

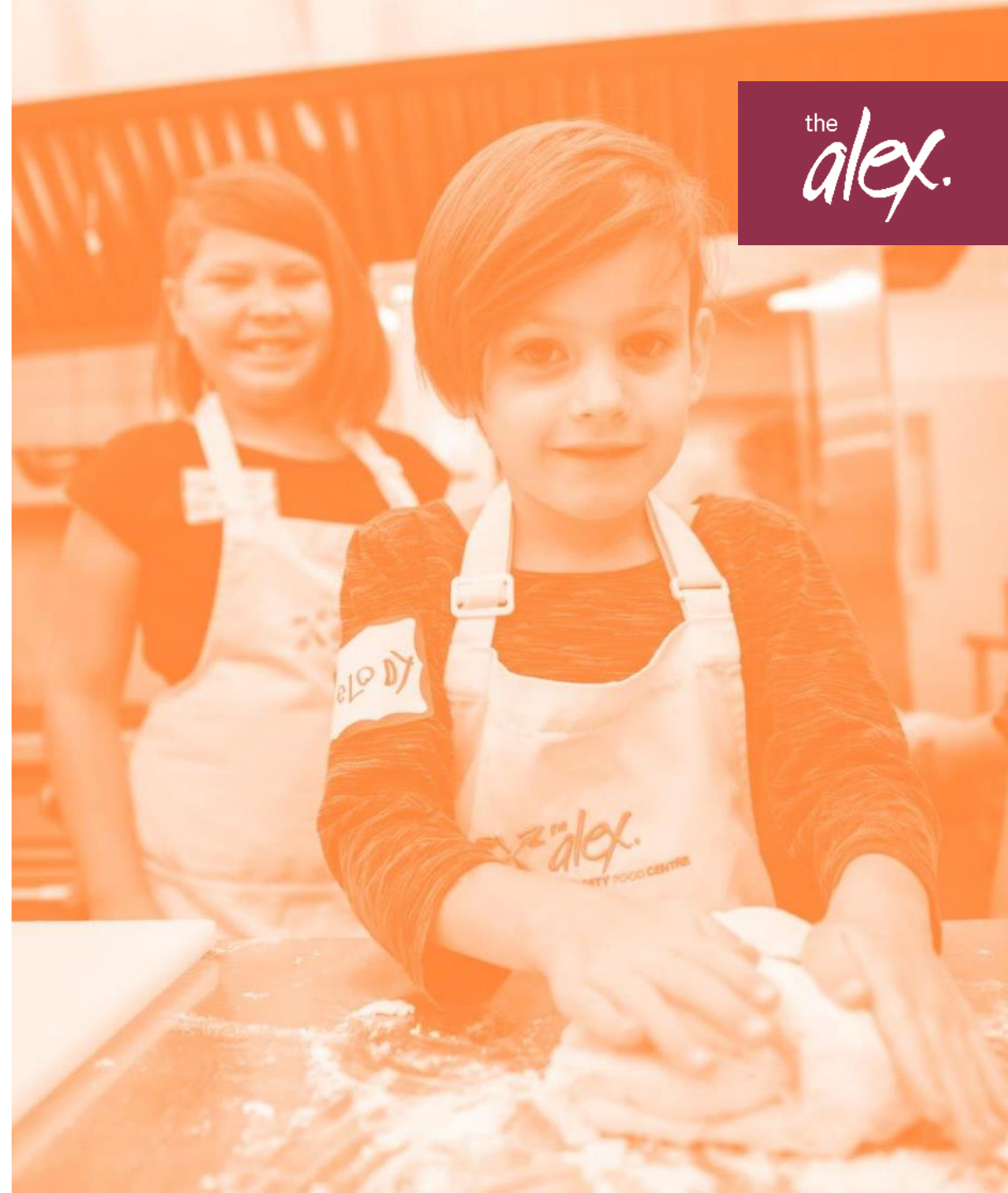
Developing an Indigenous Health Strategy

Anika Sehgal

Research Intern, The Alex

&

PhD Candidate, Department of Community Health Sciences,
Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary





Who are we?

The Alex is a non-profit health and social services organization that has provided integrated and accessible supports and thoughtful, comprehensive care to Calgarians for almost 50 years.

With a full complement of health, housing, and community programs, the Alex is a hub of supports and outreach services for people who are experiencing poverty, trauma, social isolation, or health challenges including addiction.



Serving the Indigenous population

- We provide care to a high number of Indigenous peoples in Calgary
- Some of our services see more Indigenous peoples than others (youth health centre ~ 30%)
- Our CHC sees significantly fewer Indigenous patients → need to improve our services

Community Health Centre



- CHC is a full-service health clinic that understands that good health is so much more than just physical
- Doctors, nurses and a social team who are here to support well-being and to understand patients' needs
- Medical care, mental health, gender-affirming care, social supports, justice navigation, pharmacy services...

Developing an Indigenous Health Strategy for the CHC



- **Phase 1:** Look to existing research about what we know works best in PHC settings
- **Phase 2:** Bring together Indigenous Elders and community members to explore what is important to them
- **Phase 3:** Engage with pre-existing Indigenous patients at the CHC to identify strengths and weaknesses
- **Phase 4:** Gain input from staff at The Alex to determine level of knowledge surrounding Indigenous health

Phase 1: review of existing literature

- Recognize the longstanding impacts of colonization and inter-generational trauma
- Identify and address the unique determinants of health impacting Indigenous peoples
- Promote cultural safety in healthcare settings



Phase 2: community engagement

- 2 Indigenous Elder-led Talking Circles in a panel format to discuss what actions The Alex needs to take to be a safe space for Indigenous peoples
- 1 Community Sharing Circle to hear from those who have not accessed care at The Alex and why not



Phase 2: community engagement

- Healthcare needs to be “safer” for Indigenous patients – this includes fostering trust
- Create a warm and welcoming environment – everyone is equal
- Promote Indigenous representation



Phase 3: one-on-one interviews

- 8 pre-existing self-identifying Indigenous patients from the CHC participated
- Semi-structured interviews to explore strengths and weaknesses of the CHC
- What has been helpful? What is missing? How can we do better?



Phase 3: one-on-one interviews

- Participants appreciated that at The Alex, we went beyond the biomedical – a major strength
- Missing Indigenous healing services, cultural practices that can serve to bridge a gap – includes having a space for Elders



Phase 4: staff survey

- Staff want more opportunities to learn about Indigenous peoples, culture, and history
- Supportive of decolonizing The Alex and to align with the TRC's Calls to Action

Themes

Identified Themes



Theme 1:

Increase Indigenous involvement in policies and practices at The Alex

Theme 2:

Develop holistic healthcare services suited to the needs of Indigenous patients

Theme 3:

Build capacity to be a culturally safe space for Indigenous peoples



What's next?

- Check in with community and Elders
- Seeking guidance on our next steps and how to do things in a “good way”
- Slow changes to achieve meaningful and sustained changes across our organization
- IHS is just the beginning, we know we have a long way to go

**Thank You to the IPHCPR
Network for the continued
support!**