

Annual Report

2024-2025



**Health Research
Institute**

HRI Staff: TAL 10-1506
HRI Manager: 10-1520
250-960-5501
www.unbc.ca/hri

**University of
Northern BC**

3333 University Way
Prince George, BC
V2N 4Z

CONTENTS

Message from the Co-Leads

About the HRI

- An overview of the Institute
- Membership and HRI Connect
- Introduction to the HRI Leadership Council and Staff

Update on Institute Activities

- Student Engagement
- HRI Partnered Events
- Activities
 - Seminar Series
 - Knowledge Synthesis Centre
- Operational Budget
- Northern Hub for Health Research

Partnerships

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

Looking Forward

- Objectives and Activities for 2025-2026



Photo: Dr. Sarah de Leeuw & X'staam Hana'ax (Nicole Halbauer) present for the HRI Seminar Series

Message from the HRI Co-Leads

As co-leads of the UNBC's Health Research Institute (HRI) we are pleased to submit the 2024-25 annual report for the HRI. In 2024-25, the HRI team has implemented new HRI initiatives (HRI Connect, Knowledge Synthesis Centre sustainability pilot), hosted or co-hosted many health research events and successfully co-led an institutional funding proposal to CFI/BCKDF which aims to support health equity for northern, rural and indigenous communities through a transformative health research infrastructure proposal. All of our activities underscore the importance of UNBC's HRI strategic approach to advance Health Research in Northern BC in line with our Mission to help in the creation and sharing of knowledge that increases the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

This year, established Co-lead Dr. Sarah Gray, was joined by Dr. Trina Fyfe as Interim co-lead to lead HRI activities that reflect the strategic directions of the HRI, as determined by the HRI Leadership Council. Trina also serves as the UNBC University Librarian and her engagement as the Interim Co-lead has significantly advanced Knowledge Synthesis Centre activities through partnership with the UNBC Library. Dr. Margot Parkes, stepped away as HRI Co-lead during a 1-year term as Interim Dean for the Faculty of Human and Health Sciences (FHHS), remaining active as an HRI Leadership Council Member and Academic Lead for several HRI Initiatives. As HRI Co-leads we remained focused on stability, longevity and advancement of the HRI. We continue to make strides towards financial stability for the HRI, expansion of HRI services to a broader range of members and a continued commitment to providing collaborating and convening events for health researchers across Northern BC and beyond.



Photo: HRI Staff and Co-Leads. From the left: Trina Fyfe (Interim Co-Lead), Bree Loeffler, Sarah Gray, Leana Garraway

Message from the HRI Co-Leads, Continued

Three key initiatives achieved in the 2024-25 reporting period (April 2024 – March 2025) include;

1. Socialization and uptake of HRI Connect to support HRI member collaboration and streamline HRI communications. 2. Advancement of partner driven knowledge synthesis projects with Northern Health through a partner-funded Knowledge Synthesis Librarian (0.5 FTE) and student research assistants. 3. Co-leadership of a UNBC/Lheidli T'enneh First Nation/UBC/NH partnered proposal for a Northern Hub for Health Research on UNBC and UHNBC campuses.

Building on successful precedents, our 2024-25 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-lead and leadership council members who interact with NH, BCSPOR, PHSA, Health Research Council of BC, RCCbc and the NH MOU Steering Committee and Working Groups. Examples of successes from such partnerships include the completion of the first PHSA-NH-UNBC Project Grant (Phase 2) competition in Spring 2024 (see page #30) and an HRI:ORI partnership to support the new MOU Project Coordinator to facilitate NH-UNBC MOU steering and working group activities for 2025-26.

The 2024-25 HRI Seminar Series, coordinated by HRI Members Dr. Kendra Furber, Dr. Rheanna Robinson, Nuziha Thasneem Shakkir, Leana Garraway and Bree Loeffler, included research talks from external and UNBC scholars, a career development panel discussion, information sessions from provincial health services and funding agencies (First Nations Health Authority and Genome BC) and showcased the research outcomes of UNBC Health Science Honours students (see page #14). In addition to the HRI Seminar Series, 2024-25 saw a full agenda of health research events (see page #12) by visiting scholars with expertise in medical education, agetechnology and rural/indigenous health service delivery.

