

COVID-19 MESSAGE FROM ISC BC REGION

UPDATE #69 / December 4, 2020

Good afternoon,

We hope you and your communities are staying safe and managing in what continues to be a challenging time especially as many of us start thinking about and planning for the holidays.

This will be a very different holiday season for all of us. The First Nation Health Authority's (FNHA) acting Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Shannon McDonald, has a reminder in the face of the current surging infections. "Let's continue to protect each other, especially our Elders and people who are vulnerable, through physical distancing and handwashing."

While it can be difficult to ask people to stay home and not visit family for Christmas, we know you are making the decisions that are right for you and your communities. As Dr. Bonnie Henry has often said, "this is for now not forever."


With this in mind, we wanted to share videos from a #ProtectOurElders campaign officially launched this week in Alberta. The videos, including [this one](#) on hand washing by comedian Candy Palmater, bring a smile while sharing important health messages.

As you may know, Dr. Turpel-Lafond, released her report [In Plain Sight – Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in B.C. Health Care](#) this week.


As leaders you've told us that racism impacts the health and well-being of your members – an issue that has become all the more pressing in the context of a global pandemic. We want to acknowledge the work that went into Dr. Turpel-Lafond's report and assure you that the Government of Canada will be reviewing her report and its recommendations. We trust the ongoing conversations about racism and discrimination in health care here in B.C. and nationally will result in meaningful changes in the year ahead.

Certainly a positive step was the [introduction of Bill C-15, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#), yesterday, December 3, 2020. The Bill is about protecting and promoting the rights of Indigenous peoples including rights to equality and non-discrimination, self-government and the inherent right to self-determination.

Don't bring the COVID virus home



Help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Indigenous communities. Learn how to wear a non-medical mask or face covering properly.



UPDATES

This week the [Fall Economic Update](#) was released with a commitment from the Government of Canada to continue to support First Nations as they respond to COVID-19.

Since the launch of the [Indigenous Community Support Fund](#) in the spring, the government has provided \$685 million to help First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, as well as Indigenous communities and organizations serving Indigenous peoples, to provide a wide variety of support. In BC Region more than \$65.2 million has been distributed



to date and we are currently reviewing over 300 application-based proposals for further funding.

Building on these investments, the government is proposing to provide a further \$380 million in 2020-21 for the ICSF to help ensure that the needs of Indigenous communities will continue to be met during the second wave, bringing total investments in this fund to over \$1 billion since the beginning of the pandemic.

High-Speed Internet for All of Canada

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for up-to-date information and communications. As part of its **Connectivity Strategy**, the Government of Canada has **several programs** supporting high-speed Internet access for all Canadians, especially in rural and remote communities.

The new **Universal Broadband Fund** from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada will provide up to \$1.75 billion over seven years to support broadband projects across the country. This includes funding for a diversity of projects, including large scale, high-impact projects as well as projects that provide mobile to benefit Indigenous peoples. The Universal Broadband Fund has been designed to meet the unique needs of rural and remote communities.

There is also a **Rapid Response Stream** for broadband projects that can be completed quickly. Applicants can be either a not-for-profit organization or a for-profit corporation incorporated in Canada, a Canadian provincial, territorial or municipal entity, a Band Council, an Indigenous government authority, a non-

federal public sector body or a partnership of any of the entities listed above.

Applications are being accepted for Rapid Response Stream until January 15, 2021 and for other Universal Broadband Fund projects until February 15, 2021.

Indigenous Income Tax Issues

Many of you have asked whether members who normally work on reserve would maintain *Indian Act* Exemption for Employment if they were required to work off reserve due to the pandemic response.

The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) recently **clarified its administrative position on the application of the *Indian Act* Exemption for Employment Income Guidelines** as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

Where an individual's regular place of employment (full time or part time) was located on a reserve and changed solely because of the COVID-19 workplace restrictions, the CRA will continue to apply the guidelines as if the individual was still reporting to their regular workplace on a reserve.

Where central management and control of an employer was located on a reserve and has temporarily moved off reserve solely because of the COVID-19 workplace restrictions, the CRA will continue to treat that employer as a resident on the reserve.

Where an individual's residency was on the reserve and temporarily changed to a location off reserve solely because of the COVID-19 territorial restrictions, the CRA will continue to treat the individual's residency as if the individual was still living on the reserve.

Additionally, as announced in the Fall Economic Update, the CRA will allow Canadians with modest expenses to claim up to \$400 as a tax deduction for working from home without having to keep a detailed account of their expenses.

If a taxpayer or an employer has a question about the above guidance or has a situation that is not addressed, please contact the CRA at **S87ECOVIDG@cra-arc.gc.ca**.

Additional information about Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) services, due dates and programs affected by the pandemic is **available here**.

HIGH SPEED INTERNET

DID YOU KNOW – Indigenous organizations and communities can get involved?

- Verify the coverage information on our **National Broadband Map**
- Read our **Technical Report on Fixed Wireless Capacity**
- Consult **other information for Internet Service Providers**

SOCIAL INSURANCE NUMBER

If your members are looking to apply for a Social Insurance Number (SIN) they can **do so online** or by calling 1-866-274-6627.

