

COVID-19 MESSAGE FROM ISC BC REGION

UPDATE #74 / January 26, 2021

Good afternoon,

The Province of British Columbia has formally extended the provincial state of emergency through the end of the day on February 2, 2021, to allow the necessary actions to keep British Columbians safe and manage immediate concerns and COVID-19 outbreaks.

This update and earlier editions are also available on the [First Nations Public Service Secretariat website](#).

While the pandemic response must continue, the roll out of vaccines in the province is providing a glimmer of hope – even as so many of your communities are seeing increased cases. As of yesterday, 119,850 doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered in BC, 3,193 of which are second doses. Complete immunization data is available on the [COVID-19 dashboard](#). If you missed it, last Wednesday, the First Nations Public Service Secretariat hosted a webinar on the vaccine roll out in several remote First Nations. Thanks to Klahoose First Nation, Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council, and Tahltan Band Council for sharing their experiences and optimism which you can [watch here](#).

The BC Government is reminding us all that even though the COVID-19 immunization program is underway, the risks remain high. In a [joint statement](#) Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, and Health Minister, Adrian Dix, issued a reminder that we need to continue using our layers of protection and follow the public health orders, to keep everyone without a vaccine as safe as possible. Everyone still needs to wear a mask in public, stay away from large gatherings, practice physical distancing by staying two metres apart in public, wash your hands with soap or hand sanitizer regularly.

In a [recent article](#), Splatsin Kukpi7 (Chief) Wayne Christian reminds people to follow health guidelines and avoid non-essential travel. “Don’t visit other households. If you become sick, stay home and call the health department. That’s really important because the way this works, if you go visit somebody you could potentially spread it and you don’t even know you’re spreading it.”

Finally, we wanted to let you know that with the pandemic continuing we are looking to change the approach to Our Gathering. It was around this time last year that we met at the Bayshore Westin for our largest Gathering to date. For 2021, we are looking at bringing people together in a virtual format for a series of sessions. We hope to hold the first few sessions March 10 and 11, with follow-up sessions every 6 to 8 weeks.

How can you
help protect your community?



We have been working with the First Nations Leadership Council and CIRNAC to develop the agenda and logistics. Our intent is to create space and opportunity to reflect on impacts of the pandemic and how we move forward in key areas from MMIWG to reconciliation to program reform. By starting broader discussions on areas beyond pandemic response now, we will be well positioned to move forward post-pandemic.

We encourage everyone to reach out if there are certain topics you would like us to cover or focus on. You can send a completed survey (sent to First Nations in mid-December) or ideas to aadnc.rencontre-ourgathering.aandc@canada.ca.

UPDATES

In this Update we'll share some of the information, questions and answers provided to participants of last Friday's webinar describing the third round of ICSF and what it means for your community.

Details on New Funding Through the Indigenous Community Support Fund

The \$380 million in additional funding for the Indigenous Community Support Fund is divided into two envelopes. Approximately \$145.2 million will be sent to communities as direct allocations. The allocation methodology for these funds mirrors that of the previous ICSF funds announced on August 12, 2020.

In BC, this means an additional \$20 million is being sent to First Nations and self-governing communities now to provide communities with the flexibility they need to address the specific needs identified by leadership and community members. We are processing budget adjustments so you are not required to do anything to receive this funding. Your First Nation can expect the same allocation as in the last round.

The second envelope has \$234.8 million to address applications for Indigenous communities and organizations, including \$75 million to support urban and off-reserve proposals submitted prior to November 30, 2020.

Given the number of applications received, we were only able to support a small percentage of the requests to date. We are now in a position to fund eligible costs in those proposals submitted by November 30, 2020, and will be in touch with those who applied to let you know what will be funded under this third round of ICSF within the eligible authorities.

We have also forwarded any public-health related submissions to the First Nations Health Authority and they have been actively reviewing and supporting eligible applications.

Our goal is to be able to communicate funding decisions by end of this week.

● **We are using Zoom to communicate and we need a host to help keep things organized and structured. Is having a host for Zoom meetings eligible under ICSF?**

Where communities have made proposal requests for communications support, those costs have been deemed eligible. For those communities which have not applied for communications support through the application-based process, the Indigenous Community Support Fund allocation can provide for those costs.

