

## Capacity Building Across the System

Engagement and consultation, advocacy, representation, “ownership”, and partnership.

### The Issue

The issue was very clear and understood. It was a very sensitive subject that affected everyone including the many surrounding First Nation communities and the municipality of Sioux Lookout.

- Amalgamation of the Two Hospitals: A federal hospital in Sioux Lookout serving the First Nations people and a provincial hospital serving the townspeople of Sioux Lookout.
- How do we work together as First Nations people and non-First Nations people in a small northern Ontario town (history of racial conflict, but also a recognition that racial conflict is unhealthy with a desire for redress in order to live and work harmoniously).

### Agreement To Do Something

The fact that the issue and process was considered and initiated speaks to the matter of ownership, engagement and consultation. There had been discussions for many years about amalgamating the two hospitals, but it was not until the issue was brought to the right level (leadership) that gave it life:

- Leadership (collectively as a Nation and Government): Chiefs, Elders, First Nations Councils.
- Community (information, knowledge, understanding, involvement). The chiefs wanted to get back to their membership for direction.
- Chiefs' Resolution and Mandate: The chiefs took the leading role and initiated the process. The mandate was very clear, it set the parameters of the task, and outlined First Nations interests.
- Invitations to the federal and provincial governments, and the Municipality of Sioux Lookout to hold exploratory discussions on a **government to government** basis regarding the two hospitals.

### Process and Approach

The process established and agreed upon for meetings throughout was one that was conducive to meaningful dialogue, relationship building, constructive planning, and commitment:

- 4 parties: Independent, but spoke as one voice on the task, representation for each party covered at all levels (e.g. NAN Chiefs Negotiating Unit had 7 Chiefs at the table representing 30 communities, Sioux Lookout delegation represented the residents of the town as well as the surrounding communities).

- Accountability to constituents and citizens: support and direction from community, reporting back (at community level, chiefs meetings, town council), representing interests, and making it work.
- Negotiating principles used: interests vs. positions, problem not people, respect (listening and hearing)
- Elders at the table: wisdom, guidance, and support
- Resources and support: financial, human, technical
- Regular in- person meetings

## **Interests**

As there were four parties involved, there were wide and varied interests that came to the table:

- First Nations: Indian hospital (ownership and the “Indianness” of the hospital), treaty protection (hospital is a treaty right), federal fiduciary responsibility, government to government relationship with federal government ( direct relationship with the government), improved hospital and health services, resources including funding, ownership to the hospital (governance).
- Federal Government: To get out of the hospital business and save money.
- Municipality of Sioux Lookout: Relations with First Nations people, economy, “Hub of the North”.
- Ontario Government: Hospital and health business.

## **Challenges**

The challenges inherent in the planning exercise for one hospital produced champions and advocacy for the cause. The people at the table were thorough on the issues, worked hard at reconciling differences, able to work and see the big picture and from a system perspective. In all, they advocated and advanced the issue for one hospital to the larger community and the leadership (chiefs, First Nations organizations, Town council, townspeople).

- Different interests
- A federal and provincial hospital
- Unions representing health professions and workers
- Governance structure of the new organization
- Grievances

## **The Four- Party Agreement and Implementation**

Government to government  
 Administrative Arrangement  
 Ownership  
 Partnership