

Conversation on Cancer
Part II

March 2, 2009
Council of Yukon First Nations

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Executive Summary

On Monday, March 2, 2009, representatives from the Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon First Nation Health and Social Directors, the Canadian Cancer Society and other health care and government stakeholders met to discuss cancer and the needs of the First Nation population in Yukon. The objective was to build upon the recommendations outlined in the report, *Conversations on Cancer, Part I*, which were the results of the October 2007 workshop.

During the 2009 workshop, participants reviewed the findings of the October 2007 report and identified key topic areas that would become the focal point for discussion. Concerns from across the territory were shared and strategies for cancer screening, prevention and awareness were discussed.

This report provides the necessary background information and framework for future work in this area. The participants recommend that immediate action be taken to create the partnerships necessary to implement changes to cancer prevention, awareness and screening to ensure that Yukon's First Nation population is better served.

Methodology

Through the guidance of the workshop facilitator, Mary Jane Jim, the participants completed a visual interactive process to produce the results outlined in this report. The format for the workshop was as follows: (1) discussion of expectations; (2) identification of problems; (3) ranking of identified problems and expected solutions; and, (4) creation of a framework for future work.

The first three phases required considerable brainstorming, particularly phase three. Phase three was structured using a four part system defined by (1) current situation; (2) desired situation; (3) obstacles and questions; and, (4) suggested solutions.

A group evaluation was conducted at the end of the workshop and there was unanimous consent that the group had achieved their expectations and was satisfied with the work that was accomplished. This report presents those findings.

Background

Conversations on Cancer, Part I

As outlined in the report, *Conversations on Cancer, Part I*, in October 2007, representatives from the Canadian Cancer Society, Yukon First Nation health coordinators and other stakeholders met to discuss the needs of the Yukon First Nation population and their concerns with regard to cancer in Yukon.

During the 2007 workshop, participants reviewed the current status and the existing resources for prevention, diagnostics, cancer care and overall support for First Nation communities in Yukon. Concerns were shared and participants identified key areas where more needs to be done to support the health of the communities, to provide adequate care and to support individuals and families burdened by cancer.

During the 2007 workshop, participants agreed on the following recommendations:

- 1) increase investment for research, surveillance and data collection in Yukon;
- 2) increase resources for cancer prevention and health promotion;
- 3) increase support for palliative patients, their caregivers and families;
- 4) create meaningful partnerships; and,
- 5) develop a comprehensive cancer strategy for Yukon and other northern regions.

During the 2007 workshop, participants suggested the following specific actions:

- 1) circulate the *Conversation on Cancer, Part I* report to appropriate government representatives and stakeholders;
- 2) involve the Canadian Cancer Society in promoting awareness for cancer and prevention in First Nations communities;
- 3) Canadian Cancer Society should organize workshops on cancer and cancer prevention for frontline workers and practitioners; and,
- 4) representatives from the Canadian Cancer Society, First Nation health coordinators and other stakeholders should form a committee that will evaluate the next steps.

Upon review of the 2007 report, the 2009 workshop participants identified that the primary reason why the initiatives outlined in *Conversation on Cancer, Part I* have not been implemented is lack of funding and human resources

Initial Partnerships

Council of Yukon First Nations

The Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) is the central political organization for the First Nation people of the Yukon. It has been in existence since 1973 and continues to serve the needs of First Nations within the Yukon and the MacKenzie delta.

The Council was formed under the *Societies Act of the Yukon* and operates under a constitution which has been adopted by its member First Nations at a General Assembly. At present, the Council of Yukon First Nations is made up of 10 Yukon First Nations: the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the Teslin Tlingit Council, the First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun, the Selkirk First Nation, the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, the Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation, the Ta'an Kwach'an Council, the Kluane First Nation, the Carcross/Tagish First Nation and the White River First Nation. Four other First Nations in the Yukon Territory, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, Liard First Nation, Kwanlin Dun First Nation, and Ross River Dena Council have chosen to work independently of CYFN at the present time.¹

Canadian Cancer Society

The Canadian Cancer Society was founded in 1938. It is a national, community-based organization of volunteers whose mission is to eradicate cancer and enhance the quality of life for people living with cancer. The Canadian Cancer Society invests in outstanding cancer research, provides reliable information on all cancers, delivers community-based support programs and leads cancer prevention initiatives. The society relies on the generosity of donors, corporate supporters and volunteers to achieve its mission.²

1 Council of Yukon First Nations: www.cyfn.ca.

2 Canadian Cancer Society's: www.cancer.ca.

The Canadian Cancer Society has a regional office in Whitehorse, Yukon and a presence in community health clinics through the distribution of brochures and cancer-related materials. The Canadian Cancer Society in Yukon works to advocate on behalf of Yukoners to the territorial government, and provides support to cancer patients and their families through community initiatives like Relay for Life, an overnight cancer fundraiser that honours cancer survivors.

