



Wiidosem Dabasendizowin | Walking With Humility:  
**Looking to the Southern Direction Report**

N'DOO'OWE BINESI | SJCG INDIGENOUS HEALTH

August 2023



ST. JOSEPH'S CARE GROUP



N'DOO'OWE BINESI



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## Land Acknowledgement

I would like to share some truths about myself. I am not Indigenous; I am of immigrant heritage. Although my ancestry extends to England, I like many others have benefited greatly from living and working on the traditional land of Canada's First Peoples, and I have a desire and a responsibility to acknowledge the land on which I reside.

I was born and raised in Hamilton Ontario, situated on the traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Ho-deno-sho-nee and Mississaugas. This land is covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Ho-deno-sho-nee and Anishinaabek to share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

For over a decade now, I have lived in Thunder Bay, which is built on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabek, and includes the home of the Ojibway of Fort William First Nation, signatory to the Robinson-Superior Treaty of 1850.

I understand and accept that Canada's history of colonization and assimilation has had long-lasting impacts on the culture and quality of life of Indigenous Peoples.

Having myself been subject to an education grounded in colonialism, I must be aware of my own unconscious bias and the risk of stereotyping and prejudicing. I recognize that I must do more to learn about the history of Canada's First Peoples, including their pre- and post-contact experiences - to better understand the impact of colonialism and my role as a resident, neighbour, partner, and ally.

As a health service provider working with Indigenous Peoples, I recognize that acknowledging the impact of colonization and other parts of our shared history, including the Indian Act, residential school systems, Indian hospitals and the Sixties Scoop is critical to understanding each individual's current physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health status. It is also critical to understand the impact policies have had regarding access to services, safety, food security and health care that many take for granted.

Health empowerment encompasses health services that are community-driven and developed with Indigenous partners. "Nothing About Us, Without Us" is the collective call to action from Indigenous communities. Coming from a place of privilege, it is my responsibility to listen, to foster trust, to learn and consider the unique needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples, particularly those living in rural, remote and isolated communities in Northwestern Ontario, in the development of culturally and geographically appropriate health services.

While hopeful for our shared future of reconciliation, let us recognize the historic significance, sacrifices and contributions of Indigenous Peoples to the development of the places we call home, both in shaping and strengthening our communities, our province, and Canada as a whole.

**Ron Turner**, Director, Inpatient Rehabilitative Care, St. Joseph's Hospital

*Note: This Land Acknowledgement was taken and edited from the April 20, 2023 SJCG Management Team Meeting with permission.*

# Prayer

*Meegwetch (Thank You) Kitchi Manito  
(Great Spirit, Creator)*

*Meegwetch, mino-bimaadiziwin  
(the Good Life)*

*You have provided everything  
we need to live on Mother Earth.*

*As we look to the Zhawanong (South),  
we are reminded to look to our hearts  
and listen to the beating of our hearts  
with Mother Earth's heart beat.*

*We feel the connection and look to grow  
with nurturance, guidance and compassion  
from our Creator  
through all that we have today.*

*Meegwetch, Kitchi-Manito, help us to keep  
our hearts open to your love and healing  
as we work together.*

**Imprint Hanging Standing Woman  
Brenda Mason**



# Acknowledgements

Ahnii/ Boozhoo,

It has been four years since my appointment as St. Joseph's Care Group's first Director of Indigenous Relations, and I look forward to serving as the Vice President, N'doo'owe Binesi at SJCG. As we look to the future, we will continue advancing Indigenous health and reconciliation; enhance and build capacity for culturally safe care; lead the development of strategy and policy direction that promotes reconciliation and addresses anti-Indigenous racism and discrimination; and support the facilitation of system transformation through partnerships, initiatives, programs and Indigenous-centred research and evaluation.

I'd like to thank the Leadership Team for being respectful and open to looking at things differently, and for supporting the Walking With Humility approach we have adopted at SJCG. One example of this approach is to create space for our Elders to support the next SJCG 2024-2028 Strategic Plan Steering Committee. Special thanks to Carolyn Freitag, Vice President, Clinical and Chief Nursing Executive, for her leadership and commitment to advancing the work of the Indigenous Health Education Committee. I'd also like to acknowledge Sena Honke and Kim Callaghan from Communications & Government Relations for your edits and feedback on this report. I would also like to acknowledge our President & CEO, Kelli O'Brien. In such a short amount of time, you have had a significant and positive impact at SJCG, and have led with humility and kindness. For all your dedicated work – thank you.

The N'doo'owe Binesi team is trailblazing cultural work in healthcare by creating culturally safe care environments while innovating approaches to improve client health outcomes. Special miigwech to N'doo'owe Binesi's management team: Marinna Read, Clinical Manager, Andrew Koscielniak, Manager of Program Development, and Reena Larabee, Traditional Healing Manager.

As a working collective, Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin have enabled this work to flourish with their prayers, guidance, and support. I say kitchi miigwech to Ernie and Charlotte Kwandibens, Luke Sagutch, Brenda Mason, Gerry Baxter and Wanda Baxter.

Gchi' Miigwech

**Paul Francis Jr.**  
Vice President, N'doo'owe Binesi  
St. Joseph's Care Group



## Message from the President & Chief Executive Officer

The work of reconciliation involves building better relationships but at the heart of this work is the need to first acknowledge hard truths. Since joining St. Joseph's Care Group (SJCG), I have come to a deeper understanding of the importance of and the discomfort that sometimes occurs with acknowledging these truths, in particular in relation to the history of the Catholic Church and the role of the Church in the operation of the Federal Government's policy for Residential Schools. The abuses perpetuated against Indigenous Peoples inflicted devastating suffering and harm that continues to impact the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples today, through intergenerational trauma, as well as ongoing oppression and widespread systemic racism and discrimination rooted in colonial legacy. Although SJCG is not the Catholic Church, we are a Catholic-sponsored organization and recognize that Catholic healthcare is an extension of the Catholic Church. As a result, we must be compelled to advance social justice and advocacy to work in opposition of racism and discrimination.

We are deeply committed to Walking with Humility on our journey towards truth and reconciliation. As we move together in the Southern Direction of our journey, we have continued to focus on learning and recognizing a more balanced history that includes Indigenous perspectives and lived experiences. This learning is creating the growth necessary to enable us to challenge and dismantle injustice and inequities so that we can together create safer spaces for Indigenous clients and staff. We have been purposeful in investing in education, resources and external partnerships to address Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination. While we know there is still much to do so that all Indigenous Peoples feel respected and safe when they interact with SJCG, I am hopeful and inspired by the work that is taking place. For Indigenous Peoples who in the past have not felt safe accessing our programs and services as a result of their experience, we are truly sorry and we are committed to doing better.

