

Wisdom Council

2022-23 Annual Report



**Alberta Health
Services**

Wisdom Council

MESSAGE FROM AHS



It has been a great pleasure to connect with the AHS Wisdom Council and Elder Circle through 2022 and 2023. There has been an incredible amount of great work and input from the Council that has made a difference within AHS and for the Indigenous peoples living in Alberta. We have achieved much in the past year.

The Council's input and guidance as AHS implemented the 1-844 Indigenous Support Line has been invaluable and has had an immediate and positive impact. Launched first in the North Zone in May 2022, it spread to the South Zone and Central Zone over the spring and summer of 2023. Patient satisfaction is at 100 per cent – an almost unheard of achievement – and callers to the support line tell us in their evaluations that they feel heard and respected by the Listeners. It has received accolades from outside the organization too, winning two national awards and one provincial award for patient experience.

Council also guided us through the implementation of the Patient Access to Indigenous Spiritual Ceremony Policy which ensures patient requests for ceremony can and will be accommodated consistently across AHS facilities.

It is achievements like these that will continue to break down barriers and support our staff to better meet the spiritual and cultural wellness needs of Indigenous peoples.

I understand and appreciate the value the Council brings to AHS and look forward to expanding and deepening our partnership in the months ahead. There is a great deal we still need to do and I look forward to the Council's ongoing involvement and advice.

Mauro Chies
President/Chief Executive Officer

OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS



Front Row: Paul Daniels, Casey Eagle Speaker (Co-Chair), Cheryl Sheldon (Co-Chair), Noreen MacAteer, Meeka Otway
Middle Row: Patsy Campbell, Bridget Fanta, Carola Cunningham, Connie Morin, Beatrice Little Moustache, Calvin Badger, Shannon McQuillan, Cody Twinn
3rd Row: Adam North Peigan (Advisor), Wally Sinclair, Alvina Yellowknee, Emil Durocher, Charles Weasel Head, Dolly Creighton
Missing: Rebecca Morin, Donna Fayant

MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS



This has been a year of great change and challenge within the Wisdom Council and Elder Circle and we want to acknowledge and thank each member of the Council for their commitment and participation in our meetings and conversations.

This year, we celebrated Wally Sinclair as he shifted from his role as Co-Chair to become a member of the Elder Circle. Wally is a long-term member of Council and has contributed greatly over the years. We are grateful for his continued involvement.

We said farewell to some of our support and leadership staff which has been difficult and we look forward to working closely with those who are new to our Council including five new members who joined us in the fall/winter of 2022.

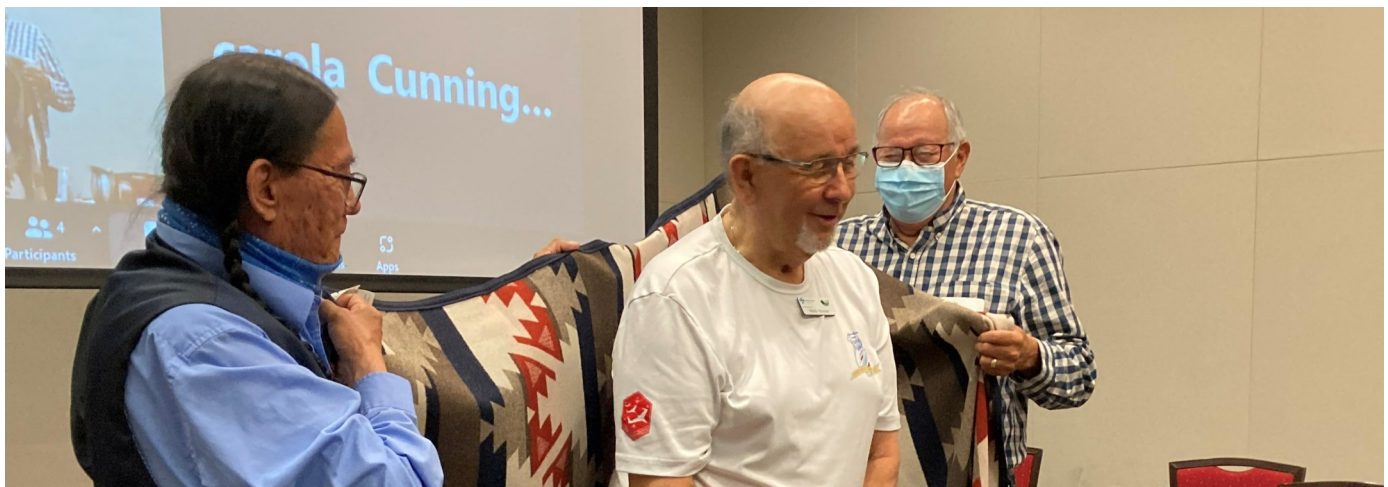
Amid the challenges, however, there has been great work completed by this Council and we have supported AHS to implement some important initiatives which our outlined in this report.

