


COVID-19 MESSAGE FROM ISC BC REGION

UPDATE #33 / May 1, 2020


Good Afternoon,

It has been seven weeks since ISC moved to providing essential services, officially closing the physical office on Melville Street and having staff work remotely. We have been diligently working on adjusting to the current situation to ensure that essential services are supported and that concerns from First Nations are being addressed.

Stay the course
help limit the spread of COVID-19



Please watch this animated video:
Physical distancing: Stop the spread of COVID-19 in Indigenous communities



UPDATES

We would like to thank everyone who participated in today's Town Hall webinar on First Nations education in BC hosted by the First Nations Public Service Secretariat. ISC was joined with representatives of the First Nations Education Steering Committee and the First Nations Schools Association. For your reference, the webinar was recorded and can be viewed on [FNPSS's YouTube channel](#).

The panel received several questions about financial resources for technology and learning, specifically internet and laptops, and what resources are available.

While it is true the **Indigenous Community Support Fund** provides Indigenous leadership with the flexibility needed to prepare for and react to the spread of COVID-19 including educational support, we are aware that the current allocations may not be able to be stretched beyond readiness and response preparations (and issues like food and security).

We want to confirm that all the funding for education will continue for the year as anticipated with the intent of giving schools the flexibility to support continuity of learning as it makes sense in your communities, for you families and students. This will look different in each community based on the needs of the students, level

of connectivity, and other factors. In its April 15, 2020 update to First Nations Leadership, the First Nations Education Steering Committee suggested that First Nations may want to adjust their education budgets during this time. They noted that the BC Tripartite Education Agreement funding formula, by which First Nations are funded for education, enables First Nations to determine how best to invest education funds received from ISC.

Many schools, for example, are working with their communities to coordinate care packages for families and to ensure that meals that would otherwise have been provided in schools are at least partially replaced through these family supports.

Other resources may be available to you to ensure current priorities and needs are addressed for your learners. For example **Telus is offering high-speed internet for \$9.95 a month to BC students in need**. School districts may also **offering technology loans** where required, giving more children the opportunity to learn at home, including more than 23,000 computers and devices are being loaned out in every part of the province. Parents are encouraged to reach out to their schools to see if devices are required to support learning.

Be assured that ISC continues to work collaboratively with our education partners - The First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), the First Nations Schools Association (FNSA) and BC's Ministry of Education - to ensure that First Nations learners remain supported during this difficult period and to plan what will be needed in the coming months.

Support for Post-Secondary Students

On April 22, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the **Canada Emergency Student Benefit** that provides additional funding for post-secondary education students affected by COVID-19. Legislation was passed by the House of Commons on Wed and is before the Senate today. In addition, more than \$75 million was committed to specifically increase supports for First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Nation students. We are awaiting further information on this. However, we have been advised that the intention is for funds to reach students as quickly as possible. As such, ISC plans to use existing authorities and contribution agreements as much as possible while preserving partners' current flexibility for student allocations.

In addition, the Province also announced \$1.5 million for an **Indigenous Students Emergency Assistance Fund** to support emergency living expenses like groceries, cell phone bills and childcare and other unanticipated expenses like medical, dental and optical costs, and travel costs for family crisis or community obligations. Students can contact the Indigenous Student Service Centre on campus for assistance with the application process.

This funding also supplements other student support measures announced last week. Indigenous students can access all of the other student supports that fall within the larger COVID-19 economic response plan for post-secondary students including the **new Canada student service grant and the enhanced Canada student loans program**.

We all appreciate how difficult this is for post-secondary students who finished the year in virtual classrooms, are challenged to find summer jobs and don't know what the fall semester might look like. Hopefully these supports will reduce some of the financial anxiety.

PARTNER INFORMATION

The Province of British Columbia has **launched a survey** to find out how you've been affected by COVID-19 and get your feedback on their response and potential next steps including when to resume classroom instruction.

For parents looking for resources to support their homeschooling, remember that even cooking together and games can be valuable sources of learning.

Children in First Nation Schools

FNESC and the FNSA have prepared **webpage to support continuity of learning** during COVID-19. In addition, they have also prepared some **suggestions for families to support learning at home**.

Children in Public and Independent Schools

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the BC Ministry of Education is working with all 60 school districts and independent schools authorities to ensure a coordinated approach including delivering learning opportunities in a variety of ways. Ministry of Education has launched a website, **Keep Learning**, to provide families with ideas for everyday educational activities, links to free learning resources, and tips for how to help children learn and stay well while they are at home.

B.C. Ministry of Education FAQs and More Information about Continuity of Learning

Accurate, timely information about B.C. schools, programs and educational services, including regularly updated frequently asked questions in multiple languages, is **available online**.