With Love, Respect, Bravery, Truth, Honesty, Humility, and Wisdom, the N'doo'owe Binesi Team and Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin continue to lead us in development of a continuum for learning Indigenous Cultural Safety and Humility and care pathways that embed Indigenous Knowledge & Healing Practices. Miigwech for your unwavering guidance and patience during this stage in the development. Over the past two years, we have seen our leaders and staff grow as allies, challenging and working earnestly towards positive changes within SJCG and the health system with care, compassion and commitment. Becoming an "Ally" involves humility and growth through actively seeking feedback, engaging in self-reflection and continually strengthening ones abilities, and using ones role to influence positive change. As a leader, becoming an "Ally" and having the privilege of using the influence of my role to support positive change has been a journey for which I will always remain deeply grateful.

Respectfully,



Kelli O'Brien  
President & CEO



## Introduction

N'doo'owe Binesi is a developing, innovative Indigenous Health department within St. Joseph's Care Group (SJCG). Led by the Vice President, N'doo'owe Binesi, who reports to the President & Chief Executive Officer (CEO), N'doo'owe Binesi continues to be guided by Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin, the Elders Council. *Wiidosem Dabasendizowin: Walking with Humility* has provided a strong framework that utilizes the wisdom of the Medicine Wheel and continues to guide us into our next Strategic Plan.

Centering Indigenous pathways and healing rooted in Anishinaabek culture, values and traditions, N'doo'owe Binesi plays a key role across the organization in providing ongoing education and training opportunities for staff, and cultural support for clients and families.

It has been two years since we updated the community with our First Steps Report in June 2021, and this important work has certainly not slowed. The work of N'doo'owe Binesi thrives as we continue to be guided by Looking to the Southern Direction, the second iteration of our Walking with Humility plans. As we use ceremony to direct our work, we are grateful for a ceremony that was held at the Lodge on Dawson in October 2022 that reassured us we are on the right path moving forward.

Over the past two years we have worked diligently to build a solid foundation by developing cultural safety and transform the healthcare experience for Indigenous clients receiving care at SJCG. This Looking to the Southern Direction Report, August 2023, is our updated report to the community.

### THE MEDICINE WHEEL

The southern direction in Anishinaabemowin is Zhaawanong. Zhaawanong, represented through the red quadrant of the Medicine Wheel, represents the adolescent stage of life and the element of the Earth, and guides us into summer. Adolescence invites many challenges, but also provides us with the tools we need to create strong roots and ground us in our future work. The southern direction symbolizes the beauty of life and reminds us of the importance of continued nurturance and care.



### KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Creation of Vice President, N'doo'owe Binesi
- Foundational staff education of Repairing the Sacred Circle and Wake the Giant training
- Significant growth of N'doo'owe Binesi team
- Expanding role and capacity of the Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin – Elders Council and link to SJCG's Board of Directors

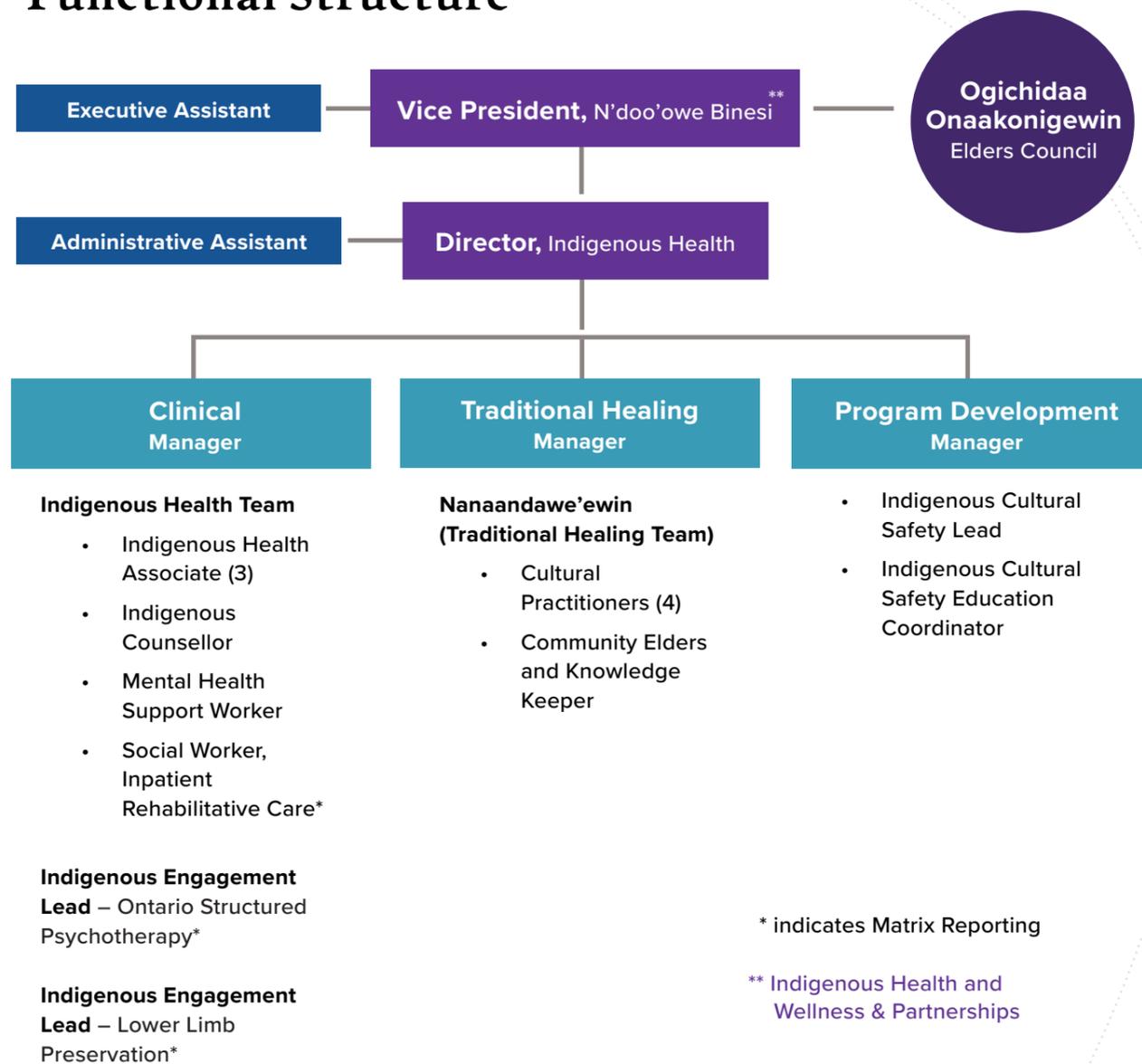
# Who We Are

N'doo'owe Binesi has spent the past two years building our team to support Indigenous knowledge, culture, and healing practices into St. Joseph's Care Group's (SJCG) programs and services, with the goal of enhancing culturally safe care. The Vice President of N'doo'owe Binesi reports to the President & CEO of SJCG. The Elders Council also has a link to the SJCG Board of Directors through the new Mission and Equity Sub-Committee of the Governance Committee.



