

True North

2019-20 Annual Report



Message from Alberta Health Services Board of Directors



Dr. Brenda Hemmelgarn

Alberta Health Services values Advisory Council members as volunteers, leaders and partners in health care 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 health care system – and they advise AHS on our planning, programs and services.

We had 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.

Sincerely,

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

Message from the Chair, True North Health Advisory Council

Tansi, Danate, Hello,

On behalf of the True North Health Advisory Council (HAC), I am pleased to provide you with the 2019-20 annual report. It has definitely been a challenging but interesting year for the HAC. The Chuckegg wildfire in 2019 affected our communities in various ways and now we find ourselves in a global pandemic.



Liane Mercredi

Alberta Health Services has been responsive and sensitive to the health needs of the area; one demonstration of this is a [Community Conversation](#) True North HAC was pleased to host with AHS in Paddle Prairie. Stakeholders from across the region were invited to discuss new ways to work together.

This year we had many dedicated, longstanding members exit the HAC. I want to express gratitude for their dedication; it has been an inspiration to see their passion for health care. As recently elected Chair for True North, I'd like to welcome the eight new Council members to the team. I look forward to working together to continue supporting our communities through community engagement and collaboration.

Mashi, Thank you

Liane Mercredi
Chair, True North Health Advisory Council

Who we are

The True North Health Advisory Council (TNHAC) is comprised of up to 15 volunteer members who reside in the geographic [region](#) near Rainbow Lake and Paddle Prairie. Visit us online for a full list of [membership](#).



*L-R: Wally Schroeder (former member), Wilma Cardinal, Ray Toews
Missing: Liane Mercredi (Chair), Richard Cartier (Vice-Chair), Caroline Adam-Courtoreille, Pam Boese, George Fehr, Jessica Juneau, Sharon McLean, Jan Welke, Judith Weibe, Nella Fehr*

Highlights

Presentations

- Addiction & Mental Health
- Women's Health
- Psychological Awareness & Wellness Support (PAWS) Program

North Zone Sector Meeting

- A combined meeting with all six North Zone Health Advisory Councils
- Connection with multiple AHS North Zone leaders
- Members shared top health priorities from their region

Location of Public Meetings

- La Crete, Rainbow Lake, Paddle Prairie & virtually
- Eight new members recruited; two orientation sessions

Key achievements of 2019-20

In the spring of 2019, the True North Council area was affected by wildfires. Communities continue to demonstrate resilience through recovery. Council members remain interested in health supports for their communities, especially those most vulnerable to adverse health outcomes. Council is particularly interested in Emergency Medical Services and Addiction and Mental Health supports. The following are examples of how the True North HAC has successfully partnered with AHS to meet Council goals and priorities:

- Partnered with AHS to host a [Community Conversation](#) in Paddle Prairie. The community, AHS and Council members came together to discuss the successes and unique challenges faced in and around Paddle Prairie. Access to and continuity of care for rural and remote residents was identified as a key priority in the region. Feedback was shared with AHS' Health Plan and Business Plan team.
- Dr. Verna Yiu, AHS President and CEO, attended the May 2019 Council meeting and provided an update on AHS activities. Dr. Yiu and Council members discussed the health issues and strengths of the communities in the True North area, including challenges related to health professional recruitment and retention. Council shared information about the “grow your own” initiative, intended to nurture school-aged students who want to pursue a career in health care in their local community.
- After wildfires spurred a state of emergency in the True North area, Council held a special June meeting to hear about recovery efforts. Council described the impact of the fires to True North communities, including the loss of homes and the mental health concerns resulting from these traumatic events. AHS shared community resources that listed sources of help and information on self-care.
- In September 2019, Council elected Liane Mercredi as Chair and Rick Cartier as Vice Chair. Liane is a member of the Beaver First Nation, with a background in Indigenous health promotion. Rick is a paramedic who has provided care across the True North area for over 18 years. Through his work, he has seen the medical, psychological and socio-economic needs of rural and remote communities. Liane and Rick are dedicated to bringing forward the broad range of voices in the True North Council area and reaching under-served populations.
- The True North HAC demonstrated adaptability through the COVID-19 pandemic by moving their meetings to a virtual format. Council continued to hold meetings using Zoom and invited past members to hear COVID-19 information and updates at their March 30 meeting. They also received a mental health pocket guide to distribute to their communities.

A look ahead

In March 2020, Council heard about a new direction for HACs. This includes increased community engagement and events designed in partnership between AHS and Council members. The True North HAC will hold a brainstorming session in June to develop ideas for community events and engagement initiatives that can be implemented in the fall. The 2020-21 Council year promises to be an active and exciting one as Council prepares to be involved in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the AHS Review and co-hosting events. Some of our upcoming plans include:

- Co-hosting a virtual town hall in May for True North area residents, focusing on COVID-19, recovery efforts from the recent devastating flooding in Fort Vermillion and addressing concerns on the upcoming wildfire season.
- Partnering with [Rural Health Professionals Action Plan](#) (RhPAP) and AHS on health professional attraction, recruitment and retention. This includes participating in “grow your own” initiatives and encouraging young people in the True North region who show an interest in entering medical professions.
- Through the June brainstorming session, Council members will build a catalogue of ideas for future community events and initiatives.

The True North HAC will continue to work closely with AHS leadership and community partners to take on the exciting year ahead. True North HAC looks forward to forging new partnerships and making the vision for the future come to life.

The AHS North Zone team provides service to a large geographical area with a diverse population. We place a very high value on the information and advice we receive from a broad range of stakeholders in our communities. The HACs give us a regular forum to share ideas, receive input, and refine our ways of working so that our strategies and operational priorities are aligned with provincial and local priorities.

Gregory Cummings
Chief Zone Officer

Advisory Councils act in an advisory capacity to Alberta Health Services (AHS) as we share feedback with AHS leadership from our communities about health services. We hold public meetings at locations throughout our geography and participate in engagement activities that further contribute to health services in Alberta.

Learn more

Visit ahs.ca/advisorycouncils

✉ truenorth@ahs.ca

☎ 1.877.275.8830

Check us out on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) or 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
- Delivering a presentation at a Council meeting on a health area of interest or concern
- Provide input on various health care topics online, at [Together4Health](#)
- Apply to [become a member](#). Members are appointed for three-year terms.

