



HEART AND STROKE FOUNDATION APPLAUDS Toronto's First Indigenous Health Strategy 2016 – 2021: A Reclamation of Well Being: Visioning a Thriving and Healthy Urban Indigenous Community

May 30, 2016

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada extends congratulations to the Toronto Indigenous Health Circle for the creation of Toronto's First Indigenous Health Strategy 2016 – 2021 and to the City of Toronto and the members and staff of Toronto Public Health for supporting and working to advance the Strategy. We offer our commitment and support to work with Indigenous residents of Toronto and across Canada to reclaim their well-being.

The strategy's title resonates: A Reclamation of Well Being: Visioning a Thriving and Healthy Urban Indigenous Community. The time to act is now. Canadians are experiencing an enlightenment vis-à-vis the history and reality of Indigenous life. The Heart and Stroke Foundation shares with all Canadians the sense of urgency and justice inspired by the findings of the Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and has committed to making Indigenous Health a key priority across our work.

The Foundation applauds and shares Toronto's commitment to the principle of self-determination and partnership that is at the core of the strategy, informed by the vision of youth, wisdom of elders, community engagement and the experience and best practices of other jurisdictions.

Indigenous people face the many barriers of cultural comfort and accessibility, ease of communication, family involvement and adequate resources to meet the needs of the community.

The Strategy recognizes the vital importance of cultural sensitivity and training throughout health and social services delivery systems. Through this approach clients are more successfully identified, encouraged to participate and more likely to return for follow up. Anxiety for patients and families is reduced further supporting compliance with programs, care and treatments and encourages return for ongoing appointments and support.

Critically, the Strategy recognized the importance of access to healthy food, clean water, diet education, physical activity, on health. The Strategy clearly understands the stress that housing, education, mental health challenges, poverty and other determinants place on the health and well-being of indigenous people.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation advocates for better access to healthy food and clean potable water for First Nation, Inuit and Metis people. The Foundation supports better funding for research and health information specifically regarding indigenous people and populations.

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In the past and currently, the Heart and Stroke Foundation has worked with Indigenous communities to address high rates of hypertension, place Automated Electronic Defibrillators (AEDs) in communities and facilities; funded and supported community food and physical activity initiatives through Spark grants and other programs, and supported the development of a Chair of Rural and Indigenous Health at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM).

It is an honour for the Foundation to stand with you and with indigenous youth, elders and people across Toronto, Ontario and Canada working for a healthy future.

Thank-you, for this opportunity to congratulate you on your work and speak in support of your efforts to reclaim the health and well-being of Indigenous people.

Sincerely

Jeff Sommers

Director, Health Promotion