

## MEDIA RELEASE

# North East LHIN's Continued Journey of Reconciliation

**March 16, 2017** – Six months after launching Northern Ontario's first-ever *Health Care Reconciliation Action Plan*, the North East Local Health Integration Network (NE LHIN) continues its work to expand culturally appropriate health care services to build a stronger system of care for Aboriginal Northerners.

In the past year alone, the NE LHIN has supported Indigenous cultural safety training for more than 400 Northerners working in health care. The eight-week online training course is designed to broaden understanding of the history of Aboriginal Canadians, and strengthen the skills of practitioners working with Aboriginal people.

Gloria Daybutch, Chair of the NE LHIN's Local Aboriginal Health Committee and Executive Director of Mamaweswen North Shore Tribal Council says, "Our vision continues to support the healing process of Aboriginal Northerners so that future generations never have to suffer from uncontrolled poor health and well-being."

The CEO of the NE LHIN, Louise Paquette, notes that the LHIN applies health equity and cultural sensitivity approach in all of its work to better meet the health care needs of fellow Northerners. "A designated group of LHIN staff work in partnership with federal and provincial partners, as well as our health service providers, to strengthen the relationships and services needed to better support the needs of Aboriginal Northerners today and for generations to come," said Paquette. "This is part of our shared journey towards reconciliation."

The NE LHIN team includes Carol Philbin Jolette, Senior Advisor to the James and Hudson Bay Coast; Debbie Szymanski, Aboriginal Officer; and new to the team is Darlene Orton, a member of the Dokis First Nation. Earlier this year, Pam Williamson, Executive Director of Noojmowin



The North East LHIN Aboriginal Health Care team includes Aboriginal Officer, Darlene Orton, a member of Dokis First Nation, (left); Senior Advisor Carol Philbin Jolette (middle); and Aboriginal Officer Debbie Szymanski.

Teg Health Centre and a member of the LHIN's Aboriginal Health Committee, was named Co-Chair of the NE LHIN Mental Health and Addiction Advisory Council. The Council holds the important responsibility of implementing the recommendations outlined in Dr. Brian Rush's Review of Addictions Services in Northeastern Ontario. The report was commissioned by the NE LHIN and found themes of access, coordination and system sustainability faced by Northerners accessing addiction services, which are in keeping with the NE LHIN's current priorities for enhanced patient care across Northeastern Ontario.

**FACTS:**

- Read Northeastern Ontario's first-ever *Aboriginal Health Care Reconciliation Action Plan* [here](#), and Dr. Brian Rush's report [here](#).
- The strategies of the LHIN's Reconciliation Action Plan are developed around the directions of the cultural medicine wheel – Opportunities (*East*), Relationships (*South*), Knowledge and Understanding (*West*), and Sustainability and Evaluation (*North*) – a widely recognized approach that represents wholeness, balance and interconnectedness.
- The plan is aligned with the priorities of the NE LHIN's Integrated Health Service Plan for 2016-2019, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report (which includes 94 calls to action to aid in the reconciliation of the legacy of Canada's residential school system), and Ontario's First Nations Health Action Plan.
- The Aboriginal population within Northeastern Ontario is approximately 11% of the total population; in general, Aboriginal people experience a lower health status than other Northerners.
- The primary health conditions experienced by Aboriginal Northerners, include:
  - Higher rates of medically complex chronic health conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and mental health disorders.
  - Physical aging at a younger age due to multiple chronic conditions.
  - Higher cases amongst Aboriginal youth of mental health issues, chronic illnesses and poor oral health.
  - High rates of suicide and suicide ideation.
  - Over-representation as clients in addiction services across Northeastern Ontario.

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