

COVID-19 MESSAGE FROM ISC BC REGION

UPDATE #71 / December 18, 2020

Good afternoon,

Season's Greetings to you all. This is our last update planned for 2020. While it's been a year of unimagined challenges, it's also been a year of outstanding resilience and resourcefulness on the part of you and your communities. We hope our joint efforts with the Province of BC and the First Nations Health Authority have helped along the way.

This is the week BC began immunizing people for protection against COVID-19. As Dr. Bonnie Henry told many of you during a [joint webinar](#) Tuesday, the arrival of vaccine is going to give us protection. "Protection that will help us get out of the dark cloud that we've been under for a long, long time." We provide more information about vaccine approval and safety in Canada later in this Update.

Even as we look to brighter days ahead, we must remember that the pandemic is far from over. This is why, as we enter this next stage, health officials are reminding us of the importance of using our layers of protection and following all of the public health orders. Frequent hand washing, wearing masks, social distancing, limiting travel and gatherings, and staying home when sick, are still needed to limit the spread of the virus.

As 2020 comes to a close and we look to brighter days ahead, we would like to share an important safety reminder. As we focus on the pandemic emergency it would be all too easy to forget the fire risks that come with the holiday and winter season. We urge you to keep fire safety top of mind and consider how you can encourage members to do the same in their homes. For more safety tips, visit: [National Indigenous Fire Safety Council](#) and the [Province of BC](#).

As the virus continues to affect communities, we know the response may feel like a marathon. You are responding to the needs of your communities and members, while listening to the news, working from home and trying to balance many demands. This holiday season will be unlike any most of us have ever experienced. While we will not be able to participate in some treasured celebrations and traditions, we hope you can take some time for yourselves. Despite everything, we hope you find this holiday season restorative so you can start the new year rested and relaxed.

We hope that the holiday spirit and the promise of the COVID vaccine lift your communities with hope for the New Year.

Stay calm, stay safe.



Should your community experience a natural hazard emergency over the holidays, Emergency Management BC (EMBC) is the first point of contact and can be reached 24/7, seven days a week at 1-800-663-3456. EMBC is also offering support for non-health aspects of COVID-19 response, as well as coordination with health and other response agencies.

ISC BC Region's Duty Officer (604-209-9709 / bcaandc.do@canada.ca) is available during regular working hours – and longer during periods of activation. In all of our updates, including this one, we have also shared the contact information for our executive team.

UPDATES

Indigenous Community Support Fund

We want to provide you with an update on the status of applications for the **Indigenous Community Support Fund (ICSF)** needs-based COVID-19 support funding which closed on November 30, 2020. Thank you for taking the time to prepare and submit your proposals. We know that this is a very difficult time for everyone and recognize the effort required to apply when there are so many other urgent and critical priorities.

ISC BC Region has now reviewed all 330 ICSF applications received by the due date and are in the process of issuing amendments for First Nations and organizations who will be funded at this time in order to have our funding transferred to recipients by December 31, 2020. Please note that the need for resources as identified by applicants greatly exceeded the resources available at this time. However, all remaining applications are being held in anticipation of additional resources being made available. Applicants with projects that were deemed ineligible will be notified individually.

First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) is currently reviewing on-reserve public health ICSF requests to assess alignment with their Community Support Guide (CSG). FNHA will contact communities directly to discuss requests that align with the CSG.

As stated in the **Fall Economic Statement 2020**, the government will provide a further \$380 million in 2020-21 for the Indigenous Community Support Fund to help ensure that the needs of Indigenous communities will continue to be met during the second wave, bringing total investments under the ICSF to over \$1 billion since the beginning of the pandemic. Please stay tuned for more information.

If you have any questions regarding your application please contact the ISC BC Regional office at aadnc.isbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca.

As well, for communities that require urgent and immediate assistance to deal with emergencies, please contact Emergency Management BC at 1-800-663-3456.

