

Elders Advisory Committee

Alberta Mental Health & Addictions Subcommittee of Health Co-Management

Collaborative Mental Health Care Conference
Calgary, Alberta
June 19, 2015

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Overview

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Context

- Health Co-Management (HCOM) is an agreement between First Nation signatories and the Minister of Health that was formed to be a proactive mechanism to improve health outcomes for First Nations in Alberta. It aims to increase the participation of First Nations in assessing, analyzing, and managing programs and services funded and/or offered by FNIHB Alberta Region.
- There are 6 subcommittees that report to the Health Co-Management Committee. **One of these subcommittees is the Mental Health and Addictions Subcommittee.**
- The Elders Advisory supports the work of the Mental Health and Addictions Subcommittee.
- Although the co-management structure is primarily comprised of First Nation representatives, the structure remains a Western structure – one that does not adequately represent First Nation culture, traditions or language.

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History

During the development of the regional prescription drug misuse strategy, the Mental Health and Addictions Subcommittee recognized that a missing element in the project was the incorporation of First Nation culture.

As a result of the advice and guidance from First Nation Elders on the development of the *Spirit of Healing: Alberta First Nations Conquering Prescription Drug Misuse Strategy*, the subcommittee determined that in order for any project/programming to be viable, traditions and culture need to be the foundation.

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Commitment

In August 2013 the sub-committee formally decided to support the creation of an Elders Advisory and funding was allocated. The 3 Lead Elders from the prescription drug strategy development would be appointed as the Lead Elders for the larger advisory group.

The Treaty area processes were respected to appoint 6 additional Elders from each of Treaty 6, 7 and 8.

In 2014 the first Elders Advisory meeting was held with the sub-committee to discuss purpose and to commence the drafting of the terms of reference.

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Purpose

The Elders Advisory advises and works collaboratively with the Mental Health and Addictions Sub-Committee of Health Co-Management on all issues concerning the mental health and well-being of First Nations' Peoples and communities by:

- providing advice, guidance and recommendations on the strategic direction of the subcommittee including First Nation language, knowledge, tradition, cultures, spiritual values, protocols and ceremonies;
- using the advisory's collective wisdom and knowledge to support the appropriate implementation of the vision and mission of the sub-committee.
- collaborating, communicating and participating with other sub-committees and working groups that provide mental health and addictions supports.

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Priorities

To date the Elders Advisory have advised and made recommendations on:

- the development of a cultural competency curriculum;
- the development of a mental health and addictions informational brochure;
- how to culturally launch the *Spirit of Healing: Alberta First Nations Conquering Prescription Drug Misuse* strategy;
- transition of the current Elders Advisory structure to a regional model which provides broader support.

One Elder now participates at each Mental Health and Addictions Subcommittee meeting to provide direct advice and recommendations at the time of decision making.



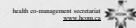
Why it's important

Ethical Space

The Elders Advisory and the Mental Health & Addictions Sub-Committee acknowledge the differences between Indigenous and Western ways of collaborating. Both groups demonstrate a continued commitment to navigating these differences in order to improve the wellbeing of First Nations in Alberta.

Cultural Safety

Cultural safety occurs along a continuum of learning. It begins with cultural awareness, moves along to cultural competency, and then to cultural safety. **Cultural competency** requires full and active involvement of the Elders. Movement toward cultural safety cannot occur without Elder teachings.



In Practise

Spirit of Healing: Alberta First Nations Conquering Prescription Drug Misuse



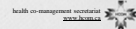
- The initial Elders Gathering was to ensure work was grounded in First Nation culture.
- The gathering started with ceremony launch the process.
- The Elders went through a visioning process to come to the name *Spirit of Healing: Alberta First Nations Conquering Prescription Drug Misuse*
- The Elders provided advice and guidance on use of traditional healing approaches and medicines and on identifying health mentors and supports for community members.



In Practise

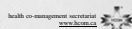
Spirit of Healing: Alberta First Nations Conquering Prescription Drug Misuse

- The gathering ended in ceremony to validate the data collected and was followed by a traditional feast to celebrate the launching of this significant initiative.
- The contracted consultant worked closely with the 3 Lead Elders throughout the community engagement process. Involvement of the Elders provided cultural validation for the process.
- First Nation communities readily embraced the strategy and community implementation has begun in 13 First Nations and 2 Tribal Councils.
- In May 2015 a ceremony was conducted by the Elders Advisory to launch the strategy and bless activities for the upcoming year.



Spirit of Healing: Alberta First Nations Conquering Prescription Drug Misuse
Website:

www.abfnspiritofhealing.com



Questions?

