

Information Update

Community Health

Dear Community Members.

We have heard over the last number of weeks some apprehension in the community about the future of health care delivery due to a shortage of professional health care workers. This concern is not dissimilar to communities throughout Northern Health and the rest of our province. We continue to work with our partners on recruitment and retention strategies, however; it takes a community to support our health care workers.

You have asked what can you do to help?

Fort St. James and region are important contributors to forestry, mining, and the tourism industry. We are tenacious communities with a strong voice, made up of authentic peoples who care deeply about each other and who work hard to spearhead positive change. From the diligent work of our health teams and elected officials we have been fortunate to receive ongoing funding to support the health care programs so that they can be vibrant.

We want to get to a point where we are not doing crisis management but are able to support preventative care in our communities. Together we have improved programs, increased the number of health care workers in our communities and developed new initiatives that have brought services closer to home for our patients. The healthcare team has developed community priorities that they are working together to address.

Our biggest challenge is to fill those vacant positions in our communities. Be a part of our local recruitment team. YOU can be a community booster and volunteer to help host new workers when they tour our town. Help us fund raise so we are able to provide incentives that enable the community to retain our current staff and support new staff. Be thinking about **WHO YOU KNOW...** a “cousin of a cousin” that is a nurse, doctor or social worker. Reach out and invite them to have a look at what we have to offer. Maybe they know someone. Encourage our youth to look at health care as a career, and encourage adult learners to enter into post secondary health care programs.

Learn More:

Fort St. James [Moving to Fort St. James | Fort St James District – historic and resourceful!](#)
Primary Care Society [Join our medical practice in Fort St James, BC \(fsjamesmedicalclinic.com\)](#)
Nak'azdli Health Centre [\(3\) Nak'azdli Health Centre | Fort Saint James BC | Facebook](#)
Tl'azt'en Health Centre [Health - Tl'azt'en Nation \(tlaztensation.ca\)](#)
Binche Whut'en Health Centre [Health Services - \(binche.ca\)](#)
Northern Health [ExpectMore - Search for Health Care Jobs and a Career with Northern Health](#)
Stuart Lake Hospital [Stuart Lake Hospital | Northern Health](#)
College of New Caledonia <https://cnc.bc.ca>

Reach out to any of the contacts above.

What sets us apart is our commitment and support of each other. We have always worked together as a region to address whatever challenges we face as communities. Together, we can meet the challenge of health care in our communities.

Respectfully,

Ann McCormick
Chair, Fort St. James Primary Care Society

In an effort to keep our community members informed we are creating a section to respond to some of the questions we are hearing. Checkback for updates.

Frequently Asked Questions

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BOOKING AN APPOINTMENT

I am hearing my doctor is leaving, how will I get an appointment?

- Patients whose provider is no longer working in the community have been assigned a new temporary provider. As new physicians join our community, patients who have a temporary provider will be assigned a permanent provider.
- The patient-provider relationship is very important and takes time to develop. While we are in transition, we encourage patients to be active participants in their health, ask your provider questions when unsure, call the NH Virtual Clinic at 1-844-645-7811 to access another family doctor or nurse practitioner and be sure to renew your prescriptions before they run out. We expect when calling for a regular appointment patients **may** have to wait up to 1 month to see a provider.
- The Fort St. James Health Centre will continue to support acute patients each weekday through the Acute Care Clinic (ACC) located at the FSJ Health Centre. The ACC is open to those patients with sudden, acute, non-emergent health concerns. The provider assigned to the ACC is supported by the emergency provider at the health center, when available.

Learn More:

- More information can be found at <https://www.fsjamesmedicalclinic.com/>
- Contact your local FN Health Centre:
 - Nak'azdli Health Centre: 250 996-7400
 - Tl'azt'en Health Centre: 250 648-3350
 - Binche Health Centre: 250 648-3232

COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

How do our elected officials support health care in our community?

- Our elected officials have been doing amazing work behind the scenes advocating to the Ministry of Health, Northern Health and First Nations Health for additional resources. The community now has the funded positions, aggressive recruitment strategies and community support we hope will allow them to be filled.
- The District of Fort St. James, Regional District Bulkley Nechako Area “C” and Nak’azdli Whut’en are founding members of the Fort St James Primary Care Society

DAKELH FIRST NATIONS PRIMARY CARE CENTRE

I am hearing there is an additional new program starting in Fort St. James. How will it affect me?

- Our area has been fortunate to be awarded one of the First Nations Health Authorities 15 new programs within the province of BC. A newly formed society will support the First Nations led Dakelh First Nations Primary Care Centre.
- This new wellness initiative aligns with the Ministry of Health’s commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to deliver services that are First-Nations-led and informed by traditional wellness values and by the lived experiences of Indigenous people.

