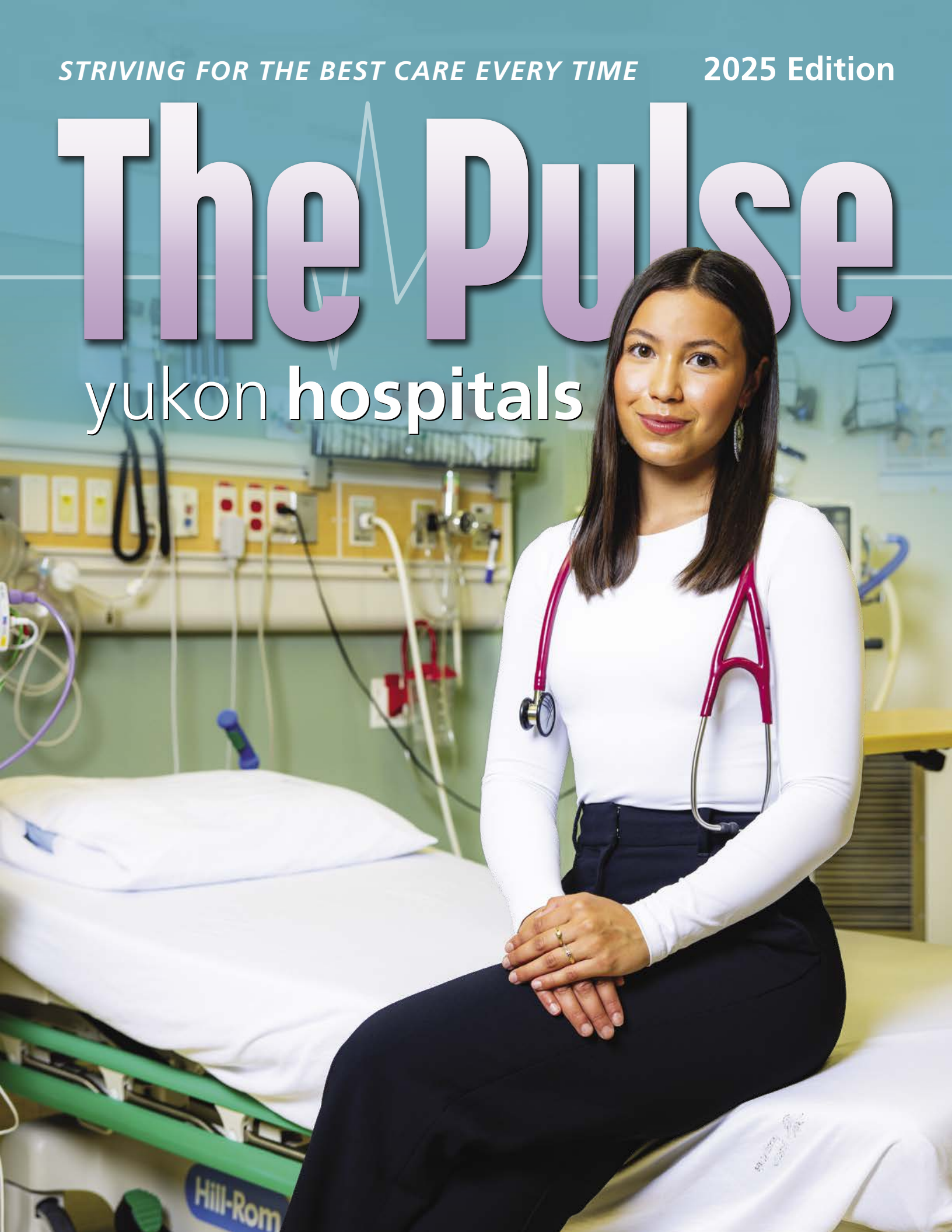
STRIVING FOR THE BEST CARE EVERY TIME

2025 Edition

The Pulse

yukon **hospitals**



Accessing Healthcare

If you need urgent care, don't hesitate to go to the nearest emergency department or dial 911.

For non-emergency situations or less urgent needs, please call your primary healthcare provider.

Anyone without a provider can call the Whitehorse Walk-In Medical Clinic.

If you are unsure, dial 811 for health advice from a Registered Nurse.

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James Low
Executive Director, People, Quality & Strategy

Paul Payne
Executive Director, Corporate Services

Tanya Solberg
Executive Director, Patient Care & Support Services

Stefanie Ralph
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Letter from Leadership

Top to bottom:
Tiffany Boyd, Pamela Hine

Caring for our communities is at the heart of everything we do. At Yukon Hospitals, we know that healthcare isn't just about services, it's about people. It's about ensuring everyone who walks through our doors feels seen, heard, and cared for. Leading this team is an incredible privilege, but access to safe, high-quality care should never be a privilege. It should be a given.

We are honoured to serve all Yukon communities across our three hospitals: Whitehorse General Hospital on the Traditional Territories of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, Dawson City Community Hospital on the Traditional Territory of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and Watson Lake Community Hospital on the Traditional Territory of the Kaska Nation, including Liard First Nation, Kaska Dena, and Ross River Dena Council. We acknowledge and respect these lands and the people who have stewarded them for generations.

In small communities like ours, care runs deeper. Our teams aren't just looking after patients, they're caring for friends, neighbours, and family. They bring expertise, compassion, and an extraordinary commitment to every patient they see.

That same dedication drives our work ahead. Our 2025–2027 Operational Plan outlines how we'll strengthen care and deepen trust over the next 18 months. This includes reducing service gaps, improving access and flow, expanding our team, and investing in digital tools and safer spaces. We're also advancing our Indigenous Workforce Strategy, growing community partnerships, and enhancing cultural safety in how care is planned and delivered.

We honour our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation through action by creating inclusive, culturally safe care environments and listening to Indigenous voices to guide meaningful change. This work is ongoing, and we know it must be rooted in respect, humility, and accountability.

We want people to feel connected to their hospital. That connection starts with open conversations, responsive care, and recognizing the efforts of our dedicated staff. We invite you to explore, celebrate, and experience the impact of our shared efforts through the stories we share.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Boyd
Chief Executive Officer, Yukon Hospitals

Pamela Hine
Board Chair, Yukon Hospitals

Youth Intern Accepted into Medical School

Jamie Thomas-Van Bibber,

a member of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, who works at Dawson City Community Hospital as a Youth Intern with the First Nations Health Program (FNHP) was recently thrilled to find out that she's been accepted into medical school at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Born and raised in Dawson City, she first realized that she wanted to study medicine and become a doctor when she was in grade 11 at Robert Service School - Hätr'unohtän Zho. She went on to major in biomedical sciences as part of her undergraduate degree at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

"I was lucky to know I wanted to be a doctor from an early age because I was able to tailor my education in ways that would help me prepare for medical school and gain exposure to the healthcare system in the Yukon, particularly how the system interacts with Indigenous communities," says Thomas-Van Bibber.

After she graduated from her undergraduate degree in a Bachelor of Arts and Science in Health majoring in Biomedical Sciences and minoring in Social Determinants & Health Equity, she returned to the Yukon and began a research position working with Yukon Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research at Yukon University.

Shortly after, she first learned about the FNHP Youth Internship program. In preparation of applying to medical schools in Canada, she wanted to gain more clinical experience by shadowing healthcare professionals.

