

NORTHERN PASSAGES

VOLUME 18 | ISSUE 1

COLLABORATIONS ABOUND IN
TEMISKAMING SHORES

REFLECTING ON LESSONS
LEARNED IN NORTHERN ONTARIO

RECORD DONATION
FOR INDIGENOUS MEDICAL STUDENTS



Northern Ontario
School of Medicine
École de médecine
du Nord de l'Ontario
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NORTHERN PASSAGES

Newsletter of the Northern
Ontario School of Medicine



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Cover photo: Devil's Rock, Temiskaming Shores.

Stéphanie Lachapelle,
third-year NOSM medical student



COLLABORATIONS ABOUND IN TEMISKAMING SHORES

Last fall, executive leaders from the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) spent time in the community of Temiskaming Shores. The three-day itinerary provided an opportunity to meet with local physicians—who are also faculty members at the School—community members, and NOSM residents and medical students who are living and learning in Temiskaming Shores.

“We designed this visit to learn as much about the community as possible,” says NOSM’s Chief Operating Officer, Mr. Ray Hunt. “It is important to us that we learn something new about the community we visit and celebrate the work we do together. The success of NOSM is not based in Sudbury or Thunder Bay—it is what happens in communities just like Temiskaming Shores.”

Temiskaming Shores, created by the amalgamation of the town of New Liskeard, the town of Haileybury, and the township of Dymond in 2004, is a community of 9,920 in Northeastern Ontario. The community is a busy teaching site for the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, with 20 local physicians involved in teaching medical students, residents, physician assistant students, and other health-professional learners.

One of the NOSM medical students living and learning in Temiskaming Shores is Stéphanie Lachapelle. From a young age, Lachapelle says she was interested in medicine. “I first thought of being a nurse

or physiotherapist, but I realized I might have potential to do more,” says Lachapelle. And wanting to do more, Lachapelle set her sights on becoming a physician. “After graduating from École secondaire catholique Sainte-Marie, I decided to pursue a career in nursing knowing that in my fourth year of studies I could apply to the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. I was accepted into NOSM’s MD program on my first try.”

A Francophone from Belle Vallée, Lachapelle has welcomed the opportunity to embrace the academic support provided by NOSM’s Francophone Affairs Unit. “There are plenty of opportunities for me to supplement my medical school classes with learning medical terminology in French, practicing patient interviews in French with volunteers from the community, and working with physicians who can evaluate my clinical work in French,” says Lachapelle. “Each of these opportunities gave me the foundation I needed to complete two clinical placements in French—one being Smooth Rock Falls and my third-year Comprehensive Community Clerkship placement here in New Liskeard.”

“I wanted to come home to work and learn in my community during my third year,” says Lachapelle. “The patients here have been so supportive. They have been very understanding of me taking extra time with them to be thorough. At NOSM, we get a lot of one-on-one interaction with



Third-year NOSM medical students in the first-of-its-kind medical simulation lab at Temiskaming District Secondary School.

physicians, and I'm always made to feel like my learning is a priority. I am grateful to the physicians here in Temiskaming Shores and I feel privileged to have these experiences. Going to any other medical school wasn't an option I considered. I hope that by sharing my experiences, I can encourage more Northern youth to consider a career in medicine."

In addition to working at the local health centres and hospital, Lachapelle has been able to visit the Temiskaming District Secondary School (TDSS), where the school, local physicians, and medical community recently built a medical simulation lab—the first-of-its-kind in an Ontario high school.

Teacher and paramedic Thomas McLean teaches in the highly successful Health Care Specialist High Skills Major program

at TDSS, which gives students hands-on experience in the medical field.

"The equipment, purchased through a collaboration between TDSS and the South Temiskaming Local Education Group (LEG), allows physicians and students practice high level simulations including trauma skills and cardiac resuscitation," says McLean.

Dr. Stacy Desilets, NOSM's Family Medicine Program Director, is excited for the educational opportunities the TDSS simulation lab also provides for both local physicians and NOSM learners. "The equipment that is available in the simulation lab is incredible," says Desilets. "The lab is set up to run scenarios in a clinic room, trauma bay, or the back of an ambulance. Our physician group has committed two afternoons a month at TDSS, where physicians work with high

school students. We are also working to schedule time for NOSM residents and third-year medical students to become involved with the simulation lab as well."

