

NATIONAL CIRCLE FOR INDIGENOUS MEDICAL EDUCATION 2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

NCIME
THE NATIONAL CIRCLE FOR
INDIGENOUS MEDICAL EDUCATION



CNFMMSA
LE CERCLE NATIONAL POUR
LA FORMATION MÉDICALE EN SANTÉ AUTOCHTONE

**BOARD CHAIR
DR. SARAH FUNNELL**



As we reflect on 2025, I am honoured to acknowledge the significant growth and collective leadership demonstrated across the National Circle for Indigenous Medical Education. This year marked an important step forward as NCIME continued its transition into Phase II, strengthening its foundations while expanding its reach across Indigenous medical education.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I extend my deepest gratitude to NCIME's staff, leadership, and partners. The dedication and expertise brought forward by this growing team have enabled meaningful progress in course development, digital learning environments, research, data sovereignty, assessment, and national collaboration. I would also like to sincerely thank the Academic Advisory Council, the Indigenous Deans of Medicine Council, and the Elders and Knowledge Keepers Council for their guidance, wisdom, and continued commitment to ensuring NCIME's work remains grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

The Board would also like to extend its sincere appreciation to our Executive Director, Academic, Danielle N. Soucy, PhD, for her steady leadership and guidance throughout this critical period of transition. Danielle's commitment, expertise, and care have been instrumental in advancing NCIME's vision during a time of significant growth and evolution.

We are also honoured to welcome Konwahahawi (Sarah) Herne, Ed.D as NCIME's Chief Executive Officer. Konwahahawi's leadership, experience, and deep commitment to Indigenous medical education marks an exciting new chapter for the organization. The Board looks forward to working closely with her as NCIME continues to strengthen its national presence and advance its mandate with integrity and purpose.

None of this work would be possible without the trust and support of our funders and partners, whose continued commitment has allowed NCIME to advance its mandate with integrity and purpose. As Board Chair, I am proud of the strong governance, collaboration, and shared vision that continue to guide this organization. Together, we are helping to create lasting change that upholds respect and belonging for Indigenous learners across medical education. I look forward with optimism to the year ahead and the important work still to come.

Sarah Funnell

Dr. Sarah Funnell

Board Chair

National Circle for Indigenous Medical Education (NCIME)



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER DR. KONWAHAHAWI (SARAH) HERNE

In May, 2025, NCIME welcomed Dr. Konwahahawi (Sarah) Herne as its inaugural Chief Executive Officer

Dr. Herne brings extensive experience in Indigenous education and leadership. They hold a master's in educational leadership from St. Lawrence University and earned their Ed.D in Executive Leadership with a focus on Social Justice from St. John Fisher College in 2021. Dr. Herne has worked extensively with Elders, traditional knowledge holders, and educators to strengthen Indigenous knowledge systems in institutional settings.

As I reflect on the past year at the National Circle for Indigenous Medical Education, I am filled with gratitude, pride, and a deep sense of responsibility for the work we are undertaking together.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to NCIME's Board of Directors, Academic Advisory Council, Indigenous Deans of Medicine Council, Elders and Knowledge Keepers Council, and our staff. Your guidance and dedication continue to shape NCIME as an organization grounded in Indigenous values, accountability, and community. The strength of NCIME lies in these relationships and in the collective commitment to advancing Indigenous self-determination in medical education.

This past year marked an important transition as NCIME moved into Phase II. With this growth came an expansion of our organizational capacity and the ability to welcome exceptional talent into our team. The diverse skills, lived experiences, and expertise of our staff have strengthened our work. It has also allowed us to respond more effectively to the needs of Indigenous learners, educators, and institutions.

Through this growth, NCIME has developed and delivered meaningful courses, tools, and resources that support culturally safe, anti-racist, and equity-driven approaches within medical education. These offerings reflect our mandate to advance Indigenous medical education and advocate for equity across health care systems. They also represent our ongoing commitment to creating pathways that honour Indigenous knowledge and lived experience.

While there is still much work ahead, this year has demonstrated what is possible when we work in relationships guided by Indigenous leadership and grounded in trust and reciprocity. I am grateful to walk this path alongside such dedicated partners and colleagues, and I look forward to the continued work ahead as we deepen our impact and build a more equitable and culturally safe future for health care.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Konwahahawi Herne".

