

# Northern BC Healthy K to 12 Schools Newsletter

ISSUE 7 | FALL 2024



Information for Northern BC schools,  
students, and families



**northern health**  
the northern way of caring



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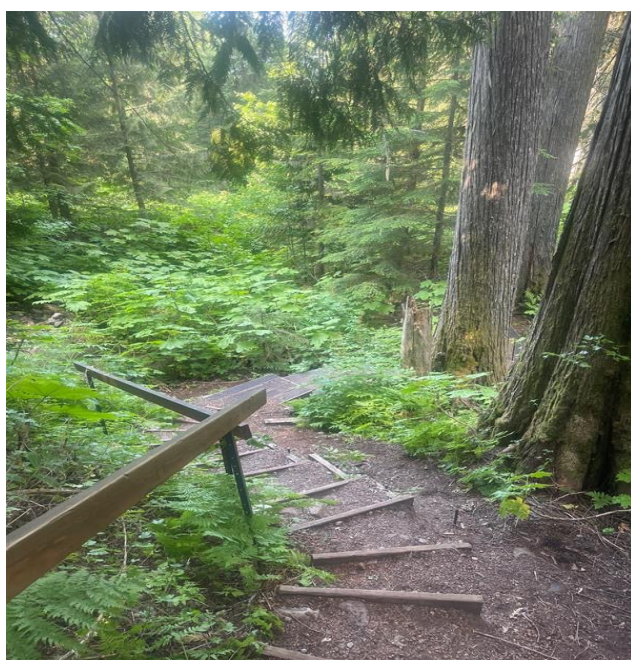
## FOR ALL SCHOOLS

### Using QR codes

In this newsletter, we use QR codes for various websites and resources. Here are steps to help you:



- **Step 1:** Open the Camera App from your mobile device (either on the home screen, control centre, or lock screen).
- **Step 2:** Hold your device so the QR code opens in the viewfinder and wait until you see a notification pop up with a link.
- **Step 3:** Click on the notification to open the link associated with the QR code.



Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut Provincial Park,  
nestled in the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh.  
Photo submitted by: Randi Leanne Parsons

### Territory acknowledgment

Northern Health acknowledges with gratitude that our work takes place on the territories of the Tlingit, Tahltan, Nisga'a, Gitksan, Tsimshian, Haisla, Haida, Wet'suwet'en, Carrier (Dakelh), Sekani (Tse'khene), Dane-zaa, Cree, Saulteau and Dene Peoples.

### People and partnership acknowledgment

We recognize the 11 Métis Chartered Communities, as well as the Inuit, urban, and away from home Indigenous peoples on these lands.

We are thankful for the continued opportunity to work in partnership to optimize the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples whom we serve.

### Commitment statement to Truth and Reconciliation

Northern Health (NH) acknowledges the harms experienced by Indigenous peoples accessing the health system. We are committed to new ways of being, through building healthy and trusting relationships with Indigenous communities, families, individuals, and employees. These commitments are interwoven throughout the strategic priorities and are integral to the success of Northern Health.



For more information on NH's commitments, visit NH's [Strategic Plan](#).



## Services to schools

Healthy schools help to protect the health and safety of our children and youth in the North.

For an overview of the current Northern Health (NH) services that are available to schools, visit the [NH School and youth health](#) webpage.



The types of services offered for families with school-age children and youth include:

- Follow up for reportable contagious illnesses (like measles or chickenpox).
- Guidance and inspection regarding food safety, water, sanitation, and air quality.
- Immunizations at Kindergarten entry (4-6 years of age), Grade 6, and Grade 9.



If you or your family need to connect with a health care provider, connect with the [health unit](#) in your community.

**Note:** Some services may vary from community to community and school to school.



For more information on Population and Public Health supports, review [Northern Health Supports for Schools 2024/2025](#).



### Health education and promotion content to support curriculum are available for:

- Alcohol, smoking and vaping
- Injury prevention
- Mental health and wellness
- Nutrition and healthy eating
- Physical activity
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Support for children with potentially life-threatening medical conditions.
- Support for substance use, including access to harm reduction supplies.

