

Setting the stage for healthier communities and a sustainable healthcare system

Work on the business plan to replace Cowichan District Hospital continues with three of the four building blocks of our business plan now complete.

Input from 42 user groups – which included staff from all program areas, physicians, Aboriginal communities, patient partners, Our Cowichan and other community non-profits – has enabled us to finish the future state service model, functional program and indicative design for the replacement hospital.

As we head into September, hospital engagement will enter a relatively quiet phase while the project team works on finalizing budget estimates to determine what it would cost to design, build and operate the facility as proposed. These components will be compiled into the final business plan for submission to the provincial government in the coming months.

With business planning activities winding down in the fall, local care teams continue to identify opportunities to invest in community services that support people to achieve better health and wellness proactively while reducing capacity pressures on our current and future hospital.

This work is happening in partnership with representatives from our user groups, service partners and local elected officials to promote a more connected, accessible and sustainable health and care system for all.



*Members of the Emergency Department team at Cowichan District Hospital
Photo credit: G. Halme, RN CNL*

Highlights from the past several months include:

- Adapting workflows to enable home support and community health clients to receive better continuity of care
- Forming a Priority Response Team to coordinate quick, wrap-around care for frail patients at risk for re-hospitalization
- Construction update for [The Hamlets](#) 88-bed long-term care facility
- Groundbreaking on [Cowichan Hospice House](#)
- Improving access to hip fracture treatment and recovery time with specialized surgical techniques
- Partnering with Cowichan Tribes on [Blessing Tree project](#) to promote understanding and relationship building with Indigenous people and communities; and
- Operating room renovations to accommodate additional surgeries.

While it's been said before, leadership cannot express enough appreciation for the incredible contributions from staff, physicians and the entire Cowichan community.

"We are humbled and overwhelmed by staff and physicians' readiness to identify and adapt to the changes that have been needed," noted Area Director Emma James.

Dr. Michelle Weizel, Area Medical Director, adds, "There is a sense of eagerness, and a culture of improvement, which enables teams to tackle our challenges and support better care for people in our community."

In addition to our hospital and community staff's participation, the Cowichan District Medical Society and the Cowichan Division of Family Practice have provided financial support and physician attendance at our planning sessions and Our Cowichan has been an amazing facilitator for conversations with other local partners.

The community has also benefitted from the addition of a new member to the leadership team. In July, Mary Knox

was appointed to the position of Manager for Aboriginal Engagement in Cowichan on a full-time basis. In this new role, Mary will focus on continuing to strengthen connections between our health teams and the local Indigenous communities served by CDH, as well as the Métis community, Friendship Centre and First Nations Health Authority.

With everyone's collective knowledge, and the support of Our Cowichan, the CDH Foundation, healthcare volunteers, auxiliaries and local government, we're not just paving the way for a better facility, but a better health care system for the entire community.



Above: The leadership team welcomes Mary Knox as Manager, Aboriginal Engagement for the Cowichan Valley. Mary served as Island Health's Aboriginal Health Manager for Central Island since 2011. She is from the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation and is the oldest of four children of Chief Peter and Mable Knox. Her father is a hereditary chief of the Kwagu'ł of Tsaxis (Fort Rupert), the highest-ranking of the Kwakwaka'wakw First Nation. Mary's forefathers include internationally acclaimed artist Chief Mungo Martin and renowned ethnographer, George Hunt.

Next steps: Moving Cowichan Valley Health and Care forward together

As a community member or service provider, your participation is essential to the success and sustainability of the health system in Cowichan.

This fall, we will be encouraging health care providers and community participation to inform service improvements for three key patient populations:

- Frail/elderly individuals
- Those who are palliative and at end-of-life
- People living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

These populations are among those with the greatest needs that we know we can support better by altering our processes and practices. New resources and primary care will also arrive over the next few years to support change and improvement via the [Cowichan Hospice House](#) and significant provincial investment in [Primary Care Networks](#).

Other opportunities for staff and community engagement will focus on mental health, health literacy and health promotion, to provide long term benefits that impact community wellness.

We will reach out via community surveys and local clinicians, and will post engagement opportunities via email and online. For more details, visit www.islandhealth.ca/newcdh or email newcdh@viha.ca.