
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health
Interior Health

Strengthening patient care in the Coquihalla corridor

MERRITT – The expanded and redeveloped emergency department at Nicola Valley Hospital and Health Centre is strengthening patient care for people in Merritt and area through improved infrastructure, which includes features that foster equality and inclusion in British Columbia’s health-care system.

“Nicola Valley Hospital and Health Centre plays a critical role for local residents needing care as well as those travelling through on busy area highways,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “Our government is proud to support this new, larger and modern emergency department, which is enhancing critical care for people and will support the region for years to come.

“In addition to being an expanded and more efficient space, the redeveloped emergency department also reflects how equality is the underlying foundation of our public health-care system. To this end, the emergency department now includes two rainbow crossings and significant First Nations artwork to make this local hospital a welcoming and inclusive space for all members of the local community,” said Dix.

At 500 square metres (5,380 square feet), the new emergency department is approximately four times larger and features expanded trauma and treatment areas. It also provides increased privacy and better infection control measures, a medication room and confidential triage area, as well as a covered ambulance bay with a dedicated entrance.

Doors to the new emergency department opened Oct. 10, 2018. Since that time, other work has been done to finalize the project, including relocating treatment areas into the newly expanded section of the emergency department. This work reached substantial completion in March 2019.

More than 8,500 patients have come through since opening last October. This is an average of 35 patients a day, which is expected to increase during the busier summer months.

There are also two new rainbow crosswalks, recently installed on-site as part the final stages of the emergency department’s redevelopment – one outside the department’s entrance and the other inside. The idea of rainbow crosswalks in the community was originally raised by students at Merritt Secondary last spring.

As well, the hospital is now home to art produced by revered artist Clint George of the Okanagan Nation, symbolizing earth, fire and water, as well as five feathers symbolizing the five area Indigenous bands: Shackan Indian Band, Nooaitch Indian Band, Coldwater Indian Band, Upper Nicola Indian Band and Lower Nicola Indian Band.

“This artwork is striking and resonates how this hospital, its staff and Interior Health are

committed to the delivering culturally appropriate care. Together with the rainbow crossings, the redeveloped site underscores how everyone who enters the health-care system is to be treated with equal respect, and how public health care has a clear role to foster a more inclusive society,” said Dix.

“I thank everyone who made this happen, including those at Nicola Valley Hospital, Clint George, people in the community, Interior Health, and the students from Merritt Secondary,” added Dix.

The cost of the emergency department project is approximately \$6.5 million, which was shared by the provincial government, Interior Health and Thompson Regional Hospital District. The Nicola Valley Health Care Endowment Foundation and Nicola Valley Health Care Auxiliary raised funds for equipment. A donor recognition wall is being installed.

Built in 1964, Nicola Valley Hospital and Health Centre is near the intersection of four highways, including the Coquihalla, and serves a population of approximately 12,000 people.

Quotes:

Doug Cochrane, chair, Interior Health –

“I’m proud of the sense of community that is reflected in this expansion and renovation. Thanks to our strong relationships with the regional hospital district, foundation, auxiliary and Aboriginal partners, alongside Interior Health’s physicians and staff, we have created an environment to provide excellent quality emergency care to residents in the Nicola Valley region.”

Ken Christian, chair, Thompson Regional Hospital District –

“The TRHD is proud to be a funding partner on this important upgrade. It will not only serve the residents of Merritt and surrounding electoral areas, but will enhance services for all British Columbians using the Coquihalla Corridor.”

Jean Perog, president, Nicola Valley Health Care Endowment Foundation –

“Our community has looked forward to the new emergency department for a long time and we are proud to have been a funding partner. The success of this is due to the generosity of our residents and our hardworking volunteers. Our donor wall recognizes a large number of our donors who have helped make this project a reality. We are pleased that emergency patients in the Nicola Valley now receive care in a state-of-the-art health-care environment.”

Jacque Hall, president, Nicola Valley Health Care Auxiliary –

“The membership of the Nicola Valley Health Care Auxiliary is very pleased to have been able to assist in the funding for the new emergency department in the Nicola Valley Hospital. Without the support of the community and our volunteers at the thrift shop, we would not have been able to reach our goal of \$150,000. We would like to thank everyone for their assistance. Congratulations to Interior Health for providing much-needed services to our community and the surrounding area.”

Kati Spencer, teacher, Merritt Secondary school –

“Regardless of what they might symbolize for you, it’s always uplifting to see a rainbow. Over the past year, I’ve seen countless rainbows pop up around Merritt, each one a promise of a safe and welcoming space for our LGBTQ2s+ friends, neighbours and students. Thank you to Minister Dix and his colleagues at Interior Health for making a point of adding this beautiful symbol of inclusion to Merritt’s new ED.”

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