



Pathways to Well-Being was a one-day workshop hosted on June 28, 2017 by the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) Indigenous Affairs Office and Research Portfolio on the traditional territory of the Fort William First Nation. Bringing together youth, Elders, community leaders, and government representatives the Workshop focused on strategies to promote life and life skills, and identify strengths of communities to address the crisis of youth suicide. Using a World Café approach participants provided recommendations on five themes.

THEME 1: TRADITIONAL WAYS

We need to practice our way of life through kindness and revitalize who we are by connecting to the lands but also respect other peoples' beliefs as spiritual wellness is about a way of life for everyone. We must include our language. Our ways need to be taught to everyone through cultural training and in our schools starting at junior kindergarten through to university. It is important to recognize language, rites of passage, and culture and how these assist in dealing with stigmas including racism and colonization.

THEME 2: MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS

It is important to have safe spaces created within our communities to talk about the different traumas we have faced as peoples but also focus on the resilience of our peoples and celebrate each other. It is important to host community meetings and share information at community events. Education is still a key component in meaningful conversations and guest speakers can be utilized to address different age groups in the education system. It is important for Youth and Elders to come together but we need to recognize that it can be challenging for the Youth to approach the Elders due to lack of knowledge on protocols.

THEME 3: ROLE OF COMMUNITY AND COMMUNITIES, CAREERS AND EDUCATION

Each community has healthy role models that can be utilized. Some communities are at a different level of healthiness so networking among communities is important for sharing ideas and successes. Our Youth need to have a voice and establishing Youth Councils in the communities provides the space for their collective voice to be shared at the Chief and Council table. The communities need to secure funding to support administration, for land-based learning and provide Elders in classrooms, language immersion and assisting Youth in career choices so they can secure a job in the community.



Pathways to Well-Being workshop participants stressed that it is important for young people to know who they are, their nations, names, clans and rites of passage.

THEME 4: ROLE OF THE HEALTH WORKFORCE

Health-care providers have a role in educating the community on issues and solutions but also in providing adequate training. Health-care providers also need to be trained in cultural safety and recognize the diversity between and within communities. They can host dialogue sessions and address racism through models of care and kindness. It is important that they provide a vision of what wellness looks like being inclusive of physical, mental, social and spiritual—the holistic approach.

THEME 5: PARTNERSHIPS, COLLABORATIONS AND OTHER INFLUENCES

Communities have the knowledge and can network, develop partnerships and collaborate to deal with issues. Chief and Council along with Elders and Youth all have a role in this. Respect is the foundation to developing any type of partnership and in collaborating. There are specific roles that NOSM can play such as advocacy, coordinating capacity building in the education systems, providing support for community based initiatives, assisting with accessing health funding, adopting a faculty program and, assisting with the development of a health care staffing model that suits the needs of the communities.

NEXT STEPS

The *Pathways to Well-Being* Workshop provided the opportunity to identify volunteers to contribute to a Steering Committee that will develop a multi-year action plan to build on the opportunities promoted at the workshop:

- The importance of more land-based activities to be hosted in the communities, which need to include language, rites of passage, healing ceremonies, and all aspects of our culture.
- The role of social media and other opportunities to share information and create dialogue within and across communities at community events, health fairs and traditional ceremonies.
- The importance of working together and assisting each other to deal with stigmas including racism and colonization.
- The role of health-care providers in educating the community of issues and solutions and providing adequate training within communities.
- The importance of health-care providers taking cultural safety and training and recognize the diversity between and within communities.



Pictured (left to right): Ms. Valerie Oshag; Chief Arlene Slipperjack; Mr. Jason Smallboy, Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Deputy Grand Chief; Dr. Charles Branch, Co-Chair, NOSM Indigenous Reference Group; Hon. Jane Philpott, Minister of Indigenous Services; Dr. Roger Strasser, NOSM Dean; Hon. Patty Hajdu, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour and MP, Thunder Bay-Superior North; and, Mr. Don Rusnak, MP, Thunder Bay-Rainy River.

PATHWAYS TO WELL-BEING REPORT

The full report of the *Pathways to Well-Being* Workshop can be found at nosm.ca/reports.

"The plan forward needs to be community-based."



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