Community Information

As of June 2008, Yukon's population was 33,294, with 25.9 percent identifying as aboriginal.³ There are fourteen First Nations in the Yukon Territory, eleven of which have signed self-government agreements with the Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada.

The Canadian Cancer Society estimates that in 2008, 110 Yukoners were newly diagnosed with cancer.⁴

³ Yukon Bureau of Statistics: <http://www.eco.gov.yk.ca/stats/>

⁴ Canadian Cancer Society/National Cancer Institute of Canada's report entitled, *Canadian Cancer Statistics 2008*, p 17.

Expectations for the Workshop

The preliminary discussions at the workshop provided the group with insight into each individual’s expectations for the day. Expectations ranged from those looking to develop a strategic framework to those looking for information on cancer services, health promotion and specific issues, to those with concerns about cancer in Yukon.

A consensus was reached and participants agreed to focus on the development of a strategic framework. As discussed, topics to be addressed within the strategic framework included:

- specific goals and timelines;
- the priorities outlined in *Conversation on Cancer, Part I*;
- the creation of meaningful partnerships and collaborations;
- targeted health promotion and cancer prevention for Yukon First Nation communities;
- measurable outcomes; and,
- the identification of constraints and restrictions to the process.

Building a Strategic Framework

In reference to the background and guidelines identified in the *Conversation on Cancer, Part I*, the participants of the 2009 workshop, narrowed the discussion to the key issues of screening, prevention and awareness for First Nation people.

The following chart identifies the initial concerns and comments the workshop participants had for the key issues of screening, prevention and awareness.

Key Issues: initial concerns and comments		
Screening	Prevention	Awareness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better screening • increased helicobacter pylori (h-pylori) screening • increased colon screening • screening for early detection • assess kinds of cancers within the communities • early detection • how can we increase or have doctors take notice of patient concerns • identify specific cancers • have screening process in place • information about screening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • environmental cleaning of radioactive sites • regular water testing in communities • increased palliative care • harm reduction • education and awareness around the types of cancer in the community • how to recognize the symptoms of different types of cancer • new scientific facts about cancer taught in communities • education in schools, especially younger children • increase awareness on the role of genetics in cancer prevention • look at other resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better access to fruits and vegetables for a fair price • training and teaching for communities on how to prepare healthier meals • increase healthy living through diet and exercise • nutrition • healthy eating habits • maintain a healthy diet and active lifestyle • promotion and tools for physical activity • target healthy living – food budget • awareness of unhealthy foods • awareness of healthy eating • train two people to teach awareness and find funding • tobacco • healthy eating (target the schools, parents, children) • physical activity • decrease tobacco use – especially among youth • causes of cancer such as smoking, helicobacter pylori, healthy eating, how to prevent, getting cancer

Building upon the group's comments and concerns relating to screening, prevention and awareness, participants were asked to further develop these ideas through a brainstorming session that involved: (1) current situation; (2) desired situation; (3) questions/obstacles; and, (4) suggested solutions. The end result of this brainstorming session was the development of a chart that provides a strategic framework for further exploration of the each topic.

Screening

What is the current situation of cancer screening in Yukon First Nation communities?

- misdiagnosis occurs due to negative perceptions and/or prejudice
- patients are not going to the doctor/nurse
- patients are intimidated by health centre staff
- screening is reactive and not proactive
- there are confusing guidelines as to whether genetic testing should be done
- the process of ultrasound, mammogram, biopsy takes too long
- screening is done for limited and specific types of cancer only
- there is a communication barrier because practitioners do not speak native languages
- health care professionals do not seem to be listening to the patients or addressing their needs

What is the desired situation for cancer screening in Yukon First Nation communities?