N'DOO'OWE BINESI

## Functional Structure



# Logo Redesign

## ORIGINS

“Spiritual Gathering” is an original artwork by local artist Benjamin Morrisseau, commissioned by St. Joseph’s Care Group in January 2019. “Spiritual Gathering” was unveiled June 17, 2019, during the re-dedication of St. Joseph’s Hospital’s sacred space called Nagishkodaadiwin – the Spiritual Gathering Lodge.

Central to the painting is Animikii, the Thunderbird – an important figure in the Anishinaabeg culture. Thunderbirds are supernatural and powerful Manitou (spirits), and are looked upon as protectors and healers to help restore balance here on Mother Earth. There are many stories and understandings of the Animikig (Thunderbirds) amongst the Anishinaabeg. The painting depicts people coming together for healing with help from the animals such as the bear and moose, the water beings of fish and turtle, and spirit beings from the supernatural realm, all under the watch and protection of the Thunderbird.

~The SJCG 2020 - 2024 Strategic Plan

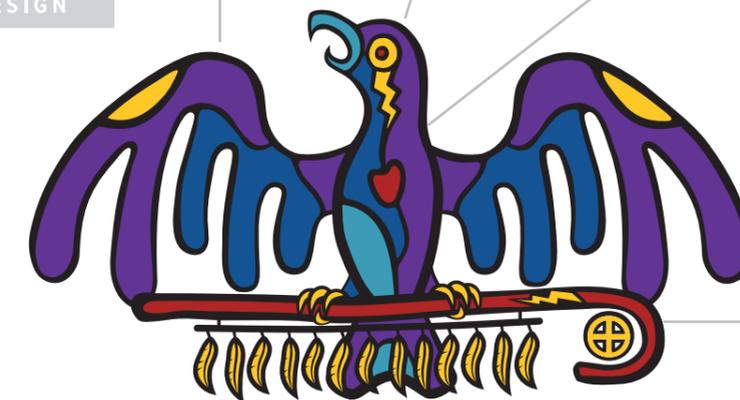


Wings lifted to show the protective gesture present in “Spiritual Gathering,” a central tenant of the brand identity.

Thunderbird clearly identified by lightning bolt below eye, drawn in at an Elders’ consultation.

Heart shape becomes more rounded to better reflect the woodland style.

## 2023 REDESIGN



Also suggested at an Elders’ consultation, this illustrated version of the eagle staff holds 13 feathers.

N'DOO'OWE BINESI

Font update: using the brand’s sans serif, blended with the capitalization of the parent logo.

**ACTION 1** Integration of Indigenous Knowledge & Healing Practices Nanaandawe'ewin

In 2022, the Traditional Healing Program received the name Nanaandawe'ewin through ceremony. Nanaandawe'ewin describes the act of one searching and seeking out their healing and wellness. Through the creation of Nanaandawe'ewin and as a part of N'doo'owe Binesi, we have been able to grow our team of Cultural Practitioners to 4 full-time positions, reporting to the Traditional Healing Manager, who coordinates with community Elders and Knowledge Keepers to provide ceremonies and cultural supports for our clients and families.

Under the guidance of ceremony, the Ogichidaa Onaakonigwein, and support from Leadership Team, Nanaandawe'ewin will begin to offer the Sweat Lodge Ceremony to St. Joseph's Care Group clients in 2023. A Sweat Lodge Policy has been developed and approved, with construction of the Sweat Lodge to take place in early June 2023.

**APRIL 2021 TO MARCH 2022:**



**75** in Rehabilitative Care



**42** in Addictions & Mental Health



**11** in Seniors' Health

**128**  
individual referrals for Traditional Healing

**365**

**SHARING CIRCLES /GROUPS**  
with a total of 1,596 in attendance.

Nanaandawe'ewin, with the Cultural Practitioners and approximately 12 community Elders and Knowledge Keepers, supports the following programs and services across St. Joseph's Care Group:



**Sister Margaret Smith Centre (SMSC) Youth Treatment:**  
Weekly and additionally biweekly  
**Men's and Women's Treatment:**  
2 Sharing Circles per treatment cycle



**The Lodge on Dawson**  
Weekly Sharing Circles



**Balmoral Withdrawal Management**  
2 Sharing Circles per week



**St. Joseph's Hospital**  
Weekly Sharing Circles and monthly Big Drum Teachings



**Hogarth Riverview Manor and Bethammi Nursing Home**  
Weekly Resident visits and Sharing Circles

**Mental Health Rehabilitation:** Weekly Sharing Circles  
**St. Joseph's Outpatient:** Sharing Circles upon request  
**SMSC Explorations:** Occasionally supported when requested  
**SMSC Day Treatment:** Occasionally supported when requested

High and Medium Support Homes weekly and biweekly:  
Amethyst House, Franklyn Manor, Wilson Place

**Indigenous Health Team Changes**

The previous job positions of Indigenous Cultural Health Associate and Indigenous Transitions Coordinator have been amalgamated and retitled to Indigenous Health Associate. This position and title change allows us to better serve clients with a more holistic approach to ensure consistency and continuity of client-centred care. Plans are in place to onboard another full-time Indigenous Health Associate to support residents in St. Joseph's Care Group's (SJCG) long-term care homes.

The Clinical Manager continues supporting quality care reviews, admissions processes, and new position developments. The quality care review is aimed at adapting the current processes to include cultural safety within the reporting structures. The Clinical Manager has supported the development of the Indigenous Engagement Lead positions for both the Ontario Structured Psychotherapy Program and Lower Limb Preservation, a joint initiative between Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (TBRHSC) and SJCG, and funded through Ontario Health.

HERE FOR OUR PEOPLE

ACTION

## 2 Cultural Humility As A Journey

### Repairing the Sacred Circle

#### *Ji-Dakobichigeseg iwe*

#### *Bimaadziwen Gagiizhibiigoseg*

In 2021, we launched Repairing the Sacred Circle (RSC): An Indigenous Cultural Education and Awareness Primer to lay the foundation for Indigenous cultural safety within St. Joseph's Care Group (SJCG). This introductory Indigenous cultural training program offers participants an insightful way of thinking about Truth and Reconciliation, a reflective pathway for cross-cultural discussion, and an entry point to create the necessary change for awareness and inclusiveness at SJCG. In this training, participants are introduced to concepts such as colonization, race and racism, common stereotypes, and how these contribute to health inequities for Indigenous People within the current health care system. RSC also introduces participants to Indigenous knowledge and cultural protocols/practices, such as the use of the Sharing Circle and traditional medicines.

