

**Beaufort Delta Regional Wellness Council  
December 10, 2022  
Minutes**

**In Attendance:** Deborah Gordon-Ruben, BDRWC Acting Chair  
Peggy Day, BDRWC Member  
Ruby McDonald, BDRWC Member  
Sasha Blake, BDRWC Member  
Arlene Jorgensen, Chief Operating Officer, NTHSSA-BDR

**Apologies:** None

**Guests:** None

**Member of Public:** Donnie Roberts, Programs Manager Gwichinya Gwich'in  
via Telemerge

**1.) Call to Order** at 1:04 pm. by Deborah Gordon-Ruben, Acting Chair

Ms. Gordon-Ruben welcomed everyone in attendance.

**2.) Reflection / Prayer** led by Peggy Day at 1:05 pm

**3.) Approval of the Agenda**

Motion 2022-12-10-01 Moved by Ruby McDonald seconded by Peggy Day that the agenda be accepted as presented.

**4.) Previous Meeting Minutes – Review and Approval**

Final minutes from the October 29 to 30, 2021 meeting were reviewed.

Motion 2022-12-10-02 Moved by Deborah Gordon-Ruben.

That the Beaufort Delta Regional Wellness Council (BDRWC) minutes for October 29-30, 2021, be approved with correction on page 12 to reflect corrections from "Reuben" to "Ruben" and change the signatory from Ethel-Jean Gruben, BDRWC Chair to Debbie Gordon – Ruben BDRWC Acting Chair.

Motion Carried

## 5.) Business Arising from Previous Minutes

- Ms. Ruby McDonald commented on page 2 of the previous minutes about Debbie Gordon-Ruben's question on staffing in the Beaufort-Delt Region. She mentioned that there is a particular situation in Fort McPherson where an office secretary is hired or designated as Home Support Worker that takes care of an elderly in the community. She is concerned about this because to her knowledge there are a couple of community member who undergone taking care of elders in the community but for some reason they are not hired for the position. Ms. McDonald thinks that it is not helpful to the community when staff is not trained in a particular position and hired just because they have connections with hiring authorities or management.

Ms. Deborah Gordon-Ruben asked if there are ways to look into this concern brought up by Ms. McDonald and what can the Beaufort-Delta Regional Wellness Council can do to improve hiring of Homecare Staff in the region.

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) Arlene Jorgensen informed the council about the Government of the Northwest Territories Human Resources (GNWT - HR) hiring process for Northwest Territories Health and Social Services - Beaufort-Delta Region (NTHSSA - BDR) staff in the region.

If other applicants, thinks the proper hiring process and screening is not followed, there is an appeal process that they can go through during competition for the position.

If the employee is already hired and there are concerns on how staff performs or there are lapses in performing her duties and responsibilities, community members can always contact the employee's immediate supervisor/manager and notify them of this concern so they can address it with the certain staff responsible.

If concerns brought up are not dealt with within the department concerned, community member can elevate their complaint to NTHSSA Quality and Risk Manager – North, Sarah Fitzgerald who is responsible for looking into concerns about the delivery of services by NTHSSA for Sahtu and BDR. Ms. Fitzgerald assess these concerns and brings it to the COO attention if needed.

**Action Item:** COO will bring the concern of hiring unqualified employees for the homecare position to HR.

- Ms. Peggy Day commented on page 6 of the previous minutes and asked if there are any update from Child and Family Services about new federal legislation for children and families and if there any new information regarding implementation. Any report, data and statistics will be appreciated because Inuvialuit Regional Corp. (IRC) and them as members will be asked by community members of the status of the new federal legislation.

The COO commented that the COO is not directly involved with Child and Family Services unlike in the past because of the restructuring that happened with NTHSSA. There is now the NTHSSA Territorial Child and Family Services (CFS) that is responsible for the whole region including BDR. The COO will contact the Director of CFS and will invite them again to do a presentation for the BDRWC.

Ruby McDonald commented that there is too much barrier with implementation and collaboration with the government when first nation organizations want to get involved with Child And Family Services.

**Action Item:** COO will invite the CFS Director next meeting to do a presentation and update on CFS about the new federal legislation for children and families.

- Ms. Peggy Day Commented on page 9 of the previous minutes regarding the GTC concern on LARGA Facility. Ms. Day is asking if there is any update and if there is a resolution on this concern.

The COO informed the council that the previous chair Ethel - Jean Gruben presented the letter about the LARGA Facility to the Leadership Council (LC) which met last February 2022, and the COO believe it is shared with the Minister but because there is no BDRWC meeting after the LC meeting, the COO have no update or information on the LARGA Facility.

**Action Item:** The COO will follow up with the LC on The LARGA Facility issue.

**Action Item:** The Executive Assistant will include the LARGA Facility Concern next meeting agenda.

## Chief Operating Officer Action Items

Included in the meeting package:

*NIHB Dental Travel Coordination (document)*

- Invite Ms. Gabor Mate and Cindy Blackstock to present to the regional wellness councils. The recommendation was passed on to Allen Stanzel, who is responsible for governance, and let him know that that was a request for education.
- Finally received the NWT and NIHB coordination document for dental appointment which was delayed due to the fact that Dental Services is a federal program through NIHB and is managed by Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) staff in the territory. The Health Center only host them in the communities. The Dental Clinic in Inuvik is private. Sally Ross is the main contact for all dental issues in the region. There are dental services issues in the region that need to be addressed.

