

# Oldman River

## 2018-19 Annual Report



Oldman River  
Health Advisory Council

Healthy Albertans.  
Healthy Communities.  
**Together.**

## Message from Alberta Health Services Board of Directors

Alberta Health Services values Advisory Council members as volunteers, leaders and partners in healthcare planning. With every year that passes, I see how our Councils continue to grow and expand. They challenge us and ask really great questions, they share the AHS story with their communities, their families and neighbours – helping Albertans everywhere to better understand our complex healthcare system – and they advise AHS on our planning, programs and services.



*Dr. Brenda Hemmelgarn*

We have a number of long-time members leaving Councils in 2019-20 and we would like to acknowledge their hard work, dedication and passion. While we will miss them, we also know it's important for new voices to join the conversation and we look forward to building new partnerships, relationships and connections. We hope our departing members will continue to share their advice as members of the public and share their knowledge of the healthcare system.

This year, we added 23 new members to the Advisory Council family, and we also added a new Council. We were pleased to support and nurture the development of the Sexual Orientation Gender Identity & Expression (SOGIE) Provincial Advisory Council.

Members have made many contributions in their local areas, and you'll learn more about them in this report. Here are a few general examples from across the province over the past year:

- **Evolution of the Wisdom Council:** new Terms of Reference will guide the work of the Wisdom Council and includes creation of an Elder Circle which gives an enhanced role to Elders in helping to advise AHS on programs and services to best meet the needs of Indigenous people.
- **Connect Care:** a number of members have joined the patient advisory committees.
- **Supporting more addiction and mental health services:** many Councils held information sessions and highlighted the importance of services; their efforts helped support the development of Edmonton's new Access 24/7 Addiction and Mental Health Clinic and enhance awareness on services and access.
- **Expanding relationships:** connecting with the LGBTQ2S+ community through the new SOGIE PAC, meeting with municipal leaders, and holding meetings at Métis Settlements.
- **Connecting with Albertans through [Community Conversations](#):** Health Advisory Councils partnered with AHS to host 12 events across the province, where Albertans shared their views about challenges and solutions to healthcare issues.
- **Highlighting top concerns:** based on feedback from their communities, all Councils advised us on local concerns. AHS tracks and responds to concerns at each Council meeting.
- **Participation in Community Engagement Committee of the Board meetings:** various Council Chairs joined the conversation and shared ideas.

Member satisfaction is important to us, and it was gratifying to learn through the Annual Satisfaction Survey that our members are feeling generally satisfied in their roles. They've also said there's a need for more clarity on their role, and we're listening. We have begun work on an overarching Health Advisory Council review to address some of the gaps, and to ensure all our members fully understand their role.

On behalf of the AHS Board of Directors, our leadership team, and our workforce, thank you for your passion and time. We look forward to continuing to work with you on improving healthcare for Albertans.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brenda Hemmelgarn  
Vice Chair, Board of Directors; Chair, AHS Community Engagement Committee of the Board

## Message from the Chair Oldman River Health Advisory Council

It is my pleasure to present the Chairman's Report on behalf of the Oldman River Health Advisory Council (ORHAC) for 2018-19.



*Brad Gillespie*

It was another constructive year for the Oldman River Health Advisory Council. With a year of relative stability in terms of membership and Alberta Health Services staff, Council was able to focus on developing and executing our Council work plan this year. Although we did lose two Council members to medical school this year, we wish our departed members well, and are confident they will both make great physicians.

ORHAC identified raising our profile in our communities as a priority this year. To that end, we made presentations to municipal governments through the Southwest Alberta Mayors and Reeves meeting, discussions and presentations to service groups, and in February, participated in Community a Conversation in Lethbridge with citizens of our Council area and AHS leadership. Intended to support the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of AHS, this conversation identified a number of issues and opportunities for healthcare in Southwestern Alberta.

We continue to welcome members of the public to our meetings during the standing public comments portion of our agenda. We have begun to notice increased attendance by members of the public at our meetings, and hope this trend continues. Additionally, we have continued to receive presentations from stakeholder groups, medical associations, along with increased involvement with supporting medical practitioners and patient and family support groups.

Over the year ORHAC meetings took place around the region. In addition, we have begun a recruitment drive to replace those members who are completing their terms this year. We would like to extend our heartiest appreciation to those members finishing their time with Council, and wish them good fortune in the future.

