



natural health practitioners of canada
praticiens de la santé naturelle du canada



ANNUAL REPORT
2014

The background image shows a person standing on a wooden dock that extends from the foreground into a calm lake. The sky is a mix of soft orange and light blue, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. In the distance, there are silhouettes of mountains. The water reflects the colors of the sky. In the bottom corners, there are decorative white leaf-like shapes.

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ABOUT THE NHPC

The Natural Health Practitioners of Canada (NHPC) is the largest member, non-profit, complementary and alternative health association in Canada

The NHPC was established in 1988 and now represents over 6,300 natural health professionals. It provides its members with medical malpractice and commercial general liability insurance, as well as education and networking opportunities. The NHPC has a strong tradition of high professional standards and is committed to maintaining these standards for its members.

The NHPC is the voice of its members to governments and to the insurance industry. It represents professionals in 65 different complementary and alternative health practices and advocates for fair recognition of competencies. The NHPC is committed to raising public awareness of natural health in the ever-changing landscape of health and wellness.

BOARD PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Throughout 2014, NHPC staff, the Board of Directors, and volunteers made significant efforts on behalf of NHPC members and natural health in Canada.

During the year, the NHPC was active in Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta by providing information and engaging in discussions with governments who are considering the question of forming regulatory Colleges for massage therapists. The NHPC is ensuring that, if those governments do proceed with legislation to create regulatory Colleges, NHPC members will have as equal involvement and access to the College as the provincial massage therapy associations. NHPC members have shared their views on regulation, and these views have formed the NHPC's approach to regulation on a province-by-province basis. Equally as important, the NHPC also provided input in several cities on municipal bylaws related to the licensing of NHPC practitioners.

In addition to working on regulation with provincial governments, the NHPC has had many meetings with several insurance companies to ensure that they continue to recognize NHPC members as competent and eligible for client claims reimbursement. The NHPC strengthened these relationships, which

resulted in new recognition from Medavie Blue Cross and TELUS Health — members now have access to e-claims services.

Along with advocating on behalf of NHPC members, the NHPC provided several other valuable services to members, including a Conference and tradeshow, workshops, webinars, and one-on-one advice on technical and business aspects of member practices. During this time, the NHPC also carried out significant internal systems and policy improvements. Among these was making the membership renewal process simpler and faster, with an online renewal option, which allowed members to access membership documents instantly. This process change resulted in an overall increase in the NHPC's response time to member phone calls. The online renewal process continues to receive a significant amount of positive feedback through emails, social media, and at Connections Cafes, indicating that members appreciated this feature.

The NHPC's top priority throughout the years has always been staying connected with its members. In 2014, the NHPC increased the frequency of its email newsletter to twice a month while continuing to be an active and



Michelle Blanchard, Board President



Kelly Sloan, Executive Director

engaging user on a number of social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Connections Cafes, attended by both NHPC staff and NHPC Board of Directors, provided the opportunity to have face-to-face conversations with members across the country.

In addition to attending Connections Cafes, the NHPC Board of Directors was very active in supporting NHPC member services. The Board joined staff in presentations to schools and volunteered at the NHPC Annual Conference. It made decisions on many important organizational matters, including organizational finances, recruitment of members to the Board of Directors, legal matters, and proposed amendments to the Bylaws.

In 2014, the NHPC's relationships with other organizations improved significantly; internal systems and policy changes better accommodated member needs; financial

stability was secured; and advocacy work was highly successful in demonstrating equal competency of NHPC members. In addition, important education and practice management advice provided value-added services and were vital contributors to the overall success of 2014.

The NHPC has over 6,300 members across the country, working in 65 different natural health practices. The staff and the NHPC Board of Directors are honoured to continue working and volunteering on behalf of NHPC members and promoting the benefits of natural health practices to all Canadians.

REGISTRAR AND PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

REGISTRAR

An applicant who seeks to join the community of natural health practitioners represented by the NHPC must meet the eligibility criteria as set by the Board of Directors and must be approved by the Registrar.

A submission of a Police Information Check is required for membership and will be reviewed by the Registrar. If appropriate, an interview will be conducted to assess the risk in relation to an applicant's suitability to be in the profession and a member of the NHPC.

Once accepted as a member of the NHPC, members must maintain their membership in good standing in order to be afforded the rights and privileges of membership. A member would not be in good standing if they were:

- non-compliant with the Continuing Competency Program
- in arrears of dues, fees, or assessments
- having an imposed interim suspension or interim conditions on their membership pending outcome of a disciplinary action or criminal activity

If for whatever reason a member fails to be in good standing, the NHPC will communicate with the member in question to rectify the situation and bring the member back to good standing.

PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

The NHPC introduced the Practice Management Advisor role in 2013 as a member resource to discuss practice-related matters. While the Practice Management Advisor helps members by discussing business practices, workplace dilemmas, interpersonal conflicts, and any other everyday practice and ethical inquiries a practitioner may have, the Advisor also informs the public and the industry of NHPC standards. This role is important to both NHPC members and the public as it provides a critical and candid look into the realities of being a natural health practitioner.

COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION PROCESS

The NHPC Complaints Resolution Process offers a respectful way for the Association to address concerns regarding misconduct of a practitioner.

The Complaints Director receives complaints for allegations of misconduct and conducts an assessment and investigation in accordance with Article 10, Complaints Resolution Process of the NHPC Bylaws. Through remedial undertakings — such as alternative dispute resolution, course work, supervised practice, and counselling — the resolution of a complaint results in the healing of relationships and creates suitable outcomes for parties involved.

In some circumstances, additional investigation may be required, and experts in a specific subject matter or third party investigators will be utilized. A complaint may then proceed to an Arbitration Hearing and may result in Sanction Orders being imposed upon the member.

The nature of complaints, for example, may relate to allegations of inappropriate crossing of boundaries; alleged inappropriate billing practices and/or inadequate recordkeeping; incompetence of the practitioner; working outside of their recognized modality or standard of practice; and alleged conduct of a sexual nature including, but not limited to, communication, touch, activity, and behaviour.

In the case of a member being charged with a criminal offence, such as sexual assault, the Complaints Resolution Process holds its investigation until the court proceedings have been finalized and only once there is a verdict will it continue its investigation. A member may have criminal charges dismissed, withdrawn, or be found not guilty to the charge of sexual assault but may still be investigated for misconduct in relation to the NHPC Code of Ethics. The Association's Code of Ethics is important as it provides support and guidance to all members in their respective practices.

LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jeff Lazo

*Chairperson/
Board Representative*

Carla Pentz

*Co-Chair/
Member at Large*

Don Himmelman

Member at Large

Paulla Schmidt

Member at Large

Michel Huszar

Board Representative

The Leadership Committee's goals are developing Board leadership, seeking Board nominations from within the NHPC membership, succession planning, and ensuring a smooth transition for each new NHPC Board member.

In the past year — especially in the fall — the Leadership Committee connected with members at NHPC Connections Cafes and encouraged members to become leaders of the NHPC through involvement on the Board.

The Leadership Committee was successful in conducting interviews and finalizing candidates, who will be elected throughout the year to the Board. The Committee then ensures their transition to a Board role will be successful.

The Leadership Committee presented the new Board of Directors slate during the Annual General Meeting in May 2014.

At the first quarter meeting in 2015, the Leadership Committee conducted interviews with the NHPC Board of Directors as part of the succession planning process.

MEMBERSHIP

COMPETENCY EQUIVALENCY EXAM (CEE)

The CEE evaluates competency for massage therapists against a standard of knowledge and performance developed by the Consortium of Massage Therapy Regulators: *The Inter-jurisdictional Practice Competencies and Performance Indicators for Massage Therapists at Entry-to-Practice* (IJ Document). The CEE is a two-part examination, which includes a written and a practical component, and gives NHPC massage therapists the opportunity to demonstrate a high standard of competence.

The NHPC developed a robust and credible examination by engaging top industry professionals to provide insight and direction throughout the entire process. The NHPC worked closely with a leading psychometrician, professional educators, subject-matter experts, and industry contacts to ensure that the examination meets the needs of a variety of stakeholders.

SCHOOL VISITS

The NHPC School Visit Program gives staff the opportunity to build relationships with NHPC approved schools and their students. These meetings are a great opportunity to meet with students from a variety of disciplines, to share the work of the NHPC, and to present the benefits of membership. Because of these visits, each year the NHPC is happy to welcome students as new members. In addition, the NHPC is able to keep up-to-date and monitor the curriculums of various schools.

CONTINUED COMPETENCY PROGRAM (CCP)

The CCP is a mandatory program for Regular members to maintain their continued competency and education in order to remain in Good Standing. Eligible activities such as studying books, research papers, and DVDs – as well as participation in workshops – earn members CCP credits. Twenty credits are required within every two-year cycle. Mandatory components of the CCP include Ethics, First Aid, and CPR.

