



# Assistant Deputy Minister Newsletter

Indigenous Health Division  
Volume 3, Issue 3  
April 2026

## Greetings from the Assistant Deputy Minister

As spring comes into full bloom, I am delighted to share the April 2026 issue of the Indigenous Health Division's newsletter with you.

We continue to support the Alberta government's commitment to incorporating First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives into health care initiatives. Our division remains dedicated to working towards the goal of closing the gaps Indigenous patients and their families experience within the health care system.

The recent Budget 2026 announcement includes investments to strengthen Indigenous primary health care across Alberta. If passed, this funding would support culturally safe, community-led initiatives, including physician services, patient navigation, and prevention and screening programs, with a focus on improving health outcomes for Indigenous patients and families across Alberta.

In this issue, you will find updates on the division's Indigenous health initiatives, recent news, and additional resources. I look forward to continuing to share updates and opportunities with the communities we serve.

### Updates from the Indigenous Health Division

#### Upcoming events

- **Blackfoot Confederacy Tribal Council** will have the Annual Protocol Agreement Meeting with the Premier in April 2026. The Chiefs of **Siksika Nation**, **Piikani Nation**, and the **Blood Tribe** will meet with the Premier and Ministers to discuss a variety of topics.
- Our next quarterly meeting of the First Nations Health Director Advisory Committee will be hosted on April 16, 2026. The Committee provides expert guidance to government and health agencies, with the aim of improving health outcomes through culturally safe care.
- Red Dress Day is a day to honour and raise awareness for missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, two-spirit, and gender diverse peoples (MMIWG2S+). This important occasion is observed on May 5, 2026, and we encourage everyone to take part by showing their support. We encourage you to wear red or hang a dress in your home or workplace as a sign of solidarity. To learn more about the history and significance of Red Dress Day, please visit the website [here](#).

#### Discussing Indigenous health priorities

- In March 2026, we visited **Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement** to discuss primary care mobile clinics and culturally driven health services.
- **Mikisew Cree First Nation**, **Fort McKay First Nation**, and the **Nunee Board Society** met with the Division in March 2026 to share about the unique challenges pertaining to remote areas, non-emergent transportation, cancer rates, and X-rays access.
- In late March, we also met with counterparts and stakeholders in New Brunswick and Ontario to learn more about innovative approaches from across Canada.
- We continue to engage with Indigenous partners on identified health priorities with recent highlights on supporting Indigenous midwifery and Indigenous Patient Navigators. These engagements have included meeting with First Nations, Metis Settlements, and grassroots organizations.



*Meeting with Horizon Health Network*

## Addressing Indigenous hair practices in health care settings

- What we heard from community members about the incidences of improper hair cutting and handling within health care facilities is concerning. There is a need for clear guidance that honours the cultural significance of hair. We will be engaging with Indigenous communities and health care partners to better understand experiences, concerns, and cultural protocols to inform appropriate, respectful approaches within health care settings.

# INDIGENOUS HAIR CUTTING IN HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

## LEARNING

The Indigenous Health Division is looking to grow our understanding of the cultural significance of hair for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.

Recognizing the diverse and unique identities of Indigenous Peoples, we welcome learnings from across the expanse of Indigeneity.

## GUIDING

These learnings will guide our ongoing work with health care stakeholders in developing culturally appropriate hair cutting and handling practices for Indigenous patients in health care facilities.

## IMPROVING

This work aims to increase knowledge of Indigenous cultures in the health care system, with the goal of improving care and experiences for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit patients.

If you would like to share your knowledge or experiences to help guide future directions, please email us at [indigenoushealth@gov.ab.ca](mailto:indigenoushealth@gov.ab.ca).

