



**NWT Breast Health/
Breast Cancer Action Group**

Northern Women Helping Northern Women



February 2016

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- Canarctic Graphics
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STAGE IV - FINDING AND KEEPING HOPE

by Gillian Burles

When I saw her standing there on my doorstep, the sight of a ten-year survivor changed everything. Instead of feeling lost and alone, it felt like I was joining a team of survivors - we would all wear pink ribbons and get together once a year at fundraisers and toast each other's strength.

Fast forward 2.5 years, my cancer spread to my bones and my prognosis with Stage IV cancer was an average survival rate of 18-24 months. The support network virtually disappeared as the needs of newly diagnosed women were very different than the needs of women with Stage IV. I was alone again. Eventually I connected with another woman whose cancer had also progressed to Stage IV and we supported each other. We had open and frank emails about our fears and our intense sadness and grief up until her death. And then I was alone again. Eventually I found an online support group specifically for Advanced Breast Cancer. Once again, members of that group would die - a constant reminder of how deadly this disease is. Along the way I learned of two other women in Yellowknife who were living with Stage IV and we began informal support lunches so we could chat and share frustrations about side effects, symptoms, new treatments, strategies for dealing with healthcare professionals and on the darker days, talk about our fear of dying, leaving our loved ones alone and being unable to watch our children grow up. We joked about being the breast cancer dunces since we clearly did not get the survivor part right! It was a pleasure and a relief to talk to women who truly understood what living with Stage IV was like. Then one of the women's cancer progressed again, eventually taking her life and we were back to two people.

The peer support for women newly diagnosed with cancer is very strong and makes a real difference in how they cope and eventually move on with their lives. But for women with Stage IV, the support network is either weak or non-existent. And when we do find that support, there is always the chance that it will be ripped away. But as new treatment options arise, the numbers of people living with Stage IV are slowly rising. We are living with this disease for longer periods as it is slowly morphing into a chronic disease. Strengthening the support network for Stage IV survivors is more crucial than ever. I am sure, that as our numbers continue to grow, so will our support network.

NWT Cancer Statistics 2015

- ◆ Cancer is the leading cause of death in the NWT.
- ◆ Between 2001-2010, an average of 111 new cancer cases were diagnosed every year in the NWT.
- ◆ Cancer accounts for approximately 25% of all deaths in the NWT.
- ◆ The cancer incidence in the NWT is the same as in the rest of Canada. However colorectal cancer rates are higher among men and women in the NWT than in the rest of Canada.
- ◆ Breast, colorectal and lung cancers are the most commonly diagnosed cancers among NWT women .
- ◆ Colorectal, prostate and lung cancers are the most commonly diagnosed among NWT men.
- ◆ The incidence rate of cancer has been increasing but the mortality rate from all cancers has been increasing.

Source: H&SS. (2015). Cancer in the NWT 2001-2010

New Breast Cancer Peer Support Group in Yellowknife

Ever want someone to talk to but not receive advice? Or have you had conversations with someone that you felt a deep connection with? Often times, people diagnosed with a serious disease like cancer, just need to connect with someone else who is going through or went through similar experiences. This support is referred to as Peer Support. The NWT Breast Health/Breast Cancer Action Group is hosting a Peer Support Group for women that have been diagnosed with any type of cancer to talk to other women diagnosed with cancer. If you've received help from a peer and you are willing to share this experience or if you would like to receive this support, we hope to see you at our Peer Support Group. We will meet the last Wednesday of the month from 7pm-8pm. Meeting dates are: January 27, February, 24, March 30, April 27, and May 25., 2016



- ◆ Are you a woman diagnosed with cancer? Going through treatment? Completed your treatment?
- ◆ Would you like to connect with other women having similar experiences?

If you've answered "YES" to any of these questions, then a peer support group may interest you. It is an opportunity to share, learn, get support, and be with others who are on this journey. Starting January 2016, the NWT Breast Health/Breast Cancer Action Group invites you to join our monthly peer support sessions for women by women.

