

COVID-19 Message from ISC - BC Region April 3, 2020 - Update#15

Good afternoon,

We would like to thank everyone who participated in our inaugural ISC BC Region Town Hall Webinar hosted by the First Nations Public Service Secretariat (FNPSS) featuring ISC and FNHA. The Webinar was an important opportunity for us to hear directly from First Nation leaders in the Region so we can understand the top-of-mind issues in your communities. This way, we can focus our efforts on your priorities.

We wanted to follow up on the FNPSS's apology for the technical glitch that resulted in many people not being able to attend our Town Hall Webinar this morning. We understand that over 225 tried to get on the line with only about half being successful which certainly shows there is an appetite and we will be hosting another Town Hall in the near future. We appreciate that you took the time to make yourselves available to listen in on such short notice and regret that you were unable to join in as planned.

For your reference, the recording of the full webinar can now be viewed at:

https://zoom.us/rec/play/tMYsf-9r283E4CTsASDCvRxW466faKs2nJN_fNbmkinVyMKZlryMrVHY-SqmYCasn31VfWmQDx0k-x

Technology can be a great uniter but can also be a challenge as we try to innovate and push it to its limits! We will be sure to keep you apprised on details of future Town Hall's as we organize them.

Updates

ISC BC Region is now receiving more than 1000 emails and calls per day – these can be questions from First Nations, partner organizations or from our provincial partners. Rest assured, we are answering every one of these – and have committed to responding within 48 hrs but as many are wide-ranging, it can be a challenge and we are doing our best to respond as quickly as possible.

In this update we would like to answer a few of the questions from today's Webinar which revolved around the themes of: food security; the use and administration of emergency funds; and, funding sources and eligibility:

What is the Government of Canada doing to address issues of First Nations food security?

We know many of you have concerns about food security and today the Government of Canada took another step in addressing that issue. The Prime Minister pledged \$100 million this morning to support national, regional, and local organizations across Canada that are able to reach people and communities experiencing food insecurity. That means food banks, the Salvation Army and organizations working to meet the urgent food needs of Canadians, including Indigenous peoples and Northern populations.

This funding will be used to purchase food and other basic necessities. It will help these organizations find new, creative ways to reach people in need, so they can continue to carry out their important work while respecting physical distancing guidelines.

In addition we have been working in three areas critically important to food security.

1. **Coordination with Other Levels of Government** – We are working with emergency management and ministries to look at the need for supplies and equipment across the province. We want to assure you that we are aware of the importance of food security and that the Province sees all communities as a priority, including First Nation communities. They realize that this is not just a federal priority and will be working with us to address your concerns.
2. **Use of Emergency Funds** – Allocations, that communities have already received, allow for the flexibility to purchase food to address the most urgent needs of your vulnerable populations, as determined by the community. If you have questions regarding these allocations we are available to discuss your needs around the use of funds and distribution or resources.
3. **Access to Traditional Foods** – We have been, and will continue to meet with all federal departments to discuss issues such as permits that impact hunting and fishing and access to traditional foods. We have a small team dedicated to reaching out to communities to try to identify how we can assist where there are true supply issues. We recognize that we are all looking at supply shortages across the country and we will see how needs can be met.

Could you please provide clarity as to what the emergency funds should be used for? Are they meant to also support those off-reserve, and what about the homeless population?

In general, the funds allocated under the Emergency Management Assistance Program are based on on-reserve numbers and are intended for on-reserve expenditures to assist communities to enhance to resilience and preparedness and to support collective approaches to meet community needs rather than funds for individuals.

We are working together with provincial partners and other government departments to provide enhanced funding and reach out to the most vulnerable populations. There are efforts underway including a cross-B.C. working group in response to the needs of vulnerable populations such as those facing homelessness. The recent influx of money has helped to bring conversations to ground and hopefully will help people at an individual level.

While the focus of Emergency Management Assistance Program funds has been on First Nations communities, we are in the process of expanding the terms of this funding. We understand that all situations are different. If a community is exploring the idea of supporting off-reserve needs or supporting members returning homes, funds may be directed to those needs. However, we encourage you to research the other funding sources available to ensure you are not duplicating existing programs. A list of all [benefits and funding support](#) is available on the [FNPSS](#) website as well the [COVID-19: First Nations Community Guide on Accessing Additional Supports](#).

Finally, we would like to reassure you that we are aware that COVID-19 is only one of the concerns that may be facing your communities. The funding from the Emergency Management Assistance Program is

specific to COVID-19. We are aware that we are moving towards flood and wildfire season and there will be separate funds to deal with those sorts of emergencies. Please feel free to contact us directly with specific questions regarding the use of funds by email: aadnc.iscbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca.

We want to thank everyone for their participation and express once again that while we were not able to get to everyone's question during the Webinar, we are committed to following up on questions not answered live and a recording of the Webinar will be available on the First Nation Public Service Secretariat website.

We will continue to provide information as well as program and funding details as they become available and we look forward to our next Town Hall Webinar.

Question of the Day

Q. How is the funding from the Indigenous Community Support Fund being distributed across Canada? How much is being allocated to First Nations in BC?

A. 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 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,
- 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>.

Partners

First Nations Public Service Secretariat

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

First Nations Health Authority

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

Premier's task force to support B.C. economy during, after COVID 19

[https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020PREM0046-000618National Information](https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020PREM0046-000618National%20Information)

National Information

Trudeau announces \$100M to help address urgent food needs to those in need, including Indigenous communities. #cdnpoli #covid19

<https://twitter.com/CBCOlivia/status/1246095185748135938>

Prime Minister announces support for food banks and local food organizations

<https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2020/04/03/prime-minister-announces-support-food-banks-and-local-food>

Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan/covid19-individuals.html>

Employment Insurance and Canada Emergency Response Benefit

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/news/2020/03/introduces-canada-emergency-response-benefit-to-help-workers-and-businesses.html>

[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

Useful Links

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 email address if you have any non-health COVID-19-related questions and requests, please email: aadnc.isbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca The email address and other information are also available on the FNPSS website.

Thank you,

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Indigenous Services Canada – British Columbia Region