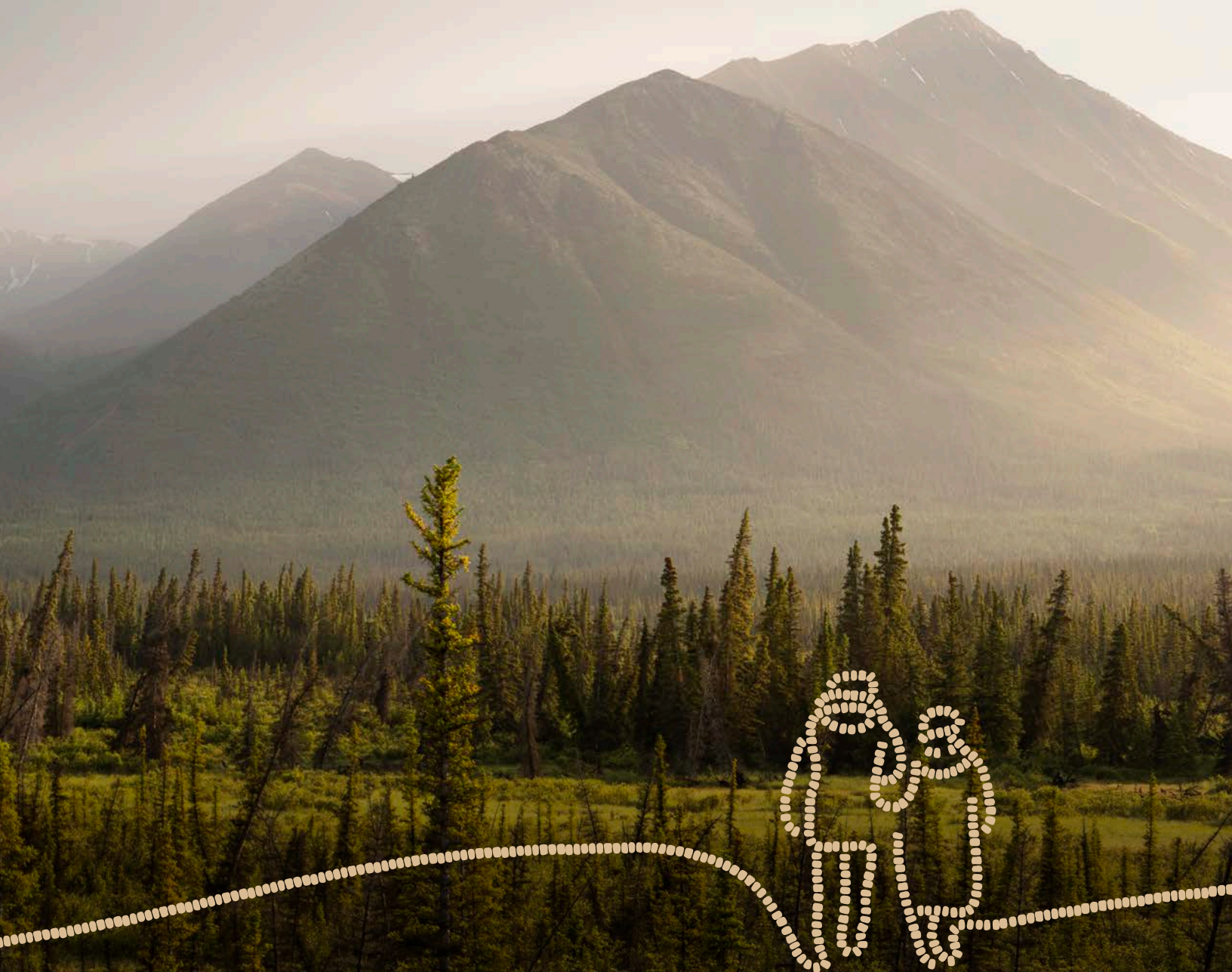


CANCER CARE PATHWAYS

Improving Yukon First Nations Cancer
Experiences and Outcomes in Yukon



FOREWORD

I am honoured to introduce Cancer Care Pathways – *Improving First Nations Cancer Experiences and Outcomes in Yukon* (the “Strategy”). I want to thank the many partners, leaders, and community members whose time, knowledge, and commitment made this work possible.

