

Otipacimo

Storyteller



FALL
DAGWAAGIN
Cb·P³ 2024



Sharing Knowledge

SLFNHA welcomes guests from B.C. for second knowledge exchange session

www.sfnha.com

Photo by Cheryl Thompson

Mission

Transforming the health of Anishinabe people across Kiiwetinoong by providing community led services and a strong voice for their community health needs.

Vision

Resilient and healthy Nations supported on their path to wellness.

Values

We value respect, relationships, culture, equality, and fairness. We work to protect the Anishinabe teachings of love, courage, respect, wisdom, truth, honesty, and humility.



Sioux Lookout
First Nations
Health Authority



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SLFNHA and FNHA come together in knowledge exchange

In a significant step toward strengthening health service delivery for First Nations communities, representatives from the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) in British Columbia (B.C.) visited the Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority (SLFNHA) for a two-day knowledge exchange session on October 2-3 in Sioux Lookout, Ontario. This visit was designed to foster learning, collaboration, and a shared commitment to improving health outcomes for First Nations people across both regions.

The event brought together leadership and health service professionals from FNHA and SLFNHA, two organizations responsible for delivering health care and wellness services to First Nations communities in their respective regions. Over the course of two days, participants exchanged insights on a wide range of topics essential to providing culturally safe, community-driven health care to First Nations populations.

“We’re looking at innovation as an organization, not just health transformation. I’m looking to create long lasting relationships across organizations and model what it would look like to work as separate organizations with similar goals. We can share this information with other organizations doing this same work across the country,” says Sonia Isaac-Mann, President and CEO, SLFNHA.



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Presentations and group discussions covered areas critical to Indigenous health, including Social Determinants of Health, Mental Health and Wellness, Health Human Resources Strategy, and Traditional Wellness. FNHA and SLFNHA shared their unique approaches to engaging communities, building partnerships, and integrating traditional knowledge with modern health practices. The discussions highlighted the importance of addressing the systemic issues that impact health, such as access to funding and even emergency services on a base level.

The exchange also included presentations on Cultural Safety and Humility, a cornerstone of health services that ensures care is respectful of and responsive to the cultural identities and needs of Indigenous patients. Participants from both organizations shared best practices and lessons learned in embedding cultural safety into their health service delivery models.

“There is so much work to do, so many areas, so many challenges, in finding the necessary people. Much of what we do is work with people. As we improve our systems, as our people move to different organizations, they’re actually helping the whole system. I see it as a whole system change. So, when we have new opportunities, it’s good for all of us,” says Richard Jock, Chief Executive Officer, FNHA

SLFNHA, which serves 33 First Nations in northwestern Ontario, provided FNHA representatives with a comprehensive tour of its

health service sites, including its main offices, the three hostels that support patient accommodation for remote communities accessing care, and the Meno Ya Win Health Centre that opened in 2010. The tours offered insight into the unique logistical challenges of delivering health care across vast and isolated regions, a challenge shared by both health authorities.

The knowledge exchange session culminated in a closing ceremony, where participants reflected on the two days of discussions and the shared commitment to advancing Indigenous health care. Leaders from both FNHA and SLFNHA expressed optimism about the future of their collaboration and the potential for ongoing exchanges of knowledge, resources, and expertise. The FNHA, which provides health services to over 200 First Nations communities in B.C., has long been a leader in the movement toward Indigenous-led health care. Their visit to SLFNHA is part of a broader effort to build relationships and share knowledge with other First Nations health authorities across Canada.

Eunice Joe, Executive Director, Vancouver Island expressed the importance of understanding that “we’re not managing a program; we’re governing our health,” as consistently conveyed by FNHA Elder Cliff Atleo through the establishment of FNHA.

This is the second Knowledge Exchange the organizations participated in together. SLFNHA went to Vancouver, B.C. during the first week in April 2024 to visit the FNHA.

New Food Affordability report highlights inequities for First Nations families in Kiiwetinoong

A new report by SLFNHA highlights that First Nations families are spending nearly a quarter of their monthly income on basic foods.

