



For Immediate Release

## **Report calls for increase in culturally safe health care services in rural Indigenous communities**

**October 27, 2016** – Access to quality health care in rural, remote and northern communities is a long standing issue in Ontario.

A new briefing note released by Northern Policy Institute, *Health Care Priorities in Northern Ontario Aboriginal Communities*, by John Dabous, Julie Duff Cloutier, Nichola Hoffman and Kristen Morin, emphasizes how improved access and integration of culturally safe services can tackle the serious health care disparities that continue to exist in the north.

In light of findings presented in the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the authors set out to address issues related to sub-par health care delivery, including those identified nine years ago in a writing campaign by Dr. Murray Trusler, a family physician who provided health care services in the remote community of Sioux Lookout.

The paper's overarching recommendation is to expedite the implementation of the recently-mandated province-wide Indigenous Cultural Safety training. The authors point out that despite recent headlines announcing the government's plan to introduce such training, no specific formal plan has been implemented to date.

"Fostering an environment of culturally safe practice throughout the province is a crucial step towards addressing the health disparities for Indigenous peoples in Ontario," states the authors, "The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) has the opportunity to shift the focus from providing health care directed at Indigenous populations, to working alongside Indigenous communities in this regard."

The report looks at other challenges, including a lack of access to integrated medical records, and jurisdictional issues, specifically how funding structures and the fragmentation of health care responsibilities between the federal and provincial governments further complication service delivery.

Based on their findings, the authors make several other proposals to improve health care services in isolated Indigenous communities in Northern Ontario:

- Build upon Ontario's existing culturally safe primary care models and expand into remote locations;
- Enhance communication and coordination between aboriginal and non-indigenous agencies and;
- Streamline access to integrated electronic medical records (EMRs) for interdisciplinary health care providers;
- Expand Aboriginal Health Care Access Centres (AHACs) and;



- Plan and establish funding models to support the infrastructure providing cultural competence training, restructured FHTs, and access to EMRs.

The complete report, including all recommendations is available on our website at [www.northernpolicy.ca](http://www.northernpolicy.ca)

**Media Interviews:** Author Julie Duff Cloutier and NPI President & CEO Charles Cirtwill are available for comment.

To arrange an interview, please contact:

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**About Northern Policy Institute:**

*Northern Policy Institute is Northern Ontario's independent think tank. We perform research, collect and disseminate evidence, and identify policy opportunities to support the growth of sustainable Northern communities. Our operations are located in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, and Kenora. We seek to enhance Northern Ontario's capacity to take the lead position on socio-economic policy that impacts Northern Ontario, Ontario, and Canada as a whole.*

**About the Authors:**

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