

# Northern Oral Health Working Group

## Background

### History

- Established in 2003 under the umbrella of the *Northern Health Strategy*
- Initially composed of dental professionals in both Northern Provincial and First Nations health jurisdictions along with the College of Dentistry at the University of Saskatchewan and University of Manitoba
- Initial goals were to work together to **improve oral health** and **access to oral health services** utilizing a population health approach
- **Early accomplishments** included:
  - Partnerships with the Colleges of Dentistry at the Universities of Saskatchewan and Manitoba
  - Continuing Educations sessions to enable professionals to practice at the cutting edge
  - Standardized health promotion messaging and resources
  - Best Practice Standards promoted
  - Knowledge Transfer to communities and allied health professions
  - Development and implementation of standardized paper chart system
  - Exploration of e-record dental chart system
  - Development of the *Oral Health Risk Assessment Tool*
  - Revision of Health Canada's *Children's Oral Health Initiative Fluoride Varnish* training manuals and resources
  - Development of *Anticipatory Guidance* document and complementary teaching presentation
  - Facilitated standardized *Infection Control Procedures* through training
  - Worked with the *Northern Healthy Eating Team* to promote healthy eating through collaboration with the schools and Maternal-Child teams

### Purpose

- Be a resource for dental public health at the local, regional, provincial, and national levels
- Work as an inter-jurisdictional team to develop and implement best practices which will improve oral and systemic health outcomes of Northern Saskatchewan residents
- Support membership diversity to ensure inter-professional and inter-jurisdictional representation

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### Principles

Over time the NOHWG has evolved **principles** that **guide their action**:

- Utilization of the Continuum of Care in Population Health that involves promotion, prevention, and treatment
- Development of a Team that is inclusive, cooperative, collaborative, interprofessional and interjurisdictional, prizes professionalism and ethics, as well as works through partnership and consensus in a manner that ensures:
  - A holistic perspective
  - Cultural appropriateness
  - Client centeredness
  - Continuous Quality Improvement by following Best Practice Standards
  - Respect for Jurisdictional Authority with our populations
  - Resource sharing

### Focus

As this Working Group evolved, their **activities** coalesced in **three areas**:

#### 1. Improving Service Delivery

- Implementing a ***Sugar Strategy*** in collaboration with the *Northern Healthy Eating Team* in all schools and communities. The NOHWG worked to develop awareness activities as well as helped with the alignment with the Saskatchewan Education's *Health Curriculum*
- **Aligned messaging** with that of the Canadian Dental Association, Canadian Association of Public Health Dentistry, Canadian Pediatric Association, Canadian Chief Dental Health Officer, the Canadian Oral Health Framework, the recommendations of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences Oral Health Panel's document *Improving Access to Oral Health Care for Vulnerable People Living in Canada (2014)* and their identification of the 5 A's of vulnerability (availability, accessibility, affordability, accommodation, and acceptability)
- Worked interprofessionally with the Faculties of Nursing, Medicine, and Dentistry at the University of Saskatchewan to ensure that the same messaging was conveyed to their students and colleagues
- Encouraging ***First Dental Visit*** and the establishment of a ***Dental Home*** before one year of age
- ***Open Cup Initiative*** which encourages use of small cups rather than sippy cups as infants transition from breast to cup
- Worked collaboratively and interprofessionally to **standardize *Prenatal Classes***

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### 2. Increasing Access to Care

- Established **working relationships** with Health Promotion, Nutrition, Population Health, Schools, Northern School Boards, Communities, Nursing, Speech Language Pathologists, Kids First Program, Head Start Program, Home Care, Indian Child Family Services, and the College of Dental Surgeons of Saskatchewan to increase access by removing barriers.
- Provision of **Interprofessional Workshops** in Schools and Communities through the Health Eating Team and Maternal Child Programs
- Advocated for the **re-establishment of a School of Dental Therapy** by working as members of NITHA's Oral Health Working Group
- Collaborated to provide a multi-day **Oral Health Clinic** to graduates of La Loche High School in the late spring of 2016 - all oral health services were free of charge to these students, all materials were donated, and students were presented with gifts that would help them to maintain good oral health

### 3. Vehicle for Continuing Education for Licensing Bodies

- Provided opportunities for skills develop and update through the College of Dentistry at the University of Saskatchewan in collaboration with the Saskatchewan Dental Therapists Association on numerous topics including:
- Provided training for **Fluoride Varnishing**
- Facilitated **continuing education** for oral health professionals in the North

*The NOHWG would like to thank **CAPHD** for the **2016 Merit Award** received at the National Conference in September 2016 in Edmonton. [This award recognizes the efforts of groups and individuals, in improving the oral health of all Canadians. These efforts can include, but are not limited to, administrative work, interprofessional education, and health promotion].*

*Chair of the NOHWG, Penny Griffith from the Athabasca Health Authority, accepted the award on behalf of the group.*