



Spring/Summer 2025 update

April 1 - June 30, 2025

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.

Northern Health (NH) leads the way in promoting health and providing health services for Northern, rural, and Indigenous populations. ([Strategic Plan, Looking to 2025](#)) Indigenous Health, within NH, walks alongside Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) and communities we serve, as well as organizations, staff and medical staff in the North to strive for excellence and culturally safe care to uphold Indigenous people's rights to self-determined health and wellness.

Through partnerships with First Nations Health Authority(FNHA), Métis Nation BC, and Indigenous communities, we are co-creating systems that reflect Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and healing.

Our Indigenous Health(IH) team leads this work through three key pillars:

- **Service Delivery Integration** - Programs like the Indigenous Care Team and Health Service Delivery Area (HSDA) Advisors ensure culturally safe care is embedded—not added on.
- **Learning and Quality** - Anti-Indigenous racism education, Indigenous patient experience initiatives, and data sovereignty efforts are reshaping how we learn and grow.
- **Internal Service Transformation** - From capital planning to recruitment, Indigenous perspectives are guiding how we build and sustain our health system.

Indigenous Health Service Delivery Integration

Our team bridges senior leadership and Indigenous Health areas, fostering collaboration across Northern Health. We support leaders in cultural safety commitments, guided by Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Collaborating with

FNHA, First Nations, Métis Nation BC, and Métis Chartered Communities, we integrate cultural approaches into health services, enhance access and equity, and provide leadership for the Indigenous Patient Liaison Program.

Embedding cultural safety into clinical policies

The IH team is working with NH to integrate Indigenous ways of being and knowing into clinical policies to create safer, more responsive care environments for Indigenous patients and families. By valuing Indigenous knowledge alongside clinical evidence, several policies have been updated to reflect cultural safety and trauma-informed practices. Changes include involving family and Indigenous Care Teams in care planning, improving communication with communities, and addressing bias in clinical encounters. These updates—guided by input from First Nations partners—are helping ensure NH policies support respectful, inclusive care rooted in reconciliation.

Immunization and Vaccine Stewardship Forum



Inge Dijk, FNHA, and Christa Meuter, NH presented on Best Practices for Vaccine Clinics



Gabe Zamorano, FNHA, and Georgina Scully, NH present on Equity

On May 27-28, 2025, Northern Health and the First Nations Health Authority co-hosted the first-ever Immunization and Vaccine Stewardship Forum in Prince George. The event welcomed over 100 participants—including Indigenous health leaders, nurses, and community representatives—from across the North to build vaccine confidence and share culturally safe immunization practices.

With a focus on equity, organizers emphasized that every community, no matter how remote, deserves safe and reliable access to life-saving vaccines. The forum highlighted the partnership between NH and FNHA as they walk together with trust and respect, honouring traditional protocols and learning from each other. Solutions discussed were community-centered, grounded in local knowledge, and designed to reach those who are often left out.

It marked a new chapter for community health, where partners came together under one roof to build

Community Collaboration and Indigenous Partnerships



Pathways to Partnership workshops

The IH team recently test piloted a new workshop entitled, "Pathways to Partnership: Engaging Indigenous Communities." These sessions are designed to support staff in developing respectful, effective relationships with Indigenous partners and communities.

Created for NH staff who work closely with Indigenous patients, families, and colleagues, the workshops were shaped by feedback from external partners, including Health Directors and MNBC LOU representatives. The pilot sessions offered practical tools and insights to help staff engage in ways that are thoughtful, informed, and community-centered.

Looking ahead, the workshops will be delivered this fall to leadership with the goal of strengthening cultural safety practices and deepening NH's commitment to reconciliation. Delivered virtually, they are part of a growing effort to foster meaningful partnerships with Indigenous communities across the North.

Indigenous staff Community of Practice

The Indigenous staff Community of Practice is a welcoming space for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit employees across NH to connect, share, and grow together. Through informal, people-centered gatherings, members support one another, exchange experiences, and explore new perspectives—all while building a stronger sense of belonging. This initiative helps foster learning, collaboration, and workforce development in ways that reflect Indigenous values and lived experiences.

Interested in joining? All Indigenous staff are welcome. You can connect through the MS Teams CoP channel, join monthly virtual gatherings, or reach out to the Indigenous

Health team. Feedback and ideas are always appreciated— send an email to the Indigenous Health team Indigenous.Health@northernhealth.ca

Métis sashes bring culture and comfort to NH facilities



In April 2025, Kitimat General Hospital marked a meaningful step toward culturally-safe care with the unveiling of a framed Métis sash at its entrance. The event, led by NH's Indigenous Community Engagement Advisor Kelly Stalker and Métis leader Bernadette Chaboyer, brought together Métis organizations, NH staff, and community members in a celebration of culture and connection. This follows earlier efforts in 2024, when framed Métis sashes were installed in Smithers-area facilities including Bulkley Lodge and Bulkley Valley Hospital. A sash was also installed in NH's Virtual Clinic, extending this symbol of Métis identity into digital care spaces. These vibrant displays offer comfort, visibility, and a sense of belonging for Métis patients and families, while reflecting NH's ongoing commitment to Truth and Reconciliation.