Changes to Income Assistance

The Province of BC has announced a temporary **BC Recovery Supplement** on cheques issued to Income Assistance Recipients. ISC will be adjusting its Income Assistance supplement to be comparable to the BC Recovery Supplement. In an email earlier this week, Band Social Development Workers were advised that the BC Recovery Supplement will be treated similarly to the COVID-19 Crisis Supplement.

Adult Income Assistance Recipients who are not receiving Employment Insurance or other federal Recovery Benefits are eligible to receive the Supplement. This includes clients in treatment or long-term care receiving the Comforts Allowance, Work Opportunity Program Clients (who would receive it directly), and Hardship Assistance clients.

The supplement will be included for cheques issued in January, February, and March 2021 (reflecting the February, March, and April 2021 cheques).

MENTAL HEALTH

Feelings of stress are common during the holiday season. If your members are struggling and require mental health support, please refer them to:

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).

FINDING FINANCIAL HELP DURING COVID-19

Your members may be eligible for support through other programs. **Answering some questions to find financial help during COVID-19.** While this tool cannot guarantee their eligibility, it can point them to the program details.

Claiming home office expenses

On December 15, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) provided additional details on [how it has made the home office expenses deduction available to more Canadians](#), and simplified the way employees can claim these expenses on their personal income tax return for the 2020 tax year.

A new temporary flat rate method will allow eligible employees to claim a deduction of \$2 for each day they worked at home in that period, plus any other days they worked from home in 2020 due to COVID-19, up to a maximum of \$400.

The CRA has also launched simplified forms (Form **T2200S** and Form **T777S**) and a [calculator](#) designed specifically to assist with the calculation of eligible home office expenses.

For more information on working from home expenses go to Canada.ca/cra-home-workspace-expenses.

TELL YOUR MEMBERS!

For support in filing their income tax, members can call the Canada Revenue Agency at 1-800-959-8281, email S87ECOVIGD@cra-arc.gc.ca or get support online at the Canada Revenue Agency.

To support access to critical programs and services for clients, including First Nations members, without access to technology, Service Canada Community Outreach and Liaison Service are available to offer alternate service delivery methods that will continue to support accessing critical programs, services and benefits.

You can call them at: 1-877-631-2657

Grants Available from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada

As vaccines start to roll out across Canada, you may be starting to think about moving from pandemic response to economic recovery. Community businesses and Indigenous entrepreneurs you know may be looking for additional supports.

Aura Heat, a northern Indigenous business that offers sustainable products, found COVID-19 has brought with it a few positives. Designer and founder Brenda Dragon says the pandemic forced her company “to dig deep, pull our best selves forward and persevere.”

Knowing that retail wholesales would continue to struggle as tourists stayed away, her company launched a new website with better marketing analytics and improved user experiences. With better data, they now can see the social ads that resonate with core customer groups all over the world.

That there are many grants and wage subsidy options out there for Indigenous-owned businesses and entrepreneurs to help them pivot. This [federal grant finder](#) can help connect businesses to what’s available so they can find the right programs and services, whether they’re starting out or scaling up.



Brenda Dragon (right) and her daughter Chloe Dragon Smith.
Photo courtesy of [Say Magazine](#)



Information about COVID-19 vaccine in Canada

Canada's health officials advise we are not at the end of living with COVID-19, rather we are at the beginning of the end. As you know, the Government of Canada recently announced the authorization of the first COVID-19 vaccine in Canada, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Approval was granted after a thorough, independent review of the evidence for safety, efficacy, and quality requirements for use in Canada.

Up to 249,000 Pfizer doses will be available for COVID-19 vaccination in December, with the first portion of this shipment being shipped to 14 locations across Canada including BC where immunization is already underway.

In other exciting news, Canada has also secured early access to the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. Following successful negotiations and contingent on Health Canada's authorization of the vaccine, Canada will be able to access 168,000 doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine in December 2020.

The Government of Canada has signed agreements with seven companies to increase the number of vaccines available. Vaccines will be provided to at-risk groups first on a rolling basis as vaccines are received in Canada, including older adults, Indigenous adults and health care workers.

