



## Expanding Virtual Care in the North

The Northern Interior Rural Division of Family Practice (NIRD) is proud to announce that it has been successful in acquiring funding to pursue the upscaling of its [telehealth program](#), an initiative first trialed in the Robson Valley Virtual Medicine Project. The funding was acquired as part of the Division's Patient Medical Home (PMH) application.

Partnering with Northern Health, the Division's entry into virtual care aims to improve patient access to Primary Care Homes (PCH) and facilitate team-based care through virtual connections set between physicians and other PMH providers, including other partner physicians, specialists and emergency services. The technology, which includes hand-held cameras and video-conferencing stations, enables physicians to communicate in real-time. For rural communities separated by distance, the new virtual care technology not only allows physicians to connect with another professionally, but also allow for the development of a virtual community of practice.



Dr. Stefanus DuToit explaining some of the features of the telehealth technology. (Click on the play button to link to Dr. DuToit's explanation).

Dr. Ray Markham will lead the project with the assistance of Dr. Sean Ebert and Dr. Stefan DuToit. The leads will be supported by a working group which is set to meet monthly. The purpose of the group will be to provide focused attention and direction to issues arising throughout the assessment, implementation and training phases of the project. Moving forward, the project's goal will be to collaborate with Northern Health to further improve access and health outcomes for NIRD patients.

For more information, contact Project Coordinator, Candance Smit at [csmit@divisionsbc.ca](mailto:csmit@divisionsbc.ca)

March 2018  
Issue 7

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## POLL

*We want your opinion!*

What is your preferred date for the [Pills of Knowledge for Best Evidence in Rural Practice Conference 2018?](#)

**June 9th 2018**

**June 16th 2018**





## Microprojects Initiative

By Stephanie McNeney

The Division is providing local physicians with the opportunity to tackle healthcare needs in their communities by funding small physician-led projects through the Micro-Project Initiative. The Micro-Project Initiative distributes grants of up to \$10,000 for small physician-led projects that are aimed at addressing gaps in care, improving community health outcomes, or making practice improvements. The aim of the Initiative is to test projects that address a local issue and evaluate the projects to determine whether they can be scaled-up or adopted in other communities.

Where possible, physicians are encouraged to involve community partners, specialist physicians, team

members, and/or allied health care professionals. The Division is available to help you identify the scale, scope, and funding allocation for any ideas you may have.

The Micro-Project Initiative is designed to allow physicians greater flexibility and creativity in how they approach solving local problems. There are currently a number of micro-projects that are underway. These projects are extremely diverse, ranging from an arts-informed project to practice improvements to the creation of a high school clinic, among many others. See the summary of current projects for some inspiration, and be sure to read about the Nechako Valley Secondary School Medical Clinic to get a close up look at a NIRD micro-project!

### Project in Focus | The Nechako Valley Secondary School Medical Clinic

Youth living in Vanderhoof now have a new local resource they can access to improve their health and wellbeing. As of January 2018, six local physicians are providing weekly clinics during school hours at the Nechako Valley Secondary School (NVSS). Students are able to book appointments with physicians using a variety of methods, including through a specialized mobile app designed for the NVSS clinic, through the school's website and social media, or through one of NVSS's counsellors.

The development of the NVSS clinic is an attempt to address gaps in care for youth in Vanderhoof. There are a number of barriers for youth accessing primary care. The existing primary clinic has limited appointments outside of school hours with no evening or weekend services. There is no public transportation in Vanderhoof so students are reliant on parents or others resulting in lost class time for students and lost work time for drivers.

These barriers have negatively affected the health of youth in the community. In the past five years, Vanderhoof has recorded significant rates of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STI) among youth. Less primary care access has also meant that youth, particularly those in crisis, have not been connecting to the mental health resources they need.



Pictured: Drs. Aryn Khan, Micaela Coombs, and Suzanne Campbell -- 3 of the 6 doctors involved with the NVSS Clinic.