## Advancing health through Indigenous-led primary care

- We are seeking to engage with Indigenous communities, Indigenous organizations, and health system partners to answer the question “what is Indigenous-led primary care?”
- Our focus is on Indigenous leadership in the design, delivery, and governance of primary health care to support the co-development of an Indigenous-led primary care model for Alberta.
- If you are interested in participating in this conversation, please reach out to us at: [IndigenousHealth@gov.ab.ca](mailto:IndigenousHealth@gov.ab.ca).

## Developing the Organizational Learning Indigenous Cultural Competency Toolkit

- The Organizational Learning Indigenous Cultural Competency Toolkit is being developed to support health care providers in building the knowledge and skills needed to deliver culturally meaningful, safe, and relevant care to Indigenous patients and families across Alberta.
- We are starting to collaborate with communities and partners to validate culturally grounded updates to the Toolkit. Engagement will also help ensure the content reflects diverse Indigenous experiences, supports culturally safe learning, and can be utilized across the health system.
- We have heard clearly from patients, families, communities, and health care providers that the Toolkit is needed.
- If you are interested in contributing your experience and expertise, please contact us at: [IndigenousHealth@gov.ab.ca](mailto:IndigenousHealth@gov.ab.ca).

## Funding Indigenous health care

- The [Indigenous Patient Navigator Grant Program](#) has allocated \$7.6 million over three years (2024-2027) to [18 recipients](#) across Alberta, all of whom are now beginning the final year of the grant term. A new round of funding for this program will be open for applications this summer.
- The [Bilateral Indigenous Patient Navigator Grant Program](#) has awarded \$6.3 million over three years (2025-2028) to [14 recipients](#) in the last year. These projects are moving into Year 2 of the program.
- The [Indigenous Primary Health Care Innovation Fund](#) has allocated \$20 million over two years (2024-2026) to a total of [14 recipients](#) across three calls. Successful grant recipients from Calls 2 and 3 are now entering their final year of implementation.

## Modernizing primary care: Town hall series

- On March 31, 2026, the second Indigenous [Modernizing of Alberta's Primary Health Care System \(MAPS\)](#) Assistant Deputy Minister Townhall was held, a session dedicated to sharing updates and strengthening transparency across the health system.
- In response to some questions and feedback received from the December 2025 townhall, the March 2026 town hall centred on providing clear information about the Ministry of Hospital and Surgical Health Services and their work related to Indigenous health.
- The next Indigenous MAPS town hall is planned for **June 2026** with the Ministry of Assisted Living and Social Services. Those interested in attending or receiving updates are welcome to contact the Indigenous Health Division at [IndigenousHealth@gov.ab.ca](mailto:IndigenousHealth@gov.ab.ca).

## Data sharing agreements pilot program

- To inform key health decisions and collaboration, a data sharing agreement pilot program was designed. Letters of introduction have been sent to four communities to establish collaborative data sharing agreements that address broader community needs beyond health priorities.
- We are now initiating discussions on the agreements. Introductory meetings took place with **Mikisew Cree First Nation** in July 2025, and with **Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation** in March 2026.



## Accessing Indigenous health data

- The Ministry of Primary and Preventative Health Services works directly with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit partners to provide access to 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](mailto:health.analyticsrequests@gov.ab.ca).



## Health news in Alberta

- [Strengthening Indigenous health care access](#)
- [Measles Outbreak prompts Standing Measles Exposure Advisory for South Zone](#)
- [Measles Outbreak prompts Standing Exposure Advisory for areas of North Zone](#)
- [Albertans help shape disability assistance program](#)
- [Budget 2026: Focused on strengthening acute care](#)
- [Building cardiac care in southern Alberta](#)
- [More Albertans connected to primary care](#)
- [Public alert for potential measles exposure](#)
- [One click closer to continuing care](#)
- [Subscribe to Public Health Advisories](#)

## Closing remarks

We are committed to working alongside community partners to advance First Nations, Métis and Inuit health priorities and celebrate the diverse cultural perspectives. Your engagement and collaboration are invaluable, and we look forward to continuing to connect with you through future newsletters.



### Contact Information

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

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