The HRI co-hosted an NH-UNBC MOU Education and Training Day on the UNBC campus in Fall 2024 which brought together scholars from UNBC and NH, and we partnered with the Faculty of Human and Health Sciences (FHHS) on their Professorial Lecture for Dr. Davina Banner-Lukaris. We thank members of the Office of the Vice-President of Research and Innovation, Dr. Paula Wood-Adams, Dr. Davina Banner-Lukaris 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 the HRI Co-Leads, Continued

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 Librarian, Terri McKellar, Research Skills Development Trainee, Rhonda Thygesen, and student research assistants. We thank the HRI Leadership Council members that governed the strategic direction of the HRI in 2024-25 (see page #8 of HRI report for current members). We sincerely thank departing member, Dr. Waqar Haque (FBE, Business, FSE, Computer Science) for his innovative work on developing HRI Connect for our members; and welcome Dr. Taru Manyanga (DMS, Master of Physiotherapy- North) as the newest member of the HRI Leadership Council. In 2024-25, we expanded student membership to include the highly motivated and engaged MSc level trainees, Mr. Jonathan Dolon (MSc, Health Sciences) and Mr. Jakob Ostberg (MSc, Interdisciplinary Studies) and created an elected position on the HRI Leadership Council.

The first election for this position will be initiated at the HRI Annual General Meeting scheduled for April 24, 2025, where our members will vote for one of three candidates who have been nominated to stand for membership. The addition of this position is a significant step in the evolution of HRI activity governance, that will support diverse membership on the HRI Leadership Council.

In 2025-26, the HRI leadership will dedicate time to the development of communication strategies, cost recovery models and evaluation of HRI services such as the Knowledge Synthesis Centre, HRI event planning and HRI Connect to enhance accessibility and transparency of HRI services. We will continue to lead engagement events to socialize the Northern Hub for Health Research across Northern BC, the province and nationally to achieve our goal of funding success. And finally we will continue to foster and develop existing and new partnerships to support health research for the benefit of Northern BC and beyond.

Sincerely,

Sarah Gray, (HRI Co-Lead, Professor, DMS, NMP, UNBC)

Trina Fyfe, (HRI Interim Co-Lead, University Librarian, UNBC)

Margot Parkes, (HRI Co-Lead until July 1 2024, Interim Dean FHHS, Professor, Health Sciences/DMS, NMP, UNBC)

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.

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

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 wellbeing 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 and partners such as Northern Health (NH), and developing research capacity.

Themes

Our members conduct research in the following areas:

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



Photo: A 4th year Honour Student presents at the April 2025 Seminar Series

Membership

Being a member of the HRI has many benefits, including being on the email distribution list, invitations to HRI events and activities, having access to the membership directory, and an invitation to the Annual Meeting. In addition to these benefits, members can enjoy:

- **UNBC Member** (UNBC Faculty and Research Staff)
 - Access to leadership opportunities within the HRI
- **Student Member** (Undergraduate and graduate students of any academic institution and post-doctoral fellows)
 - Access to leadership opportunities within the HRI (UNBC students only)
 - Opportunities to showcase your work at HRI events
- **Partner Member** (Researchers from any institution/organization interested in Health Research relevant to Northern BC)



HRI Connect

This membership database will serve as a way to facilitate networking amongst our members and allow the HRI to better communicate important information.

Key features:

- Connect with those currently doing research in your areas of interest by easily searching using key words and filters.
- Easily keep your profile up to date, including your contact information, biography and research areas.

[HRI Connect Link](#)

Photo: HRI Leadership Council Student Representative, Nuziha, poses with 4th Year Honours Students after their presentations for the HRI Seminar Series

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.



Sarah Gray

Co-Lead
Northern Medical
Program, DMS



Trina Fyfe

Co-Lead-Interim
(Term Start July
2024) University
Librarian



Margot Parkes

Co-Lead (April- June
2024)
School of Health
Sciences, FHHS,
Northern Medical
Program, DMS



Shannon Freeman

School of Nursing,
FHHS
On Sabbatical
July 2024



**Darlene
Sanderson**

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



**Rheanna
Robinson**

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



Waqar Haque

School of Business,
FBE; Department of
Computer Science,
FSE (Term End Sept
2024)



Taru Manyanga

Physical Therapy,
DMS (Term Start
January 2025)

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.