"The youth internship is designed to be tailored to your interests, which was amazing," says Thomas-Van Bibber. "I was able to shadow the nurses and physicians and learn more about different procedures and processes in the hospital. I was also able to work on projects that support culturally safe care in the hospital, which is something I'm very passionate about."

"I've really enjoyed being able to work in my community," she adds. "It's been amazing to work with FNHP to help provide culturally safe care to Indigenous patients, while identifying gaps and ways that we can work towards striving for culturally competent care in the hospital."

Thomas-Van Bibber worked on an educational resource for physicians and nurses who travel to Dawson City to work for shorter rotations at the community hospital. "It's crucial for those working in healthcare and coming to Dawson City to be equipped with the tools to provide culturally safe care to Indigenous patients," she says. "Having that foundational

knowledge about local Indigenous cultures can make a significant difference in providing care."

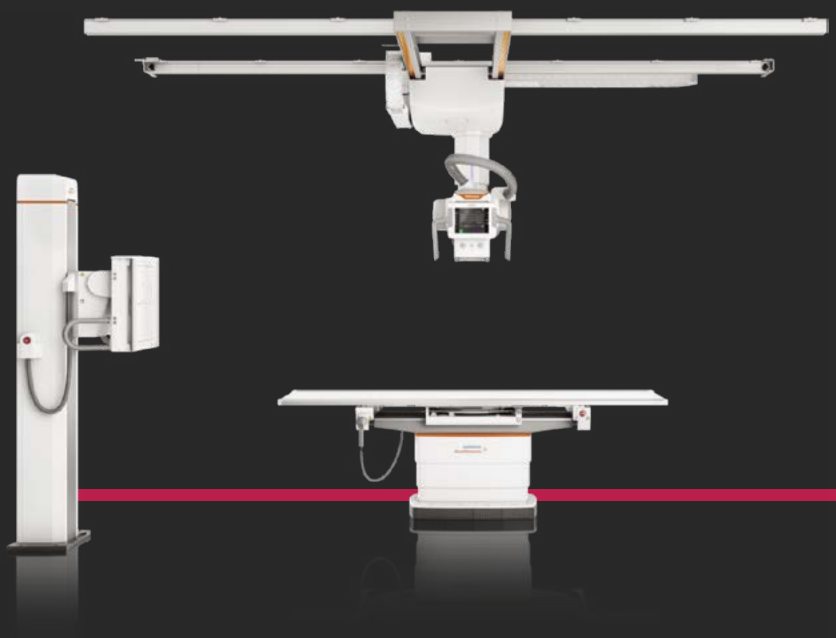
She encourages other youth to apply for the Internship Program.

"It's so important that we have Indigenous youth coming into this field," says Thomas-Van Bibber. "The internship allows young people to work closely with healthcare mentors and leaders to help bridge the gap. It's an amazing program." For now, she's thrilled to know that she's one step closer to her dream of studying medicine and becoming a doctor.

"If everything goes well at school, I'll be the first Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in doctor and one of the few Yukon First Nations doctors," she says. "I'm just really excited to pursue my education and, one day, come home to my community to be able to provide care."

Want to learn more about youth internships with First Nations Health Programs?

Contact
scott.longman@yukonhospitals.ca



New X-ray Upgrades Imaging for Patients

In February, we installed a new X-ray machine at Whitehorse General Hospital, marking a significant upgrade to outpatient imaging services. Replacing the previous system from 2010, this new equipment enhances diagnostic accuracy and efficiency.

"This new equipment has a lot of components, which allow for better quality images, lower radiation, and faster exams," says Caitlyn Carey, Manager of Medical Imaging. "Technology has improved significantly since our last machine was installed, and these upgrades will help us provide even better care."

The new X-ray is also equipped with advanced orthopedic capabilities, including the ability to perform specialized imaging for scoliosis and measuring leg length, which aids in surgical planning.

"This will allow us to provide better support to our orthopedic surgeons for patient management," explains Carey. "This is a huge step forward for us in terms of supporting orthopedic care."

With faster scans, enhanced imaging, and greater precision, the new X-ray machine is set to improve the patient experience at Whitehorse General Hospital.

A Journey as a New Nursing Grad in the Yukon

Yukon Hospitals proudly supports new nursing graduates as they transition from the classroom to clinical practice through a specialized mentorship program. The 'New Grad' program, through the Canadian Association School of Nursing (CASN) is designed to help nursing graduates settle into their roles at the hospital, knowing it can be challenging.

Daria Lehner, who graduated from Grant MacEwan University in Edmonton as a Registered Nurse, recently moved to Whitehorse with her family to work at Whitehorse General Hospital (WGH).

Lehner was excited to learn about the program offered by Yukon Hospitals. It is a 6-month residency for integrating nursing graduates into health care delivery with the goal of creating a more sustainable workforce. As a newly licensed registered nurse, it appealed to Lehner that she'd be supported in transitioning into her professional role.

Photo provided by Daria Lehner

"It's been nothing short of amazing," says Lehner. "I feel like everyone at the surgical department has been very welcoming and open to having students around, providing teaching opportunities and helpful feedback."

In the first three months of the residency, new grads work "shoulder to shoulder" with a preceptor-mentor, an experienced nurse, starting with a minimal patient load and working up to a full load.

Lehner praises the mentorship offered through the program at WGH. Lehner, who works in the Operating Room, says the program creates a safe environment for learning and asking questions. Mentors are available to new grads to discuss challenges, and as well, to "debrief heavy days".

"Having a mentor in the first few months helped me to slowly build my confidence," says Lehner. "It's been great all around."

She and her family are enjoying settling into Whitehorse and exploring the "beautiful scenery" around the city. When she's not working, Lehner says she enjoys cooking and spending time with her family and friends.

The "small town feel" of Whitehorse has helped Lehner get to know the staff at WGH and the wider community.

"I find that in this environment we have a better opportunity to connect to our patients and provide them with more personalized care," says Lehner.

"Although some things are challenging with nursing in the north, everyone is well prepared and knowledgeable to do their best in challenging times. It's been great to witness this working in the Yukon."

As Lehner continues her journey as a new nursing grad, she is excited to embrace the challenges ahead. With the support of her mentors and colleagues, she's confident that she will grow both personally and professionally.

Meet the New Chief of Medical Staff at Whitehorse General Hospital

Yukon Hospitals is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Alex Kmet as the new Chief of Medical Staff. Dr. Kmet officially started his new role in January, bringing a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to healthcare in the Yukon.

Dr. Kmet has a strong background in medicine, having studied in Alberta before moving to the Yukon over 11 years ago. His expertise spans specialty palliative care and general practice oncology services, and for much of his career in the territory, he has worked as an anesthesiologist in the operating room.

As Chief of Medical Staff, Dr. Kmet will play a pivotal role in overseeing medical quality and safety. This senior position involves not only providing clinical insight but also leading teams of healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurse practitioners, midwives, and many others who contribute to patient care.

With the healthcare system in the Yukon currently undergoing significant transformation, Dr. Kmet sees this as a unique and exciting time to take on the challenge.

“It’s really important to acknowledge the teams of people who provide care in our hospitals," says Dr. Kmet. “It’s not just doctors and nurses, but everyone from maintenance staff to lab techs and administrative personnel who work together to deliver the care people need.”