● **Our Chief and Council and staff are having to put in extra hours to manage our community's pandemic preparedness and response. Are incremental costs for hiring additional people or paying overtime eligible?**

The Indigenous Community Support Fund can support hiring additional staff, backfilling additional staff who are reassigned, or overtime where costs are related to responding to COVID-19. We encourage you to contact the FSO assigned to your community to work out the details of supporting these eligible costs.

● **Our ICSF was approved but only to 52 per cent and you didn't actually tell me what specific project the funding was for. So I wanted to make sure that I understand that there's some flexibility?**

Apologies if your community doesn't have the clarity on what projects or what elements of your proposal were funded. We want to make sure that every community understands what part of their application has been supported. There is significant flexibility in the types of initiatives that communities can undertake and we appreciate that needs will go beyond this fiscal year.

Should you have any questions, please contact your FSO or the ISC BC Regional office at aadnc.iscbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca.

● **When will bands be getting the money and can those monies be rolled over?**

The direct community allocations are being processed right now, so you should be seeing them within the coming days. The funds don't require your signature and will be directly deposited into your bank account. Funding Service Officers and others are also reaching out to communities, particularly if you have different streams of funding coming in, to make sure you are aware of what you are getting funded for.

With regards to rolling over the funding, the intent is to provide you with resources until March 31, 2021. We absolutely understand that plans and circumstances change, so there is no intent to be asking for that funding back if it's not expended by March 31. You will be able to roll it over into the next fiscal year.

ISC Mirroring Provincial Income Assistance Changes

Friday's Town Hall was also an opportunity to clarify some of the supports available for Income Assistance and Persons With Disabilities and we promised to confirm the information provided and share it here:

● **BC will be reducing its income assistance supplement down to \$150 and I'm guessing Canada mirrors that? When is that going to happen?**

For clarification, there is no reduction in the basic support and shelter rates for Income Assistance (IA) clients. In December 2020, the Province announced that their COVID-19 Crisis Supplement was to be replaced by the BC Recovery Supplement. The BC Recovery Supplement is effective for cheques issued to IA clients in January, February, and March 2021 (reflecting the February, March, and April 2021 cheques). This information was communicated to Band Social Development Workers (BSDWs) on December 15, 2020, in alignment with provincial policy.

From April to December 2020, ISC mirrored the Provincial COVID-19 Crisis Supplement, providing an additional \$300 per month to eligible adult recipients on Income Assistance. In 2021, additional support continues through a \$150 per month supplement for eligible Income Assistance adult recipients, including those on disability assistance (PWD). The ISC \$150 supplement will be in place from January to March to mirror the **BC Recovery Supplement**.

BSDW Policy Line updates are available through GCCollab, a Government of Canada online collaboration platform. To be added to the GCCollab BC Region BSDW Policy Support Group or to the policy updates email list, please contact the BSDW Policy Support Line at 1-888-440-4080, or via email at aadnc.tsdbstoutien-bsdwsupport-bc.aandc@canada.ca.

Economic Development

While many communities are still in the midst of combatting COVID-19, with an end in sight we know you are also looking out for the economic well-being of your communities. As many of you may know, \$332 million was committed through the **Fall Economic Statement** for the *Provision of Community Services through Own Source Revenue in Indigenous Communities*. These funds are to support First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities following a significant decline in own-source revenues due to the pandemic where it has an impact on the provision of community services. We hope to share more information in the coming weeks. Should you have any questions with regards to Economic Development, please contact **David Russell**.

FUNDING APPLICATION DEADLINES APPROACHING

In August 2020, ISC BC Region rolled out the **COVID Indigenous Community Business Fund**. BC received \$14.3 million with nearly \$12 million expended to date including \$8.7 million in Stream One funds that were distributed to First Nation communities in September. Please note that applications from community-owned businesses for Stream Two continue to be welcomed until March 1, 2021. As well, the April 2020 **COVID Economic Stimulus Package for Indigenous Businesses**, through the Aboriginal Financial Institutions network, closes on March 31, 2021.

Professional and Institutional Development Program (P&ID) 2021-2022 Call Package

In case you missed it, last week (January 18), emails were sent to communities announcing the 2021-2022 call for applications for the Professional and Institutional Development Program (P&ID).

