

The Calgary Zone  
Indigenous Health Action Plan  
Summary

# Walking together: Creating a new path



# Walking together

## **"Átł̨is̨ilāts'ādīł̨i"**

—Tsuut'ina

The Calgary Zone of Alberta Health Services (AHS) is committed to:

- Improving the health and health experiences of Indigenous people
- Delivering culturally safe health services to Indigenous people
- Building, nurturing and

## **"Barhe Mānībīch"**

—Stoney

sustaining long-term relationships with Indigenous people.

The Calgary Zone is on the traditional territory of the Blackfoot peoples in the Treaty 7 area, including the Siksika, Stoney Nakoda and Tsuut'ina nations.

This land is also home to Métis

## **"Aistowaípiyaóp"**

—Blackfoot

peoples, Inuit people and urban-dwelling Indigenous people.

Many of these people have strong ties to knowledge, traditions, medicine and ceremonies that have been passed down through the generations for thousands of years.

## Planning process

From late 2018 to June 2019, the Calgary Zone hosted some 50 conversations to help inform this Indigenous Health Action Plan.

Participants included First Nations health directors, representatives from urban Indigenous-led non-profit agencies, patients, elders, healthcare providers, the AHS Wisdom Council and AHS leaders. Our plan reflects what we heard from people and outlines a path forward, together.

This 15-year plan is an adjunct of the Calgary Zone Healthcare Plan and is focused on sustainable change.

## What we found

Racism and culturally inappropriate healthcare services exist across Alberta, Canada and the world and are the main barriers to accessing health services.

Healthcare access improves when healthcare services are owned and managed by, or tailored to the needs of local Indigenous communities. Improving the determinants of health is foundational to improving health outcomes.

Indigenous peoples have said they want a blended approach—a mix of traditional and modern medicines. Integrating or embedding traditional and cultural health practices and spaces into AHS will improve the uptake of medical advice as well as openness, trust and health outcomes of Indigenous people.

## Next steps

AHS will continue this journey in phases, with the belief all of us can make a difference by speaking our truths, listening to one another, building trust and working together on common goals and actions.

"Let's move to reconcili-action," says Casey Eaglespeaker, co-chair of the AHS Wisdom Council.

**"We can certainly change the path of tomorrow because we have the resilience and motivation to do so. Together, we can empower each other to work toward this common goal."**

## Our Vision

### INDIVIDUAL FOCUSED

Indigenous individuals and communities in Calgary Zone are healthy and supported in their wellness journey.

### COMMUNITY

Indigenous people in the Calgary Zone are supported through integrated, culturally based primary care that offers navigation, seamless transitions of care, is community-based, holistic and culturally safe. AHS is a reliable, trusted collaborator in the delivery of health services in partnership with community.

### CALGARY ZONE

Calgary Zone commits to giving Indigenous people respectful, patient-centred, quality care that is culturally safe, holistic, and accessible in AHS services/ facilities. Services will be delivered in respectful ways that are culturally appropriate and in partnership with community.

➤ For more information, visit [ahs.ca/ihapcz](https://ahs.ca/ihapcz)



“Let us walk together to make it happen. We will work together so that our children will not have to struggle through the system, and they will have smoother transitions to a place of well-being.”

## Committed to act

Calgary Zone is committed to taking the following actions in phases over the life of this plan.

Our planning and engagement processes identified five pillars for action across AHS Calgary Zone:

1. System Requirements and Shared Accountability
2. Culturally Safe and Responsive Care
3. Engagement and Relationships
4. Integration and Continuity of Care
5. Traditional Wellness and Practices

### Pillar for action

## 1 System Requirements and Shared Accountability

Create clear accountability, collaboration and planning between Indigenous Health and Calgary Zone Operations. We will:

- 1.1** Work together with transparency and with shared accountability for outcomes.
- 1.2** Adopt an equitable framework for operational business plans and resources.
- 1.3** Incorporate traditional practices into programs and services; work in partnership with the community, Elders and others.
- 1.4** Create a culturally safe workplace for Indigenous staff.
- 1.5** Support and encourage Indigenous staff to celebrate and practice cultural traditions.
- 1.6** Implement the Indigenous Traditional Protocol Guide.
- 1.7** Partner to improve data capture and measurements for health service planning.

