



Registered Nurses Network of BC
c/o UBC School of Nursing
T201-2211 Wesbrook Mall
Vancouver, BC V6T 2B5
www.nursing.ubc.ca/Scholarship/RNNetwork

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2010 Year in Review: Where We Have Been and Where We Are Going

BC nurses and nurse practitioners are increasingly aware of the changes that have ensued since nursing came under the Health Professions Act in BC in 2005. While many of us theoretically understood that the Act was designed to ensure that professional regulatory colleges focused more intensely on regulation, most of us assumed that most of what we thought of as the “professional association” functions inherited from the RNABC would continue within the newly formed CRNBC. However, in the aftermath of that change, as it attempted to come into compliance with the legislation, the CRNBC constrained or extinguished functions such as the right to articulate the perspectives of registered nurses in regard to health care planning and delivery. In keeping with these changes, CRNBC also began to review its role as the jurisdictional member for BC with the CNA. CRNBC has concluded that continuation in its current role with an organization whose mandate is to advance the profession and engage in influencing health and social policy is a conflict of interest. CRNBC is now discussing with CNA several options for ending CRNBC’s jurisdictional membership in CNA in a measured and managed way.

Although many nurses in BC had been noticing these changes and expressing alarm, it was difficult for anyone to determine what the appropriate response should be and who ought to lead it. Many of the well organized groups of nurses who had previously been aligned with the RNABC put considerable energy into reformulating themselves as independent organizations. And although this response allowed for the continuation of many important organized nursing functions, it did not address the larger policy voice for the profession or the capacity to link the province with the national policy agenda.

In this context, a small and informal group of concerned nurses began to assess what could be done and who ought to do it. They consulted widely with individual nurses and nursing groups, and created the network that became known as the “RN Network of BC.” As 2010 began, this group of nurses, joined by hundreds of other supporters through the RN Network website and email updates, began to plan toward a “general meeting” to be held in May at Vancouver General Hospital. On the appointed day, the auditorium was packed and hundreds of other nurses joined in around the province by simultaneous webcast. The meeting highlighted the complexity of the challenging conditions within which BC nurses had found themselves, and the necessity of

strategic forward movement to build a new entity that could take on this crucial function in a manner complementary to the important work of the CRNBC, the BCNU, and the CNA.

Following that meeting, the Association of Registered Nurses of BC became a legal entity in the summer of 2010, positioning itself, with an appointed interim board and a modest project budget courtesy of CRNBC funding, to negotiate a viable future alignment with the existing organizations.

On this basis, the ARNBC Board has been working at a very rapid pace to interpret its options going forward, to set up the processes and structures through which it can move forward. There has been much to do in creating a communication platform, considering mechanisms and structures within which all nurses can have a voice in the development of the organization as it evolves, and in carefully working through the complex challenges associated with the views and positions of the partner organizations. While this work has not been highly visible to our nursing colleagues throughout BC, it has laid some crucial foundations. Re-establishing the health and public policy voice that nursing needs and deserves in this province is an interesting and sometimes frustrating challenge, but we are getting there. And we will succeed!

Over the past year, many of you have provided your input and suggestions through survey monkey questions. Your ideas and feedback have been extremely valuable during this period of transition. The ARNBC website, which we anticipate will be live in early 2011, will be an important ongoing means through which we can continue to connect with BC Nurses. Another important connection with you as has been through the updates and bulletins shared through this RN Network distribution group.

As 2010 draws to a close, we know we have made progress, although there is much more to be done. We anticipate being able to open up discussion about the options going forward and create some provincial consultation fairly early in the new year. We anticipate a spring meeting of the Association, to which all BC nurses will be invited and encouraged to participate in creating the first formally elected ARNBC board. And that elected board will be strongly supported with the platform we have created in this initial phase to engage BC nurses in a meaningful way as the organization solidifies its shape and structure. In addition to launching the organization, we are also very much mindful of the need for a sustainability plan – and one that is fiscally viable for BC nurses as well as for the times in which we find ourselves. Those are large challenges, but we have absolutely no doubt that BC nurses are ready to overcome them and help position the ARNBC in the best possible place to support a professional nursing presence in BC and Canada.

So 2010 has been a year of great progress and movement toward resolving the nursing professional association crisis in BC. And by the end of 2011, we know that we will be fully established with a mechanism that will allow all BC nurses to work together to articulate nursing perspectives and inject the knowledge that a nursing perspective brings toward solving complex health problems into the public domain. It is up to all of us, and every voice counts!

Seasons Greetings

Thank you for your encouragement, support, impatience, passion, and ceaseless commitment over this past year. We hope that the holiday season allows for some relaxation and refreshment so that we are all ready to stand strongly and together in making a bright new future for nursing in BC.

Thank you for your ongoing support!

Rob Calnan, Susan Duncan (ARNBC Interim Board Co-Chairs); Lynette Best, Julie Fraser, Suzanne Johnston, Leanna Loy, Paddy Rodney, Maureen Shaw, Sally Thorne, Jo Wearing. (Interim Board Members)



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