

# Enhancing Access to Pediatric Rehabilitation Care in a Remote Northern Indigenous Community using a Teams and Technology Approach: A Community-led Pediatric Rehabilitation Pilot

## Project Description

Children who live in rural and remote areas may experience reduced access to healthcare services which can impact their overall health and well-being. Rural and remote communities often have fewer healthcare providers with specialized pediatric training, including rehabilitation providers such as physical and occupational therapists. Children and families may be required to travel long distances to access such services. Virtual health technology, including remote presence robotics, is one avenue for enhancing access to healthcare providers while allowing families and children to remain in their home community.

The overarching aim of this project is to collaboratively develop a culturally-informed model for the provision of children's rehabilitation services in partnership with Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation and the community of Pelican Narrows. First, the research team must gain an understanding of community needs and preferences for children's rehabilitation services. A community needs assessment will be co-created with community stakeholders with the following objectives:

1. Identify community needs and preferences for children's rehabilitation services
2. Understand community experiences with accessing children's rehabilitation services, travelling for services, and utilizing remote presence technology (Doc in a box and Remote presence robot)
3. Identify ways to evaluate a pilot clinic that are culturally meaningful and relevant

With the guidance of the community, interviews and sharing circles with community members, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, families, and healthcare providers will identify community-prioritized needs for children's rehabilitation services, as well as experiences in travelling for care and the use of remote-presence technology.

The project will also empower community members to identify culturally appropriate strategies in providing rehabilitation services virtually and culturally relevant outcome measures. In partnership with the community, the results of the needs assessment will be analyzed and will inform the collaborative development of a pilot hybrid (virtual and in-person), family-centred children's rehabilitation clinic in the final phase of the project.