Culturally Safe Spaces: Honouring Métis identity

NEW Indigenous Care Team replaces Indigenous Patient Liaison program

As part of NH's ongoing commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, the Indigenous Patient Liaison (IPL) program has evolved into the Indigenous Care Team (ICT). This expanded team supports First Nations, Métis, and Inuit patients and families in accessing culturally safe care across the North. Working closely with clinical teams, site staff, and Indigenous Patient Experience Advisors, the ICT helps improve care experiences and address concerns raised by Indigenous patients.



Strengthening care for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit patients

The Indigenous Care Team's impact

Indigenous Health Learning and Quality Team

Our team supports cultural safety and Anti-Indigenous racism education, aligning with NH's direction toward Truth and Reconciliation. We facilitate tailored workshops, provide dedicated support to each HSDA, and offer patient support in NH care sites.

We create safe spaces to discuss health harms, address concerns, and build better relationships with Indigenous peoples. Additionally, we lead strategies related to data, evaluation, and Indigenous-led health research, integrating Indigenous perspectives into NH's strategic efforts.

Cultural Safety and Anti-Indigenous Racism Education Team



Respectful Relationships: Cultural Safety Course update

The Indigenous Health Education team at NH is nearing completion of a major update to the Respectful Relationships: Cultural Safety course—transforming it into a shorter, more accessible learning experience. Once launched, it will be available to all health care professionals in B.C.

This revamped course supports NH's commitment to reconciliation by helping staff build cultural safety into their everyday work. It encourages reflection, respectful relationships, and action—starting from day one.

“Many times, we simply do not know and are therefore uncomfortable. There is no harm in saying we don't know and that we have lots to learn. That is called humility.”

Participant, Respectful Relationships

Specialized Services Northeast team takes a unique approach to cultural safety training

When it comes to reconciliation, learning together makes all the difference. The Specialized Services Northeast team recently partnered with the Indigenous Health Education team to take on the Respectful Relationships: Cultural Safety course. Over four months, staff from Dawson Creek and Fort St. John committed to a shared journey of reflection, connection, and growth.

Read the full story to learn how this team supported one another, deepened their understanding, and helped bring cultural safety to life in their everyday work.

[Respectful Relationships in action: Specialized Services training story](#)

Bannock Bites

Since November 2024, the Indigenous Health Education team has been hosting Bannock Bites—monthly, one-hour educational sessions open to all Northern Health staff. These sessions offer a welcoming space to learn, reflect, and connect on topics related to cultural safety and reconciliation.

Each session explores a different theme, often grounded in Indigenous history, knowledge, and lived experience. Recent topics have included:

- Indian Hospitals
- Moose Hide Campaign Day
- Red Dress Day
- Indigenous Nurses Day
- The Indian Act

Missed a session? You can still take part in the learning journey—recordings of past Bannock Bites are available to watch anytime. These sessions offer lasting impact and are a great way to continue building cultural safety into your everyday work.

Indigenous Patient Experience(IPE) Team

The Indigenous Patient Experience (IPE) Advisors connect with patients and families to understand and advocate for their concerns and complaints. They create a bridge between the healthcare system and the patient and family experience by finding opportunities for improvement, recognizing trends, connecting areas of expertise and people in the care experience. They create meaningful change using a restorative approach in the healthcare system and delivery of care.

Where do I start with a concern?

Start locally. Concerns or complaints are best addressed and resolved at the time and place they occur. If you have a concern or complaint, it is best to speak with the management of the person who provided the service. If this is not possible or it feels unsafe to do so you can contact the IPE Team.

How to contact the IPE team

☎ **PCQO Phone:** 1-877-677-7715
Press 1 for IPE

☎ **Phone:** 250-645-8806
voicemail checked daily

✉ **Email:** IPE@northernhealth.ca

Internal Service Transformation Team

Our team provides administrative support to the entire IH team, coordinating activities related to financial and organizational planning, labor relations, human resources, and management. We ensure policies are implemented correctly, manage resources, and support scheduling, budgeting, and record maintenance. We support Indigenous procurement projects, ensuring facilities reflect Indigenous language and culture, and develop communication tools for IH and NH initiatives. Additionally, we integrate Indigenous perspectives into recruitment and retention practices, lead administrative reporting cycles, manage grants and awards, and support the strategy and implementation of IH projects

Creating space for connection: NH opens office in Lheidli T'enneh community

The spaces NH builds, occupies, and provides care in are evolving to better reflect Indigenous ways of being. Across the region, NH is working to ensure that hospitals and care environments affirm the identities of Indigenous patients, families, and staff—through Nation-informed design, Indigenous art, healing gardens, and wayfinding signage in Indigenous languages. Recent examples include the renaming and design of the Ksyen Regional Hospital and the new hospital in Fort St. James. A regional scan is also underway to guide future improvements.