Learn More:

- To learn more about the First Nations led Primary Care Centres visit: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2019HLTH0129-001783>
- The First Nations Health Survey: <https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/research-knowledge-exchange-and-evaluation/health-surveys>
- Cultural Safety: <https://www.doctorsofbc.ca/news/supporting-cultural-safety-first-nations>

FORT ST. JAMES PRIMARY CARE SOCIETY

What is the Fort St. James Primary Care Society and what are they doing to support the current health care environment?

- The Primary Care Society is your “health care voice” in Fort St. James and in addition operates the Fort St. James Medical Clinic located in the Fort St. James Health Centre. The Society is working diligently on the recruitment team and have played a role in supporting national and international recruitment initiatives.
- An example of the work we are doing is providing accommodation for locums, and short-term agency health care staff. This work would not be possible without the support of community members, our local organizations and industry representatives.
- The District of Fort St. James, Regional District Bulkley Nechako Area “C” and Nak’azdli Whut’en are founding members of the Fort St James Primary Care Society

Learn More:

- **Visit [Fort St James Health Centre/fsjamesmedicalclinic.com](https://fsjamesmedicalclinic.com)** to learn more about the Fort St. James Primary Care Society and to view our 2022 – 2024 Strategic Plan select the Primary Care Society from the Health Centre Menu.

HOSPITAL DIVERSION

What does it mean when the hospital is on “Diversion”?

- Diversion does not mean the hospital is closed. A shortage of available staff may cause temporary changes to the emergency department hours. Emergency patients with life-threatening emergencies will be temporarily diverted to other area hospitals for emergency care when Stuart Lake Hospital is on diversion.

Learn More:

- In the event of diversion at Stuart Lake Hospital, signage will be in placed at the facility informing patients to call 9-1-1 for transport.
- Patients who aren’t sure whether their condition would warrant an emergency room visit, or who need health advice can call 8-1-1, or visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca for non-emergency health information from nurses, dietitians, and pharmacists which is available 24/7.
- Alternatively, patients can also call the NH Virtual Clinic at 1-844-645-7811 (daily from 10am to 10pm) to access a family doctor or nurse practitioner.
- Also visit [Fort St James Medical Clinic and Health Centre \(fsjamesmedicalclinic.com\)](https://fsjamesmedicalclinic.com)
- Check out [Nakazdli Health Centre | Fort St James | BC | Skip the Waiting Room](#)

RECRUITMENT

How will we recruit for the new hospital when we already have challenges?

- A new state-of-the-art hospital is a large incentive to help drive recruitment and retention for Fort St. James.
- Planning for staff at the new hospital has already begun with much discussion around recruitment strategies and the number and mix of staff that will be required.
- Northern Health recruiters are working in partnership with the Primary Care Society, the community, First Nations Health Authority, and the providers to attract and retain healthcare providers and support staff in Fort St. James.
- Two physicians are expected to the team of providers in March 2024. This brings the number of full-time physicians to 5 leaving 3 full-time openings for new physician recruits.
- The recruitment team has partnered with local schools to develop workers from within the community.
- The College of New Caledonia is currently taking registrations for the Residential Home Support Program. This will help support our aging demographics and the new sixteen bed Long Term Care wing in the new hospital.

Learn More:

Community Health

- Visit our New Hospital: <https://letstalk.northernhealth.ca/Stuart-Lake-Hospital> for a list of jobs and how to apply
- Visit the College of New Caledonia: <https://cnc.bc.ca/programs-courses/programs> to see what other health care opportunities there are.

SHARING YOUR EXPERIENCE

There are times I want to share my experience and story with a provider or staff member that is either positive or challenged. Who do I reach out to?

- We want to hear all your stories. We are often not good at celebrating our success or sharing what needs to be changed.

- ***Physician, Nurse Practitioner or Staff Concerns***

Fort St. James Medical Clinic
Jamie Fraser, Clinic Manager Jamie.fraser@northernhealth.ca
250 996-2700

Fort St. James Primary Care Society
Kathy Marchal, Executive Director Kathy.marchal@northernhealth.ca
250 996-2700

- ***Interprofessional Team Member (Social Work, Mental Health, Community Nurse (RN)) Concerns***

Fort St. James Health Centre
Nicole McVey, Team Lead Adrienne.mcvey@northernhealth.ca
250 996-2700

- ***Stuart Lake Hospital Staff, Nurses and Allied Health Workers***

Stuart Lake Hospital
Ildi Polgar, Site Manager ildiko.polgar@northernhealth.ca
250 996-8201

- ***Northern Health's Health Service Administrator Omineca***

Raquel Miles, Interim HAS Raquel.miles@northernhealth.ca
250 996-2700

- ***Northern Health Patient Care Quality Office***

Toll-free: [1-877-677-7715](tel:1-877-677-7715)
Email: patientcarequalityoffice@northernhealth.ca

- ***College of Physicians and Surgeon of British Columbia***

<https://www.cpsbc.ca/public/complaints>