



A newsletter produced by Prince Albert Grand Council's Department of Health and Social Development

The Heart Beat



Summer Issue 2017

PAGC Pharmacy Service Brings First Nations Closer to Control Over Health Care

Prince Albert Grand Council's Department of Health and Social Development (H & SD) is in first stages of a pilot project to provide prescription fill services for its member communities.

It is the first phase of a larger plan to open an on-reserve Medical Centre of Excellence, which would provide in-house patient treatment and a wide variety of specialized services. For now, the pilot project will lead to an on-reserve medical centre, which is expected to house a pharmacy, dental clinic, walk-in doctor's clinic, and diabetes centre as well as laboratory, diagnostic and optometry services.

The new pharmacy health service, which is believed to be the first of its kind in Canada, was developed through a partnership with Winnipeg-based companies FN Health Services and Providen Pharmacy Logistics as its new prescription fill provider. It is based on a co-operative style model that returns profit back to communities based on population and usage of pharmacy services.

Cover photo: H & SD Director Al Ducharme, Providen's Steve McGregor and PAGC Consultant Scott Carleton of FN Health Services departing to Hatched Lake Denesuline Nation.

PAGC Grand Chief Ron Michel said he believes the project is a mutually beneficial opportunity, because it allows First Nations to take control of their own health care service and generate new revenues for new health-related initiatives.

"Most of the services we receive through our Treaty Rights to Health Care are coming from outsiders and nothing is coming back to the people. So, we wanted to see how many prescription fills were coming from our communities, how much, from where and from who," explained Grand Chief Michel.

In fact, the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program through Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) spends about

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Message from the Director



Once again, I am happy to present to you the latest issue of our newsletter where you can read about the latest news in H & SD.

As you will find in the cover story, the opportunities to manage one's own health care in our First Nation country is upon us. This is what is being said by our PAGC Executive Chiefs, our First Nation Chiefs and their Councils and the Directors of Health for each of the PAGC communities we work closely with. They are saying we must consider all possibilities.

Historically, we have continually asked the government for more funding but it has always been difficult to convince them. We know that the funding in other areas is substantial and we are intent on entering and playing a more significant role in these services. We know that with the right partners and with the support of FNIHB, NIHB and the Nation-to-Nation agreements with the current federal government we can enter these domains and be successful.

The mood in Canada towards First Nations is changing. With the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Canada and its recommendations, First Nation initiatives will be or should be supported. The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls also indicates the need to recognize and respond to the challenges all First Nations face.

It is time to recognize the capacity, knowledge and experience we have developed over the past years as we manage our health affairs. We know we are capable of entering into all components of health care delivery and that we, more than anyone else, know which services and the extent of those services that should be designed and delivered in our communities. We are ready for that and demonstrate such resolve by entering in the full circle of First Nation Health Care. This, of course, includes areas such as pharmacy, dental and diagnostics.

The future is in our hands and our leadership wants it to be that way. We need to follow their vision, a vision that comes from our First Nations and membership. In this way, we will be exercising our Treaty Right to Health and defining the extent of the "Medicine Chest."

With that I hope you enjoy the stories in the latest issue of our newsletter. It covers some exciting projects and initiatives undertaken by our dedicated staff.

Please feel free to contact us with any comments and suggestions.

Thank you. Pedomaya. Ninaskomin. Marsi Cho

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Al Ducharme".

Al Ducharme
Director of Health and Social Development
Prince Albert Grand Council

\$480 million annually in prescription medication, including about \$83 million in Saskatchewan.

Since PAGC is one of the largest tribal councils in the country, Grand Chief Michel said there is a significant opportunity for PAGC and its communities to benefit from the business of prescription fill services.

“We looked into the service ourselves, and, sure enough, we are entitled to a ‘Right of First Refusal’ to provide any services being to catered to First Nations, including pharmaceuticals, which are usually provided through pharmacy giants, like Rexall,” he explained.

In general, there are many components of First



H & SD Director Al Ducharme and Grand Chief Ron Michel

Nation Health Care that are the responsibility of non-First Nations companies.

However, PAGC’s Director of Health and Social Development Al Ducharme said that will change. He said it is the intention of PAGC and its First Nations to provide these services, including dentistry, optometry, laboratory services and various types of diagnostic services.

“When you enter a new field of health services, one that has been historically outsourced by FNIHB and NIHB, there will be many challenges related to policy and resistance,” he said. “But our communities, their Chief and Councils and their Directors of Health have steadfastly maintained their resolve to move forward, and indeed they are already looking at many other opportunities.”

