



ALL NATIONS  
HEALTH PARTNERS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Be kind. Be patient. Be understanding.**

*Kenora, ON, April 2022* – Over the past two years, there have been major impacts on health care systems globally and locally. We have all been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including in our personal and professional lives. Since the beginning of this pandemic, but most especially in the last year, our region has faced major challenges including critical staffing shortages. Areas as close as Red Lake have had to shut down emergency services for 24-hours due to the lack of available staff and Lake of the Woods District Hospital has had to close its Intensive Care Unit for some shifts for the same reasons. Primary care practitioners have worked in partnership with other organizations, redeploying staff to bridge gaps to continue service provision and for the first time ever, strategies such as hiring out-of-community agency nurses has been trialed, coming at an incredible expense.

Serena Joseph, Acting Executive Director of Waasegiizhig Nanaandawe'iyewigamig (WNHAC) shares "While demand for our services have always been greater than available resources, COVID-19 has only further illuminated gaps and health disparities faced by our clients. WNHAC is looking to engage health service partners to strategize interim solutions, such as prioritizing key services and identifying duplications, to ease pressures on our providers, nurses and support staff, while minimizing further risk to care for our clients. We are all doing our very best with the resources available."

We are all still facing the COVID-19 pandemic. With many restrictions and preventative measures being lifted across Ontario, we are seeing a sixth wave and are anticipating the highest number of COVID-19 cases in our area since the pandemic began. There are also other illnesses circulating causing an incredible number of staff to be away from work due to illness or isolation. Further to this we are generally short of family doctors in our area. Regionally, our area has a need for 30+ family doctors and in reality, there are currently 19 (across the Family Health Network, Lake of the Woods District Hospital, Kenora Chiefs Advisory and Waasegiizhig Nanaandawe'iyewigamig). These staffing shortages inevitably affect services, resulting in longer wait times and department closures. Those receiving service are frustrated and our health care teams are also frustrated, tired and discouragement is growing. The staff who show up each day have worked tirelessly to keep us safe and all the while have provided excellent care amidst the pressures faced. Ray Racette, President & CEO of Lake of the Woods District Hospital has stated "We are exceedingly proud of our staff, their commitment and dedication to serve, their resilience amidst all the changes they have endured, and the sacrifices they have made throughout this challenging time."

A message from Colleen Neil, All Nations Health Partners Executive Lead and Executive Director at Sunset Country Family Health Team - "Our most caring healthcare professionals are showing signs of suffering from near-total compassion fatigue. Relentless demands, lack of appreciation for their efforts, an intolerable push for process, procedure, and cost savings; the desperate lack of staff and support simply drained the capacity of those providers to be at their best. We can – and we must recruit for compassionate healthcare providers, but that compassion needs to be nurtured and retained, or we are just spinning our wheels. Improving morale must focus on minimizing compassion fatigue, and it is something every person can participate in. People come to us for help when they are not at their best and know those aspiring to provide care are not at their best. If we are going to be able to recruit more help, if we are going to be able to retain that help, we must help our helpers help us. We must be kind and compassionate, and they must be kind and understanding, but it truly is the "golden rule" for all of us."

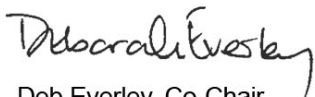
"We have done everything we can through this pandemic to ensure that everyone who needs services, has

access to services,” said All Nations Health Partners Co-Chair and Executive Director of Kenora Chiefs Advisory, Ogimaawabiiitong Joe Barnes. “Our area has had a major issue with health human resources, and have had staff working in multiple roles, missing holidays and working around the clock to ensure we are meeting the health needs of everyone”, Barnes added. “I just want everyone to show all the health workers a little extra patience and extra kindness as they have been the true heroes of this pandemic, and continue to work tirelessly to take care of people.”

A message from Deb Everley, Co-Chair - All Nations Health Partners “In the last two years we have seen the power of kindness, empathy and compassion in action, in our homes, workplaces and in our community. At our most basic human level we know that kindness begets kindness, and that showing kindness to others makes us feel better about ourselves. These past two years have been difficult for most people, and for our health and human services workforce it has been especially stressful and tiring. On behalf of the All Nations Health Partners I am asking each of us as neighbours, coworkers and citizens, to recognize in each other that we all have wounds of the heart that have not yet healed, and so if we could all remember to treat ourselves, and each other, with compassion, care and kindness, it will ensure that we create for ourselves and our families, the kind of community where everyone feels safe, belonging and welcome.”

Our colleagues, our patients, our healthcare providers are also our neighbours, our teammates, our friends, our volunteers – our community. As we continue to move forward together, the All Nations Health Partners ask everyone including our teams to consider kindness, patience and understanding in all we do. We are all in this together and together we can do so much.

Sincerely



Deb Everley, Co-Chair  
All Nations Health Partners



Joe Barnes, Co-Chair  
All Nations Health Partners



Colleen Neil, Executive Lead  
All Nations Health Partners



Ray Racette, President & CEO  
Lake of the Woods District Hospital



Serena Joseph, Acting Executive Director  
Waasegiizhig Nanaandawe'iyewigamig

#ANHPBeKind  
#BeKind

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