

Health & Wellness



Frances Chartrand
Minister

The Manitoba Métis Federation Health & Wellness Department (MMF-HWD) was established in 2005 with a clear vision: “A Well Métis Community.” The MMF-HWD is committed to utilizing knowledge to improve Red River Métis health not only within Manitoba but also beyond its borders. To achieve this vision, MMF-HWD strategically assumes a leadership role by actively developing and employing health prevention and research, service delivery and interventions, community programming, and health analytics.

The overarching goal of MMF-HWD is to lead research and interventions leading to a positive impact on Red River Métis health as well as healthcare programs and services. Central to this mission are the voices of Citizens, who play a pivotal role in constructing Red River Métis-specific knowledge. Ethical considerations remain paramount in all activities, ensuring inclusivity for all. Through HWD’s initiatives, Red River Métis Citizens receive access, and are able to inform the creation of community health and prescription drug programs, COVID-19 supports, and also receive the most up-to-date information on Red River Métis health issues.

Overall, the Annual Report for fiscal year 2022/2023 highlights a period of remarkable growth and progress for the MMF-HWD. Through the establishment of new branches in 2022 (Clinical, Community Programming, and Policy and Health Information), and expansion of existing ones (Research), the department is well-positioned to continue its mission of promoting “A Well Métis Community.” The Department also continues to foster relationships with agencies such as the Federal Government (ISC, FNIHB), the Provincial Government, University of Manitoba, the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer, as well as Diabetes Canada and Dynacare. HWD staff continue to provide COVID-19 supports, such as vaccination, testing, and mental health care. The Department held two consultations, one specifically with Métis medical professionals, which were well received in the community.

With the ongoing dedication of its staff and the active involvement of Citizens, the MMF-HWD remains steadfast in its commitment to improving Métis health and well-being in Manitoba and beyond.

Community Programming

The Community Programming branch, established in 2022, enables the MMF-HWD to address Citizens’ health needs through a wide range of programs and initiatives. By engaging with the

Community and listening to their concerns, MMF-HWD is able to tailor health programming to be relevant, accessible, and positively impact the well-being of all 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 2021, 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. Currently, over 1,000 Citizens are registered in the program and receive financial support toward their medication, as well as comprehensive prescription consultation.

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.

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.

Medical Housing Initiative

In collaboration with the Housing Department, the MMF-HWD has been working on developing Michif Manor, which will provide short-term accommodation to Citizens and their families who are in the City of Winnipeg for medical appointments and treatment.

Mental Health Line

Recognizing the hardships caused by COVID-19, the MMF-HWD understands that many are experiencing feelings of sadness, stress, and anxiety. To provide support during these challenging times, the Mental Health Wellness phone line was established in December 2020, and continues to cater to the specific needs of Citizens.

This free helpline, staffed by Métis counsellors, received over 700 calls in the first year it was initiated.

Anyone feeling “out of sorts” is encouraged to reach out to us at 1-833-390-1041 extension 1 for assistance.

Clinical Services

Established in January 2021, the Clinical Services team of the Health & Wellness Department is dedicated to serving Red River Métis Citizens of Manitoba. In addition to the vaccine clinics, this branch coordinates two mobile Health Units in the southern and northern regions. These Health Units offer blood pressure

monitoring, diabetic footcare, and Point-of-Care Testing for health issues such as diabetes and high cholesterol, as well as general health. For up-to-date news regarding our clinic, check the MMF website.

The MMF-HWD understands that there is a need for an addictions treatment centre and have been working on ideas to make that a reality. Clinical Services is actively working on the creation of a Métis-specific centre to provide a range of treatment services for Citizens.

Services provided by Clinical Services include:

- ∞ 5-minute check-ins with registered/licensed nurses for one-on-one discussions about concerns.
- ∞ HbA1C tests with results in three minutes to monitor sugar levels.
- ∞ Cholesterol level tests with results in seven minutes.
- ∞ COVID-19 and other vaccinations.
- ∞ Diabetic foot care by registered foot care nurses.

Clinical Services' mission is to improve the health and wellness of Red River Métis Citizens across all seven regions in the province through education and support.

To book the Red River Métis Mobile Clinic, contact your local chair or office, or contact us at:

Email: clinicinfo@mmf.mb.ca, Phone: 1-833-390-1041 Ext: 3

Health Research

Since its inception in 2005, the Health Research team has been conducting qualitative research to understand the experiences and perspectives of Red River Métis Citizens. Our goal is to create Red River Métis-specific health knowledge by capturing lived experiences through consultations, discussion groups, and personal interviews.