As the new Chief of Medical Staff, Dr. Kmet is focused on supporting teams within the hospital, helping medical staff become the best leaders and professionals they can be to provide exemplary care for patients.

“At Yukon Hospitals, we’re responsible for caring for some of our most vulnerable individuals,” says Dr. Kmet, adding “I want the care we provide to be the same care I would want for my own family.”

In his first few months in the role, he’s already witnessed how this sentiment is shared by everyone at Yukon Hospitals, including frontline staff and administrators.

“Everyone at the hospital is dedicated to providing the care people deserve."

> “I want the care we provide to be the same care I would want for my own family

PATIENT-CENTERED CANCER CARE at Karen's Room

Every morning, a dedicated team of cancer care providers – physicians, registered nurses, pharmacists, and coordinators – meet to discuss the treatment goals for cancer patients at Karen's Room, a special unit dedicated to providing chemotherapy and immunotherapy services at Whitehorse General Hospital.

"We have an amazing team," says Jennifer Madley, a Registered Nurse who's worked at Yukon Hospitals for the past 17 years and today specializes in administering chemotherapy treatment. "It really feels like we're working together to provide excellent patient care. It's very collaborative."

The Cancer Care healthcare providers at Karen's Room are a small but united team, dedicated to building relationships with their patients and providing the best possible care for them as they receive treatment.

Karen's Room, located in Outpatient Services, opened at Whitehorse General Hospital in 2003 in memory of Karen Weiderkehr, a beloved Yukoner who passed away in 2000.

"Previously, cancer services were quite limited for Yukoners," says Hilary Smith, a Registered Nurse in her eighth year with Yukon Hospitals who works in Karen's Room to provide treatment and also logistical support for patients. "Karen's legacy has helped us to provide many cancer treatments here, including chemotherapy and immunotherapy."

Today, the Cancer Care team supports cancer patients by providing counsel after their diagnosis and administering chemotherapy, immunotherapy, and other treatments. They also offer navigational support for patients who have to travel within the Yukon to Whitehorse for chemotherapy, or those who have to travel to Vancouver for radiation therapy.

"We have a range of patients that come to Karen's Room," explains Smith. "Some come for a short duration of treatment and follow up with their family doctors – and hopefully we've cured their cancer. But many patients come for chronic disease management. Their cancer may never be cured, but provide ongoing treatment for them here."

> "Since 2012, we've seen a 150 percent increase in patients. We used to get 4 to 6 referrals a month, and today we're seeing 10 to 20 a month.

Kelly Cozens, Manager of Medical Daycare and Visiting Specialist Clinic at Whitehorse General Hospital, says they've seen a notable increase in referrals and patients at Karen's Room over the last decade.

"Since 2012, we've seen a 150 percent increase in patients. We used to get 4 to 6 referrals a month, and today we're seeing 10 to 20 a month."

The increase in patients at Karen's Room is due to several factors, including that the Yukon has one of the fastest growing populations in the country. However, it's also related to the development of new cancer treatments that enables people with cancer to live longer. Also, a wider range of cancer treatments are now available.

Relationship Building with Patients is Critical to Cancer Care

Oncology nursing is unique from other areas of healthcare.

"Our team of nurses are very specialized in their training," says Cozens. "Maintaining their skills through continuous education and training is a key priority given they are the only nurses in Yukon who administer Chemotherapy. We are fortunate to have a great partnership with BC Cancer Agency who helps provide this additional support to Yukon's oncology nurses."

For Smith and Madley, the biggest differences between general nursing and oncology nursing is that providing cancer care and treatments, administered over a period of time, allows nurses to build relationships with patients.

"We really do get to know the patient and their whole family unit," says Smith. "We're really supporting the whole family."

Relationship building is critical to providing the best possible care, says Madley. When patients come to Karen's Room for treatment, they receive a special quilt made by different quilting groups in the Yukon. Patients use their quilt during every treatment visit, then when they leave, they take the quilts home with them.

"Not all of our conversations are focused on people's disease, sometimes we'll chat about gardening," says Madley. "It really feels like we're making treatment a personal experience."

Karen's Room Supports Patients Beyond Chemotherapy Treatment

The nurses' role at Karen's Room isn't only to help administer treatment to cancer patients. They also work as Cancer Care Coordinators to support cancer patients in the Yukon to navigate the system, access financial assistance and medical travel, and liaise with their physicians.

"We really want to be there to help bridge those gaps in communication for people," Smith says, who is currently working as the Cancer Care Coordinator for patients.

She points out that many cancer patients in the Yukon who aren't receiving chemotherapy or immunotherapy don't always realize that staff at Karen's Room can provide logistical support to them.

"We really want people with cancer to know, regardless of what treatment you're getting, or if you're receiving treatment at all, if you have a cancer diagnosis, we can be a resource," says Smith.

Patient-Centered Care is the Goal at Karen's Room

Jennifer Wallace is the chemotherapy pharmacist working with the Cancer Care team at Karen's Room. She's been working at Whitehorse General Hospital for the past 11 years.

Wallace orders and prepares the medication for every individual patient at Karen's Room, and in some cases, helps navigate medical coverage through government, private insurance, or compassionate access.

"It's a terrific interdisciplinary team with the nurses, myself, and physicians," says Wallace. "Patient-centered care is the goal here."

New Cancer Care Navigator for Indigenous Patients

Recently, a new Cancer Care Navigator position was created by the First Nations Health Program (FNHP) to provide emotional and logistical support to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis patients going through cancer diagnosis and treatment. Laura Salmon, the Director of FNHP, acknowledges the funding support from the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer.

Ingrid Issac is pleased to be stepping into the new Cancer Care Navigator role at Karen's Room. She is from the Wolf Clan of the Liard First Nation and Kwanlin Dun First Nations.

Since 2019, Issac has worked at Yukon Hospitals with the FNHP as a cultural support worker for Indigenous patients at Whitehorse General Hospital. In the Emergency Room, Issac is warmly known as the "ER Auntie" for her work in building compassionate, trusted relationships with Indigenous patients and ER staff.

In February, Issac began shadowing the oncology team at Karen's Room, familiarizing herself with the support services and connecting with staff and patients. She brings a wealth of experience with her from previous work. Issac worked at the Council of Yukon First Nations for 10 years, providing support to former residential school students and assisting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

In her new role at Karen's Room, Ingrid will ensure Indigenous cancer patients receive the cultural care and support they need throughout their healing journeys.

Transforming Mental Health Care AT THE Whitehorse General Hospital

Erik Pinkerton Photography

An innovative space designed to shift patient care, community wellness, and healing has officially opened at Whitehorse General Hospital, where the new Fireweed Mental Health Unit was unveiled at the grand opening.

The new Fireweed Mental Health Unit replaces the former Secure Medical Unit (SMU) at Whitehorse General Hospital, marking a major improvement in how we support patients with mental health needs. Our care teams continue to provide safe, compassionate treatment in a space designed for healing.

Informed by input from patients, staff, and community, the Fireweed Unit offers a more therapeutic and inclusive environment, reflecting our commitment to improving outcomes and reducing stigma through thoughtful, patient-centred design.

