

Northern BC Healthy K to 12 Schools Newsletter

ISSUE 9 | FALL-WINTER 2025



Information for Northern BC schools, students, and families



northern health
the northern way of caring

For all schools



- 03 Truth and Reconciliation**
Indigenous rights and territory acknowledgement.



- 05 Northern Health (NH) resources**
Supporting health and wellness in schools.



- 06 Environmental health**
Tips to support health and prevent illness in shared spaces.



- 06 Injury prevention**
Smart ways to stay safe and avoid injuries outdoors.



- 07 Mental wellness**
Helping kids, teens, and the adults who care for them feel their best.



- 07 Nicotine risks**
Nicotine and vaping: know the risks, make smart choices.



- 08 Physical activity**
Help kids sit less, move more, and build healthy screen habits.



- 08 School-aged immunizations**
Find out which vaccines kids need to stay healthy and protected.



- 10 Wildfire smoke**
Tools and tips to keep indoor air clean and avoid smoky skies!

For elementary schools



- 11 Dental health**
Explore ways to support kids' dental health!



- 12 Injury prevention**
Explore how the brain works and how to stay safe.



- 12 Nutrition**
Support body confidence and belonging for all students.



- 13 Physical activity**
Tools to help kids move more and learn in fun ways.

For secondary schools



- 14 Alcohol and legal substances**
How to help teens stay safe and make smart choices.



- 14 Mental wellness**
Help youth feel better, stay healthy, and build life skills.



This icon is found on the bottom right of each page – click on it to come back here, to the table of contents

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.

Territory and rights acknowledgement

Northern Health (NH) 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'khee), Dane-zaa, Cree, Sauteau, and Dene Peoples.

We also recognize the 11 Métis Chartered Communities across Northern BC, and the Inuit, urban and away from home Indigenous Peoples on these lands.

We are thankful for the continued opportunity to work in partnership to uphold Indigenous rights to health and to optimize the health and well-being of the Indigenous people and communities we serve.



Fall colours shine across the traditional territories of Dakelh Peoples, specifically Nadleh Whut'en and Stellat'en First Nations. Photo submitted by Randi Leanne Parsons.

Commitment statement to Truth and Reconciliation

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 NH.



For more information on NH's commitments visit NH's [strategic plan](#).

Indigenous health and cultural resources

Canada has three distinct groups of Indigenous peoples: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. The use of the word Indigenous is meant to show a commitment to improving health outcomes for all groups.

NH Indigenous Health



Indigenous Health walks alongside Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) and communities we serve, as well as organizations, staff, and physicians in the North. Together, we aim to provide excellent care that respects Indigenous cultures and supports Indigenous Peoples’ right to make decisions about their own health and wellness.

Visit [NH Indigenous Health](#) for more information.

Assembly of First Nations (AFN): Digital education toolkit

Check out the [It’s Our Time: The AFN Education Toolkit](#), a tool to bring together First Nations and non-First Nations people, and foster a spirit of cooperation, understanding, and action.

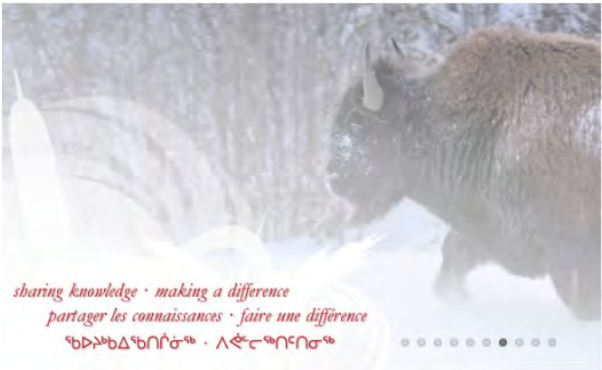
It includes easy-to-use learning modules on topics like treaties, residential schools, and Indigenous ways of knowing – designed to support respectful relationships and reconciliation in schools and communities.



The National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health



National Collaborating Centre
for Indigenous Health



The National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health (NCCIH) helps share health information with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people across Canada. It started in 2005 and is funded from the Public Health Agency of Canada. The NCCIH works out of the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George, BC, on the land of the Lheidli T’enneh First Nation.

They have [knowledge resources](#) on child, youth, and family health topics.

