



Wiidosem
Dabasendizowin

Walking
With
Humility:

Embracing the
Teachings of
the West

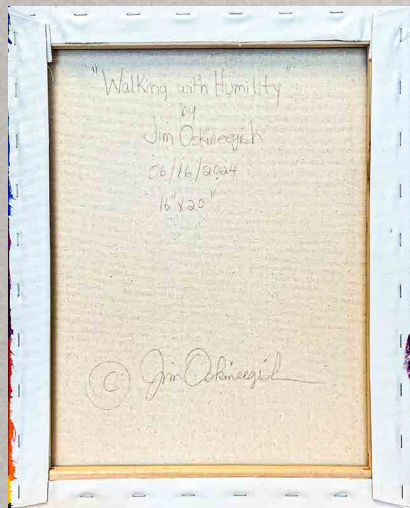
2024-2028



N'DOO'OWE BINESI



ST. JOSEPH'S CARE GROUP



Walking With Humility

BY JIMMY OSKINEEGISH

“WALKING WITH HUMILITY” IS A CAPTIVATING SUNSET PAINTING BY JIMMY OSKINEEGISH, A SECOND-GENERATION WOODLAND ARTIST FROM EABAMETOONG FIRST NATION (ALSO KNOWN AS FORT HOPE), A REMOTE COMMUNITY NORTHEAST OF THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO.

Depicting Makwa the Bear, journeying across Turtle Island, this artwork is deeply symbolic, interweaving elements of nature and Anishinaabe spiritual teachings. The painting features a vivid sunset, casting a warm glow over the scene, while the Grandmother Moon rises in the sky, creating a harmonious balance between day and night. This duo symbolizes the continual care and guidance provided by the Grandfather Sun and Grandmother Moon.

A notable element of the painting is the inclusion of seven stars, representing the Seven Grandfather Teachings, which are fundamental to Anishinaabe culture: **DEBWEWIN** (Truth), **DABAADENDIZIWIN** (Humility), **ZOONGIDE’EWIN** (Courage), **NIBWAAKAAWIN** (Wisdom), **MANAAJI’IDIWIN** (Respect), **GWAYAKWAADIZI** (Honesty), and **ZAAGI’IDIWIN** (Love). Each represents a virtue that guides an ethical and balanced way of life.

In the foreground, the Makwa stands tall, surveying Mother Earth with a sense of guardianship and respect. This stance is significant, reflecting the Bear’s role in the original creation story. The accompanying tree symbolizes the interconnectedness of all life, moving with the Makwa and emphasizing the sacred connection between nature and the spiritual world

Through his artwork, Oskineegish invites viewers to reflect on their relationship with the Earth and the teachings that guide harmonious living.



Each step we take is a step into the future
Each step closer to the other side
Our purpose before then is to at least get to acknowledge what has been put here for our use

The smell of the Earth we walk on
To see as much of it as we can
To understand the connection
To everything else that lives here within us
To hear the Birds and Animals as they speak to each other and to us
To listen to the Water as it passes by, and to wonder where it is going or has come from
To listen to the Trees as they cry for help, our help
To hear the Winds as they praise Ke Manito Minaan (Creator or Great Mystery)
To see the miracles of Clouds being shuffled here and there
Understanding Creation as it was meant to be understood

Each Direction tells of stories of life, similar to the bible
We were put here to understand all of this
And to give thanks for everything
Just as each leaf falls from the Tree
We will take our cue
We too will follow
To become part of the land we came from
Full Circle
Life starts fresh
As we enter the new place

Neena Wint (Us Together)

ERNIE AND CHARLOTTE KWANDIBENS





Anishinaabemowin: Preserving Language



In accordance with the guidance from our Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin, we are committed to prioritizing Anishinaabemowin (the Ojibway language) in our terminology. This means we will avoid using Western classification terms such as “Aboriginal” or “Indigenous,” and instead do our best to use the following references:

- **ANISHINAABE** – Singular form
- **ANISHINAABEK** – Plural form

The term **Anishinaabe** (with variants such as Anishnawbe, Nishnawbe, etc.) refers to a group of culturally and linguistically related First Nations located around the Great Lakes, spanning both Canada and the United States. Collectively, the **Anishinaabek** include groups known as Ojibway/Ojibwe/Oji-Cree, Chippewa, Odawa, and Potawatomi. The term **Anishinaabe** literally translates to “a person” or “a human being.”

This approach reflects our dedication to preserving and promoting the Anishinaabe language, culture, and traditional knowledge systems. By using these terms, we honor and uphold our cultural heritage.

N’doo’owe Binesi

(IN-DOUGH-OH-WAY BIH-NAY-SIH)
HEALING THUNDERBIRD

N’doo’owe Binesi embodies profound spiritual significance for the Anishinaabek. The Thunderbird, a revered spiritual helper, symbolizes healing, strength, and transformation. In our logo, the Thunderbird’s uplifted wings represent its protective nature creating space for a “Spiritual Gathering,” while the lightning bolt emanating from its eye signifies the arrival of healing energy. The woodland heart shape underscores the essential care and compassion inherent in healthcare. Additionally, the Thunderbird is depicted with Piimii-Gabo, the Grandmother Eagle Staff, further connecting the logo to its spiritual strength.

“Walking With Humility” is a living document and long-term strategy that shares our story and commitment to improving healthcare for Indigenous Peoples. Launched in 2018 and symbolized by the East direction, this marked the beginning of a transformative journey for our organization, fostering a new vision and direction.

In 2022, we turned to “Looking to the Southern Direction” (2022-2024), which guided us through a period of significant growth and development. During this phase, we saw the emergence of N’doo’owe Binesi, an Indigenous-led division of St. Joseph’s Care Group, which operates under the guidance of Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin. This period was characterized by deepened relationships and meaningful progress in our efforts to provide culturally safe and responsive care.

As we move forward, this plan, “Wiidosem Dabasendizowin | Walking With Humility: Embracing the Teachings of the West” (2024-2028), will steer our efforts over the next four years. This new phase represents a commitment to reflecting on past lessons, embracing ongoing teachings, and fostering enduring partnerships to advance Indigenous healthcare in a manner that is respectful, equitable, and inclusive.

“The Thunderbird,
a revered
spiritual helper,
symbolizes healing,
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N’DOO’OWE BINESI



Voices of Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin

“There’s no mystery about it. Culture is about mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being, and that’s how it’s used.”

The voices of Anishinaabe Elders hold immense importance within Anishinaabek communities, serving as roots of cultural knowledge, revered for their wisdom, insight, and connection to traditional ways of knowing. The Elders recently sat down for one-on-one conversations that reflected on their involvement with N’doo’owe Binesi.

Elder Aaron Therriault recently joined Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin, and has witnessed significant changes and a shift toward a more positive atmosphere after incorporating traditional tools and ways of healing, such as the drum and an Eagle Staff into Nagishkodaadiwin. “There’s no mystery about it. Culture is about mental, emotional, spiritual, and

physical wellbeing, and that’s how it’s used. It’s a harvest of life. You’re harvesting your mental capacity, your energy, your spirit. You’re harvesting knowledge or even faith. All those things you need to carry you through the winter, through the dark months. Then you start the cycle all over again.”