The new unit has been a long time coming, says Karen Girling, Director of Projects at Yukon Hospitals, who reflects back on initial conversations in 2018 about how to best utilize the empty space above the Emergency Department. Since then, Girling and her team have consulted with community experts on how to design a "non-institutionalized" space that promotes safety, cultural diversity, and healing for patients.

Erik Pinkerton Photography

Clinical staff from Yukon Hospitals visited existing mental wellness units at hospitals in Kamloops and Kelowna to do research, ask questions, and integrate knowledge and best-practices into the design of the new space at Whitehorse General Hospital.

"It's about asking questions like; how can we manage our patients safely? How can we create capacity for patients to do as much activity as they can?" asks Girling.

The new unit is located above the Emergency Department and includes 12 patient rooms (8 initially developed), 3 patient-seclusion rooms, and offers additional therapeutic spaces for patients, including a First Nations gathering place, an exercise room, a communal dining area, a therapy tub room, and an outdoor courtyard.

The design of the new space includes a kitchenette where patients can make coffee, or tea, "just like they're at home", says Girling, along with a room with a bathtub for therapeutic soaking and relaxing. Patients will be able to meet with their loved ones in a family room. "This gives patients the ability to interact with their family members within a secure environment," Girling explains. Patients will also be able to access an outdoor courtyard for getting fresh air, walking, or having a cigarette.

"A challenge that we faced in the existing space is that every time a patient wants to have a cigarette, they have to be escorted out into the hospital's common smoking area," she explains.

The design of the outdoor courtyard allows patients to look out and enjoy the view of the mountains, but won't allow anyone to look in, which protects confidentiality.

Another innovation is the capacity for staff to create two separate areas within the unit. If staff are providing care for two different patient populations—for example, young and old—they can put up a dividing wall to create two zones and ensure a healthy environment for everyone.

Key Focus of the Unit

Anyone experiencing a mental health crisis or warning signs of a mental health crisis may need immediate support and stabilization.

The focus in a short-term stabilization program is not on in-depth treatment, but rather on providing regulation tools and time in a safe and secure environment to find balance and become ready for further treatment.

Working with Elders to Indigenize the Space

Indigenizing a space isn't as simple as hanging up a piece of art by an Indigenous artist. It's about integrating culturally appropriate practices and supports as part of the patient's care and environment.

The First Nations Health Program (FNHP) at Yukon Hospitals has been involved in every step of planning, from policy creation to unit design and clinical collaboration. FNHP has also consulted with the First Nations Health Commission group, which represents the 14 First Nations in Yukon, to discuss the new unit. Elders and Knowledge Keepers have provided guidance to ensure the healing room reflects key cultural aspects, with warm, natural furnishings designed to help patients feel calm and at home.

In the new unit, FNHP staff will contribute to daily programming and support patients on their healing journeys. "We worked to create a unit that is culturally safe and where patients may feel more comfortable receiving care," says Marshal Johnson, Cultural Program Coordinator. "The new unit will be a transformational improvement on patient experience."

There is a new on-unit family room for sharing a cup of tea with loved ones, as well as a First Nations Healing Room called the "Gathering Place", says Johnson, where FNHP will provide access to local medicines to help patients feel calm and safe, and support them with their therapeutic goals. Six local Indigenous artists are creating intentional artwork that will brighten the walls and further enhance the healing environment.

In addition, efforts are underway to incorporate traditional language into the space, and FNHP is seeking Southern Tutchone language speakers who would like to contribute to this initiative. The unit will also include a library project developed in collaboration with Indigenous youth, featuring life promotion kits and culturally relevant resources to support patient wellness.

These enhancements reflect a holistic approach to care—one that recognizes the importance of physical, emotional, and spiritual healing while ensuring the unit remains a safe and structured space for acute stabilization.

These improvements represent a step forward in the design of our mental health facilities. By prioritizing patient comfort, autonomy, and dignity, we are setting a new standard for therapeutic environments that are conducive to healing and recovery.

We are committed to indigenizing our spaces and making Yukon hospitals more welcoming.

At Whitehorse General Hospital, inpatient units are being renamed after Yukon plants, with each unit transformed through colours and artwork. Beadwork, chosen for its cultural significance, will guide the artwork: each unit will feature a beaded symbol of its plant, reflecting resilience, tradition, storytelling, and protection for those on their healing journey.

New Unit Names & Colours

Blue Bell Intensive Care Unit – Blue

Dandelion Medical Unit – Yellow

Yarrow Surgical Unit – Green

Golden Rod Medical Unit – Golden Orange

Fireweed Mental Health Unit – Dark Purple

Wild Rose Maternity Unit – Light Pink

Q&A Leadership

Tanya Solberg

Executive Director
Patient Care &
Support Services

How do allied health professionals collaborate with doctors and nurses to provide comprehensive patient care?

Allied health professionals are essential to patient care, bringing specialized expertise in area such as laboratory medicine, medical imaging, pharmacy and social work. They play a critical role in diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation, working closely with doctors and nurses to develop and implement care plans. Through assessments, treatment coordination, and patient education, they help manage conditions, improve recovery, and enhance quality of life. Working as an integrated team improves efficiency, reduces hospital stays, and leads to better patient outcomes.

Paul Payne

Executive Director
Corporate Services

What infrastructure investments and upgrades are planned to support the future needs of Yukon Hospitals?

Having the right facilities and equipment is essential for delivering quality care to Yukoners. That's why we are prioritizing health infrastructure planning and investing in key projects.

We've committed over $1 million to plan the next expansion of Whitehorse General Hospital, focusing on increasing surgical services, inpatient capacity, and supporting spaces.

Additionally, we're investing $4.2 million this year in maintenance and capital projects at Whitehorse General Hospital, Watson Lake, and Dawson City Community Hospitals. This includes new medical equipment, building system upgrades, and other improvements to keep our facilities safe and efficient.

By planning for the future while maintaining our hospitals today, we are ensuring Yukoners continue to receive high-quality care now and, in the years, ahead.

Stefanie Ralph

Executive Director
Patient Care, Access and Flow

How is the hospital managing capacity challenges to ensure quality patient care during high-demand periods?

The demand for hospital services continues to grow as Yukon's population increases and ages. Yukon Hospitals are balancing immediate needs while planning for the future. Each day, we work with health system partners to ensure patients receive care in the right place with the right resources.

There are increasing days when the need for inpatient beds exceeds availability. When this happens, patients may receive care in temporary spaces like the Emergency Department or Surgical Daycare.

To address this, long-term planning is underway to expand inpatient capacity at Whitehorse General Hospital. With the opening of the new mental health unit, eight existing beds will be repurposed for general inpatient care. Additionally, planning for a future surgical tower includes exploring opportunities to create more purpose-built inpatient s paces to meet growing demand.

James Low

Executive Director
People, Quality and Strategy

What strategies are in place to support recruitment, retention, and overall health human resources (HHR) planning to ensure a stable and sustainable workforce?

Yukon Hospitals work closely with government, unions, educators, and regulatory bodies to advance a shared health HR plan focused on recruiting, retaining, learning, planning, and innovating. We're actively marketing career opportunities and engaging with high schools and Yukon First Nations to build a more representative workforce. This includes internships, student placements, and new graduate programs. Our Indigenous Workforce Strategy supports recruitment through outreach, navigation help, and paid experience opportunities.

