

Health & Wellness

Minister Frances Chartrand



The Manitoba Métis Federation's (MMF) Health and Wellness Department (HWD) was established in 2005 to develop and use knowledge that is culture-based and holistic. The HWD's objective is to "close the gap" of health status for Métis families and communities. Over the past year, the department has experienced a lot of growth and has greatly expanded the work it does.

The HWD has played an active role in the Central COVID-19 Response Team as it continues to steer our Nation safely through the pandemic. The HWD staff and team participated in COVID-19 activities such as establishing the testing phone line, vaccination clinic, and Mental Health Wellness phone line to assist Citizens with any mental health issues during pandemic isolation and to ensure that Citizens' needs were met.

Métis-Specific Research/Programs

The HWD is leading research projects to build Métis health-specific knowledge to support the development of programs and services to meet the needs of Métis Citizens.

Validating What We Already Know: Measuring Métis Health Status in Manitoba

Métis Regional Health Survey

We know that many Citizens have a poorer health status compared to the general Canadian population. To find out more about health status, chronic disease, access to healthcare services, and preventative programming, the HWD initiated the development of the first Métis-specific regional health survey to build a comprehensive understanding of Métis health status and health patterns. This will be achieved using a two-pronged approach involving the planning and development of the Métis Regional Health Survey, which has been designed to provide detailed information about the general health and well-being of the Manitoba Métis population, and Point-of-Care Tests (POCT) to identify the clinical markers of diabetes and other chronic illnesses among the population. Results of the Regional Health Survey will be shared back with Citizens at AGA 2022.



Understanding the Opioid Crisis in Manitoba Métis: Evidence to Support Interventions (Opioid Study)

Many families and communities have been touched by the opioid crisis. This project is a first look at the use of opioids by Métis. The HWD is continuing to determine rates of opioid prescriptions for Métis in the province and in each MMF Region. It has examined the rates of hospital admission, medical visits, and emergency department visits associated with opioid use; it has examined mortality, suicide attempts, and deaths by suicide associated with opioid use. In this final year the HWD will identify whether opioid use has a differential impact on Métis when compared with all other Manitobans. The department staff will be visiting each Region to bring results back and to gain Citizens' observations to those results and gather input to address this issue.

Participating In Other Métis-Specific Research

In addition to the research projects the HWD leads, it is involved in projects with researchers from outside the MMF who share its interest in building a Métis-specific knowledge base.

Participatory Risk Communication: Indigenous Youth-Generated Health Messages

Youth play an important role as future leaders and Knowledge Holders. Using culture camps, the HWD is working with Youth aged 18 – 30 to build relationships with Youth and Elders using a variety of land and water-based activities. Over the past months, it has been unable to hold face-to-face camps. Instead of that activity, Youth were invited to submit videos about the impact of COVID-19 on their lives. The HWD anticipates the camps will resume in winter 2022.

Scaling Up – the Oral Health Study

We know good oral health is essential to a child's success in school and their ability to speak and even to chew food properly. This project involves working with caregivers of young Métis children to understand ideas about oral health and to develop some tools that would be helpful for them to use to prevent tooth decay, and to use in ELCC programs. It also provides oral screening on pre-school children in some Manitoba communities.

Programs

Informed by their research, the HWD provides programming to improve the health and wellness of Métis Citizens.

Prescription Drug Program

Since 2017 when your Métis Government developed its first Métis Health Benefits Prescription Drug Program, eligible Métis seniors and Elders have had access to essential prescription drug coverage. To be eligible, individuals must be Métis Citizens, over the age of 65, and have an income of \$25,000 or less. As of April of this year, Citizens over 55 years of age became eligible to apply to the program.

The success of the program is a result of the collaboration of the MMF Health & Wellness Department, the Métis Community Liaison Department (MCLD), and MEDOCare Pharmacy.

Métis Senior Vision Care Initiative

Vision is an important part of maintaining independence for Citizens; the Métis Senior Vision Care Initiative offers vision care services including managing healthy eye care, eye examinations, and prescription eyeglasses, all of which make this possible. Prior to COVID-19, Prairie Eye Care provided mobile vision care services throughout the regions. Once public health restrictions have been lifted, clinics will begin to be offered again.

Eligibility requirements for this program are the same as those for the Prescription Drug Program. However, there is value added for all Citizens regardless of age or income. Any Citizen can benefit from a negotiated rate of \$150 per set of prescription glasses, including bifocals or progressive lenses, by presenting their Citizenship card at the time of purchase.

Projects

Improving the Cancer Journey for Métis Citizens

We know that cancer has impacted every family and community in the Homeland. The MMF has committed itself to achieving the long-term goal of involving Métis culture into the cancer care system in ways that provide Métis Citizens using the system a level of comfort. To make this



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happen, the Health & Wellness Department is building a Métis Cancer Strategy. The HWD wants to help inform cancer care practices in a way that allows Citizens to receive holistic care. Over the past year, the department has been reviewing programs, policies, and resources for education on cancer prevention, diagnosis and treatment, and end-of-life care, and conducting interviews with health care workers in the cancer continuum and Indigenous health services. In the upcoming year, it will hold focus groups with Métis Citizens to help identify gaps in regions and to identify changes, supports, and resources you would like to see.

Tobacco Strategy

The Health & Wellness Department is developing a Manitoba Métis-Specific Tobacco Reduction Strategy. The primary goal is to reduce tobacco and vaping usage among Métis Citizens to improve health and quality of life. Over the past year, the HWD conducted a scan of tobacco reduction best practices and existing programs in Manitoba to best support strategy development. Early in 2021, staff consulted with tobacco reduction professionals across the province, and later this year they will visit various communities to gather Métis voices and experiences.

Climate Change and Health

The MMF is dedicated to environmental stewardship and ensuring the sustainability of Métis traditional livelihoods in a changing climate. Working in partnership, Energy & Infrastructure and the HWD are seeking to develop and implement an action plan focused on environmental resiliency and emergency management. Citizens will have the opportunity to further contribute to the Action Plan in upcoming workshops.

Partnerships

Over the past year, HWD staff have continued to build working partnerships to enhance Métis health and wellness, which include:

- MCLD and MEDO Care Pharmacy, to assist in both the Prescription Drug Program and the Senior Eyeglass Program,
- Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC),
- Canadian Institute on Health Research (CIHR),
- University of Manitoba (UM), and
- The Children's Health Research Institute (CHRI), Diabetes Canada, Dynacare Laboratories, and a pharmaceutical company called Boehringer Ingelheim.

In addition, the HWD works closely at a strategic level with the Canadian Partnerships against Cancer (CPAC) and CancerCare Manitoba to address Métis-specific preventative issues. It also interacts closely with the seven MMF Regions, and the Infinity Women Secretariat to connect with Métis Citizens at the local level about their health and wellness issues.

Health & Wellness staff took part in the Provincial Youth Forum held this year. Not only were they able to interact with several youth as they described the projects they are involved with, but they were able to create an opportunity for two Métis students who were also involved. They worked with the department over the summer and are intending to stay engaged with the Federation in the future.

In conclusion, the Health & Wellness Department will continue to work with their families and communities, partners, and funders as they continue to build the department and enhance social programming and services for Métis Citizens across the province. The HWD will also continue to foster meaningful relationships and partnerships across the departments and with the health care system, to ensure the health care needs of the Métis are identified and that programs and services are developed to meet them. Over the next year, the department anticipates continued growth with a group of committed, experienced staff working together to create knowledge and improve programs and services for Citizens.