Cancer touches every Yukon First Nations community. Most of us have a family member, friend, or neighbour who has faced cancer. For Yukon First Nations, this experience is often made harder by historic and ongoing colonial practices including systemic racism within the healthcare system. These realities continue to create barriers, fear, and trauma along a person’s cancer journey.

The impacts of cancer extend well beyond the individual. Families and communities play a vital role in care and healing, and their own wellbeing is affected throughout the journey. Compassionate, culturally safe support must be available for both individuals and those who support them at every stage: from prevention; diagnosis to treatment; aftercare, and end-of-life care.

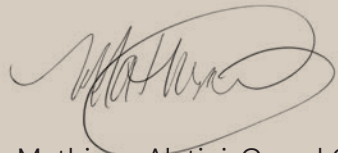
Yukon First Nations have long called for change that recognizes the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual impacts of cancer and the systems that surround it. Yukon First Nations continue to raise these concerns while also stepping in to

fill gaps through community-based programs and supports. This Strategy is the result of that sustained advocacy and the shared effort to better understand the challenges and opportunities in accessing cancer services in Whitehorse and in Yukon communities.

This work was grounded in partnership, collaboration, and consensus. The Strategy reflects Yukon First Nations priorities, including connection to the land, embracing Traditional Knowledge, integrating wholistic wellness grounded in cultural values, being inclusive of our languages, and building strength through togetherness. These foundations are essential to creating meaningful and lasting improvements in cancer care and outcomes.

I am grateful to the individuals and communities who shared their stories and wisdom to guide this work. I look forward to supporting the implementation of this Strategy as we move forward together, in care, respect, and shared responsibility.

Shāw níthän,



Mathieya Alatini, Grand Chief
Council of Yukon First Nations

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	4
How did we get here?	6
Our Way.....	8
Declaration.....	10
Vision.....	12
Goals.....	13
Strategic Priority Areas for Action.....	14
Acknowledgements.....	26

Cover Photo: Dan Carr

INTRODUCTION

Cancer Care Pathways – Yukon First Nations Cancer Strategy

The cancer care pathway refers to cancer services from awareness and prevention to early detection, treatment and survivorship through to palliative and end-of-life care.

Opportunities to improve cancer care exist at every stage of the pathway. The focus of the *Yukon First Nations Cancer Strategy* is on cancer care services offered in the Yukon, with emphasis on early interventions through awareness, prevention and screening. This strategy also prioritizes further development of partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions that provide out-of-territory cancer services. Many of the challenges cancer care patients experience while navigating the health care system are not unique to the cancer care pathway. Yukon First Nations identified that common barriers to accessing care include inadequate medical travel coverage and the deficit of primary care providers across the territory. The actions identified in this plan aim to mitigate these challenges, but do not resolve them.

Better Cancer Care for All

Yukon First Nations have taken the lead to identify service gaps and systemic barriers in the Yukon's cancer care pathway. This strategy focuses on improving the cancer care pathway for Yukon First Nations Citizens (both status and non-status) living in the Yukon. Many of the proposed actions identified in this strategy will benefit all cancer patients receiving care in the Yukon.

Photos: Archbould.com

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Cancer has been a priority for Yukon First Nations for many years.

From 2007 to 2009, the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) initiated community workshops, culminating in the *Conversations on Cancer Parts I-III* reports. These reports highlighted the need to address increasing rates of cancer in our communities, and take the conversation beyond discussions, and onwards towards change.

From 2014 to 2017, CYFN received three years of funding from the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (CPAC) to engage Yukon First Nations communities to discuss cancer, provide education sessions and develop cancer resources. Through these engagements, it became clear that there was a need to address cancer care in the Yukon. The development of a cancer strategy was identified as the next step.

During this same period, the Office of the Yukon Chief Medical Officer of Health released two reports: *Cancer Mortality Trends, 1999–2013 (2017)* and *Yukon Cancer Incidence Report, 2009–2016 (2019)*. Both reports recommended a coordinated approach to cancer prevention and control involving Yukon First Nations.

