

NEWS RELEASE

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Rainy River District Groups working to create a local Ontario Health Team

As part of the Provincial Government's restructuring of the Health System, Ontario Health Teams (OHTs) are being developed across the province. The focus is on improving patient care and experience across the full continuum of care.

When the initial call was made for OHT self-assessments, Gizhewaadiziwin Health Access Centre and Fort Frances Tribal Area Health Services met with their respective Board of Directors and the 10 First Nation Chiefs in April and May 2019 to discuss OHT priorities. A decision to submit an Indigenous-led OHT self-assessment for the southern region of Treaty #3 was made. The Ministry assessed our OHT status as "in discovery" meaning that the submission supports the OHT model, but encouraged us to continue discussions with other health organizations within our region. An emphasis on expanding partnerships and aligning with the readiness criteria outlined for the OHTs was also encouraged.

Starting in October 2019, follow-up meetings were held with other local health and social service organizations and the local First Nation Leadership to discuss expanding the OHT self-assessment membership to the entire Rainy River District. The initial self-assessment was revised and resubmitted to the Ministry in December 2019. Partners to the up-dated submission include: Gizhewaadiziwin Health Access Centre; Fort Frances Tribal Area Health Services; Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board; Riverside Health Care Facilities; Atikokan General Hospital; Canadian Mental Health Association Fort Frances Branch; Fort Frances Family Health Team; Atikokan Family Health Team; and Northwestern Health Unit.

All parties expressed interest in formalizing a working group to develop relationship agreements and move an OHT self-assessment forward with the goal to develop and implement a collective vision for the health care of all people in the Rainy River District. The vision will include ensuring the provision of care close to home and working within our Local Health Hubs to provide that care. The first meeting of the working group was held on February 7, 2020.

The Rainy River District Ontario Health Team working group is working on the Terms of Reference for the group and will continue to provide Communication Releases on the work being done. Interim Co-chairs and Communications leads are Shanna Weir (Gizhewaadiziwin Health Access Centre) and Karen Lusignan (Atikokan Family Health Team).

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