

COVID-19 MESSAGE FROM ISC BC REGION

UPDATE #34 / May 4, 2020

Good Afternoon,

The COVID-19 pandemic is impacting Indigenous communities in many ways. We've heard that whether the cases are close to communities or not, First Nations may be experiencing distress, anxiety and uncertainty. These are real and understandable reactions.

Indigenous Services Minister Marc Miller says he knows COVID-19 is affecting the mental health of Indigenous communities, particularly among those who are at a high risk from the illness or have families who are. "The apprehension and fear that exists within communities is real and has an impact on mental health."

Minister Miller also noted that the federal government is increasing the number of crisis intervention counsellors on shift at the Hope for Wellness helpline, which provides telephone and online support for First Nations, Inuit and Métis in English, French, Cree, Ojibway and Inuktitut.

As we begin Mental Health Week in Canada we want to remind you that there are mental wellness supports available to help.

We would also like to highlight a **message from Senior Medical Officer Dr. Nel Wieman, First Nation Health Authority**, as she talks about COVID-19 and the impact on mental health and wellness.

Additionally, FNHA has some additional Mental Wellness and cultural supports available:

- **Mental wellness and cultural supports available during the pandemic** (FNHA info sheet)
- **Staying Connected During the Pandemic** (FNHA poster)

HOPE FOR WELLNESS HELPLINE

Immediate, culturally safe telephone crisis intervention support for First Nations, Inuit and Métis 24 hours a day, seven days a week and the number is 1-855-242-3310.

Online chat: hopeforwellness.ca

KUU-US CRISIS RESPONSE SERVICES

First Nations Health Authority also offer 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).

UPDATE

Good mental health is so critical to our well-being, and yet it is often dismissed as less urgent or deserving of our care and attention. This leaves far too many to suffer in silence, fearing discrimination or stigma.

Today, Prime Minister Trudeau, joined other global leaders to **launch the Coronavirus Global Response**. This online pledging event aims to initially raise more than \$8 billion (USD) to help researchers and innovators develop solutions to test, treat, and protect people, and to prevent the further spread of COVID-19. To date, the

Government of Canada has announced investments of over \$850 million (CAD) which includes funding to:

- mobilize Canadian researchers' and life sciences companies' coronavirus and development of medical countermeasures; and,
- create strategies to tackle misinformation, stigma, and fear.

As community leaders, we know you are focussed on meeting the needs of your members in the short

and long-term. Over the weekend, the Prime Minister announced an **investment of \$240.5 million to develop, expand, and launch virtual care and mental health tools to support Canadians.**

One of the new initiatives this investment will support is **Wellness Together Canada**, an online portal that provides Canadians with free resources, tools, and professional support services to help with wellness and resilience, as well as mental health and substance use. It will also support a growing family of digital products that includes the Canada COVID-19 app, which helps people track their symptoms, receive the latest updates, and access trusted resources.

And as further measures to ease some of the social, emotional and economic impacts of COVID-19, the Government of Canada also announced yesterday that **families receiving the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) will get \$300 extra per child in May** to help them deal with the added pressures of COVID-19.

Lastly, on Friday, May 1, Bill C-15 – “An Act respecting Canada emergency student benefit” was passed. Under the **Canada Emergency Student Benefit**, eligible post-secondary students and recent graduates who have seen their education and job prospects hampered by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic will receive \$1,250 a month from May to August. For those who have a disability, or are taking care of someone else, they will receive \$2,000, which is equal to the amount received by those eligible for the **Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)**. The target for applications being open is mid-May.

PARTNER INFORMATION

Indigenous Tourism BC (ITBC) announced today that it is **releasing \$300,000 in financial support for tourism businesses through the Emergency Relief Fund**, a program that offers immediate finances to Indigenous businesses impacted by the global pandemic. To date, ITBC received applications from every tourism region in the province and is granting 71 businesses with emergency relief dollars.

Dr. Bonnie Henry recently released **an order and guidelines to protect people working in the silviculture**

RESPONSE TO COVID-19 SURVEY

Share your ideas and input!

B.C. is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic with a co-ordinated province-wide approach. Our priority is to protect British Columbians and ensure we can effectively respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 questionnaire topics include:

- Responses to government measures, actions, and decisions
- Current levels of concern
- Personal and job impacts
- Use and need of information sources

Share your feedback by completing the online questionnaire.

sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. The order sets out prevention, control and inspection protocols to help contractors, tree planting operators and their employees reduce the risks of COVID-19.

In addition, BC has implemented on-site security at motels and hotels to ensure tree planters adhere to the orders and guidance. The framework was developed through a partnership between the FNHA, Northern Health and Provincial Health Services Authority. The work is guided by the principles of cultural safety and humility, and provides flexibility so local leaders in rural, remote and Indigenous communities can adapt it to meet their unique needs. It will be implemented through full engagement with each of the communities’ local leaders.

BC is also **deferring stumpage fees** with interest for three months for Tree Farm Licence, Replaceable Forest Licence and First Nations’ Woodlands Licence holders who are in good financial standing with the Province. They also must be following through on their reforestation obligations.

This will help eligible companies pay employees, pay contractors and pay other bills needed to safely keep their doors open or reopen them faster.



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

We believe we are better when we share our knowledge. We are pleased to share resources and updates being offered by communities:

- **Westbank First Nation** posted a video from Councillor Jordan Coble about Mental Health Week and opening discussions and creating awareness.

QUESTIONS OF THE DAY

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

Food security remains a frequently asked question for ISC-BC Region. On April 3, 2020, the Prime Minister announced \$100 million 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 of 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 supply chain issues in procuring food. We recognize that we are all looking at supply shortages across the country and we will see how needs can be met.

NATIONAL INFORMATION

- **Taking care of your mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic**
- **Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Prevention and risks**
- The Government of Canada has made announcements regarding financial assistance for those who will be impacted during these unprecedented times – these individuals and businesses are encouraged to apply for assistance. You can find further information on how to apply for financial or economic support at: Canada.ca/coronavirus and [Questions and Answers on the Canada Emergency Response Benefit](#).
- For a great description of what flattening the curve means, consider watching [Prime Minister Trudeau's video tweet](#)
- **Public Health Agency of Canada**
- **Resources for Canadian Businesses**
- **Transport Canada – COVID-19 measures, updates, and guidance issued by Transport Canada**



USEFUL LINKS

- Economic measures to help stabilize the economy during this challenging period. As information is rapidly changing we strongly encourage you to visit the **federal** and **provincial financial supports** websites often for the latest information.
- 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.
- With the help of BCFC, the First Nations Public Service Secretariat has posted a **COVID-19 Resources for All BC Individuals**.

REGIONAL CONTACTS

We've set up a dedicated email for any non-health COVID-19-related questions and requests:
aadnc.iscbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca.

