# Learning through ceremony: a community-based approach to teaching Indigenous health

#### **Esther Cook**

Health Director
Misipawistik Cree Nation Health Authority

#### Lisa Mendez

Interprofessional Practice Coordinator University of Manitoba





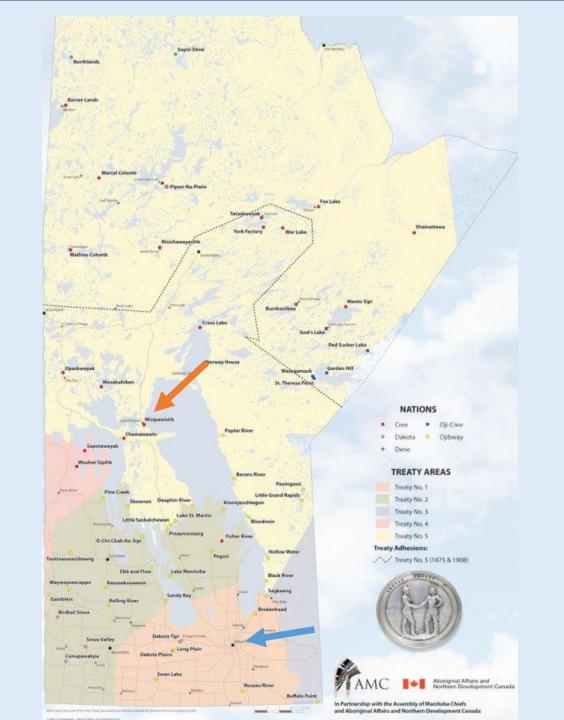




















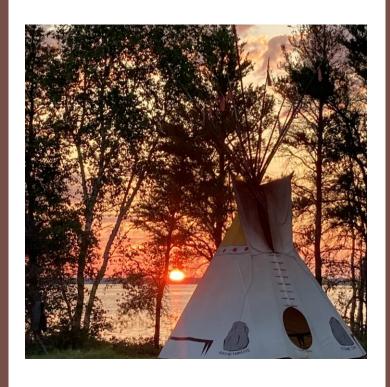
## How it all began...

- 2017: U of M launched a two-week program
  - Students went to community in interprofessional groups of 3-6
  - Interprofessional collaboration was the Faculty's priority
  - Community decided "curriculum" with direction from university
  - Mix of health centres, nursing stations and land-based
  - RBC Experiential Learning Travel Initiative funded student expenses
- 2018: Misipawistik Cree Nation partners and hosts a group of 3 students





# 2019



# Shallow Bay Sundance









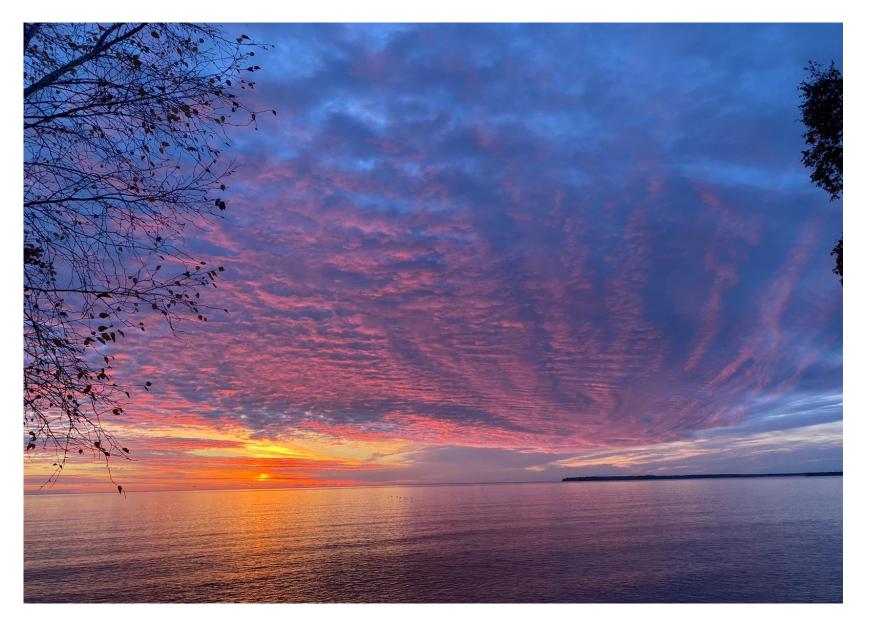












The most powerful experiences came from being involved in two Cree sweat lodges. These ceremonies were beautiful and moving, and I felt honored to be a part of them.

The value of such spiritual practice was clear to me and helped show me that there is a great need for our society to support people to look after their own and their community's spiritual wellbeing.

This weekend was one of the most memorable experiences I have had throughout my time at the Rady Faculty of Health Sciences.

There were many powerful learnings that I would have never experienced inside a classroom nor reading through books.





An environment of love and support was fostered during the retreat, and it was beautiful to witness.

It was evident to me that a sense of belonging in community, language, culture and traditions have a huge role to play in healing.

The retreat also showed me how much I love the Manitoban north.

I love the beauty of the land, the quiet connection to nature I feel, and the pace of life there. I profoundly grateful for having met such wonderful people.

I want to strengthen my connection to northern communities in the future and could see myself practicing up north as a physician.



## What we've learned...

- Students value the opportunity to build authentic connections with the community, each other, and the land.
- Students' eyes are opened to the importance of protecting and promoting Indigenous knowledge and practices
- Communities benefit as the students fill helper roles to support ceremonies and retreats.
- Keys to success include having a community champion who is connected to culture and a university representative who is committed to centering Indigenous voices in healthcare education.

## **EKOSI**

## **Esther Cook**

Health Director
Misipawistik Cree Nation Health Authority
estherc@mcnhealth.ca

### **Lisa Mendez**

Interprofessional Practice Coordinator
University of Manitoba
Lisa.mendez@umanitoba.ca





