

## Manitoulin Island Addictions Services Program Changes Health Centres

July 21, 2017 -- When a person is dependent on a substance such as alcohol or drugs, quitting can be difficult. Even reducing your intake can seem impossible.

A program on Manitoulin Island provides support to those wanting help dealing with their addictions. Community Withdrawal Management Services (CWMS) offers assessment, support groups, home-supported counselling, and a connection to other services.

The program was created 17 years ago and operated by Manitoulin Health Centre (MHC). At the time there were no other providers equipped to offer it. That has since changed. With the help of funding from the North East Local Health Integration Network (NE LHIN) the Noojmowin Teg Health Centre has grown into a place of healing as well as the new home of CWMS.

“Manitoulin Health Centre has long recognized the need for client assessment and for services that relate to withdrawal programming, and have looked historically to help fill this need,” said Derek Graham, President and CEO of Manitoulin Health Centre. “MHC looked to our local community partners for opportunities for enhancements. Coupled with the needs locally for culturally appropriate services, and given the range of community services available through Noojmowin Teg, the situation was right for this transition.”

Noojmowin Teg Health Centre, on Aundeck Omni Kaning First Nation, offers community-based programs to the local Indigenous population. These services include primary care, allied health, mental health and addictions, traditional healing, health promotion, as well as home and community care.

“Clients going through withdrawal are often dealing with underlying mental health issues,” said Pam Williamson, Executive Director at Noojmowin Teg Health Centre. “We are able to offer a broad range of services and better address the myriad of needs that person may have. We aim to help people see a pathway and figure out their goals.”

This move is in line with the NE LHIN’s priority to improve access and increase care coordination to addiction services. Last year, the NE LHIN commissioned Dr. Brian Rush to



**Derek Graham, President and CEO, Manitoulin Health Centre (MHC) and Pam Williamson, Executive Director, Noojmowin Teg Health Centre have worked together to transition Community Withdrawal Management Services from MHC to Noojmowin Teg.**

review the North East region's addictions services providers. Dr. Rush recommended enhancing support for community-based withdrawal management services.

"The Manitoulin Health Centre has been committed to this program and to clients for nearly two decades, but treatment needs have changed – and today Noojmowin Teg is better able to meet those needs," said Kate Fyfe, Interim CEO, NE LHIN. "This is an opportunity to have different services and programs work collaboratively to respond to this client population."

Three months after the move, one woman expressed how grateful she is that the CWMS program exists, and how satisfied she is with her treatment during the transition of the program to Noojmowin Teg.

"I'm very proud of what the assessment people provide. They make you feel very welcome and they don't judge you. I was open to the people I spoke with and I felt very happy with every appointment I attended," she said.

The transition of Community Withdrawal Management Services from Manitoulin Health Centre to Noojmowin Teg took about eight months and was seamless for both clients and staff. Noojmowin Teg leased a new space and incorporated the existing two-member team within its Mental Health and Addictions program.

"Our commitment is to maintain the existing priorities, and to build further support to the three local alternative therapies clinics, to increase program awareness and accessibility, and to seek more engagement with the partners of the Island Mental Health and Addictions Network," said Williamson.

#### **Background:**

- The Noojmowin Teg Health Centre is committed to supporting and promoting the overall holistic health and well-being of Anishinabek and Aboriginal individuals, families and communities within the District of Manitoulin Island.
- Noojmowin Teg is one of ten Aboriginal health access centres in Ontario. It's funded, in part, by The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the North East LHIN.
- From April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017, Noojmowin Teg saw close to 3,000 clients and had nearly 12,000 client encounters.
- The [North East LHIN Addiction Services Review](#) made several recommendations concerning the development and growth of withdrawal management services (WMS) in the region. Dr. Rush explained that it is more cost effective to locate WMS in community (rather than hospitals) and that "patients can be well-managed with an appropriate model of collaborative care that includes nursing support in the community-based WMS and good cooperation with hospital-based and other community physicians."

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