



Dr. James Andrew Makokis

1. Brave Advocacy

Physicians are at the forefront of advocacy on a daily basis. Not only do we have to advocate for our patients within the health system to ensure they receive the best and equitable care, but we often have to advocate for one another. We are stronger when we stand together. Now, more than ever we see the need to work together to ensure the needs of the profession and our patients are met, especially in political climates like present day Alberta which have become hostile and adversarial.

Brave advocacy means having vulnerability to bring issues forward that require attention and support. Sometimes it can require a unique approach to stand beside and with people and populations who have been misunderstood. Brave advocacy involves reaching into the hearts of people to help change their minds and bring them on side to achieve a common goal, it involves building bridges and relationships. Through my time on the Amazing Race Canada, I was able to see the importance of this, which helped lead to our success.

2. Being Well Ourselves

Physicians and learners need to be well themselves if they are to create a healing and caring environment for the people they serve. The culture of medicine is shifting with newer generations of physicians recognizing the need for a healthy work-life balance and we need to support this if our colleagues are going to stay in the profession and have a long, satisfying career. Medical learners enter into the profession with a sense of eagerness, optimism and altruism that all too often is trained out of them by rigid expectations, unrealistic, and non-supportive work environments. I strongly support programs that encourage learner and physician wellness and empathy based practice. I support the shift in medical culture which fosters unapologetic happiness, healthy boundaries to practicing medicine, and an environment where all colleagues can feel safe to be who they authentically are. In this way, we can feel fulfilled to provide high quality medical care that our population deserves.

3. Embracing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion across the profession

Each physician that enters into the profession is gifted with talents, attributes, and skills that allow them to provide exceptional care. Despite the fact that physicians graduate with the same degrees in their respective specialties and areas of expertise, they may not be given the same opportunities due to the limitations we allow to occur in institutions that govern us. Physicians from diverse backgrounds are often excluded from participating in the decision making processes that effect change within the health care system. When this happens we inhibit our ability to create an inclusive and diverse profession which fosters growth, development and innovation. We need to ensure that all physicians and learners are represented equitably if we are to grow as a profession which values the uniqueness of each and every member. In doing so, we start to break down the walls of institutional and systemic racism which have led to substandard patient care and health outcomes.

Dr. James Andrew Makokis

Dr. James Makokis is a Nehiyô (Plains Cree) Family Physician from the Saddle Lake Cree Nation in northeastern Alberta and most recently won Season Seven of the Amazing Race Canada with his husband Anthony Johnson as "Team Ahkameyimok" (Never give up in the Plains Cree language).

Since starting his practice in Alberta in 2012, Dr. Makokis has become a leader in the area of Indigenous health, equity diversity and inclusion, anti-racism, and transgender health. He has taught about these subjects through various venues including keynoting national conferences, Grand Rounds, in medical schools and residency programs. Recognizing the huge gap in equitable access to gender affirming health care for the transgender and gender diverse community, Dr. Makokis has worked to train Family Physicians, residents and medical learners to increase their competency and comfort in this area. This work has been profiled by national and international media outlets including the CBC, AJ+ and the Thompson Reuters Foundation. He has been asked to present to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta on this topic and helped to create the Toward Optimized Practice (TOP) Clinical Practice Guidelines on Gender Affirming Care.

Currently Dr. Makokis practices Family Medicine in Kehewin Cree Nation in the Lakeland PCN and has a subspecialty practice in transgender health in south Edmonton. In November 2020 he was announced as the inaugural Medical Director at Shkaabe Makwa in Toronto at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, which is the first hospital-based centre in Canada designed to drive culturally relevant system initiatives to achieve healthy equity and community wellness. He is appointed as an Associate Clinical Professor in the Department of Family Medicine (University of Alberta), and Adjunct Faculty in the Dalla Lana School of Public Health (University of Toronto).

He graduated from the University of Alberta with a Bachelor of Science (Nutrition and Food Science) in 2004 with distinction, the University of Toronto with a Masters of Health Science (Community Nutrition) in 2006, the University of Ottawa with a Medical Doctorate in 2010 and completed the Aboriginal Family Medicine Residency Training Program at the University of British Columbia in 2012.

Dr. Makokis has volunteered and served on several boards including the Lakeland Primary Care Network, Indspire, the Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada, the Primary Health Care Technical Committee of Accreditation Canada/Health Standards Organization, Macewan University's Indigenous Community Advisory Committee, and was co-chair of the Aboriginal Wisdom Council of Alberta Health Services. Currently he is chairing a National Expert Physician Panel on Indigenous Health and as part of this work helped facilitate the first National Anti-Indigenous Racism Summit in the Canadian Health Care system which brought together leaders in the health system in response to the death of Joyce Echaquan in a Quebec Hospital. For this work, he was invited to present at a United Nations expert panel in December 2020 on Pandemics in Indigenous Nations.

He has received the Indspire Award, Macewan University's Distinguished Alumni Award and the Rising Star Award in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Ottawa. Dr. Makokis has authored book chapters related to Indigenous Public Health and the front-line experiences of Rural Family Physicians. He is an avid ultra-marathon trail runner and believes in the importance of Treaty for ensuring a peaceful co-existence on Turtle Island.