These issues were the impetus for local physicians to develop the NVSS clinic. Through discussions initiated during the province-wide Child and Youth Mental Health, Substance Use (CYMHSU) Collaborative, the local Vanderhoof physicians worked with their community health partners and local youth to develop a framework for what would eventually become the NVSS clinic. The clinics would serve as an option for youth to address

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their physical, mental, and emotional health needs by improving their access to primary care. In addition, the clinics would also become a launching pad for youth to access other health resources, including those offered by one of the NVSS clinic’s key partners, the Nechako Valley Community Services Society.

While still early in its implementation, the clinic is expected to generate positive health outcomes for youth. The clinic’s physicians expect to see a decrease

in emergency department (ED) visits, teen pregnancies, and mental health crises due to an increase in appropriate health screening and lifestyle counselling. At the end of the day, the clinic’s physicians want to build a connection between themselves and youth in their community and provide a low barrier space where youth feel comfortable accessing care. The NVSS clinic is only a first step to enhancing the health of Vanderhoof’s youth, but one that will foster a stronger patient-provider relationship for years to come.

### Current Micro-Projects Listing

Below is a current list of the micro-projects happening across the Division. For more information regarding how you can apply for a micro-project grant, please contact Stephanie McNeney, [stephaniemcneney@gmail.com](mailto:stephaniemcneney@gmail.com)

Micro-Project	Community	Physicians	Project Summary
Opioid Management	Burns Lake	Dr. Charl Badenhorst	This project is focused on developing a sustainable support system for those returning to the community with opioid dependence. This pilot project aims to demonstrate how a small community can support comprehensive treatment and prevention of opioid addiction, and will work to develop treatment processes that are unique to rural locations.
Supported second stage housing for patients or people who are returning from recovery center, detox or correctional center, opioid dependency, etc.	Burns Lake	Dr. Charl Badenhorst	This project aims to provide supported second stage housing for patients living in the Burns Lake community who are returning to the community with opioid dependency. The aim is to provide stable housing to patients who are leaving a recovery centre, detox, or a correctional facility in order to lower the risk of recidivism
Advanced Care Planning Education for Patient Benefit	Fort St. James	Dr. Marile van Zyl	The objective of this project is to support patients to make informed decisions about their health care preferences in the event of any health circumstance where they cannot express these preferences for themselves. The project involves public information sessions, providing information about representation agreements, conversation tools, and providing support with making the agreement. There is also an emphasis on engaging staff at Nak’azdli and Tl’azt’en Health Centers to encourage residents in these communities to participate.

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Micro-Project	Community	Physicians	Project Summary
Enhancing Rural Code Blue Expertise Among Physicians and Nurses	Mackenzie	Dr. Ian Dobson	This project is focused on enhancing the comfort level and skills of health care providers (physicians and nursing staff) who perform emergency department code blues at Mackenzie and District Hospital, while also improving interprofessional team cohesion.
Healthy Living	Mackenzie	Dr. Dan Penman	This project aims to motivate and support community members struggling with unhealthy lifestyle changes and provide education and support for the community to engage in healthier lifestyle choices. The objective is to create a preventative program for patients suffering from obesity. Patients will set their own goals and the program will provide ongoing support with the help of a nurse practitioner and life coach. This program will help participants achieve healthy lifestyle changes, resulting in participant weight loss, increased exercise, reduced blood pressure, lowered A1C, and/or dietary changes.
Improving Sexual Assault Response in Rural Communities	Mackenzie	Dr. Ian Dobson, Lisa Creelman (NP)	The overarching goal of this project is to improve the rural response to sexual assault. This will be achieved by decreasing barriers to access to sexual assault care and follow-up and standardizing the rural approach to sexual assault. This project aims to decrease re-traumatization of those who have been sexually assaulted and decrease prevalence of depression and PTSD post-assault.
Visioning Health	Nadleh Whut'En	Dr. Terri Aldred	Envisioning Health with Nadleh Whut'En is an exploratory arts-informed project that aims to explore and document community-based, strengths-focused perspectives about optimal health in Nadleh Whut'En, a northern BC First Nation. Dr. Aldred and Dr. de Leeuw, a researcher at UNBC, are working with community partners to document and gain a better understanding of the community's vision for improved health and wellness. The findings from this project will provide insight for professionals and policy makers about health care delivery in Nadleh Whut'En.
Doctors in Schools	Quesnel	Dr. Andrew Lodge, Dr. Lola Sogbein, Dr. Shimon Raina	This project has initiated a weekly clinic in two high schools in Quesnel. The goal is to improve timely access to care for youth, support health promotion, and connect unattached youth with a family doctor. The project team intends to continue refining this model for high school primary care clinics so that it can eventually be implemented in other schools.

