



## Natasha Kellett, Masset, British Columbia

Natasha Kellett, RDH, and I live on the remote islands of Haida Gwaii, about 100 miles of the northern B.C. coast. There are approximately 5000 people who live here in six villages, and there are 3 dental clinics here. When Covid hit B.C., of the 3 dental clinics here on the islands, only Natasha's dental clinic in the village of Old Masset was able to stay open because she had PPE left over from the SARS epidemic. Unfortunately, the dentist that worked in Natasha's clinic had to leave. That left Natasha as the only dental health professional available to help the people of the islands of Haida Gwaii. I should also mention that planes had stopped flying from Haida Gwaii to the mainland, and ferry travel was perilous because of the possibility of becoming infected with Covid. Patients started to call me at the clinic in the village of Queen Charlotte and the other dental clinic in the village of Skidegate with intense dental pain. All of these patients were referred to Natasha! Natasha began helping patients while they were in their cars, and later she brought them into her clinic to treat large painful cavities by placing silver diamine fluoride, light cured varnish and where possible placed IRM as a temporary. Countless patients were relieved of their pain. She also took & texted me x-rays so I could diagnose abscesses and prescribe medication as needed. Without her compassionate help these patients would have suffered greatly, or would have had to ferry to the mainland at their peril, and without a guarantee they would be seen by a dentist as most clinics were closed. Singlehandedly for over 6 months, this compassionate Superhero went above and beyond the call of duty to meet the emergency needs of hundreds of our patients on the islands of Haida Gwaii. Natasha Kellett deserves to win this award!

Natasha never stops thinking about her patients. If they have an emergency she makes arrangements to get them in to see the dentist or to assess. Even if she is messaged via Facebook or texted. She lives in a small village and has been a reliable source of comfort for myself and my family on a couple of occasions! I know through the village grapevine she has even driven people to their appointments when they couldn't get to the clinic. When the pandemic first occurred my family found ourselves quarantined and Natasha was there to help which wasn't surprising, however, with the grocery drop off she made sure we all had new tooth brushes and toothpaste to keep up our oral hygiene! I am fortunate to call Natasha a friend, even though I've moved to another province recently I still hear constantly about her dedication to the residents of Masset and Old Massett, anytime someone is in oral need she has an option. She is definitely deserving of this.



# DO YOU KNOW A DENTAL HYGIENE SUPERHERO?



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I worked with Natasha for over 10 year at Interior Health Dental Services. She was dedicated to helping people the communities she served. She has been working in Haida Guaii.. Natasha is an RDH who is forging new pathways to help rural and isolated communities without a dentist, access dental services in a unique way. She is the Program Supervisor at the Old Massett Dental Clinic - A Band run Non-Profrit First Nations Community Dental Clinic on the island of Haida Gwaii British Columbia.

Haida Gwaii is an archipelago in the waters off the British Columbia North Coast. It is remote and isolated and is the traditional home of the Haida people. Currently it has a population of aprox 5000 residents. It is accessible by daily 2hr flights from Vancouver or a 6-8hr ferry crossing (weather permitting) from Prince Rupert 2-3x per week.

Haida Gwaii has endured a long history of past dental trauma, including intergenerational dental trauma. This is the legacy of Residential Schools, Indian Day Schools, Military Dentists, INAC Dentists and most recently a failed relationship with UBC Dental School. It is unfathomable the amount of past dental trauma and the impact colonialism has had on the oral health of the Haida People. Natasha has made it her goal is to deliver dental service in a way that does not contribute to this legacy and instead assists and empowers her clients and their families on their healing journey

Prior to the global Covid19 pandemic Natasha had started a pilot project for managing trauma based dental fear and intergenerational dental trauma by integrating traditional indigenous healers and their modalities into the Old Massett Dental Clinic. This project was seeing promising results and was well accepted by the patients and the community. When the Covid19 Pandemic struck and this project along with all routine dental procedures was put on hold. This did not stop Natasha from using her dental knowledge and scope of practice as a Registered Dental Hygienist, to assist not only her patients but all the residents of Haida Gwaii in managing their most urgent dental needs in a compassionate and culturally safe manner.

The island of Haida Gwaii went into self-isolation in mid-March, 2020, all commercial flights were suspended and did not resume until beginning of November. Ferry travel was limited to residents returning home. Travel permits issued by the Council of the Haida Nation were required. Anyone returning from off island was required to self-isolate for 14 days. The local hospitals went into lock down, services were suspended and the doors to the ER were locked. The local physicians asked residents with non-life threatening issues, including dental issues to only come to the hospital as a last resort.

