#) and share with anyone who might be interested.

#### **Priority Program Bursaries:**

- \$2,000 per year in tuition credits for students enrolled in select undersubscribed programs at a public post-secondary institution. Programs include perfusionist, medical lab technologist, medical radiological technologist, magnetic resonance imaging technologist, nuclear medicine technologist, radiation therapist, respiratory therapist, environmental health officer, advanced care paramedics, primary care paramedics, clinical counsellors, biomedical engineering technologists, and rehabilitation assistants.
- \$5,000 per year in tuition credits for Indigenous students enrolled in select programs at a public post-secondary institution. Programs include physiotherapist, occupational therapist, speech language pathologist, and dietitian.

#### **Nursing Student Tuition Credit:**

Nursing students enrolled in Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), Bachelor of Psychiatric Nursing (BPN), and Practical Nursing (PN) programs in public postsecondary institutions (PSIs) between September 2023 and August 2026 are eligible to receive a tuition credit of \$2,000 each program year. Indigenous students enrolled in the BSN program at public PSIs during this same period will receive an additional \$5,000 tuition credit per program year. The

\$5,000 tuition credit for BSN represents an expansion of funding already available to Indigenous students in BPN and PN programs.

### **New Grad Licensing Exam Bursary:**

Funding is being advanced to health authorities to support new graduate allied health professionals, Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses, and Licensed Practical Nurses with a \$500 bursary to help cover costs associated with exam licensing or certification exams. This funding is ongoing, retroactively applied to January 1, 2023. Nursing eligibility is limited to new graduates who take a guaranteed offer of regular employment (temporary or permanent) for at least six months at a minimum of 0.7 full-time equivalent (FTE).

### **Jago Award recipient: Respect – Vanessa Kinch**

The Jago Award for Respect is presented to an individual or team who exemplifies outstanding behaviours and actions that demonstrate NH's value of respect. The 2024 Jago award recipient for the respect category is Vanessa Kinch. [Read more here.](#)

### **Recruiters on the Road**

NH's recruiters travelled all over recently, speaking with health care professionals locally, nationally, and internationally! Their travels included:

- Adventures in Healthcare presentation - Terrace, BC
- Canadian Association of Occupational Therapy (CAOT) Conference – Halifax, NS
- School District 81 Career Days, Fort Nelson Secondary School – Fort Nelson, BC
- Alberta Association of Nurses Conference – Edmonton, AB
- Healthcare Travelling Roadshow – Fort Nelson, BC
- Canadian Society of Respiratory Therapists – Banff, AB
- SAIT Classroom Presentation – Calgary, AB
- Adventures in Healthcare – Prince George, BC
- Grow Our Own Presentations and Hecate Strait Employment Development Society presentation – Prince Rupert, BC
- Speech and Audiology Conference – Vancouver, BC
- Adventures in Healthcare NE – Fort St. John, BC
- Security fair – Vancouver, BC
- Grow our Own presentation – Terrace, BC
- NTI American Critical Care Nurses Association – Denver, CO
- Prince Rupert Port Authority Career Fair - Prince Rupert, BC
- UNBC OT student connect – Prince George, BC
- Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists Conference – St John, NB
- Canadian Council of Cardiovascular Nurses – Calgary, AB
- CASN Biennial Canadian Nursing Education Conference – Calgary, AB
- Canadian Association of Pharmacy Technicians – Niagara Falls, ON
- Metis Nation Health Promotion Gathering – Fort St. John, BC
- BC Health Care Careers UK Travelling Roadshow – United Kingdom

To see highlights of these events and conferences, check out [Northern Health Careers.](#)

## Capital Projects

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### Celebrating and honouring National Indigenous Peoples Day at DCDH

On June 21, staff and patients at the Dawson Creek and District Hospital (DCDH) took part in a series of celebrations and initiatives to honour and acknowledge [National Indigenous History Month](#) and [National Indigenous Peoples Day](#).