- easily accessible screening
- more awareness of screening in the communities so people know when to get tested
- barrier-free health care clinics in the communities
- doctor/community nurse house calls
- Yukon First Nations should have a central health care centre
- central lab in Whitehorse to do more testing here in Yukon to improve the timeframe for diagnosis and screening
- all community members should have access to health care
- more awareness on what to get screened for both patients and physicians
- increase the cultural awareness of practitioners
- all patients should get listened to (e.g., no prejudice because someone is intoxicated)
- better dental care (e.g., there is no regular dental care in Old Crow)
- no inappropriate screening

What are the obstacles to improving cancer screening in Yukon First Nations communities?

- lack of funding for testing, lab facilities, doctors
- high turnover of nurses
- getting Yukon residents interested in health matters
- not a priority to political leaders
- reactive versus preventative planning
- not enough manpower at First Nation level
- health care deals with the current crisis rather than prevention

- not enough doctors
- nurses do not seem to want to send patients to Whitehorse
- systemic racism
- potential legal restrictions of home visits

What are the solutions to improving cancer screening in Yukon?

Creating Partnerships	Training	Awareness	Access
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use partnerships (e.g., Canadian Cancer Society and Canadian Partnership Against Cancer) to develop population-based screening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase capacity for Yukon participation in cancer research (e.g. h-pylori) • incorporate training and education through Yukon College • get the community health representative program back on track and train workers to deal with these issues • have people to deal with cancer specific programs (e.g., toolkits for lay people) • more cross-cultural awareness for health care providers • home visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community-based prevention efforts (e.g., tobacco, vitamin D) • cross-cultural awareness on screening for the general public and health care providers • promote testing as a positive thing to change people's perception • create awareness among political leaders and the political will 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • examine access to care as a Yukon-wide issue • mobile screening or home-based screening • create opportunity for people to visit doctors more • expand the scope of role of the community nurse

Cancer Screening Framework

What?	Who?	With Whom?	When?	Comments
Creating partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council of Yukon First Nations • Canadian Cancer Society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nation Health and Social Directors • Government of Yukon • Arctic Health Research Network • Registered Nurses Association • Health Canada • Yukon Registered Nurses Association • Canadian Partnership Against Cancer • Chief Medical Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April 2009 - September 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create a working relationship • develop pilot projects
Training and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council of Yukon First Nations • First Nation Health and Social Directors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nation Health and Social Directors • YTG - Health Promotion • Arctic Health Research Network, YT • Yukon College • Yukon Medical Association • Canadian Cancer Society • BC Cancer Agency • Canadian Partnership Against Cancer • Chief Medical Officer • Yukon Registered Nurses Association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2009 pilot health and cultural awareness • March 2010 implement training 	
Creating awareness around screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council of Yukon First Nations • Canadian Cancer Society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nation Health and Social Directors • YTG - Health Promotion • Arctic Health Research Network, YT • Yukon College • Yukon Medical Association • Canadian Cancer Society • BC Cancer Agency • Canadian Partnership Against Cancer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April or May 2009 • May 2010 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need money to move forward and hire individuals - possibly through Arctic Health Research Network, YT and Council of Yukon

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Medical Officer 		<p>First Nations and the Canadian Cancer Society</p>
<p>Access to screening</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government of Yukon • Yukon Medical Association • Council of Yukon First Nations • Chief Medical Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yukon Medical Association • Canadian Cancer Society • Council of Yukon First Nations • Yukon First Nations Health and Social Directors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research and feasibility has to be done

Prevention

What is the current situation of cancer prevention in Yukon First Nation communities?

- not enough prevention cancer strategies and tools
- inadequate information about nutrition
- the current healthy living prevention tools are not integrated into the community very well (e.g., tobacco cessation and chronic disease)
- pamphlets and posters do not appeal to northern living and northern literacy levels
- First Nation Health and Social Directors have limited access to the school system (e.g., limited to 30 minutes a year in some communities)
- Mayo has good model of a women’s wellness clinic which is run by the nurses
- some communities have a good meals on wheels program
- the prevention materials are not culturally or traditionally focused

What is the desired situation for cancer prevention in Yukon First Nation communities?

