

Winnipeg branch: Services revolve around northern communities and children



Since 1996, Bayshore's Winnipeg branch has provided nursing services to the bustling, diverse city and the surrounding area. The branch's reach also extends far north through its northern nursing program, which provides relief staffing for 26 nursing stations in isolated communities in Manitoba and Nunavut, through contracts with Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch.

For the northern nursing program, the Winnipeg branch has a roster of over 60 nurses, who have joined Bayshore from all across Canada. "We have nurses from B.C. to P.E.I.," says Lola Archer, the branch's Area Director. "They're very strong and unique employees. They work with a lot of autonomy, and they come to us with good nursing experience in emergency and intensive care. It's really an advanced skill level."

New hires attend training to learn about working safely in remote areas, which includes everything from reviewing comprehensive assessments to suturing and putting on casts. "Then we send them to a nursing station with a preceptor, and they do hands-on orientation for a week," says Archer. "Once they've completed that, they're ready for assignments."

Set in communities of a few hundred or a few thousand people, northern nursing stations are staffed by two to 12 nurses, and are typically the only medical facility in their area. The stations are equipped for nurses to assess, triage and act on a wide range of health conditions.

Assignments last two weeks to three months. Bayshore's nurses live at or near the nursing stations, so they get to know the residents and other staff members. "It's really holistic caregiving. Because they're living in the community, they really gain a good cross-cultural understanding," says Archer. "In training, we talk about cultural sensitivity and respect when providing care to First Nations people."

To support its northern nurses, the Winnipeg branch has a coordinator on call at all times, as well as access to clinical support. Last year, it provided over 70,000 nursing hours to northern communities.

The branch also provides services to children who have special needs, a program introduced in 2005 by Archer and former Area Director Dawn-Marie Johnston. "In Manitoba, we have a provincial program called URIS, the Unified Referral

Intake System, which was put in place in the mid-'90s to provide support to community programs so that special-needs children would have safe care in the community," says Archer. "The majority of the work we do with pediatric clients is referred to us by URIS."

Bayshore provides education on asthma and anaphylaxis. It offers support for students who need a nurse to accompany them all day at school, and also trains para-professionals for delegated tasks, such as tube feeding for pediatric clients at schools, daycares and respite programs.

"We've provided support to five school divisions," says Archer. "Every year, we do as many as 300 care plans – safety plans for students with health issues such as asthma or anaphylaxis. The program is unique to Manitoba, and it's extremely valued, because it enables best-practice standards of care for non-professional people caring for children in the community."

Some of the branch's pediatric clients have become adults, and Bayshore continues to meet their needs as they move into other programs, such as adult day programs and supportive living.

Archer speaks warmly about the branch's dynamic team. "We've grown quickly to become a well-known and respected health care agency providing a high standard of support," she says. "We wear a lot of different hats because we're doing a lot of different things – in addition to our northern nursing and paediatric programs, we have our pharmaceutical programs, infusion clinic and other initiatives – so we're very team-orientated." (She adds that they do the "best pot-luck lunches ever.")

Every year, the branch raises funds for Hospice & Palliative Care Manitoba by participating in Hike for Hospice. "For the past couple of years, we've also done a Bud, Spud and Steak Night – we sell tickets and have an auction to raise money," says Archer. "To learn more or hear some of our many stories, you're welcome to visit us any time!"

For more information, contact larcher@bayshore.ca

Back row, left to right: Marilyn Dyck, Karen Robinson-Franko, Jan Johnston, Wendy Hnytko, Tracy McConnell, Virginia Aguiar. Front row, left to right: Dawn-Marie Johnston, Elaine Symesko, Shannon Herbert, Lola Archer



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