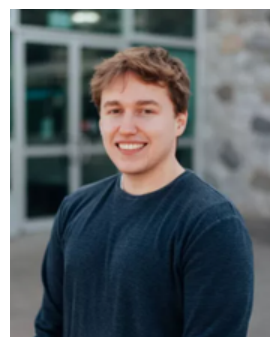
**Nuziha
Thasneem
Shakkir**

Student
Representative
Msc., BTech
PhD Student



**Jonathan
Doyon**

Student
Representative
BHSc (Honours),
MSc Student



Jake Ostberg

Student
Representative
BHSc (Honours)
MSc Student

HRI Staff



Leana Garraway

HRI Manager &
Co-Lead, BC
SUPPORT Unit
Northern Centre



Bree Loeffler

Administrative
Assistant
HRI/RCCbc



Terri McKellar

Knowledge
Synthesis Librarian



Rhonda Thygesen

Research Skills
Development
Trainee



UPDATE ON INSTITUTE ACTIVITIES

APRIL 1, 2024 - MARCH 31, 2025

Student Engagement

Student Engagement | HRI Leadership Council Student Representatives

In its ongoing efforts to increase awareness of its services, the Health Research Institute (HRI) has been actively engaging with students through various events. Notably, in September 2024, the HRI hosted a table at the UNBC Orientation Fair, where they provided information about their services and resources to incoming students. This hands-on presence allowed students and faculty to connect directly with HRI staff and student representatives and learn about the supports available to them. Additionally, in March 2025, Leana Garraway served as a panelist for the UNBC Career Centre's inaugural "Careers in Research" night.

Furthermore, the three HRI Leadership Council Student Representatives organized two meet-and-greet events for students to connect, strengthen relationships across campus, discuss research interests, network, and brainstorm ways the HRI can better support students interested in health research at UNBC. The student representatives are also involved in various HRI activities; **Jake Ostberg** is a member of the Planning Committee for the 2025 Northern Research and Quality Conference (UNBC-NH co-hosted event), and **Nuziha Thasneem Shakkir** is a member of the HRI Seminar Series Planning Committee, and in this capacity hosted the April 2025 Seminar. These events and initiatives highlight the HRI's commitment to supporting student success by fostering connections and providing career resources.

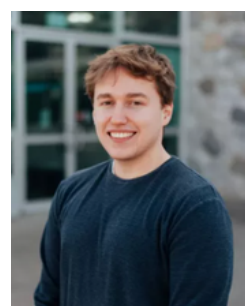
Student Representatives



**Nuziha Thasneem
Shakkir**



Jonathan Doyon



Jake Ostberg



Image: HRI Leadership Council Student Representatives host a student social

HRI Partnered Events

Event Planning and Co-Hosting

The HRI welcomes the opportunity to partner or co-host events and guest presentations 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 for options and costing for event planning and co-hosting.

HRI Co-Hosted Events

Faculty of Human and Health Sciences (FHHS)

Interim Dean, Dr. Margot Parkes

FHHS/HRI Professorial Lecture Series

The Faculty of Human and Health Sciences (FHHS) established its inaugural Professorial Lecture Series in February 2025 in partnership with the HRI. A Professorial Lecture highlights the career of a tenure track faculty recently promoted to Professor, and the FHHS is proud to continue this tradition of highlighting their newly promoted faculty.

- February 13, 2025 | Researcher. Educator. Leader: A Journey from the Heart
- Dr. Davina Banner-Lukaris

Centre for Technology Adoption for Aging in the North (CTAAN)

Academic Director, Dr. Shannon Freeman and Director Dr. Richard McAloney

CTAAN-Age-Well Webinar Series

Organized by CTAAN Research Managers Matt Sargent and Emma Rossnagel

- May 2nd, 2024 | Current research and development of assistive products for persons with dementia in Japan
 - Visiting Scholars Dr. Misato Nihei, University of Tokyo, Japan & Dr. Nodoka Yamauchi, National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST), Japan
- June 27th, 2024 | Enhancing Care for Older Adults in Japan – development of a digital approach to comprehensive geriatric assessment
 - Visiting Scholars Drs. Ebinara, Miyagi, Wu & Park, & Tohoku, University Graduate School of Medicine Japan

Image: Dr. Davina Banner-Lukaris gives the inaugural Professorial Lecture



HRI Partnered Events

Dr. Anurag Singh, Division of Medical Sciences

- November 20th, 2024 | Transforming Kidney Health in Indigenous Peoples: Experience from ANZ
 - Visiting Scholar Dr. Jaqui Hughes, Flinders University, Australia.
 - Co-hosted with the Northern Centre for Clinical Research (NCCR)

