

# Wood Buffalo

## 2020-21 Annual Report





## Message from Alberta Health Services Board of Directors



*Vicki Yellow Old Woman*

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.

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, Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council



*Angela Betts*

As we close out a challenging year around the world, I am humbled by the generosity and kindness of my community leaders, residents and Council members. We have been offered an opportunity to listen and bring ideas, solutions and awareness to AHS through the Wood Buffalo Advisory Council, and as Chair I have met and collaborated with communities across Alberta on big and small projects and initiatives through these connections.

Our community resiliency is forged and sustained by the people we live and work with and we have faced challenges with grace and perseverance. We have held community engagement sessions which have sparked and educated our residents to work together to find solutions to challenges they felt they were facing alone. We continue to look ahead to the opening of our long-term care facility in Fort McMurray, Willow Square, and to recognizing and advising on improvements to health services, and fostering positive relationships.

Thank you to every healthcare employee, every essential worker, every community member and my fellow Council members for your dedication to Wood Buffalo.

Yours,

Angela Betts  
Chair, Wood Buffalo Advisory Council



# Who we are

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

Angela Betts (Chair)	Fort McMurray, AB
Tinna Ezekial (Vice Chair)	Fort McMurray, AB
Patience Akenbor	Fort McMurray, AB
Lisa Barter	Fort McMurray, AB
Sonia Burke-Smith	Fort McMurray, AB
Cecile Calliou	Fort McKay, AB
Natalie Gentili	Fort McMurray, AB
Sandy Grandison	Fort McMurray, AB
Todd Hiller	Fort McMurray, AB
Evelyn Okoh	Fort McMurray, AB
Farooq Shamshad	Fort McMurray, AB
Carol Theberge	Fort McMurray, AB



## Public Participation

- 36 community members attended regular HAC meetings
- 153 community members attended community engagement events





# Key achievements of 2020-21

We had a busy year creating awareness of the Council. It proved to be worthwhile as 189 community members attended our meetings and events in 2020-21.



During the year we partnered with AHS to host two mental health community conversations. The first event in October had 83 community members participate in an AHS presentation that outlined what is known about mental health challenges in Wood Buffalo communities. Community mental health service providers then provided an overview of the supports they provide in the area. Following these, we engaged in a facilitated conversation about mental health needs, resources, challenges and opportunities in the area.



Our second community conversation in March provided 70 public participants the opportunity to connect with community service agencies to learn more about the new mental health directory being developed by community-based and AHS leadership Wood Buffalo. The local Health Neighbourhood Coalition also shared information on grassroots work underway to improve mental health for area residents. Discussion ensued on mental health challenges faced in our communities. We are proud to continue being part of a community effort to improve the mental health of our residents.



In March, Council members attended a virtual COVID-19 community conversation for the North Zone. Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Kristin Klein, provided an update on the status of COVID-19 in Alberta and the North Zone, including AHS' response and vaccination program. Dr. Klein addressed questions and concerns and provided resources for members to share within their communities.



In April 2021, Council Chair, Angela Betts, and Vice Chair, Tinna Ezekiel attended a Council of Chairs meeting with the Honourable Tyler Shandro, Minister of Health. Minister Shandro provided updates and engaged in dialogue with Council leaders.



We were fortunate to recruit new members from Fort McKay and we're excited to hear more from this community. We continue seeking representation from Anzac and Conklin to help represent our large geographic region. See page six for information on how to apply.



## Presentations:

- AHS Addiction and Mental Health
- Wood Buffalo Community Mental Health Partners
- AHS COVID 19 Psychosocial Supports
- Leadership Wood Buffalo
- Local Health Neighborhood Coalition
- Wellspring Cancer Services

## A look ahead

In the year ahead, Council will focus on connecting with the communities in the Council area as we plan for meetings and engagement events in 2021-22. Council will host two public meetings and encourage the public to attend and share insights on healthcare services in their community. This will also be an opportunity to hear from health-related presenters and local stakeholders on topics of interest.

Council will co-host two more community events in collaboration with AHS. Community stakeholders will be invited to participate in engagement and learn more about health initiatives across our Zone.

Plans for the coming year include:

- Increasing public attendance and participation at HAC meetings through connections made at community events, promotion and invitations to local stakeholders.
- Supporting the AHS Addiction and Mental Health portfolio to promote programs and services.
- Sharing information about seniors and continuing care programs and services.
- Partnering with the AHS Population and Public Health portfolio and the Medical Officer of Health to host a community event on pandemic recovery and immunizations, while sharing accurate information with communities.
- Continuing to build relationships with other AHS Advisory Councils
- Recruitment to fill vacancies on Council.

Our community health partners are essential and we will continue to build relationships through our meetings and events. Key stakeholders include Rural Health Professions Action Plan (RhPAP), Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and local hospital foundations/ auxiliaries. We appreciate the connection with municipal leaders, Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) and other local community groups.

*Over the past year, Alberta's six North Zone Health Advisory Councils have been instrumental in helping us get critical COVID-19 information out to our communities and in informing our pandemic response. In addition, they have shifted to a virtual model and engaged hundreds of local Albertans through their community events. The HACs are deeply connected to their local areas and work closely with AHS North Zone leaders. We are grateful for their advice and collaboration. We look forward to continuing to partner with the True North, Wood Buffalo, Peace, Lesser Slave Lake, Lakeland Communities, and Tamarack Health Advisory Councils.*

**Gregory Cummings**  
Chief Zone Officer, North 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)

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

☎ 1.877.275.8830

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

