

## PRESS RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **BOTULISM POISONING: MARINE MAMMAL MEAT PRECAUTION**

**Kuujjuaq, July 3, 2018** – With summer approaching, the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS) and the Department of Public Health wish to remind Nunavimmiut of the precautions to take in order to prevent foodborne botulism.

The risk of botulism poisoning is greater during the summer, after a marine mammal hunt, and more particularly during the preservation and preparation of traditional foods (walrus, seal, beluga). Botulism poisoning results from the ingestion of a toxin that affects the nervous system (facial and respiratory muscles). The toxin is produced during incorrect fermentation or preservation methods of meat or fat from marine mammals.

"On hot days, keeping the meat cold is the best way to make sure the toxin that causes botulism does not develop," states Dr. Françoise Bouchard, Director of Public Health of the NRBHSS. "As soon as possible, the harvested meat must be chilled (on ice, in the refrigerator or in the freezer); the same precaution applies when the meat arrives in homes and during preparation."

As for *igunaq*, the Department of Public Health recommends storing the meat in the freezer (home or community) and beginning the fermentation process in the fall, when temperatures are cooler.

Traditional foods are integral parts of Nunavimmiut life, and it is of utmost importance to preserve traditions. However, for everyone's health, the NRBHSS Department of Public Health invites all Nunavimmiut to follow these preventive measures.

The Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services 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 55<sup>th</sup> parallel in terms of the provision of health and social services for the inhabitants of the 14 communities.

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Source:	Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services
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