



Media Release

November 24, 2020

SIIT innovates to offer the first Virtual Symposium for RHSW in Saskatchewan

SASKATOON – Residential School Survivors, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls families, and 60s Scoop Survivors – RHSW staff are accustomed to addressing challenging situations and fostering resiliency. It comes as little surprise then that this provincial community of wellness professionals has found a way to promote best practices despite the presence of COVID-19.

Between Tuesday, November 17th and Thursday, November 19th, over sixty resolution health support workers (RHSW) from across Saskatchewan participated in their first virtual symposium funded through Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and organized by Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies' (SIIT) Wellness and Community Development Unit (WCDU).

The symposium, entitled *Strategies for Meaningful Connections through COVID*, provided practical training for the support of clients from a distance. “This training responds to a critical need in our communities”, explained Riel Bellegarde, President and CEO of SIIT. “Right now, isolation is necessary, but it can put a significant strain on personal mental health. Anything we can do to support those in our community who have experienced intergenerational trauma is paramount, now more than ever.”

The symposium provided by the WCDU is an example of one of these services. Since 2000, this unit has been mandated to support workforces at the community level through the provision of province-wide certified professional development activities and events. Through contribution agreements with Indigenous Services Canada, WCDU supports three First Nations workforces: The National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP); Resolution Health Support Workforce (RHSW); and Maternal Child Health Workers (MCH).

“The event was a tremendous success with positive feedback for both presenters and participants,” stated Barb Sankey, Dean – Post-Secondary of programming at SIIT. “The virtual platform lends itself to our provincial scope. Whether you are in a large office in Regina or a team of two in Onion Lake, you can participate in a professional development community. It is a platform we will use again for other outreach this year.”



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Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (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 95% of the student body.

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