

ANNUAL REPORT | APRIL 1, 2023 - MARCH 31, 2024

**UNBC** UNIVERSITY OF  
NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA  
**Health Research Institute**



**Health Research Institute**

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**University of Northern BC**

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Dr. Paula Wood-Adams, Vice President Research and Innovation, provides a welcome at the 2023 Northern BC Research and Quality Conference

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Collaboration for Health Research in Northern BC Seed Grant Program





Image: HRI Co-Leads, Dr. Sarah Gray and Dr. Margot Parkes

# MESSAGE FROM THE HRI CO-LEADS

As co-leads of the UNBC's Health Research Institute (HRI) we are pleased to submit the 2023-24 HRI annual report. Over the past year our team has progressed existing HRI priorities, strengthened relationships with core health research partners and initiated a collaborative external funding proposal to support the sustainability and expansion of the HRI for the future. Each of these efforts underscore the importance of ongoing support for health research in Northern BC and to advance the HRI's mission to help in the creation and sharing of knowledge that increases the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

Three key achievements in our 2023-2024 report that reflect our commitment as co-leads to stability, longevity and advancement of the HRI include: 1. The implementation of a new membership structure supported by an online database called [HRI Connect](#), which clarifies membership benefits/responsibilities and supports communication between HRI and its members and between members; 2. A new partner-funded Knowledge Synthesis librarian position is in place to support the HRI Knowledge Synthesis (KS) Centre to advance partner

# MESSAGE FROM HRI CO-LEADS, CONTINUED

driven knowledge synthesis projects; and 3. Received UNBC support for a proposal led by the HRI, the Northern Centre for Clinical Research (NCCR) and Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, for submission to the CFI Innovation 2025 National Funding competition, for infrastructure to build a “Northern BC Hub for Health Research” on the UNBC and UHNBC campuses, providing a dedicated home for the HRI and providing infrastructure on which to leverage future funding opportunities for health research.

Building on successful precedents, our 2023-24 report exemplifies the scope and importance of diverse partnerships as central to HRI's success and contributions to strengthening health research in Northern BC which is facilitated by HRI co-leads and leadership council member contributions to partnerships including BC SPOR, BC Health Research Council, NCCR Advisory Council, NH MOU Steering Committee and Working Groups, the PHSA/NH/UNBC Funding Partnership, and RCCbc.

The 2023-24 HRI Seminar Series, (see p. 11), once again showcased the diverse areas of health research supported by the HRI. In collaboration with Northern Health, the HRI team was instrumental in the organization of the 2023 Northern BC Research and Quality Conference, Looking to the Future: Health in the North which welcomed over 100 attendees to the UNBC campus between Nov 7-9, 2023 (see summary p. 17).

The HRI Manager, Leana Garraway and HRI Administrative Assistant, Bree Loeffler continue to be the heart of the HRI team supporting the Knowledge Synthesis Research Associate and Librarian, and the RCCbc funded Research Associate. We are grateful for the invaluable contributions of the HRI Leadership Council members who govern the strategic direction of the HRI in 2023-24 (see page 6 of HRI report for current members), including departing members, Dr. Annie Duchesne (FHHS, Psychology); Dr. Heather Peters (FHHS, Social Work, Quesnel campus); and graduate student members, Cameron Aird and Aderonke Agboji, and incoming member Dr. Rheanna Robinson (FISSH, First Nations Studies). We also thank members of the Office of the Vice-President of Research and Innovation, Dr. Kathy Lewis, Dr. Paula Wood-Adams and Mark Barnes, for their support of HRI initiatives and in allowing the HRI to represent UNBC at health research tables locally, provincially and nationally.



# MESSAGE FROM HRI CO-LEADS, CONTINUED

In 2024-25 the HRI leadership will continue to advance partnerships with the collaborative CFI Innovation proposal for the Northern BC Hub for Health Research being a key initiative for 2024. We are looking forward to benefitting from HRI Connect to enhance transparency , and to foster equity, diversity and inclusion in our membership, services and activities for 2024-25.

Sincerely,

**Margot Parkes** (Professor, Health Sciences, Faculty of Human and Health Sciences/ Northern Medical Program, Division of Medical Sciences)

**Sarah Gray** (Professor, Northern Medical Program, Division of Medical Sciences)



Image: HRI Co-Leads, Dr. Sarah Gray and Dr. Margot Parkes with Leana Garraway, HRI Manager and Bree Loeffler, HRI Administrative Assistant

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# ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

The UNBC Health Research Institute (HRI) is designed to enable UNBC's experienced and emerging health researchers (faculty, staff and students) from across the 5 Faculties and the Division of Medical Sciences, to join together for the purpose of furthering health research and innovation. The Institute provides a venue for collaboration, support, and the creation of partnerships among researchers from many disciplines concerned with health and its determinants. All who are engaged in health research are invited to become members of the HRI. Members of the HRI include researchers and students from across UNBC and its partners.



## Vision

The UNBC Health Research Institute envisions a world in which healthy individuals, families and communities live without health inequities.



## Mission

To facilitate the creation and translation of knowledge that will enhance the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities. The Health Research Institute will pursue this mission through promoting knowledge creation, knowledge synthesis and exchange, fostering links among researchers, stakeholders and partners such as Northern Health (NH), and developing research capacity.