Since the launch of RSC, all members of SJCG's Board of Directors, Leadership Team, and management teams have completed the training, and it is now open to all staff as a learning elective. Post-training surveys identified statistically significant outcomes in:

- Increased awareness of own biases, stereotypes, assumptions, and privilege;
- Recognition when observing racism in the workplace; and
- Work towards respectful allyship.

In 2023, Elder Gerry Baxter gifted RSC, and the work to be done, with the name *Ji-Dakobichigeseg iwe Bimaadziwen Gagiizhibiigoseg*. This name represents our ability to return to a time where trust and respect had been broken, and now coming together to correct the disruption and create a better way forward. In the context of the RSC training, it is about recognizing the harms that racism and colonial trauma have caused presently and historically, and finding a healing way to restore relationships.



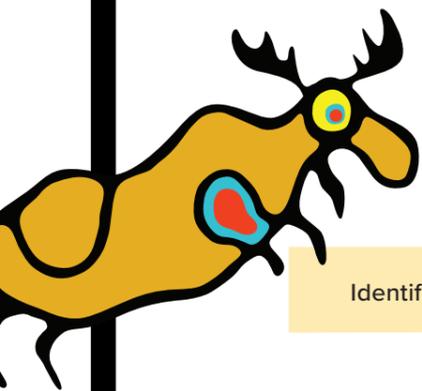
## Implementing Indigenous Self-Identification

In early 2022, we established a Project Team, with staff representation from across St. Joseph's Care Group (SJCG), to implement a process for our clients to voluntarily self-identify as First Nation, Inuit or Métis. We were able to align the process and objectives with the TBRHSC Voluntary Indigenous Self-Identification project, which launched in March 2021. Implementing Indigenous Self-Identification at SJCG is an important step in improving health outcomes and connecting clients to Indigenous health services. It was important for our Project Team to ensure this was an Indigenous-led initiative, and to incorporate the First Nation principles of ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP).

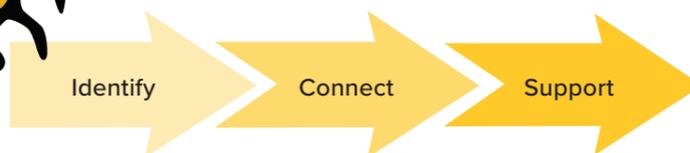
Indigenous Stakeholder Engagement invited opportunities for discussion, feedback, and recommendations moving forward. To date, three sessions have been held with engagement from several Indigenous health and community organizations, our Elders Council, and Indigenous Client and Family Partners. This feedback and guidance is fundamental to ensuring the project is done in an appropriate and respectful manner.

The Project Team recognized the importance of helping staff feel comfortable, competent and supported in facilitating the Self-Identification process with clients. In-person staff education was curated as part of the pilot in the Spring/Summer of 2022, and delivered with support from N'doo'owe Binesi team members. Using pre- and post-session staff evaluations, we were able to measure the effectiveness of the education in facilitating Self-Identification. Additionally, feedback from clients helped the Project Team make improvements to the facilitation process to support clients' understanding of why questions were being asked; how information was used; and what the clients' rights were in choosing if and how they would like to respond. To streamline efficiencies in staff education, SJCG's Corporate Learning developed a Voluntary Self-Identification eLearning module in our corporate Learning Management System that is available to all staff. Staff that complete this education are also encouraged to complete Repairing the Sacred Circle to enhance their cultural awareness when facilitating the Self-Identification process.

Staff, Indigenous Stakeholders (including clients), and SJCG Leadership have shown tremendous support and appreciation for this initiative. In May 2023, in collaboration with TBRHSC, this work was shared at eHealth Conference & Tradeshow, which attracts over 1000 health care professionals from across Canada each year. A stepped approach to the Voluntary Self-Identification Project implementation continues across the organization and is slated to conclude in spring 2024.



### STEPS



### OUTCOMES

Improve overall health and well-being of Indigenous patients

Promote journey of cultural competency for staff

Support organizational development of culturally safe services and environments

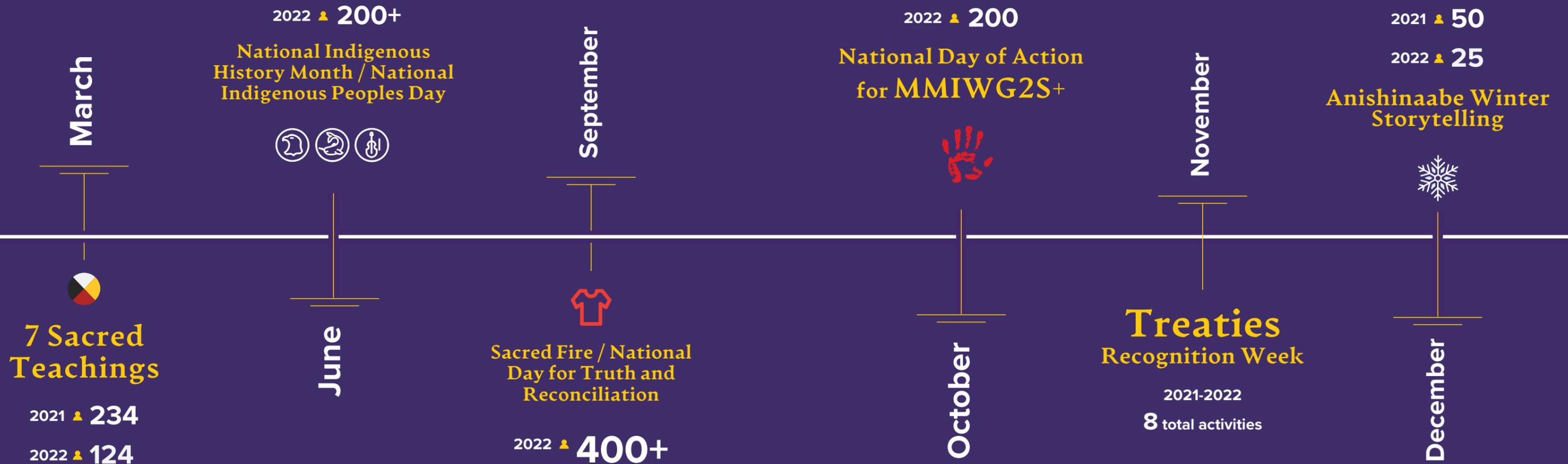
## Wake the Giant Culture and Inclusivity Training

On Friday, February 24th, 2023, St. Joseph's Care Group and Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre announced their partnership with Wake the Giant, committing to a healthcare system where Indigenous Peoples can expect to be welcomed with respect, where everyone is treated with dignity, and where no one who needs care second-guesses whether they will be safe. Wake the Giant is a cultural awareness project aimed at creating more welcoming and inclusive spaces for Indigenous

Peoples, youth and communities in the city of Thunder Bay. This Culture and Inclusivity training module was developed by staff and students from Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School, and the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council. It is a 30-minute online module that all 5,500 health care staff from both organizations will complete, providing staff with applied knowledge and tools to identify and address racism. On completion of the training, staff receive Wake the Giant logos to add to their identification.

