

# Oldman River

## 2020-21 Annual Report





## Message from Alberta Health Services Board of Directors

Since my appointment to the AHS Board in the fall of 2020, it has been my pleasure to become familiar with the work of the Advisory Councils. By all accounts, Councils have persevered through the COVID-19 pandemic and have found success in connecting with stakeholders as they adapted to virtual meetings well through 2021.



*Vicki Yellow Old Woman*

Advisory Councils continue to be tremendous partners in health. They have been instrumental as a conduit of information from AHS to local communities, a task of particular importance during an extraordinary period of time. Through innovation and determination, each Council has remained committed to its role of advising AHS, and to bringing forward the voices of their communities.

I look forward to working with Advisory Councils in the years ahead and watching as they continue to evolve. Thank you to each member for your ongoing dedication to improving health services for all Albertans.

Sincerely,

Vicki Yellow Old Woman,  
Chair, Community Engagement Committee, AHS Board



## Message from the Chair, Oldman River Advisory Council

To say that 2020-21 has been an extraordinary year would be an understatement. Our Council has inducted three new members, as well as a new Chair and Vice Chair, myself and Jim Bennett, respectively, and we await the opportunity to meet one another in person.



*Doug Thornton*

Council has enthusiastically adopted a new system of connecting with Zone leaders and the response has been excellent. Communication is critical, and we're pleased with AHS' willingness to work with us to ensure our communities are heard.

Completion of a full year of pandemic response has left our members in awe of the commitment made by all the people working in our healthcare system. We're grateful to all health professionals as they work hard to bring us through the pandemic so we can get back to living our full lives. Our medical professionals have served Albertans with steady professionalism despite many of the challenges such as those individuals and businesses that chose not to follow public health guidelines. We owe them our thanks.

Sincerely,

Doug Thornton  
Chair, Oldman River Health Advisory Council



# Who we are

The Oldman River Health Advisory Council (ORHAC) is comprised of up to 15 volunteer members who reside in the geographic [area](#) surrounding Lethbridge. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic we were unable to obtain photos of our membership. The following members sat on Council in 2020-21:

Doug Thornton (Chair)	Lethbridge, AB
Jim Bennett (Vice Chair)	Raymond, AB
Debra Gazely	Lethbridge, AB
Brad Gillespie	Lethbridge, AB
Brian Hammond	Pincher Creek, AB
Henry Heinen	Picture Butte, AB
Vicki Koersen	Taber, AB
Stephanie Leavitt	Lethbridge, AB
Betty Ann Little Wolf	Fort MacLeod, AB
Laura Nelson	Raymond, AB
Carolyn Simonis	Lethbridge, AB
Stuart Wright	Raymond, AB





# Key achievements of 2020-21

In the midst of an unprecedented pandemic, we implemented a refreshed approach we called HAC 2.0. Its implementation has changed the way HACs interact with the public, including incorporating community engagement events into our annual planning schedule.

The virtual format has allowed ORHAC to broaden its reach within local communities. As a result, we've seen an increase of public at our meetings which translates to a significant increase in feedback from public to AHS.



## Community concerns shared with AHS includes:

- Access to addictions and mental health supports
- Vulnerable populations and seniors impacted by the pandemic
- Impacts of COVID-19 on the community
- Vaccine rollout and supply



## Council engaged with AHS on topics that included:

- COVID-19 and vaccination rollout
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS) listening sessions
- [Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Health System](#) (PRIHS)
- Cardiac service planning
- Facility-based continuing care
- Influenza campaign feedback
- Rural information series
- Family presence and visitation taskforce
- Unconscious Bias professional development session



## Public Participation:

- 78 members of the public attended community events hosted by the Oldman River Health Advisory Council
- 79 members of the public attended meetings hosted by the Oldman River Health Advisory Council



The AHS Community Engagement team held its annual Advisory Council Forum in the spring of 2021. The event was held virtually and spread over four days. Themed as 'Hope and Resilience,' sessions included AHS experts and award-winning external speakers on timely topics such as Indigenous health, virtual health, dementia care, addiction and mental health, and inclusivity in healthcare.

### AHS Presentations

- ❖ *Addiction and Mental Health: Navigating Virtual Services, South Zone*
- ❖ *Seniors Health & Continuing Care, South Zone*
- ❖ *Plan Well Planning Guide: Why prepare and plan for serious illness, decision-making and creating an individual plan*

### Public/Community Engagement Presentations

- ❖ *Addiction and Mental Health – South Zone*
- ❖ *Covid-19 Response – South Zone*
- ❖ *Psychological First Aid Training*





## A look ahead

Under direction of the newly elected Chair and AHS zone leadership, the ORHAC remains focused on raising awareness for the Council and its continued contributions to health.

Our focus remains on educating community stakeholders, hosting community engagement events, and building new partnerships. We are committed to five key areas:

- Seniors health and continuing care: Council will partner with AHS' Seniors Health to host an engagement event to listen to the needs of the community and gather feedback, while raising awareness of the HAC.
- Addiction and mental health: In collaboration with partners, Council will learn more about the mental health needs of communities to share with AHS South Zone leadership.
- Rural Health: Council will partner with Rural Health Professions Action Plan (RhPAP), and Primary Care Networks (PCNs) to promote local resources. Council will also encourage discussion about available addiction and mental health resources offered in rural areas.
- Indigenous Health: Council will strive to ensure Indigenous voices are invited into the healthcare conversation at meetings and engagement events.
- Virtual Health: Council will engage the community to understand the benefits and challenges of making virtual health a permanent resource for patients.

Council will continue to value and grow partnerships in health. Partnerships with organizations like RhPAP, PCNs, and local health foundations are invaluable.



*We greatly appreciate the perspective our HAC members bring to the table on behalf of our communities. Their experiences help us to respond to questions, issues, and challenges they see and feel, while their input assists us in finding creative and innovative solutions to address shape the priorities within the communities they represent. HACs are extremely valuable to the healthcare system.*

**Linda Iwasiw**

Chief Zone Officer, South Zone

**Dr. Aaron Low**

Zone Medical Director, South Zone

Advisory Council members share advice and feedback from their communities with AHS. Councils hold public meetings and engagement activities virtually or in locations throughout their geographic area that further contribute to improving healthcare services in Alberta.



## 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/advisorycouncils](https://ahs.ca/advisorycouncils).
- Delivering a presentation at a Council meeting on a health area of interest.
- Providing input on various healthcare topics online, at [Together4Health](#).
- Applying to [become a member](#). Members are appointed for three-year terms.

## Learn more

Visit [ahs.ca/advisorycouncils](https://ahs.ca/advisorycouncils)

✉ [oldmanriver@ahs.ca](mailto:oldmanriver@ahs.ca)

☎ 1.877.275.8830

Check us out on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) or by searching AHS Advisory Councils.

