

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **NWT-based project receives over \$2 million for HPV and COVID-19 vaccination research**

*Yellowknife (March 19, 2021)* The University of Alberta has received over \$2 million from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) to look at culturally appropriate ways to promote the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine in the Northwest Territories (NWT). The five-year project is led by the University of Alberta's Dr. Sangita (Gita) Sharma and Indigenous and Global Health Research Group and supported by NWT partners, Hotii ts'eeda: NWT SPOR SUPPORT Unit and the Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Health and Social Services.

The vaccination rate for HPV is 55% in the NWT, compared with up to 92% in other parts of Canada, in spite of it being the most common sexually transmitted infection and the main cause of cervical cancer. This project will conduct research two NWT communities to capture experiences and perspectives relating to the HPV vaccine. At the same time, the team will gather data on the COVID-19 vaccine, hopefully providing insight into increasing vaccine uptake territory-wide. Consultations will take place on the land through intergenerational activities such as hunting, beading and hide-tanning, using a research approach known as "Two-Eyed Seeing", which incorporates the strengths of both Indigenous and western ways of knowing.

The research will begin as soon as all approvals required from the University of Alberta and Government of NWT have been received.

*"Vaccine hesitancy research is timely, and Hotii ts'eeda is proud to support it. Ultimately, this work could reduce rates of cancer and improve vaccine uptake in general in the NWT."*

- John B. Zoe, Chair of Governing Council, Hotii ts'eeda: NWT SPOR SUPPORT Unit

*"We are really excited to continue to work with communities in NWT to further reduce risk of cancer and address communities' concerns and questions around vaccines, including COVID-19. "*

- Dr. Gita Sharma, Alberta Health Services Chair in Indigenous Health, University of Alberta

Inquiries can be directed to:

Rachel MacNeill  
Communications and Knowledge Translation Advisor  
Hotii ts'eeda: NWT SPOR SUPPORT Unit  
867-920-5517  
[rachelmacneill@tlicho.com](mailto:rachelmacneill@tlicho.com)

Ross Neitz  
Communications Associate  
Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry, U of A  
780-297-8354  
[rneitz@ualberta.ca](mailto:rneitz@ualberta.ca)