



NORTHERN MATERNAL CHILD NETWORK
RÉSEAU MÈRE-ENFANT DU NORD

2025-2026

Annual Report



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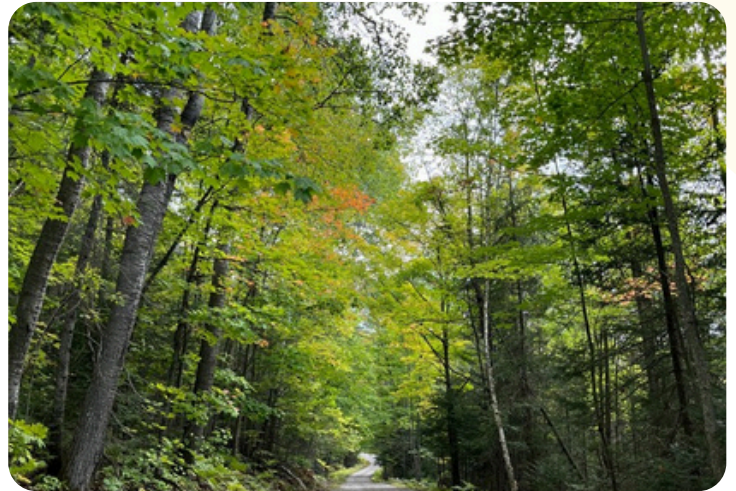


Land Acknowledgement

The Northern Maternal Child Network (NMCN) respectfully acknowledges that our work, and that of our community partners, is carried out on the traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples. The NMCN spans across Northern Ontario, which includes the lands of the people of Treaty 9, Treaty 3, Treaty 5, and the Robinson Treaties of 1850.

These traditional lands have been home have been inhabited, cared for, and stewarded by Indigenous Peoples since time immemorial. They are the traditional territories of The Northeast and Northwest regions are home to the Cree, Moose Cree, Ojibway/Chippewa, Oji-Cree, Mushkegowuk, Algonquin, Odawa, Métis, Nipissing, and Anishinabek Peoples, each with their own distinct histories, languages, and traditions.

We express our sincere gratitude for the privilege of living and working on these lands. We recognize and honour the ongoing contributions of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples in shaping and strengthening our region, our province, and our nation. The NMCN remains committed to fostering respectful and meaningful partnerships with Indigenous clients, partners, and communities.



Message from Leadership

As I reflect on the past year, I am proud of the progress made across the Northern Maternal Child Network (NMCN). Guided by our shared commitment to collaboration, equity, and improved outcomes, this year marked continued growth in how we connect maternal-child healthcare providers, strengthen regional partnerships, and support coordinated care for perinatal, newborn, and pediatric populations across Northern Ontario.

Throughout the year, the NMCN collaborated closely with healthcare organizations, providers, and system partners to respond to emerging priorities, including **measles** and **RSV**.

With education consistently identified as a key priority by partners, I am particularly proud of the partnership established with the Women and Children's Health Network (WCHN) to develop a comprehensive education framework, **L.E.A.R.N.**, designed to support all levels of care across both regions, particularly in relation to nursing onboarding.

As part of this initiative, the NMCN developed core skills and competency frameworks to support greater standardization of care, including the **Maternal Newborn Competencies** and the **Pediatric Nursing Competencies**, as well as a structured **Mentorship Package** to facilitate clinical placements and knowledge exchange between sites.

To further advance consistency in practice, we introduced a **Birthing Bundle** and

strengthened our **Committees and Communities of Practice**, fostering meaningful connections across the maternal-child continuum of care.

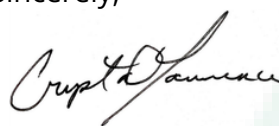
Pediatric data continues to be a significant gap, limiting our ability to identify well-informed quality improvement opportunities and strengthen care closer to home. Over the past year, the NMCN partnered with Ontario Health and regional hospitals to establish key pediatric acute care metrics aimed at identifying service gaps and informing system planning.

In addition, NMCN compiled a comprehensive **resource inventory** to better inform southern partners of available services within northern referral centres. This initiative is intended to support timely repatriation and facilitate smoother transitions back to care closer to home for northern patients and families.

This work wouldn't be possible without the dedication of our partners, advisors, Network members, and the continued support of Ontario Health and the Ministry of Health. We are deeply grateful for the trust placed in the NMCN and the collective commitment to improving health outcomes for the maternal-child population.

As we look ahead into the next year, we remain focused on strengthening collaboration, supporting system transformation, and working together to ensure equitable, high-quality care for every family in the North.