Therriault emphasizes the need to continually enhance and support the practice of Anishinaabe culture across SJCG. “If you’re not allowed to practice those things, that’s like a slow death. It’s like an animal in a cage, unable to do what it’s supposed to do. This is the same thing with culture. When you cage it and suppress it, it just becomes dormant and flat, but when you



water it, it will start to grow, and everybody benefits.”

All Elders spoke of the importance of a more holistic approach to healing that connects to the medicine wheel. Brenda Mason, newly appointed as the Ogichidaa-Kwe (Elder in Council) for N’doo’owe Binesi, elaborates:

“The mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual side of things all connect. They make up how you feel. I’m not only working with the clients but reviewing services that currently exist or are being created, and I’m looking at them with a holistic approach.”

Elder Ernie Kwandibens stresses that we can’t even talk about health without addressing the root causes of disease and trauma: “Our lands have been impacted, our soils and waters contaminated. This has disrupted access to food, medicine, and connection to our culture and

traditional knowledge.” Building on this point, he said: “The environment and health are intertwined. The environment must be healthy for everything else to thrive. The land, the trees, the birds—they are all listening. Those trees are living, breathing entities. Jack Pine, Spruce, Cedar—we are all from one tribe, yet we are different. That’s what we are trying to help people understand.”

For the Elders, the land is the ultimate nurturer of people. It provides physical sustenance and nurtures the spirit. Anishinaabe have always used the medicines of the land to help with sickness and healing. Elder Charlotte Kwandibens shared a story from her childhood: “When we were young, we didn’t go to the city to buy aspirin...my father knew what to get when we were sick, and my mother also knew what to do with us. They had traditional medicine and healings for

everything, all from the land.”

Ogichidaa-Kwe Mason notes, “The land does not belong to me... I belong to the land, not the other way around. Many Indigenous People have gone on their healing journey. It’s not to take the land back, it’s to take back who we are, to take back and re-learn our language. Reconnect to the land, to the trees, to the water, to the animals, to remember who we are.”



STATEMENT OF THE BOARD OF ST. JOSEPH’S CARE GROUP

St. Joseph’s Care Group’s Commitment Statement to the Anishinaabek

We, the Board of Directors for St. Joseph’s Care Group, are dedicated to advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion within our team and our communities. We strive to foster inclusive and people-centred, wholistic care— addressing the needs of the body, mind, spirit and emotions.

Rooted in our Mission, Vision & Values, we are committed to achieving health equity for all peoples by taking ownership and responsibility to address systemic barriers, biases and inequities.

OUR COMMITMENT TO THE ANISHINAABEK

With great respect, St. Joseph’s Care Group recognizes that it operates on the traditional territory of the Ojibway of Fort William First Nation, part of the Robinson Superior Treaty of 1850. We also extend acknowledgment to the Anishinaabek Nation, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Grand Council Treaty #3 and the diverse Indigenous Peoples within this territory, to whom we provide services.

We acknowledge the current health disparities faced by the Anishinaabek are a result of the oppressive legacy of colonialism and systemic racism. We acknowledge the pain caused by the Residential school system, including our affiliation with St. Joseph’s Residential School (1870-1966) in Fort William (now Thunder Bay). We are a Catholic-sponsored organization with an obligation to Truth and Reconciliation. As stewards, we pledge to confront this dark chapter of history with honesty,

humility, and compassion. As a Board, we must speak with one voice, get to the core of Truth and Reconciliation, and listen to the truth of the survivors, families and communities affected by the residential school experience.

We recognize the systemic failure to respect the rich history, traditions, and wisdom of the Anishinaabek people. We commit to embracing Anishinaabek languages, culture, and spirituality within our organization, and gaining an understanding of a wholistic approach to health and wellbeing that incorporates traditional medicines and practices.

Supported by the guidance and wisdom of the Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin (Elders Council), we acknowledge N’doo’owe Binesi— the Indigenous health division at SJCG is committed to advancing cultural safety, fostering understanding and integrating practice. We support the growth of this division and an

environment that prioritizes cultural safety and humility as essential foundations of quality and well-being, through guidance from Anishinaabek Knowledge Keepers and Elders.

We commit to addressing systemic racism and discrimination to ensure Anishinaabek people and communities can access culturally safe healthcare services. To have healthy people and communities, every person must be able to access the resources and support they need to be well.

The Board of Directors of St. Joseph’s Care Group steadfastly uphold our commitments until our environments are places where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, and where all feel safe and welcome.

A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP



Thank you to Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin for generously sharing wisdom, knowledge, guidance, counsel and contributions in shaping our journey of Walking with Humility. It is those teaching and insights that set us in the right direction as we strive to build respectful and meaningful relationships with Anishnaabek Peoples.

The creation of an Indigenous division called N’doo’owe Binesi (Healing Thunderbird) within St. Joseph’s Care Group has been crucial to our work. It is an organizational structure designed to embed Indigenous knowledge, build bridges, and offer a blueprint for others to make changes within the mainstream healthcare system.

Our vision forward is one of healing, understanding, and partnership with the Anishinaabek. Guided by Anishinaabek culture, we are deliberate in tackling the hard issues of colonization, racism, and discrimination head-on. Drawing on our values, the Seven Grandfather Teachings, the Two-Eyed Seeing Approach, and wholistic care that considers mind, body, spirit, and emotion, we strive to address these challenges with empathy and kindness.

This is our third plan of Wiidosem Dabasendiziwin. Just as we grow in life, we look back on the first two directions – East and South – that guided us from fledgling to an organization with a strong foundation and the knowledge with which to transition to the West. This plan is integral to our work, and features extensively in our Strategic Plan 2024-2028.

St. Joseph’s Care Group continues to extend full support to N’doo’owe Binesi in their vital role of leading cultural safety initiatives within our organization. The work is significant, and our commitment is to provide the team with the resources, support and empowerment they need to transform culture and care.

We call upon our staff, physicians, volunteers, as well as our health and community care partners to join us in advancing truth and reconciliation. Together let’s continue on this journey of learning, growth, and understanding.

MIIGWECH,
JANINE BLACK, PRESIDENT & CEO
& PAUL FRANCIS JR., VICE PRESIDENT N'DOO'OWE BINESI

Remembering Luke Sagutch

Luke Sagutch, an Anishinaabe Elder, was dedicated to his community work and counselling. As we honour and remember his invaluable contributions, we reflect on his legacy as an original member of the Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin for N'doo'owe Binesi. Luke's wisdom and dedication to preserving Anishinaabe culture, traditions, and teachings have left a lasting impact on us all.

"During his final journey, Luke Sagutch's admission to St. Joseph's Hospital provided an opportunity for the staff of N'doo'owe Binesi and members of Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin to come together in a deep and meaningful way. Recognizing the significance of this moment, we gathered to honour Luke's life, offer prayers, sing traditional songs, and provide ceremonial support to help him transition to the spirit world. Amidst the clinical setting of the hospital, the presence of the Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin and the staff of N'doo'owe Binesi brought a sense of cultural and spiritual comfort to Luke and his loved ones. Our collective prayers and ceremony served as a source of strength and guidance during this sacred time. Luke was surrounded by the

love, respect, and healing power of Anishinaabe traditions. As Luke prepared to embark on his final journey to the spirit world, he was embraced by the warmth and support of his community, knowing that his work would endure through the teachings and stories he shared. Though his physical presence may have transitioned, his spirit lives on." Paul Francis Jr., Vice President, N'doo'owe Binesi.

