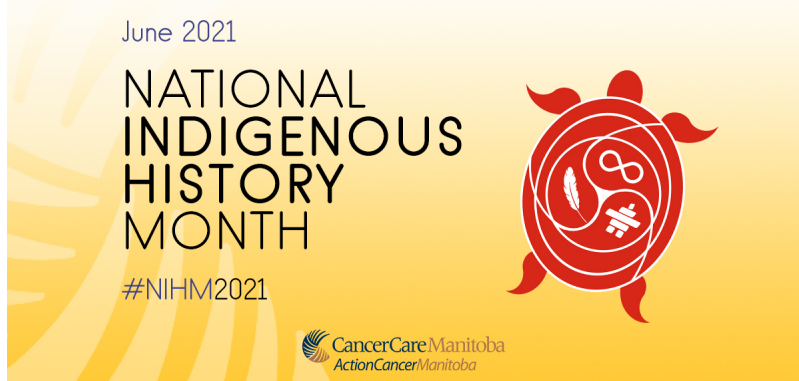


# First Nations, Métis and Inuit Community Connector Project Success Stories

*By CCMB Communications & Public Affairs*

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When you work at a community level within Indigenous communities you often look at health from an Indigenous holistic view. Therefore, you try providing resources for all aspects of the journey. Our community connectors provide a comfortable safe place for cancer patients to share and open up about all obstacles they are faced with. Sometimes it's providing support related to financial hardships, family dynamics, emotional needs or who to connect with at CancerCare Manitoba (CCMB). Having a local trusted person opens up these conversations. Community connectors learn the cancer journey from a community perspective and provide help in any way possible.

The community connectors are part of a project focused on access to cancer care for First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities in Manitoba and Kivalliq. The project is hosted through the Underserved Populations Program and funded by the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (CPAC). The community connectors receive training and support from the project coordinator. Currently there are 70 community connectors across Manitoba and 8 more community connectors from Kivalliq, Nunavut are being trained as well.

Having community connectors has already led to many positive outcomes. These are two stories that reflect the positive impact that community connectors have on cancer patients in their communities.

The St. Laurent Community Connector realized there was a need for transportation to and from appointments for patients. The community connector put out a call to local community members to see if anyone would be interested and available to volunteer their time and vehicle to help drive St Laurent cancer patients to and from appointments in Winnipeg. There were 5 drivers who came forward and asked to be on the contact list. Each driver had either a personal connection with cancer or was directly affected by cancer themselves, and wanted to help in any way possible. The community connector was able to help coordinate safe transportation to and from appointments for patients with the volunteer drivers. Through the COVID-19 Emergency Funds provided to CCMB by CPAC, CCMB was able to provide pre-purchased gas cards to support the transportation of cancer patients in need. This local community transportation for patients provided safe and affordable transportation for cancer patients during treatment.

In one First Nation community, the community connector program had trained a Home and Community Care nurse as a community connector. The nurse was able to take the training and learn more about the resources and services CCMB offers clients and their families. The nurse worked closely with a client receiving palliative care. During the pandemic this patient felt isolated and alone without being able to see her family. The community connector reached out to CCMB and applied for a virtual connection device for the client. CPAC had provided CCMB with devices to increase virtual connections for patients in the context of the pandemic. The community connector then reached out to the local health centre asking if they would help with the cost of wifi for the client, which was approved. With the device provided by CCMB through CPAC, the assistance of the community local health centre, and the work of the community connector, this patient was able to virtually connect with her family and health care providers.

The community connectors are providing essential information related to prevention and screening as well as supports to people in First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities who are accessing cancer care. This kind of project is vital for addressing health inequity in Manitoba and Kivalliq and working toward Priority 6 of the Roadmap to Cancer Control in Manitoba: Improve First Nations, Métis and Inuit Cancer Control and Outcomes.