While in Temiskaming Shores, NOSM's executive leaders also hosted a faculty development session in Haileybury, visited the Great Northern Family Health Team, as well as the TDSS simulation lab. "Temiskaming Shores has been heavily involved with teaching NOSM learners from the very beginning; this is one of the first communities to host medical students during their third year of studies," says Dr. Roger Strasser, NOSM Dean. "It's incredible to see the great collaborations taking place between the NOSM faculty and learners and the community."



NOSM board member, faculty members, staff, and students gathered in Temiskaming Shores.



Danielle Barbeau-Rodrigue
and François Hastir

BEHIND THE SCENES

ENGAGING WITH FRANCOPHONES

In each issue of *Northern Passages*, individuals share a “behind-the-scenes” look at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. This edition features two members of the School’s Francophone Affairs Unit, who share with us how they connect NOSM with the Francophone people, organizations, and communities across Northern Ontario.

Can you share with us what your role is at the School, and how long you've been with NOSM?

Danielle Barbeau-Rodrigue (DBR): My first day with NOSM will always stand out in my mind, as it was just a few days after the school opened in 2005. Since that time many things have changed, but I still do all I can to provide expertise and leadership to NOSM on Francophone matters regarding academic programs, curriculum content, administrative activities, the recruitment strategy for Francophone medical students, as well as continuing education and professional development initiatives for health professionals, to name a few.

François Hastir (FH): I’ve been with NOSM in the role of Community and Learner Support Coordinator for six months. I was previously the Interim Executive Director for the Association des francophones du Nord-Ouest de l’Ontario (AFNOO), which gave me a good understanding of Francophone issues in Northern Ontario. I’m thrilled to be part of the team that works with NOSM learners, faculty, and staff to improve awareness and understanding of who Francophones are, and what their reality is in Northern Ontario. My office door is always open; I am always encouraging students and staff to come by and borrow a book or practice speaking in French.

How do you engage with NOSM learners?

DBR: Both François and I enjoy working with our NOSM students. They are really open to understanding the challenges of the Francophone communities in terms of access to health-care services and they are interested in having the tools to improve the service that they will be able to provide for Francophones in their future practice—and not necessarily by just learning French if they don’t already speak it. Not everyone can learn a second or third language; it’s a lot when you have a full course load. But the students are open to learning about the concept of active offer and understanding the culture that exists in Francophone communities.

FH: Support for students is very important in our roles. For Francophone students, we provide support for both academic and social activities in French. Not all the Francophone medical students are from Thunder Bay or Sudbury. Some come to NOSM from other communities across Northern Ontario and may not have a network of Francophones established when they come to the School. When moving to a new city, many don’t know anyone, and sometimes the French language is a little bit different than you are used to. Helping the medical students to build a strong network of supports might make it a bit easier for them to adjust. On the academic side, we also offer academic sessions—medical terminology and clinical skills in French, being the main ones.

DBR: For the Anglophone students, we also offer academic activities. We provide lunch hour French as a Second Language classes and medical terminology sessions. As François and I often say, you don’t have to be bilingual to offer appropriate

services to Francophones. Our goal with the Anglophone students is to support those who don't speak French, and give them the tools to know how they can help their Francophone patients.

FH: Danielle and I teach the students that organizations such as L'Accueil francophone de Thunder Bay exist, this organization provides professional medical interpretation services to French-speaking patients. We also spend time discussing the active offer—ensuring that services in French are obvious, easily available, and accessible. All of these supports offered by the Francophone Affairs Unit will benefit the communities of Northern Ontario, and will put our NOSM-educated physicians a very trusting relationship with their Francophone patients.

In what ways do you support community engagement the School?

DBR: The support we provide Anglophone students is equally as important as how we support Francophone students. It is also true for the support we provide to the community. Since the School opened, the Francophone Affairs Unit and Indigenous Affairs Unit have worked closely with our communities—including the remote and rural communities—to ensure there is a close synergy between our academic and extra-curricular activities and addressing the reality of our

communities. We want to ensure that, as a school of medicine with a strong social accountability mandate, our programs match the reality of Francophones across all Northern Ontario. It's important that our future physicians are aware of those realities, and are equipped to face them, and respond to the needs of our populations, whether they are bilingual or not.

FH: The Francophone Affairs Unit started with mainly academic activities and basic community outreach and, as the School became more established, Danielle did a tremendous job of “thinking outside the box.” If you look at the Francophone Affairs Unit now, we still organize various academic activities, but we've also added social activities. We encourage students (both Francophones and Anglophones) to gain an understanding of the reality and discover the challenges of the Francophone community through an entertaining and unconventional process. We know that if the students have developed a sense of belonging and a certain affection for the Francophone culture, they will be more inclined to find creative solutions to better serve that population when they themselves begin to provide health-care services. Of course, that work is done in close partnership with the communities, and is strengthened by our constant community outreach. And, as a result, we see that there's a very strong focus on Francophone supports at the School, and it's very exciting. Both Danielle and I are looking forward to more success in the future!



