

2022 - 2023 Annual Report

"Wherever you go becomes a part of you somehow" - Anita Desai



Cover photo: Fort Nelson



Rural and Remote
Division of Family Practice
An FPSC initiative

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Bella Bella

2022/2023

CO-CHAIRS MESSAGE

My first year serving as the Governance Co-Chair of the Board of the Division of Rural and Remote Family Practice has been a year of learning. And what a lot there is to learn about this complex and vital part of the primary care picture in B.C. There is no other Division like this one, with 13 chapters of dedicated practitioners in unique and diverse communities across the province. I joined the Board of the Rural and Remote Division of Family Practice in 2020 after a couple of years working as a locum physician on Galiano Island where I still make my home, the territories of the *pune'luxutth'*, *quw'utsun'*, *snuneymuhw*, *leey'qsun*, *shts'um'inus*, *WSÁNEĆ*, and the *hwulmuhw mustimuhw*.



I am very grateful to live on this island and I was happy to be able to practice here, but nothing in my previously urban experience prepared me for the challenges I would encounter supporting patients in this small and remote community, challenges faced every day by rural practitioners across this huge province.

Our job as the Board of the Division of Rural and Remote Family Practice is to support the health and well being of our members and communities in advocating for equitable, inclusive, and culturally safe rural health services. Our work towards this vision is led by our extraordinary staff who provide expertise, administrative support, encouragement, and creativity to enable the myriad of initiatives undertaken by our members and their communities, including Recruitment and Sustainability Strategies, Cultural Safety and Humility Training and projects, PCN implementation, Shared Care, Perinatal and Long-Term Care projects, and more. An important priority for our Division is involvement and engagement of First Nations with us in these initiatives and we continue to advocate for an appropriate resourcing to support these partners in working with us.

The hard work and commitment of our staff in the complex rural primary care environment is what makes all this complicated work possible. As a Board we thank them and recognise our responsibility for increasing the support they receive as they give so much to our members and communities.

My role as Co-Chair has been made much, much easier because I have had the good fortune of working alongside Dr. Tracey Thorne, Co-Chair and Physician lead. Dr. Thorne is an impassioned, knowledgeable, and wise Physician leader in her community and in the province. I thank her for her tremendous work over the last few years. We will miss her leadership. Thanks also to all our Board members: Don Sutherland, Sush Shivkumar, Nola Jeffrey, Connie Leong and Erin Carlson. It's been a busy year and you have all made it easier.

Dr. Liz Whynot
Co-Chair

CO-CHAIRS MESSAGE

The annual report provides an opportunity to reflect on the work and accomplishments of the Rural and Remote Division and is always a welcomed chance to practice gratitude. In my years as Physician Lead and Co-Chair I have been consistently impressed and amazed by the quality of the people in our organization and the work they do in their communities. This last year has been full of excellent work by our operations staff and physician leadership, as well as our dedicated Board members. I am grateful for our team.



We entered the PCN world over the last year. Nearly all of our communities having submitted expressions of interest in participating in Primary Care Network planning. This is a system change that has been a long time coming for our rural communities. We are glad to be on this path which we hope will help the communities of our Division find new and effective ways to deliver care in collaboration with our partners. I feel confident that we can navigate these waters together, even if there are waves now and again. I am grateful for change. Rural doctors and communities have always done as much as possible with the limited support and resources they are able to access. The scale of the work in our communities might be smaller, but the commitment certainly is not. This has been a long couple of years with COVID, the primary care crisis, states of emergency and staffing shortages. So much has been asked of our practitioners over this period. There is a general feeling that capacity is at a max. And yet...time and again people find the strength to carry on, to do the work, and to care about the work. I am grateful for all the people who show up even when showing up is hard.

As I step off the Board and away from leadership within the Division, I have realized what a true privilege it has been to be part of this work. The people have been wonderful, the problem solving has been rewarding and seeing our mission in action has been a joy. There is much I will miss about this work, but most of all it will be the colleagues and staff I have spent so many hours talking with over Zoom and in person. It is the relationships that matter. I want to specifically mention Dr. Liz Whynot, whose support and partnership as Co-Chair over the last year has been a revelation. The Division is better with her involvement. I am better for having worked with her. Dr. Erin Carlson will be stepping into the role of Co-Chair with Liz. Erin brings a vision and a dedication to change that will be exciting for the Rural and Remote Division, she is a thoughtful leader and will be wonderful in the role. I am grateful for Liz and Erin.