Stan Fraser, a local Indigenous artist and the Cultural Advisor at the [Nawican Bergeron Youth and Cultural Centre](#), created a dreamcatcher which is painted in the medicine wheel colours and webbed with nylon string. The dreamcatcher was installed on the roof of the main entrance of the hospital with the purpose of catching negative energies and releasing good energies to patients, visitors, and staff entering and exiting the hospital. It also gives hope to Indigenous people entering the facility that there is a spiritual method to help them during their health care journey and remind them that they are not alone when dealing with modern medicine and sickness. For more information on the ceremony and additional photos, please visit our [stories website](#).

### Dawson Creek & District Hospital Replacement Project

The project is continuing to progress well and on schedule! The building is visibly starting to take shape – check out the difference between the [May](#) and [June](#) progress photos. At the end of July, an exciting milestone will be achieved when the last concrete pour for the structural suspended slabs is complete. Work is now underway for waterproofing and backfilling the perimeter of the building.

### Highlight – Maternity Unit

The maternity unit in the new hospital includes four labour, delivery, recovery, and post-partum (LDRP) rooms – all of which are private rooms with ensuite washrooms. Two of the rooms have birthing tubs for water births and one room is bariatric with a larger floor plan that can support twin births. The LDRP model of care allows patients to experience labour, delivery and post-partum all while staying in the same room. The unit also features a quiet room for families and visitors, a holding nursery with advanced equipment, and an infant security system. Visit Let's Talk DCDH to [learn more about the key features of the maternity patient rooms](#).

If your group or organization would like members of our team to share a presentation or set up an information booth at an event, please reach out to [LetsTalkDCDH@northernhealth.ca](mailto:LetsTalkDCDH@northernhealth.ca).

### Mills Memorial Hospital Replacement Project

The project continues to rapidly approach substantial completion in late August. Yes, that's next month! Substantial completion is the point where the building is complete and Northern Health takes ownership of it. This also marks the point we can get our staff in to start training and orienting themselves on the new building. Following just a few short months after substantial completion we'll be officially opening the new Mills Memorial Hospital for patients late November! We can't wait for you to see all the work that has gone into the new hospital.

## Northern Health Stories highlights

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The [Northern Health Stories site](#) is a great place to read about what's going on in Northern Health – people, places, projects, and more! Here are some recent highlights:

- [Fraser Bell reflects on nearly 20 years of working for Northern Health](#)
- [Prince Rupert in-house security team engages patients, provides trauma-informed security services](#)
- [Smoky times: How communities can help young families with wildfire smoke](#)
- [Mobile Ultrasound Program - On the move in the North](#)
- [National Physiotherapy Month: Kristen Ward's story](#)
- [2024 World No Commercial Tobacco Day](#)
- [Dr. Charles Jago Awards – Recognizing Northern Health Employees who live our Values](#)
- [Registration is open! Provincial Perinatal Substance Use Conference - Oct 2024](#)
- [Free webinar: Food costs and climate change impact stories from remote BC communities on June 27th, 2024](#)

## Ministry highlights

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Including highlights from the [Ministry of Health](#) and [Ministry of Mental Health & Addictions](#) that are of interest to all BC residents:

- [Province strengthens cancer care and expands access](#)
- [Patient safety enhanced as more B.C. health colleges amalgamate](#)
- [B.C. improves access to supports for youth, young adults experiencing psychosis](#)
- [Minister's statement on lives lost to poisoned drugs in April](#)

## Public Health

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### Northern Health Communities E-Brief – July 2024

The E-Brief is a monthly newsletter sharing resources, learning opportunities, and grant funding that supports community health in Northern BC. [Check out what's new for July 2024.](#)

To subscribe to this monthly newsletter, please email [healthycommunities@northernhealth.ca](mailto:healthycommunities@northernhealth.ca) with the subject line "subscribe."

## Overdose prevention and response

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### Text alerts for toxic drugs available in the North

In response to the toxic drug emergency, a text message alert system was launched across Northern Health. The system sends text alerts with timely information and up-to-date resources to people who use drugs, those who support them, and community members. It's a public health measure to prevent drug poisonings and deaths and provides. Opt-in by texting **JOIN to ALERTS (253787)**. [More information.](#)