

COVID-19 MESSAGE FROM ISC BC REGION

UPDATE #76 / March 5, 2021

This update and earlier editions are also available on the **First Nations Public Service Secretariat website**.



Good afternoon,

It's been almost a year since the World Health Organization declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a global pandemic setting off a world-wide response. Since then, all our lives have changed so profoundly. Our hearts are heavy with the losses of the last year yet we're hopeful for the promise of the vaccines now reaching so many communities.

This anniversary is also an occasion to recognize your efforts and the tremendous work you have done to keep your Elders, the vulnerable and your community members safe. It has been, and continues to be, a marathon.

Last January we were able to meet face-to-face for Our Gathering *kexwkexwntsút chet, tə sǫǫǫp ct*. Unfortunately, due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, this event could not be held in-person this year.

However, thanks to technology and our logistics partners, the First Nations Public Service Secretariat, we've been able to adapt virtually and find new ways to share information and engage with you.

To that end, we hope to see you all at Our Gathering *kexwkexwntsút chet, tə sǫǫǫp ct* on March 10 and 11 co-hosted by the First Nations Leadership Council, Indigenous Services Canada, and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

For more information about the event including session topics, and how to register, please visit the

[Our Gathering Hub](#).



UPDATES

Indigenous Community Support Fund

We're pleased to provide an update on the distribution of the Indigenous Community Support Fund (ICSF) Round 3 funding.

All First Nations in British Columbia have received their Indigenous Community Support Fund Round 3 formula-based funding totaling more than \$19.8 million. An additional \$12 million is in the process of being disbursed to many First Nations in BC.

To date over \$2 million in application-based funding has also been disbursed to First Nation and First Nation organizations in the province for off-reserve activities with an additional \$3 million to be disbursed in the coming week.

Furthermore, an additional \$4.5 million in formula-based funding will be disbursed shortly to First Nations in BC who had not applied to ICSF for off reserve activities and therefore have not previously received



support to provide for off-reserve members in need. The funding amounts were calculated to provide a similar level of support that was received by First Nations that did apply. If you have specific questions about your funding please contact your FSO.

Canada introduces legislation to increase number of weeks for EI regular benefits

The Government of Canada has **introduced Bill C-24**, to increase the maximum number of weeks available to workers through EI regular benefits and give them the certainty they need should their job be affected by COVID-19. The proposed legislation would provide workers with up to a maximum of 50 weeks for claims that are established between September 27, 2020, and September 25, 2021.

In addition, self-employed workers who have opted in to the EI program to access special benefits would be able to use a 2020 earnings threshold of \$5,000, compared to the previous threshold of \$7,555. This change would be retroactive to claims established as of January 3, 2021 and would apply until September 25, 2021.

ECONOMIC SUPPORTS – DEADLINE APPROACHING

The April 2020 **COVID Economic Stimulus Package for Indigenous Businesses**, through the Aboriginal Financial Institutions network, closes on March 31, 2021.

HOPE IS STRONGER THAN FEAR

Because we're better when we share our stories! This animated public service announcement "**Hope is Stronger than Fear**" by Keewatinohk Inniniw Minoayawin Inc. (KIM) in Manitoba was created to encourage First Nations to connect with their local healthcare providers to learn more about the COVID-19 vaccines, how to access them, and to make informed decisions based on facts from trusted health experts. Feel free to share!

PARTNER INFORMATION

This week (March 1, 2021) the **Province of BC announced** it is moving into **Phase 2 of the COVID-19 Immunization Plan**. During this phase approximately 400,000 people will be immunized from March to mid-April, including seniors, Indigenous peoples and people who live and work in independent living.

The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) is advising that as of March 8, all Indigenous people in BC age 65 or older will be able to **register for a COVID-19 vaccination appointment as part of the province's next rollout of vaccination clinics**. Registration will take place for appointments for first doses of vaccine. Immunization clinic locations will be confirmed at time of booking, with vaccinations starting as early as March 15, 2021.

This provincial vaccine rollout will speed up distribution of vaccine to older populations at greater risk from COVID-19. Regional health authorities are organizing these clinics with planning support from the FNHA regional teams. Current community-based vaccination clinics organized by the FNHA in partnership with First Nations communities will also continue and dates will be confirmed as vaccine supply becomes available.

To find out which Health Authority you are in, please visit: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/partners/health-authorities/regional-health-authorities.