To support retention and development, we offer flexible scheduling, mentorships, benefits, and pathways such as bridging Licensed Practical Nurses to Registered Nurses.

These efforts are helping reduce vacancies, particularly in nursing, and improve work-life balance and service continuity. While progress is being made, we continue to face challenges in areas like diagnostic and technical staffing and remain focused on long-term workforce stability.

The Patient Journey

yukon hospitals

1 Emergency Department

- Patients arrive at the Emergency Department either by ambulance or their own means.
- Upon arrival the patient is asked to register.
- All patients are then seen by a nurse who will seek to understand the reason for visit and conduct an assessment.
- Patients with severe or life-threatening conditions will be seen first. Other patients may have to wait to be seen. We understand it is hard to wait for care when you feel unwell.
- If a person waiting to be seen feels their condition has worsened, we encourage you to let the staff at the registration desk or the nurse know.
- Patients are seen by a physician. Working together with the patient the physician will develop a plan of care. This could include some further tests to gather information.
- Some patients will be discharged with their plan of care after seeing the physician and some patients may need to be admitted to hospital.

3 Discharge

- Your care team will work with you to discuss and plan your discharge from the hospital. At times, this may require the assistance of other health partners external to Yukon Hospitals.
- If you're unsure or don't understand your discharge plan, ask your care team for more information.

2 Your Stay

- During your admission, your care team will be providing around-the-clock safe and excellent hospital care.
- Be sure to speak to your nurse or care team if you have changes in how you feel or if you are unhappy with your treatment.

> Our focus is on working together with patients and their families to develop a personalized plan of care that promotes healing, safety, and reaching the individual's healthcare goals.

Stefanie Ralph
Executive Director, Patient Care, Access and Flow

Good to know

Medical Travel & Medivac

- Some types of health care may require you to be transferred to another hospital in or out of the territory. If you require emergency medical travel (medevac)to another facility, your care team will coordinate transportation.
- For non-urgent medical travel, contact Insured Health Services at 867-667-5209 for eligibility and coverage details.

What to Bring for Your Stay

- Health card and government-issued ID
- List of medications (including dosages)
- Comfort items (toiletries, glasses, hearing aids, mobility aids, etc.)
- Phone & charger
- Loose, comfortable clothing & non-slip footwear

Mentoring Matters

A Nurse's Journey with Yukon's Mentorship Program

It was Yukon Hospital's new nursing graduate program and the opportunity for ongoing mentorship that drew Madelyn Allen, a registered nurse from Ontario, up to the Yukon in 2021.

Three years ago, after graduating with her Registered Nursing degree from Western University in London, Ontario, Madelyn was one of the first RNs to move to Whitehorse to participate in the new graduate program at Whitehorse General Hospital. "If it means you get extra training, there's incentive to move to a northern corner of the world," says Madelyn. "That and if you love playing in the snow," she adds with a laugh.

The Mentorship Program provides nurses with the opportunity to expand their education and gain hands-on practical nursing skills by specializing in the areas of Emergency and Trauma Care, Maternity, and Medical Surgery. This is critical to being a nurse in the north, says Madelyn.

"Up here we have a wide scope of practice, so you have to be responsible for your own education," she says. "It's great the hospital makes this education accessible to nurses."

Madelyn decided to focus in the area of Emergency and Trauma care nursing. She studied online for two years, followed by three months of hands-on training in the ER. In October, the RN traveled south to undertake her practical training at a trauma centre in downtown Toronto. She describes the experience as positive, although "quite the jump" and a huge learning curve.

> "Nursing is a very, very intense job and it can be exhausting. So I appreciated the resources the hospital provided me with going into training and I felt well supported.

"In the ER, you know very little about your patients, or what's going to happen," she says. "You're starting from ground zero. It's a lot more unpredictable than other areas of nursing."

Despite the challenges, the payoff of participating in the program has been hugely rewarding, Madelyn says, as it's widened her knowledge and skills as a nurse – and her capacity to provide excellent care for patients.

Yukon Hospital's mentorship program involves pairing mentees, like Madelyn, with nursing mentors. Through the program, Madelyn has worked with four different nurses at the Whitehorse General Hospital.

"That's a good thing," she says. "You gain different perspectives as every nurse has a different speciality."

Entering the field of nursing can be a daunting task, but opportunities like the Mentorship Program provide nurses with the support they need to learn and grow in their scope of practice.

"Nursing is a very, very intense job and it can be exhausting," says Madelyn. "So I appreciated the resources the hospital provided me with going into training and I felt well supported."

She also credits the senior nurses on staff at Whitehorse General Hospital, describing them as "smart, gracious and incredibly compassionate", adding that she feels a strong sense of teamwork and community with her colleagues at Yukon Hospitals.

"Everyone knows each other's names and, after work, often we'll go out for a ski together."

Madelyn encourages other nurses to participate in the mentorship program at Yukon Hospitals.

"There's growing pains, for sure, but it's been a very good experience," Madelyn says. "There's so much to learn. I appreciate the hospital for introducing this program. Because of the wide scope [of nursing practice] in the north, these educational opportunities will keep us strong."

yukon hospitals

Tracking Our Progress

At Yukon Hospitals, we are dedicated to providing patient-centred care, supporting our teams, and advancing key priorities such as truth and reconciliation, sustainability, and healthcare integration. To measure our progress, we use a Balanced Scorecard — a strategic tool that tracks performance across multiple areas of healthcare.

The Balanced Scorecard provides a comprehensive view of key performance indicators (KPIs) in multiple areas across four strategic priorities:

Truth & Reconciliation, Indigenization & Decolonization

- Progress on initiatives like the **Mental Wellness Unit Project** and the **Watson Lake Anti-Racism Project**
- Engagement in **Indigenous programs** and **youth employment initiatives**

The People We Care For & Our Communities

- **Quality & Safety:** Medication errors, patient falls, infection rates, and readmission rates
- **Accessibility:** Emergency department wait times and lab and imaging service availability

Our People & Teams

- **Staff Safety:** Workplace injury rates, lost days, and safety measures
- **Workforce Sustainability:** Turnover rates, vacancy rates, sick leave, and overtime

Resiliency, Sustainability & Integration

- **Financial Performance:** Operating margins and healthcare system sustainability
- **Capacity & Resource Management:** Hospital occupancy rates, major projects, and medical procedures completed

Why Is This Important?

The Balanced Scorecard helps us make informed decisions, identify areas that need attention, and celebrate achievements. It allows us to be transparent with the public, ensuring accountability and keeping patients, staff, and the broader community engaged in our progress.

Healthcare is constantly evolving, and so are we. By tracking, reporting, and improving, we remain committed to excellence in patient care, staff well-being, and healthcare sustainability for all Yukoners.

Want to learn more? Visit our website or contact us at feedback@wgh.yk.ca

Your feedback is important and helps us improve care for all our patients. There are several ways to provide feedback:

- **Email us at feedback@wgh.yk.ca**
- **Call our Quality Improvement and Risk Management Team at 867-393-8719**
- **Ask our hospital staff or volunteers about our Patient Experience Survey**
- **Complete the online form on our website. Just scan the code!**

Tip: Please indicate whether you would like someone to contact you and the preferred method (by phone or email).

Your privacy is important, and your feedback will remain confidential.