More facts and new developments about the COVID-19 vaccine are available here: [COVID-19 vaccines](#).

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. Local Time, except on statutory holidays.

CANADA EMERGENCY BUSINESS ACCOUNT NOW OPEN TO BUSINESSES USING PERSONAL BANKING ACCOUNTS

The [Canada Emergency Business Account \(CEBA\)](#) is available to businesses that have been operating out of a non-business banking account. To be eligible, businesses must have been operating as a business as of March 1, 2020, must successfully open a business account at a Canadian financial institution that is participating in CEBA, and meet the other existing CEBA eligibility criteria. The deadline to apply for CEBA is December 31, 2020.

PARTNER INFORMATION

Province expands COVID-19 enforcement measures

The Province of BC is expanding provincial [COVID-19 ticket enforcement](#) and workplace safety measures to keep British Columbians safe, as well as mitigate the effects on health-care systems, communities and the economy in the ongoing government response to COVID-19. The Province has also asked WorkSafeBC to enhance its inspection presence in workplaces by reducing reliance on virtual checks and move to more in-person inspections, particularly in sectors where COVID-19 transmission is occurring.

Police should be called if someone has become threatening or abusive in response to a request to put on a mask.

For information on the latest orders and guidance, non-medical issues like travel recommendations and how to manage social isolation, visit: www.gov.bc.ca/COVID-19.



Poverty reduction grants support local governments

As you may have heard, your neighbouring local governments will have the opportunity to apply for the second round of the **Province's Poverty Reduction Planning & Action Program grants** to help develop local strategies and solutions to address poverty.

Projects must involve key community partners, such as community-based poverty reduction organizations, people with lived experience of poverty, businesses, local First Nations or Indigenous organizations.

Applications for the second intake will be accepted until midnight (Pacific time), March 5, 2021.

Fiscal update shows continued impact of pandemic on B.C.'s economy

This has been a tough year for families, communities and our economy. The Province of BC **released figures this week** that confirmed the forecasted provincial deficit at \$13.6 billion, and included an additional \$2 billion for new COVID-19 supports for British Columbians through **BC's Recovery Benefit** and Recovery Supplement (as noted above).

BC's Finance Minister pledged to continue to support people and businesses through this pandemic and into a brighter year ahead.

Fund helps forest sector with COVID-19 costs

The province of BC is delivering relief to small-and medium-sized forestry businesses for the extra costs of keeping their employees and communities safe, while operating through the COVID-19 pandemic. BC expects about 175 companies to apply for its \$9.3-million share of the fund, to cover costs of implementing COVID-19 health and safety measures between April 1 and Dec. 31, 2020. These costs include personal protective equipment, handwashing stations, extra vehicles and accommodations.

Click here to apply, or learn more about the **Forest Sector Safety Measures Fund**.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

It is said that in adversity you learn who your friends are. We would argue that during the COVID-19 pandemic we've collectively learned who our neighbours are. From the beginning, First Nations have responded to support each other and their most vulnerable members in new and creative ways. The Christmas Season has again seen several initiatives that we'd like to share:

Homalco Indian Band – Posted info on Coping strategies to help members get through the holidays.

Fort Nelson First Nation – Posted Countdown to Christmas: 5 Days & 5 Tools for Better Mental Health & Safety During the Holidays.

Williams Lake First Nation – “Bringing People Together, When We Must Stay Apart” is the theme of the 2020 NStQ Christmas Greeting Holiday Special. All members of Williams Lake First Nation and the Northern Secwepemc te Qelmuw are invited to send a video holiday greeting by Friday December 18 at Noon. The NStQ Christmas Greeting Holiday Special will have its premiere on December 23 at Noon.

Binche Whut'en First Nation – Shared that the 🚊 Polar Express is coming to Binche, Nak'azdli and Tl'azt'en!! 📺 Surprise Christmas packages to be delivered soon.

Okanagan Indian Band – Invited members to join the x̣ast sputa? Virtual Christmas Concert!



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

HAPPY
Holidays