We certainly would not be able to do any of these things without the support and encouragement of our AHS South Zone leadership. We appreciate our relationships with AHS staff and would like to thank them for their support. ORHAC anticipates continuing these relationships and is eager to move forward in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

Brad Gillespie  
Chair, Oldman River Health Advisory Council

## About our Council

### 2018-2019 Council Members

#### Current Members

Brad	Gillespie (Chair)	Lethbridge
Lorraine	Neal (Vice Chair)	Lethbridge
Fred	Bosma	Lethbridge
Dick	Burnham	Pincher Creek
Geraldine (Gerri)	Eagle Speaker	Cardston
Clifford (Cliff)	Elle	Pincher Creek
Georgette	Fox	Cardston
Brian	Hammond	Pincher Creek
Henry	Heinen	Picture Butte
Emma	Hulit	Milk River
Dr. Barbara	Lacey	Lethbridge
Wilma	Mulder	Lethbridge

#### Past Members

Ryaan	El-Andari	Lethbridge
Sanowar	Hossain	Lethbridge
Lauren	Williams	Lethbridge



*Back row left to right: Lorraine Neal (Vice Chair), Wilma Mulder, Fred Bosma  
Front row left to right: Emma Hulit, Brad Gillespie (Chair), Dick Burnham*

*Missing: Ryaan El-Andari, Clifford Elle, Brian Hammond, Henry Heinen, Georgette Fox,  
Dr. Barbara Lacey, Lauren Williams, Sanowar Hossain, Gerri Eagle Speaker*

## Promoting awareness of our Council

A primary focus of ours has been to build awareness of our Council. We continue using traditional and social media to inform a broad audience about our meetings, and our members have been keen to spread the word within their networks. Additionally, we send direct invitations to key stakeholders and are pleased that public attendance has increased.

Members have been busy connecting with local service groups to present information about our Council, shared work we've been a part of, and plans for the future. Presentations were made to the mayors and Reeves of Southwest Alberta in Lethbridge, the Pincher Creek Chamber of Commerce and to the Milk River Community Awareness group. We're looking forward to building on this in the year ahead.

In February we partnered with AHS to host a [Community Conversation in Lethbridge](#). Twenty-two community participants attended and joined in discussion about wellness, prevention and community care. We learned about a health-related organization that's been successful in the community and discussed ways to improve healthcare. Some of the challenges identified include:

- Transportation service, particularly for seniors
- Focus on all aspects of addictions in the region, in addition to a focus on opioids
- Need for increased mental health professionals
- Consideration for rural sustainability
- Leverage community groups to promote health

Information gathered was shared with AHS' Health and Business Plan team.

4

Public meetings were held in Lethbridge, Taber and the Blood Tribe First Nation

17

Members of the public attended Council meetings

5

Health-related presentations were provided. Topics: the Community Paramedic Program; Public Health; Enhancing Care in the Community (integrated home care); Blanket Exercise and Conversation with Blood Tribe Department of Health



*For more information about Health Advisory Councils, visit [ahs.ca](https://ahs.ca)*

## Listening to our communities and sharing feedback with AHS

Over the last couple of years the South Zone has experienced a significant opioid crisis. New services opened in 2018 to address the need and we were keen to learn about them. This generated a lot of interest and discussion locally and resulted in some frank conversations with AHS. We benefited from these conversations as we learned which services AHS operates, and those offered by external partners.

A poignant conversation for our Council took place during a HAC meeting at the Kainai Wellness Centre on the Blood Reserve. Members of the Blood Tribe Department of Health (BTDH) shared efforts undertaken to address drug use and overdoses on the reserve. It was an eye opening yet important opportunity to hear first-hand accounts of the crisis from various first responders' perspective.

We also connected with a variety of people and groups in our local communities. A sampling of health-related matters we shared feedback on include:

- Loss of physicians and recruitment in local areas
- Lack of transportation options for people in rural areas to get to medical appointments
- Praise for the availability of Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) in Alberta
- Need for AHS to increase efforts to educate the public on services available and their respective locations
- Appreciation of AHS' work with the Blood Reserve and the Blood Tribe Department of Health to address the needs of Indigenous populations

Rural Health Professions Action Plan (RhPAP) had a strong presence at our table. They shared updates about preceptorship programs, attraction and retention committees that have formed, transition-to-practice events and a rural healthcare careers exploration event for high school students. We're looking forward to our continued relationship with them.

