

Six Nations Health Services takes a wholistic approach

By Nahnda Garlow

OHSWEKEN - Six Nations Health Services has been a labor of love for so many care providers in the Six Nations community. From its humble beginnings nearly 25 years ago to today, the organization has taken a needed look at its services and has now launched what they call "New Beginnings".

Health Services Director Lori Davis Hill said that although staff knew they needed to restructure, there was a lot of revisiting and relationship building that first needed to occur in the organization.

"I guess about Feb we started to come together as a management team," said Davis. "We have always worked together but in silo's and we finally started to bring it all together. We spent some time off site with a facilitator and he helped us to redefine our vision as to what we are doing, where everyone is at and where we want to go."

This birthed some very literal new beginnings for Health Services - leading them to a vision of a more holistic approach to providing health programming to the people of Six Nations minus the cookie cutter approach taken off-reserve.

Davis said it is not just about what a person might need at the moment, but that learning their story and developing trusting

relationships with health service providers ultimately helps staff identify who to connect the client with to assist them achieve their goals. "You really have to look at all parts of you. If people travelling a lot for example - how do they maintain health and where do you set priorities? Or addressing the socio-economic needs. For example - if I don't have a place to live maybe my diabetes isn't my greatest issue of concern at the moment."

Davis also identified that right now some of the largest issues facing the community are our emotional wellness, dealing with pain management, children's health issues and chronic diseases.

The New Beginnings mission statement says it aims to be a "wholistic system that inspires people to achieve wellness. Our mission is to create a safe environment, to guide, support and care for our community members on their wellness journey."

Core values for the new mission are to develop healthy relationships between health service providers, their clients and the Six Nations community through co-operation, using a good mind, working together with honesty, trust & integrity. The vision also states that they seek to create services to foster strength in spite of challenges their clients may face, respect

their clients with an open mind and acceptance, and to care for their clients with empathy, dignity and equality.

This is a refreshing take at providing health programming on reserve during a time when many are looking for a hybrid and collaborative approach to their personal well being - such as utilizing both indigenous medicines and prescription treatments.

For Davis and her staff, fundamentally re-examining how they as professionals are approaching their work is the new beginning.

"As a member of the community who has gone out and gotten a degree, it's important for me to consider - 'how do i blend together meeting the need of my community and the requirements of my profession,'" said Davis. "It has become evident that we need to honour our professional boundaries but also push them to a place where it is comfortable for us as First Nations people and then we get to decide - 'what does good service look like for us compared to what it looks like off the reserve?'"

Davis says communication is key. Residents can always keep up with the programs and classes being provided by Six Nations Health Services by checking their Facebook page 'Healthy6Nay' and by checking them out on the web at www.snhs.ca.