HEART OF THE HOSPITAL
Our Volunteer Team

> They come here brimming with kindness, empathy and compassion

It's been an exciting year for the Volunteer Services program — "the feel-good department", says coordinator Gwen Ross. Ross is thrilled to have seen a sharp increase in hospital volunteers with program expansions to both Watson Lake Community Hospital and Dawson City Community Hospital.

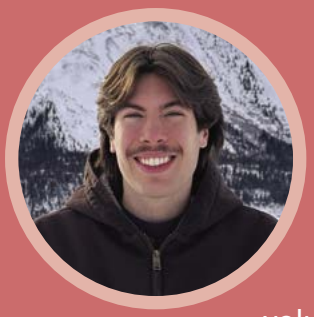
"Volunteers help people navigate the hospital," explains Ross. "When patients, or visitors come in and see a friendly face of someone who's going to help them get to where they need to go, answer their questions, or connect them to their loved ones in the hospital — it really helps dampen the stress," she says.

There are many ways to volunteer at the hospital, including working with the Morning Brew Crew to serve patients fresh coffee, helping to direct patients to where they need to go at the Information Desk, providing books and friendly visits to patients with the Books on Wheels program, raising funds with the Women's Auxiliary, or providing spiritual care to those in need.

Our incredible volunteer team represents 16 different countries, forming a diverse and vibrant group dedicated to supporting patients in our communities. Over 60% of our volunteers are bilingual, with many speaking three or more languages, including English, French, Southern Tutchone, American Sign Language, Tagalog, Punjabi, and many more. This multilingualism helps us connect with patients from all walks of life, ensuring everyone feels supported and valued.

Our volunteers also span a wide range of ages and backgrounds. From high school students to seniors, 25% are students, 45% are working professionals, and 20% are seniors. We even have staff members who volunteer, and many take on multiple roles. With 900 hours of service from our longest-serving volunteer,

Volunteers at the 2024 Volunteer Awards.



Meet Gavin

Gavin first joined the volunteer team at YH in 2023. "I am passionate about contributing positively to my community and am interested in working in the medical field someday, so volunteering with YH is the perfect way to combine those interests," says Gavin.

Meet Vincent

For the past 2 years, Vincent has volunteered as a spiritual care provider at YH. Drawing from his background as a pastor, he offers patients and their families a listening ear and spiritual guidance during challenging times. Vincent's deep passion for helping others drives his volunteer work, as he believes spiritual care can have a profound impact on a patient's recovery and overall hospital experience.

Meet Eileen

Eileen has been a valued volunteer at YH for many years. She volunteers her time and care across several areas, including the Eldercare Unit, Chemo Room, and Info Desk. Her journey into volunteering was deeply personal — having gone through chemotherapy and radiation herself, Eileen remembers the kindness of hospital volunteers who supported her during that time.

"As a cancer survivor, I remember with fond memories the volunteers that were there to help and answer questions," says Eileen. Inspired by their compassion, she now gives back by offering the same comfort and assistance to others.

Meet Sabah

Sabah has been volunteering with YH for around 10 months, primarily as part of the Books on Wheels program. She wanted to become a volunteer because she loves connecting with her community. "I truly enjoy talking to patients hoping to make their difficult times a little brighter," she says.

our team is a dedicated, passionate group, proudly supporting all three hospitals.

Every day, Ross sees firsthand the positive impacts of the volunteer program.

"They come here brimming with kindness, empathy and compassion, and they just do. They don't need to be asked, they just do. They are so good at anticipating what somebody needs even before that person has identified that they need it. How many times I overheard, 'would you like a wheelchair?' Or 'Let me take you down to emergency.'"

Yukon Hospitals values "whole-person care", says Ross. "Whole-person care is taking care of somebody physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Volunteers often fill in those gaps."

How to Become a Volunteer

For people interested to volunteer, please check out the website to learn more and apply today!

yukonhospitals.ca

Building a Stronger Future:

Yukon Hospitals' 2025–2027 Operational Plan

Healthcare is always evolving, and at Yukon Hospitals, we are committed to growing, improving, and adapting to meet the needs of the communities we serve. Our 2025–2027 Operational Plan lays out a clear direction, outlining our priorities and how we will continue delivering high-quality, responsive care for Yukoners.

The Operational Plan is our guide for action. It translates our Strategic Plan into real, measurable steps that strengthen healthcare services, support staff, and improve the patient experience.

"At its core, this plan is about strengthening the foundation of our healthcare system," says Tiffany Boyd, Chief Executive Officer of Yukon Hospitals. "It prioritizes what matters most — patient safety, staff well-being, service stability, and planning for the future."

Our Key Priorities

The 2025–2027 Operational Plan focuses on five main areas:

- **Patients & Families at the Centre –** Strengthening patient engagement and ensuring care is seamless, responsive, and built around their needs
- **Supporting Our Healthcare Teams –** Investing in retention, recruitment, and workplace well-being to ensure staff have the tools and environment they need to thrive
- **Quality & Safety Improvements –** Enhancing policies, procedures, and emergency preparedness to provide reliable, culturally safe care
- **Planning for the Future –** Investing in technology, infrastructure, and long-term sustainability to meet Yukoners' healthcare needs today and in the years ahead
- **Telling Our Story –** Building trust through transparency, celebrating successes, and strengthening relationships with patients, partners, and the wider community

This plan is rooted in Yukon Hospitals' commitment to truth and reconciliation, decolonization, and Indigenization. As one of the key pillars of our Strategic Plan, this commitment is woven into everything we do — from how we deliver care to how we support our teams and engage with communities.

"Our healthcare system wouldn't exist without the people who make it work — our staff, patients, families, and communities," adds Boyd. "Everything we do is focused on creating a system where Yukoners feel safe, respected, and confident in the care they receive."

The 2025–2027 Operational Plan is more than just a framework — it reflects Yukon Hospitals' ongoing commitment to high-quality care, supporting healthcare workers, and ensuring a strong, sustainable future for healthcare in the territory.

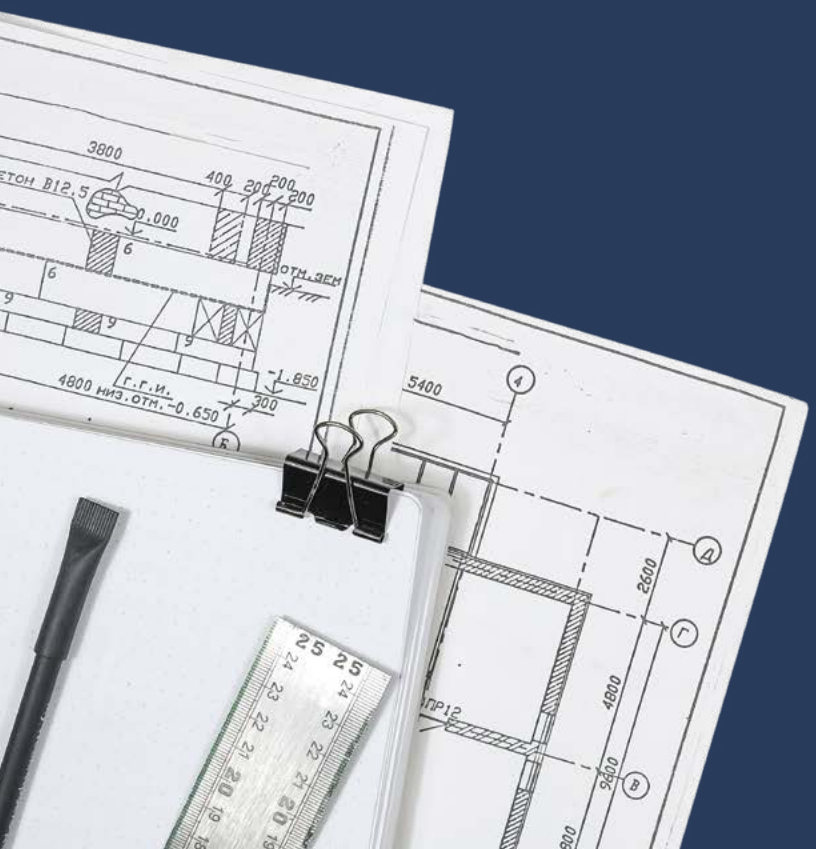
Planning for the Future: Whitehorse General Hospital Expansion