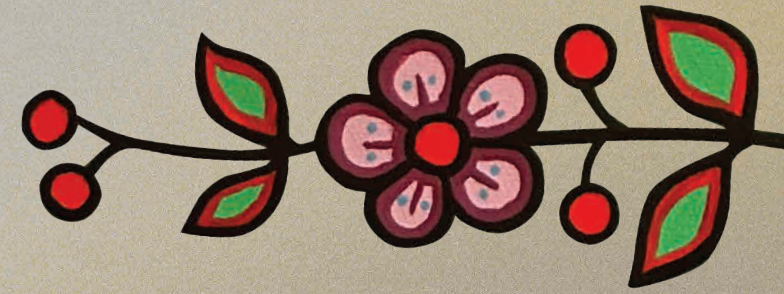
"I am deeply moved by the unity and cultural respect displayed during Luke's final journey at St. Joseph's Hospital. Our collaboration with the Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin and the staff represents the healing power of cultural traditions in healthcare and highlights the importance of integrating wholistic approaches to end-of-life care." Reena Larabee, Nanaandawe'ewn (Traditional Healing Program), Manager, N'doo'owe Binesi.

"As Elder Council members, it is our privilege to offer ceremonial support and spiritual guidance, honouring the journey of our brother Luke as he transitioned to the spirit world. He reminded us of the interconnectedness of all beings and the eternal presence of spirit." Brenda Mason, Ogichidaa-Kwe (Elder in Council), Elder Council Member.

In addition to his contributions as a member of the Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin, Luke was known for his ability to bridge understanding and promote healing within the community. As a survivor of the residential school system, Luke experienced immense pain and trauma, yet he found the strength within himself to forgive and foster reconciliation. Through his teachings and actions, he emphasized the importance of forgiveness as a pathway to healing and reconciliation.

Known also as Blue Feather and part of the Sturgeon Clan, Luke's journey of forgiveness serves as a powerful reminder of the resilience of the human spirit and the capacity for healing in the face of immense adversity. His legacy will continue to inspire others to seek understanding, reconciliation, and a shared commitment to building a more just and compassionate society.





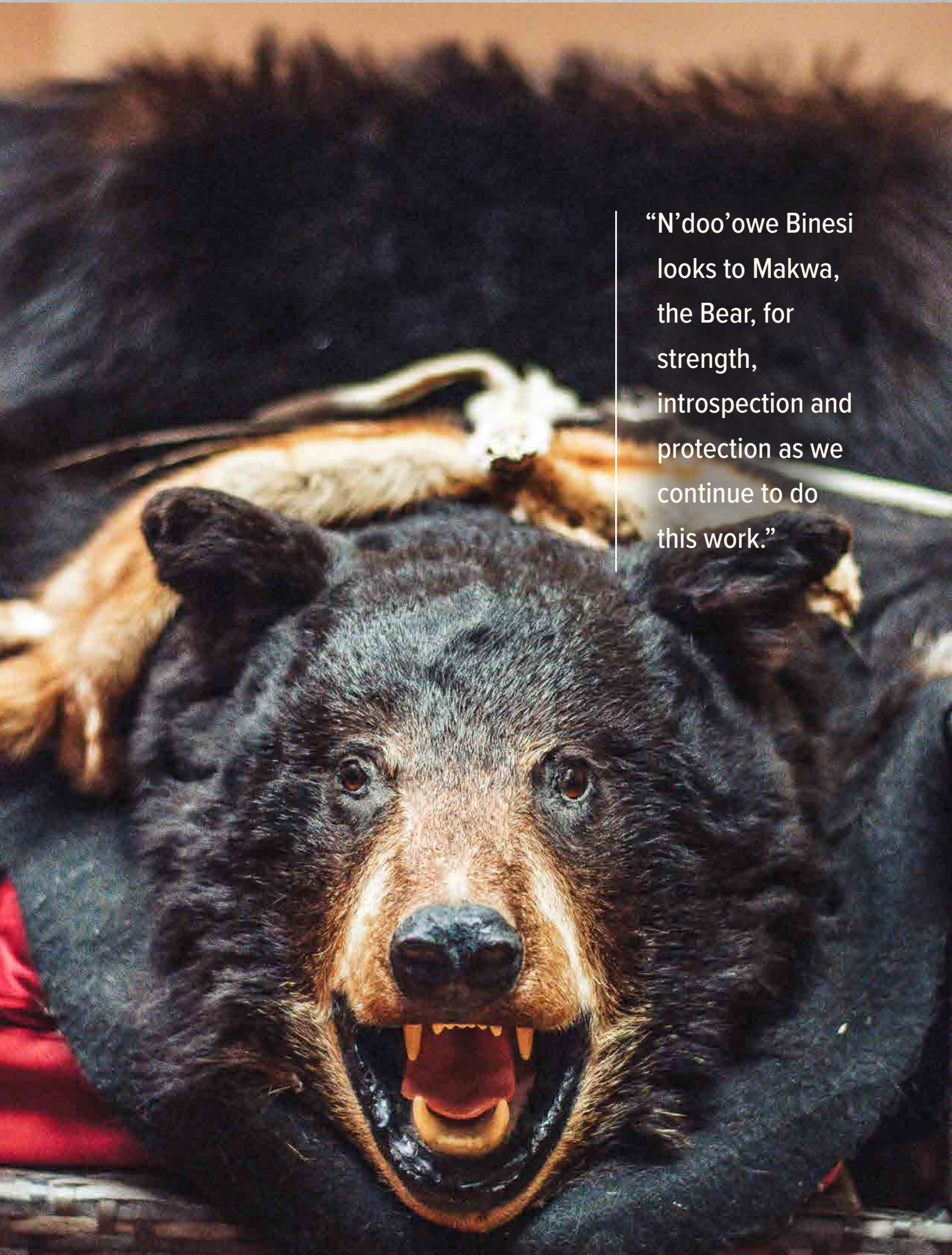
Moving West

Throughout the Walking with Humility journey, the N'doo'owe Binesi team is continually reflecting on our work and identifying ongoing strategies to advance our goals.

As we move around the Medicine Wheel, the East direction breathed life into N'doo'owe Binesi, while the South direction empowered our actions. Continuing around the circle, we now arrive at the West— a direction that calls on self-understanding.

In laying out our priorities for 2024-2028, we not only highlight our future plans, but look back at the progress we've made that brings us to where we are today. We embrace the West Direction and move forward with a true appreciation of the lessons learned in all previous directions.





“N’doo’owe Binesi looks to Makwa, the Bear, for strength, introspection and protection as we continue to do this work.”