## Environmental health



### Cleaning and disinfecting for schools

Handwashing is a key defense against spreading infections. Encourage students to wash their hands after using the bathroom and before every snack and meal.

Visit the BC Center for Disease Control (BCCDC) webpage to learn more about how to perform [hand hygiene](#). Regular cleaning and disinfection can help prevent the spread of communicable diseases.



For more information on communicable disease prevention, visit [Communicable Disease Prevention in K-12 Schools](#).



For more information about Environmental health, visit [Environmental health | Northern Health](#).

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### Air quality in the winter

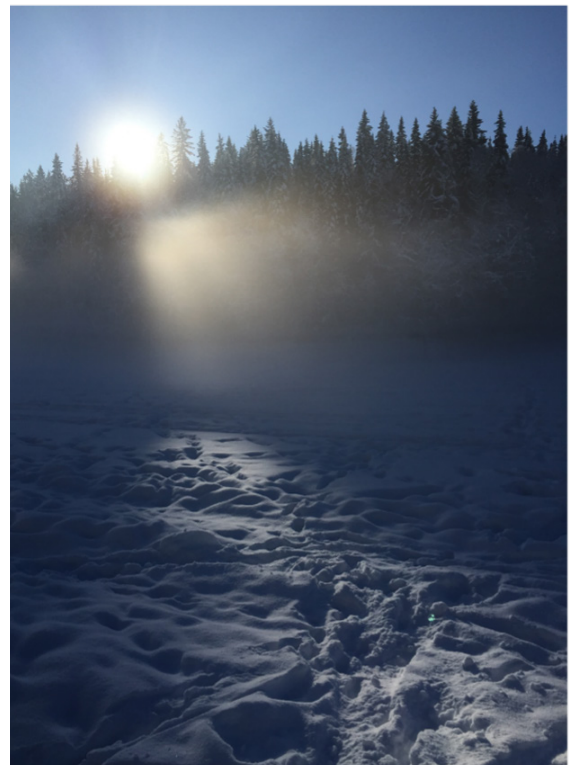
Did you know that residential wood smoke and idling vehicles contribute to winter air pollution near schools? The cool air can trap these pollutants at ground level and cause health effects.



For more information about clean burning practices, visit [Northern Health – Wood burning](#)



For more information about idling, visit [NRC – Idling – Frequently Asked Questions](#)



## 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey results



The Big Picture: An overview of the 2023 BC Adolescent Health Services (AHS) [provincial results](#) has been released.

Around 38,500 young people aged 12–19 in 59 of BC's 60 school districts completed the 2023 BC AHS. The survey was developed in consultation with young people, parents, and other experts in youth health. It was pilot-tested with diverse young people in communities across BC before being administered by public health nurses and allied health professionals to students in public schools in the spring of 2023.



## Mental health & wellness

### Join the Stigma-Free Mental Health Movement!

The [Stigma-Free Mental Health Society](#) offers essential mental health tools and training to combat stigma in schools. Their comprehensive resources, used in classrooms or at home, empower educators, counselors, parents, and students to advocate for mental health and reduce stigma.

#### [Stigma-Free School Program](#)

1. Comprehensive Student Mental Health Toolkit: Register for no-cost.
2. Live Virtual Stigma-Free Presentations: Educate and Connection.
3. Professional Development (Pro-D) Sessions: Equip educators with effective mental health education strategies.
4. Stigma-Free Clubs: Encourage peer-led mental health advocacy.



Contact the Stigma-Free Mental Health Society today to learn more.

[Stigma-Free School Program | Mental Health Tools \(stigmafreementalhealth.com\)](#)



## Establishing safe, caring, & respectful digital communities



[erase Family Sessions \(saferschoolstogether.com\)](https://saferschoolstogether.com)

were designed to support families and caregivers navigate the digital world. Some of the most prominent concerns currently surrounding use of social media platforms, smartphones, and artificial intelligence will be discussed.

\*Remote sessions are coming soon\*

Recommended for Parents/Caregivers/ Grandparents and youth aged 10 and up as a way to facilitate the conversation of safe and caring use of technology at home and in the community (60 minute session).

