

# Clinic brings indigenous and western medicine together in harmony

By Nahnda Garlow

**SIX NATIONS** - Integrating indigenous medicine and western medicine has become a goal of the greater medical community. In the last year, many health organizations have recognized the need to incorporate indigenous wisdom with western health modalities. And on Six Nations, Juddah's Place is quickly becoming the focal point of practitioners taking those goals and going forward.

Dr. Karen Hill and Elva Jamieson have been practising medicine together for just about three years. In that time the patient roster has grown to just under 750 for Hill. Elva Jamieson, who is the indigenous medicine practitioner in the practise, does not have an exact number of her patient roster, however she is travelling the Haudenosaunee communities and practises throughout the Great Lakes area - bringing indigenous medicines to patients as far away as Akwesasne, Allegany, Kahnawake, Oneida, and beyond.

"In the larger picture



that is what people are saying, that as indigenous people integrated medicine is what we need — to pick that knowledge back up. And as an indigenous physician then how can I not have that be a part of what I am doing? It's the cornerstone of everything," said Hill. "That's what were trying to do; bring that knowledge back to our people, strengthen that identity on who we are each from our own place, each with in our own way."

Thus far the results have been phenomenal. The small practise is located in a house on Sixth Line on Six Nations of the Grand River Reserve, but the notoriety is anything but small. Earlier this year Hill was awarded by the inaugural Dr. Thom-

as Dignan Indigenous Health Award from the Royal College of Physicians for her dedication to bridging the gap between Indigenous health values and the practice of western medicine.

Hill and Jamieson will see patients together. Hill said, "We talk to them at that first visit on how we are approaching health and how we are working together. So they are aware on how what we are doing here is different. It then puts the responsibility of that person's well being back into their lap."

Hill said, "I have a picture of a tree that I use and I say to my patients, 'Our health is like this tree. and if you have a tree in the front of your house

- beautiful tree - and one summer the leaves just started turning brown and falling off in the middle of the summer. Do you just go outside and spray paint all the leaves and tape them back on the tree?' No. It's not just an issue of symptoms."

The use of indigenous medicine hit international news last year as two children from the territory opted for Onongwatri:yo instead of chemotherapy. That in itself has restored a dignity to patients in the area who wish to pursue wellness through the use of traditional medicines.

When patients are presenting with complex medical issues such as cancer Hill said, "We open the dialogue and say, 'How do you want to deal with this?' I've had patients say, 'I'm not going for chemo. I want to try traditional medicine first.' People know what they want. They will ask if they can try both approaches. I tell them whatever it is that they want - we'll help you to do that. It's about opening up that space for the person to make those decisions

and not feel like we're going to critical of those choices."

Jamieson also works with oncologists at the Juravinski Cancer Centre in order to help her patients who choose to utilize both Onongwatri:yo (indigenous medicine) and Chemotherapy drugs.

Oncologists will send Jamieson the blood work for her patients and she will adjust her medicines in order to offer her medicinal support to her patients. "Usually it's the liver stuff - and that is how I have to adjust the medicines."

Jamieson said that her practise at Juddah's place has opened a positive working relationship with Juravinski where patients are choosing to start chemotherapy on the condition that they are able to continue taking indigenous medicines simultaneously.

"This medicine supports them while they are in the chemotherapy." Jamieson said that the last report she got from Oncologists at Juravinski who opt to utilize a hy-

brid treatment plan has been overwhelmingly positive and they are hoping the co-treatments will result in better outcomes for First Nations patients. "It gives our people an option to help them."

The clinic is not federally funded and is self sufficient, which has presented challenges of it's own. However both Hill and Jamieson just smile knowingly and say, "It's not about us. It's about this journey we are on and where the spirit is leading us." Both practitioners acknowledge that the journey they are on is very much led by - a common passion for a truly holistic approach to helping patients and guidance from above.

Juddah's Place will be hosting an open house this Monday, June 23, 2015 from 11am to 4pm at the Juddah's Place clinic; 3534 Sixth Line on Six Nations of the Grand River. For more details you can call Juddah's Place at 905-765-1200.