

1966-1979

Lethbridge Health Unit



Portrait of the City of Lethbridge Health Unit staff in front of the Galt Building, March 1979. FRONT ROW, L-R: Constance Cook, Wendy Bradley, Marion Pashkovich, Grace Hodgins, Cheryl Wolcott, Jo-Anne Kirby, Dr. Barbara Lacey, Agnes Short, Yosh Chaki, Louise Laqua, June Crighton, Cheryl King-Hunter, Linda Flatla, Maria Kuthner. SECOND ROW, L-R: Idwal Potter, Wendy Timmermans, Helen Malinsky, Joan Schow, Karen Alston, Norma Sees. BACK ROW, L-R: Sharon Herman, Katherina Mayba, Karen Burdzy, Penny Kohoutek, Marjory Sutherland, Wendy Hartley, Cheryl Rath, Carolyn Leishman, Darlene Bevilacqua, Carl Lemke. Galt Museum Archives, 19800156000.

As early as 1894, Lethbridge hired a Medical Officer of Health (MOH) to help protect the population from unsanitary conditions in businesses and homes and the spread of contagious diseases.

The city provided many services on its own initiative until 1958 when a provincial government Health Unit was established to provide preventative health care in Lethbridge and later to surrounding communities.

The Health Unit operated out of the City Hall Annex until it required new space in which to expand its services. An agreement was signed with the City of Lethbridge to use the ground floor of both the 1910 and 1930 Galt Hospital buildings in 1967 and that use continued until 1979. A wide variety of services were offered through in-house clinics, school and home visits, and industrial inspections.

Inspector Idwal Potter checked businesses handling food for cleanliness, and proper food storage and waste disposal. Nurses, under the supervision of Agnes Short, visited schools to monitor the health and well being of the children. They addressed issues of malnutrition, lice and unwashed bodies. Doctors like Edmund Cairns inoculated children with the new Salk or Sabin vaccines to protect them from polio in the 1950s.

Dental care was offered by a licensed dentist and dental hygienist by the late 1960s. A portable dental chair was purchased as dental employees were required to travel to schools in the area. People came to the Galt Building for x-rays to test for tuberculosis until the clinic closed in 1977. Mothers brought children to the Health Unit to monitor the health and growth of their babies. Speech therapy was provided for children who required assistance. The Health Unit was even responsible for mosquito control much to the satisfaction of the Henderson Lake Golf Club who sent a note "congratulating the Board on its mosquito control program."