Leveraging Community-based “Resources” to Transform Health and Healthcare in Manitoba First Nations Communities

Grace Kyoon (PhD) 1,2, Stephanie Sinclair (MA) 3, Kathi Averee-Kinew (PhD) 1, Naser Ibrahim (PhD) 1, Josée Lavoie (PhD) 1, Wanda Phillips-Bock (MSc) 1,4, Alan Katz (MBChB, CCFP) 1.1.2

1. Department of Community Health Science, University of Manitoba; 2. Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, University of Manitoba; 3. Manitoba First Nations Centre for Aboriginal Health Research, University of Manitoba; 4. The First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba; 5. Department of Family Medicine, University of Manitoba

Objectives: Manitoba First Nations rely on external resources to provide healthcare services in communities that are often portrayed as being dependent on the contribution of governments and government funded resources for their health and survival. But that position does not credit the complex contribution made by local strengths, skills and knowledge.

Results: Community members who are committed to positive change and transformation, act as advocates for the health of individuals, families and communities. Culture and community-based processes and practices play an important role in challenging deeply embedded factors affecting health. Independent local sharing economics augment nutrition and other needs of communities, while livelihoods that are created by local economies and result in community-grown solutions to combat dependency and helplessness.

Conclusion: The key to transform seemingly intractable health crises in First Nations communities, may lie in strengthening existing community-based sources of health assets. Awareness and support of existing innovations and innovations will involve placing resources in the hands of communities in order to boost the efficacy of sustainable solutions to the current health crises.

Acknowledgment: The iPHIT team acknowledges 8 First Nations communities who participated in the study. The communities were selected to represent all geographical locations and 4 of the 5 indigenous languages – Dakota, Dene, Cree and Ojibway.