



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW PARTNERSHIP SUPPORTS HIGH-QUALITY PERINATAL, NEWBORN AND CHILD HEALTHCARE FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN ONTARIO

(Toronto, ON, August 8, 2023) - The Indigenous Primary Health Care Council (IPHCC) and the Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health (PCMCH) are pleased to announce a new partnership that aims to foster high-quality perinatal, newborn and child healthcare for Indigenous peoples in Ontario. This new strategic Relationship Agreement is entered into with a mutual spirit of openness, respect and humility, recognizing that establishing partnerships is essential in improving Indigenous people's experience of the healthcare system, removing barriers faced by Indigenous people during their health journeys, and to continually evaluate progress towards achieving health equity.

This Agreement also recognizes that such partnerships play an important role in truth-telling around Indigenous histories and experiences, and in furthering reconciliation, healing and system change. For example, the IPHCC and PCMCH recognize that Indigenous women are 20 times more likely to experience perinatal mood disorders than the general population; however, the mental health care provided to Indigenous people is primarily Western-focused. It does not recognize the importance of culture as healing, a wholistic approach to healthcare that incorporates Indigenous ways of being and knowing.

Indigenous health in Indigenous hands

Creating space for Indigenous voices at governance and decision-making levels – in other words, placing decisions about Indigenous health back into Indigenous hands – is an important part of improving health outcomes. “By placing decisions about Indigenous health back into Indigenous hands, we embrace a path of true partnership and cultural understanding, where wisdom, traditions, and community values converge with modern healthcare practices,” says Caroline Lidstone-Jones, IPHCC's CEO. “Only then can we achieve inclusive and sustainable health solutions that honour the richness of Indigenous heritage while fostering a healthier and more equitable future for all.”

To this end, the Agreement between IPHCC and PCMCH is rooted in several principles, which include:

- creating an environment that is **culturally safe**, and free from racism and discrimination for everyone;
- being **solutions-oriented** by responding to issues in a thoughtful and timely way, and guiding the development of shared resources with a trauma-informed lens; and
- demonstrating **respect** and practicing **humility** by considering the needs of others, being honest in our actions, sharing and living life selflessly, and praising the accomplishments of all.

IPHCC and PCMCH have begun identifying areas in which the organizations' work intersects, such as around perinatal mental health and capacity building. "PCMCH looks forward to working collaboratively with IPHCC and leveraging one another's expertise," says Sanober Diaz, PCMCH's Executive Director. "Sharing knowledge will help support the development of culturally safe and affective guidelines, resources and initiatives around perinatal, newborn and child healthcare for Indigenous communities in Ontario."

A gathering of IPHCC and PCMCH representatives took place on Tuesday, August 1st to mark their commitment to honouring the principles of this agreement. On a yearly basis, IPHCC and PCMCH will undertake an evaluation process, celebrate the work completed, and set directions for the coming year. Progress will also be shared through each organization's newsletters and social media platforms.

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Partner Information

The **Indigenous Primary Health Care Council (PHCC)** is an Indigenous-governed, culture-based, and Indigenous-informed organization with the key mandate to support the advancement and evolution of Indigenous primary health-care services provision and planning throughout Ontario. Membership currently includes 21 Indigenous Primary Health Care Organizations (IPHCOs) located in 28 different locations from across the province that include Aboriginal Health Access Centres (AHACs), Indigenous Community Health Centres (IHCs), Indigenous Interprofessional Primary Care Teams (IIPCTs), Indigenous Nurse-Practitioner-Led Clinics (INPLCs), and Indigenous Family Health Teams (IFHTs).

The **Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health (PCMCH)** provides evidence-based and strategic leadership for perinatal, neonatal and pediatric health services in Ontario. PCMCH fulfils this mandate by collaborating with government, provincial agencies and organizations, regional maternal-child health networks, healthcare providers, and patients and families. PCMCH's members and partners are located on traditional Indigenous territories across Ontario. PCMCH is grateful for the opportunity to work and live on this land.

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