We are looking forward to the work ahead including providing our voice and the voice of our people to decisions and strategies to address racism within AHS and to continue to guide the organization as it implements the *Patient Access to Indigenous Spiritual Ceremony Policy*.

As co-chairs of the Council, we would like to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to all our members who are steadfast in their desire to improve the experience of Indigenous peoples when they access the healthcare services they need to stay well.

Casey Eagle Speaker
Co-Chair

Cheryl Sheldon
Co-Chair



Wally Sinclair is blanketed by Calvin Badger and Charles Weasel Head as he transitions from the Co-Chair to the Elders Circle *From left to right: Calvin Badger, Wally Sinclair and Charles Weasel Head.*

INDIGENOUS SUPPORT LINE



Through advocacy and efforts of the Wisdom Council that began in 2022, the toll-free Indigenous Support Line is now available in the South, North and Central Zones with plans to expand the support line to the Indigenous Peoples of the Calgary and Edmonton Zones in 2024. This project was supported and endorsed by the Wisdom Council as essential to Indigenous peoples accessing appropriate health services in Alberta.

Over the past year, the 1-800 support line has been recognized with numerous awards for innovation and patient experience. Please see sidebar.

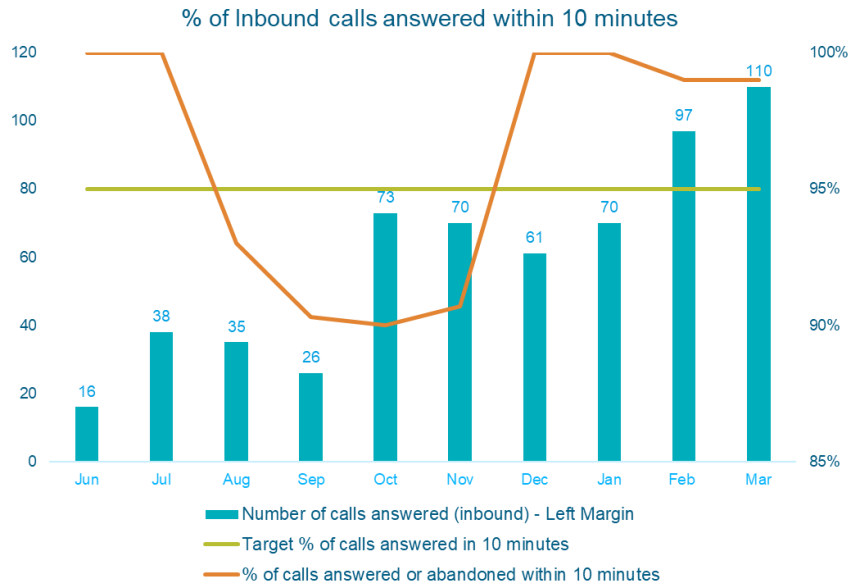
For more information, you can:
Call **1-844-944-4744**

Visit [Indigenous Support Line | Alberta Health Services](#)

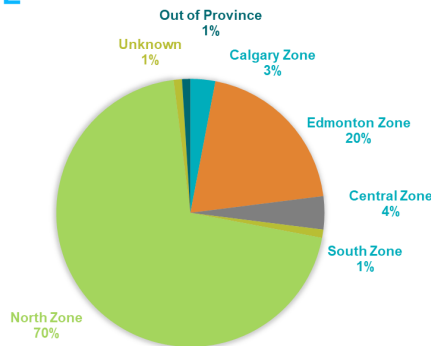
The Line is an innovation in equity and patient experience

- 2023 Patient Experience Award (provincial)
- 2023 Healthcare Excellence Award Canada—Virtual Care Award (national)
- 2022 i4 innovation in Diversity & Equity Award (national)
- Approached by other jurisdictions to share learnings

AH'S efforts to ensure optimal Line staffing between Aug & Nov improved response times. The Line is meeting its target response as calls increase.