Support for workers

BC's Ministry of Finance has announced **applications are now open for BC emergency benefit for workers**.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 – SURVEY SERIES

Statistics Canada is collecting data on an ongoing basis to better understand the impacts of COVID-19. Your response will provide insight into the challenges we all face as the COVID-19 situation evolves in Canada. This week's survey is: **Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians – Your mental health.**

The survey takes only a few minutes to complete. Your participation is important!



QUESTIONS OF THE DAY

What has the Government of Canada done to support improved internet access in First Nations communities?

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the Government of Canada recognized that fast, reliable and affordable high-speed internet is a necessity for all Canadians, including those living in rural and remote communities.

ISC collaborates with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), along with provincial and territorial governments, Indigenous community and corporate leaders to ensure that First Nations communities benefit from investments to rural broadband infrastructure networks and have access to broadband internet speeds comparable to other Canadians. ISC is an active participant in the development of ISED's Universal Broadband Fund and is engaged in informing Indigenous communities and organizations of Canadian Radio-Telecommunications Commission's (CRTC) Broadband Fund, facilitating the integration of First Nations' needs in the design and delivery of infrastructure connectivity projects, and reducing the digital divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.

ISC continues to support communities through targeted funding and leverages opportunities to co-fund infrastructure connectivity projects when possible. Since 2016, ISC has provided more than \$50M in funding for 19 infrastructure connectivity projects. Of note, two of these projects were co-funded with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's Connect to Innovate (CTI) program: Connected Coast in BC, and Mattawa First Nations Management in Ontario.

The decision around what technologies are purchased is made at a community level in line with First Nations Control of First Nations education.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

We believe we are better when we share our knowledge. We are pleased to share resources and updates being offered by communities:

- **Okanagan Indian Band** has created a **COVID-19 Education Supplement for all eligible members** to assist students and their families with the additional financial costs associated with learning at home.
- **Cowichan Tribes** has shared details their economic response to COVID-19 on Facebook, deciding to match the \$1.1 million from Indigenous Services Canada for a total of \$2.2 million dollars.
- **Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc** has posted an article on how Jordan's Principle may help support First Nations during COVID-19.

NATIONAL INFORMATION

- **Taking care of your mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic**
- **Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Prevention and risks**
- The Government of Canada has made announcements regarding financial assistance for those who will be impacted during these unprecedented times – these individuals and business are encouraged to apply for assistance. You can find further information on how to apply for financial or economic support at: **Canada.ca/coronavirus** and **Questions and Answers on the Canada Emergency Response Benefit**.
- For a great description of what flattening the curve means, consider watching **Prime Minister Trudeau's video tweet**
- **Public Health Agency of Canada**
- **Resources for Canadian Businesses**
- **Transport Canada – COVID-19 measures, updates, and guidance issued by Transport Canada**

USEFUL LINKS

- Economic measures to help stabilize the economy during this challenging period. As information is rapidly changing we strongly encourage you to visit the **federal** and **provincial financial supports** websites often for the latest information.
- First Nations Health Authority – **Information for community leaders**
- **COVID-19 BC Support App and Self-Assessment Tool**
The app will let you receive the latest updates, trusted resources, and alerts. The Self-Assessment Tool is built in.
- With the help of BCFC, the First Nations Public Service Secretariat has posted a **COVID-19 Resources for All BC Individuals**.

FREE WEBINAR: GOVERNMENT COVID-19 PROGRAMS AVAILABLE TO INDIGENOUS BUSINESS

Hosted by the **Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business**.

Event number for attendees: 300 205 926

Event Password: 222220

Audio conference (toll-free dial in):

+1-866-432-9903

Monday, May 4, 2020

12:30 - 1:30 p.m. EDT

JOIN THE WEBINAR

REGIONAL CONTACTS

We've set up a dedicated email for any non-health COVID-19-related questions and requests: **aadnc.iscbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca**.

As we head into the weekend we would also like to take this opportunity to share the contact information for our Executive Leadership Team should you or your team need to reach out regarding specific programs or services within their respective areas:

- **Regional Director General**
Catherine Lappe / 604-340-7703
- **Associate Regional Director General**
Bill Guerin / 604-803-9476
- **Community Infrastructure**
Paula Santos, Director / 604-790-8451
- **Programs and Partnerships**
Wendy Rogers, Director / 604-363-8117
- **Lands and Economic Development**
David Russell, Director / 604-817-2644
- **Funding Services**
Angela McCarthy, A/Director / 604-209-1251
- **Child and Family Services**
Chiara Taylor, Director / 778-668-9067
- **Community Development**
James Moxon, Director / 604-367-8241
- **Corporate Services**
Harold Powell, Director / 604-219-1737

