

# Nechako Watershed Roundtable Annual General Meeting: Fire, Flood and Drought: Climate Adaptation in the Nechako Watershed

I am grateful to be joining you today on the unceded traditional territory of the Saik'uz First Nation



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# Medical Health Officers in Northern Health: Geography & Portfolio Assignments

Dr. Jong Kim

- Regional
- Chief Medical Health Officer

Dr. Trevor Corneil

- Regional
- Observatory (epidemiology/surveillance), Public Health Response, UBC

Dr. Raina Fumerton

- Northwest HSDA
- Environmental Health, Climate Change and Health, Health and Resource Development, Community Care and Facility Licensing

Dr. Rakel Kling

- North Interior HSDA
- Communicable Disease, Immunization, Harm Reduction, Schools

Dr. Abby Steinberg

- Northeast HSDA
- Overdose Prevention, Infection Prevention & Control

# What are the Key Functions of an MHO?

- Responsible for **monitoring, assessing, and reporting** on the health status of persons living in the Northern Health region
- **Protecting and Promoting the health** of northerners
- Address conditions that create **health inequities (usually relates to inequities in upstream social, economic, ecological determinants of health)**
- Have positive statutory duties to **administer various BC statutes** and regulations relevant to protecting the health of the population – control of health hazards, reportable diseases, drinking water, child and adult facilities
- Provide **strategic and tactical support to senior leadership** within an organization to reorient health care policy and operations to support the health of populations
- Offer **consultation to health professionals** regarding emergent health risks to individuals or groups of persons
- Work collaboratively with – and are **a resource to – external stakeholders** to support healthy public policy

# Climate Change in Northern BC

- **Northern BC is warming faster than other parts of the province and is projected to see the highest increases in temperature and precipitation.**
- Climate risks include, but are not limited to:
  - **More frequent and extreme**
    - High heat days
    - Wildfires
    - Precipitation and heavy-rain events
    - Regional drought and water shortages
    - Storm surges and inland flooding
  - **Increased levels of**
    - Sea level rise and coastal erosion
    - Precipitation falling as rain (not as snow)
    - Glacier loss and smaller snowpack
  - **Changes to growing season and ecology**, including plant and animal distributions, pests and harmful algal growth
  - **Lowering ocean pH** (ocean acidification)



Donnie Creek wildfire between Fort Nelson and Fort St. John, 2023. (Source: The Canadian Press/HO; BC Wildfire Service, BC Wildfire Service).



Flooding near Old Remo, Terrace BC, 2021; Source: CTV News).



Telegraph Creek Rockslide, 2018; Source: CBC News).

# Climate change-related impacts on health and health systems

Heat-related illness

Evacuation, trauma, anxiety, PTSD

Asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

Infection

Malnutrition

Conflict and migration

Health



Health systems



Social and structural determinants of health



Ecological determinants of health

