



# Improving the Health Journey for Indigenous Children and Families

*ReconciliACTION Together*

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## Alberta Children's Hospital Indigenous Child Health Team

### BACKGROUND

Despite decades of reports calling for changes, Indigenous children and youth continue to face significant health and social disparities compared with their non-Indigenous counterparts. Maternal and child health concerns persist, and infant mortality rates are double. Indigenous children and youth experience higher rates of injury, suicide, obesity, diabetes, and other chronic conditions.

In 2022, the Alberta Children's Hospital (ACH) and Indigenous Community partners endeavored to vision an Indigenous Child Health Team to support families across the continuum of care, hospital to home. This work stemmed from the Indigenous Health Action Plan (IHAP) spearheaded by Alberta Health Services and Indigenous partners - honoring a commitment to improve relationships, service delivery and health outcomes for all Indigenous people.

Alberta is home to a large Indigenous population with rich heritages and cultures. The Alberta Children's Hospital is located in the traditional territory of the Blackfoot peoples, which is within the Treaty 7 area including Siksika, Stoney Nakoda and Tsuut'ina First Nations. The Calgary Zone is also home to Métis peoples, Inuit peoples, and a large urban Indigenous population.

### OBJECTIVES

The following goals address needs identified by Indigenous communities as part of extensive engagement, including talking circles, conversations, and storytelling specific to Indigenous child health.

1. Culturally responsive care for Indigenous children and families
2. Coordinated care across the continuum of pediatric and Indigenous health services
3. Holistic care addressing the social determinants of health and equitable healthcare access for Indigenous children and families (19<sup>th</sup> call to action, TRC)

### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT



Honouring a commitment to improve relationships, service delivery and health outcomes for all Indigenous people, AHS - Calgary Zone hosted extensive community talking circles and conversations to inform development of an Indigenous Health Action Plan (IHAP 2020). Participants included Indigenous patients and families, elders, First Nations health directors, representatives from urban Indigenous-led non-profit agencies, healthcare providers, the AHS Wisdom Council and AHS leaders.

Through these conversations, gaps and challenges were identified and new ideas were developed. The conversations culminated at a gathering at Blackfoot Crossing in May 2019, on the sacred ground where Treaty 7 was signed. More than 70 AHS and Indigenous community partners came together to review what had been shared and to develop concrete ideas to shape next steps. The IHAP was approved by the Calgary zone leadership team in 2019. The Approval Ceremony took place in January 2022.

### SERVICE MODEL



**Tertiary level specialized care: inpatient and ambulatory services**



**Community-based care: services supporting Indigenous Communities in and around Calgary**

### Indigenous Child Health Team

Child, Family, Community

Indigenous Clinical Care Coordinators

Indigenous Clinical Social Work Supports

Indigenous Hospital Liaisons & Cultural Wellness Coordinator

Community-Based, Local Indigenous Navigators

Biomedical

Systemic

Psychosocial

Spiritual

Cultural



ACH sits on what was once an important Indigenous buffalo range located on the traditional territory of the Blackfoot peoples. Indigenous People account for ~ 6.5% of the Population in Alberta.



### IMPACT / SIGNIFICANCE

There is great heterogeneity among Indigenous communities, therefore, a multi-pronged approach that includes community specific supports and self-determination is important. Along with diversity of culture, language and community, there are also substantial differences in the provision of health and social services, resources, and community engagement. Extensive stakeholder and community engagement has informed this unique service model, which is now in an early stage of implementation.

This initiative aims to decrease barriers, improve health outcomes, and keep children in their communities with better supports and follow-up through targeted intervention and direct understanding of the unique health care needs of Indigenous Children and families.



**Alberta Health Services**  
Indigenous Wellness Core

Alberta Children's Hospital

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