



INDIGENOUS HEALTH NETWORK

Serving Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand, Brant, Burlington and Norfolk

January 20, 2021

OPEN LETTER TO OUR MANY THOUSANDS OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY MEMBERS WITHIN THE LHIN 4 AREA LIVING ON RESERVE AND LIVING OFF RESERVE.

DEAR COMMUNITY MEMBERS,

We, at the Indigenous Health Network, wish to sincerely thank, applaud and encourage all of you for your swift ongoing steadfast actions and love during this time which was foretold to us. All of you and we together, have managed this pandemic with quick appropriate action to protect those most vulnerable, our elders, our children, frail and isolated, vulnerable families, with ongoing services to ensure all our members are receiving supplies and wellness checks on a regular basis. We also recognize that it has been a trying time when loved ones have to transition during this pandemic. There will come times we will be able to gather once again in larger groups.

We are proud of and honour all of you who have been on the forefront, working daily, serving the people tirelessly tending multiple needs. For those of you behind the scenes, ensuring that supplies are intact, PPE, medicines, providing mental health and spiritual support, leading and helping with ceremonies, fires and prayers, we recognize you and honour all you have given and that you still continue. This...has not gone unnoticed. The spiritual work holds us all up and strengthens us each day. Together, we all give of ourselves in the way Creator has planned. Our families stay safe and allow us to continue to do this work, for the people because they understand. We are all grateful to them. To our network member organizations and all the employees, we want you to know that you are doing amazing work. Each and every one of you, of us, is important to this whole as this time period continues to manifest. Our energy, light, spirit, body and minds are all required to ensure we and our peoples are here to see this through, for all those yet to come.

This letter is to encourage you to stay the course. Creator has given us many things, traditional medicines, healers and helpers, ceremonies and dance. Most of all, each other...to encourage each other, lift each other up. We also have the younger brother's bright mind which Creator brought to us, again foretold. We must use all tools given to us by Creator at this time that includes all sciences, all ways of knowing so that together all things are made whole

As we were foretold, this time is now upon us and as foretold, it will pass.

As Indigenous leaders, "chosen by our people" to represent, to carry messages, to invoke our gifts in various venues in and around this territory, we carry the responsibility to uphold treaty rights and agreements that our mutual ancestors prepared for us. One of these responsibilities is to uphold you, to encourage you and help you keep steadfast. We will do all we can to support your needs to serve the people during this time as in all times. Optimum health care for all our Indigenous people is our goal, and that includes you. Even now, in these days, it is vital that you take time for you, take care of self, eat nutritious food, spend time on the land, sleep well and remember ceremony, dance, sing and drum.

Again, as foretold, the time is now upon us, 'stand fast' do not give in, do not give up! As foretold, it will pass.

~ On Behalf of all the members of the Indigenous Health Network, (HNHB LHIN 4 Region, Ontario)

Representing 18 On and Off Reserve Health, Social Service and Indigenous Housing organizations

Sincerely,

Wendy Sturgeon, *Co-Chair of the Indigenous Health Network & Executive Director of Niagara Chapter-Native Women Inc.*

Maggie Copeland, *Co-Chair of the Indigenous Health Network & Supervisor/Community Health Nurse Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation*

Indigenous Health Network member organizations:

Indigenous Diabetes Health Circle

Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre

De dwa da dehs nye's Aboriginal Health Centre

Hamilton Regional Indian Centre

Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation

Niagara Regional Métis Council

Métis Nation of Ontario

Native Horizons Treatment Centre

Hamilton Native Women's Centre

Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy (Oahas)

Niagara Chapter - Native Women Inc

Six Nations of the Grand River Health Services

Niagara Regional Native Centre

Brantford Native Housing

Urban Native Homes

Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services

Ganawageh & Ohsto:Seri Urban Homes

Oonuhseh Niagara Native Homes Inc