



Indigenous Health

Quarterly Update

Winter 2024



Indigenous Health



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Note from
Nicole Cross,
VP of Indigenous Health

As 2024 begins, we celebrate the growth and successes of the work that Indigenous Health Northern Health has engaged in with staff, partners, communities and individuals. We are grateful for the opportunity to continue this work together.

The Northern Health Strategic Plan Refresh – Looking to 2025 was released in late December and includes Northern Health’s commitment to reconciliation. This guides our journey to ensure we commit in all aspects of our work to reconciliation and cultural safety.

We have provided key learnings towards cultural safety with educational webinars and workshops with staff and physicians and are increasing capacity to be able to provide additional learning opportunities in 2024.

Indigenous Patient Experience has grown in capacity to work in collaboration with key internal and external partners in health care and in the broader community to develop, implement, and evaluate processes that address Indigenous peoples’ experiences.

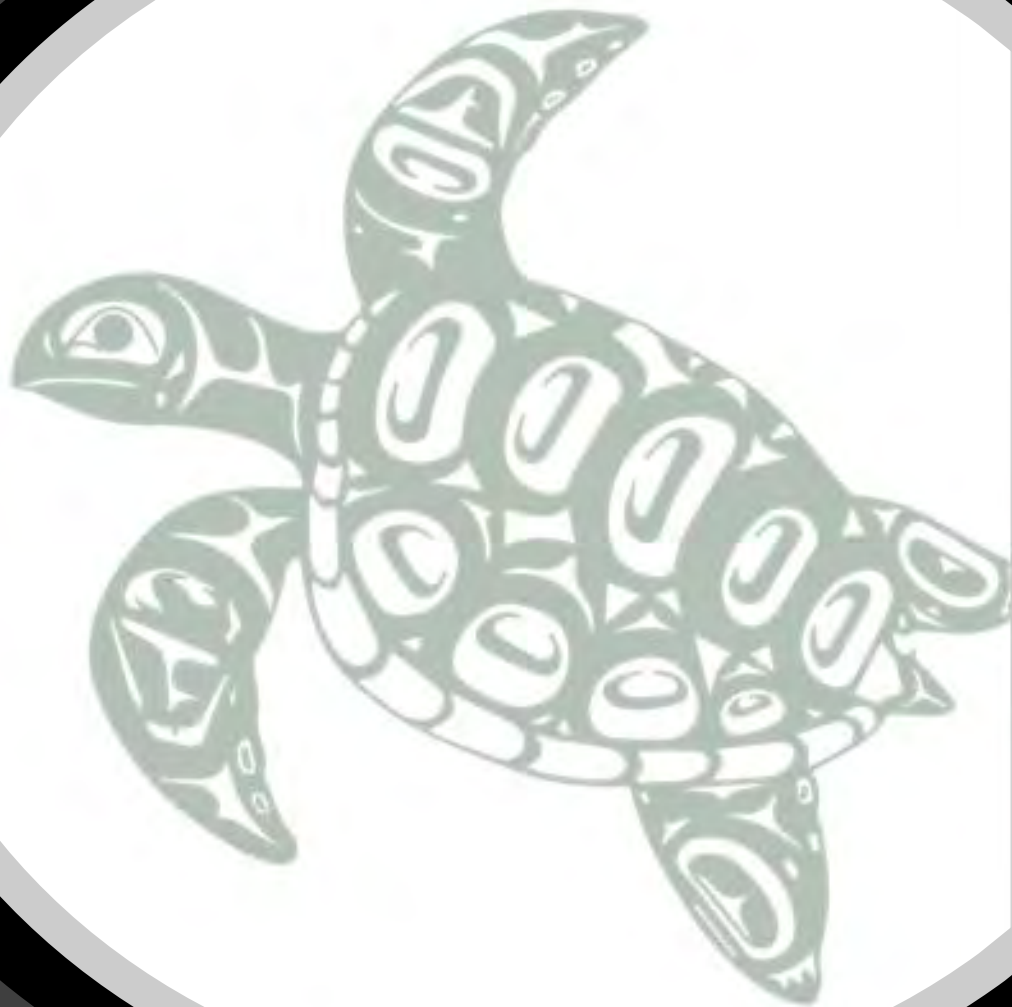
We are continuing work to create cultural safety through policy development using HSO standards to guide development. A New Regional Clinical Practice Standard for Smudging in Northern Health Facilities is underway with more to come.

