

## COVID-19 Message from ISC - BC Region March 27, 2020 - Update#10

Good afternoon,

On the close of the second week of Indigenous Services Canada enacting its business continuity plan, we can look back and see how far we've come in activating the structures and processes we need to serve First Nations in British Columbia. We can also see more of the road ahead and, with your help, identify what we need to prioritize to mitigate the non-health related impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in your communities.

### **Food Security**

We recognize that food security is a concern for many communities in British Columbia. Indigenous Services Canada has created a small Food Security Team to manage expectations in meeting your community's food security needs particularly for those who are most remote and vulnerable. The Food Security Team is working proactively with our partners including the First Nations Health Authority and Emergency Management BC to respond to issues of availability of foods and critical supplies to identify ways in which communities can access bulk ordering of food and delivery where there is a shortage and distribution challenge. As we gather more information on this, we will promptly share it.

For food security questions or concerns, please e-mail [aadnc.isbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca](mailto:aadnc.isbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca), where your inquiry will be routed to a food security surge team member for response within 24 hours.

Funding enhancements under our Emergency Management and Social Development authorities will be sent to all BC First Nations for April 1, 2020, based on a formula that includes factors such as population, remoteness, and community wellbeing index.

For a list of eligible activities under these programs, please see below.

### **Emergency Management Assistance Program (EMAP)**

- The types of expenses covered under EMAP include:
- incremental wage costs, including temporary hires and overtime
- rental of special equipment
- set-up costs for one-time preventative measures
- insurance and fuel costs of response vehicles
- care, feeding and accommodation of human resources separate from health care professionals, if required (contractors and temporary hires)
- communications (satellite phones, cell phone usage above and beyond normal use)
- water and household supplies (i.e., providing food and water if there is a concern that a shortage may occur)
- On the land activities and costs related to food security for the community

### **Emergency Social and Cultural Supports supported under EMAP:**

- Fishing, hunting or harvesting to distribute traditional foods
- Buying, preparing and delivering food to Elders or those who are immune-compromised and therefore have to self-isolate
- Replacing hot lunch programs for children if they are no longer able to access it in schools or daycares

### **Income Assistance Emergency/Disaster Supplement (Special Needs):**

- Additional Special Needs funding to support communities in meeting the basic needs for Income Assistance, Disability Assistance and those eligible for Hardship assistance

### **Supports for Individuals for all members:**

- An increase of \$300/child through the Canada Child Benefit (CCB), reflected on May 2020, CCB Payments (no need to apply if you are already in receipt of the Canada Child Benefit)
- A one-time special GST payment, distributed in early May 2020, of \$400 for a single person or \$600 for a couple for those who currently receive a regular GST credit (no need to apply if you are already in receipt of the GST credit). This will be sent to you in early May
- The Canada Emergency Response Benefit, if an individual meets one of the following circumstances:
  - workers who must stop working due to COVID-19 and do not have access to paid leave or other income support.
  - workers who are sick, quarantined, or taking care of someone who is sick with COVID-19.
  - working parents who must stay home without pay to care for children that are sick or need additional care because of school and daycare closures.
  - workers who still have their employment but are not being paid because there is currently not sufficient work and their employer has asked them not to come to work.
  - wage earners and self-employed individuals, including contract workers, who would not otherwise be eligible for Employment Insurance.

### **Jordan's Principle**

- Jordan's Principle and the Inuit Child First Initiative (CFI) continue to be available to fund products, services and supports for First Nation and Inuit children and youth.
- Our team is continuing to operate on a business as usual basis and the National Call Centre is available 24 x 7 during the current COVID-19 crisis that is causing much stress and uncertainty.
  - The Jordan's Principle Call Centre: 1-855-JP-CHILD (1-855-572-4453)
- If there are unmet needs of First Nations children related to COVID-19, families can apply to Jordan's Principle.

- Please note that there has been no change in process for making a request to Jordan's Principle or Inuit CFI.
- These requests will be considered on their own merit and will not follow a standard, formula-based or universal funding approach. The needs of specific children should be outlined in the request and the request should match the needs identified.

