

WINDIGO FIRST NATIONS COUNCIL

PRESENTATION TO “HONOURING COMMUNITY VOICES SUMMIT”

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The convening of Honouring Community Voices Summit is timely for a number of reasons as this gathering will provide us with a sense of resetting our health agenda. We are all familiar and impacted by the broken health system that has been provided by Canada and Ontario. However, this forum should not dwell on the historic impacts, but we must move forward positively so we can discuss how we make changes to a health system that is currently not working for our people. Therefore, this morning, I want to briefly provide an update on the Health Transformation Windigo First Nation is engaged and envisioning.

It is always important to be mindful of background what led to the agreement signed between Canada, Ontario and NAN on Health Transformation. The glaring picture of numerous and on-going needless and premature deaths of our people is a direct result of a broken health system. First of all, this is no longer acceptable to us, and it should no longer be acceptable to the Canadian public and to the international community. The lack of oxygen in the nursing station leading to a needless death of one of our people spoke volumes of the shoddy medical care service provided to our people. We can continue to describe many such instances but today we want to provide an update where we are going as a First Nation Council.

Last year, WFNC entered into an agreement with NAN to provide support to community consultations on the Health Transformation. The community meetings provided the following:

1) Awareness

The NAN team shared with the community members the need for a major change in health services. At each community, the people reaffirmed the state of poor quality of the health system. Not only was there a continuous retelling of the lack of health services but it provided an opportunity for the NAN team to share their findings from various communities on what is being envisioned by others in a new health system.

Through these community visits, the people began to understand, not only the state of a broken health system that has been provided by governments, but our people began to realize through their participation Health Transformation can happen.

2) Elements of NAN Health Transformation

Through the community meetings process, the NAN team, along with our own advisors presented the on-going health transformation elements such as Health Commission, Paramedics, Hospital without Borders concepts, Indigenous Law development to guide our health services, participating at Federal government's legislative process dealing with health and others.

The consultation bought certain hopes of meaningful change but due to the Covid-19 pandemic everything came to a halt. Although NAN continued to develop community meetings through virtual and other means, the effect of virtual consultation was not as effective as to face to face dialogue. It appeared Health Transformation went into a holding pattern protracted by funding negotiations and federal elections. The Health Transformation Agreement signed by Liberal government was on hold by the new Ford Conservative government. Due to the delays, people begin to ask questions as to the state of NAN Health Transformation.

Windigo First Nations Health Transformation

What is NAN Health Transformation Big Picture?

The community visits by the NAN health Transformation team provided a series of potential and/or actual developments within the region. As we slowly and cautiously emerge from pandemic, we believe NAN should have initiated a re-setting process whereby NAN would provide the big picture of the Health Transformation process. Where all the health initiatives as part of health transformation such as:

- Paramedic
- Weechihidowin Document -Immediate Health Needs Process
- Indigenous Law Development on Health
- NAN participation at AFN level on Federal legislation development
- Ontario Role and participation,
- Others

At the latter part of this fiscal year, WFNC Council had an agreement with NAN to provide community engagements with the communities. Having reviewed the state of NAN Health Transformation and the state of our community health services, it was viewed that WFNC would focus the resources through NAN on community capacity identification and development strategies. In order for health transformation to be realized and appreciated, we must have capacity to control and administer health services at the community level; therefore, WFNC will:

1) Community Leadership

Contracted WFNC Health advisor(s) will meet with Chief and Council to provide Health Transformation overview.

Health Transformation present status, where it is going and how and by whom and to Inform leadership of major NAN Health Transformation initiatives.

2) Health Portfolio Leadership Holders

WFNC will provide mentoring and support dialogue with each of our community Health Portfolio holders. The health portfolio holders are swamped daily with daily health crisis and have had very little or no external support on matters of health. With each community, we envision equipping health portfolio holder with certain tools/information in their efforts to respond to community health demands and needs.

3) Health Directors

In each community, Health Directors have become the most prominent and key services providers. They coordinate all essential health services and programs. With each additional program devolved from either governments or other health services providers, these health directors are expected to be the key individuals to facilitate all new initiatives; yet no additional adequate human or financial resources are provided to community. WFNC will examine the additional capacity and supports required for the Health Directors.

4) Health Programs staff

Many programs' staff engaged at each community do not have the required training or the skill to deliver the program; therefore, for many, it is learning on the job. It is the reality, and these individuals are seriously making the effort to provide the services in their own unique ways as needed in their communities. WFNC will begin to determine what and how capacity should be developed at each of the communities.

5) Community Health Governance

The key foundation to effective health delivery service will be community-based health governance. At this time, many of the communities have very little in the way of health committees and health boards. The responsibilities of health services rest on the shoulders of health Director, Council Health Portfolio holders and, in the end, Chief and Council. At each community, WFNC will begin discussion on options for a community-based health governance system and how the particular health governance will interact with the Regional Health Commission.

The progress of these initiatives, at each community, will be subject to community pandemic health protocols. Many of these initiatives will proceed with the agreements from each community to proceed.

In closing, WFNC efforts on Health Transformation is to begin identifying community-based health capacity development and WFNC will continue to note gaps in health services at the community levels. The WFNC communities have already identified their priorities in health services at the community level, but more work needs to be done in this area. To be successful in improving health services and reaching the goal of health transformation for our communities, WFNC will required on-going human and financial support to continue this vital task to health transformation.

Thank you.