

A first year of delivering for Inuit families and building for the future

In OHSNI's first year as an activation partner for the Inuit Child First Initiative (CFI), we supported 29 successful applications from across eastern Nunavut – with an approval rate of 97%.

Grounded in *Jordan's Principle*, the CFI provides to Inuit children and youth individualized:

- Health supports
- Educational supports
- Social supports
- Medical travel/accommodation supports



Here are just two of this year's success stories:



The KUNILIUSIE family of Clyde River, Nunavut is one of dozens of Inuit families OHSNI supported over our first year as an activator-organization for the Inuit Child First Initiative (CFI).

Tijay Kuniliusie cannot walk or talk. She also has sight and hearing issues. Her mother Tina used to have to carry Tijay, soon to be 13, on her back everywhere the family wanted to go.

They applied and were approved for a wheelchair-accessible van in April 2020. Two months later, it was delivered to their home and life became instantly easier.

The family has since received specialized physiotherapy shoes and a walker for Tijay. And Tina reports Tijay is happier than ever to have the chance to live her best life.



The KIGLIK family of Iqaluit, Nunavut has faced more than its share of challenges over the years.

Four of the family's six kids require specialized medical care that can only be had in the south. And the prospect of splitting up the family multiple times a year was adding undue stress.

So, along with customized supports, OHSNI helped secure medial travel and accommodation assistance that allows the family to stay together.

Maureen Kiglik says she was struggling to be the kind of mother she wanted to be: "the kind that will do anything for her kids. My kids are my world."

"I'm so happy. We're given a second chance. If I need something, OHSNI and CFI are only a phone call away. If I need something, I can call anytime."



OHSNI IMPACT REPORT 2020-2021

Thriving Through COVID and Beyond



Message from OHSNI's Executive Director



"As someone who started her career in public health, the threat of a global pandemic has always carried weight. And, as the COVID-19 pandemic stayed with us in waves, I am extremely proud of how the OHSNI team responded. My thanks to each of our employees for their tireless dedication and commitment to delivering excellence for patients – whatever the challenges.

I am also deeply marked by the resilience of patients and their families. Through changing logistics, varying isolation requirements, evolving restrictions, and more, Northerners have responded overwhelmingly with stoic resolve, patience, and grace. The last year has been filled with reminders of why we are fortunate to serve Nunavummiut and their families, and why our work together remains so vital."

- DANIELLE DORSCHNER, OHSNI Executive Director

Message from OHSNI's Board Chair



"The COVID-19 pandemic has changed health care delivery in innumerable ways – perhaps forever. I would like to thank OHSNI's incredibly dedicated staff for their resiliency and change agility, and for not losing focus on patients and their families. The experiences of the last year establish OHSNI as a partner to Northerners and those who care for them for the long-term"

- HEATHER SHERRARD, BScN, MHA, Chair, OHSNI Board of Directors



Every Child Matters

Canada's dark history of residential schools came back into sharp focus this year. The discoveries of several mass graves shook Canadians' collective conscience and re-traumatized survivors and their families. These discoveries, and others since, remind us of the need to recommit to meaningful actions that will lead to truth, justice, and reconciliation. OHSNI remains a partner in this journey.

If a young person in your life can use a little extra support, get in touch to see if the Inuit CFI might be able to assist. Email Dheeksha at CFI@OHSNI.com today.



Continuing to serve young Nunavummiut patients & their families

A cancer diagnosis is always heavy, even scary. For many residents of Nunavut, the 'C-word' usually comes with the additional stress of having to leave home for treatment and care in southern hospitals.

One of those is the The Ottawa Hospital (TOH). One of Canada's largest teaching hospitals, TOH is home to the Ottawa Regional Cancer Centre and a key OHSNI partner - prior to and during the COVID era.

"So much of the direct, supportive care that was done in person went virtual," says Leslee Nizman, one of OHSNI's nurse case managers, of COVID-era changes. "It's certainly a whole team effort to ensure patient care comes first - over the last months especially."

Travelling from some parts of Nunavut to Ottawa is akin to travelling from Ottawa to Mexico for care. Increasingly, the focus has been to ensure care closer to home whenever possible.

Over the COVID period, that's meant greater reliance on telehealth and on training northern practitioners to administer anti-cancer drugs like Herceptin. Certain types of immunotherapies could also be delivered up north.

"Medical travel has an acute impact on patients and families. Whenever you can, you avoid it and use alternate means," says TOH's Gwen Barton. "We had strong partnerships going into COVID, and we worked with partners and patients to establish the relationships we needed to make the changes we needed to make, all while supporting patients through their journey."

People in Nunavut have some of the highest cancer rates in the world. So, the lessons learned during the COVID era could be applied long after.

Adjusting to COVID realities; providing care closer to home

Dr. Holden Sheffield has practiced pediatric medicine at Qikiqtani General Hospital in Iqaluit for five years. Over the past 19 months, he says "things have changed across the board." When it comes to the partnership for children's health, it's only grown stronger.



COVID considerations affected travel – everyone worked to avoid trips that weren't absolutely necessary. Virtual case rounds with subspecialists helped with the delivery of high-quality care closer to home. "Because of strong collaborations, patients got the care they needed in a timely fashion," says Dr. Sheffield. "Successful rural pediatrics programs require great relationships with tertiary centres. And OHSNI is an enabler to help ensure great, culturally appropriate care for our patients." He adds: "OHSNI care coordinators absolutely go above and beyond."

Dr. Sheffield hopes to keep more Nunavummiut patients close to home with help from partners in Ottawa – even after the pandemic ends eventually. And he says he's more confident than ever that can happen having pandemic-tested the collaborative model of care.



Seeing beyond the mask to interpret needs & ensure care

For OHSNI's medical interpreters, what Inuit patients say is one thing. The full tale is in what patients express with their non-verbal communications, too. COVID complicated that immensely.

There were additional screenings and hurdles to get into each appointment, added stress for patients and families, more time away from home.

Interpreter Nuqinga Korgak says he and his colleagues took what they've always done to the next level and worked through public health requirements like masks and distancing.

"We tried to be even more verbal with them, talking to them, encouraging them to ask questions," he says.

New rules meant some new realities, including more telephone consults. But one guiding principle remained.

"Our first thing is to make patients feel comfortable, safe, understood. When they know that, they feel relieved and become open to us, and their care journey will be smoother."



OHSNI's Research Initiatives

OHSNI is proud to collaborate on projects that contribute to increased cultural competency and broader agreement that everyone in Canada deserves access to top-quality medical care.

This year, our Gabrielle (Gaby) Jodouin and Danielle Dorschner co-authored a paper, which details the journey of Inuit cancer patients and the networks involved in their care.

Our interpreter team was also instrumental in this report's redaction. Their assistance with interviews helped ensure the Northerners' voice was accurately captured and that the needs and views of patients and families were, appropriately, at the centre of this project.

You can read the full paper [here](#).