



*Saskatoon
Community
Clinic*

Community Health Services (Saskatoon) Association Ltd.

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MEDIA RELEASE

March 9, 2009

For immediate release

Program Celebrates Seventeen Years of Supporting Kohkums

The Saskatoon Community Clinic's *Strengthening the Circle Program* is celebrating seventeen years of supporting Aboriginal grandmothers (kohkums) on Tuesday, March 10, 2009. The program brings together senior Aboriginal women in Saskatoon for health and social support.

"At the time the program began many kohkums were relatively isolated from others outside of their own families, had significant health care needs, and were disconnected from community resources," said Dennis Morrison, Program Director. "We felt that by bringing the grandmothers together they could better identify and advocate for their health needs. We believed that by reducing their isolation and by also providing individual case management, counselling and interpretation services, the kohkums would benefit from improved health."

"A recently completed program evaluation by the Community University Institute for Social Research (CUISR)" continued Morrison, "documents that these goals are being met. The kohkums had an overwhelmingly positive response to the program. They reported many benefits. These include: friendships, companionship, validation of feelings, a sense of belonging to a group, opportunities for self-expression and opportunities to know and appreciate others. They also reported that the program has increased their knowledge of health information and community services."

Leadership is provided by the Clinic's Aboriginal Seniors Program Coordinator, Louise Dufour, a social worker who is Aboriginal herself. Traditional values and practices and the Cree language are used in the program. An Aboriginal elder conducts spiritual ceremonies and provides guidance to the program and its participants.

The kohkums hold monthly group meetings. These meetings include education, outings, socializing and health circles. Volunteers, who are kohkums themselves, assist by developing relationships with the participants and providing valuable practical assistance at the group meetings.

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“The program coordinator also provides one-on-one support to the kohkums,” said Morrison. “She spends time counselling them through home visits and telephone calls, provides interpretation in Cree, works with native organizations to create awareness of the health needs of Aboriginal seniors, seeks guidance from an Elder, and listens to the wisdom of the older women.”

The kohkums are involved in community projects. They developed a book, *Stories from Kohkom*, participated in research for assessing Alzheimer’s disease in older Aboriginal women and join, yearly, in Aboriginal Day festivities organized by the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre.

For more information contact Ingrid Larson, Community Clinic Membership Director at 664-4243 or Dennis Morrison, Program Manager at 664-4228 or view the Strengthening the Circle program information at www.saskatooncommunityclinic.ca.

Celebration date and time:

**Tuesday, March 10
2:15 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Meeting Room
Saskatoon Community Clinic– Mel Langer Building
424 1st Avenue North
Saskatoon**

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The Saskatoon Community Clinic a membership based co-operative provides primary health care services to people living in Saskatoon and area at the Saskatoon Community Clinic, 455 2nd Avenue North and Community Clinic Westside, 631 20th Street West.