**“When we can bring our best and whole selves to work, we do our best work and patient care improves.”**

### Pillar for action

## 2 Culturally Safe and Responsive Care

AHS Calgary Zone will create more welcoming and culturally safe environments and services for Indigenous people. We will:

- 2.1** Establish patient- and family-centred approaches to combat the discrimination, racism and biases that affect healthcare delivery.
- 2.2** Revise the patient concern submission and resolution processes to be more welcoming, responsive and reflective of Indigenous cultural values.
- 2.3** Deliver trauma-focused and healing-focused care across the continuum.
- 2.4** Reduce the negative effects the social determinants of health have on health services (for example, access issues).

**“Experiential learning is essential for understanding.”**

## Pillar for action

# 3

## Engagement and Relationships

Calgary Zone will build trusting relationships to incorporate the wisdom of Indigenous Elders and leaders, build meaningful partnerships and support sustainable collaborations. We will:

- 3.1** Focus on long-term, sustainable planning developed through effective relationships, community-led processes and meaningful co-design.
- 3.2** Create integrated communication pathways and systems.
- 3.3** Bring meaningful Indigenous perspective and influence to all levels of AHS Calgary Zone.

**“Together we can address barriers to access and enhance the quality of care, so healthcare is responsive, appropriate and culturally safe for all Indigenous people within the Calgary Zone.”**

**“Involve us in the conversation, and we will create the steps together on this journey.”**

## Pillar for action

# 4

## Integration and Continuity of Care

AHS will work towards seamless provision of health services across all jurisdictions and operations, with a commitment to solving problems together in the spirit of putting reconciliation into action. We will:

- 4.1** Develop proactive, timely and accurate discharge planning to ensure we communicate with relevant health providers.
- 4.2** Improve patient navigation and transitions.
- 4.3** Problem-solve and communicate across all jurisdictions.
- 4.4** Improve equitable access, quality and sustainability of health services for Indigenous people, with a focus on providing care closer to home and closing gaps in services.
- 4.5** Bring a greater holistic, cultural, and addiction and mental health focus to services across the continuum of care.
- 4.6** Integrate locally defined and build culturally safe primary health services into communities.
- 4.7** Support patients in accessing healthcare services and benefits.
- 4.8** Provide appropriate, timely and accurate information to relevant health providers. Improve data capture and measurement with Indigenous patients and communities to plan health services.

**“We are walking together equally in this journey to wellness.”**

## Pillar for action

# 5

## Traditional Wellness and Practices

To weave traditional wellness practices, spaces, languages and medicines into AHS services and programs, we will:

- 5.1** Increase awareness and knowledge of traditional wellness and holistic approaches across the Calgary Zone.
- 5.2** Offer traditional medicines and wellness practices to patients.
- 5.3** Make smudging available in a timely basis in all AHS-owned, leased, operated and contracted facilities.
- 5.4** Demonstrate the importance of traditional wellness and healing and reflect the partnership of Indigenous people and AHS through celebrations and community gatherings.