The deadline for proposals is Friday, February 19, 2021. Proposals that arrive by the deadline will be reviewed, assessed and, if approved, funded first. However, we will continue to accept applications throughout the 2021-2022 fiscal year and, if funds remain, or additional funding is made available to the P&ID program, we will do our best to support eligible projects.

Applicants will be informed in writing of the status of their projects.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the program, please contact Mariana Wong, Program and Policy Officer, at 604-396-6045 or email her at mariana.wong@canada.ca.

Please send completed applications to aadnc.bcregionpid.aandc@canada.ca. This mailbox is monitored daily and you will receive confirmation of receipt.

PARTNER INFORMATION

The COVID-19 vaccine: a First Nations doctor who's received the COVID-19 vaccine shares some information and thoughts

FNHA shared a **message** from Dr. Kelsey Louie, FNHA Medical Officer and Tla'Amin Nation Citizen, that we're also pleased to share.

"I was both pleased and relieved to receive the COVID-19 vaccine earlier this month. As a physician who works in clinics and hospitals, I am in the high-risk category, so with the vaccination I will be able to breathe a little easier: findings to date show COVID-19 vaccines provide up to 95 per cent protection (seven to 10 days after the second dose).



AFOA
BRITISH COLUMBIA

Virtual Audit Preparation Workshops

February 9, 2021: Northern BC
February 11, 2021: BC Interior Region
February 16, 2021: Vancouver Island
February 18, 2021: Lower Mainland

for BC First Nations and Indigenous Organizations

Although it was a relatively simple decision for me, I acknowledge that vaccine confidence can be challenging among our community members, and I want to honour the historical reasons and trauma that have contributed to this.

With this in mind, I want to reassure you that at the **FNHA**, we are you, we work for you, and we are here to help – not harm – you and all Indigenous people living in BC. Many of our employees, like me, are members of First Nations communities, and I am confident that we aim to place our communities' health and wellness needs and safety at the forefront of any decision we make.”

Organizations providing people access to food receive funding boost

As a part of the Province's 2020-21 capital project grant program, six community organizations are receiving a total of **more than \$1.13 million to help them deliver food security programs** to more people and expand food distribution: Potluck Café Society (Vancouver), Cranbrook Food Bank Society, Sunshine Coast Community Services, The Community First Foundation (North Vancouver), Vancouver Italian Cultural Centre Society and Burnaby Neighbourhood House.

This funding builds on the Province's support for food security through COVID-19. In March 2020, the Province provided a \$3-million emergency grant from the Community Gaming Grants program to Food Banks British Columbia to help British Columbians in need.

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

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Lockdowns and limited travel options create mental health concerns. It can be challenging to keep people in their homes and manage the frustration in community with people wanting to leave.

The Hope for Wellness Helpline provides immediate, culturally safe, telephone crisis intervention support for First Nations, Inuit and Métis, 24 hours a day, seven days a week (1-855-242-3310 or the online chat at hopeforwellness.ca).

Additionally community members can call the First Nations Health Authority's 24/7 culturally safe KUU-US Crisis Response Services at 1-800-588-8717 (or 250-723-2040 for child and youth / 250-723-4050 for adult and Elder).

USEFUL LINKS

- **Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Indigenous communities**
- **COVID-19 vaccines and Indigenous peoples**
 - » **Moderna COVID-19 vaccine: what you should know**
 - » **Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine: what you should know**
 - » **Canada's COVID-19 Immunization Plan**
- **COVID-19 Awareness Resources and Videos**
 - » **COVID-19: How vaccines are developed (video)**
 - » **Vaccine development and approval in Canada (infographic)**
 - » **What you need to know about the COVID-19 vaccine for Canada (poster)**
 - » **Canada's Chief Public Health Officer Statement Series on COVID-19: mRNA Vaccines**
- **Taking care of your mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic**
- **Protect your health and your community** – Preventing infection, handwashing and drinking water advisories, how to prepare, what to do if you are sick or caring for someone sick
- 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.
- **New financial support** – developed by ISC, this page provides financial support information for Indigenous individuals, students, businesses, organizations and communities.
- Latest Service Canada programs and services posters
 - » **General**
 - » **For seniors**
 - » **For youth**
 - » **For businesses**