**erase** | EXPECT RESPECT & A SAFE EDUCATION



[erase = expect respect & a safe education - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education/schools/erase)



[erase Family Sessions \(saferschoolstogether.com\)](https://saferschoolstogether.com)

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## Language matters!

Language matters is an introductory guide on mental health and substance use for educators, administrators, schools support staff and other personnel who work with children and youth in school communities.

This guide has been developed to facilitate conversations, build common understandings, and support practice by defining and discussing key mental health and substance use terms and topics.

Developing a common language and shared understanding of mental health and substance use terms and concepts can help to improve mental health literacy and reduce stigma.

This resource was developed in partnership with the BC Children's Hospital Health Promotion and Health Literacy Team, and the Ministry of Education and Childcare.



[Language Matters guide](#)



## BC Children's Hospital supports & resources for school communities

BC Children's School Mental Health Promotion team, Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre and Compass Mental Health Program offer a variety of free services, supports and resources for school communities.

[Learn more about how these teams can support school communities.](#)



### For School Professionals



[Health Promotion and Schools team](#) supports district-level champions and community

partners that work with school communities by providing resources, professional learning and consultation.



### For Parents and Caregivers



[BC Children's Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre](#) provides mental health and

substance use information, resources, and parent peer support to families across BC.

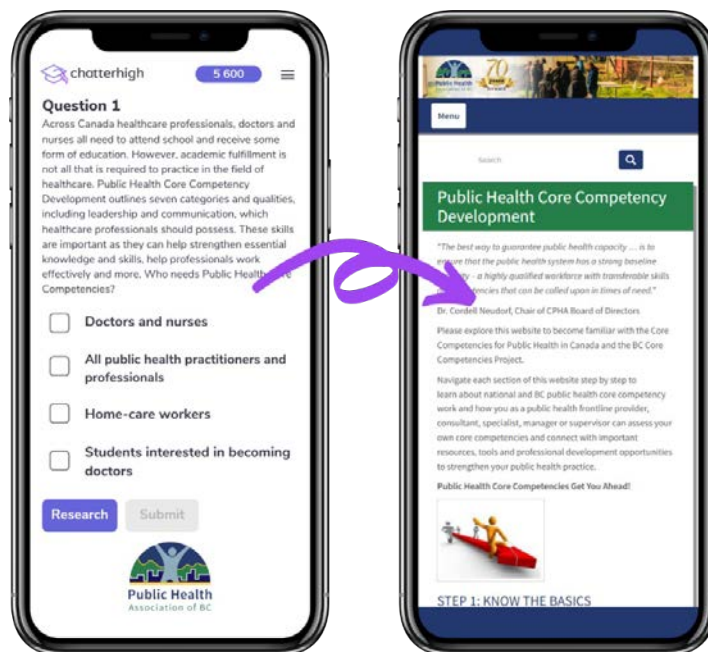


### For School Counsellors



[Compass Mental Health](#) connects community care providers across BC to

the information, advice and resources they need to provide timely and appropriate mental health and substance use care to children and youth close to home. Compass is a great resource for school counsellors and mental health clinicians, especially those in rural and remote schools.



## ChatterHigh

ChatterHigh is a gamified student engagement platform designed to deliver supplemental curriculum remotely or in the classroom. Our Mindful Module activity includes focused content on health, career pathways, financial literacy, and other essential future-planning topics.

Some exciting Mindful Modules are currently available to students in BC including:



### [Understanding Public Health in BC by PHABC](#)

Inform students about public health issues and initiatives across BC. These issues tackle everything from people that are unhoused and vaccination rates, to food insecurity and planetary health.



### [Connect to Careers in Care with BC Emergency Health Services](#)

Students explore a variety of career paths available, including how they work together to support the healthcare sector in British Columbia.



### [British Columbia Mental Health Resources](#)

Students learn all about mental health services and resources available for youth in British Columbia.

