

Student-lead conference shines light on health issues faced by Indigenous communities

By Chezney Martin

HAMILTON – A health conference held this past Saturday brought awareness to non-Indigenous community members, medical and mental health students in regards to the significant health inequalities faced by Indigenous people in Canada.

The group that organized the McMaster Indigenous Health Conference (MacIHC) was comprised of 10 individuals, including four students from McMaster working through Global Health Specialization — including Yipeng Ge, Sharon Yeung, Deepti Shanbhag and Alex Liu.



During the Working Together for the Generations to Come Closing Plenary, Dr. Dawn Martin-Hill expresses her story, which was intertwined with her experience with Makayla Sault. PHOTO BY CHEZNEY MARTIN

Liu explained that the conference was brought out of their hopes in educating others in the health field to give a realistic look at Canada's health system.

"In our third year of the Bachelor of Health Sciences Program we had a chance to be involved in an extended learning experience as a part of our

Global Health Specialization, and we decided that we were interested in

learning a lot more about Indigenous health," said Liu. "So, we had a chance to work with Dawn Martin-Hill, Karen Hill, and Bernice Downy, and a lot of different collaborators at McMaster in the Indigenous Studies Program, and on the reserve in Six Nations. We made a lot of different connections, and got to learn from so many people, and coming out of that, because of all of the connections we made, we thought that a great thing to come out of this would be a conference to bring to McMaster," she said,

further explaining that in conversation with peers, the group found that their peers barely had any knowledge in regards to Indigenous people, much less the inequalities faced by Indigenous people in the health system.

Rather than having speakers that would offer sensitized information in regards to the Indigenous health inequalities, this conference provided an eye-opening and educational experience that left not only an emotion-

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