



Ernie works hard to help others beat cancer like he did — twice!.

Ernie Grach never gave cancer a second thought until his diagnosis — which began a healing journey and spurred an activism that led him to seek membership on the Cancer Provincial Advisory Council (PAC).

“Of course, there’s always a personal story,” he says. “I had two types of cancer around that time, from which our healthcare system managed to cure me. I noticed some shortfalls and I hoped that by contributing to the Cancer PAC, some of these things could be addressed. Not just for me — but for our entire population.

“Until I had cancer, I believed life would just continue and saw no real need to talk about health, or for that matter, look after my own health. Now, I exercise regularly, eat well and talk to my friends and neighbours about what I’ve learned at our Council meetings. I have learned we can cure many types of cancer.”

When he reflects on his PACs key accomplishments to date, the education of its members and their community is the first thing that comes to mind, among other things.

“We’ve also addressed the after-effects of cancer with regards to dental work and its psychological effects.”

As a Wabasca resident who worked in the employment and training field with Indigenous people for four decades, Ernie greatly appreciates having a member of the Wisdom Council on board. “As we address the effects of cancer on our indigenous communities, it means a lot when we invite Indigenous speakers and cancer patients to our meetings.”

He wishes more people understood how advisory councils can shape and improve the system. “People should know that an Advisory Council can make a difference in our healthcare system. It takes some time and patience, but there are people at Alberta Health Services who listen and put our ideas forward. Our local Health Advisory Council (HAC) and I were able to convince AHS to build an ambulance garage and residence for our first responders in our community.” Ernie’s PAC goals are to increase the flow of information to all and grow Indigenous participation at their meetings. His outlook remain positive with good reason.

“My sense of hope comes from the incredible professional staff at AHS, their commitment to our welfare and especially from when I hear of the progress being made at both the research and practice levels in the fight against cancer.”

In his free time, when he’s not doting over his ten grandchildren, he loves to swim and ride his road bike. Keeping fit is a way of life for him, with lots of fresh air and physical exertion. “We still heat with wood at our home here in Wabasca, so wood-splitting is part of my regular routine.”

For more information on the Cancer Provincial Advisory Council, visit ahs.ca/advisorycouncils, or email pac.cancer@ahs.ca



Ernie keeps active and has been practicing for the Ride to Conquer Cancer almost daily.