Walking With Humility: Embracing the Teachings of the West

IN ANISHNAABEMOWIN, THE WEST DIRECTION IS KNOWN AS “NINGAABII’ANANG,” SIGNIFYING ADULTHOOD AND THE SEASON OF FALL. OGICHIDAA-KWE BRENDA MASON SHARES THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-REFLECTION IN ASSESSING THE PROGRESS OF N’DOO’OWE BINESI AS IT RAPIDLY MATURES:

“Since starting this program, what have we achieved? Indigenous teachings focus on understanding what has worked and why— it’s a circular process. If something didn’t work, we explore why, learning and improving for the future.”

As the sun sets in the West, we learn about healing and letting go. The late Anishinaabe Elder, Lillian Pitawanakwat left us the Strawberry Teaching, which embodies forgiveness and peace; “the Strawberry is shaped like a heart, and strawberries are known to our People

as heart berries” (Four Directions Teachings, 2012). Pitawanakwat reminds us that the West direction teaches about “death and the power of change and healing, and finding peace doesn’t necessarily come from the head – it comes from the heart” (Four Directions Teachings, 2012).

N’doo’owe Binesi looks to Makwa, the Bear, for strength, introspection and protection as we continue to do this work.

Elder Ernie Kwandibens explains a teaching from the West direction. “Despite our difference in opinions, we must travel the same path together into the future. This journey we undertake is called time, and we’re all in it together.”

N’doo’owe Binesi is named after the spiritual being Animkii, the Thunderbird. We understand that Ningaabii’anang is where the Thunderbirds reside in the West direction, and they may visit all directions.

The Thunderbirds bring protection and strength to those who need healing assistance in their spiritual lives and physical health. They also bring the healing rain along with their loud songs and electric strikes as they cleanse Mother Earth.

“The Golden Eagle, who works under the Thunderbird, is said to be on that final leg of journeying to the spirit world after death and will ask Anishinaabe their spirit name, clan and colours, facilitating their arrival to be with the ancestors.” - Elton Beardy, Cultural Practitioner, Nanaandawe’ewin.

In Embracing the Teachings of the West, we honor the journey of growth and transformation that defines this direction. As we continue to walk with humility and introspection, we recognize that our path is intertwined with the wisdom of the Thunderbird, the guidance and protection of Makwa the Bear, and the important lessons of healing.

As We Journeyed East and South:

CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY

SJCG’s annual Client Satisfaction Survey provides a snapshot of the client experience as well as trends over time and across services. In 2023, in collaboration with the Centre for Applied Health Research (CAHR), we aimed to increase Indigenous participation and added a question about accessing Indigenous Health Services. The 22-item survey was distributed through various methods to maximize feedback, including hand-delivery to inpatients, distribution during appointments, and assistance from volunteers in long-term care.

A total of 1,493 surveys were completed, with a 63.6% response rate. Of these, 186 respondents (13.9%) identified as Indigenous, a 57% increase from 2022. The N’doo’owe Binesi team effectively amplified Indigenous voices, building trust and encouraging participation. Though satisfaction was lower among Indigenous clients, the insights gained will help address care gaps and improve practices, marking progress in relationship-building.

SELF-IDENTIFICATION BEGINS
CONNECTING CLIENTS TO N'DOO'OWE
BINESI EARLY IN THEIR CARE

Connecting Anishinaabe clients and residents with culturally appropriate services from the outset of their care journey is crucial. N’doo’owe Binesi is walking in partnership with clinical care teams to ensure clients feel recognized and supported right from their first interaction with the healthcare system.



A key component of this initiative is the Voluntary Self-Identification Project. This project creates a safe space for Indigenous individuals to self-identify at point of entry into SJCG’s programs and service, opening conversation early and allowing for an immediate connection.

To ensure the success of this project, anyone tasked with asking the self-identification question must complete a mandatory 25-minute training session. This training covers the reasons for asking about self-identification, how to address client questions, and the importance of creating culturally safe experiences for all individuals.

Without voluntary self-identification, we were missing the opportunity to provide timely and culturally relevant support, as it was often taking three to four months for the first connection.

As of August 1, 2024, voluntary self-identification has been implemented in 8 program areas.

PRIORITY
one

ADVANCING OUR JOURNEY TO PROVIDE
CULTURALLY SAFE CARE FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



Fostering an environment of inclusion and respect advances our journey toward delivering culturally safe care. This commitment drives us to enhance clinical practices by making them more culturally appropriate and responsive to the diverse needs of Indigenous Peoples.

Objectives

Enhance SJCG clinical practices to increase culturally appropriate care that is responsive to the needs of Indigenous clients, residents and families.

Actions

- 1. Develop an Indigenous Client & Family Partner committee;
- 2. Integrate Two-Eyed Seeing into the Organizational Quality Program;
- 3. Continue to implement and sustain voluntary self-identification across the organization;
- 4. Embed N’doo’owe Binesi into clinical services across the organization; and
- 5. Initiate an Indigenous Client Journey Mapping Project to support improvement and learning.

Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation



The journey towards truth and reconciliation is an ongoing commitment, marked by the recognition of historical injustices and the collaborative efforts to heal and rebuild. N'doo'owe Binesi staff members reflected on what truth and reconciliation mean to them and how these principles are being integrated into their work.

QUOTES PROVIDED BY MEMBERS OF THE N'DOO'OWE BINESI TEAM.

One key aspect highlighted by the N'doo'owe Binesi team is the importance of implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) calls to action, particularly those related to healthcare. An Elder's teaching about "repairing the sacred circle" underscores the need to return to where the harm began to heal and strengthen our communities today.

Equitable access to healthcare and services remains a significant challenge. Many Indigenous clients have been in care for extended periods of time, in locations far from their communities. Long-term care homes also require attention to ensure they do not perpetuate trauma.

"The potential influx of Elders with dementia, who may relive traumatic childhood experiences, highlights the need for a safer, more supportive environment. Staff training is crucial to address these situations with sensitivity and understanding, recognizing that Elders might be experiencing some of their darkest moments."

The path forward involves continuous growth, learning, and supporting each other's journeys. For some, reconciliation also involves personal introspection and healing from the anger and blame carried from historical injustices.

"It's about changing reactions to racism, becoming stronger in one's identity, and fostering mutual understanding."

"Reconnecting with the land, language, and traditional practices is vital for many Indigenous Peoples. This process is about reclaiming identity and cultural heritage. The Western approach to creating programs often does not align with Indigenous ways of being, which are more about creating pathways that meet people's needs without forcing compliance."



The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action 18-24 address crucial health-related issues, highlighting the need for systemic change in healthcare for Indigenous communities. For Catholic-sponsored healthcare organizations across Canada, this involves a deep and multifaceted commitment to reconciliation, beyond mere acknowledgment.

The Pope's apology, delivered on July 25, 2022, in Maskwacis, Alberta directly responded to Call to Action 58, which urged a formal apology to survivors, their families, and communities for the suffering inflicted by the Roman Catholic Church in residential schools. This apology was a significant step in addressing the spiritual, cultural, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse experienced by First Nation, Inuit, and Métis children.