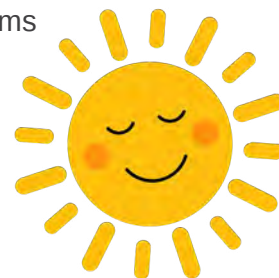


For all schools

NH resources and services

Healthy schools help protect the health, well-being, and safety of our children and youth. NH has a variety of public health services and resources available to schools and families in Northern BC, on topics that include:

- Communicable disease
- Dental health
- Environmental health
- Food and nutrition
- Harm reduction
- Immunizations
- Injury prevention
- Legal substances and prevention of harms
- Mental wellness
- Physical activity
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Vision health
- Wildfire smoke and extreme heat



[NH School and youth health webpage](#)



[Northern Health supports for schools 2025/26](#)



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



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

Healthy Communities E-Brief

The NH Healthy Communities E-Brief is a monthly newsletter, created by the NH Healthy Communities team. It includes resources, events, and funding opportunities to help improve health and well-being in Northern BC.

To subscribe, send a blank email to healthycommunities@northernhealth.ca with “subscribe” in the subject line.



Environmental health



Handwashing

The best defense against spreading germs and illness is washing our hands! Encourage students to wash their hands after using the bathroom, and before every snack and meal.



Visit the BC Centre for Disease Control webpage to learn more about how to correctly [wash your hands](#). Cleaning and disinfecting regularly also helps stop the spread of germs.



Illness prevention

As we return to school and enter the colder months, we tend to spend more time indoors which can make it easier to share germs with each other. Here are a few things you can do to keep you, your family, and friends safe:

- Take care of yourself by **eating well** and **getting enough sleep** so your immune system is in top condition.
- **Wash your hands well** with soap and water after you go to the bathroom and before you eat, prepare food, or touch your face.
- If you are sick, stay home so you **don't share your germs with anyone else**.

For more information, check out the [Quick Guide to Common Childhood Diseases](#)



Injury prevention



AdventureSmart

Heading outdoors this winter? Choose your adventure and [be safe](#) while you do it by learning everything you need before leaving!

AdventureSmart has essentials checklists for spending time outdoors, including specific lists for different winter activities like:

❄ ice fishing

❄ snowmobiling

❄ winter camping

❄ skiing

❄ snowshoeing

❄ winter hiking



Check out [AdventureSmart.ca](#) and click on the snowflake!



Mental wellness



FamilySmart: Together-centred



FamilySmart supports the mental health of children, youth, and young adults by caring for the adults who care for them. They offer peer support to all parents and caregivers in BC who are parenting and/or supporting a child with a mental health and/or substance use challenge.

They offer a variety of free resources, videos, online events, training and workshops. Peer support services are free – with no waitlist!



Free mental health supports for schools



The BC Children's Health Promotion and Schools Team and Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre offer free services and resources to support mental health and substance use challenges at school and at home. This includes [webinars](#), [podcasts](#), and [virtual supports](#).

Explore their full websites for more tools, planning support and resources:



[For school professionals](#)



[For parents and caregivers](#)



[For counsellors and clinicians](#)



Nicotine risks



Nicotine pouches



[Nicotine pouches](#) might seem safer than smoking and/or vaping, but they can still be harmful to young people because they're addictive and can affect brain development and physical health. [Explore tips for talking with kids and teens about smoking and vaping.](#)

Roots Over Clouds: Escaping the Vape



First Nations Health Authority recently launched [Roots Over Clouds: Escaping the Vape](#), a new animated video that explores the harms of vaping, industry tricks, nicotine risks, and the power of sacred tobacco and connection.



Physical activity



Help kids stay healthy by sitting less and moving more

We know that movement supports the physical health, mental health, well-being and academic success of school-age children and youth. We also know a typical school day can involve a lot of sitting or screen time.



[This infographic](#) gives ideas to help build more movement and less screen time into the school day and during homework.



Learn more about how too much screen time can affect kids and find simple ways to help build healthier screen habits by exploring more about the [4 Ms of screen use](#):

- Minimize
- Mitigate
- Mindfulness
- Modeling



School-aged immunizations



It is important to be up to date on all childhood immunizations. The school-age immunizations are listed on the next page, and the full list of recommendations (for children and adults) can be viewed at [Immunizations | HealthLink BC](#).



Check if your immunization records are up to date:

- Online at [BC Health Gateway](#)



- Locally with your [health unit or health center](#) (type "immunizations" in the find bar)



Kindergarten / school entry

Children entering Kindergarten need the following two booster vaccines, and any other childhood vaccinations that may be overdue.



[Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis,
Polio Vaccine \(TdaP-IPV\)](#)



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

Grade 6

Children in Grade 6 need the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine.