CALLER ZONE (N=37)



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

For 2022-23, Wisdom Council moved ahead many milestone activities. We:

- Finalized Indigenous Spiritual Ceremony Protocol Policy was finalized and is now available in all AHS sites. For more information [Patient Access to Indigenous Spiritual Ceremony policy HCS-304 \(ahsnet.ca\)](https://www.ahsnet.ca/Patient-Access-to-Indigenous-Spiritual-Ceremony-policy-HCS-304)
- Implemented the Indigenous Support Line (1-844-944-4744) that was introduced and now available in the North, South and Central Zones.
- Reviewed the job description of the WC Advisor role and the WC Co-Chairs were involved in the interviews and selection process. Advisor now in place to support the important work of the Wisdom Council.
- Recruited five (5) new members with on-boarding and orientation. We welcomed Alvina Yellowknee, Bridget Fanta, Cody Twinn, Rebecca Morin, and Shannon McQuillan to their new roles.
- Revised our Terms of Reference, incorporating a definition for Elder and other key cultural references. It is expected to be approved at the next gathering of Wisdom Council in September 2023.
- The Calgary and Edmonton Indigenous Health Action Plan (IHAP) ReconciliAction committee met regularly with the Wisdom Council to provide updates and progress. Wisdom Council was instrumental in assisting with developing a framework to provide advice and direction to ensure culturally appropriate guidance was included in the plan.
- The Wisdom Council participated and provided direction on activities planned for National Indigenous People's month held annually every June. The WC Co-Chairs provided the opening and closing remarks to commemorate this important event celebrated by all at AHS.



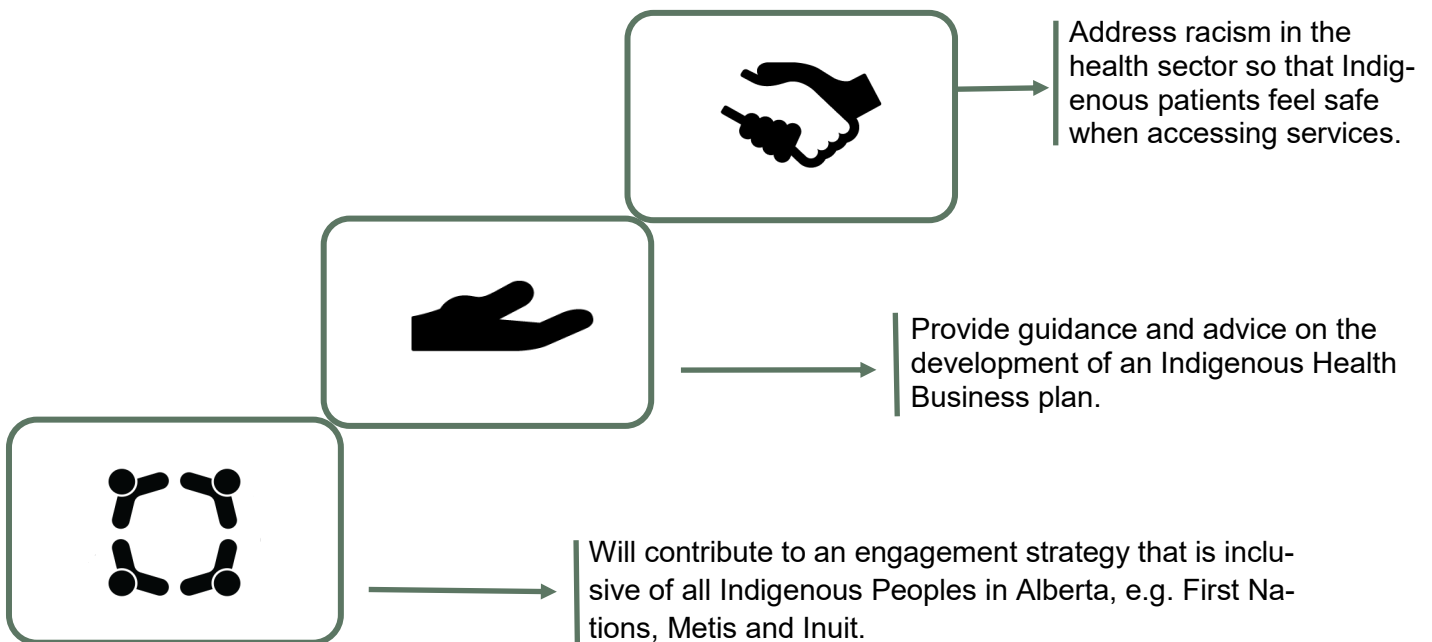
Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park located in Siksika, Alberta.

THE FINAL WORD

A LOOK AHEAD

The Wisdom Council will without fail be a strong advocate for Indigenous People to address equitable health service delivery for Indigenous People in Alberta communities. The Council continues to provide feedback, advice, guidance and recommendations on the development and implementation of culturally appropriate and innovative health service delivery for Indigenous Peoples. The WC will consistently work to increase cultural competency within AHS to improve access to culturally relevant care for the Indigenous People of Alberta.

Wisdom Council commits



GET INVOLVED

Make a difference to the health and well-being of your community by sharing your thoughts and ideas with AHS. You can:

- Email wisdomcouncil@ahs.ca
- Phone 1.877.275.8830
- Provide input on various healthcare topics online, at [Together4Health](#)