Sincerely,



Crystal Lawrence
Regional Manager

About Us

Established in 2021 and funded by the Ministry of Health, the NMCN is one of six regional maternal-child networks in Ontario. The NMCN strengthens collaboration among maternal-child healthcare providers and organizations to improve health outcomes and advance health equity for perinatal, newborn, and pediatric populations across the North.

The NMCN catchment area includes all of Northern Ontario (North East and North West OH Regions); from Parry Sound to communities across Georgian Bay to the boarder of Manitoba.

Our Vision

To work collaboratively, as a Northern region and with provincial partners, to build a well-informed, integrated system of services across the maternal-child continuum.

Our Mission

To improve health outcomes of the maternal-child population living in Northern Ontario.

Our Values

These values reflect our commitment to advancing equitable, high-quality maternal-child health services across Northern Ontario. They serve as the foundation for how we collaborate, lead, and advocate for the communities we serve.

- Advocacy
- Collaboration
- Inclusion
- Transparency
- Leadership
- Patient-Centered
- Integrity

At a Glance



39 organizations actively engaged in the Network



392 total members



6 resources developed and shared



Staff of 4



2025-2030 Strategic Plan

Empowering maternal-child health across the North

At the beginning of fiscal year 2025, the NMCN reached a major milestone with the release of its first Strategic Plan, setting a clear direction for the organization's work from 2025 to 2030. With only being operational for 4 years, the NMCN is now positioned to move forward with a shared roadmap that guides long-term priorities and supports meaningful, regionally informed action across the North.

Built Through Collaboration

The Strategic Plan was shaped through thoughtful reflection and collaboration with northern partners, committee members, patients, and provincial partners. This collective effort reflects a strong, shared commitment to addressing regional needs and improving care experiences for patients and families across northern communities.

Responding to Northern Realities

The North faces unique challenges that contribute to barriers and inequities in care. While healthcare providers across the region demonstrate resilience, innovation, and resourcefulness, this Plan is designed to further support their work by strengthening coordination, addressing gaps, and improving the overall patient experience.

Strategic Priorities

Address Disparities and Promote Equity by **Identifying and Validating Gaps** in the North, Integrating the Patient's Voice, and **Advocating for Equitable Solutions**

Enhance Collaboration and Integration by Fostering **Connections Among Providers and Organizations**, and Supporting the Consistent **Application of Best Practices Across the North**

Build Capacity and Facilitate Knowledge Sharing in the North through the **Provision of Education and Training**

Strengthen the impact and viability of the Network

A Network-Driven Path Forward

The success of this Strategic Plan depends on the continued strength of the network. The NMCN is grateful for the ongoing support, participation, and leadership of its partners. Through this collective effort, the NMCN is well positioned to achieve the ambitious outcomes outlined in the Plan and to make a meaningful, lasting impact on maternal-child health across the North.

Addressing Disparities and Ensuring Equity

This pillar focuses on advancing equity and improving outcomes by systematically identifying gaps in care, amplifying patient and community perspectives, and driving advocacy for meaningful solutions. Over the past year, NMCN has taken tangible steps to operationalize this commitment: raising public awareness through the creation of an obstetrical documentary, strengthening influence and decision-making through representation at key provincial and national tables, initiating a multi-year pediatric data project to guide evidence-informed planning, and establishing an Calls to Action Advisory Group to embed culturally safe practices and reconciliation-focused guidance.

Creating Awareness for Equitable Obstetrical Care in the North

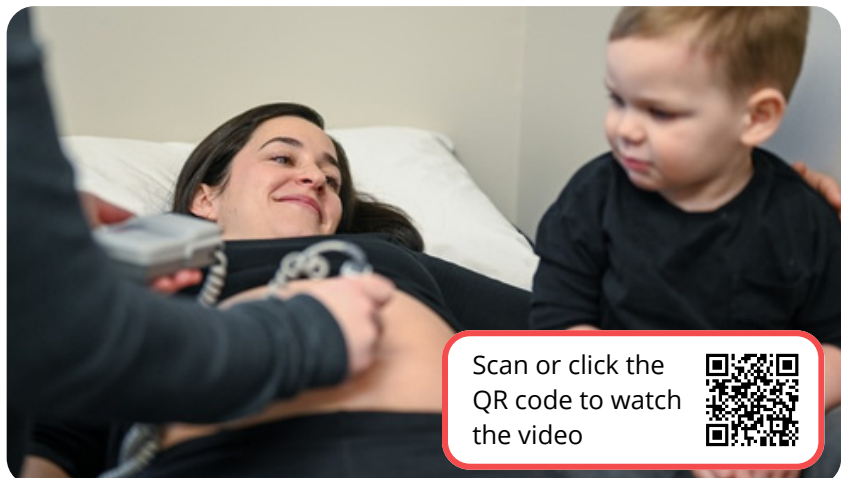
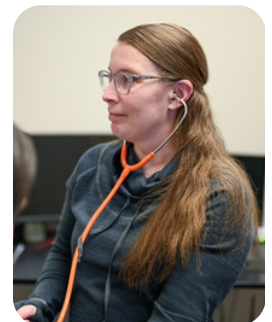
In early 2025, the NMCN, with BORN Ontario and Prenatal Screening Ontario, embarked on a tour of Northern Ontario hospitals to learn about the challenges and unique approaches to obstetrical care.

