

MIDDLESEX-LONDON BOARD OF HEALTH

REPORT NO. 04-25

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health
FROM: Dr. Alexander Summers, Medical Officer of Health
Emily Williams, Chief Executive Officer
DATE: 2025 January 23

**TAKING ACTION FOR RECONCILIATION PLAN
IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS REPORT**

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Health receive Report No.04-25 re: "Taking Action for Reconciliation Plan Implementation Progress Report" for information.

Report Highlights

- Earnest and ongoing implementation of the Taking Action for Reconciliation Plan (TAFR) is progressing well through the prioritization of relationship building and collaboration towards common public health goals with Indigenous partners and Indigenous led organizations.
- A significant milestone is the development of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that outlines how the Oneida Health Centre and the MLHU will work together to share information to prevent the transmission of communicable diseases.
- The TAFR demonstrates the MLHU's commitment to reconciliation.

Background

The Middlesex-London Health Unit's (MLHU) Taking Action for Reconciliation plan ([TAFR](#)) was developed in response to a collective commitment to enact the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada's [94 Calls to Action](#). Local perspectives obtained through dialogue with representatives of local Indigenous-led organizations and individuals resulted in recommendations to guide the MLHU's reconciliation activities. The Board approved the TAFR plan on September 20, 2018.

MLHU serves urban and on-reserve communities within Middlesex-London and adjacent localities through collaboration with Indigenous-led organizations including Atlohsa Family Healing Services, the Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre (SOAHAC), the N'Amerind Friendship Centre, and the health centres within the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, the Munsee-Delaware Nation and the Oneida Nation of the Thames.

Relationships with Indigenous partners both benefited and were strained by the pandemic response. The MLHU's Health Equity and Reconciliation Team (HEART) received feedback that our collaborative COVID-19 response efforts were effective and demonstrated the potential of continuing the collaborative relationship. However, MLHU also learned in late 2021 that relationships were not sufficiently nurtured post-pandemic. Immediately, MLHU took this feedback as an opportunity to reinvigorate the organization's TAFR plan and began working on the implementation of the 65 recommendations within seven groupings:

1. Relationships

MLHU has prioritized building respectful and trusting relationships with First Nations communities and with Indigenous-led organizations through frequent, consistent and purposeful interaction. Key engagement activities include:

- Coordinated, regular in-person and virtual meetings with colleagues from First Nation Health Centres. The terms of reference have been co-developed with the goals of mutual capacity building, coordination of shared public health mandates, and documenting collaborative processes.
- Regular communication with urban Indigenous-led organizations. This serves to amplify their organizational messages, support increased access to services such as vaccination clinics, and contribute to MLHU's learning and capacity building efforts.

2. Governance

The MLHU is committed to supporting Indigenous partners in building their capacity for unique self-determination and sovereignty goals related to public health. A highlight of this work has been the exploration of infectious disease control responsibilities. In collaboration with Oneida Health Centre partners, the Associate Medical Officer of Health (AMOH) has drafted a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that outlines how the Oneida Health Centre and the MLHU will work together to share information to prevent the transmission of communicable diseases. MLHU is also working with Munsee-Delaware and Chippewas Nations to develop similar MOUs.

3. Awareness and Education

Awareness and education are prerequisites to meaningful engagement and relationship building and are the foundation to mobilize staff to take action. In the annual observance of Indigenous Solidarity Day and National Day for Truth and Reconciliation there are activities like lunch-and-learns and staff participation in events organized by Indigenous partners.

4. Workforce Development

Human Resources (HR) and the HEART have created an Employment Equity Policy to reduce implicit bias in hiring and develop hiring targets ([Report No. 43-23](#)). The aim is to foster a culture of inclusivity, respect, empathy, and safety for all staff, including Indigenous identifying staff.

5. Supportive Environments

The Staff Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee and Indigenous Cultural Practices policy, including procedures for smudging, support the MLHU's efforts to create physical and psychological spaces where Indigenous staff, partners and clients feel respected, heard and have a sense of belonging.

6. Research

The MLHU collects social determinants of health (SDOH) data for advancing Indigenous Health. In 2023, several teams began collecting Indigenous identity from clients as part of their demographic questions. Implementation engaged Indigenous partners at every step. This data

now informs a key performance indicator in the new organizational performance management system. In the future, Indigenous identity data will be linked to health outcome metrics to better understand local health inequities to inform resource allocation. The process is guided by Indigenous partners with the hopes of developing robust data governance approaches that incorporate the principles of ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP®).

7. Equitable Access and Service Delivery

The HEART has been coordinating collaborative efforts with urban and on-reserve Indigenous organizations to increase equitable access to MLHU services and to improve referral pathways. For example, the Vaccine Preventable Diseases team has offered mobile vaccine clinics and supports to increase vaccine access to both urban and on-reserve communities. The Healthy Babies Healthy Children program is working with First Nation Health Centres to increase mutual capacity to serve Indigenous moms and babies.

The ongoing implementation of these seven groupings of TAFR recommendations is ensuring that the MLHU is meeting requirements of the [Health Equity Guideline, 2018](#). Specifically, the capacity to assess and report on health inequities experienced by local Indigenous populations is being increased through SDOH and Indigenous identity data collection initiatives. Regular and consistent engagement, focused on building relationships, mutual capacity, and trust, is leading to modifications in MLHU services to better address the unique needs of each local first nation and urban Indigenous populations. Collaboration with Indigenous-led organizations across sectors is increasing capacity to work collaboratively and reduce access inequities. Additionally, MOUs, policies, and procedures are being co-developed to ensure that progress towards reducing health inequities is sustainable.

Next Steps

In 2025, engagement efforts will focus on sustaining the relationships built, finalizing and implementing the MOUs currently in negotiation and exploring ways to support Indigenous-led urban organizations.

Regarding data collection and analysis, data governance mechanisms that align with OCAP® principles will be explored and developed in collaboration with Indigenous partners. Additionally, efforts will be made to identify local health inequities through the disaggregation of health outcome data by Indigenous identity.

This report was written by the Health Equity and Reconciliation Team, within the Public Health Foundations Division.



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This report refers to the following principle(s) set out in Policy G-490, Appendix A:

- The Health Equity standard as outlined in the [Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirements for Programs, Services and Accountability](#).
- The following goal or direction from the [Middlesex-London Health Unit's Strategic Plan](#):
We have strong relationships with our partners and are trusted by our community.
Direction 1.1: Facilitate meaningful and trusting relationships with prioritized equity-deserving groups, specifically Black and Indigenous communities

This topic has been reviewed to be in alignment with goals under the Middlesex-London Health Unit's [Anti-Black Racism Plan](#) and [Taking Action for Reconciliation](#), specifically to all TAFR recommendation groupings and ABRP recommendations advancing Race Based Data Collection and Use, Employee Systems to Support Black Employees and Cross Sectoral Collaboration.