## Core Strategic Directions

- The Health Research Institute has four core strategic directions. While they are outlined separately, they are interconnected in practice.
  1. Knowledge Creation
  2. Knowledge Synthesis and Exchange
  3. Fostering Linkages
  4. Capacity Development



## Themes

Our members conduct research in the following areas:

- Biomedical
  - Clinical
  - Social & Environmental Determinants of Health
  - Indigenous Health
  - Health Services and Policy
-

# LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The Leadership Council provides overall stewardship of the HRI. The Council works collaboratively to mobilize resources to support research development and the emerging long-term strategic vision of the Institute.



**Margot Parkes (Co-Lead)**

School of Health Sciences, FHHS,  
Northern Medical Program, DMS



**Sarah Gray (Co-Lead)**

Northern Medical Program, DMS



**Darlene Sanderson**

Health Sciences, FHHS  
Dr. Donald B. Rix Leadership Chair  
for Indigenous Environmental Health



**Annie Duchesne**

Psychology, FHHS  
(Term Ended June 2023)



**Shannon Freeman**

School of Nursing, FHHS



**Heather Peters**

School of Social Work, FHHS  
(Term Ended August 2023)



**Trina Fyfe**

Interim University Librarian



**Waqar Haque**

School of Business, FBE;  
Department of Computer Science,  
FSE



**Rheanna Robinson**

Faculty of Indigenous Studies, Social  
Sciences and Humanities, First  
Nations Studies



# LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The Leadership Council provides overall stewardship of the HRI. The Council works collaboratively to mobilize resources to support research development and the emerging long-term strategic vision of the Institute.



**Aderonke Agboji**

Student Representative  
PhD Candidate, School of Health  
Sciences  
(Term ended March 2024)



**Cameron Aird**

Student Representative  
Masters Student, School of Health  
Sciences (Term ended July 2023)



**Nuziha Thasneem Shakkir**

Student Representative  
Msc., BTech  
(Term Started November 2023)

## HRI STAFF



**Leana Garraway**

HRI Manager & Co-Lead of the BC  
SUPPORT Unit Northern Centre



**Bree Loeffler**

Administrative Assistant  
HRI/RCCbc



**Fatemeh  
Mohammadnejad**

Research Associate, RCCbc  
(Ended June 2023)



**Noah Stone**

Research Associate, Knowledge  
Synthesis Centre  
(Ended October 2023)



# Update On Institute Activities

April 1, 2023 - March 31, 2024



# INTRODUCING HRI CONNECT

HRI Connect is a membership database that serves as a way to facilitate networking amongst our members and allow the HRI to better communicate important information. You must be a member of the HRI to have access to HRI Connect, it is not accessible by the general public. To access the portal: <https://hri-connect.ca/>

Key features:

- Identify health researchers in areas of interest using key words and filters.
- Easily keep your profile up to date, including your contact information, biography and research areas.

## Membership Tiers (NEW!)

Being a member of the HRI has many benefits, these include: the HRI email distribution list, invitations to HRI events & activities, HRI Connect profile, and an invitation to the Annual Meeting & voting rights as we look to our members for feedback on strategic priorities, action plans and activities. In addition to these benefits, members can enjoy:

### UNBC Member

- UNBC Faculty and Research Staff
- Access to leadership opportunities within the HRI.

### Student or Trainee Member

- Undergraduates, graduate students and post-doctoral fellow from any academic institution
- Access to leadership opportunities within the HRI (UNBC students only).
- Opportunities to showcase your work at HRI events.

### Partner Member

- Researchers from any institution or organization interested in health research relevant to Northern BC.

We would like to thank HRI Leadership Council member, Dr. Waqar Haque, and his students, for dedicating countless hours and expertise to create this amazing resource: Saurabh Kulkarni, Kavyapriya Renganathan, Abhishek Arora, Febina M Rajeech, Kai Toyata, Shrey Shrey, Marshall Brown, Harshika

Image: Dr. Waqar Haque and some of the HRI Connect development team poses with HRI Co-Leads Dr. Margot Parkes, Dr. Sarah Gray, HRI Administrative Assistant Bree Loeffler, and HRI Connect user Dr. Sean Maurice





# HRI SUPPORTS

The HRI staff are able to provide services to faculty, students, and partners, such as:

- Networking and partnership development
- Provide letters of support and/or collaboration for new proposed research & training
- Knowledge translation and exchange opportunities
- Access to training & supports:
  - E.g., Patient-Oriented research training & recruitment, tools to support clinical trial recruitment & public/patient awareness campaigns, CITI program classes, REDcap access for health projects.
- Access and training to DistillerSR Literature Review software (contact [hri@unbc.ca](mailto:hri@unbc.ca) for options and costing)

## EVENT PLANNING AND CO-HOSTING

The HRI welcomes the opportunity to work with its members and partners to host guest presentations and support events that align with its mission. We encourage HRI members to work with the Institute as a venue for logistical and promotional support for their knowledge translation and exchange activities. The Institute can provide letters of support and draft budgets for project grants. Contact [hri@unbc.ca](mailto:hri@unbc.ca) for options and costing for event planning and co-hosting.

