

Eckville News

Eckville opens new medical clinic in partnership with Montana First Nation

Sarah Baker

The Town of Eckville celebrated the grand opening of its new healthcare services clinic developed in partnership with the Montana First Nation on Nov. 29.

At the grand opening ceremony members of the Montana First Nation, town officials, government, health, and community partners were in attendance.

While the grand opening ceremony was on Nov. 29, the Akamihk Heath Care Services Clinic officially began accepting patients on Nov. 1. Its opening represents the culmination of two years of discussions between the Town of Eckville and the Montana First Nation in Maskwacis, Alberta.

In Eckville the lack of accessible health care prior to the new clinic opening has been an ongoing challenge, Mayor Colleen Ebdon said.

"Our local doctor's office closed 12 years ago." The partnership between the Town of Eckville and the Montana First Nation would not have been possible without Cenovus Energy.

"Cenovus Energy, who had previously committed financial support to the Town for medical services, used their network of contacts to introduce us to the Montana First Nation, which had recently opened a medical clinic in their community," Ebdon said.

"We helped connect the two sides to create a partnership. We look forward to seeing the positive outcomes of this new collaboration," Vice-President of Conventional Operations at Cenovus Energy Mark Nelson said.

Since 2022, the Akamihk Health Care Services clinic has been providing Indigenous-led, patient-centered care to the Montana First Nation members and neighbouring Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities around the Montana First Nation reserve, Montana First Nation Chief Ralph Cattlemann said.

"The goal of our health care business unit is to provide primary care and radiology and imaging



Jason Nixon, MLA, Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services gave a speech at the event.

services to Indigenous and rural communities in Alberta. This business was created because of the need and challenges that we as Indigenous people and many rural communities face when it comes to accessing health care services."

The new clinic is also part of the Montana First Nations efforts to open clinics in different parts of the province.

"As our second rural site, the clinic in Eckville represents an important step in our healthcare-led economic development model. We look forward to working with the community in bringing our integrated health care services model to area residents," he added.

To do this the Montana First Nation has been working with the Alberta International Medical Graduate Association (AIMGA), the Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons (CPSA), and other professionals.

"As we expand the services to other rural locations, we hope to keep our partnership with these organizations and professionals and look forward to working with other communities and organizations," Cattlemann said.

More information on Akamihk Health Care Services can be found on the website, akamihkhealthcare.ca.



Chief Cattlemann (Montana First Nation), Malina Adams (Cenovus Energy), and Mayor Colleen Abden (Town of Eckville) stand in front of the new clinic. (Contributed photo)



Montana First Nation Drummers and Dancers performed at the event.

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