It was during this time that Natasha found herself in a situation with no dentist on the island. As a dental health professional, she did her moral and ethical duty and stepped up to assist the island residents in managing their dental emergencies. She partnered with 3 off island dentists and together in consultation with the CDHBC, local physicians and a local Nurse Practitioner developed protocol and guidelines to for a form of ""Teladentistry"" to assist island residents who were in situations of emergent dental pain and/or infection. Since most dental patients as well as their physicians were unable to determine what was a true dental emergency, Natasha



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used a consultation process to with the off island dentists she recruited and created a flow chart for herself the local physicians and nurse practitioner to use. Natasha would triage all dental emergency dental patients by phone. She would then contact one of the 3 off island dentists she was working with and given them the information on the emergency patient and their situation. The dentist would then make the decision if they would call in an Rx for the patient or direct Natasha to bring the patient into the Old Massett Dental Clinic for whatever further diagnostic information they felt they required. Often this was for an x-ray and/or a picture that was then securely emailed to the consulting dentist. The dentist would then look at the images while Natasha had the patient in the chair and direct Natasha to find out any further information from the patient they may require. In some cases, the dentist then directed Natasha to provide emergency measures within her scope of practice, such as an IRM temp filling. In other cases, the consulting dentist referred the patient to the local ER and contacted the physician on call directly to inform them of the situation and make any requests of the ER staff - such as administer IV antibiotics. This process prevented local residents from entering the ER unnecessarily, kept contact with a person experiencing a dental emergency down to a minimal, assisted physicians in their ability to treat patients with emergency dental issues, built trust between the residents of Haida Gwaii and the dental profession, increased awareness among local medical providers and physicians in the roll dental hygienists can have in increasing access to dental care and allowed for people experiencing dental pain to have remote access to a dentist when none was on the island of Haida Gwaii.

Natasha provided this level of triage from mid-March until mid-June when a practicing dentist returned to the island. During this time Natasha promoted the knowledge and skills of the dental hygiene profession to both the local medical community as well as the general public. She was featured on CBC Radio's Morning Show speaking about the experience and the roll dental hygienist's like herself can play in helping rural and isolated communities access dental care in a safe and remote way. I believe she deserves recognition because she did not hesitate to step up and use her dental hygiene knowledge and skills in a creative way to make a positive impact not only on her community, but on the dental hygiene profession in a difficult situation. I wish to recognize our hygienist and office manager Natasha for her outstanding effort during this covid pandemic. Our clinic is located in a remote northern island , on reserve at Old Massett, and Natasha, for many months, had to manage the dental needs of our community, without a dentist, on her own with only virtual support from off island dentists due to the restrictions, and a fellow CDA. Under normal circumstances, practicing in a Haida clinic, she has shown great compassion and empathy. Never have I worked with someone who regularly has delivered needed medication to the door of a patient in need, prior to dental appointments, but Natasha does that. She listens to her patients concerns, communicates in language and in a manner that is both respectful and so caring, they respond to her well. I have seen patients who performed home care with indifference become very motivated, and understand the importance of oral self care, with her educating and encouraging their efforts. Working in a band run clinic,



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she has helped to raise dental health awareness not only amongst our patients, but also amongst her fellow health providers in our community clinic, conducting workshops and being very mindful of the importance of teamwork in a small community. During this pandemic, when the clinic was shut down and the one dentist working abruptly left, she suddenly was in charge of dental emergencies, very challenging as there were strict travel restrictions at the time, so I and other dentists from afar reviewed xrays, made suggestions, and prescribed but she bore the brunt of having to handle desperate people in dental pain. She could have abandoned ship, but did not, she stayed and worked even harder, knowing how much the community needed her, a mark of her professionalism. As our office manager, and without a dentist, she also was in charge of reconfiguring our office to follow required Covid protocol, and again, she rose to the occasion, working with her team and consulting local authorities, virtual experts, but basically having to make challenging decisions on how to achieve this for the clinic in order to reopen. She dealt with scarce supply chains, difficulties getting the equipment and installers needed, all of these challenges amplified by uncertain ferry schedules, and a limited budget. Somehow, she succeeded and the clinic was reborn with new walls, new cupboards, new fans, new Covid protocols. After that, she also had the task of finding a replacement dentist, a challenge that somehow, she managed so the clinic was able to reopen. When the first dentist came, she and her team worked six days a week to try and catch up with the backlog, until all were exhausted. salute Natasha and her team for showing such professionalism and integrity through such trying times, and hope she wins your award, as she so richly deserves it.

