

Patient and Family Advisory Council

Member Bios

Melanie Buckshot – Fort Frances

Melanie has been involved in the health care field as a patient and caregiver for as long as she can remember. She has been an advocate for her family's health care needs; including helping them navigate the mental health system for both youth and older adults as well as caring for family members with terminal illnesses in hospital and long-term care. She is a mother of four; two of her older daughters were not born of her womb, but of her heart. She was blessed with them when they were 3 and 5 years old. When she first experienced the health care system at a young age, she was frightened and intimidated by the fact that health care professionals had more knowledge than she did but, as she got older, she realized she also had a voice. She is now a strong advocate in speaking for her Indigenous brothers and sisters for what they need – culturally safe and quality health care.

Joan Duke –Thunder Bay

Joan has an energetic interest in health care and believes that listening to patient and caregiver experiences is the key to understanding their unique needs and creating positive change. She has lived and worked in both small communities and urban centres for many years and understands the challenges patients, families and caregivers experience living in Northwestern Ontario. She is an active volunteer for many community organizations, where she listens to and carries back people's experiences and ideas. Joan volunteers with the Thunder Bay Regional Hospital Patient Advisory Committee and co-chairs Home and Community Care Support Services North West's Patient and Family Advisory Council. She is also a patient advisor for the Ontario Health's CEO Patient and Family Advisors Group. She keeps educated and up to date on health matters through her personal experience and through her extensive community volunteer experiences.

Dorothy Friske – Greenstone

Dorothy is a retired Elementary School Principal with a specialist in Special Education. She has been volunteering with the Geraldton District Hospital Auxiliary since 1974 and has held all executive positions. She was the last Provincial President of the

Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario (HAAO), prior to the dissolution of the organization. She is an active volunteer with Hospice Northwest and is involved with visiting clients, providing a music program in Long-Term Care homes as well as sitting with people at the end of life. She is a member of the Kenogamisis Golf Club Management Board and is secretary to the local Presbyterian/Anglican Church Shared Ministry Church Council.

David Glover – Shuniah

David was born in Toronto in 1944 and went to North Toronto Collegiate. After graduation, he worked for TD Bank, in branch work and then at head office. It was in Toronto that David met his future wife, Jane. The two of them decided to move to Port Arthur to be closer to Jane's family. David attended Lakehead University while Jane worked in her families' ladies wear business. As volunteers David and Jane were involved with the Northern Cancer Research Foundation (two family members died from the disease) then the North West Dementia Working Group, and were a founding member of the Dementia Café. David spent two terms on the Board of Directors for the Thunder Bay Community Auditorium. In June 2022, Jane passed away from Alzheimers Disease. David continues to volunteer, support, and advocate on behalf of patients and families experiencing dementia/Alzheimers.

Howard Meshake – Sioux Lookout

Howard is a caregiver to his wife who has complex health care needs. He is an advocate on her behalf for culturally appropriate services in their home while balancing full-time work. He also volunteers his time serving as the co-chair on the Board of Directors for Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority and Sioux Lookout Regional Physician Services Inc. as well as a board member for the Ka-Na-Chi-Hah Treatment Centre Board. As a First Nations member living off reserve and with extensive lived experience as a caregiver, he is eager to assist in identifying and advising on opportunities to incorporate the patient voice in order to improve health outcomes and experiences for living in the North.

Teresa Roberts – Terrace Bay

Teresa is a retired nurse who has worked for over 35 years caring for patients in her community of Terrace Bay. She also served as Chief Nursing Officer for the local hospital and has been an advocate for quality patient care throughout her career. Teresa is the Regional Coordinator for Hospice Northwest and volunteers her time

providing end-of-life care as well as grief support following the loss of a loved one. She is a board member on the Ontario Kidney Foundation and a member of the Family Council at the long-term care home where her mother resides. She is passionate about improving access to care and services in Northwestern Ontario and looks forward to continuing her journey as a health care advocate through her involvement on the Council.

George Saarinen – Thunder Bay

George grew up in Geraldton, in a small town in Northwestern Ontario with less than 5,000 people. He understands the unique challenges small and rural communities face when it comes to equitable access to health care services. He now lives in Thunder Bay where he actively contributes to the well-being of the community. George worked as a developmental service worker in group homes for the developmentally disabled for 30 years and as a funeral director for 10 years. Now retired, he supports aging family members to navigate the health care system by arranging services with various agencies as their needs change. He believes in giving back to the community when and where possible. He has served in various community roles as a representative of school boards and trustees, labor unions, political parties, library boards and sports teams. He is the current co-chair of the Patient and Family Advisory Committee for Home and Community Care Support Services North West, patient advisor for the Ontario Health's CEO Patient and Family Advisors Group and school board trustee with Lakehead Public Schools since 2006. George is an advocate for better access to quality health care services, especially in Northern Ontario and small communities.

Stephen Sidorski – Thunder Bay

Stephen has extensive lived experience navigating the health care system, especially within the mental health sector. He has been an advocate and caregiver for a family member suffering from mental health issues for many years. Stephen is an active volunteer in his community, sitting on various committees such as the Leadership Quality Safety and Risk Committee with St. Joseph's Care Group, a Salvation Army Community Council member, a member of the Capital Campaign for the new Journey to Life Centre as well as a Board Member and Nominating Committee Chair with Alpha Court Mental Health and Addiction in Thunder Bay. Stephen is also a past member of the Council of the College of Psychotherapists and Mental Health Therapists for the Province of Ontario. Stephen is excited to be part of the council

and share his experiences and advise on opportunities to include the patient's perspectives in initiatives to improve the health care experiences of people living in Northwestern Ontario.

Katherine Smith – Thunder Bay

Katherine worked as a hospital chaplain for 29 years, providing guidance in acute care, critical care, palliative/hospice care, and mental health care. She has been a patient advisor for the North West Local Health Integration now known as Community Care and Support Services North West for approximately 4 years. She is also a hospice volunteer specializing in individual grief support. She was a caregiver for many years to her mother living in long-term care with dementia and currently provides support to her two adult children who had chronic health issues growing up and continue to live with their health challenges. Katherine is drawn to people's stories about their health care experiences and wants to use these stories, as well as her own experiences, to bring forward ideas and solutions to improve health care, access and experiences for people living in Northwestern Ontario.