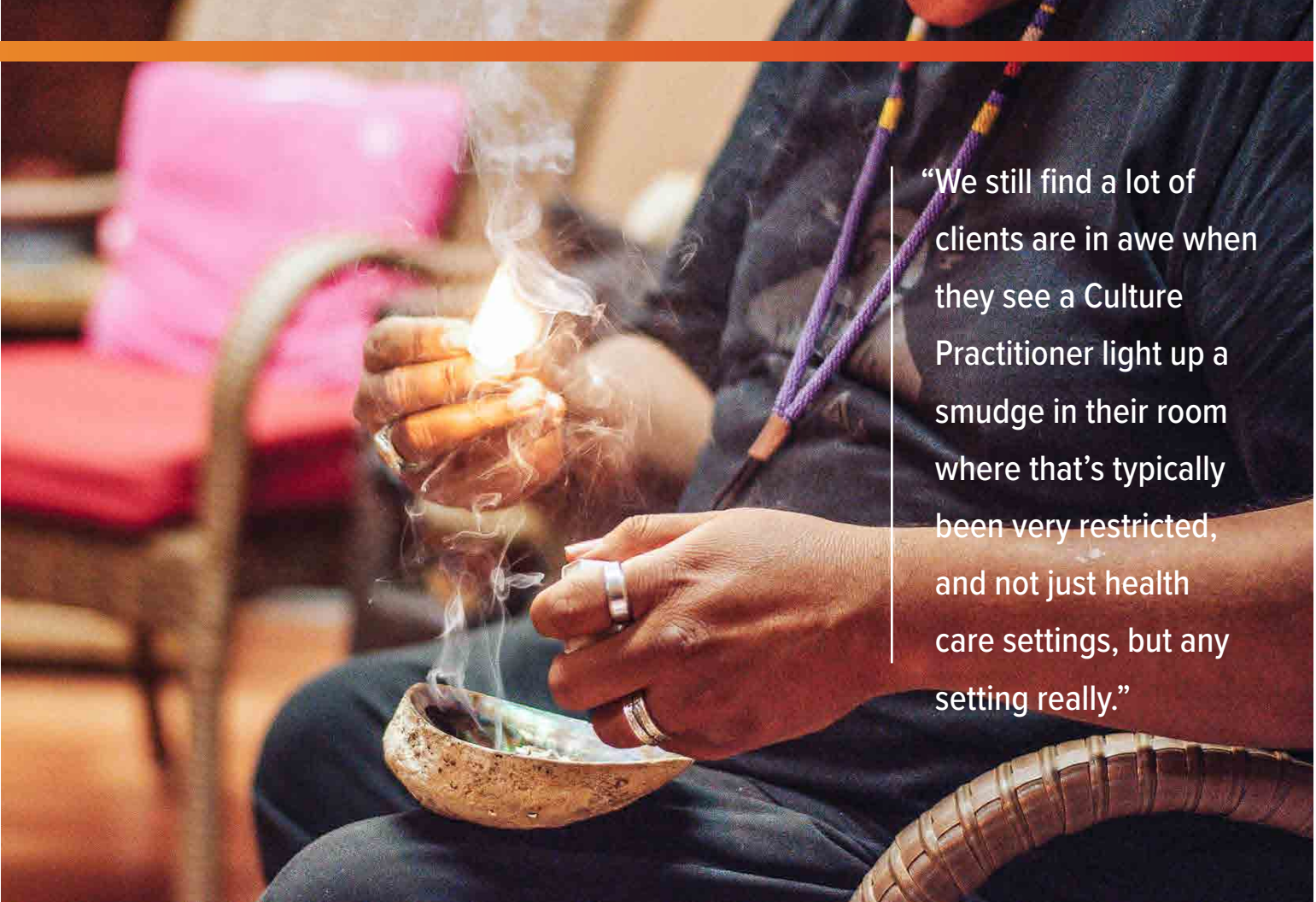
For organizations like SJCG, these Calls to Action are a mandate to acknowledge past wrongs and actively participate in healing and reconciliation. The Pope's message emphasizes walking together, praying together, and working together towards a future of justice and healing. Our Walking With Humility plans aligns to these principles, and we hope as a Catholic sponsored organization we can contribute to a more inclusive future.



TRADITIONAL MEDICINE
& HEALING EDUCATION
SESSIONS

On Wednesday, December 6, 2023, the first Traditional Medicine and Healing Education Session for physicians was successfully hosted in collaboration with the N’doo’owe Binesi team. This Accredited Group Learning Activity, approved by the Continuing Education and Professional Development Office at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, was well-attended by physicians who provided enthusiastic feedback.

A special acknowledgment goes to SJCG’s Chief of Staff, Dr. Peter de Bakker, whose leadership was instrumental in organizing and supporting this impactful event. Dr. de Bakker’s commitment to integrating traditional healing practices into medical education exemplifies our dedication to reconciliation and advancing culturally competent care. Events like this significantly contribute to our ongoing efforts towards fostering understanding and collaboration within the healthcare community.



“We still find a lot of clients are in awe when they see a Culture Practitioner light up a smudge in their room where that’s typically been very restricted, and not just health care settings, but any setting really.”

SMUDGING POLICY CONTINUES TO
HAVE POSITIVE IMPACTS

Smudging, a sacred ceremony for many Anishinaabe, involves burning sweetgrass, sage, and cedar to purify the body, mind, heart, and spirit. This traditional practice cleanses the spirit of negative thoughts and energy. During a smudge, plant leaves or stems are ignited and the flames are gently blown out. The healing smoke is then wafted over the person using a hand or an eagle feather, with the individual gently embracing the smoke. Smudging is also used to clear negative energy from rooms and homes.

Acknowledging and respecting the healthcare rights to access traditional healing services was a fundamental step toward creating an inclusive and supportive environment. Recognizing the significance of smudging for Indigenous clients and staff, a policy has been implemented to enable smudging within SJCG’s buildings. This policy allows smudging in client rooms, a

vital step in honouring and supporting Indigenous cultural practices within the healthcare environment.

The policy has been an important accomplishment for N’doo’owe Binesi, removing a significant barrier for clients. Accepted widely across all SJCG locations, staff members have been receptive and supportive of the practice. This underscores a commitment to cultural safety and the inherent right of individuals to practice their traditions without discrimination.

“While the smudging policy marks a substantial step forward, there is opportunity for further development of more advanced policies regarding the prescription of traditional medicine.”

“I dream of creating a ‘traditional pharmacy’ where Indigenous medicines are available alongside Western treatments, while monthly clinics run by traditional healers are providing culturally relevant care that respects and incorporates Indigenous knowledge.”

SACRED SPACES CREATED AT SEVERAL LOCATIONS

N’doo’owe Binesi has supported the creation of sacred spaces throughout SJCG locations to help to facilitate Indigenous client, resident, family and staff access to Anishinaabe cultural practices and ceremonies. We currently have the following spaces:

ST. JOSEPH’S HOSPITAL

- Nagishkodaadiwin- Spiritual Gathering Lodge
- Multi-Faith Room

HOGARTH RIVERVIEW MANOR

- Misko Zhaawanong Shkwaadem Red Southern Door Room

SISTER MARGARET SMITH CENTRE

- Sacred Space
- Medicine Wheel Garden

LODGE ON DAWSON

- Sweat Lodge

ST. JOSEPH’S HEALTH CENTRE

- White Spirit Bear – Cultural Room



INDIGENOUS CULTURAL SAFETY & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The newly formed Indigenous Cultural Safety & Education Committee (ICSEC) is a joint initiative between SJCG and Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (TBRHSC). This Indigenous-led forum focuses on collaboration, planning, problem-solving, and communication to enhance cultural safety and education within both organizations.