I am a pediatric dentist. I have been working part-time in Masset dental clinic since 2018. I am writing to nominate Natasha Kellett for the superhero competition. She did an amazing job during the pandemic. There are 3 dental clinics on Haida Gwaii island. Masset dental clinic was the only clinic that was open to helping the community with dental emergencies. The full-time general dentist in Masset clinic was in Vancouver and would not answer his phone. Natasha contacted me and asked if I could help them. From March till June she triaged more than 40 patients. She would call me with the Patient's history, sending me x-rays and intraoral photos. Consulting me to see if any patient requires antibiotics, so I could call their pharmacy to prescribe antibiotics. She placed temporary filling with my approval. She sent 2 children with facial swelling to the hospital soon enough and prevented life-threatening events. She managed patients' schedules and prioritized tx until their general dentist could go back to work in June. The CDA was on maternity leave. Their dentist gave 2 days' notice on his arrival in June, and she had to continue helping and managing patients until I could get the essential worker permit at the end of July to get there. She also worked hard to make Covid protocol from scratch. The Masset clinic has 2 open operatories. I was so impressed to see that they were planning to renovate the rooms to convert them into closed operatories to make a covid safe environment. To my surprise, one closed room was available already when I arrived there.



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She is a hygienist and none of the above was in her job description. There was no direct flight to Vancouver for 9 months. There was a 2-week self-isolation policy for residents traveling back to the island. I can not imagine what would have happened to the community without her help. Her effort, courage, hard work should get appreciated. We need more people like Natasha. She is a superhero. She really deserves it.

Covid-19 left the 4,750 people of Haida Gwaii without a dentist. Fortunately, the non-profit clinic where Natasha created a program to manage intergenerational dental trauma and fear, in collaboration with traditional indigenous healers, was already running. To remotely manage emergencies Natasha and 3 off island dentists, dental regulators, physicians and a NP developed a form of teladentistry. Natasha performed pre-screening, taking x-ray and photos then implemented instructions and treatments, within a hygienist's scope of practice. This ingenious collaboration provided relief, inspired trust and eliminated congestion in the ER. Although located on the reserve, the clinic serves all residents. Interior Health service included working at a low cost clinic in Nelson and volunteering with the Dental Access Fund. In 10 years she literally drove service to underprivileged, marginalized, impoverished, ignored, drug addicted, desperate, gang involved, invisible clients, at her own expense.

I wish to nominate my colleague Natasha Kellett who is a true DENTAL HYGIENE SUPER HERO, an inspiration to all who have had the pleasure of working and networking with her. Natasha moved to Haida Gwaii to work as a clinical RDH at A Band run Non-Profit First Nations Community Dental Clinic. During this time she as adapted and acquired many rolls. She successfully advocated for the First Nations Health Authority to start providing COHI (Children's Oral Health Initiative) services to the First Nations people of Haida Gwaii. She continues to advocate for equitable access to dental care for her patients and the people who live on Haida Gwaii. She spends her own time writing letters of support for her patients to access funding through Jordan's principal and other funding sources. She had been working on a project managing trauma based dental fear and intergenerational dental trauma with traditional indigenous healers. She developed and drafted protocol for her clinic to provide safe dental during the Pandemic - including emergency care when all other forms of dental care were suspended. She successfully recruited a dentist for her clinic during the global pandemic and continues to build partnerships between her clinic and speciality service providers.

Natasha is willing to jump in wherever she is needed, providing dental assisting or administrative support when needed. Natasha collaborated with other service providers and off island dentists to provide Teladentistry when there was not dentist on the island.

Prior to moving to Haida Gwaii Natasha volunteered as an RDH, a applicant processor and a fundraiser with the TEETH Clinic in Nelson, BC as well as with the West Kootenay Dental Fund and as a volunteer RDH with the Kelowna Gospel Mission.



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Currently Natasha is also working with the Nuxalk community on the Remote Central Coast of BC, assisting them in developing their own community dental program.

I believe she deserves recognition because she always works very hard and takes pride in what she does even in the most difficult of circumstances. She makes lives better every day, and inspires the people she meets with her commitment to improving oral and overall health. Client focus, empowerment through education, accountability, leadership, integrity, respect, and compassion are all words which describe Natasha's devotion to improving oral and overall health. She makes lives better every day and goes above and beyond the call of duty. Thank you for considering her as a Superhero and acknowledging her Super Power!

I work as receptionist at our health center. Natasha is our hygienist. This past year she's gone over and above her duties as she does on a daily basis. through covid she triaged patients when we had no dentist, she contacted dentists wherever she had to for advice if she needed it and made sure all patients were taken care of. She is an amazing person and is exceptional with all patients young and old. this lady deserves to win as she is exceptionally pleasant and knows everything in our office. she's AMAZING. I would love for her to win because if anyone deserve to she does. NATASHA KELLETT ROCKS!!!



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