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Micro-Project	Community	Physicians	Project Summary
Nurse Role in PMH for Complex Care, Frailty, AD	Quesnel	Dr. Slabbert, Barb Neilsen (NP)	This project is investigating the feasibility of having a Nurse Practitioner integrated into the patient medical home to support GPs with their frail and complex care patient population in order to improve the comprehensiveness of care. The NP will support the primary care practice by conducting comprehensive complex care assessments and care plans, working with frail seniors, optimizing EMR use, and supporting seniors to complete advanced care plans.
Practice development and evaluation	Vanderhoof	Dr. Sean Ebert	This project is focused on rural practice process development and relevant metrics to measure patient access, improve EMR utilization, and streamline information sharing between primary care providers, allied professionals, and specialists.
Vanderhoof Hospice Suite and Coordination of Palliative Care Services	Vanderhoof	Dr. Suzanne Campbell	This project is focused on improving the quality of end of life care for palliative patients and their families. A dedicated hospice suite is now available in the community's long-term care facility and the project team has created a streamlined process for admission to the hospice suite from community and acute care. They are also working to enhance the coordination of care between physicians, facility staff, the interprofessional team, and hospice volunteers, thereby ensuring patients are well-supported through their end of life journey.

## Practice Support Coach Listing

### By Candice Smit

Practice support coaches (PSC) are key training and support liaisons that provide physicians and their staff with ongoing support to implement changes in their practice. Here is a complete listing of the PSCs within the Northern Interior Rural Division region.

#### PSC Burns Lake - Dale Finch

Dale.Finch@northernhealth.ca - 250-251-0084

#### PSC Fort St James - Vacant

#### PSC Fraser Lake - Tara Murphy

Tara.Murphy@northernhealth.ca - 250-699-7233

#### PSC Mackenzie - Vacant

#### PSC McBride - Judy Shawara

Judy.Shawara@northernhealth.ca - 250-569-2021

#### PSC Quesnel - Margie Wiebe

Margie.Wiebe@northernhealth.ca - 250-983-6816

#### PSC Valemount - Kim Nordli

Kim.Nordli@northernhealth.ca - 250-566-4916

#### PSC Vanderhoof - Heather Goretzky

Heather.Goretzky@northernhealth.ca - 250-567-6155





**Message from the Chair,  
Dr. Sean Ebert**

It has been just over 6 years since the physicians of NIRD signed a Document of Intent with the BCMA (now Doctors of BC), the Ministry of Health and Northern Health. The document outlined collective goals to improve patient care, enhance provider satisfaction and realize integration and coordination of care through better communication and collaboration. NIRD has made significant progress through local and Division projects and has enabled physician to engage in transformative work.

The next provincial project (Primary Care Networks) will focus on multiple levels of network development to enhance integrative care and to inform regional and provincial system changes. As rural providers, we understand better than most the power and necessity of strong collaborative networks and the challenges and barriers involved in creating and sustaining them. This latest initiative is our opportunity to help health policy makers understand the key elements that lay at the heart of comprehensive, holistic and integrative care.

This will be a big challenge but it is a great opportunity. The Executive and Board will be travelling in the coming weeks to our member communities to explore opportunities to take advantage of this Primary Care Network (PCN) initiative. I would encourage all members to join in the discussions and share your perspectives and expertise.

**Contact Us**

We want to hear from you! Send us your comments or questions about the work we're doing, or let us know if you want to get involved with any of our projects.

Errol Winter, NIRD Executive Director

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