



PRESS RELEASE

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THE NUNAVIK REGIONAL BOARD JOINS FORCES WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS TO END TUBERCULOSIS

Kuuujuaq, February 28, 2018 – The Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS) held a knowledge-exchange workshop on tuberculosis (TB) in Kuuujuaq on February 14-15. Participants from across the region made several proposals in support of the Public Health Department’s revised strategy to end tuberculosis in Nunavik.

The spread of tuberculosis in Nunavik continues to be a major concern for health officials and community leaders alike. The number of reported active TB cases has ranged between 30 and 40 per year between 2013 and 2017, with the disease striking in half of the 14 communities.

The NRBHSS is currently updating its action plan as are other Inuit regions in Canada. It has set its sights on eliminating TB cases in Nunavik by 2040.

“The regional action plans will be integrated so that we can all work towards the same goal, which is the elimination of TB,” said Dr. Françoise Bouchard, Director of the Nunavik Public Health Department, during her opening remarks. “What you will be discussing here is very important. It will help the regional board define its action plan. That is why you are here.”

Participants, including mayors, community-organization leaders, elders, medical doctors, nurses as well as government and public-health officials, examined several of the problems facing *Nunavimmiut* in dealing with TB.

“I’m still learning about TB. Not knowing enough about TB makes it scary. As community members, we need to have a better understanding,” the mayor of Kuuujuaq, Tunu Napartuk, said during the meeting. “As governments talk about eliminating TB, we need to take full advantage of this moment.”

The mayor of Kangiqsualujjuaq, Hilda Snowball, shared some of the challenges her community faced during a recent TB outbreak. “People who had TB were embarrassed. Some people didn’t even want to talk to those who had the disease,” Ms. Snowball said. “We held community meetings, we went on the radio. We informed people in our community. We can’t just depend on nurses and doctors.”

Several ideas for solutions were proposed by the participants, such as:

- A communications plan to inform *Nunavimmiut* about TB including the symptoms and the importance of getting tested.
- The need to have Inuit motivators in the communities who can bring information to their communities, speak on the radio, at events etc. and support people who need to take medication.
- Trained Inuit staff, with good working conditions, to be responsible for the TB action plan in each community.
- Positive messages to eliminate the stigma surrounding TB and having elders participate in information campaigns to talk about past TB experiences as part of a healing program.

“Tuberculosis is a serious issue. To date, it has mostly been the health sector that has been working on TB, but it will require much more if TB is to be eliminated. Together, we can and will eliminate TB,” said Lucy Tukkiapik-Carrier, Chairperson of the NRBHSS board of directors.

The regional board will launch a communication campaign next month underscoring World TB Day on March 24. Communities will be invited to mark the occasion by creating greater awareness about tuberculosis.

It is part of an ongoing communication strategy that will adapt to the needs of each community as the new NRBHSS action plan to eliminate TB unfolds over the coming weeks.

The Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services is a public agency created in 1978 under the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement. It is responsible for nearly the entire territory located north of the 55th parallel in terms of the provision of health and social services for the inhabitants of the 14 communities.

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