The unofficial motto these last years has been “*A Rising Tide Lifts All Boats*”. I believe this to be true. I have seen it exemplified so many times in this organization. We have grown because of each other; we have gotten better because of each other. The support comes from all directions. I am grateful for the Rural and Remote Division of Family Practice.

Dr. Tracey Thorne
Co-Chair

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MESSAGE

What a year! Reflecting on my last four years as your Executive Director (ED), I feel like this is the first time I really got to get out and meet everyone and see your beautiful communities in real life. In my other roles and through vacations, I have been privileged to visit a few of the communities we serve, but not with the rural health care lens. I was often focused on diabetes education or assorted festivals and events. I'm pleased to report that for the first time in my history as ED, many of our strategic priorities were able to go ahead as planned.



We were able to move the needle on many of our initiatives, which was a welcome development. There are reaping days and sowing days – 2022-23 allowed our team to move past the inertia of the COVID-19 pandemic and move into a new world. As I had the chance to visit the communities in our Division, I was struck by the hospitality, openness and pragmatism I observed in each unique place. Here are two recent examples:

Fort Nelson (Treaty 8 Territories): I flew into Fort St John (FSJ), travelled up the Alaska Highway to Fort Nelson. I joined the Medical Staff Association (MSA)/Chapter meeting with the physicians, and experienced everything from the Recreation Centre, the Northern Lights Society and other highlights. We met with municipal leaders from nearby communities and learned about the local context. After a brief stop at the Fort Nelson First Nation Band Store, we visited Prophet River First Nation for a health fair. I'm grateful to Crystal of Prophet River First Nation for allowing me to come and help set up a little before returning to Fort St. John. The beautiful facility was welcoming and state of the art with informative exhibitors at the fair. The physicians shared with me real life examples in their setting that helped me to describe for our funders and partners about the realities of their experiences in medicine. It also provided a first-hand look at the stunning Northern Rockies Regional District and all it has to offer new physicians and allied health professionals as well as regular folk like me.

Traditional, unceded territory of the Líl'wat Nation (now known as Pemberton): It was an absolute delight to travel up the Sea to Sky highway and drive right past Whistler to the beautiful village of Pemberton. I instantly understood the attraction of this community. I was welcomed to the clinic and was struck by the warm atmosphere created for patients with the photos of the physicians and nurse practitioners at reception, and the integration of allied health and acute care. While this model of team-based care was ahead of its time, it's literally bursting at the seams.

Rural and Remote Division, it is a genuine pleasure to serve you.

Leanne Mack
Executive Director

2022/2023 HIGHLIGHTS

163 Members

163 members from 13 Chapters. Our Division works with four geographic health authorities and the First Nations Health Authority. Our members practice across more than 100 communities across the province, including the territories of more than 50 First Nations communities. Our members serve 145,000 patients over an area of approximately 110,000 square kilometers.



Dr. Lauri-Ann Shearer & Chapter Coordinator (Bella Bella), Rhonda Orobko

Physician Engagement

126 members were engaged through attending local Chapter meetings, participating in local projects or building relationships in our communities.

Physician Leadership

59 members were involved in a leadership capacity including leading local projects; working to strengthen local, regional or provincial relationships; leading Chapters or serving as members of our Board of Directors. This is a **5% increase** from our previous fiscal year.

2022/2023 HIGHLIGHTS

36 Projects

Members of our Division led 36 projects ranging in scope from the community to provincial level. Examples include:

- long term care initiatives;
- maternity care initiatives;
- Shared Care Committee projects; and,
- patient medical home projects, etc.

This is a 39% increase from last fiscal year.



Chapter Coordinator (North Vancouver Island), Carrera Teal, presenting the North Vancouver Island Shared Care Maternity Project at the Joint Collaborative Committees (JCC) Pre-Forum

Relationships

Members of our Division led nine Collaborative Service Committees (CSCs) and five Local Health Service Planning Tables in collaboration with Health Authority and Indigenous partners. These CSCs have submitted seven expressions of interest (EOIs) for Primary Care Networks.



Connecting and collaborating at the June 2023 Network of Rural Divisions meeting



STRATEGIC PLAN

Advocacy

Out of respect for our collaborative space, the Division does not engage in direct political advocacy with the provincial government. We invited thought leaders like past Canadian Medical Association (CMA) President, Dr. Katherine Smart, and Directors of the Canadian Association of Physician Assistants, including Lisa Steward, to fireside chats with our members so they can share perspectives and better understand the needs and experiences of our members.

Family Practice Services Committee (FPSC) Division Sharing Session (November 2022)

At the Division Sharing event, we presented a session about governance. Our Division Co-Chair, Dr. Tracey Thorne, delivered a speech on gender-based analysis in medicine that was captured by our Executive Director in this video [here](#).



Dr. Tracey Thorne presenting

Retention and Sustainability

The Chapters were funded to develop innovative local recruitment and retention initiatives for a second consecutive year. Chapters invested funds in everything from locum advertising to team building events. Click [here](#) to read the retentions and sustainability report courtesy of Reichert & Associates.

Recruitment Websites and Videos:

- [Bella Bella website](#)
- [Interior BC Practice Here website](#)
- [Gabriola Island Be Our Doctor website \(Gabriola Island video\)](#)
- [Galliano Island video](#)

100% of chapters implemented retention and sustainability activities in 2022/23

This is a 38% increase from 2021/22 



STRATEGIC PLAN

Primary Care Services

The Division hosted an *All Chapters Retreat (February 2023)*

Despite a blast of late February winter for the Interior and South Coast, the Rural and Remote Division of Family Practice hosted a successful retreat on February 27th and 28th, 2023 for our Physician Leads, Board of Directors and staff team in Vancouver.



A group photo from the February 2023 *All Chapters Retreat*

The event occurred on the traditional unceded territories of the xwməθkwáy̓ əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Sel'íl witulh (Tseil-Waututh) Nations. Snow prevented a handful of attendees from joining in person, but thankfully many were able to connect virtually. The Retreat was split over two days with particular focus on sharing successes, recruitment and retention, and networking. Enormous appreciation to George Jeffrey from Tso-w-tun Le Lum for opening the Retreat with his poignant words, as well to Nola Jeffrey for beginning with a song.



Dr. Chibuikem Ofoegbu (aka Dr. Chi) testing out his axe throwing skills at the 2023 Rural Health Conference in Whistler



Dr. Amber Bacenas & Chapter Coordinator (Bella Coola), Rhonda Elliott, attending the 30th Annual Rural and Remote Medicine Conference in April in Niagara Falls

By The Numbers: PCN Planning

Here is a look at the Division's Primary Care Network (PCN) planning by the numbers, as of March 2023:

13

CHAPTERS

9

COLLABORATIVE SERVICES COMMITTEES (CSCs)

8

EARLY DRAW NURSE PRACTITIONERS (NP) & ABORIGINAL PATIENT NAVIGATORS (APN)

7

EXPRESSION OF INTERESTS (EOIs) SUBMITTED

6

EOI APPROVALS

5

LOCAL HEALTH PLANNING TABLE (LHPTs)

4

REGIONAL PHYSICIAN LEADS

2

NEW CSCs RECEIVED THEIR DATA

1

CHAPTER SUPPORT TEAM



STRATEGIC PLAN

Cultural Safety and Humility

Our Division implemented Cultural Safety and Humility initiatives for the third consecutive year, in large part thanks to the generosity and leadership of the Nations and people we serve. In addition, FPSC Primary Care Transformation Partner, Stacey Tyers, was instrumental in helping us to secure this funding. Thanks again to Katherine from Reichert and Associates for helping us to measure our progress (evaluation report available [here](#)). Of course, there are also physicians who have been walking this path for many years, quietly and without recognition because it's the right thing to do. Two such physicians include:

- Long-time North Island physician, **Dr. Prean Armogam**, was recently given a touching gift by the Wuikinuxv First Nation for his many years of service to the remote community of Rivers Inlet. The Nation noted in a statement they wanted to honour and acknowledge Dr. Armogam for: “his care and dedication to the Wuikinuxv Nation,” as he has “remained the light to this community in his tireless caring for our people in exceptionally challenging times of physician shortages and our community falling through the cracks in an imperfect system because of our remote location.” Click [here](#) to read the full article in the North Island Gazette.