More information on these supports for individuals described above, can be found by accessing the following website:

[https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan/covid19-individuals.html#new\\_canada\\_emergency\\_response\\_benefit](https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan/covid19-individuals.html#new_canada_emergency_response_benefit)

### **Webinar hosted by FNPSS**

Thanks to those who brought their questions and suggestions today to a webinar hosted by the First Nations Public Service Secretariat. Bill Guerin, Associate Regional Director General, was there on behalf of ISC with over 150 participants – administrators and band office employees from around the province. He was joined by Chief Leah George-Wilson, Co-Chair of the First Nations Summit and Chief of Tsleil-Waututh Nation, to share information about measures put in place by ISC and her community in response to COVID-19. A big thank you to the FNPSS for hosting. The FNPSS has produced a number of [webinars](#) to support information sharing in this time of physical distancing all of which you can view on their website.

Bill fielded over 25 questions, and has promised ISC staff will follow up on those questions where details are still emerging. We know we have ongoing work to do to make sure that information gets to those who need it. These updates will continue – if not daily – as needed to share new information or best practices.

### **Partner Info**

One of the questions during the FNPSS webinar, asked for a list of all the supports available to communities and individuals through the federal government and province. Please see below these links:

**NEW Summary Page for Fed and Provincial Support on FNPSS COVID-19 page:**

<https://fnps.ca/covid-19#fedprovsupport>

**For more information about yesterday's provincial announcement please see:**

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020PSSG0020-000568>

**For more information about BC's COVID-19 emergency preparedness and response:**

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support>

## Question of the Day

### **What further funding is being made available to First Nations communities, and how can they directly access it for COVID-19 related costs?**

On March 18, the Prime Minister proposed increased resources for First Nations for preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The announcement proposed additional resources to support resiliency and preparedness of communities and we are working closely with the First Nation Health Authority (FNHA) and Emergency Management BC (EMBC) to ensure seamless service and leverage each organization's capabilities.

On March 26, 2020, Minister Miller outlined details of the new distinctions-based \$305 million Indigenous Community Support Fund, to address immediate needs in First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation communities related to COVID-19.

The Indigenous Community Support Fund includes \$215 million for First Nations (of which \$41,129,000 is for BC) and \$30 million for Métis Nation communities (of which \$3,625,000 is for BC). The Fund also includes \$15 million for regional and urban, and off-reserve Indigenous organizations supporting their members living away from their communities, and to regional organizations such as Friendship Centres.

These funds could be used for measures including, but not limited to:

- support for Elders and vulnerable community members,
- measures to address food insecurity,
- educational and other support for children,
- mental health assistance and emergency response services,
- preparedness measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

To learn more about the Indigenous Community Support Fund and how to access funding, please visit <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1585189335380/1585189357198>

These funds will flow directly to Indigenous communities, with maximum flexibility to help adapt responses to address local needs. Details of funding allocation and parameters around the funding is currently being worked out and we are hoping to have more information out to you soon.

Also important to note, portions of the overall \$305 million is only part of what is available to all Canadians living on-and-off reserve. There are other supports available such as Employment Insurance, the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (see above), to name a few.

## **National Information**

[Public Health Agency of Canada: Infographics](#)

[The COVID-19 First Nations Community Guide on Accessing Additional Supports](#)

The Hope for Wellness Help Line is open 24 hours a day 7 days a week to support members of your community experiencing emotional distress and may be reached directly by dialling **1-855-242-3310** or via online chat at: [hopeforwellness.ca](https://www.hopeforwellness.ca)

## **Useful Links**

### **First Nations Public Service Secretariat**

[As Band offices close their doors in response to the COVID-19 threat, the FNPSS is providing a platform for Band administrators to access and review timely information.](#)

### **First Nations Health Authority**

[Summary Page of COVID-19 information and response](#)

### **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.](#)

### **Public Health Agency of Canada**

[Epidemiological summary of COVID-19 cases in Canada: includes map and other data](#)

## **Regional Contacts**

We've set up a dedicated e-mail address if you have any non-health COVID-19-related questions and requests, please email: [aadnc.isbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca](mailto:aadnc.isbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca). The e-mail address and other information are also available on the FNPSS website.

Catherine Lappe  
Regional Director General  
**604-340-7703**

Bill Guerin  
Associate Regional Director General  
**604-803-9476**

Indigenous Services Canada – British Columbia Region