Ongoing Projects (2022 – current)

1. Red River Métis Tobacco Reduction Strategy: The research team continues to develop Red River Métis-specific approaches to support our Citizens who smoke and wish to quit or reduce their tobacco use. Additionally, we aim to prevent the use of nicotine products among Youth and non-smokers. The Tobacco Reduction Strategy, currently in development, will outline an action plan for tobacco use reduction and prevention supports among Red River Métis.
2. REACH: Radon Education and Assessment for Community Health: Addressing the leading cause of cancer among non-smokers and the second leading cause among smokers in Canada, the Radon pilot study aims to increase awareness of radon exposure risks and lung cancer among Red River Métis. The team continues to install radon tests in Citizens' homes and provide mitigation systems to those with higher-than-recommended radon levels.
3. Red River Métis Perspectives on Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID): This research project aims to represent Red River Métis voices and concerns in federally issued MAID monitoring reports. It also aims to understand Red River Métis perspectives on MAID and identify their

needs and concerns related to this topic. Interviews with Red River Métis medical professionals and focus groups with our Citizens have contributed to a recommendations report for Federal health policy planning.

4. Distance to Care: Cancer Outcomes for Red River Métis in Rural Manitoba: Addressing barriers to cancer care identified in the Red River Métis Cancer Strategy, this project investigates challenges experienced by Red River Métis Citizens living in remote and rural areas during their cancer journeys. Health data, spatial mapping software, and consultations with Citizens continue to inform program development and policy to improve cancer journeys for those in rural and remote communities.
5. Maternal Health in Red River Métis: improving access to maternal and child health care services among Red River Métis women: With a focus on maternal and child health, this project aims to improve access to culturally appropriate maternal care services for Red River Métis women. Focus groups gather lived experiences of maternal health journeys, increase access to maternal and child health care services, and raise awareness about related risks through educational sessions.

Completed Projects:

The Research team also completed the following projects in the past year, adding to the growing body of Red River Métis-specific health knowledge.

1. Cannabis and Mental Health: Investigating perceptions of cannabis use among the Red River Métis, this study explored attitudes on use since the legalization of recreational cannabis and its potential role as a medicinal tool.
2. Red River Métis Opioids Strategy: This study examined the impact of opioid use on Red River Métis Citizens, families, and communities. The insights gathered will inform culturally relevant programming and support for our Citizens.
3. Red River Métis Cancer Strategy: Collecting stories of Red River Métis living with cancer, survivors, and their families, this study identified barriers and mechanisms to improve their cancer journey. Information gathered was used to inform the Red River Métis Cancer Strategy, providing a roadmap to enhance cancer care in Manitoba.

If you are interested in participating in any of the studies or learning more, contact healthresearch@mmf.mb.ca.

Policy and Health Information (PHI)

The Policy and Health Information team was created in January 2022 and continues to work on the following Initiatives to develop Red River Métis-specific information to support policies, programs, and services for Citizens:

1. Vaccine Hesitancy: The “Fully and Meaningfully: Engaging with Red River Métis Citizens to Increase COVID-19 Vaccine Understanding and Uptake” project aims to reduce vaccine hesitancy within the Red River Métis population. The goal is to explore attitudes toward COVID-19 immunization and create a Red River Métis-specific education strategy to improve vaccination rates.

2. **Health Legislation:** The PHI team works with the Federal Government to develop distinctions-based legislation based on the principles outlined in UNDRIP. This will create Red River Métis-specific legislation, programming, and services, fostering the health and wellness of all Citizens in line with the Community's view of well-being.
3. **COVID Surveillance:** The "Looking Backwards to Plan for the Future: COVID-19 Surveillance of Red River Métis" project is a Red River Métis-specific data linkage study examining aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic in our community. The goal is to enhance knowledge of health and well-being and build upon existing understanding of COVID-19 in this population.
4. **Red River Métis Regional Health Survey:** Conducted in conjunction with the University of Manitoba, this large-scale project aims to understand the health experiences and needs of Red River Métis Citizens. The survey results will contribute to policy and programming to improve the health and well-being of Red River Métis throughout the province.

If you would like to participate in the Red River Métis Regional Health Survey, please email MRHS@mmf.mb.ca or call 204-391-3723.

Community Consultations

In November 2022, the Health and Wellness team actively engaged in consultations with Citizens from The Pas, Thompson, and Northwest. Additionally, we held a specific consultation with Red River Métis health professionals in March 2023. The topics covered a range of crucial issues, including health legislation, medical transportation, vaccine hesitancy, mental health, and addictions.

During these consultations, we actively listened to Citizens, who shared their valuable experiences with various health systems. The focus groups facilitated productive conversations where

individuals discussed their health and wellness journeys and expressed their aspirations for future health services.

Partnerships

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

- ∞ MCLD and MEDOCare Pharmacy, to assist in both the Prescription Drug Program and the Senior Eyeglass Program,
- ∞ Public Health Agency of Canada,
- ∞ Canadian Institutes of Health Research,
- ∞ University of Manitoba, and
- ∞ The Children's Health Research Institute, Diabetes Canada, Dynacare Laboratories, and a pharmaceutical company, Boehringer Ingelheim.

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

In conclusion, the Health & Wellness Department remains committed to collaborating closely with Red River Métis families, communities, partners, and funders as we work diligently to strengthen the department and improve programming throughout the province. Looking ahead to the next year, the MMF-HWD anticipates continued growth and progress, with a passionate team of experienced staff working together to create knowledge and enhance programs and services for the well-being of our valued Citizens.

