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TO:            ᑭᓇᓂᓄᓂᓂᓄᓂᓄᓂ Kanawenimitisoowin: Empowering Community Voices Summit

DATE:        Monday June 6, 2022

FROM:        Keewaytinook Okimakanak Health Director, Anjali Mago

TOPIC:       Keewaytinook Okimakanak Health Transformation Update

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### **Summary**

Keewaytinook Okimakanak (KO) Tribal Council Health department serves the communities of Deer Lake First Nation, Fort Severn First Nation, Keewaywin First Nation, McDowell Lake First Nation, North Spirit Lake First Nation, and Poplar Hill First Nation. The communities are all remote, isolated, and fly in only with the population of approximately 3300 First Nation people living on reserve.

Although, we have not been successful in organizing regular health transformation participation sessions in KO communities because of the pandemic, however, we have been working on the health transformation related activities in several ways including community engagement and meetings to establish a better healthcare system. Some of the achievements are as follows:

### **Primary Care Nursing Services Devolution**

Transfer of primary care nursing services administration to KO aligns with the health transformation process of self-determination over health. In collaboration with the community leaders, KO Tribal Council ensures that the community members have access to quality healthcare services in a timely manner; policies and procedures are developed and implemented for the better functioning of the nursing station; resource search and allocation is done to establish new positions in the community to support the nursing devolution e.g., clinical assistant, community based nursing admin assistant, mental health support, public health programming etc. The nursing devolution is an example of supporting our community in delivering their own services.

### **New approaches to healthcare**

Several community engagement meetings and focus groups led us to develop a new approach to healthcare by utilizing Elders in the communities to be the first responders to crisis situations by offering emotional and cultural support for all community members. Elders share their life experiences and pass on cultural practices as teachers, healers, advisors, and counsellors and bring the past, present and future in perspective to ensure cultural continuity. Currently KO has employed two elders in each KO community to serve the mental wellness needs of children and youth.

### **Healthcare Emergency Planning**

We have been supporting the ability of our communities and organization to be skillful in planning and implementing evacuations during emergencies such as flooding or forest fires. Such planning and programming are community driven and First Nation controlled processes and utilize collaboration and partnerships. We have been working to be self-efficient during evacuations by creating policies, procedures, guiding/planning documents and training our health staff and community leaders and other members in emergency management.

KO has its own services established for Covid-19 testing and are available for community members and for service providers. The testing sites are in Thunder Bay, Balmertown, Sioux Lookout, and Dryden. 75% of KO health staff are trained on Covid testing and will train anyone in the KO communities to assist with Covid testing. KO also offers mobile testing in urgent cases or those who are immobile and cannot get to a testing site. KO also offered PCR testing to anyone who traveled the winter road through Balmertown/Red Lake. These are some of the examples of moving forward towards better access to services.

### **Capacity & Training**

KO continues to work towards ensuring all community members will have access to health services without having to leave the community for simple medical needs. We conduct community engagement sessions to know communities' health priorities, and what they would like to implement in a new health system. Such community engagement sessions helped us understand the needs which led us to support the regular professional development of our staff e.g., certifications in advanced footcare, phlebotomy, wound care, immunizations, personal support services, palliative care, discharge planning etc.

We advocate to bring required resources in our communities such as ultrasound services, optometry, audiology, oral healthcare, resources to fill the gaps related to govt. issued Identifications. KO continues to support the activities towards enhancing communities' wellbeing.