For a full list of available activities [visit our library](#) and [click here to create your account!](#)

## Injury prevention

### Pedestrian and road safety

As everyone starts heading back to school, our roads will be busier with buses, cyclists, pedestrians, and drivers.

ICBC has excellent resources for parents and educators to [teach road safety](#).



Here are some tips to help prepare your children and keep them safe as they walk or roll to school this year:

- Pre-plan and map out your route.
- Always use crosswalks and follow pedestrian/road signs.
- Make eye contact with drivers; never assume they see you.
- Limit your distractions; remove headphones and avoid using your phone while crossing roads.
- Watch for drivers turning right or left through crosswalks; look right and left before crossing.
- Walk with an adult or buddy.



#### Share the road!

A reminder for drivers that 30km is the speed limit in school and playground zones. Slow down and take extra caution around school buses. Driving slower allows you to see hazards better and react to them in time to avoid a crash.

### Concussion awareness

Did you know that there has been an update to the concussion recovery recommendations? As children head back to school and sports, it's important to remember that concussions can occur anywhere. Any blow to the head, face, neck, or body that jars the head can cause a concussion.

The BC Concussion Awareness Training Toolkit has recently launched their **NEW** online learning modules which are an excellent resource for parents, youth, and educators and to learn how to prevent, recognize, and manage a concussion.



Explore [CATT Online](#) to learn more.





### Winter outdoor safety

The kids are back in school, and winter is fast approaching. Activities such as skating and sledding can be great ways for everyone to have fun and stay healthy throughout the winter season, but it is important to keep safety in mind.

With climate change affecting our winter weather, remember to dress in layers, use extra caution around lakes, ponds, streams, and rivers, and to ensure that proper safety equipment is worn while out enjoying the snow and ice this year!



To learn more about winter outdoor safety, visit [AdventureSmart.ca](https://www.adventuresmart.ca).

### Playground safety

Play is an essential part of a healthy childhood. Sometimes play can lead to scrapes and bruises which is a normal part of growing up. Preventing more serious injuries, however, will ensure the play stays fun. Falls are common among children and youth. Always encourage safe play and the use of safety gear to avoid injuries related to falls.



Educators and parents of younger children can learn more about falls prevention and playground safety by visiting [HealthLinkBC-Playground safety](https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc/playground-safety).





## Dental health

### Preventing tooth decay for your child is very important.

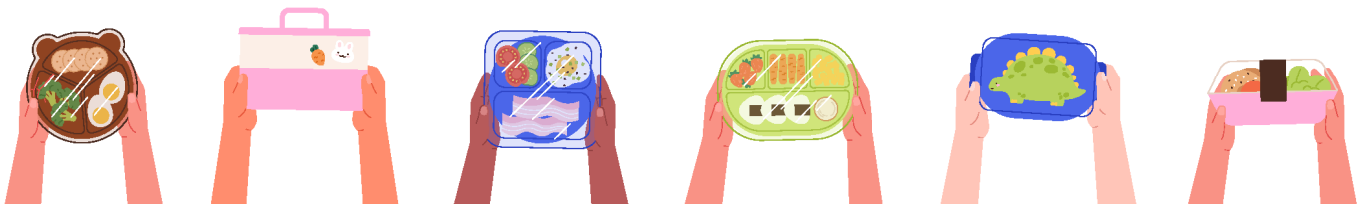
Aim to provide a balanced and nutritious diet. Nutritious food is good for both our general health and our dental health. Without the right nutrients, our teeth and gums can become more vulnerable to tooth decay and gum disease. Sugar is one of the main causes of tooth decay.

Here are some tips to cut down on sugar:

- Aim to offer sugar-free snacks.
- Avoid sugar-sweetened soft drinks and fruit juices.
- Drink water for thirst.
- Read lists of ingredients when you are grocery shopping. Honey, molasses, liquid invert sugar, glucose, and fructose are all types of sugar.
- If you are serving sweets, avoid sticky sweets. They cling to teeth and are harder to brush away.
- Eat sweets with a meal, not as a snack. The increased flow of saliva during a meal helps to wash away and dilute sugar.



