



Making a difference with the Chinook Project



AVC students Jason Gray, Rhonda Stone, Sarah Dixon and Leighann Diehl are shown outside Rigolet, N.L.
PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE GUARDIAN BY DR. MARTI HOPSON

Veterinary care provided for companion animals in the North

The Chinook Project was founded in 2005 by Drs. Lisa Miller (Atlantic Veterinary College) and Jane Magrath (English, UPEI) to provide free veterinary care to remote communities in the Canadian North, with the support of partners and donors.



Animal Talk

Dr. Marti Hopson

Now co-ordinated by Miller and Dr. Marti Hopson, the Chinook Project has, since 2005, served 10 different northern communities (six with follow-up visits) and ministered to over 1,000 dogs. From these coastal communities, veterinary care is normally many hundreds of kilometres away, accessible only by plane or boat.

Each summer, the Chinook Project responds to requests from northern communities and takes three or four volunteer veterinarians and vet technicians and four or five students from the AVC to spend three to 10 days in the communities providing vaccinations, wellness checks, spaying and castration surgeries and other

AT A GLANCE

Fast facts

- ▶ To learn more about the Chinook Project, see www.chinookproject.ca for blog postings from AVC students about their experiences this past summer.
- ▶ Tentative plans for the Chinook Project for summer 2015 are to travel to Natuashish and Sheshatshiu.

essential veterinary services. This past summer, two different teams of veterinarians and veterinary students went to three separate locations, Nain (second visit), Sheshatshiu and Rigolet, N.L.

Nain is the northernmost community in Labrador, with a population of approximately 1,000 people of Inuit and European descent.

Like all of the coastal towns of northern Labrador, it can only be reached by air or sea. It is part of Nunatsiavut, meaning "our beautiful land", which is a region of land of northern Labrador claimed by the Inuit and under partial autonomy and self-governance since 2005. In Nain, the Chinook team saw 27 animals for spay/neuter surgery and 81 for wellness and medical appoint-

ments. Vaccination is crucial because rabies transmitted from wildlife is a real risk in these northern communities.

Moving on to Sheshatshiu, population 1,400, the first veterinary team overlapped with the second so there were 14 people running a very busy clinic. There were four full days of clinics in Sheshatshiu, an Innu First Nations community located just outside Goose Bay. There is a need here to control the dog population, as roaming dogs can cause problems. Fighting and unwanted litters of puppies are animal welfare issues. When a female is in heat, the male dogs will form groups and can fight and injure each other or people. An increased number of roaming dogs affects humans as well, with increased incidence of dog bites and other public health issues. Eighty-six dogs received veterinary care in Sheshatshiu, including 52 spay or neuter surgeries.

Local support is crucial in all communities visited by Chinook, arranging food, accommodation, volunteer assistance with administration and a clinic facility. In Sheshatshiu for example, local organizers and the Sheshatshiu Band Council constructed a clinic for the Chinook team inside the town garage that normally houses the fire truck.

The second team next visited Rigolet, the southernmost Inuit town in the world, which is in a beautiful coastal location with a population of just 300. The Chinook team set up a clinic in the community centre, and in just 2.5 days saw 86 animals and performed 31 spay or neuter surgeries. The team also helped in a home with a serious overpopulation of cats and attended to three large working sled dog teams.

The Chinook Project would not exist without the support of our partners and donors, including local community organizers who generously provide supplies, accommodation, food and volunteers to help with administrative duties. Travel and shipping of supplies to the North is very costly, and the Chinook Project gratefully acknowledges past or current support of the Newfoundland and Labrador government and the Valley Veterinary Clinic,



AVC student Meghan Levangie and Dr. John Ruffino (AVC 2010, now practising in Newfoundland) are shown spaying a dog in Nain, N.L.
PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE GUARDIAN BY DR. MARTI HOPSON

the Rathlyn Foundation, Ann McCain Evans, the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre, Zoetis Animal Health, Proctor and Gamble, Boehringer-Ingelheim, Vetoquinol and Air Labrador.

Next month in Animal Talk: Improved animal protection legislation for P.E.I.

Dr. Marti Hopson co-ordinates the Chinook Project together with Dr. Lisa Miller. Dr. Hopson is a council member of the P.E.I. Veterinary Medical Association,

one of the member groups of the P.E.I. Companion Animal Welfare Initiative (CAWI). Animal Talk is a monthly column in The Guardian produced by CAWI, the goal of which is to improve the welfare of owned and unowned companion animals. CAWI consists of 4-H P.E.I., the P.E.I. Humane Society, SpayAid, Cat Action Team, P.E.I. Veterinary Medical Association, PEI Department of Agriculture and Forestry, and Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre at the Atlantic Veterinary College. Links to each of these groups are at gov.pe.ca/agriculture/CAWI. Readers are invited to send questions related to the well-being of owned and unowned companion animals to cawipei@gmail.com.



AVC student Rhonda Stone is shown with a patient in Rigolet.
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A happy ending



"Macadamia (right) was adopted by my brother and his family in May, and Maxx by Mom in August," says Amanda Henderson-Bolton: "My brother came up for a visit, and Macadamia came, too. He and Maxx are best buddies now. They love to steal Grampie's chair. These little guys have made two families very happy!"

PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE GUARDIAN BY AMANDA HENDERSON-BOLTON