



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
College of Dentistry
DENTISTRY.USASK.CA



MEDIA RELEASE

USask collaboration establishes first dental therapy degree program in Canada

Canada's only national dental therapy educational program will have a fall 2023 start

SASKATOON – Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) has given its support for a new national dental therapy educational program and approved \$2.1 million in funding to establish the program, which will be run collaboratively through a partnership between the Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority (NITHA), the University of Saskatchewan's (USask) College of Dentistry, Saskatchewan Polytechnic, and Northlands College.

The partnership will launch the Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Dental Therapy program in Fall 2023, thereby establishing Canada's first and only dental therapy degree program. The dental therapy program will start accepting students in March 2023 through the USask website. Classes will start in August 2023. Students can choose to study in La Ronge at the Northlands College campus, in Prince Albert at the USask campus, or in Regina at the Sask Polytech campus. The program will accept seven students per year at each campus location, for a total of 21 students per year.

The two-year degree program's focus will include recruiting Indigenous students; utilizing multiple campuses to enable students to learn where they live; and using a multi-entry, multi-exit model that enables students to complete the program in steps and allow them the option to take a break from their studies and find employment if needed. The degree program will also offer dual licensing opportunities for dental hygienists.

"NITHA is excited this program is coming to fruition. A program to address the oral health needs throughout NITHA continues to be a top priority for our Board of Chiefs," said NITHA Executive Director Tara Campbell. "Our leadership has been advocating for a program since the closure of the National School of Dental Therapy; Growing capacity in dental therapy is central to improving Indigenous oral health, not only in Saskatchewan but, across the country."

"What an exciting announcement," said Dr. Doug Brothwell (DMD), dean of the USask College of Dentistry. "It has been over four years since NITHA approached the college requesting that we work together to solve the problem of access to dental care in their 34 member First Nations. The original two partners soon realized the advantage of partnering with Sask Polytech and Northlands College to bring additional expertise and experience to the new program. Combined, and after a full year of collaborative work, we are thrilled to be rolling out a unique program to develop the ideal work force to meet the oral health needs and aspirations of Canada's Indigenous people and communities."

"Sask Polytech is very excited to work in partnership to launch Canada's only dental therapy program," said Christa MacLean, dean of Sask Polytech's Schools of Health Science and Nursing. "Dental therapists are an integral part of the oral health team. They are trained to perform restorative dental treatment such as fillings, extractions, and other preventive services. This partnership will allow students to train close to home in La Ronge, Prince Albert or Regina."

"Northlands College is both honoured and humbled to enter into this partnership. Our history of collaboration with University of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Polytechnic, and NITHA has proven to be fruitful and beneficial for the people of northern Saskatchewan. We look forward to the outcomes of the dental therapy program and the opportunity it will provide for people in northern Saskatchewan, and beyond."



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In 1987 the dental therapy program delivered through the former Wascana Institute closed, and the National School of Dental Therapy closed in 2011, ceasing all dental therapy education in Canada. The effects continue to be felt by remote communities in Saskatchewan and across the country where dental therapists traditionally worked. The absence of a dedicated dental therapy program has aggravated access to care issues in these remote communities.

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About Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority:

Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority (NITHA) is the only First Nations organization of its kind in the country. The organization is comprised of Prince Albert Grand Council, Meadow Lake Tribal Council, Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation, and Lac La Ronge Indian Band and each has extensive experience in health service delivery. The NITHA partnership, a First Nations driven organization, is a source of collective expertise in culturally based, cutting edge professional practices for northern health services in our partner organizations.

About University of Saskatchewan:

The University of Saskatchewan (USask), located in the vibrant city of Saskatoon on Treaty 6 territory and the traditional homeland of the Métis, is leading the way in tackling pressing problems like water and food security. Research, teaching and learning at USask is enhanced by our array of world-class centres and facilities. A range



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of excellent programs, from business, law and public policy to engineering, medicine and dentistry, positions us to cross traditional discipline boundaries and work together to bring a unique perspective to key global challenges. With more than 25,700 students from around the globe, including nearly 3,300 self-declared Indigenous students and more than 3,400 international students, our strong community and well-recognized experts will continue to drive USask to be the university the world needs.

About Saskatchewan Polytechnic:

Saskatchewan Polytechnic serves students through applied learning opportunities on Treaty 4 and Treaty 6 Territories and the homeland of the Métis. Learning takes place at campuses in Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon and through extensive distance education opportunities. Programs serve every economic and public service sector. As a polytechnic, the organization provides the depth of learning appropriate to employer and student need, including certificate, diploma and degree programs, and apprenticeship training. Saskatchewan Polytechnic engages in applied research, drawing on faculty expertise to support innovation by employers, and providing students the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills.

About Northland College:

Northland College is a private liberal arts college with a progressive focus on the environment and sustainability. Our innovative curriculum and distinguished faculty draws students from across the country who come to be a part of a powerful educational community. Every Northland student has access to unique courses, quality internships, hands-on experiences, and dedicated mentors. Our graduates leave campus prepared for advanced study, challenging careers, and meaningful lives.