A random audit ensures that members are acquiring their credits and submitting their certificates to the NHPC for their member records. The NHPC ensures that members are supported in meeting the requirements for CCP audits.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS AND NEW MEMBER RECRUITMENT

The NHPC exceeded its goals for the 2014 spring and fall renewals. In addition, a significant number of new members joined the NHPC. The NHPC, in response to member feedback, further developed the existing online renewal process by providing members with the ability to download copies of their membership documents from their member account on the website.

NEW DATABASE SYSTEM AND ONLINE REGISTRATION SYSTEM

The NHPC database was replaced with new database software allowing the Association to streamline its administrative processes and store member data more efficiently. It enables insurance companies to securely verify membership, and it provides members with secure access to more of their member records online.

MEMBER ADVOCACY

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS


The work of NHPC Government Relations spans 13 provincial/territorial jurisdictions. As the only inter-jurisdictional organization representing natural health professionals in Canada, the NHPC has members in provinces where massage therapy is regulated and non-regulated. The NHPC has a unique perspective to objectively assess the impact of regulation on members moving from non-regulated to regulated provinces.

In the interest of NHPC members, the responsibility for providing balanced and fact-based information has led to an NHPC plan that outlines the benefits and challenges of regulation. Prior to the NHPC engaging in discussions with government officials, the NHPC ensures that members in each jurisdiction are consulted to determine their specific priorities and concerns. Consultation with members is the first step in advocacy and is as equally important as keeping complementary and alternative health on the agendas of government officials.

Throughout the past year, massage therapy regulation played a large role in NHPC Government Relations initiatives. Discussions regarding regulation in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Alberta continue into 2015. The NHPC is deepening its relationship with senior government officials — particularly with the Ministries of Health.

In 2014, the NHPC touched base with Alberta's new Health Minister and anticipates future consultations in 2015. This time last year the NHPC reported that Alberta Health Services would be conducting a survey of all massage therapists in the province to determine the level of support for regulation. Since then, the Government of Alberta announced it would not be proceeding with the survey, so as a result, the NHPC is examining other options in 2015.

The Manitoba Health Professions Advisory Council had not yet made recommendations in 2014 to the Manitoba Minister of Health regarding the regulation of massage therapy. The NHPC continues to be engaged in the decision-making process and in working with senior Manitoba Health Staff.



The NHPC is currently engaged with the Saskatchewan Minister of Health and government staff, as an application for the regulation of massage therapy has been made. The NHPC will represent its members' interests during this process.

INSURANCE RELATIONS

The NHPC met with several insurance companies across Canada throughout 2014. The NHPC's in-person meetings involved informing and educating insurers on the function and role of the Association, membership, and most importantly, advocating for the recognition of complementary and alternative medicine for extended health/wellness plans and accounts.

The NHPC attended the Canadian Health Care Anti-fraud Association Conference in 2014 as an exhibitor to meet with various insurers and other associations and colleges. It was an opportunity for the Association to connect on various fraud issues in the profession, as well as an opportunity for advocacy and networking.

In 2014, the NHPC successfully negotiated an agreement with TELUS Health and 11 insurance companies to implement electronic-billing for massage therapist members in non-regulated environments who have completed a 2,200-hour/two-year training program or the Competency Equivalency Examination.

Another highlight of the past year for the NHPC was being recognized by Medavie Blue Cross for private benefit plans in Eastern Canada. Massage therapist members in non-regulated provinces in this region who have completed a 2,200-hour/two-year training program are now eligible providers as a result.

In 2015, the NHPC will be advocating with a variety of industries, specifically larger employers, for the inclusion of complementary and alternative health in extended health/wellness plans and accounts. NHPC members are encouraged to contact the NHPC office for further information on the recognition of complementary and alternative health for insurance purposes.

MEMBER EDUCATION AND EVENTS

The NHPC continues to promote the growth and development of its members through continuing education and peer networking opportunities.

Two of the major focuses of the past year were the research and review of the continuing education opportunities available for members and building frameworks for evaluating the quality of educational opportunities and resources. Potential continuing education partners were identified, and input was collated from numerous sources, including NHPC member input. The ultimate aim was to build a robust lineup of high-quality, cost-effective, continuing education resources and opportunities that are easily accessible to members across the country.

