

North Island Hospitals Project Newsletter



North Island Hospitals Project
BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Volume 4, Issue 1

www.nihp.viha.ca

July 2016

Hospital team goes back to school, back to the future



The North Island Hospitals Project is about building for the future. Never was that more clear than at a recent return to school for NIHP Chief Project Officer Tom Sparrow.

Reprising an earlier visit to Queneesh Elementary School last year, Sparrow and Graham Design Builder's Comox Valley Senior Project Manager Bret Miche brought another hospital construction presentation to the school in April, this time presented to four of the school's Kindergarten/Gr. 1 classes, roughly 80 five and six-year-olds. The students had many questions and observations about the hospital construction project next to the school property.

"It was awesome," Sparrow said. "To look at the joy and excitement in their faces was truly inspirational. It's very energizing and such a

pleasure to be able to present a picture of the future. Those kids are our future, so you feel honored to be able to inspire vision in the kids."



Above: Chief Project Officer Tom Sparrow, left, Graham's Senior Project Manager Bret Miche and students work the Queneesh Elementary School sandbox with the new Comox Valley Hospital construction site in the background. Above left: Sparrow and Miche field questions.

Afterwards Sparrow and Miche joined students in the school's sand pit for more construction work. "The presentation to the children was very inspiring," said Queneesh Principal Christine VanderRee. "We had already noticed the impact on their play in the sandbox as the children attempted to create their own construction sites. Since the visit, they have begun to notice even more details of construction and the people involved, from our neighbouring field. We see this inspiration in their play, writing, drawing and reading choices. Thanks for your thoughtful, age appropriate presentation."

Project employment and skills training hitting new heights

The number of people working on North Island Hospitals Project (NIHP) construction surpassed 1,000 in April and was expected to remain in this range in the months to come.

The number of workers on the new hospitals construction sites reached a peak of 1,008 people in April, the highest monthly total since construction began in July 2014. Local workers made up almost two-thirds (64 per cent) of the total April workforce. Ninety per cent of the workers were from Vancouver Island.

The number of apprentices working and learning on the two hospital sites reached new heights as well. April saw 290 apprentices working on the project in areas including plumbing, mechanical, electrical, carpentry, sheet metal, and walls & ceilings.

Construction of the new hospitals will create

an estimated 2,200 direct jobs and more than 1,400 indirect jobs over the life of the project. Employment numbers have been growing since construction started in July of 2014. The numbers are expected to reach their peak by early summer 2016.

The economic and social benefits of the North Island Hospitals Project extend well beyond job numbers, said NIHP Chief Project Officer Tom Sparrow. He notes the project to date has purchased \$165 million worth of equipment, products and services from a wide range of Island suppliers, from concrete and steel to electrical, roofing, hardware and much more.

"We're building capacity on the Island through education, through the workforce composition, through apprenticeship programs, and through purchasing and

supporting businesses and services across Vancouver Island," Sparrow said. "In addition, the income that is generated through those jobs is going directly back into our local communities. We're strengthening the foundations of these communities at many different levels. It's absolutely phenomenal."

The North Island Hospitals Project has been recognized as one of BC's 'Champions of Apprenticeship' by the Industry Training Authority, which funds skilled trades training in BC.

The \$606.2 million North Island Hospitals Project includes a new \$331.7 million, 153-bed Comox Valley Hospital in Courtenay on Lerwick Road near Ryan Road, and a new \$274.5 million, 95-bed Campbell River Hospital on the existing hospital site at 375 - 2nd Avenue.



COMOX STRATHCONA
REGIONAL HOSPITAL DISTRICT



A Gathering Place for everybody

New hospitals in the Comox Valley and Campbell River will have all-inclusive places for quiet reflection and ceremony when the hospitals open in late 2017.

Island Health recognizes the importance of ensuring that everyone – including First Nations – and other Aboriginal people—feel welcome and respected when they receive health care services.

While many Island Health facilities feature some form of all-nations room, the North Island Hospitals Project is offering new opportunities for these special places; the opportunity to improve on earlier designs and the opportunity to develop more comprehensive guidelines around use of the rooms.

The North Island Hospitals Project created an Aboriginal Working Group in 2012 to help design hospitals that reflect Vancouver Island First Nations and Métis cultures, community history and values, and incorporate the work of local artists.