The Community Engagement Committee of the AHS Board expressed an interest in understanding the top health-related concerns from across the province. Our Council identified the following:

- Mental health and addiction – awareness; supports for seniors with depression
- Aging population – need for additional supports; transportation
- Increasing personal accountability for health – awareness; health promotion and prevention; increasing awareness in schools in the region
- Augmenting homecare with other services – need for awareness; future plans
- Opioids – approaches to coordinate services
- Communication with AHS – two-way; desire for the HAC to be included in discussions early on and prior to final decisions being made; clarity on outcomes of feedback provided.

## Working with AHS to share information with our communities

One of the highlights of our meetings is the opportunity to engage with AHS South Zone Leadership. Members of the team attend each meeting and provide updates on the status of health services in the region. To build our understanding of services in the region we toured the Blood Tribe Department of Health, the Taber Health Centre, parts of Chinook Regional Hospital, and the Pincher Creek Health Centre.

Each HAC meeting begins with an informative presentation(s). The past year we were fortunate to learn more about the following topics of interest:

- Cultural Competency Blanket Exercise
- Conversation with Blood Tribe Department of Health
- Community Paramedic Services - Mobile Integrated Healthcare
- Public Health overview
- Enhancing Care in the Community (Integrated Home Care Services)
- Connect Care

During our roundtable discussions, AHS graciously obliged our thirst for knowledge. Some key pieces of information we've been able to share back with our communities, include:

- Opioid Crisis – magnitude of the crisis in the region; resources available; work underway to continue addressing the need
- Wait times - reasons for longer waits in some areas than others; efforts to address surgical capacity and operating room utilization
- Capital project updates
- Levels of Supportive Living
- Decision process for moving a patient from one facility to another
- Immunization – rates, access and public education in the Zone
- Midwifery – work underway to bring the service to Lethbridge
- Organizational redesign – efforts undertaken to address workforce efficiencies

## A look ahead

The coming year will see the faces of our Council change as long-standing members' terms come to an end, and we recruit new people in their place. Several of these members have been with us since the beginning and have provided invaluable insights over the years. We thank them for their years of dedication and wish them all the best as they look to the future!

We're looking forward to the roles and functions of Health Advisory Councils continuing to evolve. We'll continue working with AHS' Community & External Relations department and South Zone Leadership to provide input into this progression where needed.

It's important to continue building the profile of our Council so more people in our communities are aware of our existence. Plans for the year are to reach out to local service groups, Indigenous groups, Family and Community Support Services (FCSS), Chambers of Commerce, and others. We'll seek participation in meetings and opportunities to present about our Council, and will in turn invite them to our meetings.

As we seek new learning about health services in our region, we plan to tour sites such as the Milk River, Fort MacLeod and Cardston Health Centres. We will also invite both the Health Promotion and Seniors Health teams to present about their work and the services and resources available in Southwest Alberta.

Living a healthy lifestyle and personal accountability is important to us. In the months ahead, we will determine a process that will allow us to effectively share the knowledge we've gained through our meetings, presentations, and outreach with the broader community. Our members engage with people and groups in our communities regularly. This year we plan to broaden our reach by hosting a public event where we'll offer an extended presentation on a topic of interest, then seek targeted feedback to be shared with AHS.



# Learn more

- Visit [ahs.ca/advisorycouncils](https://ahs.ca/advisorycouncils)
- Email [oldmanriver@ahs.ca](mailto:oldmanriver@ahs.ca)
- Check out our Twitter and Facebook accounts, by searching AHS Advisory Councils

# Get involved

You can make a difference to the health and well-being of your family, friends, neighbours and community by sharing your thoughts and ideas with AHS. You can get involved by:

- Attending an upcoming meeting. Agendas and notices are posted on the Advisory Council webpage: [ahs.ca](https://ahs.ca)
- Delivering a presentation at a Council meeting on a health area of interest or concern.
- Volunteering your time as a Council member.

For more information about Health Advisory Councils, [visit ahs.ca](https://ahs.ca)



Oldman River  
Health Advisory Council

Healthy Albertans.  
Healthy Communities.  
**Together.**