



# MEDIA RELEASE

October 25, 2023

## Virtual Health Hub, partnered with SIIT, brings world-leading AI robotic technology to Saskatchewan

**SASKATOON** – Please join us for a live demonstration of new robotic technology that will help deliver world-leading diagnostic healthcare to rural and remote areas of Saskatchewan and beyond.

Virtual Health Hub, partnered with Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT), will demonstrate two different robotic devices designed to deliver remote healthcare services at a special Open House on **October 25th** from **10am until 12pm**. The event will be held at SIIT Saskatoon Campus (229 4th Avenue) on the 1st Floor in the PAWÂCIKËWIKAMIK: The Innovation Collective.

One of the highlights of the Open House will be the *Seven Degrees of Freedom Ultrasound Robotic Arm*, the first of its kind in Canada. Virtual Care and Remote Presence Program Director, Dr. Ivar Mendez, will be onsite to demonstrate and discuss how these technologies will shape the future of delivery of rural and remote healthcare.

“In partnership with SIIT we are testing a novel robotic technology for diagnostic ultrasonography,” said Dr. Mendez. “This state-of-the-art robotic arm could bring diagnostic services such as ultrasound to communities that do not have access to these services. Robotic platforms combined with artificial intelligence (AI) will have an important role in health care delivery in the future.”

The project aims at improving access to healthcare for Saskatchewan residents living in remote communities or communities that do not have access to ultrasound services that require a sonographer to be on-site. With trained staff operating from a central location, the robotic arm is controlled to remotely perform an ultrasound without requiring the patient to travel long distances for essential services.

Highly trained staff are essential to the extension of these services, making SIIT a crucial partner in the VHH initiative.

“As a national leader in Indigenous healthcare training, the partnership with the VHH is a natural extension of SIIT’s strategic goals to serve our communities many of which are rural, remote and northern,” explains SIIT President Riel Bellegarde. “SIIT is committed to being leaders of change in the implementation of the TRC Calls to Actions related to healthcare (18-24, 55) and UNDRIP to ensure parity in healthcare outcomes

for Indigenous Canadians.”

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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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