



From the Ground Up:

Building a New Professional Nursing Association in British Columbia, Canada

Susan Duncan, Julie Fraser and Nora Whyte

Background

In British Columbia, as nursing was brought under the umbrella of comprehensive health professional legislation, nurses experienced the fading away of what had been a vibrant professional policy voice representing the province's 37,000 registered nurses.

Established in 2010 following an intensive planning and networking phase, the Association of Registered Nurses of British Columbia (ARNBC) has been working to re-build the unique policy voice and perspective that a professional association brings to nursing, health and public policy in the interests of health equity.

Purposes

- To provide a provincial voice and forum for registered nurses to contribute to advancing the health of British Columbians through participation in the development of health and public policy;
- To advance the role of the professional nurse in providing accessible, efficient and effective health care that meets the highest standards; and
- To mobilize collaborative initiatives among nursing groups and organizations provincially, nationally, and internationally.

Achievements 2010 to 2013

- Established a new professional nursing association in British Columbia
- Became a jurisdictional member of the Canadian Nurses Association in 2012
- Established a governance structure and election process for the Board of Directors
- Developed policy statements and held meetings with government on nursing and health issues
- Mobilized nurses to use their collective voice during a provincial election campaign
- Collaborated with partner organizations to lobby government for better primary care and a provincial nursing plan
- Facilitated development of virtual nursing networks to support member engagement
- Partnered with the Canadian Nurses Association and the British Columbia Nurse Practitioner Association on a public awareness campaign to promote the role and benefits of Nurse Practitioners

vision

Nurses making a difference for the health and health care of British Columbians.

mission

ARNBC is the professional voice for nursing leadership, policy, and practice.

Relevance & Opportunities for Nurses

The relevance of a provincial nursing association:

- Connects nurses with other nurses across British Columbia
- Includes the voice of nurses in influencing change on social and health issues
- Links nurses with national and international organizations
- Supports professional practice and advances the profession of nursing

Creating Avenues for Nursing Engagement

- Strong web presence and social media strategy: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and an active Blog on nursing policy issues
- Province-wide consultations to gain understanding about nursing issues and solutions
- Opportunities for involvement in Board of Directors, committees, and events
- Network Leads Program: volunteer ambassadors in nursing networks in communities, workplaces, nursing schools, and within specialty groups
- Engagement of nursing students through nursing leadership projects and social media



Conclusion

Nurses value the role of the professional nursing association in providing leadership for identity, practice, voice, and policy. ARNBC complements the work of the nurses' union and the regulatory college in the province.

During the past three years, ARNBC has inspired and engaged nurses of all generations to use a collective policy voice. The lessons learned from the experience in British Columbia are relevant to others seeking to develop new models of professional nursing organizations for the 21st century.



References

Association of Registered Nurses of British Columbia
ARNBC 2012 Consultations Report.
Vancouver: Author

Duncan, S., Thorne, S., & Rodney, P. (2012).
Understanding the Implications of the Changing
Regulatory Environment in Nursing: Insights from the
B.C. Experience. Vancouver: Association of Registered
Nurses of British Columbia

B.C.'s professional association:
Reinvented and renewed. Canadian Nurse, 108(9), 12-14.