Yukon Hospitals is planning a major expansion to Whitehorse General Hospital to make sure our services and spaces can meet the growing needs of Yukoners — today and in the future.

Why is an expansion needed?

Our hospital is facing significant pressure. Yukon's population is growing and aging, and the demand for hospital care is increasing. In fact, inpatient occupancy has averaged 105% during this last fiscal year — with more than 70% of days over 100% occupancy. Some patients who no longer need hospital-level care are still waiting for a more appropriate place to go.

At the same time, surgical standards have changed over the years, and our current operating rooms need to be upgraded to meet today's expectations and prepare for future demand. Support services like hospital infrastructure, technology, and building systems also need more space and modern updates to continue supporting safe, high-quality care.



What's happening now — and what's next?

Yukon Hospitals is entering an important planning phase. This work will help determine what the new spaces will look like, how much they will cost, how long construction will take, and how we can maintain services throughout the process.

This year's goal is to complete a detailed pre-construction plan. Staff and physician input will be essential to make sure the future design supports high-quality care for patients. The Government of Yukon has allocated $1.15 million in the 2025–26 budget to support this phase.

We're building on previous planning, including a 2018/19 surgical services renewal plan. That work will be updated to reflect changes in health care standards, services (such as resident orthopedics), and the needs of a growing and aging population.

We're committed to ensuring hospital facilities and services keep up with the needs of Yukoners — and this expansion is a big step toward that goal.

Have a question? Send us a message at wghexpansion@yukonhospitals.ca

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Finding Her Path

How an Internship Sparked Anika Enoch's Healthcare Career

> "Go in there with confidence. The program is really supportive.

Anika Enoch, a member of the White River First Nation from Beaver Creek, lives in Whitehorse. Today, she balances her time as an intern with the First Nations Health Program (FNHP), along with her job at the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate.

Enoch's interest in pursuing a career in healthcare led her to reach out about the FNHP Internship program, which would enable her to learn about different areas of healthcare.

Initially, Enoch was interested in nursing, although she wasn't sure it was the "right fit", she says.

In August 2024, she did a "shadow shift" in medical imaging, shadowing healthcare professionals at Whitehorse General Hospital. Enoch enjoyed the experience so much that she decided to sign up for the internship, which began a few months later in December.

FNHP arranged for her to shadow healthcare professionals in other areas of the hospital, including MRI, CT, and ultrasound. Shortly after, Enoch had the opportunity to shadow a Combined X-Ray and Lab Technologist (CLXT) at the hospital — and this piqued her interest.

CLXTs play a unique role, trained to perform various diagnostic laboratory tests and X-rays. This multifaceted role is helping to address healthcare shortages and expand the professional scope of healthcare providers.

"As I looked more into the role of CLXTs, I became really interested in it," says Enoch. "Plus, I'd be able to work in smaller communities, too, so it would be fun to get to know the people there."

In February, she travelled to Dawson City Community Hospital to shadow a CLXT. She noticed the close connections between patients and healthcare providers in a smaller community. The experience reinforced her interest in the profession.

"I've always been drawn to helping people," Enoch says. "It's cool to see how it's done and what goes on behind the scenes."

Inspired by her internship, she applied to the CLXT program at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) in Edmonton. She hopes to start in September if accepted.

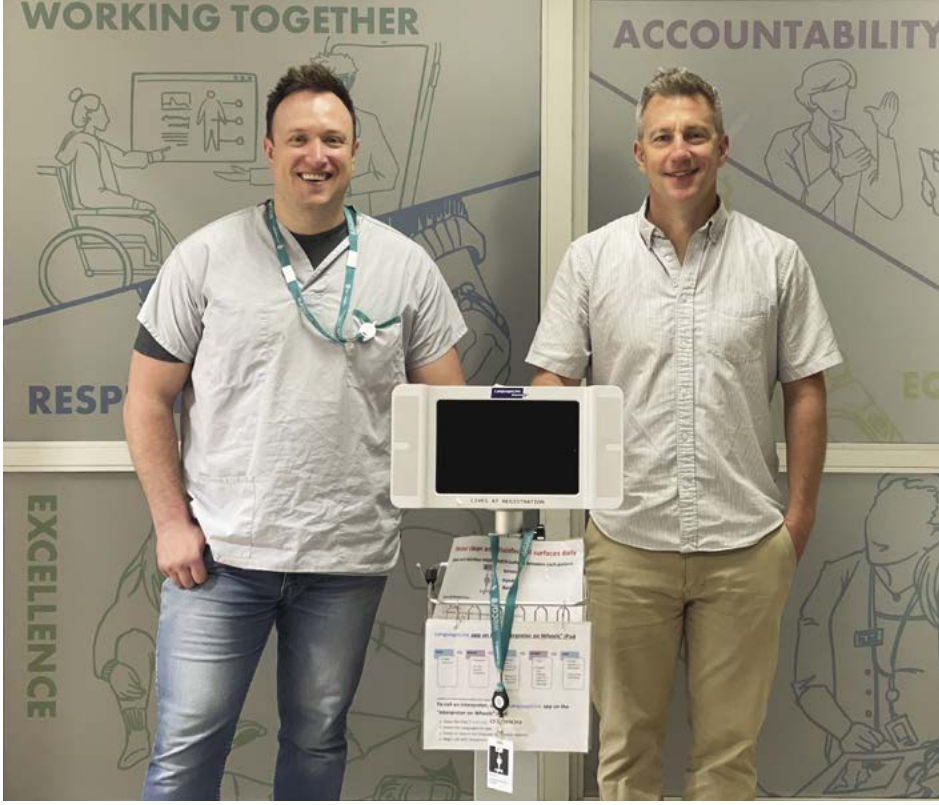
Enoch encourages other First Nations youth to explore healthcare careers and recommends reaching out to Marshal at FNHP. The internship allowed her to learn about different professions beyond nursing.

Her advice? "Go in there with confidence. The program is really supportive," she says.

Want to learn more about youth internships with the First Nations Health Program?
Contact marshal.johnson@wgh.yk.ca

Breaking Language Barriers

Language should never be a barrier to receiving safe, high-quality care. At Yukon Hospitals, language access is a priority, ensuring that patients can communicate in the language they feel most comfortable using.