RESEARCH AT THE HEART OF FRANCOPHONE VITALITY

The Francophone Affairs Unit of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) is hosting the School's 6th Francophone Symposium from April 5-7, 2018 at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario.

This symposium, a collaborative effort between NOSM, ACFAS-Sudbury (anciennement l'Association canadienne française pour l'avancement des sciences), and the Consortium national de formation en santé (CNFS) Laurentian University chapter, will focus on research in the Francophone minority context, with an overarching theme being Research in the Minority Francophone Context: Widening Our Horizons.

nosm.ca/symposiumfrancophone2018

affaires.francophones@nosm.ca
705-662-7260

PLEASE NOTE: The majority of the sessions will be presented in French. Simultaneous interpretation will be available throughout the symposium in both of Canada's official languages.





Dr. John and Sue Burton enjoyed their time in various Northern Ontario communities.



REFLECTING ON LESSONS LEARNED IN NORTHERN ONTARIO

There are many regions around the world faced with significant physician shortages. A country one third the size of Northern Ontario, New Zealand relies heavily on doctors trained in other countries. The number of general practitioners (GPs) in New Zealand is dwindling, and the rate of vacancies in rural general practice is high. Approximately 1,100 physicians are recruited each year, most of whom stay for only a short time.

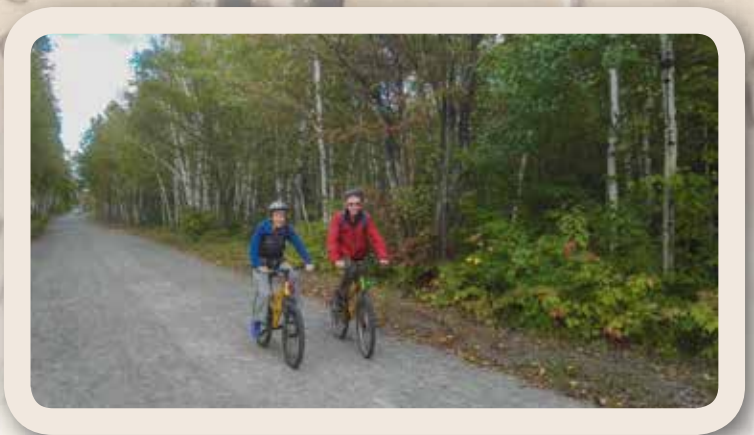
Dr. John Burton, a rural GP from the small coastal community of Kawhia, has been the sole family physician in his community since 1992. Dr. Burton and his wife Sue, a medical laboratory

technologist, have welcomed many medical students into their home over the years. There are currently only two medical schools in the country—the University of Auckland School of Medicine and the University of Otago. In May of 2017, the University of Waikato presented a business case to the Government of New Zealand for a new Waikato Medical School to be established in the city of Hamilton, 200 kilometres northeast of Kawhia.

Having learned about the Northern Ontario School of Medicine when the Burtons met Dr. Roger Strasser, the School's Dean, at a presentation in New Zealand, they were struck by

the similarities between Northern Ontario and the Waikato region of New Zealand's North Island. "In response to an invitation from NOSM, Sue and I began making plans to spend three months in Northern Ontario," says Dr. Burton. "One of our aims was to find out as much as we could about how NOSM engages with communities in Northern Ontario in the process of training medical students, and how we could apply similar strategies to try to solve the shortage of rural doctors in New Zealand."

The Burtons spent a month in Sudbury and then journeyed west, spending time in Sault Ste. Marie, Wawa,



Marathon, Thunder Bay, Dryden, and Sioux Lookout. They also paid brief visits to Manitoulin Island, Geraldton, Hearst, Kapuskasing, and Iroquois Falls. “We are overwhelmed by the generosity of Northern Ontarians, as well as their passion and ideas for advancing medical education in their region,” says Dr. Burton. “We talked in offices, around board tables, over coffees, and meals together, and enjoyed sharing camps, kayaks, walks, and even an introduction to snow-shoeing and cross-country skiing.”