Guided by Indigenous trauma-informed principles, the committee emphasizes Indigenous knowledge and healing, as initiatives aim to increase intercultural competency, resolve conflicts, and support behaviour change, creating a culturally safe, inclusive, and high-quality environment free of racism for Indigenous clients, families, residents, volunteers, learners, staff, and physicians.

Key responsibilities of ICSEC include oversight of the Indigenous Health Education Committee, the Allyship Working Group, and developing Indigenous Staff Caucus. The ICSES also provides educational opportunities, produces annual work plans and reports, and works to maintain open communication with SJCG and TBRHSC stakeholders, particularly Indigenous communities, reflecting its commitment to reconciliation and strategic goals.

On May 13, 2024, SJCG and TBRHSC leadership, committee members, along with Elders, gathered for a ceremony led by Ogichidaa-Kwe (Elder in Council), Brenda Mason. The ceremony reflected on past achievements and recognized the future impact of ICSEC on Indigenous cultural safety and education in healthcare, not only within SJCG and TBRHSC but throughout Northwestern Ontario.

LEFT – SWEAT LODGE AT DAWSON

PRIORITY two

ADVANCE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION



Engaging in truth-seeking, acknowledging historical injustices, and promoting reconciliation through equitable care delivery, fair employment practices, and robust community partnerships. This work is critical in prioritizing the rights of Indigenous Peoples to traditional healing. Our Strategic Plan and co-leadership model emphasize shared responsibility and allyship, focusing on systemic change, listening to Anishinaabe voices, and confronting biases.

Objectives

To foster an inclusive and culturally competent environment within SJCG that actively engages in truth seeking, acknowledging historical injustices, and promotes reconciliation through equitable care delivery, equitable employment and community partnerships.

Actions

1. Continue to build on Indigenous cultural safety education and training for staff;
2. Embed Indigenous perspectives and practices into organizational culture, including policies and practices;
3. Strengthen our partnerships with Indigenous communities and organizations; and
4. Implement Indigenous data sovereignty principles.



Regional Indigenous Knowledge Gathering Event: Walking Together With Humility

This gathering focused on empowering diverse Indigenous voices and perspectives to improve health equity and foster collaboration on how to deliver culturally safe healthcare

ON MARCH 18TH AND 19TH, 2024, N'DOO'OWE BINESI HOSTED THE REGIONAL INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE GATHERING EVENT: WALKING TOGETHER WITH HUMILITY, FOCUSING ON ENHANCING HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCES FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. It brought together Indigenous communities, healthcare providers, professionals, community agencies, and Indigenous groups to strategize pathways forward to improve health service delivery in a way that works for Indigenous Peoples.

“The history of healthcare in Canada includes the impacts of Indian hospitals as well as systemic racism, which continue to be barriers to an equitable and responsive healthcare. This gathering focused on empowering diverse Indigenous voices and perspectives to improve health equity and foster collaboration on how to deliver culturally safe healthcare,” Paul Francis Jr., Vice President, N’doo’owe Binesi.

The event featured speakers and presenters, including a keynote address from Anthony Johnson and Dr. James Makokis, the renowned trailblazing Two-Spirit team on the Amazing Race Canada. The duo’s compelling victory in Season 7 brought pivotal gender, sexuality, and Indigenous issues to the forefront of national consciousness, reshaping societal perceptions.

VISUAL TALKS ILLUSTRATOR SHANNON LOOMER CAPTURED THE GATHERING IN REAL-TIME THROUGH HER VISUAL RECORDINGS. ONE OF HER PIECES IS SHOWCASED IN THE APPENDIX (PG 32)



Also on the agenda was storyteller and renowned Ojibwe artist Isaac Murdoch from Serpent River First Nation, an advocate dedicated to Indigenous and Western community reconciliation. In an interview with reporter Rick Garrick in Anishinaabek News, Murdoch shared an experience. “One time, I was asked to facilitate a session with 30 principals and 30 six-year-olds — so I quickly divided the two groups up to form a chief and council each and they had to figure out how to get clean water to baby birds,” Murdoch says. “The adults came up with policy prescriptions, they came up with creating a new political party, they came up with a whole bunch of ideas and thoughts regarding legal frameworks and different things like that to try to accommodate environmental issues.” Murdoch says the young people did something very different from the adults, they filled a clay pot full of water. “And they said: ‘Let’s just go give it to them,’ and they actually brought the clay pot outside in the back where the ravine was and sure enough, birds started drinking out of that clay pot right away. So it just goes to show that when we take action and use our hearts instead of our minds, we can make real positive change.”

Quick Facts:
250 ATTENDEES

40% REPRESENTATIVES FROM COMMUNITY AGENCIES & ORGANIZATIONS

17 FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES & TRIBAL COUNCILS





COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Since the beginning, N'doo'owe Binesi has been supporting partnering organizations by developing collaborative relationships to lead change in our communities. These partnerships support culturally safe care and enhance access to traditional healing and community Elders.

Our community partners include Children's Centre Thunder Bay, Shkoday, Options Northwest and NorWest Community Health Centres.

"Children's Centre Thunder Bay has been in a partnership with N'doo'owe Binesi for three years now. Through this partnership we have been able to provide traditional Indigenous cultural services to children, youth and families on an individual basis, as well as through our programs and services including Day Treatment, Live-In Treatment, and Oshkiniikidjig Miikanens Youth Group. Perhaps just as importantly, our partnership has provided our staff with access to meaningful training opportunities such as Repairing the Sacred Circle, deepening our collective understanding and ability to work from an anti-oppressive lens and honouring our Commitment to Indigenous Peoples in the spirit of reconciliation. We truly value this partnership and the impact N'doo'owe Binesi is having in our community."

LESLIE HATTON, CHILDREN'S CENTRE
Thunder Bay, Manager, Child and Family
Counselling and Therapy



PRIORITY
three

AMPLIFY INDIGENOUS CULTURAL SAFETY
WITHIN THE REGION



Health outcomes for Indigenous Peoples in Northwestern Ontario is generally poorer. As healthcare providers, we must do everything possible to ensure our spaces are welcoming, healing, and safe. By promoting understanding and respect for Indigenous culture, we can support Indigenous cultural safety across the region, fostering inclusive and safe healthcare environments.

Objectives

To promote understanding and respect for Indigenous cultures while fostering a safe and inclusive environment for Indigenous Peoples within the region.

Actions

- 1. Partner and develop coalitions with mainstream and Indigenous organizations to support cultural safety across the region; and
- 2. Co-design protocols for regional programs in partnerships with First Nation communities and Indigenous service providers.

