

Board of Directors Regular Meeting

Wednesday April 15, 2026 – 5:00 to 5:45pm

Virtual via Livestream

Board Members

Dr. Robert Halpenny, Chair
 Joyce Adjei
 Ernest Armann
 Deborah Austin
 Jared Basil
 Thomas Friedman
 Mike Gerrand
 Dr. Michael Murray
 Bonnie Pearson
 Willie Sellars

Resource Staff

Sylvia Weir, President & CEO
 Susan Dolinski, VP, People & Engagement
 Nicole Elliot, CFO
 Brent Kruschel, VP, Health Technology & Clinical Services
 Dr. Mark Masterson, VP, Medicine
 Dr. Glenn McRae, VP, Quality & Professional Practice
 Dr. Sue Pollock, Chief Medical Health Officer
 Diane Shendruk, VP, Clinical Operations
 Lorne Sisley, VP, Infrastructure & Support Services
 Leslie Varley, VP, Indigenous Partnerships
 Jeremy Stubbington, Board Liaison (Recorder)

Guests

Dr. Andy Delli Pizzi, Medical Health Officer
 Courtney Zimmerman, Executive Director, Health Protection
 Casey Neathway, Director, Regional Environmental Health Services (First Nations Health Authority)
 Councillor Brian Holmes, Upper Nicola Band

Item		Discussion
1.0	CALL TO ORDER	The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm
1.1	Territorial Acknowledgement	The Board of Directors acknowledged the seven traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Dākelh Dené, Ktunaxa, Nlaka’pamux, Secwépemc, St’át’imc, syilx, and Tšilhqot’in Nations, where we live, learn, collaborate, and work together.
1.2	Declaration of Conflict of Interest	No conflicts of interest were declared.
1.3	Approval of Agenda	Moved and seconded: THAT the Board of Directors approve the agenda of April 15, 2026, as presented. <p style="text-align: right;">- Carried unanimously</p>
2.0	NEW BUSINESS	
2.1	One Lake, Many Voices	<p>The purpose of this item is to highlight the collaboration between First Nations Health Authority, Interior Health, and the Upper Nicola Band in responding to a toxic algae bloom on Nicola Lake.</p> <p>The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Article 25, affirms First Nations’ rights to strengthen their relationship with land and water. This right is embedded within the Emergency and Disaster Management Act.</p> <p>The Nicola Watershed has experienced recurring cyanobacteria (commonly referred to as blue-green algae) blooms for several years. In the summer of 2025, the situation escalated from a potential risk to an active emergency following animal deaths, prompting involvement from the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre.</p>