## INDIGENOUS HEALTH

## EDUCATION COMMITTEE





14 events organized

by IHEC in collaboration with N'doo'owe Binesi since IHEC's creation in 2021.

## Indigenous Health Education Committee

St. Joseph's Care Group's (SJCG) Indigenous Health Education Committee (IHEC) strives to create a safe and culturally welcome environment for Indigenous clients, and to ensure that front-line workers and managers are aware of the historic and current reality for Indigenous Peoples. IHEC provides education for SJCG staff that focuses on increasing intercultural competency, conflict resolution, and trauma-informed care through an Indigenous lens.

St. Joseph's Care Group's Indigenous Health Education Committee (IHEC) is an Indigenous-led, interprofessional group of organizational representatives accountable for enhancing employee knowledge and awareness of the link between the Canadian history of colonialism and the current health crisis for Indigenous Peoples.

As co-chair of the IHEC committee and facilitator of the Allyship work group, it has been an extraordinary learning experience and opportunity for reflection in a safe space and kind way. On my own learning journey, I am committed to learning about the difficult truths and cultural ways of Indigenous peoples and encourage others to be vulnerable and open to do the same. In a relatively short time over the past year,

I've seen ally numbers grow within SJCG and remain inspired by the openness of our staff to engage in the many educational activities offered. I am grateful for the guidance of the Indigenous Health Team and direction provided by the Elders and recognize their time and effort invested in this purposeful and important work. As we journey together to create a culturally safe environment, my hope is each Indigenous client and their family feels safe, receives equitable and quality care in a culturally respectful way, and has the opportunity to receive traditional medicine and healing practices as part of their healing and care experience at SJCG.

~ **Carolyn Freitag**, Vice President Clinical and Chief Nursing Executive (CNE)

### 7 Sacred Teachings Series

Throughout 2021-22, IHEC hosted virtual sessions titled 7 Sacred Teachings, presented by the Traditional Healing Manager, and Elders Council members Wanda Baxter, Luke Sagutch, and Brenda Mason. Community Elders and Knowledge Keepers, including Tina Armstrong, Laura Calmwind, Audrey Deroy, Eli Baxter, Orville Councillor, Teresa Trudeau-Magiskan, and Nathaniel Moses were also invited to present.

Year	Number of Sessions	Total Participants
2021	8	234
2022	3	124



### National Indigenous History Month and National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21st)

In 2021, IHEC held 6 hybrid teaching events focusing on the Jingle Dress Dance, Powwow Regalia Teachings, Grandfather Drum Teachings, Indigenous Crafts, and Regalia and Ojibway Floral Beadwork.

On June 1st, 2022, we decided to host strictly in-person events in an effort to create genuine connections between staff and clients. We began celebrations with a gathering in the courtyard of St. Joseph's Hospital, where 40 staff attended a Powwow drum and dance exhibition. Four additional events were offered across various SJCG sites, totaling 160 participants.

### The Sacred Fire and National Truth and Reconciliation Day - 2021/22

Led and guided by the Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin and facilitated by N'doo'owe Binesi, the Indigenous Health Education Committee hosted the first 4-day Sacred Fire in honour of Canada's first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in 2021. Thanks to our partners Ka-Na-Chi-Hih, Children's Centre Thunder Bay, Oshki-Pimache-O-Win and Shkoday, the first year was a success in continuing a healing way forward.

With direction from the Elders Council and key learnings from 2021, we hosted the 4-day Sacred Fire again in 2022 at the Sister Margaret Smith Centre's Medicine Wheel Garden. Throughout the 4 days, over 400 people visited the Fire and made offerings to the children who never made it home from Residential Schools, as well as the individual survivors, their families, and communities. Many teachings and stories were shared throughout the week, particularly during the opening sunrise ceremony and closing ceremony. Throughout the week, almost every member of the Elders Council, many of whom had personal experiences with Residential Schools, shared their wisdom and stories with visitors. A healing dance also featured multiple jingle-dress dancers and songs from the Grandfather Drum, North Thunder.

Planning is underway for our 3rd year hosting the 4-day Sacred Fire.

## Treaties Recognition Week

St. Joseph's Care Group continues to acknowledge Treaties Recognition Week during the first week of November.

In 2021-22, the Indigenous Health Education Committee hosted a total of 8 activities and events to educate and inform staff about the importance of recognizing treaties and the land we work on. The events included:

- Two Walk-A-Mile video sessions at St. Joseph's Heritage and Bethammi Nursing Home
- A presentation for Leadership Team from Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux titled *Treaties in Ontario and Canada and the Calls to Action*
- Beading Wampum Workshops
- Two presentations from Michelle Solomon, Fort William First Nation Counsellor



## Anishinaabe Winter Storytelling

In December 2021/2022, IHEC hosted 5 different storytelling sessions. Presented by community Elders and Storytellers, some of the session topics included: A Historical and Contemporary Perspectives; Creation: Our Origin and Purpose; and Traditional Medicines.

Year	Number of Sessions	Total Participants
2021	5	50
2022	1	25

## National Day of Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People (MMIWG2S+)

On October 4th, 2022, IHEC members set up information boards, resources and handed out red ribbons to create awareness for National Day of Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People (MMIWG2S+). It is estimated that approximately 200 staff were engaged in this event across multiple sites.



**1,929** event attendees 2021-2022

**627** completed Wake the Giant Training

**213** completed Repairing the Sacred Circle Training

# ACTION 3 Prioritize Indigenous Health

On March 8th, 2023, the Indigenous Health Education Committee held a webinar titled *Nurturing the Fire for Truth and Reconciliation* within Health Care, presented by Miranda Lesperance, Ph.D., Vice President of Indigenous Collaboration, Equity, and Inclusion at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (TBRHSC) and Paul Francis Jr, Director of Indigenous Relations at St. Joseph's Care Group (SJCG). The presentation explored the meaning of cultural safety within historic and healthcare-specific contexts, while exemplifying the importance of building and supporting Indigenous led-initiatives for genuine reconciliation efforts. The session was attended by over 115 people from SJCG and community partners.



## Children's Centre Thunder Bay, Options Northwest, and Shkoday

Since the beginning, N'doo'owe Binesi has been here for our partners by developing collaborative relationships with local organizations to lead change in our community. In 2021, we officially partnered with Children's Centre Thunder Bay, then in 2022, Shkoday and Options Northwest, to support culturally safe care and enhance access to traditional healing and community Elders.