Dr. Erin Wilson, Associate Professor - School of Nursing

- September 26th, 2024 | Linking strategic health research development to informing evidence-based practice: Experiences of a rural healthcare organization in the United Kingdom
 - Visiting Scholar Dr. Bonnie Teague, University of East Anglia, UK
 - Co-Hosted with Northern Health

UNBC Office of Research and Innovation

- November 6th, 2024 | Quality Measures for Qualitative Research: What really matters and why?
- Visiting Scholar Dr. Virginia Braun, Waipapa Taumata Rau/The University of Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand

Event Support

Dr. Anurag Singh, Division of Medical Sciences

- June 3rd, 2024 | The Hybrid Care Research Collaborative One Day Meeting

Division of Medical Sciences

- August 8, 2024 | Small Molecules in Drug Discovery and Disease Diagnostics
 - Visiting Scholar Dr. Keng Yoon Yeong, Monash University, Malaysia
- January 31, 2025 | Canada's Leadership in Diabetes Research Through Core-Driven Open team Science
 - Visiting Scholar, Dr. Jim Johnson, University of BC & Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute

2024 Education and Training Day

- November 7, 2024 | Enhancing Quality in Collaborative Research
- NH-UNBC Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Initiative

Image: Visiting Scholar, Dr. Jaqui Hughes



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. Attendance is in-person and online. Recordings of past sessions can be viewed on the [HRI Website](#).

The HRI would like to thank the 2024 - 2025 Seminar Series Committee for all of their hard work to plan, organize and host the seminar series: Dr. Kendra Furber, Dr. Rheanna Robinson, Nuziha Thasneem Shakkir, Bree Loeffler and Leana Garraway.

SEPT 19 2024	Julie Morrison	First Nations Health Authority Services
SEPT 26 2024	Visiting Scholar, Dr. Bonnie Teague, UK	Linking strategic health research development to informing evidence-based practice: Experiences of a rural healthcare organization in the United Kingdom Hosted with Northern Health
OCT 17 2024	Genome BC	Health Metadata Commons: Unifying Biobank and Omics Metadata Presentation and Drop in Session

NOV 21
2024

Visiting Scholar, Dr. Brian Christie, U Victoria

Understanding the effects of repeated mild traumatic brain injury: How preclinical and clinical findings are reshaping our perspective

DEC 7
2024

FEB 27
2025

H.E.A.L Team

All Our Relationships: Roles of Friendships and Geography in Developing Critical Anti-Colonial Health Humanities Teaching Tools and Places, including HARC and HEAL

MAR 20
2025

Career Paths in Health Research: Panel Discussion

- **Andrew Giles** | Senior Lab Instructor, UNC
- **Celia Belamour** | Clinical Research Coordinator, NH
- **Janna Olynick** | Data Analyst, CSFS
- **Vanessa Mitchell** | Research Associate, NCCIH
- **Parleen Pandher** | PhD Student, UC Berkeley

APR 4
2025

UNBC Honour Students

- **Jenna Rea** | Vitamin D and Cognition in Young Adult University Students
- **Rupali Cheema** | Short Community-based Sports programs and Mental Health in Immigrant Children and Youth
- **Naomi Cole** | Respiratory Muscle Training: Feeling Completely Under Water

Seminar Series Planning Committee



Dr. Kendra Furber



Dr. Rheanna Robinson



Nuziha Thasneem Shakkir



Leana Garraway



Bree Loeffler

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.

After discussion and advocating for funding, the role of **Knowledge Synthesis Librarian** was developed as a co-funded position between the HRI and UNBC Library, and in May 2024 we welcomed Terri McKellar into this role. Terri’s activities this year have included providing valuable services, supports and capacity building to UNBC Faculty, staff and students as well as external partners. Terri had assistance from the HRI Research Skills Development Trainee Rhonda Thygesen.



