



Assistant Deputy Minister Newsletter

Indigenous Health Division
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Greetings from the Assistant Deputy Minister

It is my pleasure to present the latest edition of the Indigenous Health Division newsletter. Our team remains committed to advancing the health priorities of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities across Alberta.

Honouring Métis Heritage: Louis Riel Day & Métis Week

Louis Riel was executed in 1885 for advocating for the rights and recognition of Métis people. Today, his legacy lives on. Each year on November 16, we observe Louis Riel Day to honour his leadership and enduring impact. Métis Week runs from November 15 – 22, 2025. This week brings focus to the rich culture, history and contributions of Métis people in Alberta and across Canada. I encourage you to connect with local Métis organizations and communities to learn more and participate in a meaningful way. Here are some ways to get involved:

- **Louis Riel Walk – November 15**
Hosted by the Métis Nation of Alberta, this walk honours Louis Riel, his family, and loved ones.
- **Community Events in Edmonton**
Throughout the week, you'll find a variety of activities, including the Louis Riel commemoration, a seniors' tea, a City Hall proclamation ceremony, and more. A full list of events is available [here](#).
- **Delia Gray Gala – November 22**
This event celebrates Delia Gray, the first Provincial Elder of the Métis Nation of Alberta. For more information, please click [here](#).

Let's take this week to recognize, learn, and participate in celebrating Métis heritage and resilience.

[Annual Métis Week celebrations | Alberta.ca](#)

Honouring Indigenous Veterans: November 8

Indigenous Veterans Day, observed annually on November 8, is a time to honour the courage, sacrifice, and service of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit veterans who have served Canada in times of war and peace. From the War of 1812 to modern-day peacekeeping missions, Indigenous Peoples have played a vital role in defending our country, often facing systemic discrimination upon their return home.

Indigenous Veterans Day began in 1994 to recognize the service of Indigenous soldiers who were often overlooked. The day calls attention to their contributions and the injustices they faced. It also reflects a commitment to acknowledging their role in history and continuing the work toward equity and respect.

Let us take this opportunity to reflect, learn, and express our gratitude to Indigenous veterans and their families. Please click [here](#) to learn more about the history of Indigenous Veterans Day.



Indigenous health updates

Engaging with Indigenous partners: community visit series


Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) Lisa Higgerty recently met with Chief and Council from Frog Lake First Nation and Samson Cree Nation to discuss community health priorities and concerns. These conversations have helped strengthen future collaboration and deepen understanding of the unique health needs in each Nation.

ADM Higgerty also joined Primary Care Alberta CEO Kim Simmonds for visits to Edson Friendship Centre, Aseniwuche Winewak Nation, and Hinton Friendship Centre on October 16 and 17. These meetings served as introductory conversations on health care in Alberta and helped build a clearer understanding of community issues and concerns.


Looking ahead, ADM Higgerty will attend meetings with Siksika Nation, Fort Chipewyan Métis Nation, Mikisew Cree First Nation, and Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation. These meetings continue to play a valuable role in fostering future collaboration and strengthening our collective efforts to support communities.

Ask the advocate featuring Tony Cardinal

Can Indigenous patients access support from you even if they haven't filed an official complaint?

 **Tony Cardinal:** "Yes, Indigenous patients and families can reach out to the Indigenous Patient Safety Investigator & Advocate (IPSIA) even if you haven't made a formal complaint. The IPSIA is here to listen, support, and walk alongside you. You can share your concerns, ask questions, or get guidance about your health care experience. Support might include helping you understand your rights, connecting you with cultural or community resources, or guiding you if you decide to make a formal complaint later. You don't have to face this alone, your voice matters, and the IPSIA is here to make sure it is heard and respected."

How do you ensure privacy and confidentiality during the complaint process?

 **Tony Cardinal:** "In my role as the Indigenous patient safety investigator and advocate, I work to protect your privacy and keep your information safe. Everything you share is confidential, and nothing is shared without your permission. Your personal or medical information is protected under Alberta's Health Information Act, the Access to Information Act and the Protection of Privacy Act. This means you can speak openly and safely, I am here to support you without judgment."