- more access to school programming (e.g., a week long program with continuous messaging throughout the year)
- two or more trained people to do cancer prevention work in the communities
- regular water testing (full spectrum)
- community presentations on cancer prevention (e.g., using various medias like the new video conference system)
- food awareness information and how food works in your body
- ways to integrate prevention through partnerships and collaboration
- have government recognize prevention as a priority
- a collaborative model of health care
- access to fruits and vegetables at a fair price (e.g., government regulated or community greenhouses)
- encourage traditional foods as part of a healthy diet
- food security strategy in each community

What are the obstacles to improving cancer prevention in Yukon First Nation communities?

- money
- human resources
- policy and priorities of governments
- limited access to schools
- not knowing how to make healthy choices
- media marketing on junk food

- poor dietary choices at the community markets and schools
- no policy set to enable healthy choices
- access to traditional foods is declining (e.g., poor salmon run in 2008)

What are the solutions to improving cancer prevention in Yukon?

School Program	Policy	Creating People Capacity	Access to Funding	Awareness Campaign
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make a policy to ban junk food and pop in all schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advocate to government for a policy change to implement prevention programs • create access to affordable healthy foods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trained prevention staff with the resources to make a difference in the communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • under 2010 climate change funding apply for money for food security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information on healthy food choices in the communities

Cancer Prevention Framework

What?	Who?	With Whom?	When?	Comments
School program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council of Yukon First Nations • Yukon First Health and Social Directors • Canadian Cancer Society • Government of Yukon • Yukon First Nation Advisory Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals • Government of Yukon • School Councils • First Nation Education Liaison Workers • Community Nurses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April/May 2009 • pilot program for 2009/10 school year with broader program for 2011 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need education and health promotion
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council of Yukon First Nations • Canadian Cancer Society • Health Canada • Government of Yukon • Canadian Partnership Against Cancer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nation Health and Social Directors • Government of Yukon • Arctic Health Research Network • Health Canada • Yukon Registered Nurses Association • Canadian Partnership Against Cancer • Chief Medical Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2009, ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review policy
Creating people capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council of Yukon First Nations • Canadian Cancer Society • Health Canada • Government of Yukon • Canadian Partnership Against Cancer • YTG – Health Promotion • CYFN – Health Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nation Health and Social Directors • Government of Yukon • Arctic Health Research Network • Yukon Registered Nurses Association • Health Canada • YTG - Nurses • Canadian Partnership Against Cancer • Chief Medical Officer • Yukon College 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2009 with tangible results by May 2010 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • look at other models (e.g., the “Act Now” program in British Columbia)
Access to funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council of Yukon First Nations • Canadian Cancer Society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nation Health and Social Directors • Government of Yukon • Arctic Health Research Network • Health Canada • Canadian Partnership Against Cancer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As soon as possible and ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hire a fund hunter • look into climate change funding through Health Canada/INAC

<p>Awareness campaign</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council of Yukon First Nations • Canadian Cancer Society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nation Health and Social Directors • Government of Yukon • Arctic Health Research Network • Yukon Registered Nurses Association • Health Canada • Canadian Partnership Against Cancer • Chief Medical Officer • Yukon College 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a training session to create capacity and awareness with Canadian Cancer Society and make it First Nation relevant
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Awareness

What is the current situation of cancer awareness in Yukon First Nation communities?

- there is some awareness but mostly on specific diseases and things that relate to overall health but not specifically to cancer
- denial with smokers
- lack of information about possible cancer causing agents in Yukon (e.g., h-pylori, historic use of Agent Orange)
- information that gets back to the communities is not consistent
- not enough education and awareness on tobacco and alcohol
- a lot of stress and crisis in the communities
- when there are awareness programs in the community no one shows up

What is the desired situation for cancer awareness in Yukon First Nation communities?

- better informed people
- more programming for cancer awareness
- each First Nation needs to have a land-based treatment facility
- full spectrum water testing in the communities
- full spectrum soil testing in the communities
- trained people to do cancer awareness presentations
- relevant awareness materials that are reader friendly
- local media campaign

What are the obstacles to improving cancer awareness in Yukon First Nation communities?

- television is a good way to get the message out but we don not have access to programming or public service announcements in Yukon
- health is not a priority for First Nation communities
- First Nation communities are dealing with the reactionary problems and can not focus on prevention because it is a struggle just to get basic needs
- not enough manpower and existing community leaders already have too many meetings
- people in the communities lack motivation
- no trained workers

What are the solutions to improving cancer awareness in Yukon First Nation communities?

