

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Network Indigenous Initiatives: 2022 Report

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Network:

Pregnancy and Infant Loss (PAIL) Network is committed to improving support for all Ontario families who experience the loss of a pregnancy, death of an infant or elective abortion no matter the circumstances that surround that event. We know that individuals and families experience their grief in different ways, and that grief changes over time. Health professionals working with Indigenous families and in First Nations, Inuit, and Métis (FNIM) communities across Ontario need the tools to provide compassionate care and guidance to families during this time, and communities need to have the capacity to wrap around these families to support their mourning. Indigenous families who lose a baby or infant or choose an elective abortion can experience additional trauma when available supports are not inclusive and reflective of their experiences and needs.

The team at PAIL Network has committed to listening, learning and supporting the needs of Indigenous peoples. Our commitment starts with acknowledging the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action](#). This year, our team has committed to **Action #22**. For more information on our commitment to this action, please visit our [Indigenous Supports](#) page found on our website.

Overview: 2021 Indigenous Outreach Efforts

In 2021 PAIL Network focused on listening and learning to the needs of Indigenous communities, organizations and professionals that provide support to Indigenous families. In 2022 PAIL Network has taken the steps to fulfill the needs expressed by professionals and families, and actions have been taken to address these needs. [Click here](#) to read the 2021 Indigenous Outreach Report.

Action: Building Lasting and Trusting Relationships

We are building relationships by continuing with outreach consultations in Indigenous communities, organizations, professionals and visiting communities in person. We consulted with 9 communities and organizations in 2022 including:

Independent First Nations Alliance (Muskrat Dam)
Naotkamegwaning First Nations (Whitefish Bay)
Keewaytinook Okimakanak Mobile
Indigenous Services Canada – Pikangikum First Nations Nursing Station
North Bay Indigenous Hub
Southern Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre (SOAHAC)
Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
Chigamik Community Health Centre
Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nations

We visited 3 communities in person to listen and learn about their needs and build lasting and trusting relationships through workshops, events, and knowledge exchange. These communities include:

Sioux Lookout: Blueberry Festival – Beading workshops and Circle of Support Walk for the community
Naotkamegwaning First Nations (Whitefish Bay) – Beading workshop for community members and professionals

Pikangikum First Nations – Beading workshop with community and health professionals

Action: Education for Healthcare Professionals

We are providing education for healthcare professionals through presentations, workshops, and medical rounds. These presentations are adjusted to reflect the work we have done, the lessons we have learned, and actions we plan to take to improve awareness, increase support for Indigenous families and education for professionals in the coming years. These presentations included:

SOAHAC Summer Series – Lunch and Learn

Meno Ya Win Health Centre (Sioux Lookout) – Lunch and Learn for health care professionals at the hospital and in the community

Naotkamegwanning First Nations (Whitefish Bay) Lunch and Learn for first responders and other professionals working in the community

Pikangikum First Nations - consultation with nursing station professionals to learn about their education needs and the community's health care and support needs

International Stillbirth Alliance (ISA) Salt Lake City, Utah – virtual presentation on Indigenous outreach and pregnancy and infant loss support for Indigenous families and professionals.

Indigenous Services Canada Nursing Rounds – Educational telemedicine rounds

Seven Generations Education Institution – Presentation on bereavement care and education in Ontario for nursing students

Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre: Quality Committee of the Board of Directors– Indigenous Outreach presentation

Action: Culturally Appropriate and Informed Support for Indigenous Families

PAIL Network has included Indigenous culture and education in our events and programs this year including our pregnancy and infant loss awareness events and volunteer “Reconnect”.

PAIL Network's 2022 “Reconnect” for volunteers included an Indigenous cultural workshop for volunteers to learn more about Métis sashes and the art of finger weaving. We also included a workshop for our volunteers across Ontario to learn more about land acknowledgments, why they are important and how to go about creating one for their geographic area.

Our October 15th Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Kits that were provided to families in the province included sweetgrass braids bought from an Indigenous owned and operated source. The card included in these kits had a section dedicated to education about the traditional use of sweetgrass for families across Ontario. The “Wave of Light” on Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day was also held in 5 Indigenous communities across Ontario including:

Nogjiwanong Friendship Centre in Peterborough

North Bay Indigenous Hub

CHIGAMIK Community Health Centre

Saga' Da' Agaas Obigi' Asogameg Aboriginal Head Start

Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation

In 2022, PAIL Network also focused on the recruitment of Indigenous volunteers to facilitate online support groups. We have reached out to organizations and communities across Ontario to spread the word about our volunteer program and our plans for Indigenous led peer support groups.

Action: Online Access to PAIL Network Support

We are bridging the gap to online support through our iPad pilot program which will provide Indigenous families in Ontario the temporary use of iPads to connect to our online support groups. We have reached out to 6 organizations across Ontario to participate in this pilot. These include:

Can Am Indian Friendship Centre

North Bay Indigenous Hub
Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre
Gizhewaadiziwin Friendship Centre
N'Swakamok Native Friendship Centre
Pikangikum First Nations Nursing Station

Plans for 2023

Our initiatives to improve support for Indigenous families and education for professionals will continue in 2023 with the following:

- The ongoing recruitment of Indigenous volunteers to facilitate circles of support groups online to work towards the implementation of Indigenous facilitated online peer support groups
- The planning and development of Indigenous specific information modules to our online volunteer training manual
- Planful inclusion of Indigenous culture and education in PAIL Network hosted events
- The distribution of iPads to families in need of hardware to connect to online groups as part of a 12-month pilot program in coordination with Indigenous communities across Ontario
- Continued education and support for healthcare and service professionals by listening and learning to community voices, providing presentations and workshops to increase awareness, and seeking opportunities to offer leadership to other organizations as they work to improve bereavement care and support to Indigenous families

Conclusion

PAIL Network is committed to continue developing our supports for Indigenous families across Ontario and education for professionals working in and with Indigenous communities. We will continue to visit communities and foster relationships built on trust. We will demonstrate this with our actions. We will continue to grow and develop our resources and supports for families and professionals by ensuring they have the tools to support their own communities. Our plans will be collaborative and action based and we will always continue to listen and learn from Indigenous communities, organizations and professionals across Ontario to develop programs and resources that are highly responsive and reflective of the needs expressed.