

## Rural Preceptorship: William J. Cadzow Lac La Biche Healthcare Centre

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For my final practicum with the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta, I was fortunate enough to be placed at the **William J. Cadzow Lac La Biche Healthcare Centre** in Lac La Biche, Alberta. My decision to select a rural preceptorship placement was influenced by my desire to experience every aspect of nursing and my lack of attachment to any specialty. Initially, I had no idea of what to anticipate, I had never been to Lac La Biche, nor anywhere else in Northern Alberta. I quickly found comfort in small town life, finding the town culture similar to where I grew up, and I was able to

have many pleasant conversations with the locals who were consistently very welcoming.

My first shift at the hospital was eye opening, as I was able to see the wide array of patient cases and the diversity of care that the hospital provides. The acute care unit hosts patients from all spectrums which allowed me to provide nursing care for patients' post-surgery, awaiting long-term care, experiencing highly acute medical conditions, labouring and postpartum mothers and infants, pediatric patients, psychiatric patients and even those receiving palliative care. In the same shift, I would be caring for a variety of patients: one had a bowel obstruction requiring a nasogastric tube insertion; another admitted for diabetic ketoacidosis; a patient undergoing alcohol withdrawal; a long-term care patient requiring full care; and a postpartum mother and infant. The opportunities that I was provided were diverse, which enabled me to practice to full scope and far beyond my expectations.



Compared to the units I had been placed on in the city, I was able to see the particular importance of teamwork in rural healthcare settings and the need for communication. Occasional lack of human and material resources in rural settings meant that nursing staff must be supportive of one another and use

creativity to provide accurate and effective nursing care, often referred to by the nurses as “McGyvering”. Trust and communication among staff from other disciplines was further crucial, and I was able to develop professional relationships with physicians, medical students, pharmacists, lab technicians, dieticians, social workers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and even food and environmental services workers. In a smaller hospital like the Lac La Biche Healthcare Centre, it is easy to get to know every member on staff, and appropriate communication and collaboration would help to facilitate continuity of care for patients and the community. During my time here, I quickly integrated into the team, in part due to the wonderful support provided by my preceptor. I was lucky to be paired with the best preceptor I could have imagined who was consistently willing to answer my many questions pertaining to nursing and life in Lac La Biche. He was my constant role model and always provided support to myself and other staff. He routinely sought out external experiences outside of my assigned patient load, never ceasing to ensure that I had the best preceptorship experience possible. Seeing the value of teamwork firsthand made me realize that this was what I had been missing for most of my undergraduate degree, and that I would look for a similar experience upon graduation.



Choosing a rural preceptorship was the best thing that I could have done for myself, not only as a future nurse, but as a person. Even during the midst of a global pandemic, I was provided with the chance to go somewhere new, meet new people, and get a taste of what it is like to work as a nurse in a supportive environment. I finally feel as though I have found my place in nursing and a field where I truly fit. I was able to grow into the nursing role while also discovering my personal needs and goals for the future. I realized that I love working in rural environments and the variability associated with rural healthcare and I look forward to continuing my journey as a generalist through my new position as a graduate nurse. I am grateful for the Faculty of Nursing for providing me with this opportunity and of course, the staff and

my preceptor at the Lac La Biche Healthcare Centre who facilitated this wonderful experience that will guide me through my future nursing career.