In 2020, the Government of Yukon released the *Putting People First* report, which included recommendations to improve health outcomes and promote equitable access to care for Yukon First Nations.

Yukon First Nations Cancer Care Project (YFNCCP)

The Yukon First Nations Cancer Care Project (YFNCCP) was founded in 2018, following several years of identifying cancer as an issue in Yukon First Nations communities. Through years of partnership and support from CPAC, the YFNCCP aims to advance peoples-first, self-determined priorities to improve the cancer landscape in the Yukon.

The YFNCCP is a collaboration between Yukon First Nations governments, the Government of Yukon, Yukon Hospital Corporation, Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon First Nations Elders and persons with lived experience of cancer.

An Oversight Committee was established to guide this work and ensure that the Yukon First Nations Cancer Strategy reflects the priorities of Yukon First Nations.

Why we need a Yukon First Nations Cancer Strategy

The Yukon First Nations Cancer Strategy has two main purposes.

First, it demonstrates the collective effort of Yukon First Nations actively working to improve the cancer care pathway. The strategy is informed by several years of engagements with directors and managers of Yukon First Nations health, wellness and social departments, Elders and Yukon First Nations citizens with lived or living experience of cancer. The actions outlined in the Yukon First Nations Cancer Strategy represent consensus among Yukon First Nations and serves as a guiding document for change.

Second, this is the first cancer care strategy developed specifically for the Yukon. It creates an opportunity to incorporate Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, doing and being into health service. The action items presented in this strategy are intended to help guide partners in delivering quality health care that incorporates both traditional and western approaches.

This work is intended to serve as a foundation for future cancer strategies and health plans in the Yukon. By launching the Yukon First Nations Cancer Strategy, Yukon First Nations voices are placed at the forefront of decision-making and culturally appropriate solutions can be considered and integrated into future organizational plans.



Photo: GBP Creative

OUR WAY

The “Our way” visual was created to ensure that Yukon First Nations worldviews and ways of knowing, doing and being are reflected in this work.

At its core, this Strategy is about the people, communities and support circles that are impacted by every cancer diagnosis. This piece serves as a reminder of the knowledge shared by communities and the wisdom of Elders that informed its development.

The strong, layered circle represents the balance of Traditional and Western ways into a cohesive path of cancer navigation.

Each element of the visual was intentionally chosen by the YFNCCP Oversight Committee and aligns with the priorities of Yukon First Nations moving forward.



Connection to the Land

The colours reflect the Yukon’s natural landscape and the connection that Yukon First Nations Peoples have to the land. Crowberry is an example of the nourishment offered by the earth. Shades such as water, sun, and spruce bough represent time spent on the land, along with familiar and comforting shades of black spruce and sweet grass. Grizzly and antler symbolize strength and resilience. They also reflect the rhythm of wildlife and the changing seasons and phases of life, such as the shedding of antlers in the fall and hibernation in the winter.

Traditional Knowledge

Inspired by beadwork, this image is a reminder of the vital Traditional Knowledge passed down through generations. The beaded centrepiece shows that people are not alone as they move through the stages of a cancer journey. Smaller individual pieces come together to form a whole, illustrating how different components of Traditional and Western medicine can combine to develop a treatment program.

The two people can represent different types of support, such as family members, an Elder and youth, or a patient and health care provider.

Stronger Together

An unbroken circle illustrates that we are stronger together. It represents family, friends, peers, co-workers and community surrounding a person during their cancer journey. Each figure is shown in a different color to symbolize that individuals can offer something different and can offer support in their own way.

Language

A beaded outer circle surrounds the image, reflecting Indigenous wellness and health through the traditional languages of Yukon First Nations. Handed down by Elders, language is deeply woven into culture. The traditional languages embedded in this artwork signify the inclusion of this vital link.

Despite the history of repression, the preservation and revitalization of languages of Yukon First Nations is evidence of great resilience, strength, ongoing healing and overall wellness.

