

Mission Moment



The Northern Ontario School of Medicine University honours an individual who is recognized by their peers and learners for being an exceptional collaborator or leader of interprofessional learning. This year, Lisa Lees, a Registered Dietitian at St. Joseph's Hospital, has been awarded the Health Sciences Award for Interprofessional Collaborator.

Lisa believes in the importance of having learners shadow other disciplines to better understand their roles and perspectives. "I wouldn't be able to effectively do my job without the many team members who also contribute to the care of our clients," says Lisa. "So I see that teaching learners to understand and embrace the role of each team member is vital."

Congratulations Lisa, and thank you to all of our staff Preceptors for your leadership in inspiring students as they prepare to become the next generation of health care workers.

Drive High-Quality People-Centred Care

Care, Compassion, and Connection: Supporting Clients in Hospital with Substance Use

Statistics report that substance use affects one in five people in Canada. At St. Joseph's Hospital, the past five years have shown a steady increase in the number of people admitted for physical rehabilitation who also use substances. For some, hospitalization can be a pivotal moment – a time when they are ready to make positive changes in their lives. For others, it is a period when they need the right supports in place to manage substance use while receiving rehabilitative care.

Enter the Substance Use Working Group, a multidisciplinary group comprised of St. Joseph's Hospital's Inpatient Rehabilitative Care Team, the Indigenous Health Team, and the Sister Margaret Smith Centre. The working group convened in October 2024 to take a critical look at how to make best use of the continuum of programs and services that St. Joseph's Care Group offers. Three priority areas were identified for immediate-term action: Staff Education, Resources and Tools, and development of a new Model of Care.

Staff Education - More than 160 staff have completed customized training based on a survey of needs. Topics have included Substance Use Health Strategy, Polysubstance Use, Trauma Informed Care, Care of Clients Who Use Opioids, The Impact of Stigma in Healthcare, and Planning for Transitions from Hospital.

Resources and Tools - A staff reference tool has been implemented on Opioid Use Disorder: A Clinical Overview for Hospital-Based Providers. Work is progressing on the development and implementation of supporting policies and procedures to enable the new model of care.

Model of Care - The model of care that the working group developed looks at the client's full journey from inpatient to next place of care. Through an Addictions Consultation Service, clients can access medical consultation, addictions counselling, mental health support, Indigenous Health Team support, and peer support, as well as care coordination and discharge planning such as to the Regional Rapid Access Addiction Medicine Clinics.

In the first six months, 29 clients accessed the service, with staff providing support through 164 separate visits or interactions. Staff on the Physical Rehabilitation Unit describe the work as a game changer, and that the option to refer clients for an addictions consultation has gone a long way towards increasing confidence both during care and discharge of clients who use substances, giving hope for a continued recovery. For clients, it means having the right care as part of their inpatient stay, with referral pathways to access services in hospital and as they return to community.

Crossroads Centre's New Home

On Friday, May 23, 2025, clients Cameron and Katyann led a tour of Crossroads Centre's new home on Sibley Drive. Both are experts in how care is experienced, and both brought their perspectives to planning for a move to what had previously been the site of Withdrawal Management. That's an important point because, for some clients, there was concern that returning to the building could be uncomfortable or triggering. Through collaborative planning and thoughtful renovation, one client described the transformation as a new beginning and a place for healing.

Crossroads Centre plays an important part in the continuum of care, providing voluntary pre- and post-treatment for addictions for up to 20 people aged 18 and over at any one time. Pre-treatment focuses on stabilization, emotional and physical wellness, peer support, and adjusting to a structured daily routine which are all important tools to have before starting intensive live-in addiction treatment. Post-treatment supports people to apply and build upon the skills they learned, with a focus transition planning to sober living through coping skills, relapse prevention, and developing the connections needed for long-term recovery.

Thank you to Minister Patty Hajdu, MPP Kevin Holland, MPP Lise Vaugeois, Matt Simeoni of RBC, Darcy McWhirter of Confederation College, and members of St. Joseph's Care Group and St. Joseph's Foundation of Thunder Bay's Boards of Directors who joined us for a tour and helped celebrate Crossroads Centre's 60th year of service.

The move of Crossroads Centre is part of a multi-phased project to expand and enhance addictions services at St. Joseph's Care Group. Next steps in the project will be the opening of the final eight Safe Sobering beds and construction of the permanent home of Withdrawal Management and additional services at 500 Oliver Road.

Nurture Our People

Celebrating and Recognizing Our People

Every day, our Staff, Physicians, Students, and Volunteers make a difference, caring for people in mind, body, spirit and emotion. June is a month of celebrating our people, where we come together across all sites to share laughs, connect, and recognize the dedication, achievements, creativity, and hard work of so many. Recognition barbecues are held at sites across the city, with day and evening events to make sure that there is an option for everyone regardless of shift schedules. To mark service milestones, years of service gifts are given to staff.

These gatherings are one way for our Board of Directors and Leadership to say a heartfelt thank you for the remarkable compassion and skill that our staff deliver in service to the health and wellbeing of our clients and community. St. Joseph's Care Group is grateful to the staff and Client & Family Partners from across our organization who help bring Wellness and Recognition to life in such a meaningful and fun way.

Lead and Enhance Regional Specialized Care

Amplifying Our Indigenous Cultural Safety Approach on the System

As part of its commitment "to work to become a trusted ally of Indigenous communities to address inequities in the health system and foster improved health outcomes for Indigenous Peoples," the Ontario Hospital Association is convening an Indigenous Health Hospital Leads Advisory.

Paul Francis Jr, Vice President N'doo'owe Binesi joins Rennie Linklater, Senior Director Shkaabe Makwa with the Centre for Addictions & Mental Health, as co-leaders of the Advisory. As Ontario's hospitals work toward Truth and Reconciliation, the Advisory will play a critical role rooted in Indigenous knowledge and practices to guide meaningful action.

The June edition of the Ontario Hospital Association's Health System News will feature an educational and informational article titled: "Guided by the Grandmothers and Grandfathers: Anishinaabe Governance in Health Care Through the Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin Elders Council." There will also be a spotlight and link to the *Indigenous Medicine Stories: Anishinaabe mshkiki*

nwii-dbaaddaan podcast hosted by Darrel Manitowabi, where the discussion focused on N'doo'owe Binesi, St. Joseph's Care Group's Indigenous Health Division, and the significance of traditional healing in modern healthcare.

Later this year, the Ontario Hospital Association plans to travel to Thunder Bay for a visit rooted in ceremony and knowledge, fostering connection and relationship-building, and to see the work of N'doo'owe Binesi and guidance of Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin in practice at St. Joseph's Care Group.

Strategic Enablers

Commitment Statements to the Anishinaabek, and to Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

Following the launch of St. Joseph's Care Group's (SJCG) new Strategic Plan in Spring of 2024, the Board of Directors began work on a set of Commitment Statements that acknowledge our past and present role in creating barriers and disparities for marginalized peoples. The Commitment Statements to the Anishinaabek and to Equity, Diversity & Inclusion expressed clearly how St. Joseph's Care Group will advance equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism efforts until our environments are places where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, and where all feel safe and welcome.

In May 2025, the Commitment Statements were officially launched first to staff, and then to the public through our web and social media channels. Professionally printed copies of the Commitment Statements are prominently displayed at multiple sites, signaling to staff and the public our active commitment to equitable access to healthcare and to fostering healthy, respectful work environments for all.

