



Funding for Indigenous engagement was made possible by a Connection Grant from the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada to support partnership and collaboration between Island Health, First Nations Health Authority and Indigenous communities in the Cowichan region.

Reaching the one year milestone

At this time last year, we were beginning our community open houses and scheduling user group meetings with teams who contribute to day-to-day services and care at Cowichan District Hospital (CDH).

A year later, we are reflecting on the tremendous amount of thought and effort that everyone has contributed to our plans for Cowichan Valley Health and Care.

The many conversations we've had with community members, staff, volunteers, care and service partners have given us hope and excitement for the years ahead.

Learning from Indigenous ways

On a rainy fall day in October, our CEO and local leaders met with the newly established Indigenous Advisory Committee (*working title*) in Chemainus to check in after our first round of visits to Indigenous communities and learn about the protocols and priorities for planning a new hospital and health system within their traditional, unceded territory.

At these sessions, we appreciated the prompt to encourage youth to participate in conversations on health. "We respect our children and our grandchildren and we learn from their wisdom," said Penelakut Elder, Myrus James. "Their generation will inherit what we leave behind, so involve them in your planning."

This was a profound reminder for those of us in health who dedicate considerable time and effort into thinking about how to support older adults. In Cowichan, seniors age 75+ represent ~10% of the region's total population and this age group is expected to increase by ~70% in 2028. [Source: P.E.O.P.L.E. 2019, BC Stats]

Thinking about ways to support people to thrive at all ages and maintain their wellness as they grow older is worth a closer look, and hearing more from youth is something we're looking forward to in future engagement. Including youth in our planning also provides them with early opportunities to explore careers that can enable them to reach personal goals, which often include giving back to their community through their work.

Elders also pointed out the critical need for responsible use of natural resources in the Cowichan Valley; the health of the air, land and water, and their connection to the health of the community as a whole.

Environmental sustainability plans for a new CDH are well aligned with these principles and a facility that achieves LEED Gold certification will be a place that is healthier for the environment, community, patients and staff.

LEED Gold: What's in a name?

Some of the LEED credits we're aiming for in Cowichan include:

- Supporting public transit, green vehicle use and "active transportation" (walking or wheeling)
- Managing rainwater to protect habitats by storing storm water in a pond and using it for irrigation or safely returning it to natural water flow systems
- Preserving tree canopies or planting new trees to provide shade and clean air for a healthy environment

- Reducing clean water use (The new North Island Hospital campuses use 40% less water per square meter than older facilities and future technology would match or surpass this.)
- Maximizing energy efficiency and minimizing greenhouse gas emission in alignment with [provincial legislation](#); and
- Building a facility that is able to adapt to climate change.

What's next?

Work on the business plan for a new CDH will carry on throughout the winter. The project team is in the final stages of financial analysis and costing, which is no small task for a project of this scope and complexity. Once complete, the plan will undergo a round of internal reviews via Island Health's executive and board of directors, before submission to the provincial government.

The proposed scope, schedule and budget, will all be confirmed pending government's review and approval of the business plan. The final design and look of the hospital, and details such as the make and models of specific equipment, will evolve following further user group and community consultations.

Working groups at work

We recently had the opportunity to tour the maternity and paediatric unit at CDH to learn how members of the Perinatal Working Group are planning for a space that allows them to provide the best care to moms and children in their community.

With funding from the Cowichan District Medical Society, the multidisciplinary team of physicians, midwives, nurses and community members meets to discuss current and future state projections for their unit, lessons learned from other recent hospital projects, and how to incorporate patient and care provider input into plans for a new hospital.



The Perinatal Working Group at work (L-R): Dr. Maki Ikemura; Sarah Byrne, RN, CNL; and Mona Kaiser discuss ways they can use the existing space to provide better experiences for families today, while planning for a new facility in the future.

“We have learned that patients wish to deliver with loved ones close by, as well as avoid the need to be transferred elsewhere for specialized services,” said Mona Kaiser, project liaison for the Perinatal Working Group. “Knowing these details helps us focus our planning in ways that will make a significant difference to families in the Cowichan Valley.”

“This type of integrated planning ensures each portfolio can be woven together into a continuous stream of care so our patients are able to have a much better experience,” notes David Huntley, manager for Surgical Services; Rehabilitation; and Child, Youth, Family Services at CDH.

Would you like to help shape Cowichan Valley Health & Care experiences?

Did you know patient partner volunteers have been helping our health teams improve services and care behind-the-scenes? Some hold ongoing seats on our steering committees, while others opt for one-time participation, providing expert advice, sharing their experiences with the health system so we can tailor services to better meet the needs of the community.

To be notified of upcoming opportunities, email newcdh@viha.ca and let us know your area of interest!

Have your say in the Community Satisfaction Survey

The Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) is conducting a comprehensive

[community satisfaction survey](#) from now until December 31.

600 randomly selected residents and households will be called through both landlines and cell phones, and participants will have the option to complete the survey by phone or online through a secure email link. At the end of the survey, residents can also receive a link to additional questions about local health services.

Your responses to these questions will help inform the way CVRD, Island Health and Our Cowichan Communities Health Network prioritize and deliver programs and services, as well as how best to inform and engage the public.

“This is an opportunity to get feedback from residents that we may not regularly hear from, and with a high degree of confidence that the results represent the thoughts and feelings of the region at large,” said Aaron Stone, Chair of the Cowichan Valley Regional District.

In addition to the statistically valid survey, the CVRD has an open [online version](#) that all residents are welcome to complete and share their feedback through, including the local health services questions.

As always, *thank you* to all who are joining us on the Cowichan Valley Health & Care journey and Season's Greetings from all of us at Island Health.