**Action Item:** The Executive Assistant will find out the position title of Sally Ross from the DHSS.

**Action Item:** The COO will inquire on how to lodge a complaint to the dental professional regulating body.

**Action Item:** COO will draft a letter for the BDRWC chairperson to be sent to the BDR Leadership on the dental issues in the region.

- COO identified our NTHSSA Quality and Risk Manager – North, Sarah Fitzgerald and her role as a main point of contact to all complaints and concern regarding delivery of care. The COO also identified new staff Denise Ritias as the Senior Indigenous Patient Advocate who will be the main point of contact for Indigenous patients in the acute care who need assistance during their stay in the hospital and in other medical facilities outside the region.

**Action Item:** The Executive Assistant will send a copy on their email of the complaint poster to BDRWC members.

- The Acting Chair recommended to consult IRC in recruiting staff for Homecare program in the communities. It was a successful recruitment when IRC is involved.

**Action Item:** The COO will bring the recommendation to consult IRC when hiring Regional Staff for Homecare Program to the RM Continuing Care.

- The chapel pulpit is now donated to the Roman Catholic Church and waiting for the wooden pews to be donated. The Chapel has now more space for other religious faith to use and always open for patient, residents and visitor to use.

**Action Item:** The COO will have an open signage placed on the Chapel.

- Some pieces of the Medical Travel process are territorial policy and some of them involve out of the province medical facility so there is a challenge to figure out where the bottlenecks are. COO brought the concern to the Executive Meeting and a process mapping will be done to identify which area can the region improve and areas where territorial departments can work on.
- The Acting Chair commented that there is a flaw in Medical Travel Escort Policy, and it is not being implemented properly in some cases that she has personal knowledge off.
- Donnie Roberts asked if nurses could advocate for elders on medical travel escorts and nurses to educate patients on how to navigate Medical Travel especially on medical travel escort. Donnie also suggests that CHR's in the communities can also advocate and educate patients in the community in regard to Medical Travel Escorts. The COO is very appreciative of the suggestion and think it is a very good idea so she will discuss it with the management team and figure out how to implement it with the current nurse and CHR staffing in the region.

**Action Item:** The COO will discuss the suggestion of nurses and or CHR's advocating and educating patients on medical travel escorts with the management team.

- The COO will look into how Long-Term Care (LTC) in Sahtu is doing their Indigenous Meal successfully and how they navigate the Environmental Health policies in place. The vision is to have indigenous meal in place permanently in the hospital but in accordance with Health and Environmental Safety Standards.

## 6.) Chief Operating Officer Report

Ms. Jorgensen went over her written report. Discussion highlights:

- **Key Initiative Highlights**

- Beaufort Delta Mental Health and Addictions Renewal Project

- Recommendations on the project are still in the implementation stage.
- There is a need for bureaucracy to support the program and not for it to drive the program.

- The COO will have a meeting in February 2023 with the DHSS to discuss what kind of standards or processes need to change to support the project.
  - Four recent Community Wellness Worker hires (CWW) in Aklavik, Sachs Harbour, Tuktoyaktuk, and Inuvik are all Indigenous staff.
- Inuvik Primary Care.
    - Hired a new CHN in Public Health.
    - Increased same-day appointments for patients who do not need to see a physician.
  - Suicide Response Planning.
    - Ms. McDonald commented that it is essential to educate the community to recognize the signs of a suicidal family member or anyone in the community. Early warning signs of suicidal tendencies can help prevent actual suicide incidents.
    - The Acting Chair commented that Suicide Ideation collaboration with IRC worked so well in the communities.
- **Operational Updates**
    - Increased pressure on Emergency and Acute Care.
      - Increased pressure on the system due to COVID.
      - Lot of mental distress especially in the communities.
      - The Acting Chair receives more calls about mental concerns from community members in her work from around 10 pm to early midnight.
    - Staffing Challenges
      - This year is the most challenging in almost 50 years in terms of a national shortage of healthcare workers and it greatly affects the whole territory and the region.
      - More casuals and job shares nurses are being hired due to the shortage of nurses across the territory.
      - Hiring student nurses to work in the region so they will be encouraged to work permanently in their communities.
      - The Acting Chair commented that there is a perception of GNWT employees being restricted from participating in outside activities which is the reason for other people not applying for a government position. The COO informed the council that it is not restrictive as it is perceived but there are policies in place to prevent conflict of interest with certain positions in government.

- Organizing the Job Ops Event in the hospital to expose and educate students about career opportunities in the healthcare sector.
- **Service Delivery Highlights**
  - Senior Indigenous Patient Advocate.
    - Hired Denise Ritias to work as Senior Indigenous Patient Advocate for the BDR.
  - Accreditation
    - Accreditation is a 4-year process where Accreditation Canada assesses NTHSSA and making sure the quality-of-service delivery is meeting the national standards.
    - Ms. Day asked if the dental services are included in the upcoming NTHSSA accreditation. They are not.