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

The HRI also strives to increase awareness of its services to students by organizing various events and activities. In 2023-2024, these included:

- Hosted an exhibitor table at the UNBC Services Fair during Orientation Week & the 2023 Research and Quality Conference
- Attended School of Health Sciences 2023 Graduate Orientation Luncheon
- Guest lectured twice on the HRI and the BC SUPPORT Unit in Nursing 403 Introduction to Nursing Research
- The 2023 Research and Quality Conference was supportive environment that encouraged students to participate, present their research, network, attend skill building workshops, and learn about the many career opportunities available in research and quality improvement. A main reason for having no registration fee for the 2023 event was to remove barriers for student attendees.

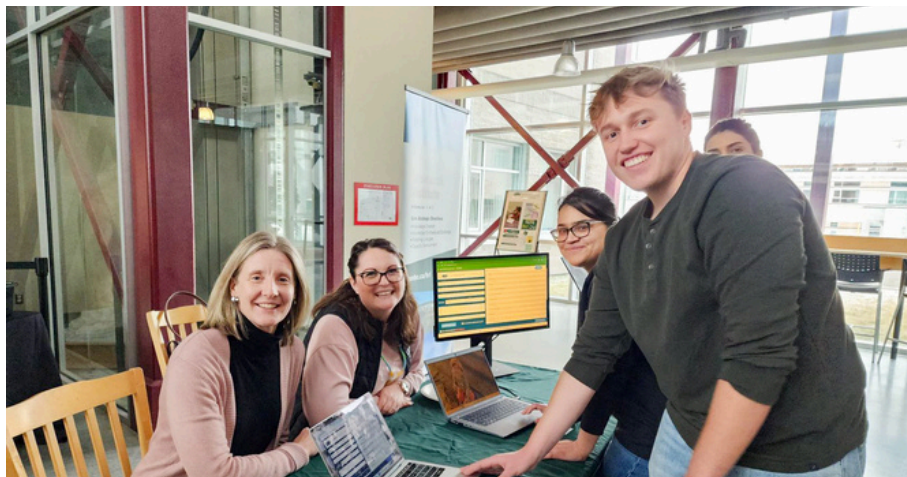


Image: Dr. Sarah Gray and Bree Loeffler assist students and faculty in HRI Connect profile creation at a launch event on March 28, 2024

# ACTIVITIES

## KNOWLEDGE SYNTHESIS & EXCHANGE

### Health Research Institute Seminar Series

The UNBC Health Research Seminar Series runs monthly between September and April and provides a venue for local and visiting researchers from a variety of disciplines and UNBC honors and graduate students to present their research. The Sun Life Financial Rural Endowment Fund provided financial support to run the logistics for the event. Attendance is in-person and online. Recordings of past sessions can be viewed on the [HRI Website](#).

The HRI would like to thank the 2023 - 2024 Seminar Series Committee for all of their hard work to plan, organize and host the seminar series: Dr. Kendra Furber, Dr. Rheanna Robinson, Cameron Aird, Nuziha Thasneem Shakkir, Bree Loeffler and Leana Garraway.

<p><b>SEPT 21</b> <b>2023</b></p>	<p><b>Dr. Shannon Freeman and Aderonke Agboji</b></p>	<p>Promoting Quality of Life for Older Adults in Northern and Rural Communities</p>
<p><b>OCT 19</b> <b>2023</b></p>	<p><b>Interdisciplinary Panel</b></p> <p><b>Hosted in partnership with Northern Health</b></p>	<p>Northern Health &amp; UNBC: Working in Partnership Towards Health in the North</p>
<p><b>NOV 16</b> <b>2023</b></p>	<p><b>Dr. Viviane Josewski</b></p>	<p>A Time of Truth and Reconciliation: Advancing Meaningful Reconciliation in Health Through Indigenous-led Community-Driven Health Research Partnerships</p>

**DEC 7  
2023**

**Dr. Jacqueline Pettersen**

Vitamin D, Cognition, and Dementia

DEC 7  
2023

**JAN 18  
2024**

**Dr. Sara Farhan**

The Jewish Medical Professionals of Modern Iraq

DEC 7  
2023

**FEB 15  
2024**

**Dr. Kalindi Morgan**

Natural Products: From nature's defense to pharmaceuticals of strength

DEC 7  
2023

**MAR 21  
2024**

**Dr. Linda O'Neil**

The continuing importance of trauma-informed health care in the north: A long journey

**APR 4  
2024**

**Honours Students**

- Emily Pinko
- Thomas Kreitz
- Alexia Bankowski
- Bruce Danesh

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# SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

