

News Release

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ADDRESSING PRIORITY CANCER CONTROL GAPS WITH AND FOR INUIT AND FIRST NATIONS

First time collaborations to improve the cancer experience for patients in rural, remote and isolated communities

Kuujjuaq, March 7, 2014 – Today, together with the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer, the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (area 17) and the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay (area 18) are proud to launch an initiative to improve cancer control with and for First Peoples. While cancer affects everyone, rates of common cancers have increased among First Nations, Inuit and Métis in the past few decades and in some populations are now at or above those in the general Canadian population.

According to the Québec Tumour File, there were 497 (233 males and 264 females) observed primary cancer cases in Nunavik during the 1986-2010 period. The mean annual number of new cancer cases is increasing, almost doubling within one decade, from 16 in 1996-2000 to 29 in 2006-2010. Up to the year 2000, the cancer incidence in Nunavik was comparable to that of the Rest of Quebec. But since 2001, the region has had a higher incidence of cancer, as compared to the Rest of Quebec

In Nunavik females, lung cancer ranked first with almost 1 out of every 3 new cancer cases (32%), followed by colorectal (13%) and breast (11%) cancers. This higher proportion of lung cancer in females is specific to Nunavik and not found in the Rest of Quebec. In Inuit males, just lung (37%) and colorectal (13%) cancers made up 50% of new cancer cases. Again, the proportion of lung cancer among males is far higher in Nunavik as compared to the Rest of Quebec.

There were 529 (247 males and 282 females) observed primary cancer cases in Eeyou Istchee during the 1986-2010 period. The mean annual number of new cancer cases is increasing, especially in females. Over the study period, people in Eeyou Istchee experienced a lower incidence of cancer, as compared to the Rest of Quebec

In Eeyou Istchee, the 3 most frequently diagnosed cancers in females were breast (21%), colorectal (13%) and kidney (12%). Kidney cancer is particularly frequent if one considers that it only made up 2% of all cancers in females in the Rest of Quebec. Lung (17%), prostate (14%) and colorectal (11%) cancers are the top-3 cancer sites in Eeyou males.

The new initiative will help reduce the cancer burden within Québec and more precisely in the Nunavik and James Bay Cree Territory and improve the experience for patients.

Developed by the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services and the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay, the project aims to increase the quality and cultural relevance of healthcare and health services for First Nations, Inuit and Métis patients with cancer.

This project will make it possible to:

- Provide culturally relevant services, improving the efficacy of the healthcare system for clients. Patients' compliance with treatment, as well as motivation to self-manage their condition, depends on their level of acceptance of the healthcare approach they receive. This compliance also depends on their understanding of the different treatment options that are presented to them. Finally, taking into account the cultural dimension of health services makes it possible to fulfill the need for a comprehensive approach to cancer care and to reduce disparities related to cultural differences.
- Improve the coordination of healthcare services for Inuit and Cree patients. The lack of coordination in the healthcare system with respect to managing chronic diseases especially in remote areas was noted in the main documents on this subject.
- Improve access to healthcare and cancer care services in Nunavik and Eeyou Istchee through the development of local healthcare provision.
- Position areas 17 and 18 within the national cancer control network.

The initiative will help to build and maintain connections through a network that will bring people from across the country together to benefit from each other's experiences and tackle common challenges. In total, the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer is investing \$10.2 million in the implementation of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Cancer Control Initiative that the *Quality and culturally adapted care and services for Inuit and Eeyou* patients with cancer is a part of.

The three and a half year project is part of broader strategy stemming from the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Action Plan on Cancer Control. Released in 2011, this plan represented a collaborative effort by the many organizations and individuals working to improve cancer outcomes among First Peoples in Canada. Informed by First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners and the cancer control community, the plan outlined where the Partnership is best positioned to advance cancer control for and with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

"Advancing cancer control with and for First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities is a priority for the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer," said Lee Fairclough, VP, Strategy, Knowledge Management and Delivery at the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer. "Initiatives like this one are intended to improve how we provide care in a culturally responsive and safe way. It will be very rewarding to see the impact of this work in Québec and more precisely in the Nunavik and James Bay Cree Territory and across Canada."

About the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (area 17)

The NRBHSS is a public agency created in 1978 under the **James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement**. It is responsible for nearly the entire territory located north of the 55th parallel in terms of the provision of health and social services for the inhabitants of the 14 communities.

About the the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay (area 18)

The CBHSSJB is a Cree agency created in 1979 under the **James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement**. As Region 18 within the Ministère de la santé et des services sociaux du Québec, it is responsible for providing health and social services within the nine Cree communities of Eeyou Istchee, the traditional Cree territory which covers the watershed emptying into James Bay.

The <u>Canadian Partnership Against Cancer</u> works with Canada's cancer community to reduce the burden of cancer on Canadians. Grounded in and informed by the experiences of those affected by cancer, the organization works with partners to support multi-jurisdictional uptake of evidence that will help to optimize cancer control planning and drive improvements in quality of practice across the country. Through sustained effort and a focus on the cancer continuum, the organization supports the work of the collective cancer community in achieving long-term population outcomes: reduced incidence of cancer, less likelihood of Canadians dying from cancer, and an enhanced quality of life of those affected by cancer.

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