



March 6, 2014

Advancing Cancer Control for First Nations and Métis Peoples is Focus of New Partnership

For the first time, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN), the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency are all working together to advance cancer care and services for people in the province.

“In Saskatchewan the cancer journey of First Nations and Métis people often crosses many components of health systems, multiple providers, geographic locations and cultures,” said Bev Whitehawk, Director of Primary Health Care with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. “We want to ensure that we are addressing the gaps that exist as patients receive necessary care and services and we can’t accomplish this alone.”

The three-year \$1.07 M project which is funded by the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer will see the partners review current cancer surveillance systems and best practices that will help determine a method for identifying Status First Nations and Métis peoples within the healthcare system. The initiative will include creating a framework for the use of data to support care and then piloting it in the English River First Nation Health Clinic, Ochapowace First Nation, Battleford Tribal Council- Indian Health Centre and registered citizens of Métis Nation-Saskatchewan.

“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 Saskatchewan and across Canada.”

Saskatchewan is one of nine jurisdictions working with the Partnership to improve the quality of the cancer journey for First Nations, Inuit and Métis patients. In Saskatchewan the focus is on residents of rural, remote and isolated communities.

“Together with our partners from FSIN and the Cancer Agency we felt it was important that we create a plan to address the issues and the overall health of our peoples,” said Sandra Youngchief, Director of Health for Métis Nation-Saskatchewan. “Our goal is to reduce the burden of cancer in First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan by creating a surveillance system that will achieve the best outcomes and effectively advance cancer control.”

“Effective cancer surveillance is essential to monitoring population health and planning appropriate programs and services,” said Riaz Alvi, Provincial Leader of Epidemiology and Performance Measurement for the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. “By hearing directly from First Nations and Métis people about what they need and want, we can create a surveillance system that helps us to deliver information that is specific and valuable to these populations.”

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