

Leif Christensen Nurse Practitioner

Oddly enough, I didn't realize that I wanted to become a nurse until the end of my third year at Mt. Allison University where I was completing my Bachelor of Biology. This revelation came to me while watching a National Geographic documentary about a RN in rural Kenya who would travel between villages via motorcycle. At that moment I knew I wanted to combine my background in science with my desire to help others. I promptly began looking for an accelerated BSc in Nursing program, and ended up at St. Francis Xavier, where I graduated in December 2006.

From Nova Scotia, I moved to Salinas, California where I worked as a RN in an ICU- stepdown unit. After three years working with critically ill patients, I transitioned to the Emergency Department. This proved to be an invaluable experience where each shift provided an opportunity to quickly assess acuity, while contemplating which labs, imaging and medications the clinician would order. This ritual provided an integral foundation in my transition from RN to NP.

In 2013, my wife Tara and I moved back to PEI where I was fortunate enough to start the UPEI Master of Nursing program. Since graduation in May 2015, I have worked as a primary care nurse practitioner at Harbourside Health Centre (HHC) in Summerside. This clinic serves approximately 4500 patients across the health and life spectrum.

I am constantly humbled at the vast amount of information expected of a primary care NP. The workplace provides ample opportunity for lifelong learning. In the past year I have been fortunate to mentor several NP and RN students. I typically see 16 patients per day, more on Tuesdays when I do a prescription refill clinic. On Thursday afternoons I work at the Holland College Summerside campus where I help run a health clinic for students. This has proven to be a refreshing reprieve.

I want to publicly thank three special nurse practitioners who have inspired me along my journey. Sherri McKinnon has quietly and competently served rural, eastern PEI for years. Her steadfast dedication to Souris has acted as a bulwark in a sea of change. Sherri's practice is now woven into the very fabric of the community. I want to thank Melanie McCarthy who graciously mentored me while I was a student NP. Melanie helped pave the way at HHC for all future NPs. My tenure at HHC is more rewarding because of Melanie's pioneering spirit. Last but not least, I would like to thank Rebecca McCarvill, my friend and colleague at HHC for her calming presence and enduring willingness to collaborate on challenging cases.