ASHS Statement in Honor of Makayla Sault and Family

Learning about Makayla's passing this past week has touched the hearts of everyone at the Aboriginal Students Health Sciences Office (ASHS).

Makayla's journey with her medical diagnosis and her treatments chosen, acts as a reminder to us all that patients have rights and Makayla had Indigenous rights. Ontario's Health Care Consent Act allows all children to determine their own medical treatment, as long as their capacity for judgment is sufficient to appreciate the reasonably foreseeable consequences of a decision or lack of decision.

Makayla's decision to halt chemotherapy has spurred much controversy. However, this is not the first, nor will it be the last time that Western Medicine is halted. Therefore, it is within our responsibility, as medical professionals, and it is our due diligence to ensure a broad or greater understanding of all factors affecting care in the context of providing a culturally safe and optimal level of health care.

We believe and would argue that it is important as health care professionals to be knowledgeable about Aboriginal history, It is important to be knowledgeable about residential schools and the 60's scoop and their effects in order to understand the profound and long lasting impacts a health care practitioner acting within the Western medical model and taking a paternalistic approach would have on Aboriginal patients.

We are aware that Makayla and her family hope to educate today's and future health care practitioners about traditional approaches to treating sickness and the importance of traditional medicine either instead of or in conjunction with Western style medicine. It is our hope that we at the ASHS office at McMaster University, much like our colleagues on campus can help honour Makayla's wishes through education; providing linkages and collaboration with stakeholders both on and off campus in order to see the transformation of modern medical practices to be culturally inclusive and safe.

On behalf of the ASHS team,
Melinda J. Fowler, MD.
Aboriginal Faculty Advisor