Building and nurturing relations of reciprocity to support growth and development is important in Indigenous cultures. In 2022, our three community partners committed to the Anti-Racism Anti-Hate (ARAH) grant program, as funded by the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. The ARAH program supports community-based anti-racism initiatives by developing partnerships and leading education/training for increasing awareness of systemic racism and build organizational capacity to recognize, act, and prevent occurrences of racism and hate.



## Playing a Leadership Role in Catholic Healthcare for Truth and Reconciliation

Hosted together with Fort William First Nation, the 59th Catholic Health Alliance of Canada's (CHAC) Annual National Conference: Looking Within - Creating Culturally Safe Environments of Care for Indigenous People, saw over 400 participants representing 125 Catholic healthcare organizations from across Canada.

The conference showcased Anishinaabe cultural teachings from the territory, including a Sunrise Ceremony, Sacred Fire for the duration of the conference, Grandfather Drum songs, and Jingle Dress healing dance. During pre-conference activities, a Kairos Blanket Exercise was also held in the Faculty Lounge at Lakehead University.

On Thursday May 12th, 2022, we had words of welcome from Chief Peter Collins and an opening pipe ceremony and prayer from Ernie and Charlotte Kwandibens. The conference featured prominent Indigenous speakers and panelists, such as Kohontakwas Diane Longboat, Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, Harmony Johnson, Lisa Raven, Dr. James Makokis, Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux, Ro'nikonkatste Bill Hill, and Paul Francis Jr.

For the past two years, the Director of Indigenous Relations has been part of the faculty of Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario's (CHSO) Mission Leadership Program, a program to support leadership in Catholic healthcare organizations.

ACTION  
4

# Continued Engagement in Indigenous Research & Evaluation

## N'doo'owe Binesi Comprehensive Program Evaluation

As N'doo'owe Binesi continues to evolve, we reflect on the development and the current state of our program to better plan for the future. With guidance from the Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin and St. Joseph's Care Group's (SJCG) Leadership Team, we recruited Reciprocal Consulting Inc., a majority Indigenous-owned firm that specializes in working with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis organizations on program evaluation, data analysis, community engagement, and strategic planning initiatives.

The program evaluation project scope begins with reflecting on what aspects of the N'doo'owe Binesi program are working well and where there are opportunities for improvement. This reflection will begin to tell the story of how the Indigenous Health department has grown to date, which will further support identifying current organizational staff, client, and community needs.

A steering committee comprised of an Elder, an Indigenous SJCG Client & Family Partner, N'doo'owe Binesi management, and the Director of Mission & Equity will be working with Reciprocal Consulting to guide the program evaluation. The goal of this evaluation is to gain a better understanding N'doo'owe Binesi's impact across Northwestern Ontario more broadly, and the evaluation's findings will contribute to our future Walking With Humility planning. The final report is expected to be completed in March 2024.

## Engaging for Change: Building Culturally Safe Care Through Indigenous Narratives

Originally delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, *Engaging for Change: Building Culturally Safe Care Through Indigenous Narratives* is a research project created in partnership with faculty from Lakehead and Western universities, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, Anishinawbe Mushkiki and St. Joseph's Care Group.

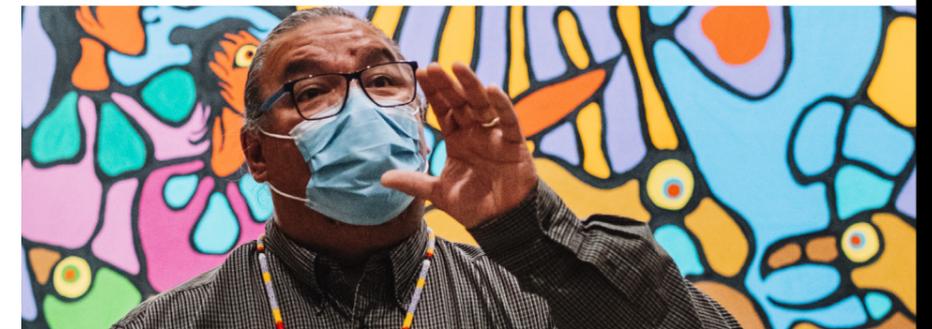
In August 2022, members of the Elder's Council participated in a full day of knowledge sharing focusing on Indigenous Health, Traditional Medicines, and their own interactions with the health care system. The Elders agreed to be visually and audibly recorded, and these recordings will be used for future educational materials and to inform healthcare training opportunities.

Training was piloted with Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) first and second year students, and those who have completed the training received beaded cultural safety pins. Most recently, in March 2023, interviews began with staff and team members from N'doo'owe Binesi.

## Indigenous Chronic Pain & Substance Use

In 2021, various N'doo'owe Binesi staff supported the St. Joseph's Care Group (SJCG) Project Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (ECHO) Chronic Pain & Opioid Stewardship team with the development, implementation, evaluation, and knowledge dissemination of the first Project ECHO Indigenous Chronic Pain and Substance Use (ICP&SU) pilot in Canada. During the first year, our Director, Clinical Manager, Cultural Practitioner, and Indigenous Counselors supported curriculum development, advisory board membership, hub team participation, and didactic presentations on Understanding Trauma Through an Indigenous Lens & Historical Context, Utilizing Traditional Approaches in Chronic Pain & Substances Use Management, and Systemic Racism, Cultural Safety and Pain.

Due to the success of the first pilot project, additional funding was provided for qualitative data collection and to offer the Project ECHO ICP&SU series again in 2022. Additional successes of the Project ECHO ICP&SU pilot include the development of a process manuscript, receipt of a Canadian Institute of Health Research Planning Grant, and knowledge dissemination at local, national, and global conferences (see Appendix A).



ACTION 5

### Indigenous Leaders & Governance

**Elder in Residence** – The growing demand for Indigenous knowledge and utilizing community Elders and Knowledge Keepers continues to increase. We have started drafting a job description to determine the scope and role of an Elder in Residence position.

**Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin** – The Elders Council met for 5 full day meetings in 2022. The meetings were attended by the six members on the Elders Council, the President & CEO, and the N'doo'owe Binesi management team.

The Elders also support the Indigenous Health Education Committee and rotate attendance. Two of the Elders sit on the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, and one Elder will support the N'doo'owe Binesi Program Evaluation Steering Committee. Representatives from the Elders Council will also be appointed to a new subcommittee of St. Joseph's Care Group's Board of Directors Governance Committee, the Mission & Equity Subcommittee, to help champion cultural safety, and humility, and overall health equity for traditionally under-represented groups.