Ogichidaa-Kwe (Elder in Council) Introduced



“With fluency in her native language, she serves as a cultural guide, braiding tradition and innovation.”

OGICHIDAA-KWE INTRODUCED

Brenda Mason has joined N’doo’owe Binesi as the Ogichidaa-Kwe (Elder in Council). She plays a pivotal role in integrating cultural and spiritual guidance across the N’doo’owe Binesi division. This position is crucial in promoting cultural safety and humility within the SJCG organization, ensuring that Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and practices are deeply respected and integrated into health and wellness services. Mason, also known as Imprint Hanging Standing Woman in her Anishinaabe community, brings decades of experience to this new role along with a deep connection to her Oji-Cree heritage. With fluency in her native language, she serves as a cultural guide, braiding tradition and innovation.



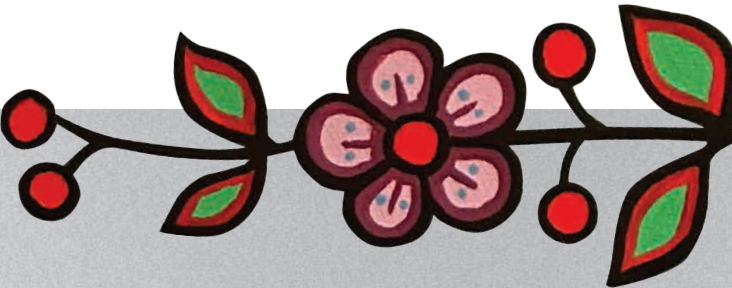
NANAANDAWE’EWIN

Nanaandawe’ewin uses a holistic approach that seeks to restore balance between mind, body, spirit and emotions. This approach connects clients with Cultural Practitioners and Elders and gaining access to cultural teachings, smudging, sharing circles, drumming nights etc. Additionally, it embraces Anishinaabek health practices, knowledge, and beliefs rooted in traditional healing and wellness, inclusive of ceremonies and plant medicines.

Five Cultural Practitioners currently implement Nanaandawe’ewin, and with the demand for services continuing to increase, the number of staff is also expected to climb. This is a very unique position, deeply rooted in Anishinaabe culture and requires specific life experiences, including spending time with Elders and Knowledge Keepers, participating in ceremony, and facilitating culture.

One of the Cultural Practitioners on staff is an apprentice of grief, the teachings he has been given inform his approach to palliative care, and his understanding of death and dying as a sacred journey.

In 2024, N’doo’owe’Binesi launched the second phase of our Cultural Safety Training, focusing on trauma-informed approaches to behaviour change. This phase employs an Indigenous-specific lens to understand trauma and translate it into behavioural change for healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, clinicians, and frontline staff. Additionally, cultural awareness training is a significant component, emphasizing the importance of allyship. This ensures that both Indigenous people and allies collaboratively support and share responsibilities in the process.



Quick Facts:

Monthly Smudge

April-June 2024
53 staff

Monthly Tea with an Elder

April-June 2024
75 staff

Seasonal Feasting

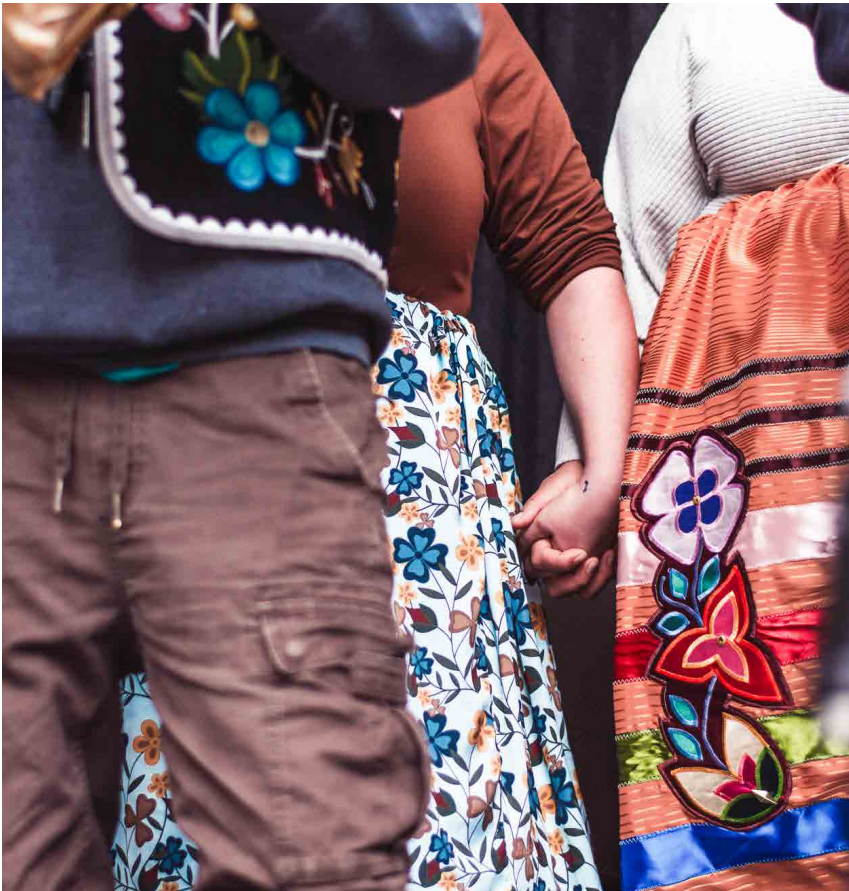
Fall 2023
65 staff
Spring 2024
60 staff

Repairing Our Sacred Circle Training

Phase 1:
88 sessions completed
SJCG Staff: 395
Partners: 436
Phase 2:
SJCG Staff: 75

Our Learnings

Reciprocal Consulting’s evaluation of N’doo’owe Binesi at SJCG, conducted from June 2023 to March 2024 with 160 participants, highlighted both positive outcomes and areas for improvement.



POSITIVE OUTCOMES INCLUDED:

Culturally Meaningful Care: Clients reported receiving care that enhanced their Anishinaabe identity and cultural connection.

Safety and Support: Clients felt safer and more supported at SJCG due to the Indigenous Health team’s presence.

Staff Awareness: SJCG staff showed increased understanding of Anishinaabe history and culture, thanks to the N’doo’owe Binesi team’s efforts.

The team’s kind, collaborative approach and authentic care for Anishinaabe clients are highly valued.

OPPORTUNITIES:

Staffing and Resources: 41% of participants felt the division lacked sufficient resources.

Awareness and Referrals: 65% were unaware of how to refer clients to N’doo’owe Binesi, indicating a need for better communication.

Integration: There is room for better integration and relationship building between the N’doo’owe Binesi team and other SJCG departments.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Increase Staffing: Expand the team to better meet client needs.

Enhance Education: Continue training for both the division and SJCG staff.

Improve Communication: Ensure better awareness of services and referral processes.

Structure Referrals: Develop a more organized referral system.

The evaluation underscores N’doo’owe Binesi’s significant positive impact and provides a clear path for future growth to enhance culturally meaningful care and support.

