



News Release

www.bluewaterhealth.ca

Bluewater Health Welcomes Indigenous Patient Navigator

Innovative and Collaborative Model Seeks to Meet Indigenous Health Needs

SARNIA & PETROLIA – June 6, 2018 – Bluewater Health is embarking on an innovative care model with local First Nations communities to meet Indigenous health needs. The hospital has been collaborating with members of the Indigenous Health Planning Committee to enhance the care experience of Indigenous patients and families. As one of the outcomes of this work, the organization is pleased to welcome Nikki George in the role of Indigenous Patient Navigator.

With both personal and formal expertise, her knowledge of Canada’s health system, Indigenous issues and the barriers that impede overall health and wellness for Indigenous people, George will assist Indigenous patients, caregivers and their families in moving through the healthcare system in a culturally safe and relevant manner. The position of Indigenous Patient Navigator was developed in partnership with members from the three local First Nations – Aamjiwnaang First Nation (Chippewas of Sarnia), Bkejwanong (Walpole Island First Nation) and the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation – and other participants on the regional Indigenous Health Planning Committee.

“We are pleased to see Bluewater Health is committed and taking action to improve the hospital experience for Indigenous patients and families,” says Sara Plain, Director of Health Services, Aamjiwnaang First Nation. “We look forward to building our partnership and learning together as we move forward.”

“This is another step in enhancing the care experience of local Indigenous patients and families,” says Laurie Zimmer, Vice President, Operations, Bluewater Health. “We’re grateful for the wisdom, guidance and collaboration of the Committee members in shaping the role, and look forward to supporting this important new position.”

George is a member of the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation and has 20 years of experience in health and wellness community program planning and development with both urban and rural Indigenous populations. She has a Bachelors of Science Nutrition from Western University and a Masters of Health Studies from Athabasca University.

“My first couple of weeks have been exciting and very positive, with lots of work ahead” says George. “I look forward to working with Indigenous patients, their families and care providers to ensure a positive overall care experience.”

“Our community welcomes Nikki George to the role of Navigator and we believe it will enhance the hospital and discharge experience for Indigenous clients throughout the county,” says Dianne George, Health Director, Kettle and Stony Point Health Services. “This is an innovative initiative and our community is looking forward to working collaboratively with the hospital and the navigator to improve the quality of care.”

According to Rosemary Williams, Nurse Manager, Walpole Island First Nation Health Centre, “Bkejwanong (Walpole Island First Nation) welcomes the Indigenous Patient Navigator of Bluewater Health and looks forward to continuing enhanced linkages, partnerships and a culturally safe and welcoming continuum of care between hospital and community for the benefit of Indigenous patients and families.”

Bluewater Health, with locations in Sarnia and Petrolia, cares for the residents of Sarnia-Lambton. With close to 2,500 staff, Professional Staff and volunteers, Bluewater Health provides an array of specialized acute, complex continuing care, allied health and ambulatory care services. Bluewater Health's Mission is: *We create exemplary healthcare experiences with patients and families every time.* For more information about Bluewater Health, visit www.bluewaterhealth.ca or follow us on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube.

-30-

For more information contact:

Julia Oosterman
Chief, Communications & Public Affairs
Bluewater Health
519-328-3136

