

COVID-19 MESSAGE FROM ISC BC REGION

UPDATE #78 / April 8, 2021

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



Good afternoon,

We hope you had a restful and safe Easter weekend. We recognize all those who encouraged their members to stay home over the long weekend, and celebrate the holiday virtually with anyone outside their household.

According to the **First Nations Health Authority** (FNHA), as of March 31, 2021, first doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been offered to all members 18 years or older in First Nations in BC. This whole-community approach was extended to rural, remote and urban settings on March 30, 2021, with COVID-19 vaccinations now available to all Indigenous people eighteen years and older.

Please share the tips below from the FNHA about what to do after you get your vaccine with all your members as not everyone will be able to get vaccinated right away, so it's still important to protect yourself and others.

BC Region has some changes that we want to share with you: Regional Director General, Catherine Lappe has been appointed Assistant Deputy Minister, Child and Family Services Reform. As many of you will know, since 2016, Catherine has embraced departmental reform and a collaborative approach with First Nations. Catherine assumes her new role effective April 6, 2021.

Associate Regional Director General, Bill Guerin, will be acting in the RDG role until the position is filled. Don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or concerns to Bill or any of our Directors listed on the last page of this Update if you have any questions or concerns.

How can you
help protect your community?



UPDATES

How to get vaccinated for COVID-19

All Indigenous people in BC age 18 or older are now able to register online or by phone for a COVID-19 first-dose vaccination appointment as part of the Province of BC's vaccination clinics.

You can **register online** or, call 1-833-838-2323. Please note, this is a new provincial number that replaces the phone lines the health authorities had been using.

In order to register online, you must provide your first and last name, date of birth, postal code, your Personal Health Number and an email address or a phone number that can receive text messages. The three-step process is simple and takes about 5 minutes.

Phone lines are open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., every day, with reduced hours on statutory holidays. Callers who self-identify as Indigenous (status or non-status



First Nations, Metis or Inuit) can register if they are 18 or older. There is no requirement to provide proof of ancestry.

First Nations Health Authority

The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) has also created a number of **posters for leadership** to share with their members, including one outlining what to expect **after they get their shot**.

To ensure you receive the latest information and resources from the FNHA, download the **FNHA Mobile App**. Notifications and the ability to customize these according to your user profile will provide immediate access to accurate, helpful information directly from the **FNHA website**.

PARTNER INFORMATION

First intake of First Nations Well-Being Fund open

First Nations throughout BC can now **apply for funding to promote well-being, improve quality of life for community members on and off reserve**, and find solutions to help address poverty in their communities.

The **First Nations Public Service Secretariat**, an initiative of the First Nations Summit, is administering the fund, which was created with a **\$2.7-million grant from the Province**.

Funding is offered through two streams: community projects and planning. The community projects stream provides up to \$35,000 for a single First Nation, \$70,000 for two First Nations and \$105,000 for regional applications of three or more partnering First Nations.

Projects in the community projects stream may include food security initiatives, training, building skills and employment opportunities, cultural initiatives to strengthen community and support decolonization, and other initiatives to promote well-being in the community or First Nation.

The planning stream provides \$25,000 for one First Nation, \$50,000 for two First Nations or \$80,000 for a

regional application involving three or more partnering First Nations. Planning can include community engagement to develop a plan or begin discussions on a plan to help promote well-being and reduce poverty at the community or Nation level.

All BC First Nations are eligible to apply for funding.

Applications will be accepted until 11:00 p.m. (Pacific time) on Sunday, May 30, 2021.

Still Time to apply for the BC Recovery Benefit

The **BC Recovery Benefit** (the benefit) is a one-time direct deposit payment for eligible families, single parents or individuals. Benefit eligibility is based on net income from your 2019 tax return. Members must apply before June 30, 2021 to receive the benefit.

BENEFIT RATES

The amount you're eligible for under the provincial Recovery Benefit will be automatically calculated based on your net income.

Applicants must provide 2019 federal income tax data to receive the benefit.

FAMILIES AND SINGLE PARENTS

- \$1,000 for eligible families and single parents with a net income of up to \$125,000
- Reduced benefit amount for eligible families and single parents with a net income of up to \$175,000

The benefit defines a family as an individual and their spouse or common-law partner, unless they are **separated**. Both people must be residents of BC on December 18, 2020.

The benefit defines a single parent as an individual who is the principal caregiver to at least one child. A child is someone under the age of 19 on December 18, 2020 who would not be eligible for the benefit on their own.

INDIVIDUALS

- \$500 for eligible individuals with a net income of up to \$62,500
- Reduced benefit amount for eligible individuals with a net income of up to \$87,500

Tax Filing Tips for Indigenous Peoples

Check out the Canada Revenue Agency's new **Taxes and benefits for Indigenous peoples** webpage and **Indigenous tax tips**.

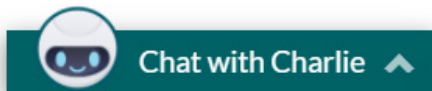
Before you call: How to get the answers you need during the 2021 tax-filing season

If your members received COVID-19 emergency or recovery benefits in 2020, they must report these amounts on their income tax and benefit return. For details: **COVID-19 benefits and your taxes**.

The Canada Revenue Agency has introduced a number of measures to help everyone get the tax and benefit information they need in less time.

It's recommended individuals consider the following steps before calling the CRA:

1. **Check Canada.ca:** the information on the Personal income tax section of Canada.ca has been updated to make it easier for taxpayers to understand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their taxes.
2. Try Charlie the chatbot: If taxpayers need a quick answer to a question, Charlie is at their service. Charlie can be found on the **CRA homepage** and many other web pages on Canada.ca.



3. Take advantage of CRA's digital services: Taxpayers are encouraged to sign up for **My Account** and direct deposit now to make tax filing, and getting payments from the CRA, that much easier and faster.
4. Check telephone wait times: Estimated wait times are now provided in real time on the **contact information web page**, as well as on the phone. This will help callers decide when the best time to call is.

FNESS Virtual Emergency Operations Centre

In case you missed it, the **First Nations Emergency Services Society released their March newsletter** on March 31, looking back at their services over the last year since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

We want to share a shout out to FNESS for quickly responding by activating an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC).



HELP FOR MEMBERS SEEKING BENEFITS!

Getting the benefits like the **Canada child benefit**, the **Canada workers benefit** and the GST/HST credit is now easier.

The new Credit and benefit short return and the Canada Child Benefit for First Nations forms are easy to complete, and there is support to help you.

For more information or help filling out the forms, call 1-855-214-7070.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS – CRA INDIGENOUS PEOPLES BENEFITS AND CREDITS PRESENTATION

Saturday, April 17, 2021

10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. (Pacific Standard Time)

Thursday, April 29, 2021

1:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. (Pacific Standard Time)

You can **register for the webinars here**. When registering, click on the link associated with the date and topic of your choice.

Due to the nature of the COVID-19 response, the focus of the EOC was on human health and safety immediately followed by continuity of service to First Nation communities. Once the fundamentals were understood, it was quickly determined that the EOC could be virtualized to support First Nation communities and partners.

A year later, the virtual FNESS EOC remains in operation, meeting weekly to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and seasonal wildfire and flood risks. The goal of the EOC is to ensure BC First Nations receive the support they need to stay safe and healthy.

USEFUL LINKS

- **COVID-19 vaccines and Indigenous peoples**
 - » **COVID-19 vaccines: get the facts **NEW****
 - » **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)**
- **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.

REGIONAL CONTACTS

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

aadnc.iscbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca.

- **Acting 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: covid19needs@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.

