

COVID-19 Message from ISC - BC Region March 19, 2020 - Update#4

Good afternoon,

While the COVID-19 situation evolves rapidly, be assured that the safety and well-being of you and your communities is top of mind for as we work remotely.

We continue to work with our partners such as the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) and Emergency Management British Columbia (EMBC) to ensure a coordinated approach to the evolving situation and to be able to respond as quickly as possible.

As shared in our last update, emergency/disaster supplement funding under the Income Assistance program is available to First Nations persons in BC affected by COVID-19 and an advance is being forwarded to allow you to enact these provisions immediately. It is our intention to mirror the provisions as that the Province of BC who have recently expanded eligibility to assist during this period. **In order to assure a timely response to your needs we ask that you identify to us what additional resources you may require in the next couple weeks if possible.** For more information, call 1-888-440-4080 or e-mail aadnc.tsdbbsoutien-bsdwsupport-bc.aandc@canada.ca

We also want to inform you of the steps we have taken to facilitate the management of funding agreements during this challenging period. Some of you have identified difficulties in obtaining physical signatures on funding agreements and amendments to funding agreements due to social distancing and self-isolation measures in effect. In response, the Department has adopted a temporary solution which permits the acceptance of recipient approval for funding agreements and amendments by e-mail from an authorized official such as the Chief (or equivalent authorized official in the organization) with all Councilors (or other authorized signatories) copied on the e-mail approval. If you have a funding agreement that you have not been able to sign and return, please respond now to the e-mail provided when you received your funding agreement, with a copy to your Funding Service Officer. My office is following up on all funding agreements that have not been returned. Future funding agreements for signature will include these instructions.

In addition, in recognition that the current circumstances have impacted your ability to respond to the reporting obligations under your funding agreements, the Department is temporarily suspending any automatic halts in funding due to arrears on recipient reporting. Please note that these actions do not remove the reporting requirements entirely but provides additional flexibilities for the due dates of these reports.

We have also received multiple questions related to activities and events funded through Set funding that have had to be postponed past March 31 due to pandemic response planning or implementation. Please be assured that we are willing to issue a change the funding approach to Fixed or Flexible where possible.

Once again, if you have any COVID-19-related questions and requests, please email: aadnc.isbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca. This will help ensure all requests are tracked and responded to promptly.

Finally, we draw your attention to new funding to support women and children who are especially vulnerable during these troubling times. The Government of Canada has announced up to \$50 million to boost the capacity of women's shelters and sexual assault centres to manage or prevent a COVID-19 outbreak. This includes potential funding to facilities in First Nation communities. Details are still emerging but more information will be coming soon.

Thank you and take care,

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Indigenous Services Canada – British Columbia Region