## KNOWLEDGE SYNTHESIS & EXCHANGE

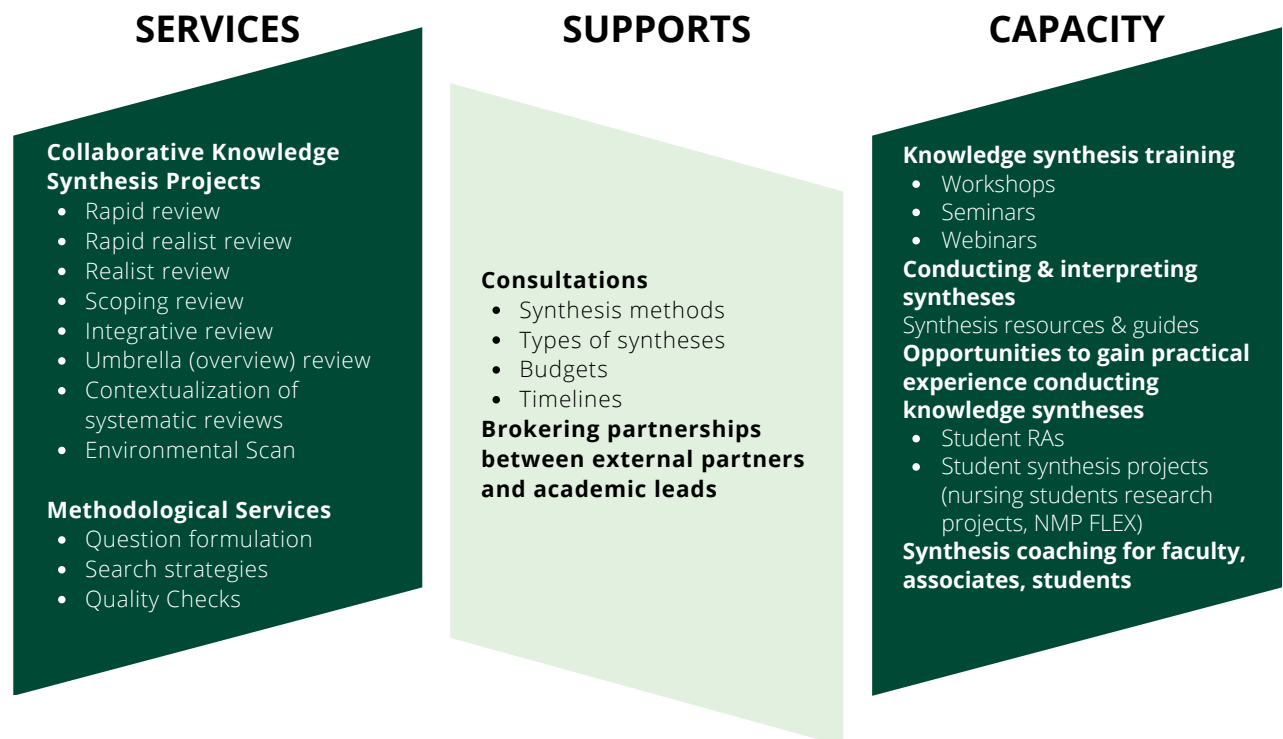
### Knowledge Synthesis (KS) Centre

The UNBC HRI Knowledge Synthesis Centre was established in 2019 with the purpose of expanding the capacity of UNBC and partner organizations to ask and answer health focused questions using synthesis methods, enhancing rural and northern applicability of the evidence, and setting up knowledge to be translated into action in policy and practice.

#### KS Centre Core Functions

- Respond to knowledge users needs for knowledge synthesis of health research with specific expertise in synthesis contextualized for rural, remote and northern health issues.
- Support health researchers conducting knowledge synthesis
- Build capacity among students, researchers, and knowledge users

Any researcher can purchase access to the HRI license to **Distiller SR Literature Review Software** for a monthly cost. Those looking for additional Knowledge Synthesis expertise can connect with the new KS Librarian, or the KS Research Associate. Contact [hri@unbc.ca](mailto:hri@unbc.ca) for options and costing.



**KNOWLEDGE SYNTHESIS CENTRE GOALS**

- Provide timely, contextualized, evidence-based syntheses to inform the optimal management of patient care, resources and services, and development of policy and programs
- Support researchers in conducting high quality, rigorous, health related knowledge syntheses with rural and northern applicability
- Involve patients, partners, and decision makers in meaningful ways in synthesis and contextualization process
- Offer training and mentorship opportunities to students, researchers, and knowledge users
- Make syntheses more visible and obtainable
- Inform the design and conduct of new health research attentive to the needs and realities of northern British Columbians

**Knowledge Synthesis Projects, 2023-2024**

Primary Investigator	Project Title
Martha MacLeod	Contributing to Perinatal Health: A Case Study of Nursing in Fort St. John Prenatal Clinic and Birthing Centre
Heath Matheson	The effect of dual-task motor interference on higher-order cognitive processes: A systematic review and meta analysis
Margot Parkes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Nechako Watershed Saturation Search</li> <li>2. Climate &amp; Health Co-Benefits</li> </ol>
Anurag Singh (NCCR)	Impact of Health Equity as a Result of Virtual Care Delivery in Rural, Remote, and Indigenous Communities: A Scoping Review
Shannon Wagner (TRU)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prevalence and Work implications of Trauma-related Mental Health Conditions in High-risk Personnel</li> <li>2. Interventions and Prevention of Trauma-related Mental Health Conditions in High-risk Personnel</li> </ol>
Diana Kutzner (NH)	Northern BC climate-related health risks literature review

# PARTNERSHIPS

## FOSTERING LINKAGES

Linkages are fostered through the creation of partnerships, the provision of support functions with UNBC health related partners, liaising with other research institutes at UNBC and elsewhere. The goals and objectives for each partnered initiative can be viewed on the HRI Website.

### Partners:

The HRI works in close partnership to provide administrative functions with the following partners:

- Northern Health (NH)
- Rural Coordination Centre of BC (RCCbc)
- Michael Smith Health Research, BC BC SUPPORT Unit
- Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA)

Image: Participants of the Northern BC Research and Quality Conference exchange ideas during a workshop led by Dr. Deanna Danskin



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## ABOUT NORTHERN HEALTH

On June 22, 2010 NH and UNBC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formally recognize their long-standing and historical partnership. The purpose of this relationship is to stimulate innovation and transformation in both organizations in order to foster innovation in health services and policy, health provider and professional education, and health research; improve the health outcomes of the people living in Northern British Columbia; improve the quality of health care delivery and health provider and professional development; create an environment that is successful in recruiting and retaining skilled personnel; and, create opportunities for collaborative research and attract related funding. The Health Research Institute partners with Northern Health to enact activities that relate to fulfilling the goals set out by the MOU.

