



Assistant Deputy Minister Newsletter

Indigenous Health Division
Volume 3, Issue 4
May 2026

Greetings from the Assistant Deputy Minister

As we move into May and the days get warmer, I am pleased to share the latest issue of the Indigenous Health Division's newsletter with you.

The Indigenous Health Division continues to support the Government of Alberta's commitment to include First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives into health care initiatives. Our work remains focused on advancing culturally safe approaches and addressing the gaps Indigenous patients and their families experience within the health care system.

In this issue, you will find updates on Indigenous-led primary care, the cultural training toolkit, the Indigenous Patient Navigator Grant Program, community engagement, answers to your questions from the Advocate and an opportunity to share your experience accessing the Advocate's services. I look forward to continuing to share information, progress, and opportunities, and to strengthening our relationships with the communities we serve.

Updates from the Indigenous Health Division

Strengthening relationships through community engagement

- In April, we partnered with the **Circle of Wisdom Elders and Seniors Centre** in Calgary to listen to and learn from Indigenous Elders and traditional knowledge holders on what they want health care providers to know about working with Indigenous patients. This engagement is part of a larger series of engagements that will contribute to the development of the Organizational Learning Indigenous Cultural Competency Toolkit to support health care providers.
- We visited with Indigenous communities to discuss their specific health priorities. This included visits to:
 - **Samson Cree Nation**, to better understand their approach to delivering coordinated health and wellness services and to discuss data and information sharing.
 - **Chiniki First Nation**, to learn from their Indigenous midwifery initiatives.
 - **Siksika Health Services**, to share updates on a range of community-based health services.
 - **Elbow River Healing Lodge** in Calgary, to hear lessons from an Indigenous-led clinic, while also welcoming our counterparts from the government in the Northwest Territories as they pursue a learning journey to advance Indigenous-led health services.
- Also in April, **Siksika Elder Treffery Deerfoot** led a teaching for Indigenous Health Division staff on the cultural importance of tobacco and tobacco tying. This teaching helped strengthen our cultural awareness and respect for Indigenous traditions.
- We also continued engagement with Health Sub-Table working groups with the **Blackfoot Confederacy Tribal Council**, the **Métis Nation of Alberta**, **Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council** and **Stoney Nakoda Tsuut'ina Tribal Council**. The focus of these meetings is to collaboratively find ways to make progress towards health priorities identified by these communities.

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 does Indigenous-led primary care look like to you?"
- Indigenous leadership is a key priority 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.

Have you experienced a difficult or unsafe health care situation and accessed the Indigenous Patient Safety Investigator and Advocate (IPSIA) service?

Your experience matters! We want to hear from you about how the IPSIA service is working.

What's involved?

- A 30-minute virtual conversation
- Share your experience and thoughts on how IPSIA can best support Indigenous patients

When?

- A time that works for you!
- Interviews ongoing until **mid-June 2026**

Who is invited?

- First Nations, Métis, and Inuit patients who have used the IPSIA service

Why participate?

- Your perspectives will help evaluate IPSIA to strengthen culturally safe care across Alberta
- Your story will be heard with respect, care, and confidentiality

Interested in participating or would like more information?

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Ethics protocol ID:
HREBA.CHC-25-0079

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.
- The need for additional educational opportunities has been heard from patients, families, communities, and health care providers.
- Collaboration with communities and partners is underway to validate culturally grounded updates to the Toolkit, ensuring content reflects diverse Indigenous experiences, supports culturally safe learning, and can be utilized across the health system.
- If you are interested in contributing your experience and expertise, please contact us at: IndigenousHealth@gov.ab.ca.

Reviewing Indigenous Patient Navigator roles and responsibilities

- The [Indigenous Patient Navigator Grant Program](#) initially launched in 2024-2025 to provide financial support to Indigenous communities and Indigenous-serving organizations to recruit and retain Indigenous Navigators.
- Indigenous Navigators assist Indigenous patients and their families in overcoming barriers to accessing health care services, and are now actively working in many facilities throughout the health care system.
- A comprehensive jurisdictional scan of Indigenous Patient Navigator roles and similar positions is underway across Canada and internationally (e.g., the United States, New Zealand, Australia), with the goal of

strengthening consistency and quality in Indigenous Patient Navigation and care transitions across Alberta's health system.

Modernizing primary care: Town hall series

- The next Indigenous Modernizing Alberta's Primary Health Care System (MAPS) ADM town hall is being 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.



Ask the advocate featuring Tony Cardinal

What has been your biggest learning or insight gained through your work as the Indigenous Patient Safety Investigator and Advocate?



Tony Cardinal: "The biggest learning has been that when individuals are given the time, space, and respect to share their story without judgment, deeper concerns often begin to surface. It is not always just about the immediate issue, but about trust, past experiences, and hesitation in engaging with the system. Creating a space where people feel safe to speak openly is where meaningful advocacy begins."

How does the Indigenous Patient Safety Investigator and Advocate measure the effectiveness of the complaint resolution process?



Tony Cardinal: "While data and outcomes provide one lens, effectiveness is ultimately measured by the individual's experience. When someone feels heard, understood, and supported through their health care journey, that reflects a meaningful outcome. In many cases, taking the time to build trust and provide clarity is what defines whether the process has been effective."

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.

Honouring Red Dress Day

- [Red Dress Day](#) is observed annually on May 5 to honour and remember missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, two-spirit, and gender-diverse people (MMIWG2S+). This day is a powerful reminder of the ongoing impacts of violence and systemic inequities and underscores the importance of our collective responsibility to advance culturally safe services for Indigenous Peoples. We encourage you to wear red or hang a dress in your home or workplace as a sign of solidarity.
- Learn more about the [Alberta MMIWG Roadmap](#) developed to guide government initiatives to address violence and increase safety and economic security of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.



Aboriginal Alert

- [Aboriginal Alert](#) is an Indigenous-led, non-profit organization dedicated to helping First Nations, Métis, and Inuit families find their missing loved ones by sharing information quickly and widely. Through its national platform, families can publish missing-person reports that are immediately distributed to members within a 100-kilometre radius and amplified on the [organization's website](#) and [social media channels](#).



Connect to community resources

Indigenous Support Line

- The service has had positive outcomes as it continues to assist connecting First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities to essential health care supports. It is also a crucial component to addressing broader accessibility challenges within the health care system.
- Please share information about the Indigenous Support Line with your families and communities. Indigenous health care advisors can be reached at 1-844-944-4744, or through Health Link at 811.



Health news in Alberta

- [Strengthening cancer care for Albertans](#)
- [Modern health centre to replace Cardston hospital](#)
- [First Indigenous-led recovery community opens](#)
- [Expanding health care access for Albertans](#)
- [Alberta covers first tubeless insulin pump](#)
- [Public alert for measles exposure](#)
- [Public alert for potential measles exposure](#)



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.

Closing remarks

We remain committed to working alongside First Nations, Métis and Inuit community partners to advance Indigenous health priorities and to celebrate their diverse cultural perspectives. Your engagement and collaboration are invaluable, and we look forward to continuing this journey together. If you would like to share your knowledge or experiences with the Indigenous Health Division to help guide our work, please feel free to reach out to us directly.



Contact Information

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

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