12 UNBC Led Projects



5 Partnered projects



4 Webinars



1 Knowledge Synthesis Guide



Terri McKellar
Knowledge Synthesis Librarian



Rhonda Thygesen
Research Skills Development Trainee

- Key supports provided included:
- **Collaborative Knowledge Synthesis Projects:** Engaging on 12 UNBC led projects, and along with the HRI Co-Leads and Manager, working with our Northern Health partners to develop a pathway for requests from NH to the Centre, and the beginning stages of developing a cost-recovery model and evaluation plan.
 - **Methodological Services and Supports:** by providing consultations and methodological expertise, & access to and training for Distiller SR review software.
 - **Training and Capacity Building:** Mentoring new employees, and presenting webinars such as KS Overview: Scoping, Systematic, and Rapid Reviews. Of particular note, Terri created a research guide on knowledge synthesis with the purpose of guiding students, faculty, staff and the community on review methodologies. This resource was launched in September 2024 and within 4 months had received over 700 views.

The guide and the uptake of NH and UNBC faculty with the Centre demonstrate the need and impact the Centre can have on quality improvement and health research. It highlights the role that a librarian can play within a Centre focused on review methodology and the need for reviews in an organization, like NH, that is continuously at capacity.

Faculty led projects that utilized HRI’s Distiller Software

Primary Investigator	Project Title
Heath Matheson	The effect of dual-task motor interference on higher-order cognitive processes: A systematic review and meta analysis
Shannon Freeman	Outcomes of remote monitoring to support older adults to live well: A scoping Review
Davina Banner-Lukaris	1.Organizing factors that foster engagement-capable environments: A study of Health Research Networks 2.SPOR Integrated team -based primary care in rural communities
Margot Parkes	1. Nechako Watershed Saturation Search 2. Climate & Health Co-Benefits
Rheanna Robinson and Margot Parkes	It's about time! Designing for health research infrastructure that is inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible, and is created with Indigenous, rural, remote and northern communities in mind.
Shannon Wagner (TRU)	1. Prevalence and Work implications of Trauma-related Mental Health Conditions in High-risk Personnel 2. Interventions and Prevention of Trauma-related Mental Health Conditions in High-risk Personnel

Operational Budget

For FY 2024 - 2025 and Projected Expenses for FY 2025-2026

	<u>Actual 2024-2025</u>	<u>Projected 2025-2026</u>
*Opening Balance	337, 510	401,936
REVENUES		
External revenue	342,500	358,000
->SPOR; ORI; DMS, PHSA, NH		
**Cost recovery for use Distiller	1,200	N/A
Support/fee HRI Co-hosted	3,000	22,000
Events		
Contribution to KS Centre	2,000	22,000
Returned research funds, expired	4,738	0
PHSA-NH-UNBC seed grant		
TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE	690,948	809,936
EXPENSES		
***Personnel	171,379	261,357
HRI operating expenses	1,300	1,351
Research awards	90,000	100,000
Event & meeting expenses	4,200	6,000
Honoraria & gifts	1,102	1,500
Non capital expenses	331	400
Software licenses	20,700	10,000
Transfer for specific purpose	0	20,000
Committed project funds	0	20,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	289,012	420,208
Closing Balance	401,936	389,728

*The opening balances of the 5 accounts managed by the HRI consist of:

- HRI Base Operating: \$63,987
- Health Research BC-SPOR Northern Centre: \$177,912
- Provincial Health Services Authority Seed Grant Fund: \$3,254
- Rural Coordination Centre of BC: \$91,375
- Knowledge Synthesis Centre: \$ 1,982