**“I have the privilege, obligation, rights AND the responsibility to keep working.”**

# Calgary Zone Indigenous Health Action Plan

OPERATIONAL AREAS	THEMES	RECOMMENDATIONS
<b>ADDICTIONS &amp; MENTAL HEALTH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt trauma-informed care</li> <li>• Increase addiction and mental health presence, services and programs in the Indigenous urban community</li> <li>• Improve access.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce adverse childhood experience screening tools</li> <li>• Share resources</li> <li>• Offer cultural humility training</li> <li>• Respond to drug misuse/abuse and identify appropriate services.</li> </ul>
<b>EMERGENCY CARE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve culturally safe care</li> <li>• Increase access to Indigenous health liaisons and social workers</li> <li>• Plan hospital discharges with relevant healthcare providers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase cultural awareness and supports of resources</li> <li>• Erect Indigenous acknowledgement signage at AHS sites</li> <li>• Hire more patient advisors</li> <li>• Utilize E-Sim development to improve cultural competency.</li> </ul>
<b>INDIGENOUS HEALTH PROGRAM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase access to, support for and navigation through traditional wellness and resources</li> <li>• Adopt wellness supports for staff</li> <li>• Offer experiential learning</li> <li>• Clarify roles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocate resources to support Indigenous health</li> <li>• Increase navigation and spiritual support for patients and families</li> <li>• Offer self-care support mechanisms for Indigenous staff.</li> </ul>
<b>KIDNEY CARE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jointly design kidney disease prevention and treatment models</li> <li>• Provide care closer to home</li> <li>• Develop collaborative partnerships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt traditional wellness practices and holistic approaches</li> <li>• Improve cultural understanding and support culturally sensitive care options</li> <li>• Assess and manage transportation challenges and care needs.</li> </ul>
<b>MATERNAL HEALTH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase support for maternal health nursing</li> <li>• Implement a harm-reduction approach for new mothers</li> <li>• Expand midwifery services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer cultural competency training</li> <li>• Assess newborns' post-discharge social risks in partnership</li> <li>• Engage First Nations health centres</li> <li>• Develop health promotion and prevention strategies.</li> </ul>
<b>PATIENT RELATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resolve patient concerns through Patient Relations channels</li> <li>• Report patient experiences of racism and bias.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish relationships</li> <li>• Review and revise Patient Relations communication materials and processes</li> <li>• Track racial concerns in a database</li> <li>• Establish a diverse workforce.</li> </ul>

OPERATIONAL AREAS	THEMES	RECOMMENDATIONS
<b>PEDIATRICS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase cultural competency training</li> <li>• Close gaps in rural services and specialized assessments</li> <li>• Strengthen the referral process</li> <li>• Offer greater support to grandmothers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer more training for cultural competency and trauma-informed care</li> <li>• Support traditional wellness</li> <li>• Expand care closer to home; remove barriers to access</li> <li>• Improve navigation and discharge practices.</li> </ul>
<b>PRIMARY CARE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address communication gaps</li> <li>• Provide patients with health information upon discharge</li> <li>• Improve case management</li> <li>• Share data</li> <li>• Improve culturally safe care.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve connections and relationships with First Nations health centre teams and primary care leaders</li> <li>• Increase understanding of trauma-informed care</li> <li>• Translate more information</li> <li>• Offer more health services closer to home.</li> </ul>
<b>RURAL HEALTH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve culturally safe care</li> <li>• Reduce misdiagnosis</li> <li>• Improve language supports and discharge planning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase cultural competencies</li> <li>• Expand Indigenous hospital liaison programs</li> <li>• Improve communication with First Nations health centres</li> <li>• Provide more care closer to home.</li> </ul>
<b>SENIORS, CONTINUING &amp; PALLIATIVE CARE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support transitions</li> <li>• Provide more care closer to home</li> <li>• Traditional wellness options and services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase staff cultural competency training</li> <li>• Build relationships with Indigenous communities to embed Indigenous practices in services.</li> </ul>
<b>SOCIAL WORK &amp; ALLIED HEALTH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase culturally safe care</li> <li>• Improve the referral process</li> <li>• Increase social support in emergency departments and Maternal Health</li> <li>• Build partnerships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support transitions</li> <li>• Provide more care closer to home</li> <li>• Increase traditional wellness options and services.</li> </ul>

➤ For more information, please email Penny Morelye at [penny.morelye@ahs.ca](mailto:penny.morelye@ahs.ca)

# CALGARY ZONE INDIGENOUS HEALTH ACTION PLAN

Focused Engagement for Indigenous Health Planning

Strengths of  
Indigenous Values  
& Ways of Working

Break down old ways and create new Two Eyed Seeing

Strengths of  
AHS Values & Systems



## VISION

Indigenous individuals in Calgary Zone are supported through integrated culturally based primary care.

Indigenous individuals and communities in Calgary Zone are healthy and supported in their wellness journey.

Calgary Zone commits that Indigenous patients receive respectful patient centered quality care that is culturally safe, holistic, and accessible.

Community Vision

AHS Vision

Patient Vision