Dr. Prean Armogam was gifted this beautiful sun mask for his 17 years of dedicated service to the Wuikinuxv First Nation in remote River's Inlet. (Submitted photo)

First Nation thanks Dr. Armogam for his 17 years of dedicated service to remote community

- **Dr. Lauri-Ann Shearer**, who ‘retired’ from serving Bella Bella and the Heiltsuk Nation after many years of service. As recognition for her work, a street was named in her honour.



Street name presentation honouring Dr. Lauri-Ann Shearer

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Rural and Remote Division has the distinct privilege of serving more than 50 Indigenous communities. We are grateful to the people in these territories for allowing us to be uninvited guests providing services on their lands. It is our attempt below to acknowledge the territories our member physicians and nurse practitioners serve, with the proviso that any errors or omissions are ours and we commit to continuing to do better to unlearn the colonial system that was imposed on Indigenous peoples after what is sometimes referred to as ‘contact’. Please consider educating yourself about the [2015 Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action](#) and the [2020 In Plain Sight Report](#) to learn and understand more.

- The **Bella Bella Chapter** is grateful to live and work within the unceded, traditional and ancestral territories of the Heiltsuk and Kitasoo/Xiaoxia’s Nations.
- The **Bella Coola Chapter** is situated on the traditional and unceded territory of the Nuxalk Nation.
- The **Clearwater Chapter** is situated on the traditional and unceded territory of the Simpcw people, of the Secwépemc Nation.
- The **Gabriola Chapter** is in the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation.
- The **Fort Nelson Chapter** would like to acknowledge that the ancestral lands that we have the privilege of gathering on is in Treaty 8 Territory; and more specifically, the traditional lands of the Dene and Cree people of Fort Nelson First Nation.
- The **Ashcroft, Lillooet and Lytton Chapter** is situated on the traditional and unceded territory of the Northern St’at’imc and Nlaka’pamux Nations.
- The **Merritt Chapter** is honoured to live, work and recreate on the traditional, unceded territories of the Nlaka’pamux and Syilx Nations.
- The **North Vancouver Island Chapter** is grateful to live and work on the traditional and unceded territory of the Kwakwaka’wakw and Nuuchahnulth peoples and includes: Kwakiutl First Nation, ‘Namgis First Nation, Mamalilikulla First Nation, Dzawada’enuxw First Nation, Kwikwasut’inuxw Haxwa’mis First Nation, Gwawaenuk Tribe, Gwa’sala-Nakwaxda’xw Nations, Tlatlasikwala First Nation, Quatsino First Nation and Kyuquot First Nation.
- The **Pemberton Chapter** is situated on the traditional and unceded territories of the St’at’imc (Lil’wat, N’Quatqua, Samahquam, Skatin and Xa’xtsa (Douglas) First Nation) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nations.
- The **Revelstoke Chapter** is situated on the traditional and unceded Sinixt, Ktuanaxa, Secwépemc and Syilx Nations.
- The **Southern Gulf Islands Chapter** is grateful to live and work on the unceded and traditional territory of the Hul’qumi’num and SENĆOŦEN speaking peoples.
- **Hazelton Chapter** members are based at Wrinch Memorial Hospital in Hazelton, situated on the unceded traditional territory of the Gitksan Nation.
- The **Long Beach Chapter** acknowledges the territories of Hesquiaht First Nation, Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations, Toquaht Nation, Ahousaht, and Yuułu?it’at̓h in the spirit of truth, healing and reconciliation.