**Deferred revenue for Distiller from previous years \$4,170

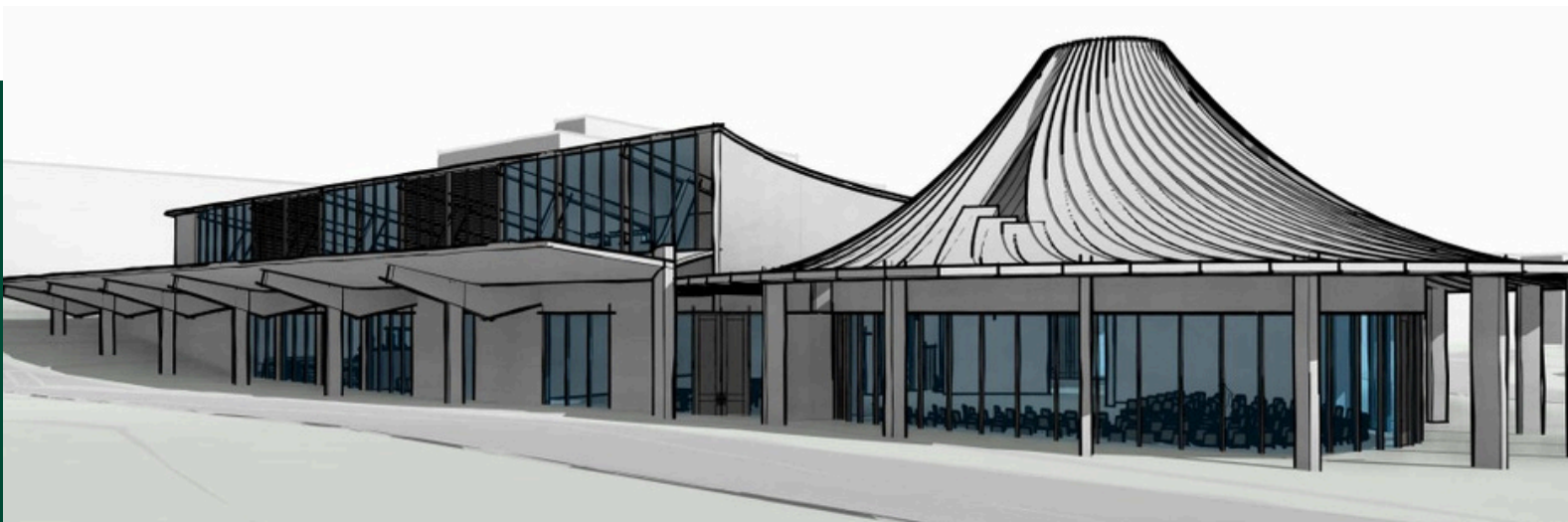
**Positions funded:

HRI Manager, Administrative Assistant, Librarian (50%), Research Assistants & Skills Development Trainee

Northern Hub for Health Research

In 2024-25 the HRI Co-leads, together with the Director of the Northern Centre for Clinical Research (NCCR), have invested significant leadership in driving a UNBC initiative critical to the advancement of Health Research at UNBC. Through the submission of a CFI 2025 Innovation Fund Proposal, UNBC and 3 key partners, Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, UBC and the Northern Health Authority are proposing an Indigenous-informed, purpose-built, technology-leading, health research hub named the Northern Hub for Health Research. The proposal includes a stand-alone interdisciplinary health research building at UNBC and a clinical research space at the University Hospital of Northern BC that will provide core, multi-user research spaces and equipment. The Hub will advance the integration of and innovations from community engaged, clinical and biomedical health research being conducted in Northern BC, catalyzing a shift in how and where health research is conducted in Canada and who benefits from it. Directly aligned with the Vision and Mission of the HRI, the proposal, led by academic, health system and First Nation partners, aims to transform how northern, rural and Indigenous populations engage with health research; creating research infrastructure to generate community prioritized research outcomes, enable clinical research and diversify employment, training and economic opportunities in biotechnology and the life sciences for Northern British Columbians and beyond.

For more information visit: <https://www.unbc.ca/office-research-and-innovation/northern-hub-health-research>.



A group of five people (three women and two men) standing in a modern office lobby. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows a large concrete pillar, a blue leather armchair, and a tiled floor. The entire image is overlaid with a dark green tint.

PARTNERSHIPS

FOSTERING LINKAGES

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: Attendees discuss NH service networks at the 2024 Education and Training Day



Northern Health

Northern Health and UNBC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2010 to formally recognize their long-standing and historical partnership. In 2022 the NH and UNBC MOU was renewed for the fourth time. Each renewal 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), Waqar Haque,
Leana Garraway



Photo: from right, Dr. Erin Wilson, Dr. Bonnie Teague, Leana Garraway, Bree Loeffler and Marcelo Bravo after a visiting scholar presentation, co-hosted with Northern Health

2024 Education and Training Day

Enhancing Quality in Collaborative Research

The purpose of this event was to increase the culture of research and research relationships in Northern BC by holding a highly collaborative skill development day.

Highlights



Please visit the [HRI website](#) for further details of the day including recordings from the keynote, and plenary presentations.



130+ Registered



4 Workshops



**1 Keynote and 1
Plenary**



**2 Working Lunch
Sessions**

Recordings:

Keynote

- André Picard | [Tipping Point: Are we finally ready to undertake some serious healthcare reform?](#)

Plenary

- Dr. Virginia Braun | [Does qualitative story completion have potential for health research?](#)



Workshops

1. Building Meaningful Partnerships for Impact
2. Selecting effective strategies to address the barriers and facilitators to change
3. Engaging Patients and the Public in Healthcare and Research: Opportunities, Tensions, and Best Practices
4. Trust, power and relationship building in implementation contexts

Working Lunches

1. Northern Health's Health Service Networks
2. Engaging in Diverse Ways: Providing Support through Participatory Research

“
Very informative. It
opened my eyes
and insights on
how to go about
research.”