“From the way we were so warmly welcomed, and by the way so much was shared with us, we have discovered both how important community engagement

is, and how much rural communities are wanting to engage more deeply with NOSM,” says Dr. Burton. “The key message I’ve heard is about how to effectively train students to equip them for working in rural communities and to inspire them to do so, is to give them more exposure to working in rural practices—experiencing everything from handling emergencies in a small hospital with the weather offering no opportunity of transferring the patients, to discovering the warmth of locals and the great outdoors. I’ve been learning about the wonderful engagement of NOSM with its rural teachers which has allowed them to redesign the student curriculum for their rural placements.”

“This has been a journey that we could not have imagined or planned,” says Sue. “Being associated with NOSM has opened so many doors for us, and, as John has said, allowed us to meet some wonderful people, and enjoy some generous hospitality. I imagine Kawhia can expect about 200 visitors from Northern Ontario over the next three years. We’ve met amazing people wherever we’ve gone and wish we could keep in touch with all of them.”



ENABLING INTERPROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION AND IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES

Faculty members in NOSM's Health Sciences and Interprofessional Education (IPE) Unit deliver to students on clinical placement monthly sessions on Northern health issues. Clinical Learning Liaisons play an important role in bringing together students and clinicians for these valuable online learning opportunities. "Recently, the focus was on how we can collectively improve culturally-appropriate access to health care for First Nations communities, in our various roles both within and outside of health care," says Justine Jecker, NOSM IPE Faculty.

"As a student Occupational Therapist, I worry about providing culturally competent care to my clients," says Natalia Puchala, second-year student occupational therapist from McMaster University. In choosing a clinical placement in Northern Ontario, Puchala says she aspires to learn and work more effectively with Northern and remote communities, and develop an understanding of First Nations cultures and community needs.

"Reflecting on the session, I realized that my understanding of culturally competent care was superficial at best," says Puchala. "The presentation inspired me to contemplate concepts of language, communication, and truth, including beliefs and understanding of self, health, and the world. In the past, I've always thought about these concepts separately; I had never reflected on the profound impact that our truth—about self and reality—has on the way we communicate."

Puchala says the session helped her appreciate that a better understanding of First Nations' history, beliefs, traditional



Natalia Puchala and Dana Stanbrook

medicine, and models is essential to effective communication with her clients, and ultimately better care.

Dana Stanbrook, second-year student occupational therapist also from McMaster University, says the presentation was an exercise in reflective practice. "Being from British Columbia, and having completed my undergrad in cultural anthropology, I am familiar with the Indigenous communities in my home province, and some of the health-related challenges that remote communities

face," says Stanbrook. "I have been very interested to learn of the circumstances and challenges that might be similar, or unique to Northern Ontario."

Some of the key points that Stanbrook says she found helpful included the framing of health goals as outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, as well as the notion of approaching health promotion at a community level, as opposed to an individual or family-centred focus. "I really appreciated hearing about how, and what, past students had created and implemented across the Nookiwin Tribal Council—including the wins and challenges," says Stanbrook. "This was a great opportunity to engage in a meaningful discussion about how we—representing Western health-care practices—can best support Indigenous communities to address their health concerns, framed by the well-established values and beliefs systems of the communities that are being reached."



MAG AEROSPACE CANADA SUPPORTS INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH CHAIR AT NOSM



Dr. Greg Ross

Remote sensing is a valuable tool for monitoring specific events in our ever-changing environment. When these events have the potential to alter our health, Dr. Greg Ross, NOSM Professor, is interested in taking a look. "Seeing" these changes in his field of research involves launching unique cameras (called

sensors) to the sky to visualize features of our landscape not detectable with the human eye. Much like x-rays enable health care providers to "see" within the body, sensors using non-visible wavelengths of light, such as infrared light, enables Ross' research team to visualize environmental changes potentially impacting human health. Examples include blooms of harmful algae in our water, pollution resulting from forest fires in our air, and industrial emissions altering ecosystems on our land.

MAG Aerospace Canada, a world leader in providing aerial surveillance, has teamed with NOSM to create the Chair in Environment and Health Surveillance, held by Ross. The Chair was made possible by the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation, who supports both the Chair as well as the associated research program. FedNor also announced a contribution to the research program, enabling Ross' research team to acquire and evaluate new remote sensing systems. The new sensors can be mounted on drones or aircraft, and will allow rapid reporting of potentially hazardous situations to appropriate organizations, such as Public Health.

"Over many years, it has become clear that the frequency of adverse events, such as beach closures from algal blooms, or air quality warnings from wildfires, is steadily increasing in Northern Ontario," says Ross. "Developing new tools to identify and rapidly report these events is possible because of new developments in remote sensing technologies, and is the goal of the MAG Aerospace Canada Chair in Environment and Health Surveillance at NOSM."

