

Aboriginal Health Access Centres & Aboriginal Community Health Centres



WHAT AHACs & ACHCs DO

Aboriginal Health Access Centres (AHACs) and Aboriginal Community Health Centres (ACHCs) are community-governed, primary health care organizations where you can go to see a doctor, nurse, or other health professional such as a physiotherapist, dietitian or mental health counsellor. They're also places to see a traditional healer or medicine person, or to connect with an Elder, teacher or Indigenous counsellor. Importantly, all staff at AHACs and ACHCs work together to address the physical, spiritual, emotional and mental needs of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis (FNIM) people and communities they serve. The organizations also break down barriers by working with FNIM communities and provincial health systems to optimize federal and provincial health resource capacity. This model of care enables high levels of innovation delivering comprehensive services focused on improving health outcomes and community wellness, as well as accelerating Indigenous health gains.

THE MEANING OF 'COMMUNITY-GOVERNED'

On every level — services and programs offered, health outcomes, cultural safety, funding and more — AHACs and ACHCs answer first to Indigenous people and communities. Decisions aren't made alongside the community — they're made by community members who sit on the governing boards of AHACs and ACHCs and base their decisions on what they've learned through ongoing outreach to the community.

A UNIQUE APPROACH TO PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

Our approach to wellbeing addresses the underlying causes of poor health including intergenerational trauma, impacts of systemic racism and the stress caused by the daily pressures to assimilate (Allan, B. & Smylie, J. 2015). AHACs and ACHCs help people to reconnect to each other, their families, communities, cultures and languages. They are also a key liaison and support for FNIM people and communities to develop relationships of respect and dignity with western health care providers. AHACs and ACHCs also recognize that the social determinants of health — income, education, adequate housing and diet — can all contribute to poorer health outcomes. To address these, AHACs and ACHCs provide comprehensive client care, which includes traditional healing to address the social and spiritual determinants of health, health promotion and illness prevention programs, and better access to social services.

HOW AHACs & ACHCs SERVE THEIR COMMUNITIES

To reflect the diversity of individual communities, AHACs and ACHCs provide services in several Indigenous languages: Oji-Cree, Cree, Inuktitut, Iroquois, Mohawk and Ojibway. It also means that AHACs and ACHCs provide care in multiple locations; for example, primary care services of doctors and nurses are made available by most AHACs and ACHCs in people's homes, in Friendship Centres and First Nations Health Centres and in other suitable locations across communities to improve access to primary health care, mental health and traditional healing services. AHACs and ACHCs regularly meet with community members to find out what the centre is doing well, and what could improve. Through client experience surveys, and opening the door to better understand community interests, concerns and priorities, AHACs and ACHCs strengthen communities' control and ownership of resources that support good health and wellbeing.

AN EVIDENCE-BASED, INDIGENOUS MODEL

Since 2013, all AHACs and ACHCs have used the same Electronic Medical Record, with data capabilities becoming more sophisticated every year. The sector serves 66,000 people annually, according to 2016 estimates. Advanced technologies will soon enable the sector to have a clearer picture of who they serve, and give AHACs and ACHCs enhanced reporting and planning capabilities. Those developments will in turn help build on a culture of constant improvements.

The sector recognizes that ownership and control over Indigenous health data belongs in Indigenous communities' hands, and AHACs and ACHCs thus work with the First Nations Information Governance Centre to ensure that the principles of OCAP® (Ownership, Control, Access, Possession) are adhered to whenever and wherever Indigenous health data is collected, stored and used.



Ontario's Aboriginal
Health Access Centres
Centres autochtones d'accès
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