The report, *The Cost of Eating Well in Kiiwetinoong: An update on food affordability in Sioux Lookout area First Nations*, confirms long-standing regional inequities in the affordability and availability of nutritious store foods in Sioux Lookout area First Nations communities.

This report used the National Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) survey and the Revised Nutritious Food Basket (RNFB) survey to collect food costing data on the cost per week needed to purchase enough food to meet the needs of a hypothetical family of four. The report found that in August and September 2022 the average monthly cost of a healthy diet from three community-based stores was \$1769.43. This cost was about 37-69% higher than a similar healthy diet purchased in other Ontario towns and cities. As of March 2021, the RNFB costs for a hypothetical family of four in Sioux Lookout area First Nations was between 22% and 62% of their total income, meaning, at a minimum, nearly a quarter of the monthly income is spent on basic foods. Budget guidelines published by the Credit Counselling Society suggest that only 10-20% of a household income should be spent on food, including personal care items.

“Communities have raised concerns about the high cost of food and its relationship to illnesses like diabetes. Our report underscores the urgent need for collaborative efforts among government agencies, community partners, and private sector to implement sustainable, community-led solutions that improve food affordability and food security,” says Janet Gordon, Vice President, Community Health.

A 2019 study on geographic and socio-demographic predictors of household food insecurity found that food insecurity is disproportionately faced by Indigenous households – with 28% experiencing

food insecurity compared to 11% in non-Indigenous families in Thunder Bay (Tarasuk et al., 2019). The research found this rate is even higher in remote northern First Nations communities. Several factors intensified food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the disruption of the already precarious food supply chain, reduced or limited travel in and out of communities, and protection measures such as self-isolation, limiting staffing at stores and community food distribution points, and reduced ability to harvest and store wild foods.

“We will use this report to help advocate for more resources and supports to address the high cost of food and other inequities impacting First Nations communities,” says Candi Edwards, Director of Approaches to Community Wellbeing at SLFNHA. “Our efforts will continue to focus on supporting community food sovereignty initiatives, exploring opportunities to negotiate prices with vendors, and advocate for policy changes that prioritize Indigenous food sovereignty and address issues such as land rights, food security, and environmental protection.”

This report comes more than a year after SLFNHA released its diabetes report, *Shookaawaapinewini Maawantoonikewin*. Findings in the diabetes report show that people living in Sioux Lookout area First Nations are getting diabetes at a younger age and are experiencing severe complications at a higher rate compared to the rest of Ontario. Community members shared that lack of affordable food choices makes preventing and living well with diabetes very difficult.

Both the diabetes and food affordability reports have been released as an urgent call-to-action to address health inequities caused by systemic racism and colonial policies that have altered the Anishinaabe way of life. These reports provide community-led direction for advocacy to address long-standing obstacles to healthy infrastructure for Sioux Lookout area First Nations communities.

Read the full report online at www.slnha.com/resources



Ceremony commemorates legacy of old Sioux Lookout Zone Hospital

On Tuesday, October 22, SLFNHA was joined by numerous honourable guests in a ceremony to commemorate the old Sioux Lookout Zone Hospital for the future demolition of the building, which will make way for a new, modern SLFNHA facility in the future.

The event honoured the legacy of the old Zone Hospital, which served Sioux Lookout and the surrounding First Nations for decades, and was attended by healthcare professionals, community members, Elders, and previous employees of the hospital. Representatives from Nishnawbe Aski Nation, the Municipality of Sioux Lookout, and Indigenous Services Canada were also in attendance.

The Zone Hospital was an essential healthcare hub providing services and care for First Nations individuals in the Sioux Lookout zone. According to the Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win hospital website, "In 1949, the federal government built and operated a

sanatorium for tuberculosis patients from northern First Nations. This was later converted into the Sioux Lookout Indian Hospital which became known, in the 1970s, as the Sioux Lookout Zone Hospital."