* Safety Note: While conversations are private, there are times when safety is the most important concern. If there is talk of immediate harm to yourself, others, or a child/vulnerable person, the IPSIA must reach out to the right supports to make sure everyone stays safe.

Stay tuned for our next issue of Ask the Advocate! If there is something you'd like to ask Tony about his role, please submit your questions to IndigenousHealth@gov.ab.ca. Concerns regarding experiences in receiving health care can be submitted by emailing info@albertahealthadvocates.ca or by calling the Health Advocate line at [780-422-1812](tel:780-422-1812). You can read more about the Indigenous Patient Safety Investigator and Advocate on alberta.ca.

Alberta health news

Supporting Indigenous health and wellness: a new era of care

Premier Danielle Smith's new health care mandates emphasize improving access and outcomes for all Albertans, including Indigenous communities across the province. Several initiatives directly address the unique needs and priorities of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit:

- **Culturally safe primary care:** Through the Modernizing Alberta's Primary Health Care System initiative, the government is committed to ensuring health services for Indigenous Peoples are culturally safe, respectful, and appropriate. This includes working with communities to improve health outcomes and build trust in the health system.
- **Rural Health Action Plan:** Recognizing the challenges faced in rural and remote areas, including many Indigenous communities, the plan aims to [address rural and remote health challenges](#) such as access to health care professionals.
- **Recovery-oriented mental health and addiction services:** Five of Alberta's 11 new [recovery communities](#) are being developed in partnership with Indigenous communities. These centres will provide culturally informed support for individuals pursuing recovery, with additional youth mental wellness centres planned in Calgary, Fort McMurray, Medicine Hat, and Edmonton.
- **Compassionate Intervention Act:** The Minister of Mental Health and Addiction will work closely with the Minister of Indigenous Relations and First Nations and Métis communities to implement this new recovery-oriented [approach to substance use and addiction](#), ensuring it reflects community values and needs.

These initiatives reflect a broader commitment to reconciliation and equity in health care, aiming to make services more accessible, responsive, and inclusive for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit across Alberta.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the new health care mandates.



Grants

Ethnocultural and Anti-Racism Grants

The Government of Alberta is supporting community-led initiatives that celebrate cultural diversity and address racism through the Ethnocultural and Anti-Racism Grant Programs. These programs fund initiatives that promote cultural understanding, reduce discrimination, and strengthen connections among diverse communities.

Up to \$50,000 is available for initiatives that create opportunities to build connections with ethnocultural and Indigenous groups, and up to \$15,000 will go toward projects that celebrate diversity. The Anti-Racism Grant Program helps communities build capacity to combat discrimination and address racism. Up to \$10,000 will support initiatives that both educate people living in Alberta, and build organizational capacity to support anti-racism work. Up to \$5,000 will go to projects that raise awareness of racism and its impacts.

Applications are open until December 19. Click [here](#) for more information.

Emergency Treatment Fund – 2025 call for proposals

Health Canada has launched the 2025 national call for proposals under the Emergency Treatment Fund (ETF) to support municipalities and Indigenous communities across Canada. This time-limited funding aims to address urgent and immediate needs related to substance use and overdose, as defined by the communities.

The ETF supports culturally-relevant, trauma-informed, and evidence-based programs and services. Priority will be given to urgent, financially feasible and project-ready proposals that address the overdose crisis in communities across the country.

Eligible applicants include:

- First Nations
- Inuit communities
- Métis governing bodies
- Modern Treaty Holders and Self-Governing Nations
- National and regional Indigenous organizations that are legally registered or incorporated not-for-profits
- Not-for-profit Indigenous associations, organizations, and health authorities

Click [here](#) to learn more and apply.



Community resource

The Recovery Capital Conference

From September 23 to 25, Calgary hosted the Recovery Capital Conference, drawing over 2,200 attendees from across Canada to explore innovative strategies and solutions in mental health, addiction, and recovery.