Image: UNBC Co-Lead, Research and Knowledge Translation Working Group, Dr. Shannon Freeman welcomes everyone to the Education and Training Day



Thank-You's

Thank-You to Dr. Shannon Freeman's staff and students who volunteered on the day of the event.

BC SUPPORT Unit

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.

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.

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

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 people as active partners in both research and its use in health car practice and policy



Image: Dr. Davina Banner, Bree Loeffler and Leana Garraway during a workshop “The Many Hats We Wear” at the Putting Patients First Conference

Northern Centre Staff

Northern Centre Activities

Putting Patients First Conference, Vancouver November 14 2024

The whole team attended and was involved in the conference this year

- Leana Garraway was on the planning committee for pre-conference BC SUPPORT Unit Patient Partner Gathering, and co-hosted the event with Patient Partner Anni Rychtera
- Bree Loeffler was at the event to capture key moments in her capacity as official photographer, part of her role on the BC SUPPORT Unit Communications Team
- Marcelo Bravo was on the Planning Committee (Abstract Review Sub Committee) for the conference
- UNBC's own Dr. Davina Banner-Lukaris was a panel member for Perspectives on the Patient-Oriented Research Experience with her colleague, Patient Partner Marc Bains.

Other Activities

- The Northern Centre team continued to work with their BC SUPPORT Unit colleagues to plan the final 2 years of the grant (2024-2026) and focus on building sustainability and legacy.



Leana Garraway

Co-Lead
& HRI Manager,
UNBC



Marcelo Bravo

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



**Dr. Shannon
Freeman**

Academic Lead &
Associate
Professor, UNBC



Bree Loeffler

Bree Loeffler,
Administrative
Assistant,
Northern Centre
& HRI
UNBC

Rural Coordination Centre of BC (RCCbc)

The Rural Coordination Centre of BC (RCCbc) is an organization dedicated to enhancing healthcare delivery in rural and remote communities across British Columbia. It works to improve access to medical services, support healthcare providers, and address the unique challenges faced by rural populations. RCCbc collaborates with a wide range of partners, including healthcare professionals, government bodies, and community organizations, to develop and implement innovative solutions that improve the overall health and well-being of rural residents. Their initiatives focus on fostering sustainable healthcare models, providing professional development for rural healthcare workers, and improving the coordination of services in underserved areas. Through these efforts, RCCbc plays a crucial role in ensuring that rural communities in BC receive high-quality, accessible healthcare.

Bree Loeffler (Administrative Assistant) has a dual role with both RCCbc and the HRI and is involved with many different projects and activities within the organization. Margot Parkes is the HRI Leadership Council Academic Lead for the HRI/RCCbc partnership, and is involved in initiatives with a direct link to the future vision of the HRI and Dr. Parkes own work as a UNBC faculty member.

Bree Loeffler:

- RCCbc Communications Team
 - Strategic Planning Retreat, Gabriola Island (August 2024) & weekly team meetings
 - Stellat'en First Nations, begin documenting the communities innovations around food sovereignty. The story will be continued into 2025.
 - Developed & maintain 200+ slides for the organizations "RCctv" which consist of slides to be used for conferences and meetings including staff and physician contact cards, program overviews, Rural BC landscapes, etc.
 - Curate slide decks for conferences
 - Support of the organizations photo bank

Photo: Bree captures images of the Shunk'et Ti gardens in Stellat'en First Nations while covering a story on food sovereignty for RCCbc communications.



Bree Loeffler
Administrative Assistant



Margot Parkes
(Academic Lead)

RCCbc Projects & Activities

- Photograph & conduct interviews at Northern Health/RCCbc co-hosted events
 - Mental Health and Substance Use Conference (October 2024)
 - See [overview slideshow](#).
 - Northern Doctors Day (November 2024)
- [Site Visits Project](#)
 - Assisted in the organization of previous years data in order to be entered into an AI database.
 - Designed a template for a community feedback report which will be completed in 2025.
- Dean's Advisory Council Administrative Support & Organization
 - Whistler, BC (May 2024)
- RCCbc Core meetings -attended two (Vancouver and Parksville)
- Northern Node: Planned social events for Northern Node staff and physicians including the annual retreat
- Rural Health Conference
 - Whistler 2024 (May 2024) - part of the communications team
 - Prince George (May 2025) -part of planning team (social activities, day care, etc.)
- Rural Health Awards
 - Compile nomination packages for awards review committee, scheduled meetings, communications with nominees on committees decisions & next steps RE attending Rural Health Conference.