When: January 27th, 2016 7-8pm (first meeting)

Where: Aurora College, 54th Street, Room 309

How Often: Monthly (last Wednesday of each month)

For more information, contact:

ykpeergroup2025@gmail.com

To learn more about the NWT Breast Health/Breast Cancer Action Group visit:
www.breasthealthnwt.ca

Upcoming Events

- Peer Support Meeting: Last Wednesday of the month at Aurora College
- February 4—World Cancer Day - see you at the Field House Track
- NWT Breast Health/Breast Cancer Action Group Monthly Meetings in 2016: February 9, March 8, April 12, May 10, and June 14, 2016. The meetings begin at 5:30 pm in the boardroom of the Andesite building located at 3502 Racine Road in Yellowknife.

Looking to Donate

We, the NWT Breast Health/Breast Cancer Action Group, are seeking your financial support for the Living the Journey cancer survivorship project.

The Living the Journey project is a 1.5-year demonstration project to develop cancer survivor care plans and trained cancer support services to improve wellness and quality of life for male or female survivors of any type of cancer. A person is considered a cancer survivor from the time of diagnosis through the balance of his/her life. The demonstration project began October 1, 2015 and is taking place in Fort Good Hope and Fort Smith.

During 2014-2015 we undertook partnerships and activities in the two communities to develop a model for survivorship care planning for individuals who are undergoing or have completed treatment for cancer. This work included the development of survivor care plan templates for different cancers and training materials for local community support services. It was funded by the NWT Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) in combination with funds received from the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation – Prairies/NWT.

Our budget for the Living the Journey demonstration project to March 31, 2016 is \$100,000, of which we have received \$70,000 through our partnership with DHSS. We are therefore seeking \$30,000 to complete this year's activities. It is our expectation that once the survivor care plans and training of community support services have been piloted and finalized, DHSS will implement them as part of their standard programs and services for NWT cancer patients.

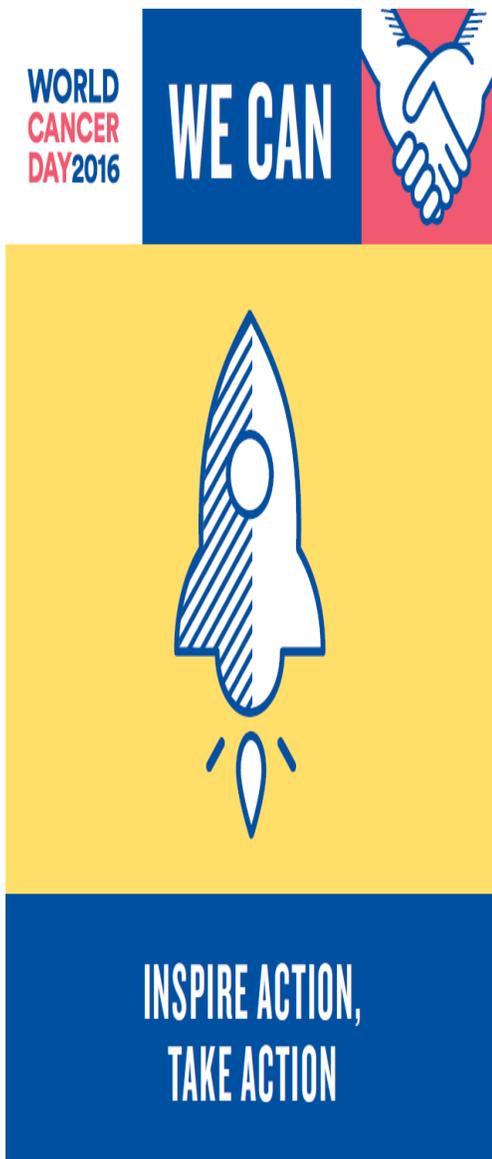
If you want to make a real impact, make us your charity of choice this year.



Contact Information

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ON 4 FEB
#WeCan1Can
#WorldCancerDay

WWW.WORLDCANCERDAY.ORG