Left to Right: Francis Aubin, Sheldon, Keith Welch

"We know that when people are sick or vulnerable, they may not think in their second language," says Gwen Ross, Language Services Coordinator. "Having access to care in your preferred language can make a huge difference in ensuring patients feel heard, understood, and empowered."

Bilingual Service Provider Program

Yukon Hospitals supports one of Canada's largest bilingual regions through its Bilingual Service Provider Program. Currently, 29 designated French-speaking staff across various departments help bridge the communication gap for Francophone patients.

Keith Welch, an Infection Control Practitioner and Occupational Health Nurse, became a bilingual service provider during the pandemic. "There's already a power dynamic between patients and healthcare professionals, and a language barrier can widen that even more," he says. "Helping patients communicate in their own language makes a real impact."

Francis Aubin, a Medical Imaging Charge Technologist, shares a similar sentiment: "If patients want to communicate in French, or any other language, we have the ability to support them — we're happy to help."

Technology Enhancing Access

Alongside bilingual staff, Yukon Hospitals also offers live video interpretation in over 260 languages through tablet-based "interpreter on wheels" devices. Each hospital has one, with three at Whitehorse General Hospital.

"Staff have nicknamed the WGH interpreter 'Sheldon' and Dawson's version 'Dexter,' " says Ross with a smile. A recent review of Sheldon's call history showed patients accessing services in Arabic, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, and American Sign Language.

"With the Yukon's diverse population, this service ensures that patients, no matter where they're from, receive care in the language of their choice," Ross adds.

By combining trained bilingual staff with innovative translation tools, Yukon Hospitals is ensuring that language is never a barrier to receiving safe, compassionate care.

Yukon's Frostbite Care Revolution

Pioneering a National Standard

At Yukon Hospitals, innovation meets necessity in the fight against frostbite. Thanks to the dedication of Dr. Alex Poole and Pharmacist Josianne Gauthier, frostbite treatment in the North has been transformed.

Since introducing a groundbreaking frostbite protocol in 2015, the team has achieved remarkable results. In cases of Grade 4 frostbite — the most severe form, where amputation is almost inevitable — amputation rates at Yukon Hospitals have been cut from nearly 100% to just 50%. This shift has changed the outlook for patients, preserving mobility and quality of life in ways that were previously unimaginable.

"Frostbite can happen to anyone, even to the most prepared," says Gauthier. "Accidents happen quickly, and having access to the right treatment at the right time makes all the difference."

Their expertise has now reached beyond the Yukon. In October 2024, Dr. Poole and Gauthier co-founded the Canadian Frostbite Care Network, a national initiative uniting healthcare providers and researchers to share best practices, enhance education, and improve frostbite care across Canada. With a special focus on rural and remote communities, their work ensures that cutting-edge treatments are available where they are needed most.

"Every minute matters when treating frostbite," says Gauthier. "Quick access to expert care can mean the difference between recovery and life-altering complications."

Through their relentless commitment, Dr. Poole and Gauthier have positioned Yukon as a leader in frostbite treatment, setting new standards in patient care. Their work is a testament to the power of innovation in healthcare, and Yukon Hospitals is proud to support their work.

For more on their efforts, visit **frostbitecare.ca**

Yukon Hospital Foundation meets $2 Million Fundraising Goal

It's been a momentous year for the Yukon Hospital Foundation, says Karen Forward, President of the foundation, as they reached their fundraising goal of $2 million dollars to support the new Fireweed Mental Health Unit Unit at Whitehorse General Hospital.

The Yukon Hospital Foundation was founded in 2006, as a stand-alone organization, to raise funds to enhance the quality of healthcare for all Yukoners. Over the past 18 years, the YHF, a volunteer-driven organization, has fundraised to help purchase advanced equipment, critical diagnostic imaging, surgical and other specialized tools.

"Yukoners have helped to fundraise for the MRI, the original CT scanner, and the medical and clinical simulation centre," says Forward. Last year, the YHF partnered with Run for Mom, an annual race held in Whitehorse every Mother's Day in support of breast health, to contribute to the costs of a new mammogram machine.

Over the past several years, the YHF has been working towards their fundraising goal of $2 million dollars to support the New Mental Wellness Unit.

"It's something that we felt very strongly about participating in," says Forward. "It's definitely been on our board's radar for the past several years."

> "We're looking forward to seeing the space open – it's something our supporters feel very strongly about.

A Recap on the 2024 Festival of Trees

The Northwestel Festival of Trees, an annual 10-day event capped off by a Gala Dinner and Live/Silent Auction, organized by the YHF, celebrated its 21st anniversary in December 2024.

"In 2003, a group of people got together and decided to host the festival of trees," explains Forward. "After two successful years, they decided to found the Hospital Foundation."

The Festival of Trees is supported by Yukoners, from individuals to larger community organizations and businesses, alike. Organizations donate specially decorated Christmas trees, with gifts ranging from Air North flight tickets to fishing trips, which are put on display for public viewing for 10 days. On the last day of the festival, the YHF hosts a special Grand Ball dinner to auction off the trees to the highest bidders.

"We had 22 trees this past year," says Forward. "Nine were in the live auction and thirteen were in the silent auction."

The live auction event rallied up a total of $96,250 dollars, with an additional $60,257 in last-chance donations. YHF raised an additional $43,631 dollars from the silent auction, bringing the total to $200,138.

The Northwestel online raffle raised a total of $116,240—half of which went to a lucky Yukoner and the other half to their fundraising goals.

Forward credits the success of the event to YHF volunteers, including the board of directors and a team of 50 event volunteers. "It's a lot of work for a small team of really dedicated people," she says.

The Foundation Supports Cancer Care in the Yukon

In addition to their support for the new Mental Wellness Unit, the YHF is committed to supporting three cancer care funds in the Yukon, including the Yukoners Cancer Care Fund, Karen's Fund, and Karen's Room. Both the Yukoners Cancer Care Fund and Karen's Fund support individual Yukoners and their families who are facing a cancer diagnosis.

"The funds provide them with a one-time grant of $1,000 to help while they're going through cancer treatments."

The YHF also supports Stix Together, a group of women paddlers in the Yukon who've been participating in River Quest since 2016 in support of the Yukoners Cancer Care Fund.

"They're an incredible group of women," says Forward. "Last summer, they hit the $100,000 mark."

Stix Together's fundraising efforts help support at least a third of what's required to maintain the Yukoners Cancer Care Fund every year, says Forward.

The fund has supported many Yukoners and their families over the years.

"Most people have been touched by cancer in some way," says Forward. "Everybody has a story. We receive many cards and letters from people expressing their gratitude for the support while going through cancer treatment."

How to Donate

Your donations enhance our capacity to care for Yukon residents, right here close to home, beyond the level generated by our tax dollars.

Contributions can be made through monthly online donations, one-time donations, or the Foundation's annual direct mail campaign. Each donation helps improve local hospital services and equipment for Yukon residents.

For more information, visit **yhf.ca/donate**

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Whitehorse General Hospital
5 Hospital Road
Whitehorse, YT
Y1A 3H7

Dawson City Community Hospital
501 Sixth Avenue
PO Box 870
Dawson City, YT
Y0B 1G0

Watson Lake Community Hospital
817 Ravenhill Drive
PO Box 866
Watson Lake, YT
Y0A 1C0

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yukonhospitals.ca
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