



Remarks by OCFP President Dr. Liz Muggah on
Signing of a Relationship Accord Between
Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) and OCFP

March 24, 2021

Good afternoon everyone. I am Dr. Elizabeth Muggah, President of the Ontario College of Family Physicians. On behalf of the OCFP and our 15,000 members across the province, I am so pleased to be here for this virtual ceremony marking our organization's signing of the Relationship Accord with the Nishnawbe Aski Nation.

I am calling in from Ottawa, unceded territory...

Also joining me are two of my Board colleagues.

- Dr. Jennifer Young, Past President of the OCFP, who began the journey that led us to signing the Partnership Agreement with NAN.
- And Dr. Jonathan Bertram, a family physician who provides care throughout Northern Ontario and First Nations communities.
- The OCFP's CEO, Leanne Clarke, is also here with us today.

I want to thank you for this opportunity to speak at the virtual Chiefs Assembly on Health Transformation and Governance.

And for this opportunity to work together.

It is not news to anyone here that Indigenous populations experience a higher health burden than the overall population. The pandemic has shed light on many pre-existing cracks in our system.

At the same time, it has also revealed what can be achieved by coming together. I've seen many of our members stepping up to provide care – notably to support COVID-19 vaccination efforts with Indigenous communities.

The OCFP's vision is "Family Physicians – Leaders for a Healthy Ontario". A healthy Ontario means the health of the entire population, especially those who are vulnerable, marginalized, and racialized.

Over the years, the OCFP has raised awareness of Indigenous care through our programs, resources, and most recently our annual conference, our Family Medicine Summit.

At our summit, Audrey Logan, Indigenous Navigator at Windsor Regional Hospital, and Dr. James Makokis, a family physician originally from Saddle Lake Cree Nation in Alberta, spoke about mistrust in a medical system that has not fully embraced traditional healing, or culturally responsive and safe care.

Ms. Logan reminded our community of family physicians of the effect we can have as healers, advocates, and confidantes for our patients. Dr. Makokis inspired us to further strive toward a more equitable and inclusive system.

We recognize that if we are to live into our mission as leaders for a healthy Ontario, we must listen, learn, and grow in our own journey as a profession: to help bring together western medicine with traditional healing practices; to provide more culturally safe care; to do our part in removing systemic barriers to better care.

Education and advocacy are fundamental pillars of the OCFP's work. From an advocacy point of view, we can help amplify the perspectives and priorities of NAN, and reinforce supports needed for family physicians and health teams working in NAN settings.

Through our Continuing Professional Development, we can support family physicians in their practice and communities to commit to culturally safe and responsive care, and raise awareness of unconscious bias.

Unfortunately, we know that the subconscious can influence clinical judgments and interactions with Indigenous communities. This is an experience we must – and will – transform together.

We will do this through therapeutic relationships that are founded on partnership, respect, and knowledge. That are focused on supporting the whole person. By being trauma informed and healing centred. By emphasizing the strengths of Indigenous peoples and communities.

Today's signing of the Relationship Accord with NAN is a step toward making care better, together.

We look forward to working with you on that path forward. Thank you.