The Indigenous Patient Liaison Worker program provides a bridge between Indigenous communities, their culture and Northern Health care providers. The program will grow in 2024 as the next phase of the program is implemented.

Indigenous Partnerships and Collaboration have been working together with FNHA and MNBC to effectively highlight and engage with community leadership on our shared health partner work.

At the same time, we are refining opportunities for partnership and accountability between NH and Indigenous patients and families in order to reach our goal of bringing their guidance and input into the work of NH.

1. Healthy people in Healthy Communities



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Engaging Indigenous people and communities and integrating Indigenous perspectives on wellness

First Nations Health Authority (FNHA)

Monthly coordination between NH and FNHA engagement teams provide clear pathways on approach and efforts to engage First Nation leadership effectively. FNHA has invited us to several events to contribute to and learn from such as the Regional Men's Gathering, the Provincial First Nations Mental Health & Wellness Summit, and the Regional Gathering of Future Leaders and Knowledge Keepers. Together, NH and FNHA engagement teams have been planning improvements to engagement for the FNHA Subregional and Regional sessions that will highlight our shared work on relevant topics to health governance representatives attending the sessions.

Health Directors (HD)

The Indigenous Health Monthly Health Director Meeting, intended to strategically build an effective relationship with community health leadership, covers topics of importance as it relates to the work of NH. Some of these include: the Complaint Process, improving communication to support patient care, the Indigenous Patient Liaison Program, suggestions and ideas around Indigenous recruitment and retention. We will be honoring the requests we have received from health directors to bring regional health program leads such as Elder Services, Primary Care, Specialized Mental Health and Substance Use, Child & Youth Mental Health and Perinatal Care in the new year.

Two components of the Collaboration Framework will be stood up in the coming months called: Indigenous Health Action Tables (IHATs), formerly known as IHICs, and HD/SLT meetings. Both are in response to guidance we received from First Nations and NH senior leadership requesting opportunities to meet exclusively to focus on strengthening and improving NH services. Indigenous Health will be providing capacity building opportunities as requested by our leadership to be supported in respectfully engaging communities in the work ahead.

1. Healthy people in Healthy Communities

Engaging Indigenous people and communities and integrating Indigenous perspectives on wellness

Métis Nation BC (MNBC)

A series of community engagement events were hosted in September to obtain feedback and validation on the Métis Nation BC-Northern Health Métis Health and Wellness Plan from Métis community members and representatives from Métis Chartered Communities in the north. Engagements included a virtual town hall meeting, an online survey and 3 in-person events. The Health and Wellness Plan is currently being finalized with edits to reflect what was heard in the community engagement gatherings. When the plan is finalized, effort will shift towards implementation of actions in early 2024.

The next phase of development will be connecting the Métis Health & Wellness Plan to community, shaping the work to concentrate efforts in realizing shared goals. Both Métis and First Nations community members have shared that they want to be involved where their unique perspectives and interest connect to Indigenous Health services.

Indigenous Health Action Tables (IHATS)

Engagement is focused on establishing Indigenous Health Action Tables (IHATs), formerly known as Indigenous Health Improvement Committees. This engagement will begin in 2024 for both Métis and First Nations. Indigenous Health is receiving guidance from both health directors and Métis Nation leads to ensure these tables are supported to achieve what they were intended for. Both sit in the service delivery area of the Indigenous Health Engagement Framework. The First Nations IHATs are intended to bring local NH operations together with local First Nations health leadership for health service planning and additional work as priority for both. The Métis Health Action Table is intended to support engagement opportunities that will advance the work of completing the Métis Health & Wellness Plan.

Provincial Child and Youth Wellness Framework

Indigenous Health staff participated on a First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Advisory Table to provide input into the Provincial Child and Youth Wellness Framework. The framework will set the strategic direction for ministries, health authorities, community agencies and others to implement a more responsive and integrated youth substance use system of prevention and care.

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2. Coordinated and Accessible Services



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Improving equity and accessibility to culturally safe care

Indigenous Patient Liaison Worker (IPLW) Program:

The Indigenous Patient Liaisons Worker (IPLW) program provides a bridge between Indigenous communities, their culture and Northern Health care providers. The role of the IPLW is to help bridge the gap between western and traditional medicine to ensure a health system that honours diversity and provides services in a culturally relevant manner.