**Action Item:** The COO will inquire on whether dental services are required to be Accredited in the NWT

- Ms. Day is taken aback learning how many missed appointments in the whole territory and would like to know if there are statistics in particular for the BDR. The COO informed the council that our Telehealth Coordinator implemented a couple of ways to improve missed appointments and it lowered down the statistics below the national average which is very significant in our region.

**Action Item:** The COO will inquire on the statistics of missed appointments in the BDR and include the data on the next meeting.

## 7.) Chairpersons Report:

- The Acting Chair mentioned and acknowledged the report of the previous Chair Ethel-Jean Gruben, and it is included in the meeting package sent for members of the present council.
- The Acting Chair mentioned that there are new members in the Leadership Council and would like to familiarize herself with the members of the present Leadership Council.

**Action Item:** The Executive Assistant will send a copy of the latest Leadership Council Membership to the BDRWC members.

- Ms. McDonald commented on her concern about Ambulance Services. She observed that there are unqualified staff working at the Ambulance Services in Fort McPherson and have knowledge of some community members not

properly attended because of this staffing issue. She would like to know who is responsible for the Ambulance Services and what are the things that the NTHSSA can do to improve the Ambulance Service particularly in Fort McPherson.

- Ms. McDonald also informed the council of one particular instance where an elder need transportation to the airport but there is confusion on who can assist whether it is the Ambulance or the Health Center.
- The COO informed the council that the Community Government through Municipal And Community Affairs (MACA) funding is responsible for all Ambulance Services in the whole Territory except the BDR. NTHSSA – BDR is responsible for transferring patient form one facility to another, so they contracted an ambulance service to transfer patient from the hospital to the airport for MEDEVAC. It was decided that since the NTHSSA – BDR already contracted the ambulance service, they included to service the Town of Inuvik and just bill back the NIHB for its services.
- MACA will be working with Health and Social Services on identifying a whole-of-government approach under existing department mandates and resources, as well as future actions that may require new mandates and resources.

**Action Item:** The COO will inquire on the concern regarding transportation of an elder patient from the community to the airport.

## **8.) Review of BDR RWC Issues and Priorities list**

Discussion Points:

- Ms. Day would want to review and study in depth the extensive list of issues and priorities on this document before discussing it in the meeting.
- The COO explained how the issues and priorities list are categorized by column. The 2<sup>nd</sup> column is the description of the topics and the next to column to it are the recommendation of the BDRWC members. The last column are the response and actions of the LC when they are brought up to the LC Meetings by the Chair. The last column also includes the comments by the COO and questions on how the BDRWC members want to proceed on the response by the LC.
- The Acting Chair agreed that the list is very extensive and needs a thorough review by the members to identify which are their priority. She also observed that some of the topics have been in the list for some time now with no concrete actions taken.

**Action Item:** The Executive Assistant will send a word copy of the issues and priorities document to all BDRWC members.



## 9.) BDRWC Members Roundtable

Ms. McDonald

- Ms. McDonald is very concerned about the suicide situation in her home community in Fort McPherson.
- Bullying is one of the main factors in the increase of suicide cases in the community.
- The government bureaucracy is hampering efforts by the community to help their own people to avert or identify early signs of suicidal tendencies of community members.

Ms. Day

- Ms. Day find the meeting to be very informative about the health and social services in the region.
- Ms. Day is so thankful be a part of the BDRWC and glad to be of support to the community.

Ms. Blake

- Ms. Blake is appreciative of being a member of the BDRWC for her community.
- Ms. Blake will review the Issues and Priorities document and will share more of her communities concern next meeting.

Ms. Gordon-Ruben

- Ms. Gordon-Ruben would like to know how Housing Corp. can help Homelessness in the Community.
- Ms. Gordon and other members would like to invite the NWT Housing Corp to ask for information on their Homelessness Program particularly the Homeless Shelter in Aklavik and in Inuvik. Also, how both organizations can work together on homelessness in the region.
- Ms. Gordon-Ruben is elated to be back as Member and now Acting Chair of the BDRWC.

**Action Item:** The COO will invite the NWT Housing Corp. Territorial Director responsible for Homelessness to the next meeting.

## 10.) Decision Items and Recommendations to the NTHSSA Leadership Council

- The Chair will work on a report with all the concerns raised with some of the priorities on the list and bring it to the next Leadership Meeting.

## 11.) Date of Next BDRWC Meeting

- The council decided to have the next Beaufort-Delta Regional Wellness Council Meeting in Inuvik in February or March of 2023. The tentative dates will be sent to all members in December 2022 for confirmation and to finalize the date of the meeting.

## 12) Closing Prayer


Ms. Day led the closing prayer.

Motion 2022-12-10-03 Motion for the meeting to be adjourned Moved by Ms. Peggy Day Seconded by Ms. Sasha Blake

Recorded by: Dennis Dulay, Executive Assistant, NTHSSA - BDR

Minutes approved by the NTHSSA – BDRWC

On the 11th day of March, 2023



Deborah Gordon-Ruben, BDRWC Acting Chair