PRIORITY four

NURTURE N'DOO'OWE BINESI



The evolution of N’doo’owe Binesi, supported by the Board of Directors, Leadership Team, and the community has been nothing short of remarkable, emphasizing the importance of culturally responsive healthcare. Although N’doo’owe Binesi has made huge strides as a team, we also know that we need to spend more time engaging with clients, residents and families to gather their experiences and suggestions on how to improve services.

Objectives

Strengthen the foundation and sustainability of N’doo’owe Binesi to optimize Indigenous health outcomes.

Actions

1. Develop strategies to secure funding and allocate resources to support the infrastructure and operations of N’doo’owe Binesi;
2. Clearly articulate N’doo’owe Binesi core services and the roles and responsibilities of the division within the organization and broader community;
3. Develop strategy to address staff retention and turnover;
4. Increase knowledge and awareness of services for both internal and external partners;
5. Seek and develop new programs and partnerships to meet emerging needs; and
6. Continue to evaluate the various components of N’doo’owe Binesi – i.e. traditional healing program.



Glossary



ANISHINAABE – (Ah-nih-shih-NAW-bay) Translates to “human being” lowered down from the stars.

ANISHINAABEK – (Ah-nih-shih-NAW-beck) Plural: groups known as Ojibway, Chippewa, Odawa, and Potawatomi.

ANISHINAABEMOWIN – (Ah-nih-shih-NAW-mow-win) The Anishinaabe language.

KE MANITOO MINAAN – (Kay-MAN-ih-too Mih-NAWN) Creator or Great Mystery.

MAKWA – (Mah-Kwaw) Bear – the ones that den’s themselves in the earth.

MINO BIMAADIZIWIN – (Mih-no Bih-MAAH-dih-zee-win) Translation: “The Good Life”. The good life refers to living a balanced life in connection with all relations, community, and the land.

MISKO ZHAAWANONG SHKWAADEM – Spiritual Room at Hogarth Riverview Manor (Mih-Skoh-ZHOW-ah-no-ng ih-SHKWAA-dem) Translation: “Red Southern Door”. The Red Southern Door is a reference to one of the four sacred directions that the Anishinaabe people honour. The Sacred Space at Hogarth Riverview Manor was dedicated as a space to host Sharing Circles and Ceremonies for Indigenous Residents of Hogarth Riverview Manor.

NAGISHKODADIWIN – Spiritual Gathering Lodge (Nuh-GISH-Koh-DAAH-Dih-Win) Translation: “Coming Together”. This name was gifted to the Spiritual Gathering Lodge space at St. Joseph’s Hospital in June of 2019.

WHITE SPIRIT BEAR ROOM – Spiritual room at St. Joseph’s Health Centre.

NANAANDAWÉ’EWN – Traditional Healing Program (Nuh-NAWN-Duh-Way-EH-Win) Translation: “Searching for Healing”

Traditional Healing in the Anishinaabe culture requires commitment and a desire for change and healing to take place. It describes the act of seeking out wellness through various ways: through ceremonies, protocols, connection with Elders and Knowledge Keepers, traditional food and plant medicines.

NINGAABII’ANANG – (Ning-Gaw-BEE-Ah-Nawng) Translation: The western direction which is described in the Anishinaabemowin language as the place of the setting star lowered down over the water. It is the direction where our loved ones leave to enter into the spirit world.

N’DOO’OWE BINESI – Indigenous Health (In-DOUGH-Oh-Way Bih-NAY-Sih) Translation: “Healing Thunder Bird”

The Thunder Bird is the highest form of Spiritual helper for the Anishinaabe. The Thunder Bird is sacred and significant to the area of Thunder Bay, as we are located in the Bay of Thunder, overlooked by Thunder Mountain (Anemki Wajiw - Mount McKay). The Healing Thunderbird provides healing and strength for all who work within N’doo’owe Binesi.

OGICHIDAA ONAAKONIGEWIN – Elders Council (Oh-Gih-Chi-DAAW Oh-NOCK-Oh-Nih-GAY-win) Translation: “Elders Law”

This name was gifted to the Elders Council through a ceremony in the fall of 2021. It upholds the Creators Law of honouring the wisdom of Grandmothers and Grandfathers, having lived a long life. Each member works together as a collective Council to provide direction for the N’doo’owe Binesi division and President & CEO of SJCG by supporting the Walking with Humility plan and SJCG Strategic plan, that promotes Indigenous Knowledge & Worldview relating to Indigenous Health and Traditional Healing.

OGICHIDAA-KWE – (Oh-Gih-Chih-DAW-KWAY) A warrior, ceremonial headwoman. Someone who leads with the heart for the people in prayer and in action.

THE SEVEN GRANDFATHER TEACHINGS

1. **Debwewin** (Deb-WAY-win) Truth: speak the truth through your own lens
2. **Dabaadendiziwin** (Dah-BAA-den-dih-zih-win) Humility: to live in a way that is lowered
3. **Zoongide’ewin** (Zoh-ng-gih-DAY-win) Courage: to have a strong heart, love unconditionally
4. **Nibwaakaawin** (Nih-bwaa-KAAW-win) Wisdom: Live out the lessons you’ve seen/learned in life
5. **Manaaji’idiwin** (Mah-NAAW-jih-ih-dih-win) Respect: to go easy on someone or something (not too harsh)
6. **Gwayakwaadizi** (Gwi-yuck-WAA-dih-zih) Honesty: to live in a way that is correct, straight
7. **Zaagi’idiwin** (ZAA-gee-ih-dih-win) Love: unconditional love

TWO-EYED SEEING – Two-Eyed Seeing is the practice of viewing the world through both the strengths of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives from one eye, and the strengths of Western knowledge and perspectives from the other eye, and learning to integrate both views to benefit all.

WHOLISTIC – For Anishinaabe, a connection to spirit is fundamental to overall health, serving as the foundation that other aspects of wellness are built. Spelt with a “w”, the word embodies its true meaning in Anishinaabee culture. It recognizes that health is not merely the absence of illness but the balance and harmony of physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental well-being.

MEDICINE WHEEL – From tribe to tribe, the details may differ but the basic teachings are the same. The Teachings of the Medicine Wheel are vast, the four directions of the Medicine Wheel remind us the need for balance in the world. Many things come in four’s to support ease of learning, and four directions teachings go clockwise beginning in the East, South, West to North.

Appendix: Illustration

VISUAL TALKS ILLUSTRATOR SHANNON LOOMER CAPTURED THE REGIONAL INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE GATHERING IN REAL-TIME THROUGH HER VISUAL RECORDINGS. THIS IS ONE OF HER ILLUSTRATIONS.





St. JOSEPH'S CARE GROUP

**ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL
CORPORATE OFFICE**

35 Algoma St. N.
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 5G7
807-343-2431 | sjcg.net

**BALMORAL
CENTRE**
807-623-6515

**HOGARTH RIVERVIEW
MANOR**
807-625-1110

**SISTER LEILA GRECO
APARTMENTS**
807-625-1126

**SISTER MARGARET
SMITH CENTRE**
807-684-5100

**ST. JOSEPH'S HEALTH
CENTRE**
807-624-3400

ST. JOSEPH'S HERITAGE
807-768-4400



Jim