As part of this journey, the NMCN worked with a videographer to capture the voices of healthcare professionals and patients, shedding light on the realities of their daily lives and the challenges they face in accessing quality care close to home.

Released in October 2025, this documentary, titled **Northern Voices: Insights into Obstetrical Care in the North**, brings you into the heart of Northern Ontario, where local healthcare providers and patients shed a light on the realities of obstetrical care in the North. Their message is clear: safe, culturally appropriate, and community-led obstetrical care is not a luxury, it's a right.

12 healthcare providers
from **9 sites across**
Northeastern and
Northwestern Ontario
contributed to this video.

2 patients shared their
first-hand experience
accessing care in
Northern communities.



Scan or click the
QR code to watch
the video



Strengthening Northern Ontario Influence on Provincial and National Healthcare Tables

NMCN strengthened its voice and influence this year through active representation at key provincial and national tables, such as the **Regional Network Operating Forum, CanOSS: Canadian Obstetric Surveillance System, and tables through BORN Ontario**. By contributing expertise to strategic discussions, policy development, and system-level planning, NMCN helped ensure that the perspectives of pediatric, neonatal, and perinatal care in Northern Ontario were reflected in broader health-care decisions. This engagement supports alignment with emerging best practices, fosters collaboration across jurisdictions, and positions the NMCN as a trusted partner in advancing high-quality, evidence-based care for birthing individuals, children, and families in the North.



Driving Reconciliation through Collaborative Indigenous Guidance

To advance the NMCN's commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, a Truth and Reconciliation Advisory Group was established to provide consultative guidance and recommendations to support the meaningful integration of the Calls to Action into the NMCN's work. This group brings together **10 Indigenous leaders, knowledge keepers, and health-system partners** from Northeastern and Northwestern Ontario to provide guidance on policy, program design, and service delivery that reflects Indigenous perspectives and priorities. By embedding Indigenous voices in decision-making, the NMCN is strengthening relationships, fostering collaboration, and ensuring that its strategies and initiatives meaningfully support reconciliation and improved health outcomes for Indigenous children, families, and communities.

Launching a Multi-Year Pediatric Data Initiative to Guide Pediatric System Planning

This multi-year initiative is in its initial stages and is focused on building a strong foundation for evidence-informed pediatric system planning. During the year, a needs assessment was conducted with key partners to identify priority data indicators required to understand service capacity, access, and gaps across the continuum of care for children and youth aged 0–18 years in the Northeast and Northwest regions. This early work sets the direction for future data analysis, and reporting across acute care, primary care, outpatient and specialty services, public health, and early years and developmental supports. By establishing shared priorities and aligning with partners from the outset, the project is positioned to support coordinated, data-driven improvements in pediatric care over the coming years.

Strengthening Collaboration and Integration

This pillar focused on strengthening connections among providers and organizations to support a more coordinated and consistent system of care across the North. Key initiatives included the development of a regional educators table to connect training leaders, align priorities, and promote shared learning, alongside exploratory work to establish a perinatal mental health table to better integrate services across health, community, and social sectors.

Leading Collaboration through a Northern Regional Educators Table

The Northern Regional Educators Community of Practice, led by the NMCN, was established this year to foster greater collaboration and shared learning among neonatal, pediatric, and obstetric regional educators across the province who support care providers in Northern Ontario. By convening this table, the NMCN has created a structured forum for members to share successes, discuss challenges, and collectively advance the region's educational priorities. Leveraging collective knowledge and resources, members can continue to develop and deliver high-quality educational initiatives that standardize care, strengthen clinical competencies, and ultimately improve perinatal, neonatal, and pediatric services across the North.

14 total members from across Ontario on the committee with expertise ranging in obstetrics, pediatric, neonatal, and critical care.