We are grateful to the Knowledge Keepers, Elders, linguists, language revitalization programs and heritage teams who provided translations for this piece, and their continued commitment to language revitalization in the Yukon. Read clockwise, the words “Our Way” are presented in Kaska, Northern Tutchone, Gwich’in, Tāgish, Southern Tutchone, Upper Tanana, Hän and Lingít languages.

Wholistic Approach

The balance of wellness and healing showcases the importance of mental, emotional, spiritual and physical wellbeing. The circle shows that connection to healing during illness, as well as to preventative care and overall health throughout our lives.

Cultural Values

The cultural safety ring speaks to the competence and importance of Indigenous cultural values, and the safety they bring in the context of cancer navigation.

Typical Western health care settings may include scenarios that, for many First Nations, could work in opposition to healing. It is imperative to recognize the cultural values, traditional knowledge and health practices of the diverse First Nations in the Yukon. This approach to care must be honoured and be an option at every stage the journey.

DECLARATION

Together, as partners, we are committed to upholding the vision of this Strategy by working collectively to improve the experiences of Yukon First Nations people affected by cancer, improve outcomes for those living with cancer and reduce the burden of cancer in our communities.

As Yukoners and leaders, we acknowledge the systemic barriers and racism that contribute to inequities for Yukon First Nations across the entire cancer pathway, from prevention and screening to treatment, survivorship and end-of-life care. We acknowledge the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization that have shaped health outcomes,

experiences in the health care system, and access to care.

We are committed to embedding cultural safety in all aspects of cancer care and acknowledge the sacred and traditional healing practices in Yukon First Nations and Indigenous Peoples.

The Yukon First Nations Cancer Care Strategy is a living commitment that will grow, adapt and strengthen through the active participation of leaders and communities. We commit to being accountable to Yukon First Nations patients, families and communities through the implementation of this Strategy.



Maria Benoit

Kaa Shaadé Hení Maria Benoit,
Carcross/Tagish First Nation



Barb Joe

Dän nätthe äda Kh'úkhjá (Barb Joe),
Champagne & Aishihik First Nations



Robert Dickson

Kwänathi inlj (Chief) Robert
(Bob) Dickson, Kwanlin Dün First Nation



Chief Sean (Uyenets'echia) Smith,
Kwanlin Dün First Nation



Stephen Charlie

Chief Stephen Charlie,
Liard First Nation



Russell Blackjack

Chief Russell Blackjack,
Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation

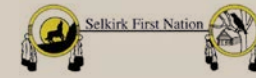


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Chief Dawna Hope,
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Chief Dylan Loblaw,
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Pauline Frost

Chief Pauline Frost, Chair
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Sarah Harison

Sarah Harison,
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Erin McQuaig

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Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in



Chief Bessie Chassé,
White River First Nation



Sudip Ranade

Dr. Sudip Ranade,
Chief Medical Officer of Health



Pamela Hine

Pamela Hine,
Yukon Hospital Corporation

Erin McQuaig

Deputy Chief Erin McQuaig, Chiefs
Committee on Health Board Member

Doris Bill

Doris Bill, Health Transformation Advisory
Committee Member

Derek Bryant

Dr. Derek Bryant, President,
Yukon Medical Association



OUR VISION

Improved experiences and outcomes for Yukon First Nations people and communities on their cancer journey.

GOALS

All actions identified in this strategy were developed in support of the following goals:

Self Determination

Yukon First Nations guide improvements in cancer care and cancer outcomes for themselves and their communities through strong and true partnerships with other health system partners.

Cultural Safety

Yukon First Nations people receive cancer care services, from awareness and prevention through to survivorship and end-of-life, in a system where practitioners are self-aware of their position of power and safety is defined by those receiving care, not those who provide it.

Equitable access to care

Yukon First Nations have access to the screening services and cancer care they need in a timely manner.

CANCER CARE PATHWAYS: STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Five strategic priority areas for action have been identified, with each outlining specific objectives and corresponding actions for implementation.

