

Aboriginal Cancer Care Unit

Honouring the **Aboriginal Path** of Well-being

NEWSLETTER • February 2007

Traditional Healing Meets Western Medicine



Joey Fox of the M'Chigeeng First Nation, is 37 and a father of two. As a patient in Toronto's Princess Margaret Hospital, he is no stranger to the cancer system.

In 2001, Joey discovered that he had leukemia, a blood cancer, and he spent many months in

the hospital battling the disease. After a successful bone marrow transplant from one of his brothers, Joey went into remission (a state where the symptoms disappear). Following this, he went on to help others understand cancer through his work at the Canadian Cancer Society and at Cancer Care Ontario's Aboriginal Cancer Care Unit. However, in September of 2006, Joey was told that the cancer was back, and spreading fast. This time, Joey decided that he would not rely solely on the help of nurses, doctors and drugs to chart his course to healing.

"Cancer Can Be Beaten" - Elder Willard Pine

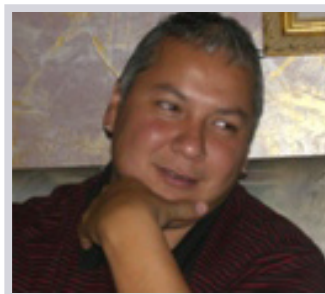
Joey was connected with Willard Pine, a healer from Garden River First Nation. Mr. Pine, who has worked with cancer patients for over 18 years, calls his kind of work Traditional Mental Health or Traditional Healing. Mr. Pine concentrates on the overall mental and spiritual health of the patient. He stresses that it is better to seek the help of a healer early on in the treatment, instead of waiting until the last minute. According to Mr. Pine, medicine comes in many forms. Even humour, talking, offering guidance, and teaching people in the ways of the mind and spirit are forms of healing.

Last December, Mr. Pine went to Princess Margaret Hospital to talk to Joey. He lit tobacco, considered a traditional medicine, in a quiet room, away from the hustle of the busy hospital ward. One of the things Mr. Pine told Joey is that people believe that cancer is a death sentence, creating a state of fear. But cancer can be beaten, says Mr. Pine. Friends, family, community and finding cancer early are all important for overcoming cancer.

Mr. Pine also stressed to Joey that his spirit is strong, and that worry and doubt would weaken him. He asked Joey to see himself giving his worries, his anger and his grief to the Creator, for it is the Creator, not we, who decides on all things. This shift in thinking, says Joey, lifted his spirit's sense of well-being and gave him renewed energy for his drug treatment.

Joey cannot say strongly enough how reaching out to healers and Elders has helped him. He hopes others will take steps to seek out such people, and that healers will make themselves known and available in all primary care facilities, hospitals and even funeral homes.

It is hard to pinpoint exactly how a meeting with a man like Willard Pine can help an individual with cancer, like Joey, but the effect of this Elder's visit was very positive. Both hospital staff and patients agree that an overall positive feeling and outlook is necessary for successful cancer treatment.



Joseph (Joey) Irving Fox Jr.

Waasaanese Nbiish

October 1, 1969 – February 19, 2007

Joey succumbed to a 5 year battle with leukemia at the Mindemoya Hospital in the loving arms of his family on February 19, 2007.

Joey is a community member of M'Chigeeng First Nation; he is the beloved father of Bryton and Christopher and beloved son of Joe and Grace Fox. He is also survived by brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and many other relatives and friends who loved him deeply.

People enjoyed Joey's presence because of his captivating humor and encompassing nature.

Joey started working at the Aboriginal Cancer Care Unit on August 17, 2004. Previously he worked at the Canadian Cancer Society. Joey was a dedicated and strong individual who promoted and educated the Aboriginal population about cancer. He was an advocate and taught communities about our traditional teachings tied to tobacco. He knew firsthand the impacts of diagnosis and treatment for cancer and this helped to inform the development of the Aboriginal Tobacco Strategy.

His enthusiasm for his work was reflected through his boys who used to ask him whether or not he was a cancer doctor. Joey's reply to them was "No – I work with tobacco – the kind you pray with to assist all of us in battling cancer."

We say goodbye to, but will never forget, our dear friend and colleague Joey 'Sonny Boy' Fox.

Combining mainstream and traditional health services: The Aboriginal Patient Navigator Program Pilot



The Aboriginal Patient Navigator Program aims to help patients and their families find their way through the Ontario cancer system. An individual Navigator works within a Regional Cancer Centre to assist Aboriginal patients coming through the system. This program is coordinated in partnership with the Juravinski Cancer Centre in Hamilton.

One current partnership is the Aboriginal Patient Navigator pilot – a one-year project running from September 2006 to October 2007 – at the Juravinski Cancer Centre in Hamilton. The Juravinski Cancer Centre was selected as the host site because it is located in Central West Ontario, where it serves close to 25,000 Aboriginal people living on and off reserve. The program is open to First Nations, Métis and Inuit patients.

Ms. Lee Styres-Loft was hired in September 2006 as the Aboriginal Patient Navigator for the Juravinski Cancer Centre's pilot project. Her role includes:

- helping patients and their families access services,
- educating, supporting and preparing patients for cancer care procedures,
- explaining terminology,
- helping patients fill out forms for benefits, and
- linking patients with Traditional Healers and Elders, if they wish.

The Navigator plays a central role in coordinating services for Aboriginal patients to help meet their physical, spiritual, mental and emotional needs at the Juravinski Cancer Centre. This service is valued by Aboriginal patients because they have an Aboriginal helper to talk to who understand their specific cultural needs.

For more information on how the Aboriginal Patient Navigator can help you or your family during your cancer journey, please call Ms. Lee Styres-Loft at the Juravinski Cancer Centre at 905-387-9711 ext. 63341.

Please place community contact information here.

Tell us what you think!

Please give us your feedback on our new newsletter. Or drop us a word if you have any story ideas or topics you'd like to see in future issues to:

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Resources

www.tobaccowise.com

Geared to Aboriginal youth to learn more about sacred tobacco and the dangers of commercial tobacco

www.mhp.gov.on.ca

Ministry of Health Promotion's home page with links to healthy eating/active living strategy, Active 2010 (sport and physical activity) and Smoke Free Ontario

www.cancer.ca

Follow links to learn more about leukemia and other cancers

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index_e.html

Find out the highlights of Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide by taking the Guided Tour. It will help you understand how much and what types of foods you need, as well as the benefits of eating well and being active.

If you are interested in any information or would like to find out more please feel free to contact our office.

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Take a look at our website for up-to-date information.

www.cancercare.on.ca
http://www.cancercare.on.ca/Index_AboriginalCancerStrategy.htm

JOACC PTO membership list

Nishnawbe-Aski Nation
Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians
Union of Ontario Indians – Anishnabek Nation
Grand Council Treaty #3
Independent First Nations
Métis Nation of Ontario
Ontario Native Women's Association
Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres

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Cancer Care Ontario is an umbrella organization that steers and coordinates Ontario's cancer services and prevention efforts so that fewer people get cancer, and patients receive the highest possible quality of care.