More resources	More research	Policy	Awareness campaign
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increased human and financial resources a trained worker in every community (e.g., this could be done through contracts) more involvement from the elders and traditional knowledge experts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yukon specific research initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> government policy to promote training Chief and Council to support and prioritize health issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> traveling road show/worker to provide service and awareness in each community focus the healthy lifestyles with a on the land message implement the Health Canada traditional food guide (but revised without milk)

Cancer Awareness Framework

What?	Who?	With Whom?	When?	Comments
More resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council of Yukon First Nations Health Commission Canadian Cancer Society Health Canada 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Nation Health and Social Directors Government of Yukon Arctic Health Research Network Health Canada Canadian Partnership Against Cancer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May 2009, ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> put toolkit together by 2010
More research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council of Yukon First Nations Canadian Cancer Society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Nation Health and Social Directors Government of Yukon Arctic Health Research Network, YT Health Canada Canadian Partnership Against Cancer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> April/May, ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assessment of existing information and environmental scan
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council of Yukon First Nations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canadian Cancer Society First Nation Health and Social Directors Government of Yukon Arctic Health Research Network Health Canada Canadian Partnership Against Cancer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May 2009, ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> politically sensitive
Awareness campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council of Yukon First Nations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canadian Cancer Society First Nation Health and Social Directors Government of Yukon Arctic Health Research Network Health Canada Canadian Partnership Against Cancer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Nation appropriate and updated information

Summary

The initial objectives of the Conversation on Cancer, Part II workshop were met. The priority areas of screening, prevention and awareness were identified and workshop

participants discussed the critical social, environmental and political issues related to each area as they pertain to First Nations populations in Yukon.

Most importantly, the workshop served as a vital first step in identifying the key components needed to meet the outlined objectives. Cancer prevention, awareness and screening in the north will not be successful unless all parties are involved in the creation of relevant projects.

Moving Forward

The workshop held on March 2, 2009, was an important first step in creating a committee to create a cancer strategy for Yukon. The following are the recommended next steps to move this process forward:

1) Disseminate the workshop findings

- Lori Duncan, Council of Yukon First Nations and Blake Rogers, Canadian Cancer Society, Yukon Region, will take the report to Canadian Partnership Against Cancer;
- Yukon First Nation Health and Social Directors will take report back to their communities; and,
- distribution of the report to the key stakeholders identified in the screening, prevention and awareness frameworks.

2) Create a taskforce and develop a territorial strategy

- Recruit membership from the identified partners in this report and formulate a committee to look at the priority areas.

3) Revisit issues not addressed on March 2, 2009

- Several important issues were identified during the workshop but not addressed due to time constraints. The group recommends that these issues be revisited with a facilitator to ensure the topic is covered in its entirety. These issues include:
 - the distinction between screening and diagnosis;
 - perceived prejudice and misdiagnosis specific to First Nations communities in Yukon; and,
 - dispelling misinformation about cancer amongst the First Nation population in Yukon.

The Council of Yukon First Nations is well positioned to take the lead on this project in Yukon with the full support and involvement of Yukon's First Nation Health and Social Directors, the Canadian Cancer Society and partners in the Government of Canada, the Government of Yukon and throughout the Yukon community.

Acknowledgements

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Canadian Partnership Against Cancer
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Canadian Cancer Society

List of Attendees

- Agnes Ball, Health and Social Director, Kaska Tribal Council
- Jody Butler Walker, Arctic Health Research Network, Yukon
- Lori Duncan, Health and Social Director, Council of Yukon First Nations
- Brendan Hanley, MD MPH, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Yukon
- Roberta Jules, Health and Social Director, Liard First Nation
- Norma Kassi, Arctic Health Research Network, Yukon
- Paula Pasquali, Director of Community Health Programs, Government of Yukon
- Phyllis Peter, Health and Social Director, Na-Cho Nyak Dun First Nation
- Marion Primozić, Health Promotion Facilitator, Champagne & Aishihik First Nations
- Kim Mia-Pronovost, Health Canada
- Blake Rogers, Health Promotion Coordinator, Canadian Cancer Society (Yukon)
- Margaret Smith, Health and Social Director, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation
- Sharon Storoschuk, Health Promotion Manager, Canadian Cancer Society (Vancouver)

Facilitator

Mary Jane Jim

Opening and Closing Prayers

Mary Jane Jim

Report Preparation

Kari Johnston