



# Media Release

October 23, 2020

## INDIGENOUS PRACTICAL NURSING PROGRAM – LAUNCHED AT SIIT

**SASKATOON** – SIIT is proud to announce the successful start of Year 2 of the Indigenous Practical Nursing Program. This ground-breaking program marks the first dedicated Indigenous Practical Nursing program in Canada. The program marries innovative technologies with traditional Indigenous practices such as harvesting traditional medicines while learning and practicing cultural protocols.

The development of this program started in 2015 with the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Report (TRC) and specifically Call to Action #23 calling for increased numbers of Indigenous professionals working in health care and cultural competency training for all health care professionals.

“As a First Nation-governed institution, we continue to implement our inherent and Treaty rights to education, SIIT is mandated to respond to the needs of our communities and nations. Now more than ever, our country needs Indigenous health professionals and we are proud that SIIT is responding to the call,” stated Chief Bobby Cameron (Witchehan Lake First Nation) Chief of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations.

“From the beginning, our federal partners have recognized the significance of this important program and the critical gap it works to help fill,” acknowledged Riel Bellegarde, SIIT President and CEO. Major investments from Indigenous Services Canada (\$230,000) for program development and from Western Economic Diversification Canada (\$315,000) for simulator and laboratory equipment, have allowed for the IPN program to reach the important Year 2 milestone. Despite the global pandemic, the first cohort is on track to graduate in Spring 2021.

“The Government of Canada is committed to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in concrete ways. This includes healthcare delivered to Indigenous people by Indigenous people – care that combines cultural awareness with the best of western and traditional health knowledge,” said the Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, and Minister responsible for Western Economic Diversification Canada. “Congratulations to the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies staff and students on the launch of this innovative program.”



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“Congratulations to the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies as they start year 2 of the first dedicated Indigenous Practical Nursing Program in Canada. The Indigenous Practical Nurses who graduate from this ground-breaking program will play a vital role in providing quality culturally-safe healthcare in Indigenous communities.” said Minister of Indigenous Services Marc Miller. “SIIT’s work will ensure that Indigenous Peoples are better represented in Saskatchewan’s healthcare system and that Indigenous perspectives in health, traditional knowledge and values are incorporated into the work they do every day”.

“In the current climate, it is important that we empower Indigenous students with the tools to offer quality healthcare that reflects our communities and our citizens traditions and cultures. For many Indigenous people, health care professionals have been a part of a system of colonialism. This program is trying to break this cycle by offering cultural training lock step with state-of-the-art medical knowledge,” explained Tavia Laliberte, VP – Academic, SIIT.

The Indigenous Practical Nursing Program is a full-time, two-year diploma program delivered at SIIT’s Saskatoon Campus. Students who successfully complete the program and the Canadian Practical Nursing Registration Exam (CRNRE) are eligible for licensure with the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses (SALPN). “One of SIIT’s strengths is its ability to bring programming into First Nations communities so that students can learn while drawing on all the benefits of remaining at home. It is important, now more than ever, to bring this training to community,” reiterated Riel Bellegarde, SIIT President and CEO.

## **Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology (SIIT)**

SIIT was established in 1976 by Saskatchewan First Nations leaders representing all Treaty areas. Today, SIIT remains a First Nation-governed educational institution, one of only four credit-granting post-secondary institutions in the province – and the only accredited Indigenous institution. SIIT provides adult learners with academic, vocational and technical training as well as services and supports for employment and career growth. Indigenous learners are at the core of SIIT, representing over 90% of the student body.

Virtual Launch Video Link: <https://youtu.be/vvaTurPKtqg>

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