Dr. Konwahahawi (Sarah) Herne
Chief Executive Officer

National Circle for Indigenous Medical Education (NCIME)
Kanien'kehá:ka | Akwesasne Mohawk Nation



Board of Directors

Sarah Funnell - Board Chair, **Mike Green** - Treasurer, **Cathy Cook** - Secretary, **Valerie Arnault-Pelletier** - Director, **Leslie Spillett** - Lead Elder

Academic Advisory Council

Marcia Anderson - Independent, **Jamaica Cass** - Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada and Medical Council of Canada, **Lisa Richardson** - Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, **Wayne Clark** - Association of Family Medicine Canada, **Darlene Kitty** - College of Family Physicians Canada, **Faith Julien** - National Indigenous Health Sciences Circle

Elders and Knowledge Keepers Council:

Leslie Spillett, Levinia Brown, Alex McComber, Ann LaBillois

Indigenous Deans of Medicine Council

Marcia Anderson - Vice-Dean Indigenous Health, Social Justice & Anti Racism - University of Manitoba; **Jamaica Cass** - Director of Indigenous Health - Queen's University; **Esther Tallfeathers** - Assistant Dean of Indigenous Health - University of Calgary; **Peggy DeJong** - Assistant Dean, Admissions - Queen's University; **Patricia Farrugia** - Associate Dean of Indigenous Health - McMaster University; **Sarah Funnell** - Associate Dean and Chair of Indigenous Health - Queen's University; **Sara Goulet** - Associate Dean, Admissions - University of Manitoba; **Joseph LeBlanc** - Associate Vice President, Equity and Inclusion - Northern Ontario School of Medicine; **Lisa Richardson** - Vice-Dean of Strategy & Associate Dean Inclusion & Diversity - University of Toronto; **Janet Tootoosis** - Vice-Dean of Indigenous Health - University of Saskatchewan; **Rebekah Eatmon** - Associate Dean of Indigenous Health - Simon Fraser University

Staff

Konwahahawi (Sarah) Herne - Chief Executive Officer, **Danielle N. Soucy** - Executive Director, Academic, **Audrey Henry** - Director of Operations, **Colin Jackson** - Communications & Community Liaison Lead, **Alexandra Nychuk** - Research Associate, **Evan Adams** - Assessment Lead, **Alex Allard-Gray** - Privacy & Data Manager, **Kayla Villebrun-Normand** - Research Associate/ Academic Coordinator, **Ariel John** - Administrative Assistant, **Sara Ayaruak-Thomson** - Associate Project Manager, **Shaun Makoni** - IT & Database Manager, **Afolabi Adegbayo** - Finance & HR Coordinator



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board convened five times throughout 2025 to discuss a broad range of matters related to NCIME's operations and governance. These discussion topics included executive management, course development, contracts, political engagement, revenue generation, policy approvals, decolonization methodologies, Board governance policies, confidentiality, codes of conduct, legal counsel, and Indigenous education, among other key areas.

These meetings, held both virtually and in person, provided opportunities for in-depth analysis and thoughtful evaluation of strategies to strengthen NCIME's work in addressing anti-Indigenous racism and advancing cultural safety and Indigenous knowledge within medical education.



ACADEMIC ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Academic Advisory Council met four times throughout 2025 to provide guidance and oversight for NCIME's academic work, ensuring that all initiatives remain culturally safe, effective, and aligned with the organization's mandate and vision. Meetings were held in Ottawa, Winnipeg, and Toronto. The topics addressed included policies and procedures, abstract submissions, long-term vision and planning, communications, membership agreements, communities of practice, terms of reference, and other strategic priorities.

The Academic Advisory Council is composed of highly respected Indigenous physicians from across Canada, whose depth of expertise, lived experience, and practical knowledge represent an invaluable resource to the organization. Their contributions play a critical role in advancing equity in health care and strengthening Indigenous-led approaches to medical education.



INDIGENOUS DEANS OF MEDICINE COUNCIL

The Indigenous Deans of Medicine Council provides institution-level insight to support the operationalization of NCIME's work within Canadian medical schools. The Council convened three times throughout 2025 and is composed of Indigenous Deans and senior leaders from medical schools across Canada.

