

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Sault Area Physicians devoted to helping vulnerable Northerners recognized as Healthy Change Champions**

**April 5, 2018** – Two Sault Ste. Marie physicians, who have a passion for helping patients in difficult circumstances, are being recognized by the North East Local Health Integration Network (NE LHIN) as **Healthy Change Champions**. Dr. Alan McLean and Dr. Sarah White provide physician coverage at a weekly drop-in clinic that operates each Thursday at the Neighbourhood Resource Centre (NRC) on Gore Street.

“Thanks to the efforts of Dr. McLean and Dr. White, people in Sault Ste. Marie are receiving quality care and patients are being linked to vital social and community supports in order to live more healthy and well,” said Jeremy Stevenson, CEO of the NE LHIN. “As a LHIN we are working to ensure quality care is delivered equitably so that people can access it close to home. Dr. McLean and Dr. White are making great strides in addressing equity and accessibility in their communities.”

The clinic opened at the NRC in 2014 as an initiative of Dr. McLean, his wife Sue McLean, and Michelle Brisbois of the Superior Family Health Team. Gaining the trust of residents in the neighbourhood took some time.

“The first week we had zero patients. The second week we had zero patients again. The third week we had one. But now we have more patients than we can see every week, which speaks to the need that is out there,” recalled Dr. McLean,”

Dr. White began assisting with the clinic while she was still a resident in 2015. She quickly found that she had a passion for the work and has been splitting time at the clinic with Dr. McLean since becoming a full-time physician in the summer of 2016.

“We often talk about how this is some of the most rewarding medicine we do. If I see someone in my office, I can help fix their high blood pressure, but it’s hard for me to help them if they can’t eat or don’t have a place to live. Working here, you get to be a part of that and you have the chance to help patients in a holistic way,” said Dr. White.



*Dr. Al McLean and Dr. Sarah White.*

Working at the clinic presents challenges, including a large number of complex patients. However, both doctors are upbeat about the successes that the clinic and the NRC have experienced. Since the NRC opened, the number of social disorder calls and mental health apprehensions occurring in the area have decreased markedly. As well, the community hub model has proven to be an effective approach that could be used in other high-needs areas.

“One of things that has really been noticeable has been the sense of community that has developed here,” said Dr. McLean. “Building relationships with the other front-line service providers has also been really helpful. If I have a patient who need assistance with housing I know where to bring them and likewise the other service providers who encounter clients with medical issues can bring them to us.”

For the two current doctors, it’s both the differences from everyday practice and the meaningfulness behind the work that makes it easy to stay dedicated to the clinic. As Dr. White explained, “When I come here, with the patients I’m dealing with, the direct things I do can make a huge difference in their lives. I just feel really honoured to work here. It’s definitely a welcome change to come here and do this work.”

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION – Healthy Change Champion Award:**

- **Who is Eligible?** North East LHIN health service providers, employees and volunteers of providers, as well as, health care leaders, community leaders, and other Northerners who are contributing to building a stronger health care system in the North East.
- **What kind of work does the NE LHIN Healthy Change Champion recognize?** Those who are transforming the health care system so that it becomes more patient/client-focused, integrated, and easier to access. These are people or organizations who are reaching out to others in the course of their work to improve the system.
- **Who can nominate?** Any Northerner can suggest a Healthy Change Champion. We just ask that you tell us in one or two paragraphs why you believe the person or organization deserves this recognition. Send your nomination to [engengagingwithyou@lhins.on.ca](mailto:engengagingwithyou@lhins.on.ca).
- **How are they picked?** Nominees are reviewed by our senior team. Consideration is also given to individuals and organizations advancing the care for special population groups within the North East LHIN including seniors, Aboriginal/First Nations/Métis, and Francophones.

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