On December 5th, 2022 the NH and UNBC MOU was renewed for the fourth time. Each renewal reflects successes and updates priority areas for the two institutions. There are multiple members of the HRI staff and Leadership Council members who, along with their NH colleagues, are engaged in partnered work to move the priorities identified in the MOU forward. These include:

### **MOU Steering Committee:**

Dr. Margot Parkes

### **MOU Research and Knowledge Translation Working Group:**

Dr Shannon Freeman (Co-Chair), Dr. Waqar Haque, Leana Garraway



Image: Julia Bickford (NH), Lisa Ronald (NH) and Margot Parkes (UNBC)



## NORTHERN BC RESEARCH & QUALITY CONFERENCE

Born from a Northern Health and UNBC partnership, this conference is a forum enhanced with resources and skill development workshops to share health and health services research, evaluation, evidence-based practice and quality improvement initiatives in the North. It has been designed to profile Northern BC research, evaluation, and quality initiatives and will provide formal learning as well as informal opportunities for participants to learn from each other.



### Conference Highlights

Please visit the [HRI website](#) for further details of the conference including an Overview Slideshow and recordings of the Keynote Address, Plenary Address, and Panel Presentation, as well as the Conference Evaluation.



**200+ Registered**



**9 Workshops**



**37 Oral Presentations**



**8 Exhibitor Booths**



**39 Poster Presentations**



**1 Health Trivia at  
Deadfall Brewing**

“

*“When we come together ...we have a lot of opportunities based on the “alignment” of what we can do together. The idea about bringing research and quality together is so unique in Northern BC.” -Fraser Bell, NH VP Planning, Quality & Information Management*



Image: Workshop Hosts Working with Patient Partners: Effectively Engaging the Patient and Family in Quality Improvement.

## Workshops

1. The secret pocket workshop: Indigenous Stories in healthcare to address Bias and Move our Hearts
2. Developing an information/data quality management program
3. Effective System Based Root Cause Analysis
4. Introducing Real-Time Virtual Support (RTVS)
5. Working with Patient Partners: Effectively Engaging the Patient and Family in Quality Improvement
6. Relationship Building in Indigenous Led Research: Reflections on the realities of my time as an Indigenous Health Research Facilitator (IHRF) with BC NEIHR
7. Liberating Structures: Tools and Activities to spark creativity and innovation
8. Old Blood: How history continues to impact contemporary health care
9. Building Opportunities for Innovation through Partnerships in our Unique Northern and Rural Context



Image: Headshot of Dr. Terri Aldred who provided the Plenary Address: Cultural Safety and Anti-Indigenous Bias: Review and Discussion of Current Recommendations and Standards  
Image credit: First Nations Health Authority



Image: Dr. Fraser Bell presented at opening reception | The Importance of the NH & UNBC Partnership



Image: Dr. Sheila Blackstock provided the Keynote Address: Decolonizing Health: Dismantling Oppression

## Thank-You's

- To all of the volunteers who generously gave their time and helped make the conference a success, thank-you so much!
- Financial support: NH-UNBC MOU fund, PHSA-NH-UNBC Partnership, BC SUPPORT Unit, PEC (room rentals).
- UNBC Copy Services for printing all of our conference signs, name tags and programs.
- ITS Services for supporting the virtual components of the conference.

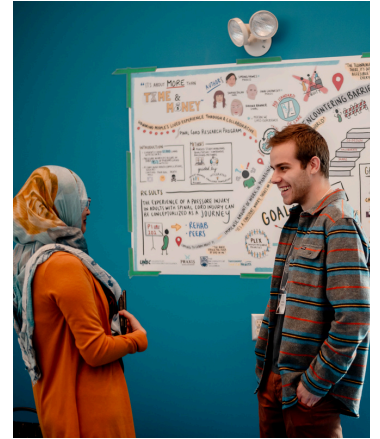


Image: UNBC Research Assistant Aiden Winkle presenting a poster

“

*“This conference shows how much you believe in health research and the effort you are putting into creating new knowledge, training next generations, and passing the knowledge to practitioners”*  
 -Dr. Paula Wood-Adams  
 UNBC VP Research and Innovation

Image: Marcelo Bravo (NH), Julia Bickford (NH), Bree Loeffler (UNBC) and Leana Garraway (UNBC) - Organizers of the Northern BC Research and Quality Conference





## ABOUT THE BC SUPPORT UNIT AND THE NORTHERN CENTRE

The BC SUPPORT Unit (Support for People and Patient-Oriented Research and Trials) is a multi-partner organization created to support, streamline and increase patient-oriented research throughout BC. The Unit is one of 10 SUPPORT Units established across the country as part of Canada's Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research (SPOR) led by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. It is also part of the Michael Smith Health Research BC, with the network's board providing governance and oversight. A provincial coordinating office (PCO) located in Vancouver coordinates activities across BC. The office works in partnership with regional centres within Fraser, Interior, Northern and Vancouver Island Health authorities.