Call centres will start registering appointments on March 8, 2021, for Indigenous people age 65 and older, as well as seniors age 80 and older. The centres will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. every day, with reduced hours on statutory holidays.

For more information please contact the **First Nations Health Authority**.

Vaccine misinformation and fraud

Our national colleagues have also identified that inaccurate information has been circulating to certain communities about the vaccine that includes false and distorted information about potential side effects. The spread of misinformation can have real consequences and can distort people's behaviours and decision-making so we're sharing here for your awareness.

Vaccines used in Canada must be approved by Health Canada and the COVID-19 vaccine is held to the same safety standards as other vaccines to make sure it is safe and effective.

To learn more about COVID-19 vaccines visit www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/covid-19-vaccine-treatment.html.

For information on COVID-19 fraud and scams visit www.canada.ca/en/public-safety-canada/campaigns/covid19.html.

It is important that everyone obtain information from trusted sources. We encourage you to remind people who may be spreading misinformation to consider the source of information before spreading or sharing articles or facts.

As always, we recognize that vaccination is a choice.

Tourism industry bolstered through destination development

The Province of BC has **announced that 54 new tourism projects throughout the province are receiving funding** under the Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program's destination development stream.

The destination development stream invests in implementation-ready tourism infrastructure and amenities projects that support the recovery and resilience of tourism. It creates jobs and develops infrastructure that will attract visitors to B.C. communities when travel resumes. Approved projects include campground and recreational-vehicle site development, alpine and mountain bike trails, boat launch upgrades, construction and/or renovations of visitor amenities and Indigenous interpretive centres.

Many of the **54 projects** are led by Indigenous organizations or governments, including Yun Yah Indigenous Society, Telkwa, Llnagaay Heritage Centre Society, Nisga'a Lisims Government, Xení Gwet'in First Nation, Salishan Place By The River, Sts'ailes, Katzie Development Limited Partnership, Bonaparte Indian Band, Ditidaht Development Corporation, K'omoks Economic Development Corporation, and Songhees First Nation.

BC recovery grants support jobs in rural communities

As part of BC's \$10-billion COVID-19 response, **BC has announced grants totaling \$20 million for 38 rural projects**. These Rural Economic Recovery program grants will support communities recovering from the economic impacts of COVID-19 and build their economies for the future. Funding for Indigenous government and organization, local government and not-for-profit projects will support immediate job creation through construction. Upgrades to municipal or Indigenous-owned industrial parks, airport expansions, marine access facilities, destination trail networks and improvements to rural-based mountain resorts will also help rural communities grow and diversify their economies.

Lil'wat Nation, Nicomen Indian Band, Leq'a:mel Development Corporation, Burns Lake Native Development Corporation, Dease River First Nation, Huu-ay-aht First Nations, Ditidaht First Nation, Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis First Nation, Malahat First Nation, Pacheedaht First Nation, Tlowitsis Nation, and Klahoose First Nation are among the recipients.

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).



New infrastructure, jobs coming to communities hit hard by COVID-19

The Province of BC has announced a **\$30 million investment in small-scale infrastructure projects throughout BC** to create jobs and support recovery for people and communities affected by COVID-19. Local governments, First Nations and not-for-profit organizations were eligible to apply in October 2020, and 63 infrastructure projects have been approved.

These projects will address short-term community needs, such as revitalizing local parks, washrooms and downtown cores, creating additional space for physical distancing and upgrading public buildings like recreation centres.

Congratulations to Gitga'at Development Corporation, Dzawada'enuxw First Nation, Quatsino First Nation, Ashcroft Indian Band, Tahsis, and Yucwmenlúcwu (Caretakers of the Land) LLP, who are listed among the **funding recipients!**

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**

REGIONAL CONTACTS

We've set up a dedicated email for any non-health COVID-19-related questions and requests:

aadnc.isbccovid19.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

Should you have any COVID-19 health-related questions, the First Nations Health Authority would like you to use the following:

- For general inquiries: COVID19@fnha.ca
- For FNHA and community health care providers (CHNs, HD, etc.) or CDE planning questions: CDMgmt@fnha.ca
- For individual health care and COVID-19 questions: 811 or primary care provider or contact the First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day 1-855-344-3800 or email virtualdoctor@rccbc.ca.

Should you have any questions regarding the Emergency Management Assistance Program, please contact our Duty Officer at 604-209-9709 or bcaandc.do@canada.ca.