The proceeds from the prescription refill service

will not be distributed as dividends. Instead, they will be split between the PAGC’s Medical Centre Building Fund and the participating First Nations who will decide on how to allocate the funds, which will be earmarked for health-related programs and services.

Benefits of Central Fill Service

What is unique about the partnership with Providen Pharmacy Logistics is that it provides the only prescriptions fill service that can offer a greatly reduced price while returning a significant amount of the proceeds back to the communities.

PAGC Consultant Scott Carleton of FN Health Services said that Providen is able to reduce its costs for labour through its technologically-advanced physical and logical systems.

“It is almost akin to a manufacturing facility as opposed to a retail pharmacy,” said Carleton.

“Usually the biggest cost to filling a prescription is a pharmacist, and in a typical retail environment, a pharmacist fills about 200 prescriptions a day. But with the systems Providen has set up, about 2,000 prescriptions can be filled per day, and again with the investment in computer system software and physical systems, they do it even much more accurately than what other providers can do in the retail environment.

Carleton said a co-operative style model that generates these returns is likely the first of its kind in the country.

“Most of the communities I’ve talked to in Saskatchewan and Manitoba don’t have any sort of joint-venture or profit-sharing opportunity with their current providers. At this point, this type of model, which is based on a real partnership with communities, is a model that hasn’t been done anywhere in Canada.”

He recalled a past conversation with another leader that illustrates a typical business scenario with the current providers.

“Once I asked a Chief, ‘What do your people do for prescription drugs?’ He replied, ‘There’s a small town about 10 miles up the road, and the people go to the pharmacy there.’ So, I asked him, ‘Do you have a joint venture or profit-sharing agreement

Spruce Lodge Providing Province-wide After Hours Mental Health Call Centre



Spruce Lodge staff: Corrine Fiddler, Manager, and Medical Transportation Travel Coordinators Tanya Sewap and Selma Bear.

First Nation members in crisis can now phone a new after-hours toll-free number operated by PAGC's Spruce Lodge staff.

Callers are put in contact with one of 130 approved mental health therapists available across the province. Travel expenses for mental health professionals are covered through Health Canada's Non-Insured Health Benefits and the Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program (IRS RHSP).

"There wouldn't be a wait for approval," said Corinne Fiddler, Manager of Spruce Lodge.

"As we know, emergencies in mental health don't usually occur in between 8 to 5, so, as long as the individual needs somebody and their situation is a crisis that needs to be dealt with, then we would put everything in place so they can access those services immediately," explained Corinne Fiddler, Manager of Spruce Lodge Boarding Home.

"There wouldn't be a wait for approval," she added.

The Spruce Lodge staff managing the calls are not mental health providers. However, they have access to a list of mental health providers who could be

contacted by either the caller in crisis or the operator.

The mental health therapists are registered with a provincially-legislated professional regulatory body from the fields of psychology or social work and are eligible for independent practice.

Once they are contacted, the mental health provider determines whether a phone conversation would be enough or if they would need to immediately visit the community member in crisis.

"I was really happy that we could offer this service, because with the crises that have happened in our northern communities, it's stressful to get assistance. So, if we could alleviate that a little bit, then they would just need to make that one phone call and we can take care of the rest for them, so they can focus on their well-being," Corrine explained.

The toll-free line is one of four services provided by Spruce Lodge. It functions primarily as a 24-hour medically-approved home that provides meals, accommodation and transportation to registered First Nation clients who are travelling to Prince Albert to access medical services not available in their home community. In addition, Spruce Lodge provides in-city transportation for clients living in PA and needing assistance to travelling outside out the city, usually to see a specialist.

Spruce Lodge also runs a province-wide After Hours Emergency Call Centre, which provides assistance with meal, travel and accommodation to all registered First Nations residing in Saskatchewan who are experiencing a medical emergency.

Based on Spruce Lodge's success with the Emergency Call Centre, Health Canada offered the new Mental Health Call Centre to PAGC with additional funding of \$92,000. Operations began in May 2017. 📞



To access After Hours
Mental Health Counselling,
call toll-free

1-866-885-3933.

U of S Collaborates with H & SD on Oral History Project

H & SD has found a partner in the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) for a new community-engaged oral history research project on traditional knowledge of health and traditional lifestyles.

The video interviews with PAGC Elders will be used for community profiles in an intercultural competency training module for PAGC health professionals. It will also be used as an additional resource for H & SD programs in Maternal Child Health, Sexual Wellness and the Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative.

H & SD's Communications and Health Promotions Officer Tina Pelletier said there's a need for traditional knowledge in all of these areas.

"I was starting to produce a video for one of our programs, but then I wanted to broaden its scope to include more Elders from more communities on more topics," explained Tina.

She said that as she began to set out a plan, the more she decided to approach it as an oral history project and wondered whether the academic community might also be interested in it.

"From my perspective, this project is one of those cases of serendipity, where two things come together in an unexpected, happy way," recalled Dr. Carlson.

After contacting the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling in Montreal, she was put in contact with U of S's Research Chair of the Graduate Studies Program Dr. Keith Carlson who happened to be starting the second year of a project that gives faculty and students opportunities to work with First Nations and other organizations.

"From my perspective, this project is one of those cases of serendipity, where two things come together in an unexpected, happy way," recalled Dr. Carlson.

"I've been hoping we could have an Indigenous organization that would want to partner with us

and we could provide students with opportunities, not only to do oral history but also find creative, multi-media ways to share that information in the end. And then I got this call from Tina Pelletier from PAGC, talking about the initiative they wanted to move forward with, and it seemed to me to be such a natural fit."



U of S student Anyssa Plan


To advance the project, a student internship was set up through Dr. Carlson's "Collaboratorium" initiative with seed money provided by U of S's Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Vice President of Research, which H & SD matched.

Anyssa Plan, a fourth-year History major at the U of S, immediately wanted to sign up for the project.

"This is perfect for me," said Anyssa. "I've always wanted to learn more about Indigenous History, and I want to learn from the Elders and help develop my history skills, because it is something I'm interested in, plus I haven't had any experience in doing oral history myself aside from reading transcripts for research papers."

Since starting in June, she has been working on developing community profiles and interviewing Elders from five communities, including Hatchet Lake Denesuline Nation (Dene), Shoal Lake Cree Nation (Swampy Cree), Little Red (Woodland Cree), Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation (Plains Cree) and Wahpeton Dakota Nation (Dakota).

Her plan is to have a finished video product and archival footage indexed in a database by the end of August.

Dr Carlson wants the partnership to last. He hopes this pilot project will build a foundation for future work and allow H & SD and U of S to apply for some larger grants, so the work can be done a more "comprehensive and thorough way." 

Message from NITHA Tips on Reducing Stress

1. **Breathe.** Focus on breathing normally. Close your eyes, sit up straight, feet planted and connected to Mother Earth. Let thoughts go while you focus.
2. **Meditate.** 5 minutes of daily meditation helps 'heal the brain.'
3. **Reach Out.** Ask for help to deal with stress from positive friends, family and other support people. Do something with them or allow them to 'talk you through it.' Watch a pep talk video.
4. **Laugh.** It really is the best medicine. Laugh and watch how it lowers the stress – fake it – compete for best laugh!
5. **Exercise.** A little. Any kind of movement adds 'feel good' chemicals and reduces stress which causes inflammation and other problems.
6. **Listen To Music.** Good upbeat music is soothing and can lower blood pressure, heart rate and anxiety.
7. **Be Grateful.** Keep a list or journal of things you feel grateful about. Add to lists/drawings and read them often.
8. **Accept that you can't control everything.** Why give your valuable time or energy to those things or people you can't control.
9. **Stay Positive.** Change negative thoughts or thinking into positive. We can't control others but can control what thoughts we hold onto and which we let go of. Practice the positive. It's a gift.
10. **Do something FUN!** Start an old or new hobby, earn something, explore, start a positive group or team, give yourself or someone else a 'pep talk.' Most of all, enjoy your life!



with them?' And, he said, 'No, once we asked them for a donation for one of our pow wows and all [the pharmacist] gave us was \$50.'

Hatchet Lake Denesuline Nation Pilot Project

The first pilot project for the prescription fill service has already been put in place at Hatchet Lake Denesuline Nation's Health Centre.

Since February, nurses from Hatchet Lake's Health Centre and Nursing Centre have been processing consent forms for transfer of service and faxing the prescriptions, refills and new prescriptions to Providen's facility in Winnipeg.

Recently, Al Ducharme, Scott Carleton and Providen's Business Operations Manager Steve McGregor visited the community to assess the performance of the service.

According to McGregor, so far, the transition to the new system has been a "fairly smooth process."

