



COMMUNITY UPDATE

The latest from Northern Health

March 2025

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

Want more frequent updates? [Follow Northern Health on Facebook](#) where we share news, stories, tips and ideas on healthy living.

Organization and community news

Improving patient care for residents in Quesnel and the surrounding areas – Quesnel Maternity Clinic opens at GR Baker Hospital

Maternity clients in Quesnel and the surrounding areas are now being supported by a team of care providers at the newly opened Quesnel Maternity Clinic, located at GR Baker Hospital.

“Receiving consistent maternity care close to home makes a huge difference for pregnant people,” said Josie Osborne, Minister of Health. “That’s why we are building a seamless system where team based, culturally safe perinatal care is accessible to everyone, no matter where they live. This new clinic will ensure that a team of medical practitioners is available to support the entire cycle of a patient’s health care needs – from conception through the post-natal period, strengthening healthcare for families in the region.” [Read the rest of the story on our website.](#)

Nurse Practitioners: Expanding the delivery of primary and acute care

In the community of Fort St. John, there are five nurse practitioners (NP) who support primary and acute care services alongside a supportive group of physicians, nurses, and other health care professionals.

Shannon McRae works in the Fort St. John Family Practice Associates clinic while Brody McGee, Raelene Marceau, Jessalyn Moskalyk, and Mikaela Pond work at the Fort St. John Primary Care Clinic.

Not all nursing careers look the same and each NP brings a unique knowledge and skill set based on their own history, training, and experience. [Read more on our Stories site.](#)

Spirit the (cardboard) Caribou, goes on an adventure

The new [Ksyen Regional Hospital](#) will feature state-of-the-art technology, including patient self-check-in kiosks for scheduled appointments. To help promote these new kiosks, Spirit the (cardboard) Caribou was brought in to show where the new kiosks will go and what they look like. However, he went on a little adventure first... [read more on our Stories site](#).

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

Emergency rooms in the North can face increasing strain at this time of year. 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](#) or speak to a nurse at 8-1-1
- Talk to your local pharmacist about their expanded services, and [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](#).

Stay prepared for winter weather and storms

It may be feeling like spring is not far off, but severe weather like snow, hail, blizzards, high winds or heavy rain can still happen at this time of year, without warning and affecting your safety in different ways. Extreme cold can be hazardous, and the risk increases the more time you spend outdoors.

Weather alerts and forecasts are issued by Environment Canada. For keeping up with extreme weather alerts:

- Follow [Canada public weather alerts](#)
- Download the [WeatherCAN](#) app to receive weather alert notifications in your area.
- Check out [DriveBC](#) for road conditions and alerts in your area

Visit the Government of BC website for resources on the following:

- [Know the risks](#)
- [As winter weather arrives](#)
- [Winter Driving](#)

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](#).

Health Career Access Program (HCAP) applications now open!

Know someone looking to start their health care career? Applications for Northern Health's Health Career Access Program (HCAP) in Burns Lake and Fort St. James are now open! The upcoming cohort starts August 24, 2025. [Visit our job site to apply](#).

HCAP gives applicants with little to no health care experience an opportunity to become trained as a Health Care Support Worker and be paid while they are enrolled in the program. Tuition is covered by the province with a 12 month return of service.

[Learn more about the HCAP program on our website](#) or connect with our recruitment team at nhjobs@northernhealth.ca.

A great turnout for the 9th annual Grow Our Own professional mentoring event in Fort St. John!

The "Grow Our Own" program aims to increase awareness and engagement in health care careers among grade 10-12 students in Northern BC, offering presentations and opportunities to learn about diverse career options.

Earlier this month, the 9th annual mentoring event in Fort St. John gave North Peace Secondary School students the chance to learn about different career paths by interviewing local professionals, including some great ambassadors for Northern Health!

Jillian (Lead for Professional Practice Strategy in Social Work) and Amanda (registered nurse and lead instructor of the local UNBC baccalaureate nursing program) spent the day having meaningful conversations and inspiring students to consider health care as a career!

[Visit our social media pages to see photos from this year's event](#).

Staff Spotlight: Rebecca Landry, RN – Fort Nelson

Meet Rebecca Landry, a new graduate Registered Nurse (RN) based in Fort Nelson, BC.

Rebecca was one of the first to take advantage of the Rural and Remote Recruitment Incentive, which has opened doors to diverse specialties and unexpected career paths. Despite her start date being delayed due to wildfire evacuations, her experience in a rural setting has not only broadened her skills but also shaped her into a well-rounded health care professional.

Rebecca's dedication to her family, including her two children and husband, is at the heart of everything she does. [Watch the video for the full story!](#)

Exploring health care careers: 2025 Adventures in Health Care Program

[Adventures in Healthcare](#) (AIHC) returns to give high school students an exciting, hands-on introduction to diverse career opportunities within the health care field. On March 11, the program kicked off in the Northeast, welcoming 36 students from Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, Chetwynd, and Tumbler Ridge.

As part of the day, the team at the Dawson Creek and District Hospital led students in an interactive discussion about their interests in health care, what they hope to see at the new hospital once it opens, and what qualities they think make a great team.

Curious what the students had to say? [Learn more about the event and read their answers on our Let's Talk site!](#) AIHC events will continue this spring in the Northwest, Quesnel, and Prince George.