1 Effective
Partnerships

2 Knowledge
Development

3 Awareness and
Prevention

4 Screening and
Early Detection

5 Navigating
the System

Effective Partnerships

Objective 1.1. Coordination between Yukon health system's cancer care providers and jurisdictional partners.

- 1.1.1. Leverage partnerships with jurisdictions and cancer care organizations to align with national standards, integrate emerging evidence and research, and share knowledge and resources to improve cancer care outcomes for Yukon First Nations.
- 1.1.2. Ensure that Yukon First Nations perspectives on health and wellness are upheld and respected when in the design, delivery and evaluation of cancer care in the territory.

Objective 1.2. Partners are meaningfully engaged in the implementation and evaluation of the Strategy.

- 1.2.1. Establish and nurture a steering committee for the implementation of this Strategy.
- 1.2.2. Communicate and champion the strategy with relevant Yukon health system partners (i.e., Government of Yukon, Yukon Hospital Corporation, Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon Medical Association, Yukon Registered Nurses Association) and federal partners (i.e., Indigenous Services Canada).

Photos: Dan Carr

Knowledge Development

Objective 2.1. Yukon First Nations' cancer data is collected and reported through a collaborative approach that meets the needs of Yukon First Nations communities and those organizing and providing health services.

- 2.1.1. Develop a shared data governance model between Yukon First Nations, Council of Yukon First Nations, Government of Yukon and Yukon Hospital Corporation for the collection, interpretation and reporting of Yukon First Nations specific cancer data.
- 2.1.2. Establish a Data Advisory Committee consisting of representation from Yukon First Nations, Council of Yukon First Nations, Government of Yukon, and Yukon Hospital Corporation to steward ongoing data initiatives.
- 2.1.3. Ensure cancer surveillance, research and the associated methodologies are informed by the needs of Yukon First Nations.
- 2.1.4. Ensure that the principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP®) are implemented when collecting, using, and sharing Yukon First Nations cancer data and information, and that partners working with this data have OCAP® training and understand the importance of Yukon First Nations data sovereignty and data governance.

Objective 2.2. Knowledge exchange strengthens a shared understanding of Yukon First Nations' cancer experiences and concerns.

- 2.2.1. Co-develop information exchange processes and communication tools with Yukon First Nations and health system partners to ensure their cancer related concerns and information needs are understood and meaningfully addressed.
- 2.2.2. Investigate the environmental contributors to cancer risk among Yukon First Nations and strengthen knowledge-translation efforts to support decision-making and community awareness.
- 2.2.3. Create meaningful opportunities for Yukon First Nations people to share their cancer experiences and Traditional Knowledge, and ensure this knowledge is respectfully mobilized to inform evidence-based decision making across cancer care, research, and policy.

Objective 2.3. All healthcare providers in Yukon are equipped with knowledge of Yukon First Nations culture, history and lived experiences to support culturally safe care.

- 2.3.1. Build upon Yukon First Nations' feedback and direction from the Putting People First report to address systemic racism in the healthcare system and implement cultural safety and humility into cancer programs and services.
- 2.3.2. Ensure healthcare providers have the appropriate training on Yukon First Nations (i.e., Yukon First Nations 101 Training) and implement recurring education on this topic.
- 2.3.3. Incorporate the voices of people with lived experiences when developing Yukon First Nations training content.
- 2.3.4. Support healthcare providers to understand, respect, and respond to Yukon First Nations' requests for use of traditional medicine, spiritual practices, and cultural care, and promote collaborative approaches that integrate these practices into individualized wholistic care plans.



Photo: Dan Carr



Awareness and Prevention

Objective 3.1. Yukon First Nations people have the knowledge and resources to reduce their risk of cancer

- 3.1.1. Co-create culturally relevant, evidence informed materials that increase the awareness of cancer, including risk factors, and common signs and symptoms.
- 3.1.2. Co-develop cancer prevention programs, continuous cancer-education resources, and wholistic wellness campaigns that reflect Yukon First Nations' worldviews aspects of wellness, including targeted initiatives to increase cancer prevention and awareness among men.
- 3.1.3. Increase training opportunities for healthcare providers and Yukon First Nations health, wellness and/or social departments to strengthen their ability to recognize and identify cancer signs and symptoms, leading to earlier detection and improved outcomes.
- 3.1.4. Increase access to Government of Yukon's smoking-cessation programs within communities and co-develop culturally grounded delivery approaches that reflect Yukon First Nations' worldviews.
- 3.1.5. Building upon action item 2.2.2., work with federal and territorial partners to create resources, supports, and remediation opportunities to reduce exposures to known and identified environmental carcinogens.