"I'm happy that the times were perfect when we did our testing on the delivery and distribution system," said McGregor.

However, he said there were challenges, logistically, since the community is remote and not accessible by road. The costs could be substantial in terms of transportation but he said that Transwest Air has been accommodating to their needs.

From beginning to end, McGregor said the turn around time is fairly fast from the time an order is placed and individually-packaged to when it is picked up from the conveyor line for delivery.

"Every item in an order is scanned right from when the order is picked to when the order is shipped to the community. The stock bottle is scanned and then travels to the pharmacist down the line who scans the bottle to verify and double check each medication item," explained McGregor.

"The product goes back on the conveyor line to the shipping department where it's scanned a third time and there is another safety check to make sure each medication is there and nothing is missing or additional that shouldn't be in the order."

Then Providen's shipping company picks it up and it is transported to Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and

then onto the community on the WestWind flight.

Even though Hatchet Lake is located in the north, the turn around is just a day.

“If the orders are faxed on Monday, they can be filled, packaged and shipped, and arrive the following day at 4 pm on the 1:55 pm flight from PA. Then, a representative would pick up the shipment and distribute them at the nursing station. By the day’s end, the nurses will have faxed us a list of who picked up their order,” he said.

In the future, a pharmacist will be available 7 days a week and be available on-call during after hours and weekends through a toll-free number. H & SD’s TeleHealth system will also be able to connect them on a weekly basis, as well there will be up to three in-person visits per year.



Hatchet Lake's Assistant Nursing Supervisor Anne Proulx provides a consent form to a community member.

better than the service they are currently receiving.”

Carleton said he’s excited about the impact the project will have on First Nations.

“It feels incredible. I have a passion for economic development in First Nations communities, and I’ve been working for years to help First Nations create discretionary revenue streams, so I’m really excited about this model with Providen.”

Setting up the plan for other communities

Discussions are already underway to hold the next pilot projects at two other PAGC communities.

Into the future, PAGC plans on working “hand in hand with the new Saskatchewan Health Region and becoming part and parcel of that system,” but Ducharme says the direction on this project is set by the First Nations who have already approved future plans to consolidate services through a Medical Health Center.

“The First Nations leadership has directed PAGC and, more specifically, PAGC Health to build such an on-reserve facility. In fact, many of our First Nations are prepared to host this facility, so this is a sign of the growth and determination of PAGC First Nations,” Ducharme added.

“Managing our own health has long been one of our main guiding principles, so, with this pharmacy fill pilot project, we are closer to making this a reality.”

Grand Chief Ron Michel said he’s happy with the progress the team has made so far.

“I feel good about this because this will benefit so many of our people,” he said.

“It’s a win-win situation, because we’re taking our own health needs into our own hands, we’re also looking at, not only delivering prescriptions, but making sure we improve health care so we don’t have that many chronic diseases, such as diabetes and heart failures,” said Michel.

“I am a strong believer that, as First Nations, we can do this ourselves. We must move from dependency toward self-sufficiency, and if we’re going to be what we want to be as proud First Nations, this is the time that we start to take care of our people.”



Providen's automated prescription fill system in Winnipeg

McGregor said that it’s been beneficial for them to visit the community and take care of any problems first hand and “see where the needs are and issues that need to be addressed, so we can improve our service in the most efficient way.”

Carleton added, “We want to make sure we don’t jeopardize client care and make sure that the service we provide is at least as good and hopefully

H & SD News Briefs



On April 12, PAGC Women's Commission held a Family Support Day for Families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in partnership with RT/SIS. Allan Adam opened the event with an honour song.



On May 15, H & SD's Residential Health Support Program hosted a "60s Scoop and Day Scholar Information Session" at the Senator Allan Bird Gymnasium.



On June 2, H & SD organized the PAGC Team for the annual Canadian Cancer Society's Relay for Life in PA. It was the best year yet with the team raising \$4,063.85.

Upcoming Events

Responsible Gambling Program

Holistic Wellness Centre | Jun 26-30, Jul 24-28 & Aug 21-25

Gamblers Anonymous Open Meetings

Holistic Wellness Centre | Monday Evenings
(7:30 pm-8:30 pm)

Honouring Our Traditions (HOT) - Men's Program (10-day program)

Holistic Wellness Centre | Jun 12-16, 2017 & Jun 19-23

Call 306-953-7283 for more info.

New Patients Welcome

FAMILY DENTAL CLINIC

Dr. David Climenhaga

CALL 306-953-7283 Ext. 2042



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