Through their collective expertise, the Council offers high-level analysis of NCIME's impact on medical education, provides strategic guidance on enacting meaningful and sustainable change, and supports the effective implementation of NCIME initiatives to maximize impact. Their leadership also helps ensure that NCIME and its team are equipped with the guidance and resources necessary to fulfill the organization's mandate.

ELDERS AND KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS COUNCIL



In 2026, NCIME will welcome the revival of its Elders and Knowledge Keepers Council (EKKC). The EKKC provides cultural, ethical, and distinctions-based Indigenous Knowledge guidance to the National Circle for Indigenous Medical Education. In their roles as advisors, teachers, and Knowledge Holders, Council members ensure that NCIME's work remains grounded in Indigenous values, responsibilities, and worldviews.

NCIME is honoured to welcome Elder Ann LaBillois as the newest member of the Elders and Knowledge Keepers Council. Elder Ann LaBillois is a Mi'gmaq Elder from Ugpi'ganjig (Eel River Bar). She grew up in Boston, Massachusetts, before returning to her home community, where she worked as an addictions counsellor for 12 years. Elder Ann LaBillois is also a certified facilitator in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) through the University of Massachusetts.

NCIME is also honoured to welcome Otsehtokon Alex M. McComber who is Bear Clan Kanien'keha:ka from Kahnawake Territory with nearly five decades of experience as an educator, training facilitator, and consultant in Indigenous health and education. He previously served as a teacher and principal at the Kahnawake Survival School and held leadership roles with the Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project (KSDPP.) Since 2019, Alex has been an Assistant Professor in the Department of Family Medicine at McGill University, advancing cultural safety, Indigenous health research ethics, curriculum development, community-based participatory research, and patient partnerships.

OUR NEW STAFF MEMBERS

Since Phase I, NCIME's team has more than tripled in size, and 2025 marked a significant period of growth with several key hires strengthening the organization's capacity and expertise. In order of hiring (left to right), NCIME welcomed the following new team members:



Audrey Henry: Audrey Henry, MBA joined NCIME as Director of Operations, bringing extensive experience in strategic leadership, organizational development, and operational excellence, alongside a strong commitment to supporting Indigenous communities. With a proven ability to manage complex initiatives and foster collaborative, high-performing teams, Audrey plays a critical role in advancing NCIME's goals through effective and accountable operational stewardship.

Evan Adams: Dr. Evan Adams will lead NCIME's work in assessment within medical education. A renowned Coast Salish physician from the Tla'amin First Nation near qathet, BC, Dr. Adams brings a multidisciplinary perspective rooted in public health, Indigenous advocacy and medical education. He will continue to share his time between NCIME and his role as the Deputy Chief Medical Officer of the First Nations Health Authority of BC. Dr. Adams is celebrated for his ability to blend energy, compassion, and wisdom in service of Indigenous health and wellbeing.



Colin Jackson: In August 2025, NCIME welcomed its new Communications and Community Liaison. Colin is Red River Métis and a citizen of the Manitoba Métis Federation. Before NCIME, Colin worked with the MMF in child welfare for four years, and is excited to bring his expertise in communications to indigenous medical education.

Alex Allard-Gray: Alex Allard-Gray, a proud member of the Listuguj Mi'gmaq First Nation, is NCIME's new Privacy and Data Manager. Alex's approach to data stewardship is guided by the Two-Eyed Seeing (Etuaptmuk) framework, which brings together Indigenous and Western ways of knowing while respecting their distinct strengths. Through this lens, he is committed to advancing ethical, culturally grounded data practices that prioritize Indigenous community needs, rights, and self-determination.

Kayla Villebrun-Normand: In December 2025, Kayla Villebrun-Normand joined NCIME as the Research Associate/ Academic Coordinator. Kayla is a proud Métis health sciences professional from Treaty One Territory. She holds a Master's degree in Community Health Sciences from the University of Manitoba, where her graduate research examined Indigenous patient advocacy in the emergency room, with a broader focus on racism in clinical encounters and improving patient experiences through culturally responsive care.

NCIME is proud to welcome these individuals and looks forward to the meaningful contributions and lasting impact they will have in advancing Indigenous medical education.