As part of this broader effort, NH has opened a new satellite office in the Lheidli T'enneh community—its first of this kind. This space will serve as a home for the IH team and a place where NH leaders can build stronger relationships with the community, supporting Indigenous recruitment, retention, and reconciliation in action.

Capital projects: A new name, a shared vision of healing

On May 23, 2025, the Fort St. James community celebrated a meaningful milestone with the naming of the new Nats'oojeh Hospital and Health Centre—a name that means “everyone healing” in the Dakelh language. Chosen through consultation with Elders and language experts from Nak'azdli, Binche, Tl'azt'en, Yekooche, and Takla First Nations, the name reflects a holistic vision of wellness rooted in Indigenous values.

The facility, which opened in January, was designed in collaboration with local First Nations to ensure it is welcoming and culturally safe. Features include a spiritual space for smudging and a healing garden with traditional plants and medicines. The naming ceremony brought together community leaders, Elders, and provincial representatives in a powerful moment of shared commitment to reconciliation and culturally respectful care.



Nats'oojeh Hospital and Health Centre

Indigenous Recruitment and Retention team

NH's Indigenous Recruitment and Retention team is working to create culturally safe, inclusive environments that support both current and future Indigenous employees. By aligning Indigenous cultural values with NH's organizational values, the team helps ensure the workforce reflects the communities we serve. Through engagement and advocacy, they support Indigenous learners and staff in accessing culturally relevant programs, employment, training, and leadership opportunities—laying the foundation for meaningful, long-term change rooted in Truth and Reconciliation.

[Job Search | NH Careers](#)

[Indigenous Talent information](#)

Health Career Access Program

Growing Our Own: Indigenous Learners Begin Practical Nursing Pathway

The Health Career Access Program (HCAP) to Access to Practical Nursing (APN) prioritized Indigenous applicants for its 2025 cohort. Nineteen Indigenous staff members expressed interest, and two qualified applicants were offered admission. This “earn and learn” initiative reflects NH’s ongoing efforts to support Indigenous recruitment and create meaningful pathways into health care careers.

Supporting cultural identity through leave

Indigenous peoples have faced exclusion from the workforce and have been negatively impacted by Canadian health care and government systems. Northern Health is dedicated to being an inclusive employer and fostering safe, supportive environments for all employees. To support Indigenous employees, Northern Health, like many public employers in BC, offers Ceremonial, Cultural, and Spiritual leave. This leave aligns with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, allowing employees to practice, develop, and teach their traditions.

Northern Health aims to create a workplace free from racism and discrimination, where everyone can draw strength from their identity, culture, and community. By reinforcing human rights at work, this leave helps ensure Indigenous employees feel safe and respected while honoring their cultural and spiritual practices.



A path to wellness



Smokehouse
summers



Disconnection to
belonging

Strategic projects

Indigenous patient self-identification

The Strategic Projects team is launching a phased approach in fall 2025 to implement a culturally safe and supportive Indigenous patient self-identification process, emphasizing cultural safety education for staff and the importance of safe data collection, responses, and support for both staff and patients.

Roadmap for Indigenous Patient Self-ID Project



Indigenous Staff Self-Identification Initiative

Concurrently, an Indigenous staff self-identification initiative is underway, inviting all NH staff to voluntarily declare their identity (Indigenous and non-Indigenous).

Honouring Indigenous days throughout the year

The IH team continues to lead efforts that support truth-telling, understanding, and cultural safety across the organization. Through events, ceremonies, and experiential learning opportunities, staff are invited to deepen their knowledge of Indigenous histories and perspectives. Days like **Red Dress Day**, **Moose Hide Campaign Day** and **Indigenous History Month** are honoured across NH sites, creating space for reflection, dialogue, and action. These initiatives help foster a more inclusive and respectful workplace, while reinforcing NH's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation.

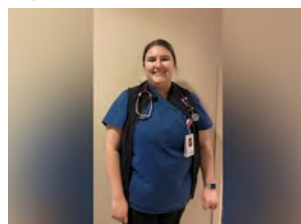


MOOSE HIDE
CAMPAIGN

CAMPAGNE
MOOSE HIDE



Indigenous
Language Day



Indigenous Nurses
Day



Indigenous History
Month Pride Month



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