The primary goal for the 2022-2024 expansion of the program has been to add IPLW positions in acute care facilities across the north. Those holding the positions have been hired for their cultural knowledge, skills and connections within the community. To achieve an expansion of this size, a phased approach has been undertaken with evaluation measures after each phase:

- **Phase 1:** Pilot sites were chosen to pilot the implementation of the enhanced IPLW service. These communities included Fort St. John, Quesnel and Terrace.
- **Phase 2:** This phase consisted of the expansion to northern health sites that had vacant IPLW roles that could transition to the new model.
- **Phase 3:** Continued growth to additional Northern Health sites. Planning for this phase has begun and additional staff hiring is expected to start in early 2024. This phase includes further enhancements to UHNBC and expansion to sites that have historically never had IPLW services and supports including the most remote sites that serve a high population of Indigenous Peoples. Consideration for what roles may be needed in our smaller sites is also being developed.

A two-day Indigenous Patient Liaison Worker in-person gathering was held on November 21 and 22 in Prince George. The gathering offered an opportunity for these front-line workers from multiple facilities to meet face to face and network while learning about supports available to them by the Indigenous Health team. The group also got to partake in traditional healing sessions, learned about the current complaints process, as well as did a deep-dive into what the Indigenous Patient Experience is. Further conversations discussed how the IPE team can support the work of the IPLWs on-site and how to can collaborate on patient safety incidences.

2. Coordinated and Accessible Services

Improving equity and accessibility to culturally safe care

Culturally safe practice standards being developed

The development of a regional Clinical Practice Standard for Smudging in Northern Health Facilities is well underway. Current development work includes a review of the literature related to smudging and traditional practices in healthcare facilities, a provincial scan of existing smudging policies and procedures in the British Columbia health authorities. A recent engagement session with the regional Indigenous Patient Liaison team is being themed and will help to scope the Clinical Practice Standard.

Partnership between Indigenous Health and the Policy Office is leading to an innovative approach to integrating cultural safety into organizational policy development and review processes. An abstract to share this innovative work at Health Quality BC's Quality Forum in April of 2024 has been accepted. Specifically, the goals of the partnership are centered on:

- Developing supportive and responsive feedback loops between the portfolios of Indigenous Health and the work of the Policy Office (i.e.. Including cultural safety education into policy implementations, honouring trends in complaints through amendments in policies, etc)
- Building capacity of the Indigenous Health team to participate in policy development and review given their respective expertise and portfolios.
- Exploring ways to support policy authors to consider ways in which cultural safety can be upheld through policy-related activities. To achieve this, Indigenous Health will be co-facilitating the February 2024 Intermediate Policy Development Curriculum, which will include content related to cultural safety in policy development for the first time. Further, Indigenous Health will be developing education to support policy authors in understanding the role of policy as a system-level lever to improve cultural safety for Indigenous patients and families.
- Developing pathways for policy authors in Northern Health to seek the input and feedback from communities in the development and review of policies that affect their members.

3. Quality



3. Quality

Implementing the HSO (Health Standards Organization) organizational standard and promoting quality through improved experiences, self-identification, and development of tools and resources for reflection. Better understand affirming & supportive Indigenous patient experience

Patient Experience Team

Members of the Indigenous Patient Experience team attended a Restorative Leadership Symposium with a northern cohort including the Patient Care Quality Office, Carrier Sekani Family Services, and the Quality Care Safety Office. While at the symposium, the team found time in the evenings to strengthen the bond between organizations, identify areas of opportunity and frustration, and bond as humans who are in the work together. The symposium helped to identify other strong restorative frameworks and allow for networking across other health authorities.

The following documents have been identified as priorities to develop to support the resolution of active feedback from patients and families and are anticipated to be finalized by next quarter:

- Talking circle
- Debrief circle
- Case study processes
- Patient journey mapping
- Health director information package

In ongoing conversations and collaboration with the Patient Care Quality Office and FNHA's Quality Care and Safety Office, barriers to feedback from patients and families and in communication between our teams are being identified with the intention to reduce the emotional labour of Indigenous community members and their representatives/advocates. One tactic we are trialing, which is showing promise, is having joint intakes with a Patient Care Quality Officer and an Indigenous Patient Experience Advisor. A finalized version of those communication pathways is anticipated to be finalized in the next quarter.