EARLY TO MID-CAREER INDIGENOUS FACULTY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (IFDLP)



The Early-Mid Career Indigenous Faculty Leadership Development Program (IFLDP) is an immersive, eight-month blended learning journey created to empower Indigenous physicians as they walk, influence, and transform the landscape of medicine in Canada. Developed by the Indigenous Faculty Recruitment and Retention Working Group during NCIME Phase I, this program directly addresses the longstanding under-representation of Indigenous leaders in academic and clinical settings. Rooted in cultural strength, it offers leadership development grounded in Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Being, ensuring that participants can lead in ways that honour both identity and community.

The program launched with a powerful two-day, land-based gathering in Membertou First Nation, where participants connected with the land, each other, and their own leadership pathways. This foundational experience is carried forward through a series of monthly online modules delivered via the NCIME Learning Module System. Each module deepens participants' self-location in Indigenous identity and supports ongoing reflection while also cultivating concrete, applicable leadership skills.

Throughout the program, participants explore a wide range of topics – including professional identity formation, navigating and reframing imposter syndrome, conflict resolution rooted in relationality, academic governance, media engagement, coaching practices, and the meaningful integration of ceremony and culture into their everyday work. Together, these elements create a transformative learning experience that strengthens capacity, confidence, and community for the next generation of Indigenous leaders in medicine.



ANTI-INDIGENOUS RACISM (AIR101) COURSE

Recommended Steps for Indigenous Community Engagement



1. Pre-work

Recognize privileges, learn about communities, take training, make connections on campus.

2. Reflection & Accountability

Self-reflection, be reflexive about the harms caused by medicine, and your institution. Be accountable.

3. Relationship Building

Develop mutually beneficial goals, actualize reconciliation, establish working relationships.

4. Reciprocity

Goals and needs of community partners should be at the forefront of engagement.

5. Protocol

As part of relational accountability, undertake steps to enact nation specific protocols.

6. Humility

Seek to be of assistance rather than centering the institution and its goals.

The NCIME has developed an Anti-Indigenous Racism (AIR101) course that is designed to provide foundational knowledge that will enable the participants to increase competencies to be able to identify instances of anti-Indigenous racism, understand the concept of anti-racism, and ways on how to implement anti-racism in policy or practice.

Building on this foundation, the course invites participants to engage in meaningful self-reflection, encouraging them to examine their own roles, responsibilities, and spheres of influence within the health system. AIR101 fosters a deeper understanding of how systemic racism and privilege intersect to impact Indigenous patients, learners, and providers. By the end of the course, participants are equipped with foundational knowledge and practical tools to actively challenge harmful practices, contribute to safer environments, and support systems-level change rooted in cultural safety and respect.

CANADIAN INSTITUTES OF HEALTH RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' HEALTH

In October 2025, the CIHR Institute of Indigenous Peoples' Health (IIPH) hosted its Think Tank at the Château Laurier in Ottawa. The event welcomed over 180 participants from across Canada, including Elders, Knowledge Keepers, researchers, graduate students, health practitioners, public health professionals, community leaders, youth representatives, and policy makers. The NCIME was able to attend this event and share our essential work in indigenous medical education, and the strides we are taking to enact equitable change.





CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF MEDICAL EDUCATION AND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RESIDENCY EDUCATION PRESENTATIONS

In October 2025, NCIME delivered two impactful presentations at national forums, including the International Conference on Residency Education's Program Administrators Conference and the Canadian Association for Medical Education. These presentations addressed critical topics such as anti-Indigenous racism, cultural safety, decolonization, allyship, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, policy, and systemic change within medical education. The sessions focused on identifying privilege, racism, and colonial structures that continue to harm Indigenous Peoples, while also offering practical, actionable steps that administrators and educators can implement to foster respectful, culturally safe, and dignified environments for Indigenous patients and learners

NCIME STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION



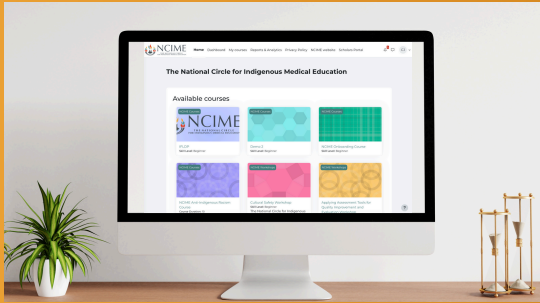
This past fall, the entire NCIME staff gathered in Winnipeg, Manitoba for our first in-person Strategic Planning Session. Over the course of two days, we focused on aligning our organizational processes, refining workflows, strengthening team dynamics, and participating in meaningful team-building activities. Coming together in the same space allowed us to deepen our connections, build trust, and return to our remote work with a renewed sense of cohesion and shared purpose.