**Accreditation Canada's Health Standards Organization Cultural Safety and Humility Standard** has served as a foundational document to guide and advance our SJCG Walking With Humility plans and actions.

ACTION 6

### Communications

Created in partnership with local Indigenous artists and storytellers, and in collaboration with St. Joseph's Care Group's Communications & Government Relations department, selected pieces from Thunder Bay Art Gallery's Gikendamowin (Knowledge Sharing) introduced a series of displays located in the Main Hallway at St. Joseph's Hospital. These displays are a way for us all to see and engage with Anishnaabek cultural beliefs, worldviews, and ways of healing. Our first display, created by Caitlyn Bird, was about the Four Sacred Medicines of Tobacco, Sage, Sweet Grass and Cedar. Leanna Marshall and Jean Marshall curated the second and third displays: Asaawaa Baazige (When the Hide is Turning Yellow From the Smoke), and Gitchi Zhaawenimaa'min Wiikwaahsahtik (Honouring the Birch Tree).

ACTION 7

### A Healing Way Forward

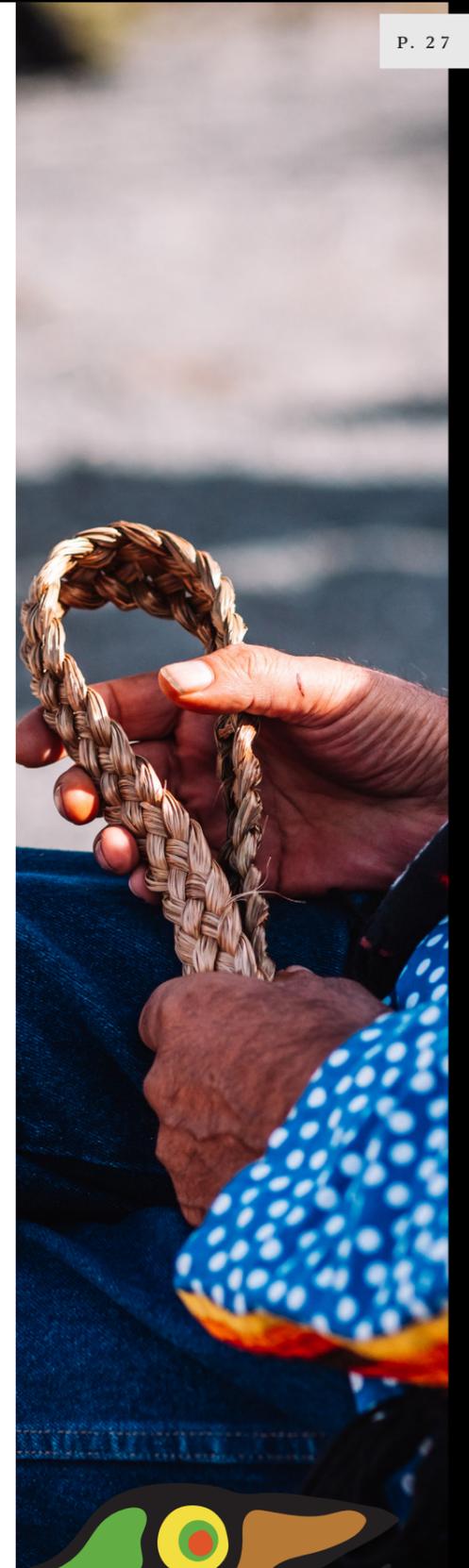
#### Leadership

St. Joseph's Care Group's Leadership Team attended a number of events related to Indigenous health and wellness, and Indigenous cultural events and ceremonies from May 2022 – May 2023. The dedication of time and action to truth and reconciliation has been vital to the advancement of our Walking with Humility commitments. See **Appendix B** for more information.

#### Creating the Future Together Design Event

On April 12th, 2023, team members from Inpatient Rehabilitative Care and N'doo'owe Binesi gathered for a facilitated Design Event. The Creating the Future Together event acknowledged the need to dismantle systemic racism and discrimination, while cultivating organizational values for culturally safe care.

The day started with a smudging ceremony and offering of prayer and song from Elder Gerry Baxter in the Spiritual Gathering Lodge at St. Joseph's Hospital. The group looked at the current state of Indigenous Health services available, before considering future actions to further improve client care. The team identified gaps that diminish culturally safe environments for Indigenous clients and staff, then collaborated to create action plans that engaged both Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff. The event featured candid discussions about the realities of racism and barriers to care faced by Indigenous People living in Thunder Bay. Staff were encouraged to keep an open mind in determining a culturally safe environment by consistently honouring mutual commitments to providing excellent, comprehensive care for Indigenous clients.



# Glossary

**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 (Mount McKay). The Healing Thunderbird provides healing and strength for all who work within N'doo'owe Binesi.

**Nanaandawe'ewin - 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. Nanaandawe'ewin describes the act of seeking out wellness through various ways: through ceremonies, protocols, connection with Elders and Knowledge Keepers, traditional food and plant medicines.

**Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin - Elders Council**  
(Oh - Gih - Chih - Daw 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 Grandmothers and Grandfathers, as their wisdom of having lived a long life.

**Piimii-Gabo – Grandmother Eagle Staff**  
(Pee -Mee - Gaw - Bow)

**Translation – “Standing Crooked”**

The gift of the Eagle staff was presented to the Elder's Advisory Council Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin through ceremony in the Fall of 2021. Piimii Gabo refers to the stage of an Elder's life, where they may experience a deterioration of the body, but the strengthening of spirit through wisdom of years lived. The eagle staff represents that Elder, specifically a grandmother.

**Nagishkodadiwin – Spiritual Gathering Lodge (St. Joseph's Hospital)**  
(Nug - Gish - Koh - Dah - Dih - Win)

**Translation – “Coming Together”**

This name was gifted to the Spiritual Gathering Lodge space at St. Joseph's Hospital in June of 2019.

**Misko Zhaawanong Shkwaadem – Spiritual Room (Hogarth Riverview Manor)**  
(Mih - Skoh - Zhou - wah - no-ng)

**Translation – “Red Southern Door”**

The Red Southern Door, is a reference to one of the four sacred directions that the Anishinaabe people look to. The Sacred Space at Hogarth River View Manor was dedicated as a space to host Sharing Circles and Ceremonies for Indigenous Residents of HRM.



APPENDIX

# Appendix A

## Evaluation of the first Project Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (Project ECHO) Indigenous Chronic Pain and Substance Use in Canada

Andrew Koscielniak, R. Kin., MA • Paul Francis, MSW • Teresa Trudeau-Magiskan, Elder • Christopher Mushquash, PhD, C. Psych.  
Donna Garstin, MASc • Marinna Read, MSW • Yaadwinder Shergill, MSc, DC • Andrea Furlan, PhD, MD  
Natalie Zur Nedden, PhD • Alex Falcigno, R. Kin. • Patricia A. Poulin, PhD, C. Psych.

