



## Talking Together to Improve Health

### What are we trying to find out?

“What mutually beneficial, respectful and effective principles and practices of engagement between First Nations communities and public health units in Northeastern Ontario can be identified, as an important step in working toward improved opportunities for health for all?”

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### What is the project about?

Ontario public health units provide a wide range of health programs. The goal of the programs are to improve, protect and ensure equal opportunities for health for everyone. However, public health units have recognized that there are gaps when engaging with the 40 First Nation communities in Northeastern Ontario.

Public health units have an interest in developing approaches to engage with First Nations communities in a respectful and mutually beneficial way. There has been little guidance available to public health units on the best ways to achieve this goal. We also know little about how First Nations wish to engage with public health units. The outcomes from this research will be an important first step in working toward strengthened relationships and ultimately improved opportunities for health for all.

The project began in the spring of 2017 and it will wrap up in the fall of 2018. The project has an Indigenous Circle which includes members who provide expertise and guidance to ensure that First Nations voices are heard as equal partners. The Public Health Sudbury & Districts is the lead project agency alongside the research team, and the Indigenous Circle. The project team includes the following individuals:

- Dr. Penny Sutcliffe, Renée St Onge, Mariette Sutherland, Dr. Suzanne Lemieux, Dr. Ariella Zbar, Sandra Lacle, Public Health Sudbury & Districts

- Laurie Zeppa, Hilary Cutler, Algoma Public Health
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- Kim Lalonde, Nippising First Nation Lawrence Commanda Health Centre
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- Dr. Marion Maar, Northern Ontario School of Medicine
- Dr. Lianne Catton, Chantal Riopel & Lynn Leggett, Porcupine Health Unit
- Dr. Emily Faries, Dr. Michael Hankard & Dr. Kevin Fitzmaurice, University of Sudbury
- Tracey Zurich, Thunder Bay District Health Unit
- Kerry Schubert-Mackey, Timiskaming Health Unit
- Caroline Lidstone-Jones, Weeneebayko Area Health Authority

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## What are the goals?

- Relationships will be enhanced between participating First Nations communities and public health units because of the shared learning process from this research.
- The project will explore and share promising strategies, principles, and practices for engagement with First Nations communities and public health units.

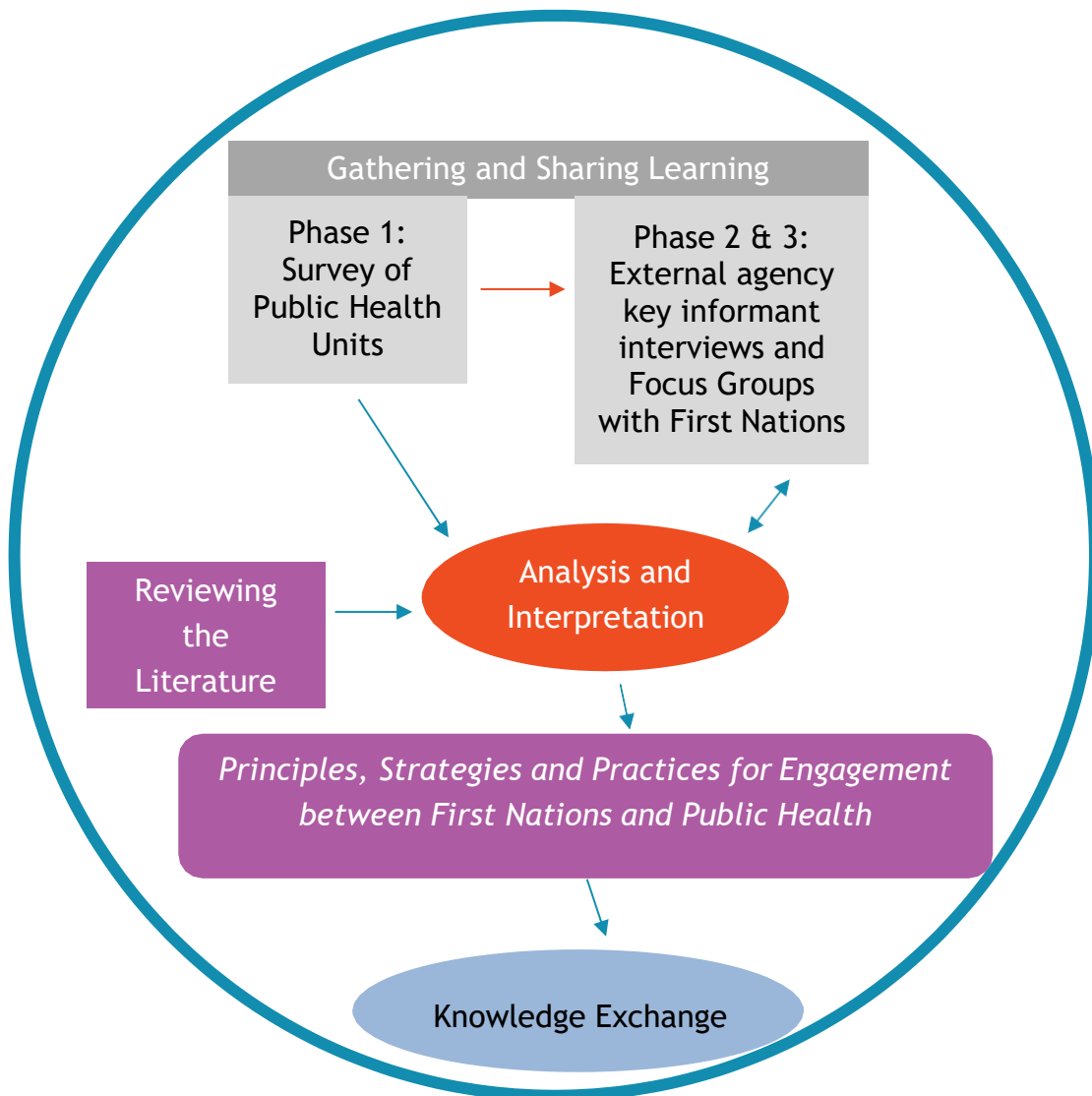
## What are the stages of the project?

**Reviewing the literature:** We conducted a literature review of strategies, approaches, and principles of engagement and collaboration between Indigenous people and public sector agencies in the last 10 years in North America and Australia. Here is the [link](#) to the literature review.

**Gathering and sharing learning:** The purpose of this stage is to gather and learn from examples of engagement. The activities that are a part of this phase are:

- An online survey of Ontario public health units
- Key informant interviews with external agencies

- Focus groups or sharing circles with members of 3 Northeastern Ontario First Nations communities, Tribal Councils, or First Nations regional health service organizations
- Knowledge exchange to increase the understanding and awareness of the principles, practices, and key themes identified in the study



**Figure 1: Stages of the project**