The Northern Centre is co-led between UNBC and NH, and is the go-to resource for patient-oriented research within the geographic area served by Northern Health. The Centre serves the communities of Northern British Columbia from Quesnel north to the Yukon border, and Haida Gwaii east to the Alberta border.



Leana Garraway, Co-Lead  
& HRI Manager, UNBC



Bree Loeffler, Administrative  
Assistant, Northern Centre & HRI  
UNBC



Marcelo Bravo, Co-Lead  
& Lead Patient Orientated  
Research & KT Capacity  
Building, Northern Health



Dr. Shannon Freeman  
Academic Lead &  
Associate Professor, UNBC

### Our Work

We bridge the gap between research evidence and health care practice by:

- Providing POR supports such as training & webinars, and access to the tools an interactive road-map to patient engagement, diversity tapestry-a learning resource to support collaboration, and a plain language guide.
- Strengthening and maintaining BC's capacity in patient-oriented research
- Engaging stakeholders as active partners in both research and its use in health care practice and policy

### Our Services

- Data platforms & services
- Learning health systems
- Capacity development
- Patient engagement

Our work is grounded in equity, diversity and inclusion, sex-and gender-based analysis, and Indigenous health research

## ACTIVITIES 2023-2024

- Marcelo Bravo and Leana Garraway co-hosted the Northern BC Research and Quality Conference, and ensured Patient Partner voices were part of the conference planning. One of the four committees involved in the 2023 R & Q conference planning was the **Person and Family Engagement Committee (PFEC)**. This committee collaborated to embed a person and family centred care approach to the conference.
  - One member of the PFEC also served on the abstract review committee, and another volunteered at the conference.
- Additional activities included:
  - Lifesciences BC: Prince George Showcase. Marcelo Bravo presented: *BC SUPPORT Unit Northern Centre Phase II*
  - Northern Health Research Series Panel Presentation: *Advancing Patient-Oriented Research: Resources, Experiences and Available Supports*. Leana Garraway was part of a panel that included Rhyann Fairbrother (BC SUPPORT Unit), Sherri Mytopher & Marc Bains (Patient Partners), Davina Banner-Lukaris & Shayna Dolan (UNBC)
    - *"As people with lived experience, our voices are key to improving health research and research relevance,"* says Sherri, a patient partner with the BC SUPPORT Unit. *"Each patient has their own journey, and our needs and concerns need to be valued at all stages of research. I want patients to know that what we say and do is important* (LinkedIn [Post].BC SUPPORT Unit. April 3, 2024)



Image: Marcelo Bravo (Northern Health) and Roger Francis (Health Research BC) at the Life Sciences BC: Prince George Showcase event

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## ACTIVITIES 2023-2024, CONTINUED

- Continuing to promote the BC SUPPORT Unit services such as facilitating the session REDcap 101: A Complete Introduction presented by Victor Espinosa (Manager for Research Informatics and Statistics, Island Health)
- The Northern Centre team also supported the annual BC SUPPORT Unit **Putting Patients First Conference**. Marcelo, Bree and Leana all attended, as well Leana was on the Planning Committee & help provide conference closing remarks along with Annie Rychtera (Patient-Partner) and Stirling Bryan (Chief Scientific Officer, Michael Smith Health Research BC)
- Marcelo and Leana also provided input into **SPOR Phase III planning 'SPOR Refresh'** by hosting an engagement sessions with six Northern BC researchers to ensure northern voices were included in the design of SPOR Phase II. Leana and Marcelo also contributing to the development & dissemination of a survey with BC SUPPORT Unit team members to further collect information for SPOR Refresh from around BC.



Image: Leana Garraway (UNBC) helps to facilitate the closing remarks at the Putting Patients First Conference



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## ABOUT THE RURAL COORDINATION CENTRE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA (SOCIETY)

The Rural Coordination Centre of British Columbia (RCCbc) network includes healthcare providers and administrators, community members, policymakers, educators, researchers, and non-profit and business leaders—all working together to enhance rural health equity in British Columbia.

Two of the HRI staff were dual HRI & RCCbc employees this year and are involved with many different projects within RCCbc.



Bree Loeffler  
Administrative Assistant



Fatemeh Mohammadnejad  
Research Associate  
(Left June 2023)



Margot Parkes  
(Academic Lead)

## PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

### Fatemeh Mohammadnejad (Research Associate)

- Provided research supports including to the following projects:
  - Rh-Disease Awareness and Prevention in northern British Columbia, Lead Researcher Dr. Trina Fyfe.
  - Emergency medical transport in British Columbia: Narrative stories from providers, decision-makers and patients in rural, remote and Indigenous communities, Lead Researcher Dr. Nelly Oelke
- Member of Poster Abstract Review committee for the BC Rural Health Research Conference
- Co-hosted a booth to promote RCCbc supports and services, including the Rural Physician Research Grant program, at:
  - Jasper Medical Conference, Jasper, AB, and;
  - Northern Doctors Day, Prince George, BC.
- Travelled to two CORE meetings in Vancouver

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## PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