		<p>Cyanobacteria is a bacterium, not algae, and produces neurotoxins. In humans, exposure may cause gastrointestinal symptoms, while impacts on animals—particularly pets and livestock—are often more severe due to higher exposure risks. Interior Health is responsible for environmental public health in the region, with the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) supporting First Nations communities in this work.</p> <p>Cyanobacteria is a natural part of aquatic ecosystems, but the specific environmental conditions which trigger these blooms is not well understood. Additionally, it can be extremely challenging and costly to identify a single cause of the algae blooms.</p> <p>Clear and timely public messaging was a priority. A joint signage initiative involving the Upper Nicola Band, Interior Health and First Nations Health Authority was highlighted as a positive collaboration. The signage incorporated nsyilxcən language, reflecting cultural inclusion and community acceptance, while ensuring public safety messaging remained clear. This initiative will hopefully serve as a model for future public health communications within the region.</p> <p>Positive outcomes included strengthened partnerships among health authorities, First Nations, agriculture, and other partners. A provincial surveillance dashboard has improved the ability to track cyanobacteria presence and identify response gaps. Efforts are underway to ensure consistent messaging for communities. Satellite imaging is now being used to detect blooms early; while early-stage blooms pose lower risk, toxicity increases as blooms die off, underscoring the need for proactive communication.</p> <p>The response reflects a One Health/Planetary Health approach, recognizing the interconnectedness of human, environmental, and animal health, an approach aligned with Coast Salish teachings. Shifting from an enforcement-only model toward community-led responses has been identified as a positive path forward. Ongoing collaboration and partnerships will be essential to addressing future cyanobacteria events effectively, as demonstrated with this event.</p> <p>Questions/Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- It was asked if there is any way to treat the bloom in the lake?<ul style="list-style-type: none">o There is a lack of research in this area, particularly in BC as this issue is emerging with climate change. There has been some research out of California using different chemical compounds to treat blooms, but this type of treatment can create other imbalances in the lake’s ecosystem.- It was asked how long the blooms last?<ul style="list-style-type: none">o This can vary depending on environmental factors.- It was asked if there is proactive monitoring for all the watersheds in the region, or if a more reactive approach is taken when the blooms occur?<ul style="list-style-type: none">o There is some proactive monitoring done on “lakes of interest” by the Ministry of Environment, but this is only done once or twice a year depending on the location of the lake. With 1000’s of lakes in the region with varying levels of accessibility
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		<p>proactive monitoring of all would be extremely costly and time consuming.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One challenge from this work is the number of partners involved, with multiple government Ministries, Health Authorities and First Nation Governments involved. It takes a very collaborative approach which is something that has really evolved out of the Nicola Lake bloom.
3.0 STANDING REPORTS		
3.1	President & CEO	<p>Sylvia Weir provided an update that included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The implementation of Access Central has been completed, this is a virtual service for adults 18 years of age and older to receive medical support in withdrawing from alcohol and other substances. - At the last public Board meeting LINK ED was launched, this service provides in-person/virtual supports to maintain access in small emergency departments throughout the region. The pilot is taking place at four sites and has moved to covering seven days per week for all participating sites. There has been feedback from patients who felt safe receiving care in this format and nurses who felt supported in this model. - HealthIM is a new tool in collaboration with the RCMP that connects frontline officers with our Interior Health emergency departments to provide support in prioritizing mental health and substance use related calls. This tool has been rolled out in the East Kootenay including Golden, the Columbia Valley, Elk Valley and Creston. Over the next few months IH is looking forward to seeing the launch of this tool throughout our region. - Robotic Surgery at Kelowna General Hospital has fully launched with Vinni the robot participating in more than 140 cases as of April 1, 2026. Robotic surgery technology allows surgeons to operation on patients with greater precision in tighter spaces, while reducing complications, pain, and blood loss.
3.2	Board Chair Report	<p>Chair Halpenny provided an update that included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Board recently met for two days in Vernon at Vernon Jubilee Hospital. Some of the reports received by the Board included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An update on the Health Professions and Occupations Act which came into force on April 1, 2026. ○ A report from the Office of the Information & Privacy Commissioner of BC regarding privacy breaches that occurred following the Lapu-Lapu Day Festival Tragedy in the Lower Mainland last year. While Interior Health was not directly involved in the concerns in the report, the Health Authority holds patient privacy as a top priority and will consider and implement recommendations from the report. ○ An update on the work of the Maternal, Newborn, Child & Youth program that supports the delivery of care to this important population in our region. ○ A report on Seniors Care in the region, which highlighted several quality initiatives underway including one to reduce the use an antipsychotic medications in long-term care.



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An update on the Interior Health Pharmacy Program. ○ Routine updates on IH Digital Health and Capital projects, noting the recent provincial announcements about the resequencing of long-term care projects in the province, which will see a delay for the Cottonwoods replacement project in Kelowna. <p>- These meeting cycles serve as a reminder to the Board of the broad spectrum of issues and concerns the health authority is responsible to navigate within the region.</p>
4.0 ADJOURNMENT		
<p>As there were no further questions, a motion to adjourn was made at 5:59 PM</p> <p>Moved and seconded: That the Board of Directors meeting of April 15, 2026, be adjourned.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">- Carried unanimously</p>		
The next meeting will take place on October 21, 2026		