Photo: Archbould.com

Screening and Early Detection

Objective 4.1. Ensure equitable access to cancer screening in Yukon.

- 4.1.1. Explore opportunities to bring screening services closer to communities.
- 4.1.2. Work with federal partners at Non-Insured Health Benefits to improve medical travel policies and reduce barriers for Yukon First Nations accessing cancer screening services.
- 4.1.3. Evaluate existing cancer screening programs, identify barriers to participation, and collaborate with health-system partners to act on the findings.
- 4.1.4. Expand screening-reminder program to reduce missed appointments and streamline rebooking process for clients.

Objective 4.2. Increase Yukon First Nations awareness and participation in cancer screening.

- 4.2.1. Develop organized cancer screening programs in Yukon starting with colorectal, cervical and breast cancers.
- 4.2.2. Co-develop an annual cancer-screening campaign tailored to Yukon First Nations and create culturally relevant educational resources that encourage screening participation and increase awareness of eligibility.

Objective 4.3. Access to culturally safe, trauma-informed cancer screening in Yukon.

- 4.3.1. Co-develop principles of a culturally safe, trauma-informed screening approach that will be applicable to other healthcare services in Yukon.
- 4.3.2. Co-develop and implement a culturally safe, trauma-informed screening practice.

Photo: Dan Carr



Photo: Mikayla Ericsson



Photo: GBP Creative

Navigating the System

Objective 5.1. Yukon First Nations people have access to the cancer care services they need and know where to find them.

- 5.1.1. Produce an easy-to-navigate process map to guide clients through the cancer care journey; include information and resources for British Columbia and Alberta and make this resource available in both online and print formats.
- 5.1.2. Work with Yukon Hospital Corporation to prioritize the availability of a Cancer Care Navigator position at Whitehorse Hospital and increase Yukon First Nations' awareness of this service.
- 5.1.3. Work with federal partners to explore in-territory community support services and positions for navigating the cancer journey, advocating for patients, assisting with Non-Insured Health Benefits and medical travel claims, and escorting clients.
- 5.1.4. Develop medical lodging facilities in Whitehorse and Vancouver to provide safe, supportive accommodations for patients required to travel for cancer care.

Objective 5.2. Establish patient advocacy, outreach and resources in Yukon First Nations communities

- 5.2.1. Build upon best practices from other jurisdictions to support community-level patient advocacy that improves people's ability to access and navigate the healthcare system.
- 5.2.2. Increase awareness and improve communication about the outpatient services available to cancer patients at Yukon Hospitals (e.g., mammography, colonoscopy, cancer care treatments), and support services available to patients and families (e.g., First Nations Health Programs, and patient navigation).

Photo: Dan Carr



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our sincere gratitude to the many partners and individuals who contributed their time, knowledge and commitment throughout the development of this project. Their collaboration and support have been essential in shaping this strategy. We especially acknowledge and thank the following self-governing Yukon First Nations and key organizations for their leadership, guidance and participation:

- Carcross/Tagish First Nation
- Champagne and Aishihik First Nations
- First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun
- Kluane First Nation
- Kwanlin Dün First Nation
- Liard First Nation
- Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation
- Ross River Dena Council
- Selkirk First Nation
- Ta'an Kwäch'än Council
- Teslin Tlingit Council
- Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in
- Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation
- White River First Nation
- Council of Yukon First Nations
- Yukon Hospital Corporation
- Government of Yukon

We offer heartfelt gratitude to the Elders and Cancer Survivors who have shared their stories, experiences and wisdom. Their courage, resiliency and strength, illuminate a path toward a stronger and more compassionate future for cancer care in the Yukon.

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