

# Rural and Indigenous Access Program

Accessible eyecare starts here.

The Rural and Indigenous Access Program was established in 2021 with the goal of improving eye health outcomes by enhancing the **availability, accessibility, and affordability** of optometric care in rural and remote areas of British Columbia.

Recognizing the unique and often complex barriers to accessing comprehensive eye exams and dispensary services in these underserved regions, the program aims to support patients and practitioners by **bringing eye care directly to communities**. Within this program framework BCDO prioritizes continuity of care, strengthens community relationships and improves logistical coordination, while also acknowledging the service of returning optometrists.

To participate in the program, optometrists must meet the following criteria:

- 1 Licensed and in good standing with the College of Health and Care Professionals of British Columbia
- 2 Completed San'yas cultural safety training course
- 3 Have the necessary equipment to deliver optometric care outside of their regular office and provide on-site dispensing for frames and lenses
- 4 Commit to a minimum of one year of periodic service to their assigned community. This ensures stability in care delivery and fosters trust between optometrists and residents.

In 2024, 76 rural and remote communities across British Columbia were serviced with 23 optometrists delivering care, an **increase of 77%** since its inception.

To date in 2025, optometrists have provided services in over 45 communities, including five that have received multiple visits.

The Rural and Indigenous Access Program continues to address geographical, economic, and logistical challenges, with a strong commitment to equity in eye care for all British Columbians—**no matter where they live.**