In the upcoming year, we have an ongoing commitment to working alongside Indigenous community partners and community representatives, including Health Directors, to share updates and receive input on ongoing program developments.

We have also launched a jointly managed email to further streamline arising concerns brought forward by Indigenous patients and families. We can be contacted by email at: IndigenousPatientExperience@NorthernHealth.ca.

4. Our People



4. Our People

Creating educational opportunities for staff and promoting environments for Indigenous staff

Northern Health's Respectful Relationships Course

Curriculum review – The Respectful Relationships review process began on November 20, 2023. The core team members are a wide range of Interested and affected parties that include: A Lheidli T'enneh Elder, Northern Health education, the National Collaborating Center for Indigenous Health (NCCIH), the University of Northern BC (UNBC), First Nations Health Authority (FNHA), Métis Nation BC (MNBC), Physician Quality and NH Indigenous Health Medical leads. This group advises work necessary to support meeting the requirements of the HSO BC Cultural Safety and Humility standards at all levels of the organization.

Respectful Relationships groups in the NE - The education team provided support to the NE Specialized Services to develop a plan for the entire staff to work together to complete the Respectful Relationships Curriculum. Groups of three will work together to complete the curriculum modules to ensure accountability and to support each other through the work. The plan will commence in January 2024.

Respectful Relationships post curriculum workshops - Members of the Indigenous health team have now completed the delivery of seven of the ten Respectful Relationships post curriculum workshops available to all staff and physicians who have completed the Respectful Relationships curriculum. Interactive discussions continue to be well received. To date, 577 NH staff/physicians have completed the curriculum with 852 currently in progress.

Indigenous Community of Practice (CoP)

The Indigenous Community of Practice is a group of Indigenous staff members at Northern Health who come together monthly to connect with and learn from each other; capture and share collective knowledge; and celebrate successes together.

It has developed, at the guidance of those participating, meaningful connection experienced by all those who attend. Those that attend have wholeheartedly welcomed Indigenous Health's invitation to bring forward areas of work for their feedback and input. Participants continue to show up in ways that demonstrate ownership in this space, and together are working to create supportive and positive work environments for Indigenous staff across the organization.

4. Our People

Creating educational opportunities for staff and promoting environments for Indigenous staff

Physician Co-leadership group

Through a collaboration with the Physician Co-leadership group at the University Hospital of Northern BC (UHNBC), Indigenous Health Team members partnered to deliver a Cultural safety education training day on October 20, 2023. The education supported a clear understanding of the work within the Indigenous health team and how the team interconnects with Northern Health's strategic Plan and the Northern Health Medical Advisory Committee (NHMAC) strategic plan around cultural safety and anti-racism. The Indigenous health team also took the group through cultural safety exercises to guide the leaders in understanding their fears around cultural safety work and how they can lead in this work with their own teams and move anti-racist approaches in care forward.

Substance Use and Cultural Safety

A tailored workshop was developed and presented on December 5th to the regional Substance Use Resource Nurses on embedding Cultural Safety within their practice. Participants were encouraged to complete the Respectful Relationships Curriculum

Decolonizing Nursing Pedagogy and Research

Northern Health Indigenous Health Regional Education Lead, who is also an Indigenous registered nurse is currently part of the University of Northern BC (UNBC) work on decolonizing nursing pedagogy and research. Working with Sheila Blackstock who is also a nurse and a Gitxsan Scholar and Associate Professor, Faculty of Human and Health Sciences, School of Nursing and academic lead of the NCCIH, as well as partnership with First Nations Health Authority, Métis Nation BC and through community knowledge gathering sessions.

4. Our People

Creating educational opportunities for staff and promoting environments for Indigenous staff

Taa Saantii Mamawapowuk

The Indigenous Health team along with sixty Northern Health staff were invited to attend a community–led health gathering and cultural day on September 15,2023 that was put on by Métis Nation BC called the Taa Saantii Mamawapowuk. Northern Health staff learned about Métis history, culture, traditional medicines and were able to view the Métis health and wellness plan co-developed with Northern Health intended to be shared for input with Métis citizens. The day was attended by Métis and Northern Health leadership. Attendees were able to share their learning from the day in a large learning circle which highlighted the positive effects of the gathering.



Photo credit: Métis Nation BC

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5. Communication, Technology and Infrastructure



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Implementing a refreshed communications framework. Improving physical and virtual spaces. Collaborating on improvement-driven technological innovations.