Margot Parkes:

Dr. Margot Parkes has been involved with the establishment of the emerging Planetary Health working group **Green Acts for Big Impact: a Community of Practice** co-led by the Rural Coordination Centre of BC and [Health Quality BC](#). Officially launched April 9, 2025, it's a space for rural and remote clinicians to connect, share ideas, and take practical steps toward low-carbon, high-quality care. [Join the community of practice.](#)



Image: The Northern Node team with RCCbc learns of traditional medicines that can be harvested in PG at the yearly retreat



Image: Bree fillets a salmon in preparation for canning at the Stelat'en First Nations Salmon Festival

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 principals:

- 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.



Collaboration for Health Research in Northern BC

Funding Program

In 2023, PHSA, NH and UNBC made a commitment to continue this partnership and to support a Project Grant program. There will be 3 project grant funding competitions with up to two projects funded per year for a \$45,000 grant. The first call for applications was released in March 2024.

This partnership will also support a seed grant competition in autumn 2025 and 2026.

The goal of the Funding Programs is to enable collaborators from UNBC, NH, and PHSA to work in partnership and initiate new research projects that focus on improving the quality of health services and the health of the population in northern BC.

2024 Winners

- **Title:** Closer to Home: Decentralizing Clinical Trials to Improve Access for Rural Cancer Patients in Northern BC
Principal Investigator (NH): Damanpreet Kandola
Co-Applicant (PHSA): Roel Schlijper
Co-Applicant (UNBC): Davina Banner-Lukaris
- **Title:** Addressing Moral Distress for Lasting Workforce Sustainability: A Comprehensive Intervention Strategy in the sector of Long -Term and Assisted Living in Northern BC
Principal Investigator (NH): Esther Alonso-Prieto
Co-Applicant (PHSA): Alice Virani
Co-Applicant (UNBC): Davina Banner-Lukaris

2025 Intake

A call for applications has been opened for the Project Grant Program. Please see our [website](#) for more information and for application instructions.



LOOKING FORWARD

2025 - 2026

2025 - 2026

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:

HRI Operations

- The HRI Leadership Council will welcome the first elected member.
- There will be a continued focus on partnering with UNBC & external partners to co-host or supported events. This includes the NH & UNBC 2025 Northern BC Research and Quality Conference October 22-23, 2025
- Northern Hub for Health Research-Co-Leads will continue to focus on initiatives for the advancement of Health Research at UNBC.

Office of Research and Innovation (ORI)

UNBC has a student first focus that means keeping student needs at the forefront of decision making. For this reason the ORI partnered with HRI to enable the hiring of students for the Knowledge Synthesis Centre in roles that provide training and research experience that will help student learn skills for future academic or employment careers.

The HRI will welcome Nasrin Golzadeh in the new role as Project Manager of the NH-UNBC MOU partnered work. Nasrin will work within the ORI in partnership with the HRI and NH.

UNBC Library

The HRI will continue to partner with the UNBC Library to support the Knowledge Synthesis Centre Research Librarian position for 2025-2026. As well, we look to expand UNBC's capacity for knowledge synthesis by jointly purchasing an institutional license to Covidence systematic review software for use by all UNBC Faculty, staff and students.

Faculty of Human and Health Sciences

This year marked the first partnered event between FHHS and the HRI with the inaugural Professorial Lecture Series. This partnered Professorial Lecture Series will continue, additionally the FHHS and HRI are committed to supporting students and early career researchers with activities, such as Graduate Student Events, other flagship events, and financial support for KS work.

Collaboration for Health Research In Northern BC Funding Program

Part of the **Provincial Health Services Authority, Northern Health and UNBC** partnership, HRI serves as secretariat for this partnership and will run:

- A funding competitions for two \$45,000 project grants in April, 2025 and again in April 2026
- A seed grant competition in autumn, 2025, and again in autumn 2026