2023/2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS, COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND STAFF

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dr. Erin Carlson	Board Vice Chair, Board Policy Committee
Nola Jeffrey	ED Development Committee, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee
Connie Leong	CPA, Treasurer and Secretary, Chair of Finance Committee
Dr. Sush Shivkumar	Chair of Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee, ED Development Cmte.
Dr. Donald Sutherland	Chair of Policy Committee
Dr. Tracey Thorne	Board Co-Chair, Finance Committee, ED Development Committee
Dr. Liz Whynot	Board Co-Chair, Policy Committee, Board Development Committee

BOARD SUB COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dyan Dunsmoor-Farley	PhD, Chair of Policy Committee, Board Development Committee
Lena Hozaima	RN, Finance Committee
Guangbin Yan	Board Development Committee

PHYSICIAN/CLINICAL LEADS

Dr. Memoona Akram	Lillooet
Dr. Christopher Applewhaite	Southern Gulf Islands
Dr. Amber Bacenas	Bella Coola
Dr. Erin Cusack	Gabriola Island
Dr. Jim Fuller	Pemberton
Dr. Kevin Garneau-Begin	North Vancouver Island
Dr. Anthony Isiraojie	Ashcroft
Dr. Carrie Marshall	Long Beach
Dr. Kate McCarroll	Revelstoke
Kyle Monroe, NP	Hazelton
Dr. Marius Mostert	Fort Nelson (Chapter Physician Lead Regional Physician Lead, North)
Dr. Chibuikem Ofoegbu	Clearwater
Dr. Duncan Ross	Merritt
Dr. Lauri-Ann Shearer	Bella Bella
Dr. Sush Shivkumar	Lytton
Dr. John Soles	Clearwater (Regional Physician Lead, Interior)
Dr. Tracey Thorne	Gabriola Island (Regional Physician Lead, Island Division Physician Lead)

2023/2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS, COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND STAFF

STAFF

Linda Andersson	Documentation Coordinator (serving all Chapters)
Katherine Brown	Interim Regional Manager, Interior
Jennifer Brunelle	Chapter Coordinator & PCN Planning Manager, Revelstoke
Chris Dreyer	Chapter Coordinator, Ashcroft, Lillooet & Lytton
Rhonda Elliott	Chapter Coordinator & Virtual Care Coordinator, Bella Coola
Graham Gillies	Chapter Coordinator, Bella Coola
Dana Hibbard	Virtual Care Coordinator, Hazelton
Christianne Kearns	Regional Manager, Interior (on leave)
Harpreet Kullar	Operations Coordinator (serving all Chapters)
Cecilia Larson*	Recruitment and Retention Coordinator, Northern Divisions
Leanne Mack	Executive Director (serving all Chapters)
Faye Missar	Project Coordinator, Long Beach
Kaitlyn Morrison	Chapter Coordinator & Virtual Care Coordinator, Hazelton
Noorul Nassir	Attachment Coordinator (serving all Chapters – on leave)
Rhonda Orobko	Chapter Coordinator, Bella Bella
Diana Penney	Chapter Coordinator & Virtual Care Coordinator, Fort Nelson
Angela Pounds	Chapter Coordinator & Virtual Care Coordinator, Gabriola Island
Sarah Sandusky	Chapter Coordinator, Merritt Interim Attachment Coordinator
Shelley Sim	Chapter Coordinator, Clearwater
Carrera Teal	Chapter Coordinator, North Vancouver Island
Helen Truran	Regional Manager, Vancouver Coastal and Island
Brooke Wood	Chapter Coordinator, Long Beach

*resigned due to gaining entry into medical school to become an amazing rural physician.



Gabriola Island

MESSAGE OF APPRECIATION TO:

Interior Physician Recruitment & Retention Committee

- Dr. Milt Stevenson
- Riley Gettens
- Jacqui Van Zyl

Eve Han, Humanity Financial

Megan Holley, Humanity Financial

Nikki Morris, Humanity Financial

Jason Curran, Communications Consultant

Cheryl Drewitz-Chesney, Initiatives Design Liaison, Doctors of BC

Joanna Richards, Senior Manager, Primary Care Transformation, Doctors of BC

Fran Hopkins, Primary Care Transformation Lead, Doctors of BC

Angela Thachuk, Primary Care Transformation Partner, Doctors of BC

Stacey Tyers, Primary Care Transformation Partner, Doctors of BC

Robin Watt, Primary Care Transformation Partner, Doctors of BC

Marina McBride, Primary Care Transformation Partner, Doctors of BC

Stephen Reichert, Reichert & Associates

Katherine Coatta, Reichert & Associates

Emma Sheppard, Reichert & Associates

Kelly Robertson, HR Covered

Rural Coordination of BC (RCCbc)

Jeremy Ng, Twyst Creative



Revelstoke



2023