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| Briefing Note | | **Date:**  April 2020 |
| **Title:** | Joint Cancer Care Ontario Indigenous Cancer Committee (JOICC) membership | |
| **Topic:** | Access to Indigenous Navigators during COVID-19 pandemic | |
| **Prepared by:** | Indigenous Cancer Care Unit, Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) | |

There are 10 Indigenous Navigators working across Ontario’s Regional Cancer Programs. This critical role provides First Nations, Inuit, Métis and urban Indigenous cancer patients and their families with support in navigating the extremely complex cancer system. The Indigenous Navigators are housed within the Regional Cancer Centres, which are themselves located in hospitals across the province.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has required the implementation of emergency measures which will impact the ways in which Indigenous Navigators are able to work alongside their patients. Specifically, hospitals have been forced to redeploy staff across units in order to provide support to necessary services. As staff working for the Regional Cancer Programs, the Indigenous Navigators are not exempt from this duty. Secondly, both hospitals and Regional Cancer Programs have implemented several precautionary measures intended to protect the health of both staff and patients. This includes strict limitations placed upon travel. The Indigenous Cancer Care Unit and Ontario Health have put similar measures in place.

The Indigenous Cancer Care Unit recognizes the need to account for the health and safety considerations resulting from the extenuating COVID-19 pandemic and associated response. We have communicated with each Indigenous Navigator, supporting the need to comply with the policies put forward by their hospitals during this time. We recognize this will result in a reduction in community engagements and related activities. We will work together to ensure that all previously committed engagement with community will be rescheduled as soon as it is safe to do so.

The Indigenous Navigators have informed the Indigenous Cancer Care Unit that – while limited – they are still able to connect with and provide guidance to First Nation, Inuit, Métis and Urban Indigenous cancer patients. Although policies are changing daily, some of the Indigenous Navigators are able to see patients who are currently staying in hospital. Others have been communicating and consulting via telephone or online communication services, such as Zoom and FaceTime.

Despite being asked to perform additional duties outside of their traditional roles, the Indigenous Navigators remain strongly committed to providing care for First Nations, Inuit, Métis and urban Indigenous cancer patients. Both leadership in their respective Regional Cancer Programs as well as the Indigenous Cancer Care Unit are equally committed to supporting the Indigenous Navigators in this critical work. As always, the Indigenous Cancer Care Unit is available to assist JOICC members at any time, including providing a connection to any of the Indigenous Navigators.

Indigenous Navigators can also be contacted directly:

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