### Bree Loeffler (Administrative Assistant)

- RCCbc Communications Team
  - Strategic Planning day in Vancouver (September 2023)
  - Weekly team meetings
  - Developed curriculum for Mobile Phone Photography and taught it at a CORE meeting April 2023
  - Support of the organizations photo bank, Rural Health Awards, RCctv slide deck designs
- Site Visits Project
  - Planned and attended a Site Visit to Mackenzie and McLeod Lake Indian Band (May 2023)
  - Weekly team meetings
  - Strategic Planning Retreat in Prince George (June 2023)
- Administrative support for the Dean's Advisory Council
  - Travelled to Port McNeill, BC for a meeting of the committee (September 2023)
  - Virtual meeting of the committee April 2023
- Community Connector for Gibson's/Sechelt (A Community Engagement Action Plan initiative)
- Travelled to two Core meetings in Vancouver
- Planned social events for Northern Node staff and physicians including an annual retreat

Image: The RCCbc Northern Node at an outdoor skills building retreat



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## ABOUT THE PROVINCIAL HEALTH SERVICES AUTHORITY

The [Provincial Health Services Authority](#) (PHSA), [Northern Health](#) (NH) and University of Northern BC (UNBC) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding on November 12, 2013 to collaborate in establishing a mutually beneficial research partnership for northern BC. The UNBC Health Research Institute (HRI) serves as the Secretariat to support PHSA, NH and UNBC in their commitment to enhance research collaboration between the three organizations.

This partnership is guided by the following principles:

- Attends to the needs and realities of northern British Columbia in the overall context of British Columbia, including issues of equity, diversity, and inclusivity.
- Builds sustainable research capacity in the North, for the North.
- Builds capacity for partnered research and leaves a legacy of capacity across all three organizations.
- A research-based collaborative relationship for the purpose of improving the quality of health services and improving population health.
- Attends to the issues of sustainability of each party's contribution to the research partnership.
- Recognizes and respects the intellectual property rights of individual researchers and each Partner.
- Mutual respect and acknowledgement of the skills and expertise each Partner brings to the partnership.
- Open and transparent communication between the Partners.

## FUNDING THROUGH THIS PARTNERSHIP

### Collaboration for Health Research in Northern BC Funding

#### **Seed Grant Program (2015-2023)**

The HRI continues to serve as the Secretariat for the UNBC, Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) and Northern Health (NH) partnership. The HRI facilitated the ninth and final competition for this seed grant program, and two projects received funding for 2023-2024. In total, since 2015 twenty-six projects have been awarded a seed grant from this program. For a detailed list of the funded teams, please visit the [HRI Website](#), to see active recipients, see Appendix A.

#### **NEW for 2024-2025 Project Grant Program**

In 2023, PHSA, NH and UNBC made a commitment to continuing this partnership and to supporting a Project Grant program, the first call for applications was released in March 2024. Up to two projects will be funded per year with a \$45,000- 2 year grants.





## CELEBRATING THE COLLABORATION FOR HEALTH RESEARCH IN NORTHERN BC SEED GRANT PRESENTATION AND PANEL DISCUSSION

As part of the Northern BC Research and Quality Conference, a Seed Grant Presentation and Panel Discussion was held to **Celebrate 10 years of Partnership!** Phase two of the partnership was also announced at this event.

Six researchers provided overviews of their previously funded projects and engaged in a panel discussion about the impacts of the grants. This event was hosted by HRI co-lead Dr. Sarah Gray.

- [Introduction](#)
- [Esther Alonso-Prieto](#) | [Developing a Moral Empowerment Program to address moral determinants of providers' wellbeing and contribute to healthcare quality, effectiveness, and sustainability in Northern BC](#)
- [Davina Banner-Lukaris](#) | [Building Dialogues for Clinical Research Collaboration and Leadership in Northern BC](#)
- [Lisa Ronald](#) | [Assessing Community Vulnerability to Health Impacts of Climate Change in Northern BC: An Exploratory Study](#)
- [Emma Rossnagel](#) | [Growing Our Own: A Resident Focused Pilot Gardening Program in a Long-Term Care Home](#)
- [Caroline Sanders & Erica Koopmans](#) | [Day-to-Day living during COVID-19: A community participation study exploring the pandemic's impact on the early years, ages 0-8 years, across Northern communities](#)
- [Fraser Bell](#) | [Closing Remarks](#)



Image(s): Panel presenters



# WORKING GROUPS & COMMITTEES

The HRI manager, co-leads and staff are members of several local/regional, provincial, and national working groups and committees. The administrative function provided by the HRI for Partnered Initiatives provides opportunities to enhance research activities at UNBC with the aim to enhancing UNBC's research and partnerships.

## Local/Regional

- Northern BC Research and Quality Conference Planning & Administration Committees
- UNBC Health Research Institute Seminar Series Planning Committee
- UNBC Regional Data Centre Advisory Committee
- NH-UNBC Memorandum of Understanding Steering Committee; Research & Knowledge Translation Working Group
- Northern Centre for Clinical Research Advisory Committee

## Provincial

- Health Research Council of BC
- REACH BC Advisory Committee
- Health Research BC's Putting Patients First Annual Conference Planning Committee
- BC SUPPORT Unit Working Groups
- RCCBC & BC SUPPORT Unit Communications Team
- Rural Coordination Centre of BC Rural Site Visit Planning
- Rural Coordination Centre of Community Engagement Action Plan (CEAP)
- Rural Health Conference Poster Review Committee
- Island Health Seed Grant Adjudication Committee