For more information visit:  
[Canadian Dental Association Nutrition.](#)



## Physical activity

### The go-to tool for physical education: PLAYBuilder

Are you a coach, educator, or community leader looking to elevate your physical activity programs? PLAYBuilder is an easy-to-use online tool that builds physical literacy and activity lesson plans for you, so you can spend less time planning and more time playing.



For more information, visit [PLAY Builder website](https://playbuilder.ca)



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### ParticipACTION's 2024 children & youth report card

#### Rallying for resilience: Keeping children and youth active in a changing climate

Our latest report card shows that overall, 39% of Canadian children and youth ages 5-17 are getting the recommended hour of daily moderate-to-vigorous intensity activity. Schools are promising settings for increasing students' activity levels throughout the day. Check out the highlight report for more info and grades, as well as tips for parents/guardians and schools/educators to support student wellness through physical activity.



[ParticipACTION's 2024 Report Card](#)



[Parent/Guardian tip sheet](#)



[School/Educator tip sheet](#)





### Follow the path to active school travel

Students who walk, ride, or wheel to school – even partway – arrive more alert and ready to learn. Not only that, they tend to do better in school and do their part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while getting some physical activity in. It's a win, win, win.



BC Healthy Communities developed a handy infographic outlining how to get started and who to contact to plan for active travel at your school.

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### Heat and smoke safety guide

It can be tough to know how and when to prioritize activity and its benefits versus the risks of exposure to heat and poor air quality. The BC Alliance for Healthy Living and the BC Physical Activity for Health Collaborative designed the [Heat and Smoke Safety Guide](#) for coaches, recreation leaders and staff so they can protect themselves and participants as they continue to be active during inclement weather.



## School aged immunizations



It is important to be up to date on all childhood immunizations. You can check your child's vaccine status using the [Vaccination Status Indicator](#) or by contacting your [local health unit](#).

### Kindergarten entry immunizations

Children entering Kindergarten need booster vaccines for Tetanus/ Diphtheria/Pertussis/Polio (Tdap-IPV), Measles/ Mumps/Rubella/Chickenpox (MMRV), and any other childhood vaccinations that may be overdue.



[Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis, Polio \(Tdap-IPV\) Vaccine BC Health File](#)



[Measles, Mumps, Rubella and Varicella \(MMRV\) Vaccine BC Health File](#)

### Grade 6 immunizations

Children in grade 6 are eligible for the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines series. This consists of 2 doses, given 6 months apart.



[Grade 6 Immunizations in BC Health File](#)



[Kids Boost Immunity Lesson Plan: How to Handle Your Vaccines Like a Champ \(Grade 6\)](#)

### Grade 9 immunizations

Children in grade 9 need booster vaccines for Meningococcal Quadrivalent (Men C-ACYW-135) vaccine and Tetanus/Diphtheria/Pertussis (Tdap). Additionally, Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine will be offered to those who have not received it yet or have an incomplete HPV vaccine series.



[Grade 9 Immunizations in BC Health File](#)



[Human Papillomavirus Health File](#)

### Human papillomavirus (HPV) catch up immunizations

This year in some communities, students in select grades (in addition to grade 9) may be offered HPV vaccine if they are not up to date. This vaccine is safe and effective at preventing cancers caused by HPV. Eligible children can also receive the HPV vaccine at your [local health](#) unit or [participating pharmacies](#).



[Immunizebc/before19](#)



[Protect your child from cancer with the HPV Vaccine](#)

## FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

### Physical activity



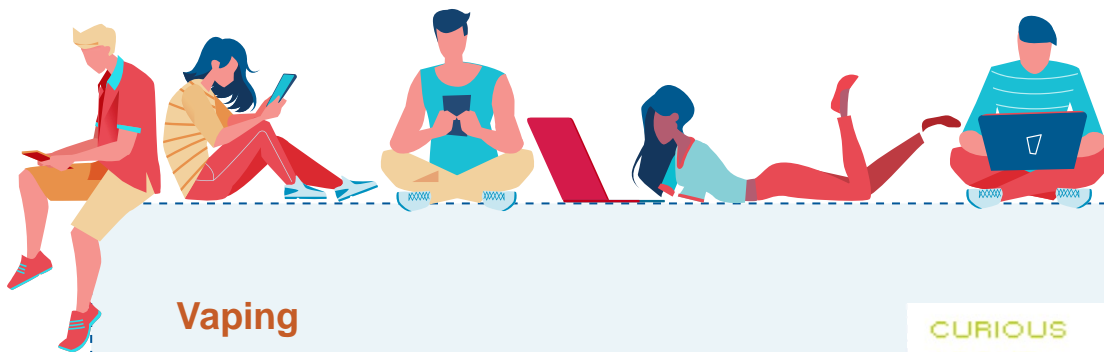
#### Investigating motor competencies in elementary-school aged children

The early years of childhood are important for developing essential motor competencies (MCs), AKA physical literacy. But what factors shape these skills? A [recent study](#) conducted by researchers including northern BC's Chelsea Pelletier seeks to uncover the combined impact of parenting, school grounds quality, children's movement behaviour, and self-confidence on the motor competencies of elementary-school-aged children. Practical tips for parents and schools looking to improve their kids' physical literacy skills are included.



[Investigating Motor Competencies in Elementary-School Aged Children](#)

## FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS



### Vaping

#### QuitNow youth mini site

QuitNow launched a mini site for young people who vape and want to quit or cut down. The mini site offers information and interactive activities on the health risks of vaping, the benefits of quitting, and ways to cope with addiction and mental well-being.



For more information visit [QuitNow, Your Vape-Free Life.](#)



### Tools for Schools

Teachers, educators, and youth groups are in a unique position to provide non-judgmental information to teens and their families about youth vaping.



Visit the [Tools for Schools](#) website for key health education resources including brochures, posters, presentations, and toolkits.

## Harm reduction

### Naloxone Kits

#### Save a life! Carry a Naloxone Kit

Protect your friends by getting trained to recognize an opioid poisoning (overdose) and how to respond.

Using a naloxone kit is easy to learn and they're free for those who might witness an opioid poisoning or be risk of an opioid poisoning.

You can get trained at your local health unit and pick up a kit. It's confidential!



Training is also available on Toward the Heart.

[Naloxone Course | Toward the Heart](#)



For more information and if you want advice on having a naloxone kit at your school contact:

[harmreduction@northernhealth.ca](mailto:harmreduction@northernhealth.ca) or [healthyschools@northernhealth.ca](mailto:healthyschools@northernhealth.ca).

## Healthy eating

### Energy drinks and teens

According to the [2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey](#), the number of teens using energy drinks has doubled in the past five years. Many parents and teachers are concerned about the growing popularity and health impacts of these drinks, but advice such as “don’t drink it because it’s bad for you” can backfire.



#### So, what are parents and schools to do?

Here are some thoughts:

- Approach talking to teens about energy drinks with curiosity.
- Encourage teens to be critical about how energy drinks are marketed.
- Teach label reading to support informed choices.
- Keep water and other healthy drinks readily available.
- Do not sell or promote energy drinks at schools or at special events.

For support on a variety of nutrition and food-related topics, connect with the Regional Dietitian Lead for School-age Nutrition at [PopHthNutrition@northernhealth.ca](mailto:PopHthNutrition@northernhealth.ca).



[NH's Healthy Eating at School webpage](#)

## Previous issues



[Issue 4 - Spring 2023](#)



[Issue 5 - Fall 2023](#)



[Issue 6 - Spring 2024](#)

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## Important contact information

If you need to speak with a health care provider:

- Call your family doctor or nurse practitioner.
- Connect with your local health unit.
- Check out the [NH website](#) for more information.



Here are some more options for you and your family:



Connect with the  
[First Nations Virtual  
Doctor of the Day](#)



Call  
[HealthLinkBC](#)  
at 8-1-1



Contact the [Northern  
Health Virtual Clinic](#) at  
1-844-645-7811



#HealthyNorth

[northernhealth.ca](#)

[HealthySchools@northernhealth.ca](mailto:HealthySchools@northernhealth.ca)

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