WORKSHOP DEVELOPMENT

NCIME is currently developing a suite of workshops focused on cultural safety, anti-Indigenous racism, wellness and joy, and related priority areas. These workshops provide in-depth exploration of systemic racism, Indigenous leadership, Indigenous data sovereignty and assessment, faculty recruitment and retention, and other critical topics relevant to medical education.

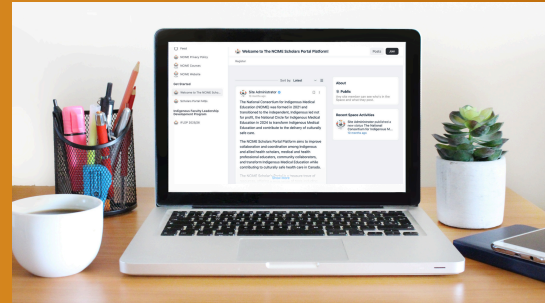
All workshops are reviewed through NCIME's governance structures to ensure that their content, recommendations, and delivery are culturally appropriate, effective, and aligned with the organization's mandate and values.

LEARNING MODULE SYSTEM



NCIME's Learning Module System is a centralized digital platform that houses NCIME courses, workshops, and educational resources. The system is designed to provide learners with streamlined, user-friendly access to a broad range of materials that support culturally safe, Indigenous-led medical education across diverse learning environments.

SCHOLARS PORTAL



NCIME has developed a state-of-the-art interactive digital platform known as the Scholars Portal. The Scholars Portal is an NCIME-certified space where academics and educators can access verified resources, engage in in-depth dialogue, and obtain the tools and materials necessary to support meaningful, evidence-informed, and impactful change within medical education.

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON ACADEMIC MEDICINE (ICAM)



NCIME attended the International Congress on Academic Medicine in 2025. We held a space at the event to discuss who we are as an organization and what we offer to indigenous students, learners, faculty, and physicians. We were able to walk through our exciting developments like our Learning Module System and Scholars Portal. We were also able to speak to attendees on a personal level and discuss what we are able to provide medical schools and the overall benefit of indigenous cultural safety, representation, and equity.

During ICAM, NCIME also had the opportunity to meet with the Black Health Education Collaborative for a dedicated discussion focused on shared priorities and opportunities for collaboration. This meeting provided space to exchange ideas, explore organizational structures, and identify common strategies to advance equity within medical education. Through these conversations, both organizations affirmed a shared commitment to strengthening pathways, supports, and systemic change for historically marginalized learners and communities.



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OUR FUNDERS

We are deeply grateful to our funders for their ongoing support and commitment to NCIME's mission. Their partnership enables us to continue advancing equity, cultural safety, and Indigenous knowledge within medical education.

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The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada. The CMA is proud to support the National Circle for Indigenous Medical Education.



ROYAL COLLEGE
OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS OF CANADA
COLLÈGE ROYAL
DES MÉDECINS ET CHIRURGIENS DU CANADA



MEDICAL COUNCIL
OF CANADA LE CONSEIL MÉDICAL
DU CANADA

IPAC
Indigenous Physicians
Association of Canada



AMIC
Association de médecins
indigènes du Canada



THE ASSOCIATION
OF FACULTIES
OF MEDICINE
OF CANADA

THE COLLEGE OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS
OF CANADA



LE COLLÈGE DES
MÉDECINS DE FAMILLE
DU CANADA

PARTNERSHIPS AND MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDINGS

NCIME works with five partner organizations to advance indigenous health across what we now call Canada. These partners include the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada, the College of Family Physicians of Canada, the Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, and the Medical Council of Canada.

Our partnership shows these organizations' commitment to improving indigenous health, and in a few short weeks, NCIME will host a ceremonial signing of our Partnership Memorandums of Understanding in Edmonton, Alberta to formally declare our commitment to advancing Indigenous medical education across Turtle Island.