



# RURAL IMPACT REPORT

Alberta & Northwest Territories Division • 2019 - 2020

The following supports are available through the MS Society to individuals affected by MS in rural communities across Alberta & Northwest Territories:

## ADVOCACY

One-on-one assistance with addressing system navigation challenges or other barriers for people facing the complexities of MS.

## COMMUNITY WELLNESS PROGRAMS

Working in partnership with local community organizations and individuals to identify and promote adapted or specialized exercise and physical activity programming to assist people with MS in enhancing their quality of life.

## EDUCATION

In-person and webinar options provide updates on the latest MS information, treatments, coping strategies and research developments, for people affected by MS and their support networks, including the local healthcare community.

## INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

Providing consistent, quality MS information and support via telephone and email by specially trained MS Navigators via telephone and email.

## PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM AND SELF-HELP GROUPS

Connecting people affected by MS with others facing similar realities.

## FRIENDLY VISITING PROGRAM

Connecting people living with MS who reside in a long-term care facility with friendly visitors for increased support, awareness of community resources and decreased social isolation.

## QUALITY OF LIFE - EQUIPMENT GRANTS

Providing financial assistance for the purchase of equipment that improves quality of life for people living with MS.

# MS SOCIETY COVID-19 RESPONSE

In March 2020, the MS Society of Canada moved to delivering programming virtually due to COVID-19.

Ensuring the health and safety of the entire MS community remains our top priority. Given the nature and the risk of COVID-19 in relation to the MS community we have made the decision to continue supporting Canadians affected by MS by delivering programs and events virtually.

The MS community can access nationwide research and education webinars, NeuroSask - a virtual program that offers physiotherapy-guided movement and social connection, and more from the comfort of their homes. We are currently developing plans to ensure we can support individuals in rural communities with limited access to technology and those in long-term care. **Our work to support Canadians affected by MS will not stop.**

# HIGHLIGHTS



**869** rural Albertans affected by MS were provided information and referral support.

**22**

self-help and support groups were held in rural communities and virtually throughout Alberta

**52**

rural Albertans living with MS received equipment funding support towards improving their quality of life and aiding in the managing of their MS and MS symptoms.

**42**

rural Albertans received advocacy support on issues related to employment, income supports, housing, human rights, healthcare and medication access, and disability insurance.



Community wellness programming was offered in partnership with local community organizations in Bonnyville, Grand Prairie, Lloydminster, and Yellowknife. Virtual wellness programs were also delivered to rural and remote communities in 2020.



Support to attend the annual MS Connect Conference was provided to 19 people with MS from rural Communities. In 2019, MS Connect was also broadcast virtually to people in the communities of Fort McMurray and Lethbridge allowing over 30 people to attend virtually.



Volunteers and staff provided support and social engagement through friendly visits to individuals with MS living in long-term care facilities in Barrhead, Grand Prairie, Hinton, Lloydminster, Lethbridge and St. Paul.



Social and recreation opportunities were provided for people living with MS in over 14 rural communities including summer BBQs, holiday social events, Christmas drop-offs to people living in a long-term care facility and the Annual William Watson Lodge retreat.



Direct one-on-one peer support was provided to 20 people living with MS in rural Alberta.



MS Education sessions and/or research presentations were delivered in over 19 rural communities via webinar or in person sessions.



**We're only one call away.** The MS Society staff across Alberta and Northwest Territories are working remotely to deliver on our mission. Additionally, our MS navigators are available to provide support to people affected by MS.

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