EDUCATION ADVISORY GROUP

Over the summer, the Education Advisory Group, comprising member volunteers supported by NHPC staff, carried out research on trends in natural health, on suitable potential continuing educational opportunities, and on products that could be facilitated for NHPC members. The group also participated in reviewing and recommending presenters for the NHPC's 2015 Conference Series.

The Education Advisory Group Members in 2014 were:

- Chloe Larmand
- Paul Buffel
- Pessy Benjaminy

CONTINUING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

The NHPC hosted three interactive continuing education events during the year: David Sheehan's *Myofascial Cupping* workshop, an ethics webinar with Cathy Sveen, and Michelle Vassallo's *Manual Lymphatic Drainage* certification workshop. In addition, a well-received client/patient health records workshop was held in conjunction with in-person Connections Cafes in 11 cities across the country.

CONNECTIONS CAFES

In 2014, a more open and conversational format was adopted for Connections Cafes. Throughout the year, NHPC Board members and staff hosted two online and 13 in-person Connections Cafe member meetings, which garnered over 580 participants. Important Association updates, invaluable input, ideas, and concerns were shared at these powerful member networking events — all of which will contribute to the planning and initiatives to be implemented by the Association in the coming years.

A one-hour client/patient health records educational workshop was held at 11 in-person Connections Cafes. The sessions, facilitated by NHPC staff members, Jan Bagot and Candace Pichonsky, received very positive feedback, and members expressed strong interest in more member events incorporating educational sessions in the future.

2014 ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Attendance at the Association's Annual General Meeting, held in conjunction with the Annual National Conference, was at a record high. The Annual National Conference was held in May in Red Deer, AB — featuring 25 world class presenters and more than 30 workshops over three and a half days. It was a sold-out event with over 270 participants. The conference also featured the largest tradeshow assembled at an NHPC conference, hosting 34 exhibitors and inviting members of the public to participate at the tradeshow. Sponsorship for the tradeshow and conference featured live radio coverage, articles, and advertisements in newspapers and widely circulated magazines.

MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

WEBSITE

The NHPC website transitioned to a new content management system and developer in 2014. Although it remained the same visually, it became better integrated with the new member database, which allowed for the introduction of better member service and self-sufficiency.

Members can now see a greater amount of their member records online and track their own Continued Competency Program activities. They can also download copies of their membership certificates and insurance confirmation letters directly from their member accounts. These services allow for faster member service and better record maintenance.

A Verification Portal was also developed for insurance industry contacts. This provides a secure means of immediately confirming membership for client insurance claims, without having to contact the NHPC office.

The website continues to be a major source of information and service for NHPC members, the insurance industry, and the public. After member feedback, work commenced to merge the Natural Health Directory with the Business Toolbox as a free service for all members, launching early in 2015.

Over the year, the website had over 57,000 measured users. On average, each user viewed five pages per session, with sessions being almost five minutes in length.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The NHPC grew its social media presence throughout the year. A Facebook content calendar was developed to promote complementary and alternative health with information that is always current. "Likes" grew significantly from the previous year. The members-only Facebook Group, NHPC Speak Easy, and Twitter also increased in popularity throughout the year.

NHPC NEWS

This was a year of transition for communication tools delivering the right information at the right time to NHPC members. Thanks to input received throughout the year, the Communications team was able to re-establish the manner in which news is delivered.

A bi-monthly electronic newsletter replaced the quarterly *Connections* magazine in October so that information is always current. This newsletter's features include important deadlines, new industry and insurance developments, and upcoming events, reaching about 5,500 subscribers. A survey distributed at Connections Cafes showed that emails are the most useful means of reaching members, so the NHPC has redirected its focus to share more urgent or timely news through all-member emails and emails targeted to specific member groups.

In 2014, top news items included Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation, TELUS e-claims, Medavie Blue Cross recognition, the NHPC Business Toolbox, and members having access to their documents online.

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

In 2014, the NHPC participated in a number of events including the *Subway Healthy Living Expo* in Red Deer, AB, and an event at the Kids with Cancer Society in Edmonton, AB, where volunteers provided their services to parents and children. The NHPC will expand on the success of these and previous events in 2015.

Plans were put in place to embark on a public awareness campaign, beginning early in 2015. This included booking eight wellness tradeshow across Canada that, in addition to engaging the public, will give members the opportunity to showcase their skills and modalities by volunteering their services for short demonstrations. Through partnerships with other wellness organizations, more volunteer opportunities will be available in 2015.



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