

## **Diversity, involvement promoted in North East LHIN**

Community engagement is an important tool for creating a “unity of health” within the health-care sector, says Monique Rocheleau, senior consultant of community engagement at North East Local Health Integration Network (LHIN).

And creating this unity – which encompasses every provider within the LHIN – is the aim of North East’s planning and processes, adds Rocheleau.

“The framework speaks to the importance of developing strategies and partnerships with partners and stakeholders across the board, which is your policy makers, your health professionals, your academic institutions, like the universities and colleges.”

Community engagement is not limited to planned activities and events, either.

“Community engagement happens at all levels every time you speak to someone, it is part of the community engagement process,” says Rocheleau.

And what’s the importance of community engagement from North East LHIN’s perspective?

“It’s your way of moving out, gathering the information, sharing the information,” says Rocheleau. “They’re your partners for any decision-making process that needs to be made for any aspect (from) your complex integration to just your every day service delivery.”

When it comes to promoting community engagement in the health-care sector, Rocheleau emphasizes the importance of making sure everyone’s needs are being considered.

In addition to the anglophone population, the North East LHIN has many francophones and First Nation people.

To make sure the needs of these groups are being met, Rocheleau says the LHIN works hard to ensure they are all included in the community engagement process.

“Any community engagement activity needs to be very culturally and linguistically (diverse) to respond to the needs of those three,” says Rocheleau. “We have to manage that with regards to all the activities.”

North East is also one of the geographically largest of the 14 networks. Headquartered in North Bay, the LHIN stretches as far north as Hudson Bay, west to White River, east to the Ontario-Quebec boundary and south to Parry Sound.

On June 15 and 16, North East LHIN held a community engagement forum called “Managing Health Care in a New Environment.”

The event, which Rocheleau describes as successful, served as a preliminary introduction to the LHINs and the role of its board members in the health-care environment. More than 100 people attended the event.

A follow-up session will be held in October, adds Rocheleau.

“These forums were supposed to be once per year,” but board members asked for another forum to increase their involvement, says Rocheleau. “We’re asking them to be really hands-on in the process, which for them is quite new.”