

# Promising Practices for Strengthening Primary Care

## Cancer Screening Mammogram and FIT Project



### The challenge

**First Nations, Métis and Inuit have lower cancer screening rates compared to non-Indigenous populations.** This is due to the historical and ongoing impacts of anti-Indigenous racism and discrimination, access issues such as long travel distances, language barriers, and stigma and fear around screening.

### The promising practice

**A community-led public education campaign to increase uptake of cancer screening for breast and colorectal cancer.** The campaign included use of culturally inclusive, First Nations and Métis designed visual tools, education, and promotional efforts meant to reduce fear and stigma and travel support to make it easier to access screening.

### Example impacts

Implementation began in May 2024, and plans to spread throughout the region are underway. Impacts to date within two First Nations communities include:

- Increase in breast cancer and colorectal cancer screening rates. 100 percent of the people who were screened shared they would attend the service again if available.
- One community member felt safer and more comfortable having a cultural coordinator translate in Ojibway during her screening and expressed she would attend again.
- One participant reported she enjoyed the group mammogram experience and especially liked having someone else do the 3-hour drive, as it was much less stressful.
- Resources were utilized, such as:
  - Videos in English and Ojibway.
  - Breast cancer screening resources.
  - A translation tool to assist with mammogram appointments in diagnostic imaging.

**“Early detection is the best way to survive cancer. If you have any symptoms don’t be afraid or shy. If it is nothing, it’s great. If it is something, you caught it early. Best to deal with it early before it becomes a major problem.”**

- Colon cancer survivor



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## Keys to success

- **Funding:** An estimated \$500 per group of patients to travel to and from the screening.
- **Champions:** People within the All Nations Health Partners Ontario Health Team collaborating with the community to develop culturally safe and supportive cancer screening strategies.
- **Flexibility:** Adjustment to how cancer screening support is used to meet community needs for primary care.
- **Meaningful partnerships with communities and organizations:** Collaboration between Waasegiizhig Nanaandawe'iyewigamig, Kenora Chiefs Advisory, Sunset Country Family Health Team, and Lake of the Woods District Hospital helped overcome resource constraints.



## Lessons learned

- Streamline communication, improve staffing levels, and simplify processes (e.g., screening lists, automated reminders) to help prioritize screenings.
- Address infrastructure challenges and create contingency plans for any transportation issues.
- Develop clear, standardized pathways that outline steps to book and deliver screenings, as well as follow-ups to improve outcomes.

## How can I learn more?

Contact the project team.

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## Why was this summary created?

All Nations Health Partners Ontario Health Team Cancer Screening Group (as Sunset Country Family Health Team), participated in **Healthcare Excellence Canada's (HEC) Strengthening Primary Care (SPC) program**. SPC brought together 20 primary care organizations from across Canada to advance practices to improve access to safe, including culturally safe, team-based primary care.

This promising practice summary was co-produced with All Nations Health Partners Ontario Health Team Cancer Screening Group to help others learn about their work and generate discussion about how similar approaches could be adapted and applied elsewhere.