### Calls to Action

- Chronic pain (CP) and substance use (SU) disproportionately affect Indigenous Peoples. These disparities are anchored in Canada's colonial history, trauma, racism, and inequities.
- Aligned with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada Calls to Action, the Canadian Pain Task Force calls for the acknowledgement of traditional healing practices in pain care for Indigenous Peoples (TRC #22).
- Improving health care providers' ability to provide culturally safe care for Indigenous Peoples is a priority (TRC #23).
- Project ECHO is a continuing professional development program aiming to improve care for people in remote, rural, and underserved areas. It is well-positioned to address TRC#22 and TRC#23

### Aim

- Our team obtained a Health Canada Substance Use and Addiction Program grant to develop and implement a pilot Project ECHO Indigenous CP&SU.
- Guided by and in partnership with our Indigenous Advisory Committee, we developed and delivered the first 10-session series of its kind in Canada.
- Each 90-minute Zoom session (evenings, January to March, 2022) provided a didactic presentation and de-identified case discussion of an Indigenous person living with CP.

### Method

- Participants completed a pre-post survey (CP management self-efficacy; demographic/practice characteristics; program satisfaction).
- Participants completed polls to rate the degree to which they perceived their knowledge improved.
- We interviewed six participants for program evaluation, including understanding if and how the pilot helped them continue developing a culturally safe practice.

### Results

- Presentations aligned with the six core curriculum themes identified by the Indigenous Advisory Committee; 78% to 94% of poll participants reported moderately or greatly improved knowledge in each theme.
- Participants attended an average of 4.96 sessions (SD=3.52); interviewees attended 9.17 sessions (SD=1.33).
- There was a significant difference in confidence in managing CP before (M=4.65, SD=1.26) and after (M=5.82, SD=0.82) ECHO,  $t(13) = -3.016$ ,  $P < 0.010$  (21 scores on a 7-point scale).

#### Self-Perceived Increase in Knowledge (core curriculum themes)

Theme	Greatly	Moderately	A little	Not at all	Already knowledgeable	Did not attend
Trauma through an Indigenous lens	8	2	0	0	0	0
Opioid history & impact on Indigenous Peoples	10	0	0	0	0	0
Clinical monitoring & opioid tapering	8	2	0	0	0	0
Psychological pain & physical manifestations	8	2	0	0	0	0
Assessing CP & SU through Indigenous lens	8	2	0	0	0	0
Traditional approaches: CP & SU management	8	2	0	0	0	0

#### Confidence in my ability to...

Task	Pre-mean	Post-mean
Determine if a patient may benefit from traditional approaches to healing	4.65	5.82
Assess the impact of trauma among people living with chronic pain in my practice	4.65	5.82

### Participants

Attendance	
Unique participants	57
Mean (per session)	28.2
Retention (mean/unique participants)	49.5%
Profession	
Nurse	21%
Social Worker	14%
Physician	12%
Community Health Worker	9%
Other (e.g. C. Psych., DC, OT, PA, PT)	44%
Type of Practice	
Hospital	23%
Aboriginal Health Access Centre	16%
Family Health Team/Group	11%
Private practice or Solo practitioner	11%
Nursing Station	5%
NP-led clinic	2%
Other	33%
Province	
Ontario	84%
Alberta	9%
Other (BC, NL, QC, SK)	7%

### Conclusions

- Our pilot resulted in improved self-perceived knowledge and self-efficacy, and a majority of respondents was satisfied with the program.

### Next Steps

- We conducted a second pilot series in 2023.
- We are analyzing additional pre-post questionnaires (CP attitudes and behaviours; facilitators and barriers to implementing learning).
- We are writing a manuscript to document the development of the pilot and outcomes to support future ECHOs.

Our goal is to build HCPs' capacity to provide culturally safe care, ultimately leading to better outcomes for Indigenous Peoples experiencing CP and SU issues.



# Appendix B

## Events attended by the SJCG Leadership Team (LT):

**May 12 & 13, 2022** - Catholic Health Alliance of Canada, Looking Within: Creating Culturally Safe Environments of Care for Indigenous Peoples, National Conference. Attended by all of Leadership Team.

**March 23, 2022** - Diversity Thunder Bay, Jody Wilson-Raybould, Virtual Speaking Event, Taking Steps to Advance True Reconciliation. Attended by the President and CEO, Director Indigenous Relations

**May 2022** - Lakehead University newly launched Anishinaabe Kendaasiwin Institute (AKI), Opening Ceremony, attended by President & CEO and VP, People Mission & Values.

**May 2, 2022** - Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) "Culture is Wellness" Week. Attended by VP, Mission People & Values and Director Indigenous Relations.

**September 27 & 30, 2022** - Sacred Fire and National Truth and Reconciliation Day. All Leadership attended with the President and CEO speaking at opening sunrise ceremony and VP Rehabilitation Care speaking at closing event.

**November 10, 2022** - Indigenous Health Education Committee hosted an educational webinar with Michele Solomon from Fort William First Nation for Treaties Recognition Week. Attended by the President & CEO, Director CECR, Director Indigenous Relations.

**December 2, 2022** - Nishnawbe Aski Nation's (NAN) Open House. Attended by President & CEO and Clinical Manager, Indigenous Health.

**December 7, 2022** - Virtual session hosted by Harvard University Native American Program, titled Inter-generation Transmission of Trauma & Resilience in First Nations, presented by Dr. Amy Bombay. Attended by the President and CEO, Director Indigenous Relations and Director CECR.

**February 24, 2023** - Wake the Giant, Launch Virtual Indigenous Culture and Inclusivity Training Media Event. Attended by President and CEO, VP People, Mission Values, VP Rehabilitative Care, VP & Chief Financial Officer, Director CECR, Director Indigenous Relations.

**February 27, 2023** - CCTB & N'doo'owe Binesi Partnership Reporting at Italian Hall. Attended by the President CEO, Director CECR.

**March 8, 2023** - Nurturing the Fire for Truth and Reconciliation Within Health Care (Virtual). Attended by President & CEO

**March 11, 2023** - Lakehead University Native Student Association Powwow (LUNSA), Attended by the President & CEO, Director Indigenous Relations.

**March 29, 2023** - Birchbark Traditional Knowledge Event. Attended by the President & CEO, VP People Mission & Values, VP Rehabilitative Care, VP Seniors Health, Director CECR and Director Indigenous Relations.

**May 12, 2023** - Catholic Health Alliance of Canada, Getting to the Heart of It: Being, Caring, Doing, Montreal, Quebec (in-person and virtual), "The power of the mind, the power of intention: using mindfulness for Healing, Decolonization and Transformation, Michael Yellow Bird. All LT participated.



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