Supporting Partners to Strengthen Health across the North

Over the past year, the NMCN supported several funding proposals including for partners in the North. This support helped align priorities, reinforce shared regional goals, and promote a coordinated approach to advancing equity and access. Through these efforts, the NMCN strengthened relationships with partners and helped advanced partnership-driven initiatives that contribute to sustainable health improvements across the North.



Fostering Collaboration through Bi-Annual Acute Care Meetings

The NMCN holds bi-annual Regional Acute Care Round Table meetings with representatives from all Northern hospitals to review key performance indicators from BORN Ontario, share insights and learnings, provide open discussions with Ontario Health, and discuss relevant industry updates. These gatherings create a structured space for transparent communication, collaborative problem-solving, and alignment on shared goals. By bringing together hospital leaders, the NMCN fosters knowledge exchange, highlights best practices, and ensures that emerging trends and developments in health care are consistently communicated across the region. This ongoing engagement strengthens relationships, supports data-driven decision-making, and reinforces a coordinated approach to improving health outcomes across the North.

17 Level 1 and Level 2 hospitals have attended since the first meeting in October 2024.

A total of **4 presentations** from initiatives impacting obstetrical care in the North were presented.



Linking Partners across the Network

Over the past year, the NMCN supported connection-building by introducing and linking partners where shared interests, priorities, or opportunities for collaboration were identified. Through meaningful partner connections, the NMCN helped partners engage directly with one another, exchange information, and explore potential areas of collaboration. While ongoing discussions were led by the partners themselves, this connection-building role reflects the NMCN's core function as a network; serving as a hub that links partners, shares information, and helps relationships form across organizations and regions.



Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing

The NMCN is committed to building capacity and facilitating knowledge sharing in the North through the provision of education and training. Over the past year, the NMCN has made significant strides to the success of this pillar, including the creation of standardized guides and support documents, engaging numerous organizations and providers across the region and beyond, and development of a program to offer high-quality, equitable pediatric and obstetric nursing education.

Connecting Clinicians to Drive Practice Improvement

Over the past year, the NMCN's Pediatric and Perinatal Communities of Practice (CoP) have achieved notable engagement through the successful onboarding of new clinicians and collaborative work to advance policy updates and resource sharing initiatives.

Membership has increased significantly this year, with the Pediatric CoP increasing membership by **39%** and the Perinatal CoP increasing by **37%**.

Across both the Pediatric and Perinatal CoPs, a combined total of **75 policies and procedures** were reviewed, strengthening consistency and safety in care across the region.

Building a Region-Wide Foundation for Safe Obstetrical Care

The **Birthing Bundle** is a standardized, evidence-aligned resource developed by the NMCN to strengthen obstetrical readiness across Level 1 and 2 hospitals, and emergency departments by clearly identifying required equipment, supplies, staffing, and skills. By helping facilities assess gaps, plan standards, and stabilize patients prior to transfer, the Birthing Bundle enhances system readiness and supports safer outcomes for mothers and newborns.

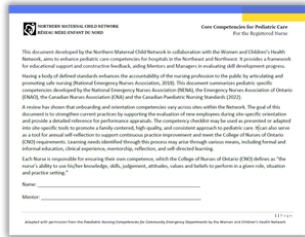


Educating and Empowering Teams Where Care Happens

Over the past year, the **NMCN visited 12 sites across the region** to provide targeted education on critical topics such as diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) management and precipitous delivery. Being in each site's own space, utilizing their equipment, and collaborating directly with their teams made these sessions highly effective, allowing clinicians, nursing staff, and physicians to build practical skills, gain confidence, and improve readiness for high-risk situations.

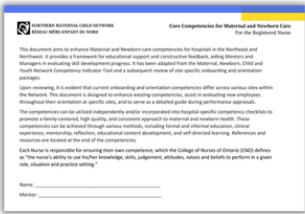


Advancing Care Through Mentorship and Competency-Based Practice



The Core Competency Checklists for Pediatric and Maternal-Newborn Registered Nurse documents

represents a significant step forward in strengthening maternal, newborn, and pediatric care across Northern Ontario hospitals. By introducing a standardized, regionally informed framework for skill development, mentorship, and ongoing competency assessment, it empowers leaders, mentors, and educators to confidently support nurses in delivering safe, high-quality obstetrical and pediatric care to help build a resilient, highly skilled workforce for the future.



Preparing Northern Partners for Emerging Health Trends

In response to emerging trends, the NMCN developed a comprehensive **Measles Information Package** and **RSV Prevention Toolkit** to help prepare our Northern partners for peak seasons. In addition, the NMCN collaborates closely with partners such as BORN Ontario and Ontario Health to deliver monthly health reports, ensuring our region stays informed and supported with up-to-date data and insights. These resources provided timely guidance on prevention, recognition, and management, strengthening community readiness and supporting the protection of patients across the region.