RECORD DONATION FOR INDIGENOUS NOSM MEDICAL STUDENTS



Fred Cass

For many aspiring physicians, the road to medical school can be long and winding. Becoming a physician requires 10 to 15 years of education. And for Indigenous students, the challenges may be magnified by leaving their community to attend post-secondary school and a lack of financial support. NOSM recently received a donation of \$150,000 to provide support for Indigenous students at

the School. This is the largest single endowed gift of its kind to support Indigenous students.

Established in late 2017 by the Cass Family of Toronto, a scholarship has been created for a first-year Indigenous learner. The recipient of the Cass Family Indigenous Scholarship will be the highest ranked self-identified Indigenous MD applicant accepted at NOSM each year. Determination of ranking will be by the NOSM Admissions Committee and recommended by the School's Indigenous Admissions Sub-Committee as having a strong cultural connection. Once the endowment has accumulated income over one year, the annual income from the endowment will be made available for a minimum of one award annually. The first scholarship will be available from this donation in the fall of 2018.

"When considering where to donate, I began with a vague thought about an area of the province where I felt a donation might be put to best use and have a positive impact," says Mr. Fred Cass. "Being from southern Ontario, it was my perception that in many Northern Ontario communities, it is challenging to make available essential services—services that are taken for granted in southern Ontario. It was this concern which brought the Indigenous communities in Northern Ontario to the forefront of my thinking."

Cass says that as he thought more about improving the provision of essential services for Indigenous communities in Northern Ontario, he came to the conclusion that good health care is one of the most important services—if not the most important—that should be available to everyone. "I thought that if my donation was to have a positive impact on the provision of health care in Indigenous communities in Northern Ontario, who would know better how to go about this than an Indigenous medical practitioner, especially one who has roots in such a community," says Cass.

"Because my hope is that the recipients of such funding will actually work in Northern Ontario communities, it seemed to me that it would be best to donate to a school in Northern Ontario," says Cass. "In other words, my idea was that, everything else being equal, an Indigenous student at a medical school in Northern Ontario is more likely to work in a Northern Ontario community than one from a medical school in southern Ontario."



NOSM's Indigenous Reference Group acknowledged the donation.

Cass says he had never heard of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine before last fall. "I turned to the internet to find out whether my idea about funding for Indigenous students attending medical school in Northern Ontario was realistic, not knowing whether such a school even existed," says Cass. "Needless to say, I was extremely pleased when my internet search came up with details about the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, its programs, and more generally NOSM's goal to realize the dream that all Northern Ontarians have access to quality health care."

Cass says he sincerely believes in the work of NOSM and would encourage others to support Indigenous medical students at the School. "This donation has turned into an amazing journey of discovery for me," says Cass. "Having lived my whole life in southern Ontario, I've learned many wonderful things about Northern Ontario and the great work being done at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. I've learned about the particular mission and purpose that led to the establishment

of the School; NOSM's focus on programs for Indigenous peoples; how students at the School actually get out and work in the communities; and, last but certainly not least, that a high percentage of graduates from the School do indeed stay on to practise medicine in Northern Ontario."

Research from The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario suggests that offering entry scholarships to students increases their persistence and success. Greater financial resources mean that the student, especially one from a lower-income family, may have to devote less time to paid work and hence more time to academic work. If you would like to support Indigenous learners—medical students, dietitians, or other health professional learners—please contact NOSM's Advancement Office at advancement@nosm.ca or 1-800-461-8777.

**Gail Brescia
Manager, Advancement
807-766-7433**



For **one week**, every summer, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine's (NOSM) CampMed offers high school students a chance to explore a potential future career in health care. They gain **hands-on medical and health sciences clinical skills**, a **medical student mentor**, learn about **Francophone and Indigenous health and culture**, and much more.

APPLY.

CampMed is seeking students who are going into grades 10 and 11. Participants selected are from Northern Ontario or other rural or remote parts of Canada to attend **CampMed** at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay and at Laurentian University in Sudbury.

VOLUNTEER.

Volunteer at **CampMed** as a post secondary student mentor.

OR

Volunteer at **CampMed** as a health-care practitioner. Consider offering your time, expertise, and knowledge.

SPONSOR.

Consider sponsoring a youth from your community to attend **CampMed**. You or your organization would be providing an opportunity for a high school student to start pursuing their dreams of becoming a health-care provider.

Visit nosm.ca/campmed for more information.

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