## National

- N2 Network of Networks: Public Engagement Committee (PEC)
  - In 2023 this working group received a Cafe Scientific Grant to host the workshop: Inclusion of Immigrants in Clinical Trails (Toronto, ON)

Image: Attendees of the Research and Quality Conference



# OPERATIONAL BUDGET

FOR FY 2023 - 2024 AND PROJECTED EXPENSES FOR FY 2024-2025

	<u>Actual 2023-2024</u>	<u>Projected 2024-2025</u>
<b>Opening Balance</b>	<b>323,218</b>	<b>283,916</b>
<i>REVENUES</i>		
External revenue	485,000	720,000
Cost recovery for use Distiller	3,800	3,000
Deferred revenue for Distiller	5,029	
Contribution for partnered events	11,500	5,000
Contribution for partnered work		20,000
Cost recovery salary KS RA	10,712	0
Returned research funds	1,285	0
<b>TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE</b>	<b>840,544</b>	<b>1,031, 916</b>
<i>EXPENSES</i>		
Personnel	204,690	169,145
HRI operating expenses	1,598	800
Capital expenses	5,863	
Research awards	0	90,000
Travel awards	2,187	
Employee travel	759	
Event & meeting expenses	12,409	5,000
Honoraria & gifts	2,893	500
Service expenses	1,208	
Software licenses	15,867	16,500
*Fund Transfer to NH	255,000	165,000
KS librarian salary	42,356	42,356
Contribution to support event	11,500	
Transfer for Distiller use	300	
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>556,630</b>	<b>489,301</b>
<b>Closing Balance</b>	<b>289,914</b>	<b>542,615</b>

The opening balances of the 4 accounts managed by the HRI consist of:

- HRI Base Operating: \$106,413
- Health Research BC-SPOR Northern Centre: \$ 115,000
- Provincial Health Services Authority Seed Grant Fund: \$18,091
- Rural Coordination Centre of BC: \$58,675
- Knowledge Synthesis Centre: \$ 25,000

\*Committed Funds: BC SUPPORT Unit Northern Centre Partnership Transfer to Northern Health

- 2023-2024: \$255,000
- 2024-2025: \$165,000



Image: Honours Students Emily Pinko, Thomas Kreitz, Alexia Bankowski, and Bruce Danesh pose after their presentations for the HRI Seminar Series



# Looking Forward



# 2024-2025

The HRI will continue to pursue its four strategic directions/goals: knowledge creation, knowledge exchange and translation, fostering linkages, and capacity development. It will implement objectives and activities in a collaborative and networked way, which allows the Institute to be strategic yet flexible and opportunistic in its actions.

Key new HRI activities that are planned for the coming year are described below.

## **Fostering Linkages**

The HRI continues to cultivate new partnerships to continue to address the core strategic areas. In 2024-2025 two new such partnerships will begin:

### **UNBC Library**

The HRI has partnered with the UNBC Library to hire a Knowledge Synthesis Centre Librarian to coordinate and manage the HRI Knowledge Synthesis Centre. We look forward to introducing the KS Librarian in 2024-2025.

### **Faculty of Human and Health Sciences**

The HRI has partnered with the Faculty of Human and Health Sciences on a Professorial Lecture Series, the inaugural event will be held in the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

## **Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) Proposal**

The HRI and the Northern Centre for Clinical Research (NCCR), are developing an application for the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) 2025 Innovation Fund competition. The proposal aims to reduce health inequities that exist for northern, rural and Indigenous Peoples by creating a Northern BC Hub for Health Research in partnership with UNBC, Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, UBC and Northern Health.

Northern British Columbia (BC) currently lacks an Indigenous-informed, purpose-built, technology-leading, health research structure. A large infrastructure investment will create new and reimagined research spaces and equipment on the Prince George campus of UNBC and at the University Hospital of Northern BC (UHNBC) on the unceded territories of the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation. The health research node will be informed by the Indigenous territories on which it is grounded, fueled by innovation and purpose-built to advance health research for northern BC communities, health researchers and the contexts it serves.

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Image: HRI Co-Lead, Dr. Sarah Grey, HRI Leadership Council Member, Dr. Waqar Haque, and HRI Administrative Assistant, Bree Loeffler at the HRI Connect Launch Event



# Appendices

# APPENDIX A

## Collaboration for Health Research in Northern BC Seed Grant Program

PHSA, NH, UNBC

Seed Grant Award Winners, funded 2023-2024:

**Developing a Moral Empowerment Program to address moral determinants of providers' wellbeing and contribute to healthcare effectiveness and sustainability**

**UNBC Lead:** Dr. Davina Banner-Lukaris, Associate Professor, Nursing

**PHSA Lead:** Alice Virani, Executive Director, PHSA Ethics Service

**NH Lead:** Esther Alon-Prieto, Northern Health Ethics Service Lead

**Term:** April 1, 2023-March 31, 2024

**Examining how a partnership between health and post-secondary education providers can facilitate the return of domestic internationally educated nurses (d-IENs) return to the nursing workforce**

**UNBC Lead:** Dr. Caroline Sanders, Associate Professor, School of Nursing

**PHSA Lead:** Brittany Watson, Executive Director, Professional Practice and Policy Office

**NH Lead:** Joanne Cozac, Coordinator Internationally Educated Health Professionals

**Term:** April 1, 2023-December 31, 2024

Image: Amy Kleptar and Erica Koopmans during the opening reception of the Research and Quality Conference