Coordinating Certified Training in Obstetric, NICU, and Pediatric Care

The NMCN has coordinated **Fetal Health Surveillance and Neonatal Resuscitation Program** for partners across the region, ensuring learners have access to high-quality, standardized training in critical perinatal care. Building on this foundation, we will continue to coordinate certification courses in the coming years, supporting ongoing skill development, maintaining competency, and promoting safe outcomes across the region.



Building a Skilled and Confident Nursing Workforce with LEARN

The NMCN, in partnership with the Women and Children Health Network, is developing LEARN Clinical Education Hub; a comprehensive pediatric and obstetric nursing onboarding program. Created by regional subject matter experts, approved by an Education Approval Committee, and delivered through a new Learning Management System, LEARN will standardize evidence-based care, strengthening nursing skills, confidence, and patient outcomes across the region. Six modules will be completed by the end of this fiscal year, marking a key milestone toward full implementation.

The program will feature **17 self-paced perinatal and 14 neonatal intensive care unit/ pediatric modules** and support approximately **60 hospitals across the Northern and Central Ontario regions.**

Development of the Network

This pillar focuses on ensuring the NMCN is well-positioned to sustain and amplify its influence across Northern Ontario. Over the past year, significant steps have been taken to build capacity and strengthen connections, including onboarding new committee members to bring diverse perspectives, launching the NMCN's first five-year strategic plan, establishing a multi-year Engagement Plan, and expanding the Network's presence on social media to reach and support care providers.

Welcoming Diverse Expertise to Strengthen Our Committees

Over the past year, the NMCN successfully onboarded a total of **10 new committee members** to the Steering Committee, Child and Youth Committee, and Maternal-Newborn Committee bringing valuable perspectives from the community, acute care, and public health sectors. Each new member participated in a structured onboarding process, including orientation to the Network's strategic priorities, policies, and collaborative processes, ensuring they were fully prepared to contribute effectively. Their addition has enriched discussions, supported diverse viewpoints, and strengthened the Network's capacity to advance evidence-informed, equitable, and high-quality care across all areas of focus.

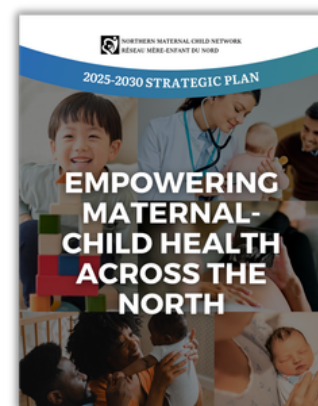
12 total members on the Steering Committee.

12 total members on the Child and Youth Committee.

21 total members on the Maternal-Newborn Committee.

Launching Our First Five-Year Strategic Plan

This year, the NMCN proudly launched its first-ever Strategic Plan, establishing a clear roadmap to guide priorities, initiatives, and decision-making through to 2030. The Plan reflects extensive consultation with members and partners, ensuring it captures diverse perspectives and aligns with the NMCN's vision of equitable, high-quality care for birthing individuals, youth, and families. By defining strategic pillars, goals, and actionable objectives, the Plan provides a framework to drive measurable impact, foster collaboration, and support evidence-informed improvements across all areas of focus over the next five years.



Leveraging Social Media to Empower Providers

This year, the NMCN expanded its reach by joining social media platforms (Instagram and LinkedIn) to connect with a broader audience of care providers across Northern Ontario. By leveraging these channels, the NMCN can share timely updates, resources, and best practices, while fostering engagement, collaboration, and knowledge exchange among health-care professionals. This digital presence empowers providers with actionable information, supports professional collaboration, and enhances their ability to deliver high-quality, evidence-informed care in the North.

LinkedIn: [Northern Maternal Child Network](#)
Instagram: [@northernmaternalchildnetwork](#)



Implementing a Multi-Year Engagement Plan to Strengthen Partnerships

This year, the NMCN established a multi-year Engagement Plan to strategically guide how we build, maintain, and strengthen relationships with maternal-child organizations across Northern Ontario. By outlining clear approaches to collaboration, communication, and partnership development, the plan ensures that the NMCN can effectively align priorities, share expertise, and foster meaningful connections. This structured, multi-year approach supports coordinated efforts, enhances system-wide impact, and positions the NMCN as a trusted partner in advancing high-quality, equitable care for women, children, and families throughout the region.