



Miichim "Food": Local Sourcing

We spoke to **Kathy Loon, Traditional Programs Manager & Michelle Beaulne, Director of Corporate Support Services at Meno Ya Win Health Centre in Sioux Lookout, Ontario**

about the Traditional health programs they have developed and sustained over the years. They have been involved with many important initiatives aiming to improve the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing of the five urban and 28 rural First Nations communities served by the hospital. Of particular interest is their *Miichim* program.

Miichim is an Ojibwe word meaning food. And it is a one-of-a-kind program bringing and offering Traditional meals of wild meat/game and local fruits/vegetables to patients. Via current partnerships with the Ministry of Natural Resources, local hunters, trappers, and anglers, they have been collaboratively looking at healthcare through a different lens. "Say you give a patient moose meat, for example," says Kathy. "It doesn't take long for them to start talking about the land they come from, their hunting days, stories from long ago. Basically you are taking that person back to a time where they were at their strongest spiritually. Because spirituality comes from the land."

Despite the challenges of the North (weather, transportation, etc.), they have sustained their programs with buy-in from all levels of leadership within the organization and the surrounding communities.

"When you feel that someone is respecting you and your culture, it goes a long way to good emotional health. Traditional food is the only food that is more nutritious for us than anything else. And, that is true for all cultures of the world."
-Kathy Loon

