

Alberta Doctors' Digest

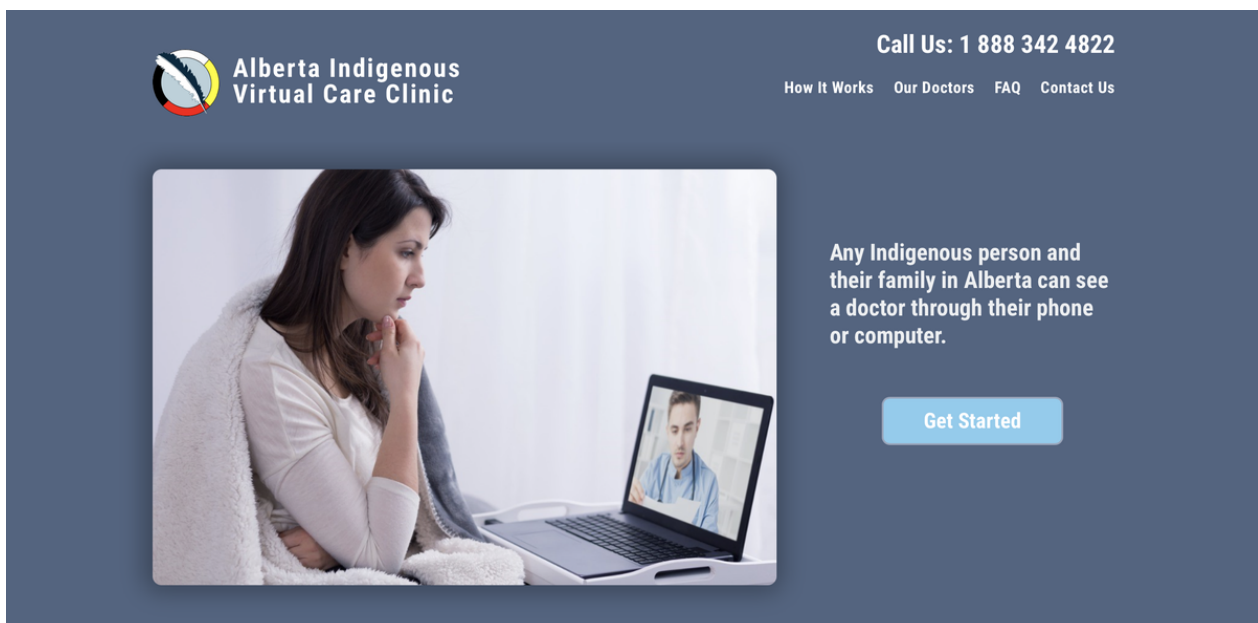
Alberta Indigenous Virtual Care Clinic

On October 28, 2020, the [Alberta Indigenous Virtual Care Clinic](#) (AIVCC) opened its virtual doors, providing same-day visits with family doctors for rural and urban First Nations, Métis and Inuit patients and their families. Working in partnership with local primary care providers, the AIVCC complements existing services for Indigenous peoples and ensures continuity of care.

“Visits” to the AIVCC are arranged by medical office assistants, who help set appointments up for patients to see a family physician either through WiFi or video conferencing tools, or even just by phone, depending on what technology the patients have access to.

“With this virtual clinic,” says Amy Gausvik, Physician Lead with AIVCC, “we’re working to remove systemic barriers for Indigenous persons by increasing access to culturally safe primary care in rural areas as well as in under-served urban areas,” she continues. “By connecting patients with local resources, we hope this clinic will bridge care gaps.”

As Dr. Gausvik stresses, COVID-19 has contributed greatly to further challenges to accessing care for Indigenous patients and communities. “These barriers are especially overwhelming in communities with limited or no access to primary care and where transportation is scarce, and made even more difficult during the pandemic,” she adds.



The screenshot shows the home page of the Alberta Indigenous Virtual Care Clinic. At the top left is the clinic's logo, which consists of a stylized feather or arrow in a circle, followed by the text "Alberta Indigenous Virtual Care Clinic". To the right of the logo, the phone number "Call Us: 1 888 342 4822" is displayed. Below the phone number are four navigation links: "How It Works", "Our Doctors", "FAQ", and "Contact Us". The main content area features a photograph of a woman sitting on a couch, looking at a laptop screen that shows a male doctor in a blue coat. To the right of the photograph, the text reads: "Any Indigenous person and their family in Alberta can see a doctor through their phone or computer." Below this text is a blue button with the text "Get Started".

Home page for Alberta Indigenous Virtual Care Clinic (link in first sentence of this story)

Continuity of care and cultural connections

The AIVCC has procedures in place to ensure continuity of care, including, with the patient's consent, copying the patient's primary care provider on care provided through the AIVCC, including investigations and referrals. Every effort is made to connect patients with local clinical resources, including primary care providers (if available in their area) through their local Primary Care Network (PCN).

"The AIVCC is staffed by family physicians who are either Indigenous themselves, or experienced working in Indigenous communities," comments Dr. Esther Tailfeathers, Medical Director, Provincial Indigenous Health and physician member of the AIVCC. "All of these physicians currently work in Indigenous communities in Alberta and are members of PCNs."

"We hope that physicians will join us in this important initiative," says Dr. Tailfeathers. "By working in partnership with AIVCC physicians, they can support their Indigenous patients and families," she adds. "Together, we can reduce unnecessary ER visits, improve connection with the health care system and improve health outcomes for Indigenous peoples who face significant challenges in accessing health care."

The AIVCC is a joint primary care initiative of Indigenous Services Canada ([First Nations and Inuit Health Branch](#)), [First Nations Technical Services Advisory Group Inc.](#) and [AHS Indigenous Wellness Program Clinical ARP](#).

Related link:

[Virtual clinic gives access to health care to Alberta's isolated Indigenous communities](#)
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