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Prairie Mountain Health enhances Aboriginal health strategies

Prairie Mountain Health (PMH) continues to work with stakeholders, health partners and organizational leaders to improve overall Aboriginal health along with developing a skilled and diverse workforce to assist with that goal.

The Regional Aboriginal Health program, coordinated by Bonnie McKay— based out of the Minnedosa Health Centre—continues towards improving health services delivery for First Nation, Metis and Inuit residents. Recently, the program expanded to add a First Nations and Metis Health Liaison for the northern part of the PMH region. Duane Ironstand, of Tootinaowaziibeeng First Nation, commenced his position in May 2015. He is based out of the Dauphin Community Health Services Building and will promote the sharing of resources, partnership development, navigation and advocacy, as well as support patient, family and community engagement.

In advance of National Aboriginal Day June 21st, PMH wishes to acknowledge support from select health partners in piloting an Aboriginal Human Resources office in Russell. PMH received funding contributions from Manitoba Metis Federation and Manitoba's Office of the Rural and Northern Health (ORNH) and rental space from the Regional Employment Resource Centre. This allowed for the establishment of an Aboriginal Human Resources (HR) office in Russell, located at the IGA Mall, and the hiring of a .5 position for a one-year term. Aboriginal HR will build and expand relations with organizations in Russell and area to provide opportunities for employment, education, social and cultural services for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal inquiries.

PMH's Aboriginal HR initiative, led by coordinator Shawn Charlebois from Swan River, strives to increase the number people who self-identify as Aboriginal within the Health Region's workforce and provide improved service to Aboriginal peoples through cultural awareness and responsiveness. With the opening of the Russell site, it brings the number of Aboriginal HR offices the Region now has to four. The others include Brandon, Dauphin and Swan River.

According to the PMH 2015 Community Health Assessment, the health region has an Aboriginal population of nearly 16 per cent, which is slightly below the Manitoba average of 16.7 per cent.

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