Both new hospitals will feature a special room or “Gathering Place” located next to the hospitals’ main entrances, providing a culturally safe, spiritual and non-denominational place for people of all nations. Aboriginal Working Group member James Quatell wants people to know that while the Gathering Place designs recognize the mid and North Island’s rich Aboriginal cultures, the rooms are for use by people of all cultures.

The Wei Wai Kum Nation Elder fears the public and hospital staff will assume the rooms are only for use by Aboriginal people. It’s not called the First Nations Room, he says, but the Gathering Place.

“Who’s that for? Everybody,” he says. “That’s what’s got to get out there. It’s for everybody, Vietnamese, Hindu, whatever. It’s not the Aboriginal Healing Room, but a room to gather. It’s just a gathering room.”

Quatell joined the NIHP Aboriginal Working Group after seeing the welcoming ceremony for the new Campbell River Hospital in 2013, prior to construction.

“I realized that all these things have started happening here in our community. I talked to Jeff (Beselt, then-medical chief of staff, now Executive Medical Director of Island Health’s Geographic Area 1) and he said ‘we want you on this working group,’” he laughs. “I had no idea that I wanted to be a part of this working group.”

Dr. Evelyn Voyageur, a nurse/instructor and member of the Tsawataineuk First Nation of Kingcome Inlet, came to the Aboriginal Working Group through a different path. She’s a North Island College instructor and also sits on the board of St. Joseph’s General Hospital.

“I attended some (of the early Aboriginal Working Group) meetings and I was very vocal,” she smiles. “If things are not the way they should be, I will say it.

“I’m sure it was Roger (Kishi, a Village of Cumberland Councillor who sits on the Aboriginal Working Group, the St. Joe’s board and the Comox Strathcona Regional Hospital District board) who was there



James Quatell and Dr. Evelyn Voyageur are both members of the NIHP Aboriginal Working Group, which helped to design the new Gathering Places in the new hospitals. They’re seen here in the existing Campbell River Hospital’s All-Nations Room.

and said ‘Evelyn, we need you on the new hospital group. Come to the meeting.’ That’s how I started.”

Thanks to input from Aboriginal Working Group members, the Gathering Place designs include a larger exterior view to maximize natural lighting, as well as direct access to an outdoor garden area with traditional medicinal plants. The rooms have flexible spaces and systems to accommodate a wide variety of ceremonies for any cultures. For example, the Gathering Places have additional sound proofing and an independent ventilation system to accommodate music, drumming and smudging ceremonies.

The rooms will have separate entrances for patients and public. They feature lots of cedar, fireplaces, and color schemes consistent with those of North Island First Nations. In another improvement on earlier designs and existing All Nations rooms in other facilities, North Island Hospitals Project Gathering Places will have additional space for the secure storage of ceremonial items.

Both Quatell and Voyageur say the inclusion of Aboriginal cultures and values in the hospital designs is good news, but both are also eager to see how the Gathering Places will be used once the hospitals are built. They feel the room at the existing Campbell River Hospital has been under used and misunderstood. Too often the room sits empty, perhaps because hospital visitors, patients and staff feel it is only for Aboriginal people to use. Quatell says that’s got to change. There’s no turning back.

“If there’s going to be any change, you have to act on it,” he says. “We have to act on it. I will act on it. Island Health was willing to bring us into the Working Group that allowed this to take place. Island Health opened (the door), I’ve come through and there’s a lot of other people that have come through.”

“I didn’t even know where it was,” Voyageur said about the existing room in the Campbell River Hospital. “I had no idea.”

She’s hopeful that the design process for the new hospitals and the Gathering Places will translate into more cultural awareness and flexibility when it comes to developing guidelines for how the rooms are used.

“The optimism that I’ve got is that we’ve been included,” she said. “We’ve been involved in the planning of it. Whether it’s going to carry out when it’s actually in place, is another thing. It’s all well to have a really nice place and we’re going to say it’s the ‘Gathering Place’ but what I’m concerned about is the people who are going to run it. Are they going to be saying ‘no, you can’t do that. That’s not within the policy?’ That’s what I’m concerned about.”

Indeed, guidelines for use of the new Gathering Places have not yet been determined, but Island Health will continue to work with the Aboriginal Working Group, clinicians and others to develop guidelines consistent with the all-inclusive spirit of these special spaces.