

## Traditional Medicines

*(Although the Storywork and Dialogues videos and guides were developed with First Nations people, they may also resonate with experiences of Inuit and Métis people.)*

**The knowledge around ways of using Traditional medicines has been passed on to generation after generation. Elders and Traditional knowledge keepers are often the holders and protectors of this knowledge, gifting it to new generations. This knowledge is respected and highly valued. Traditional medicines should be respected, honoured and better understood by all people, especially those who work in a person’s circle of care.**

*“Doctor,’ I said, “What do you think about traditional medicines?’ He said, ‘Why, are you gonna be taking some Traditional medicines? Young man,’ he says, ‘you know what, you go for it,’ he said. ‘For you people you have your ways, I respect that. Do what you have to do.’ So I went for the Traditional way.” – Jerome Yellowdirt, Alexander First Nation, AB*

*“We don’t, as Western trained physicians, do not have a fundamental grasp of in terms of some of the more traditional healing methods.” – Dr. Tom Morris, Calgary, AB*

*“Yeah spruce gums and stuff like that. You could boil it, off the tree, you know, you take the thing off the rough one out, inside just like a, it’s just like a fat dark one, a white one, you scrape it out and boil it, that’s all gum. And then drain it out and you drink the juice about two full cups a day.” – Rosemary, Fort Good Hope, NWT*

*“When the time came for, for her to go, she knew. She knew when it was gonna happen... What we didn’t have was the culture. We didn’t have that in the hospital and we brought what we could. We brought water from the river and I brought cedar boughs and brought the ... devil’s club and to help her to, to clean her, to keep her clean, to keep her spirit moving.” – Maggie Patsey, Nisga’a Nation, BC*

### **What you should know**

- It’s important to give a person the feeling of control over their treatment including those that choose to include Traditional medicines as part or all of their treatment plan.
- Many of the Traditional medicines used today in the care setting are derived from plant sources. Knowledge of Traditional medicines has always been a sacred part of Indigenous culture. Traditional

knowledge keepers understand the importance of the medicines and carry the responsibility both to protect and share this knowledge.

- Traditional medicines include not only the medicines derived from the knowledge of Traditional plants but also the Traditional ceremonies that are unique to each Indigenous culture are also considered Traditional medicine.

### **To think about and act on**

- What was interesting about the video and this discussion?
- Do the stories and reactions reflect what you already know?
- What ideas are in the video to help talking about Traditional medicines and using them in cancer care?
- Are other ways Traditional medicines could be talked about and used in cancer care?
- What could you do if you or someone you care for wanted to use Traditional medicines?
- Who else could make things better where you are?

### **Suggested Practice: Consider if these would be helpful for a better cancer journey**

1. My health care providers took my family and my culture into account when helping me plan to go to the cancer centre or back to my community.
2. When I left my community or the cancer centre, my health care providers helped me plan who would be involved in my health when I arrived.
3. When I arrived in my community or at the cancer centre, the plan my health care providers helped me with worked out.
4. I believe that the health care providers in my community and in the cancer centre have communicated well.

#### **About the Transition Support Resources**

Eight Transition Support Resources were produced to promote dialogue and discussion about the cancer journey by families, communities, primary care providers, and cancer care providers in cities. They come from stories from 28 individuals representing the First Nations patient and family perspective and from responses from 17 primary and oncology care providers in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Northwest Territories.

#### **About the project**

The Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Health and Social Services and Cancer Control Alberta, Alberta Health Services, were the lead implementing partners working with CancerCare Manitoba, the British Columbia Cancer Agency Centre for the North, and Saint Elizabeth Health Care, as well as First Nations communities in the Northwest Territories, British Columbia, Alberta, and Manitoba. The project was funded by the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer.