

A circular portrait of David Whittaker, a man with short brown hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, smiling slightly. The portrait is set against a dark grey background and is framed by a thick, hand-painted blue circular border.

David Whittaker MBChB, CCFP, OSS

Thank you for considering my application and nomination for the Doctors of BC board of directors. I believe that I have a unique and complementary skillset that would provide value to the board and the members of the Association. After reviewing the organizations strategic framework approach, I have outlined and aligned my message in the same way.

ADVOCACY: As the Physician Lead of the Rural and Remote Division of Family Practice, we provided extensive and relevant advocacy for some of the most vulnerable communities in BC. Being able to paint a picture for government and health authorities to gain a broader and well-informed understanding of rural issues. Many strong relationships have arisen.

SERVING: As a rural family physician, you come to understand the concept of serving and service to your community. Being an integral part of the community one serves is incredibly rewarding. I am by no means new to practice or leading by example. Community need recently led to our decision as a family for me to go back and upskill through residency in Obstetric Surgical Skills in 2020 to provide surgical on-call coverage that was desperately needed. I learnt so much more than enhanced surgical skills though. Working with, learning from and receiving mentorship from colleagues, while working alongside medical residents and medical students, has given me an invaluable perspective of the broadest of emerging issues impacting our professional colleagues and learners. Many telling insights.

COLLABORATING: Early on in my career in Canada I had the opportunity to Co-Chair a local committee with both the Mayor and the Health Authority Manager. It was a fantastic opportunity for me to learn the difference between “working together” and true collaboration. Taking time to learn through listening and collaborating with respect are so important.

ENGAGEMENT: As a community physician who has been “engaged with” on a very regular basis and as a Divisions leader seeking engagement with others, I have learned the importance of transparency and taking the time to build relationships. It is something that is so often rushed.

UNDERSTANDING: As a BC physician, I’ve served in multiple rural towns and remote first nations communities. Collaborating often with specialists to improve access. Travelling to vulnerable communities as a locum physician. As a Board Chair, transitioning to a governance board and overseeing two Executive Director searches. As a Physician Lead, supporting over 40 vulnerable communities. As a resident and a teacher of residents. I have a unique and valuable understanding of our broad healthcare landscape as well as solid good governance values to be an asset to the organization.

Rural Generalist Physician living, working and playing in Vanderhoof BC on the traditional land and territory of the Saik’uz First Nation



Career Highlights

- Board Chair of Rural and Remote Division of Family Practice 2018-2020
- Full scope Rural Generalist providing care through Family Practice, Emergency Room, In-patient care, Obstetrics, Cesarean Sections coverage, Palliative Care
- Rural Coordination Centre of BC (RCCbc) Core Member
- GPSC Physician Leadership Course, Cohort 9
- UBC Clinical Faculty - Teacher of medical students and residents
- Obstetric Surgical Skills Residency completed March 2021

Core Skill - Governance Experience

My recognized leadership at the Rural & Remote Division of Family Practice involved transitioning the current board from a physician-only organization to a governance board comprising physicians and non-physicians. It also involved searching for and hiring an executive director and forming multiple committees of the board focused on strong governance principles. I learnt a tremendous amount during this time and feel it has prepared me well for further professional service at a director level on behalf of all my provincial colleagues – specialists and family physicians.

As we start to lift our heads above water and breathe again as a profession, there is a tremendous opportunity to use the knowledge and learnings that we have gained through this pandemic. Medicine will likely never be the same again. The pressing problems of access to care for our patients both in community and in facility, the necessary support for our physician colleagues - both financial and emotional; the lack of diversity in our profession and its changing culture all exists, and must be addressed. Doctors of BC has the opportunity and responsibility to steer us to a destination with the answers. If not us, then who?

Thank you again for your consideration,

Dave