[HPV Vaccine](#)



[Kids Boost Immunity:
How to handle your vaccines
like a champ!](#)

Grade 9

Children in Grade 9 need the following booster vaccines. Additionally, the HPV vaccine will be offered to those who have not received it yet.



[Grade 9 Immunizations -
Meningococcal Quadrivalent
\(Men C-ACYW-135\) and
Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis
\(TdaP\) Vaccines](#)



[Kids Boost Immunity:
How to handle your vaccines
like a champ!](#)

CARD system – for students with needle-phobia

The CARD system (Comfort, Ask, Relax, Distract) provides strategies via videos, handouts and activities that can be used to help students cope before and during vaccine and needle procedures.



They have [toolkits](#) for health care providers, school staff, parents/guardians, and students!



Wildfire smoke

Class or family project: DIY indoor air cleaner

Did you know that you can make your own indoor air cleaner?

[DIY Box Fan Air Filters or Air Cleaners](#) work by pulling smoky air through a MERV 13 filter and trapping smoke particles in the filter. Make this a fun (and colourful) project and get ready for the next smoky skies episode.



Check out this helpful video on how to build different models:
[DIY Air Cleaners](#)



Photo from a [BREATHE Project](#)



Photo from the '[Train-the-Trainer Guide](#)' workshop

Wildfire smoke

NH recommends that school districts and families monitor local air quality throughout the day and take steps to limit exposure of students and staff to wildfire smoke.



Resources for schools and families:

BCCDC [Wildfire Smoke](#) – Contains a collection of key information, including health risks, and a variety of fact sheets for preparing and responding to wildfire smoke, including [wildfire smoke and your health](#), and [wildfire smoke recommendations for schools](#).

Check air quality smoke warnings here: [Air Quality Warning - Wildfire Smoke](#)



Sign up to receive air quality warnings here: [BC Air Quality Subscription Service](#)



For elementary schools

Dental health

Oral health education kits

Oral Health Education kits are now available to loan for educators across NH (schools, daycares, preschools, etc.) to provide hands-on oral health learning for the following ages:



- Pre-school aged kits (ages one to five years old)
- Primary aged kits (ages five to eight years old).

More information and loan request details can be found on the [NH Dental Health for Children page](#).

Silver diamine fluoride

Have you heard about silver diamine fluoride (SDF)? It is a special liquid that helps stop tooth decay (a cavity) from getting worse! It's made of fluoride and silver particles and is gently brushed onto your child's tooth where there's tooth decay (no needles or drilling!). The treatment is quick, gentle, and is not painful.

If tooth decay is left untreated, it may continue to grow and cause pain and infection. SDF works by making the tooth stronger and slowing down the bacteria that cause tooth decay. SDF can help kids avoid dental treatments that need sedation or being put to sleep. In some cases, if the tooth decay is small or the baby tooth is close to falling out, SDF might be the only treatment needed!

It is important to know that when SDF is applied, it causes the tooth decay to turn dark brown or black. The staining is permanent, but it means the SDF is working. As the child gets older, they may be able to have a tooth-coloured filling material put over the stain.

Despite the black staining, the main goal is your child's oral health!

For more information, please see the [Silver Diamine Fluoride fact sheet](#) or contact the dental team for your community.



Before SDF



After SDF



Northeast

DentalNE@northernhealth.ca

Northern Interior

DentalNI@northernhealth.ca

Northwest

DentalNW@northernhealth.ca

Northeast	Northern Interior		Northwest	
Chetwynd Dawson Creek Fort Nelson Fort St John Hudson's Hope Tumbler Ridge	Burns Lake Fort St James Fraser Lake Granisle Mackenzie McBride	Prince George Quesnel Southside Valemount Vanderhoof	Atlin Daajing Giids Dease Lake Kitimat Hazelton Houston	Masset Prince Rupert Smithers Stewart Terrace



Injury prevention

Brain Waves

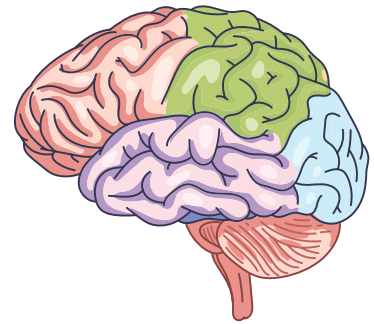
Brain Waves is a national brain and spinal cord injury prevention program delivered by the BC Injury and Prevention Unit in British Columbia.