This hospital was operated until the amalgamation of the two Sioux Lookout hospitals into the Meno Ya Win Health Centre, which opened in 2010.

While the closure and the upcoming demolition represent the end of an era, it also represents a new beginning of health transformation in the area, marking a critical step to culturally appropriate care to First Nations throughout SLFNHA's catchment area in a new modern setting. The ceremony started with drumming at the former land, and then ended with lunch and speeches at the Sioux Lookout Legion. Former employees shared stories and memories from the old hospital, while expressing excitement for the future of the site.



TRUTH & RECONCILIATION WEEK



SLFNHA was pleased to partner with local and regional organizations to raise awareness and commemorate the 2024 National Day for Truth & Reconciliation, which was on September 30.

Throughout the week of September 23 – 27, 2024, various events and activities were held in Sioux Lookout, such as medicine teachings, hide scraping and smoking, tea and bannock, beading, tobacco tie making, and more. The highlight of the week was the Walk for Truth & Reconciliation, which had over 200 participants.

The events and activities showcased and highlighted the culture of the region, specifically of the Anishinaabe and Anishinew. It was also an opportunity to recognize the impacts of Residential Schools by honouring the children who did not return home, the survivors, and their families, and for survivors to share their stories to advance intergenerational healing and reconciliation.

“As we move forward on the path of reconciliation, we must acknowledge that reconciliation can’t

happen without truth. And truth comes from story. From listening to the stories of survivors and their families. And from understanding that injustice is not just a thing of the past, but that injustice continues today as First Nations continue to fight for equitable access to healthcare, education, justice, and more,” said Sonia Isaac-Mann, President & CEO of SLFNHA.

A special tribute for the late Garnet Angeconeb was also held after the Walk for Truth & Reconciliation. Garnet was a Lac Seul First Nation band member and a residential school survivor. Among his many achievements and accomplishments, he was an outspoken and extraordinary advocate for residential school survivors. He will be missed.

To bring these events to life, SLFNHA partnered with Shibogama First Nations Council, Kuhkenah Network (K-Net), Nishnawbe-Gamik Friendship Centre, and the Ontario Provincial Police. We are thankful for their contribution and assistance. We are also grateful to Canadian Heritage for providing funding.



SLFNHA hosts Annual General Meeting in Lac Seul

Miigwetch to all Chiefs, Proxies, Elders, and all community stakeholders for a successful SLFNHA Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in Lac Seul First Nation on October 23-24, 2024.

This year's discussions centred on enhancing healthcare services, strengthening community partnerships, and promoting mental health and wellbeing across Kiiwetinoong.

We are also deeply grateful to Lac Seul First Nation for welcoming us to host our AGM on their traditional territory. Miigwetch for your generosity and hospitality!





Kiiwe Minoyaawin Return to Wellness

SLFNHA successfully hosted two family wellness camps at Onaman Ziibi in August and October. Kiiwe Minoyaawin (Return to Wellness) Family Camp combined mental wellness and cultural practices for families from First Nations communities served by SLFNHA with children/youth ages 6-18.

A number of families from numerous communities attended both weeklong camps, which included games, activities, workshops, traditional teachings, group sessions, medicine

teachings, and more.

The camps were a collaborative effort between various SLFNHA departments, including Nodin Mental Health Services, Anishinaabewadiziwin, Client Services, and Onaman Ziibi.

A winter family camp is scheduled for March 2025. For more information or to register, please call Linda Chikane-Chapman (807-737-6142) or Melissa Pye (807-738-3106). Also follow SLFNHA on [Facebook](#) for details!







Gathering Medicines

Members of the Anishinaabewaadiziwin team travelled to Sioux Valley Dakota Nation in Manitoba to gather sage to share with clients and communities served by SLFNHA. On the way, cedar was gathered to exchange with Sioux Valley Dakota Nation, a practice that was done for thousands of years as different nations across North America traded goods, medicines, and food.

For more information on SLFNHA's Anishinaabewaadiziwin team, visit www.slnha.com/anishinaabewaadiziwin





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