Agents are available Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Canadian Local Time, except on statutory holidays.

COVID-19 VACCINE AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The Government of Canada is working to secure safe and effective vaccines to prevent COVID-19. This is key to stopping the spread of COVID-19 and resuming normal life. We are getting close to having a vaccine in Canada.

Once a safe COVID-19 vaccine is approved by Health Canada and is available, at-risk groups will be prioritized to receive the vaccine first as it rolls out. This is because there will be a limited supply at the beginning.

Some Indigenous communities or members of those communities may be identified as being at increased risk. The vaccine will be free. For up to date information as it becomes available **[click here](#)**.



CANADA REVENUE AGENCY (CRA) LOOKING FOR ORGANIZATIONS AND VOLUNTEERS TO HOST FREE TAX CLINICS!

Encouraging your members to get their taxes done and having a tax return completed is necessary to getting some COVID-19-related benefits.

Free tax clinics are made possible through the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP) and are a collaboration between community organizations and the CRA. The CRA will work with you and provide support to help you run your clinic.

Your organization:

- hosts a free tax clinic
- manages resources and volunteers
- keeps taxpayer information secure and confidential
- makes sure all volunteers are approved and get a police records check, if needed

The CRA will give you:

- guidance and support
- training for volunteers
- free tax preparation software
- a year-round dedicated help line for volunteers
- promotional material
- used laptops (when available)

As a host, it's up to your organization to decide what time and resources it can invest to run the clinic.

If your organization would like to host a tax clinic or if you'd like to volunteer, go to **canada.ca/taxes-volunteer** to register online.



COVID-19 SCAMS: PLEASE SHARE WITH YOUR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Indigenous Services Canada has become aware of a number of scams that are targeting Canadians.

Scammers are contacting individuals to inform them they have tested positive for COVID-19. Upon notification, the caller requests personal information from the would-be victim, including their social insurance number. Callers may also try to use high-pressure tactics in the hope of convincing individuals to sending them money. **Please note, health officials do not request any type of financial information.**

Please be aware of these scams, and, if targeted, please share this information with the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre at 1-888-495-8501 or report the caller through the **Fraud Reporting System**.

For further information:

- **WHO Myth Busters**
- **COVIDCanada Misinformation News Dashboard**
- **Polygraph.info**
- **FactCheck.org**
- **Politifact Coronavirus Fact Check**
- **Poynter.org Coronavirus Facts and Misinformation**
- **Google Coronavirus Fact Check Explorer**



Reach out and learn how the Indigenous Community Business Fund can support your community-owned tourism business through the #COVID pandemic. **Watch video here.**

PARTNER INFORMATION

Province Invests in Rural Communities, Provides Road Rescue Funding

The BC government **announced** this week that it is providing \$1 million in emergency rescue support for rural and remote communities throughout the province.

The Office of the Fire Commissioner has partnered with the Fire Chiefs' Association of BC (FCABC) to launch the **Road Rescue Grant program**. This one-time grant will allow organizations in BC to apply for up to \$50,000 to fund equipment or train emergency responders in road rescue.

The grant program was established to support BC fire departments, fire brigades, fire societies, search and rescue groups, and First Nations communities registered with the road rescue program. The funding is provided by the Province and administered by the FCABC. The deadline for submitting a grant application to the FCABC is noon on Dec. 11, 2020.



While we applaud the initiative, please note that ISC will not be able to provide Operation and Maintenance (O&M) funding for road rescue equipment.

Send your questions on the Road Rescue Grant program to: roadrescue@fcabc.ca.

BC Hydro Rate Decrease

The global pandemic has presented families and businesses with unprecedented challenges. The Province of British Columbia hopes a **cut to hydro rates** will help.

BC Hydro has announced that hydro rates will decrease by an additional 0.6% in 2020-21 and customers will receive a one-time bill credit in early 2021 as a result.

BC's Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation, Bruce Ralston, said the one-time bill credit will provide some help for all BC Hydro customers, including residential, commercial and industrial.

USEFUL LINKS

- **Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Indigenous communities** – developed by ISC, this page provides health and financial support information for Indigenous communities.
- Find information on how to apply for financial or economic support from the Government of Canada at: Canada.ca/coronavirus.
- With the help of BCFC, the First Nations Public Service Secretariat has developed **a series of one-pagers on COVID-19 support and resources**.
- **Taking care of your mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic**
- **Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Prevention and risks**
- 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.
- **Transport Canada – COVID-19 measures, updates, and guidance issued by Transport Canada**

REGIONAL CONTACTS

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

- **Regional Director General**
Catherine Lappe / 604-340-7703
- **Associate Regional Director General**
Bill Guerin / 604-803-9476
- **Director, Community Infrastructure**
Paula Santos / 604-790-8451
- **Director, Programs and Partnerships**
Wendy Rogers / 604-363-8117
- **Director, Lands and Economic Development**
David Russell / 604-817-2644
- **Director, Funding Services**
Jody Kaden / 236-334-4742
- **Director, Child and Family Services**
Chiara Taylor / 778-668-9067
- **Director, Community Development**
James Moxon / 604-367-8241
- **Director, Corporate Services**
Harold Powell / 604-219-1737