Through free and fun resources for students in Grades 4-6, the program promotes awareness of:

- the importance of brain and spinal cord safety
- concussion prevention
- proper helmet wearing

The program is designed to align with the the following themes that are built within BC school curriculum:

- “Basic anatomy and functions of the brain, nervous system, and spinal cord”.
- “Contributing to care for self, others, school and neighbourhood through personal or collaborative approaches”.



Teacher resources include the [Brain Waves Activity Booklet \(PDF\)](#) and video lessons ready for use in the classroom!

Reach out to bcinjury@bcchr.ca if you have any questions about the program.



Nutrition

Being Me, Being Us: Creating a school community where every body belongs

Being Me, Being Us is a new online resource to support body image promotion and mental health in schools. It includes:

- Background information to increase educator knowledge about body image and how to approach the topic with students.
- Lessons plans and teaching materials for Grades 4-7, that connect to multiple subjects in the BC curriculum and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies.
- Strategies for a whole-school approach to supporting a body-inclusive environment.



Physical activity



Learning in Motion: Free physical activity resources aligned with BC curriculum



The [Learning in Motion](#) website (formerly School Physical Activity and Physical Literacy Initiative) hosts free classroom resources for educators to view, download and print including:

- activity sheets
- assessment tools
- posters



The [PLAYBuilder](#) tool is a digital platform that provides educators with:

- 1600+ activities/games and videos
- 150+ lesson plans
- a term planning tool for Grades K-7



All that's required to access the Playbuilder tool is a school district email address!



Winter fun keeps us moving!

These adventurous brothers are mushing through the snow with their trusty sled dogs, showing how fun and healthy winter can be! Max and Amric love spending time outside running with their dogs; here they are participating in the Caledonia Classic Sled Dog Race, held on the traditional territory of the Nak'azdli Whut'en People.



Max is running with Cache and Candle.



Amric is running with Cedes and Viper.



For secondary schools

Alcohol and legal substances



Binge drinking

Binge drinking is common among teens who drink alcohol. The intent is to get drunk quickly. This puts teens at risk of alcohol poisoning (alcohol overdose) and is considered very risky. Help your teen know how to stay safe.



Remember: If you suspect someone has alcohol poisoning, call 9-1-1 and don't leave them alone.

Mental wellness



Foundry BC

Foundry is a province-wide network of integrated health and wellness services for young people aged 12-24.



Young people can access free and confidential services by:

- Walking into one of our 17 local Foundry centres.
- Exploring our online tools and resources at foundry.ca.
- Connecting virtually through the free Foundry BC app (for communities without a physical centre).

Northern BC Foundry Centres are located in:

Prince George

1148 7th Ave V2L 5G6

236-423-1571

foundryprincegeorge@bc.ymca.ca

Terrace

101 – 3219 Eby Street

250-635-5596

foundryterraceinfo@tdcss.ca

Coming soon to:

- Burns Lake
- Fort St. John

Foundry Virtual BC

For communities that do not yet have a Foundry centre, FREE virtual services are available and include:

- counselling
- peer support
- groups and workshops
- physical and sexual healthcare
- work and education services



Hours of operation: 7 days a week.

- Monday to Friday 10:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m.
- Saturday to Sunday 10:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.

Questions? Email online@foundrybc.ca



PreVenture® Program

Foundry is expanding their support of the [PreVenture Program](#) with schools across BC! This program is an evidence-based initiative aimed at promoting mental health and reducing substance use among youth.



They use personality-focused workshops to equip students in Grades 7-9 with skills to handle:

- Stress
- Peer pressure
- Interpersonal conflicts
- Identity development



Why PreVenture Works!

Supportive Environment

Trained facilitators guide teens through workshops where they feel safe and heard.

Fosters Connections

Peer group setting allows for like-minded youth to come together.

Promotes Well-being

Cognitive behavioural strategies help teens to better understand themselves.

Empowers Teens

Knowledge is power. Teens come away from the workshops with a new set of skills.

For the past two years, Foundry has been supporting schools across BC in implement this program, providing comprehensive support including training for staff, ongoing coaching, and covering participation costs.



To learn more about how your school or district can get involved:

- Visit [Foundry support available for schools](#)
- Reach out directly to prevention@foundrybc.ca



Previous issues



[Issue 8 - Fall/Winter
2025](#)



[Issue 7 - Spring/Summer
2024](#)



[Issue 6 - Fall/Winter
2024](#)

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



northern health
the northern way of caring