Communications

Communications has begun work on developing refreshed branding in conjunction with Northern Health's overall brand strategy refresh. This body of work has already guided a new look and feel to the Indigenous Health team's reports, presentations, display units and overall communications.

Enhanced communication activities include providing resources to Northern Health staff members to learn and engage in Indigenous awareness events:

- National Day for Truth and Reconciliation:
 - A calendar of things to do, things to see and things to read for the month of September
 - A virtual gathering was held to honour National Truth and Reconciliation with more than 200 participants from across the health authority.
- Louis Riel Day:
 - Social media awareness, staff digest information
 - A lunch and learn
- Desktop backgrounds on recognized days like Indigenous Aids Awareness Week will provide discussion and learning opportunities throughout the year

Technology

The team is utilizing technology tools in new and innovative ways to host meetings, gather information and provide internal and external audiences access to information that Indigenous Health is engaged in.

Infrastructure

Grants: Indigenous Health, Métis Community Wellness Awards have been established, and applications are currently under review. Some upcoming projects include creating traditional and cultural wellness, community food hampers, family gatherings, winter camps to promote family bonding and Metis culture and more.

In partnership with FNHA, the First Nations Community Wellness 2023/2024 applications are currently under review and will be finalized shortly. Some upcoming projects include traditional medicine programs, community feasts, youth wellness groups and youth empowerment days, and many other initiatives on wellness and healing.

5. Communications, Technology and Infrastructure

Implementing a refreshed communications framework.
Improving physical and virtual spaces. Collaborating on improvement-driven technological innovations.

Indigenous Recruitment: Recruitment work has begun on an Indigenous recruitment strategy in conjunction with the communications and recruitment teams. Plans are underway to develop promotional materials for attending recruiting events.

Capital Infrastructure: The aim for Indigenous Health in Capital Infrastructure is to improve and enhance Indigenous Partnerships and processes with Northern Indigenous Nations.

Areas of focus will be with the following:

- All new capital infrastructure will have sacred space for privacy and cultural practices,
- Indigenous procurement process identified for capital infrastructure, supply chain and services,
- Recognition of title holders and hereditary systems, and
- Indigenous Art, Signage, Naming of facilities, and adequate funding.

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About the art in this report: line drawings of a bear, dragonfly, hummingbird and turtle are by Indigenous artist Carla Joseph, who lives on Lheidli T'enneh territory

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Summary

September

- National Truth and Reconciliation Day activities encompassed the month of September with many opportunities to learn and discuss reconciliation
- Métis Nation BC hosted Taa Saantii Mamawapowuk event for NH staff
- Métis Nation BC Annual General Meeting

October

- Perinatal conference
- FNHA Regional Leaders (Youth) and Knowledge Keepers (Elders) Regional Gathering
- Physicians Co-leadership Forum
- IH Health Director Meeting – IPLW Program & Patient Care Resourcing

November

- FNHA Regional Men's Gathering
- Restorative Approach Leadership Symposium in Vancouver
- Louis Riel Day celebrations included hosting a lunch and learn
- FNHA Regional Caucus attended by VP Indigenous Health, Engagement Lead, HSDA Advisors with also a presentation by the Northern Health CEO. The event was supported with an Indigenous Health information booth
- IH Health Director Meeting – IHAT (formerly IHICs) shaping & funding

December

- Indigenous Health Team All Staff team gathering in Prince George to collaborate, learn from and work together
- Northern Health Corporate strategy for 2024-2025 released

Amaa Wiitsim Ganuutkw Ganhl Amma Sii Kuuhl!



From THE INDIGENOUS HEALTH TEAM

The Indigenous Health Team (left to right)

Cameron Stevens, Capital
Melissa Morin, Recruitment
Alexanne Dick, Métis Engagement
Logan Erickson, Summer Student
Jean Baptiste, Patient Experience
Teresa Bennett, Communications
Taylor Turgeon, Lead
Donna Porter, Education
Tami Van Kalsbeek, Executive Admin

Nicole Cross, Vice President
Connie Cunningham, Sr. HSDA Advisor, NE
Ryan Dirnback, Sr. HSDA Advisor, NI
Christa Meuter, Sr. HSDA Advisor, NW
Rachel Weller, Patient Experience
Coco Miller, Engagement
Shannon Hall, Project Implementation
Marlaine Joe, Administration
Patricia Hoard, Patient Experience