Recruiters on the road

NH's staff and physician recruitment teams have been out in full swing this fall, sharing what kinds of opportunities set Northern BC apart. During January, the recruiters have attended or presented at:

- Feb 27-Mar 2 – **Anesthesiology Summit** – Whistler, BC
- Feb 28 – **Doc Talk, Fraser Lake** – Prince George, BC
- Feb 28-Mar 2 – **Canadian Digestive Disease Week** - Quebec City, QC
- Mar 3 – **Grow Our Own: Presentation at DP Todd Secondary School** – Prince George, BC
- Mar 4 - **UNBC NorthWorks Career Fair** - Prince George, BC
- Mar 5 – **CNC NorthWorks Career Fair** – Prince George, BC
- Mar 5 – **Virtual Hiring Event: Nurses** – Online
- Mar 6 – **Grow Our Own: Professional Mentoring Event** – Fort St. John, BC
- Mar 6 – **Dinner for Pharmacy Students: University of Saskatchewan** – Saskatoon, SK
- Mar 17 – **Rehabilitation Sciences Job Fair: University of Manitoba** – Winnipeg, Manitoba
- Mar 24 - GoHealth BC held an Indeed virtual information session for nurses in the US. Applicants were able to ask questions about travel nursing in Canada and connect with members of the GoHealth BC team. Check out [information for international applicants](#) on our website.
- Mar 25 – **UBC Nurse Fair – Nurse Practitioners** – Vancouver, BC
- Mar 28 – **Doc Talk, Kitimat** – Prince George, BC

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

Capital projects

University Hospital of Northern British Columbia - acute care tower

People in Northern BC will soon have better access to healthcare at the University Hospital of Northern BC (UHNBC). On the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh, this \$1.66 billion project includes a new acute care tower to enhance services for Northerners. With an aging population and a 20% expected increase in the Northern Health coverage area over the next two decades, this expansion is crucial.

The Early Works phase of the project started in spring 2024 with the construction of a 471-space parkade. Following this, the services at the Northern Interior Health Unit (NIHU) will be relocated to make way for the construction of the acute care tower on that site. [Continue reading on our Let's Talk site.](#)

Dawson Creek & District Hospital replacement project

Community Open House Recap: On March 12, we hosted an [Open House](#), welcoming over 50 enthusiastic community members who were interested in learning about the exciting developments of the new hospital. Attendees engaged in meaningful conversations with project team representatives, discussing various aspects of the new hospital and sharing their hopes and expectations. Common themes from these discussions included the importance of adequate staffing, a fully functional emergency department, supportive services for mental health and addictions, and state-of-the-art facilities.

We're hiring in Dawson Creek! Discover your health care career at the newest hospital in the Northeast! The new Dawson Creek & District Hospital will be open for patients in Spring 2027. There are a number of health care and support positions that need to be filled at the current and future hospital. Download a copy of the [DCDH Employment Flyer](#) to learn more.

Northern Health Stories highlights

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:

- [An unforgettable night of teamwork and support](#)
- [Celebrating Ryan McMaster: Preceptor extraordinaire](#)
- [HEABC Award celebrates commitment to nurse health and safety](#)
- [Enhanced health care access coming to Northern BC | Stories](#)
- [The sit-down family meal: a thing of the past?](#)

Ministry highlights

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

- [British Columbia is taking action to attract doctors, nurses from U.S.](#)
- [B.C. improving care for people with mental-health, substance-use challenges](#)
- [Parliamentary secretary's statement on B.C. Seniors Care Providers Day](#)

Public Health

Northern Health Communities E-Brief – March 2025

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 March 2025.](#)

To subscribe to this monthly newsletter, please email healthycommunities@northernhealth.ca with the subject line "subscribe."

Province continues to ensure people are protected from COVID-19, measles

Starting Tuesday, April 8, 2025, free additional COVID-19 vaccines will be available to people in B.C., with a focus on those who are at higher risk of severe illness.

"While the peak of respiratory illnesses has passed, influenza, COVID-19 and RSV are still here, and we must continue to practise healthy habits to keep illnesses from spreading," said Dr. Bonnie Henry, provincial health officer for British Columbia. "This is particularly important as spring break ends, a period when many people have been travelling. This is a reminder to stay home if you are sick, and if you need medical care, to call ahead so you can be seen safely." [Read the full story here.](#)

BC residents advised to check their immunization records ahead of spring travel

With two measles cases reported in the province in people returning from travel, public health officials are reminding people in BC to check that their immunizations are up to date, particularly if you plan to travel this spring. [Read more on the BC Centre for Disease Control website.](#)

Northern Health offers the measles vaccine by appointment. Many primary care, walk-in clinics and pharmacies carry the measles vaccine. Please call ahead to make sure the vaccine is available before you visit. Find an [immunization clinic](#) near you.

Respiratory and other illnesses are still circulating

The provincial health officer has [declared an end to the 2024-25 respiratory illness season](#), including additional masking in health care settings.

However, respiratory illness is still circulating in the North and it's important to continue your [healthy habits](#). Northern Health posts information about outbreaks of illnesses and infectious diseases in hospitals, long-term care, and other health facilities in the Northern Health region, when an outbreak is declared by a Medical Health Officer.

[Visit this page for more information](#), and if you intend to visit a facility where outbreak measures are in place, consider postponing your visit until the outbreak is over in order to help keep you and your loved ones healthy.

Overdose prevention and response

Drug advisory: Northern Health region – March 27, 2025

Northern Health has issued a drug advisory for the Northern Health region. A round white pill sold as “Oxycocet” has tested positive for isotonitazene. Isotonitazene or “Nitazene” is a synthetic opioid that is equal or more toxic than fentanyl and is not detected on fentanyl test strips. [For your safety, and for more information, visit our website.](#)

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.](#)

[Further information and local supports are available on our website.](#)