



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MOVEMBER AND WINNIPEG REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY OFFICIALLY LAUNCH SUBARCTIC INDIGENOUS MENTAL HEALTH ADDICTIONS CENTRE IN CANADA AFTER ONE YEAR OF OPERATIONS

THE CHURCHILL WELLNESS CENTRE IS THE FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND IN THE NORTH, PROVIDING ALTERNATIVE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS SUPPORT FOR LOCAL INDIGENOUS MEN

Winnipeg, Canada | Thursday, September 23 – Movember and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA) are officially launching the first subarctic Indigenous mental health addictions centre in Canada, celebrating one year of operations. The Churchill Wellness Centre, located in Churchill, Manitoba, has and will continue to provide much-needed mental health and social inclusion support for residents living in the northern city and surrounding areas, with a focus on supporting local Indigenous men.

The Churchill Wellness Centre represents an important step forward in providing strong local support and programming options for men in the northern region. Churchill is home to a permanent population of 900, of which over 143 men have already sought assistance from the Churchill Wellness Centre and its Movember-funded social inclusion and health literacy programming over the last year alone. The centre, however, has the potential to serve many more, with over 40 Indigenous communities in the surrounding region.

It is well documented that Indigenous people across Canada suffer from poorer health outcomes than non-Indigenous peoples. In fact, young men in northern are more at risk of adverse health impacts resulting from insufficient access to health services, healthy food, or mental health services or to experience poverty and unemployment.ⁱⁱ

*“We are incredibly excited to be launching the first subarctic Indigenous mental health and wellness centre in Canada. Churchill is an area where a number of our nations meet, including the Dene, Cree, Métis and Inuit, making it the perfect location for this new Centre,” says **Sonia Prevost-Derbecker, Movember’s Global Director of Indigenous Programs.** “Oftentimes, due to a lack of local resources, Indigenous men in these northern communities are forced to seek support away from home in larger cities like Edmonton, Winnipeg or Ottawa, where their familial support systems are not available. Maintaining local connections and having emotional support closely available is key to a successful recovery for men who may be struggling with their mental health. By having programs available to them in their own backyard, we can help improve the chances of a positive outcome.”*

ⁱⁱ Crawford, A; Suicide Among Indigenous People in Canada; 2020; <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/suicide-among-indigenous-peoples-in-canada>



The Churchill Wellness Centre provides a number of unique programs aimed at promoting mental health literacy and social inclusion in men, applying an Indigenous lens to this support by helping to re-establish connection to the historic identity and culture of participants. Social connectivity has been shown to play a pivotal role in developing mental health resilience for men and continues to be the basis of many Movember mental health programs, Indigenous-focused and beyond. With this in mind, the Churchill Wellness Centre is offering two customized versions of Movember programs already successful in other areas of northern Canada, including a land-based program and a “Bros Group” program:

- **The land-based Program** helps men reconnect with traditional ways of knowing and being such as fishing, hunting, dog mushing or weaponry making. It focuses on re-establishing and instilling traditional knowledge and skills to a new generation of men, with each activity led by an elder or knowledge keeper who passes this insight down to the men within the community.
- **"Bros Group" Program** is an indoor, connection-based program that focuses on supporting men through social inclusion, emphasizing male-focused group activity. Through these groups, men learn and practice traditional arts (including drum making, beadwork and cooking) together, creating a sense of belonging amongst like-minded members of the community, while also receiving education on maintaining personal health and mental health resilience.

The Churchill Wellness Centre is connected to the Churchill Health Centre, which is overseen by the WRHA and provides local communities access to primary care beds that can be used for mental health or addictions-related support if and when needed. The programs available through the centre will be overseen by the Subarctic Friendship Circle and The Knowledge Keepers, a local community group that includes representatives from Inuit and First Nations communities, as well as from the town of Churchill. These groups will work to ensure the centre’s programs are inclusive and representative of the many Indigenous nations in the region. The centre also has a psychiatric nurse practitioner who is available to support more acute and longterm psychological needs and care.

“The Churchill Wellness Centre was inspired by the community – we asked them what they wanted, and better local support services was their clear answer. It’s up to us as health leaders to provide the path forward towards mental health and addictions recovery, based on what the community wants and needs,” says Jason Klainchar, Chief Operating Officer of the Churchill Health Centre. “By providing an opportunity for the community to access mental health resiliency services, it allows them an outlet to reach out and grow into their own recovery.”

Churchill Mayor, Mike Spence says, *“Churchill’s stunning natural environment combined with its untold secrets of a natural healing place and its history as a meeting place of indigenous peoples makes us an ideal location to strongly support indigenous men’s mental health. Movember’s investment has been crucial and we are grateful to them in helping realize our vision. Our partnership means we’ll be able to grow and collectively support more indigenous men along their mental wellness journey.”*

The Churchill Wellness Centre is the newest addition to Movember’s Indigenous programming in Canada, continuing the charity’s commitment to broadening mental health awareness and social inclusion support for Canada’s Indigenous populations. Movember has been involved in providing



programs targeted to Canada's Indigenous communities for over six years, with active programs now operational in Winnipeg, Manitoba and Arviat, Nunavut. As part of this work, Movember has committed three years of funding to the Churchill Wellness Centre, totalling over \$1 million CAD.

You can learn more about Movember and Movember's Indigenous programming streams at Movember.com.

To download video assets including images of the Churchill Wellness Centre, local community social inclusion programs in action as well as interview clips with Movember's Global Director of Indigenous Programs Sonia Prevost-Derbecker please see [HERE](#). Media are welcome to use these clips in whatever capacity they require.

-ENDS-

Press Contacts:

Fresh PR

Jo-Anne Stayner

joanne@getfreshpr.com

+1 604-603-0657

Movember Canada

Sonya Friesen, Public Relations Manager (Canada)

sonya.friesen@movember.com

+1 613-808-1702

About Movember:

Movember is the leading charity changing the face of men's health on a global scale, focusing on mental health and suicide prevention, prostate cancer and testicular cancer. The charity raises funds to deliver innovative, breakthrough research and support programmes that enable men to live happier, healthier and longer lives. Committed to disrupting the status quo, millions have joined the movement, helping fund over 1,250 projects around the world. In addition to tackling key health issues faced by men, Movember is working to encourage men to stay healthy in all areas of their life, with a focus on men staying socially connected and becoming more open to discussing their health and significant moments in their lives. The charity's vision is to have an everlasting impact on the face of men's health. To donate or learn more, please visit Movember.com.

Note to Editors:

Movember strongly encourages the inclusion of appropriate help-seeking information for stories about suicide and mental illness. For crisis support at any time, day or night, we encourage Canadians to reach out to one of the following services: Suicide Prevention Service (Toll Free: 1-833-456-4566 - ENG, 1-866-277-3553 - FR) or the Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868). For more help-seeking information, visit Movember.com/GetSupport.