

Media Release



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FIRST NATIONS LEAD INITIATIVE TO IMPROVE ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION RATES IN ONTARIO

TORONTO – Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN), in partnership with Trillium Gift of Life Network (TGLN) is reaching out to First Nations across Ontario to raise awareness and encourage potential donors to register their consent for organ and tissue donation.

“It is truly inspiring to see such strong leadership from NAN and Grand Chief Stan Beardy for organ and tissue donation. This initiative by NAN will not only save and enhance the lives of First Nations people, but lives in all communities across Ontario,” said Frank Markel, President and CEO of TGLN. “We are all in this together. We urge all Ontarians to follow the lead of NAN and be part of the solution by helping us to improve organ and tissue donation rates in Ontario.”

TGLN and NAN have created a brochure to encourage organ and tissue donation in NAN’s 49 First Nations communities from the Manitoba border in the west to the Quebec border in the east— an area covering two-thirds of the province of Ontario. This is the first time in Canada’s history that a First Nations group has taken the initiative to create an awareness to promote organ and tissue donation.

“We’re committed to working with our partners, like the Trillium Gift of Life Network and NAN, to ensure we can increase life-saving transplants across Ontario,” said Health and Long-Term Care Minister David Caplan. “This brochure will help First Nations people as they face many new health challenges, including the increased need for organ donation, within their community and across the province.”

Today in Ontario there are 1,669 men, women and children waiting for an organ transplant.

“This partnership between Grand Chief Beardy and the Trillium Gift of Life Network demonstrates the value of working together to help improve the quality of life for First Nation people in Ontario,” said Brad Duguid, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. “Working together they have identified a need, and found a way to meet it.”

Stan and Nellie Beardy tragically lost their son Daniel in 2004. They made the decision to donate Daniel's organs and tissues to give the gift of life to people in desperate need of lifesaving transplants. Grand Chief Beardy is now spearheading the drive to educate First Nation people about organ and tissue donation. He encourages them to come forward to register their consent to donate.

"The opportunity to become organ and tissue donors may be new to many people of Nishnawbe Aski, but the value of sharing and helping others in need is deeply rooted in our spirituality and culture. I encourage everyone in our communities to seriously consider this wonderful opportunity to give the gift of life," said Grand Chief Beardy. "By becoming organ and tissue donors, we as First Nation people can give each recipient a second chance at life. This will help strengthen the resilience of our people while improving the health and well-being of our communities."

You can register your consent to donate your organs and tissue by visiting your local Service Ontario Health Card Services – OHIP office or Outreach Site where you renew your health card. You can also register by downloading and filling out a Gift of Life Consent Form from www.giftoflife.on.ca and mailing it to the address on the form.

If you've already signed your donor card, please also register your decision and talk to your family about your decision.

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