A key focus was the Alberta Recovery Model, which continues to gain national recognition as a leading framework for recovery-oriented care. Attendees participated in impactful sessions, including a panel on compassionate intervention. The panel emphasized the importance of timely, compassionate care for individuals most affected by substance use disorders. Participants also heard directly from clients of the newly opened Calgary Recovery Community, who shared important insights from their early experiences of accessing holistic care.

The conference concluded with a strong sense of unity and commitment to making evidence-based, recovery-oriented care accessible to all Albertans facing mental health or addiction challenges. Booklets outlining the Alberta Recovery Model were available throughout the event and remain accessible [here](#).

Ensuring the continuation of Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan coverage for parentless children

In the past, a child could be without their Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan (AHCIP) coverage if their parents passed away and legal guardianship was not promptly submitted. In response to concerns raised about formal guardianship sometimes taking longer to complete for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, Primary and Preventative Health Services has modified internal registration practices to ensure the continuation of AHCIP coverage for parentless children.

If you or someone you know is experiencing or has experienced Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan coverage issues, please reach out to hipreg@gov.ab.ca to reinstate coverage for children or initiate reimbursement for bills accrued while coverage was suspended.



Indigenous data access

Primary and Preventative Health Services works directly with First Nations and Métis partners to help them access health data on topics like illness rates, hospital visits and medication use. They also offer analytical support to help communities tell their own data stories, such as the [First Nation health status report](#).

For more information, email Health Analytics at health.analyticsrequests@gov.ab.ca.



Recipe of the month – Harman’s lentil soup (Daal)

This month’s recipe was submitted by Harman who is a part of our programs and data team! Any dishes we should try? We’d love to hear about it! With your permission, we’ll feature it here so others can enjoy it too. Share it with us using the contact info below!

Ingredients

¾ cup red split lentils
¾ cup husk-less split mung beans
8 cups water
2.5 spoons of salt (teaspoons)
2.5 spoons of ground turmeric
2 tablespoons unsalted butter (Substitute: neutral cooking oil such as canola oil or a mix of butter and oil)
2 teaspoons cumin
1/3 white onion, diced
3 cloves garlic, peeled and diced
1 small piece ginger, peeled and diced (equivalent in size to 1 garlic clove)
1 sprig green onion, diced
1 Roma tomato, diced
2 green chilies, diced (adjust to taste)
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 teaspoon ground red chilli (adjust to taste)
1 sprig of cilantro, chopped (optional)



1. Measure lentils and add to a mixing bowl. Wash the lentils in water 2-3 times to remove potential grit.
2. Place washed lentils and water in a large boiling pot and bring to a boil for 10-12 minutes. Once boiling, bring to a medium heat to continue a rolling boil.
3. At the 5–6-minute mark, add the turmeric and salt to the pot of boiling lentils.
4. In a medium frying pan on medium heat, add the butter to melt. Once melted, add the cumin to butter and sauté for 1 minute. This will bloom the spice and permeate the butter.
5. Add the onion, garlic, ginger, and green onions, and sauté for 1-2 minutes. Add tomatoes, green chilis, black pepper and red chili and sauté until combined.
6. Add the cooked and seasoned vegetable mix (known as “tharka”, pronounced “thaar-kaa”) to the pot of boiling lentils. This will season the lentils. Boil for 2-3 minutes and stir to combine. Garnish with cilantro, if desired.

Directions

Notes

- The lentil soup is two components – boiled lentils and a seasoned/sauteed vegetable mix (known as “tharka”, pronounced “thaar-kaa”).
- The final product is a soup-like daal. It is best served with basmati rice and plain yogurt, or with naan bread but can be eaten on its own.
- The recipe makes 4-5 servings, and it can be frozen if desired. To reheat, add ½ cup of water and defrost the frozen lentil soup/daal and reheat in a pot.

Closing remarks

As we look ahead, we remain committed to working alongside community partners to advance First Nations, Métis and Inuit health priorities and celebrate the diverse cultural perspectives that strengthen communities. Your engagement and collaboration are invaluable, and we appreciate the opportunity to share updates and progress with you. We look forward to continuing this journey together.



Contact Information

If there are any initiatives you would like to receive updates on, please reach out to us directly.

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