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## Media Release

## **National First: Remote First Nations Residency Stream**

NOSM, Matawa, and Eabametoong First Nation Create a unique family medicine residency opportunity for medical school graduates

Medical school graduates may now be able to undertake postgraduate family medicine training connected to a remote First Nation community in Northern Ontario. With the strong support of the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) under the First Nations Health Action Plan, Matawa First Nations Management (MFNM), Eabametoong First Nation (EFN), and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) have created a unique two-year family medicine residency stream.

Together, NOSM, MFNM, and EFN designed a selection process that is equally driven by community determination of the best resident physician for the community, and meeting the School's requirements for residency program entry. The selection process is significant, as NOSM, MFNM, and EFN collaborate at all stages in the selection process. Eabametoong First Nation community members make the final decision to admit the resident to the program and to work in their community. This unique tripartite process—the first-of-its-kind in Canada—demonstrates elements of collaboration and community self-determination.

"The Northern Ontario School of Medicine's Remote First Nations Residency Program will focus on experiences needed to provide culturally appropriate, skilled, comprehensive family medicine care in a remote First Nation community," says Dr. Catherine Cervin, NOSM's Vice Dean, Academic. "By having residents live in the community for extended periods of time during their residency, they will learn from Elders about traditional knowledge and healing practices, while also completing all the academic requirements of a Family Medicine residency program."

"Matawa First Nations is a proud partner in this precedent setting and transformative initiative," said Matawa CEO, David Paul Achneepineskum. "It aligns wonderfully with our overall plan to take over health services for our member First Nations and other projects we have been leading including establishing a Matawa Health Co-Operative and installing fibre-to-the-home broadband. We look forward to seeing how having access to a physician living in our community will build capacity, improve health outcomes, and save lives."

"When doctors are mostly off-site, they have limited ability to examine patients, collaborate with nurses, and function as a part of a medical team," says Chief Elizabeth Atlookan of Eabametoong First Nation. "Having daily access to a physician can only strengthen our community's medical services, and hopefully experiencing life in Eabametoong will provide great value to the residents who are chosen to become a part of our community through the joint selection process. Eabametoong is a unique and beautiful community; both community and resident will be enriched by the opportunity that has been developed through the partnership between Northern Ontario School of Medicine, Matawa, and Eabametoong."

The interview process for the 2018 – 2019 academic year is set to occur between January and March 2018. Physicians who complete the program will be required to practise in a Matawa First Nations community for four years after completing their training. When fully implemented, there will be four residents (two first-year and two second-year residents) in the program each year.

Eabametoong First Nation is the first remote Matawa community in this partnership to host a postgraduate medical resident with a return of service, and has been a significant contributor in the development in the program stream. Lessons learned from this partnership will help inform planning and advocacy for expansion of residency training in other remote First Nations communities in Northern Ontario.



Pictured (left to right): David Paul Achneepineskum, CEO, Matawa First Nations Management; Dr. Roger Strasser, NOSM Dean; and, Chief Elizabeth Atlookan, Eabametoong First Nation.

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine is committed to the education of high quality physicians and health professionals, and to international recognition as a leader in distributed, learning-centered, community-engaged education and research.

For further information, please contact:

Kimberley Larkin Communications Lead Northern Ontario School of Medicine Office: 705-662-7243

Cell: 705-669-7943 Email: klarkin@nosm.ca

Carol Audet Communications Manager Matawa First Nations Management

Office: 807-346-6505 Cell: 807-632-9663