

COVID-19 MESSAGE FROM ISC BC REGION

UPDATE #48 / June 3, 2020

Good Afternoon,

This week our thoughts are with families that continue to offer home-school instruction even as **over 60,000 children across British Columbia returned to in-class instruction in BC public schools including nearly 8000 First Nations students living on reserve**. We know many First Nations schools have suspended in-classroom learning and have made the choice to continue with online learning for the month of June.

Whether your students returned to school or not, we're hoping the rest of the school year brings good learning and success to your families and communities. Stay safe and healthy.

Stay the course
help limit the spread of COVID-19



Please watch this animated video:
Physical distancing: Stop the spread of COVID-19 in Indigenous communities



UPDATES

Commemorating and Honouring Indigenous Lives and Indigenous History

June is National Indigenous History Month. While celebrations and events may be different this year due to the pandemic, we can share and learn from stories, traditions and culture in new ways that still keep us together and connected. Throughout the month, the Government of Canada will be sharing recommendations of stories about Indigenous issues, cultures and history as part of #IndigenousReads. For more details, please read the **joint statement** by Minister Bennett, Minister Miller, Minister Vandal, and Minister Guilbeault.

There were some significant dates this week:

- **June 2** marked the fifth anniversary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action. Former students and families who came forward to share their truth showed tremendous courage. The Honourable Carolyn Bennett states that it is

only by increasing our collective understanding of the damage done by colonial policies that we will break down barriers and racism towards Indigenous peoples in Canada. You can **read her full statement here**.

- **June 3** is the one-year anniversary of the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Ending this national tragedy through the co-development and implementation of a distinctions-based National Action Plan is an urgent priority for the Government of Canada. Together with families and survivors, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people, Indigenous organizations, and other partners, Canada will redouble efforts to develop a truly National Action Plan to honour those we have lost, help their families heal, and protect current and future generations. The **Government of Canada's full statement is available here**, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also released a **statement**.



Canada announces interest relief for First Nations through the First Nations Finance Authority

On June 2, the Honourable Carolyn Bennett announced that Canada is working collaboratively with the First Nations Finance Authority (FNFA) to provide financial relief so that First Nations with existing loans under the FNFA will receive **interest payment relief**.

This \$17.1 million in funding will directly help First Nations to maintain financial stability and lessen the economic impacts of COVID-19 – as well as allocate financial resources to other critical needs – as they focus on the health and safety needs of their communities during the pandemic.

“Many First Nations are in need of financial relief so they can continue to provide critical supports to their people. By working with the FNFA, we have been able to develop specific initiatives such as community interest relief, as well as adapt broad-based federal financial supports to better support Indigenous peoples in Canada and Indigenous businesses in meeting their needs,” said Minister Bennett.

The announcement pleased Mr. Ernie Daniels, President and Chief Executive Officer of the FNFA who was appearing before the Standing Committee of Indigenous and Northern Affairs when the announcement was made.

Canada Emergency Response Benefit FAQs

The **Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)** gives temporary financial support to employed and self-employed Canadians who have stopped working because of COVID-19. It provides \$500 a week for up to 16 weeks. [Reminder: only apply for the CERB through either Service Canada or the CRA, not both.]

WHO CAN APPLY?

To be eligible, you must meet ALL of the following conditions:

- You have stopped working because of reasons related to COVID-19 or are eligible for Employment Insurance regular or sickness benefits or have exhausted your Employment Insurance regular or fishing benefits between December 29, 2019 and October 3, 2020

- You did not quit your job voluntarily
- You reside in Canada and are at least 15 years old
- You earned a minimum of \$5,000 (before taxes) in the last 12 months, or in 2019, from one or more of the following sources:
 - » employment income OR self-employment income
 - » provincial benefit payments related to maternity or parental leave

Tax-exempt income can be included in the \$5,000. The CERB is available to employees of Band councils, employees of businesses owned by Band councils, and employees of private businesses owned by First Nations individuals. There is no restriction in the eligibility criteria on the type of employer for which the employee worked.

WHAT ARE POSSIBLE REASONS FOR JOB OR INCOME LOSS?

- You have had to stop or will stop working because of COVID-19
- Your work hours have been reduced because of COVID-19 (e.g. quarantine or illness)
- You are taking care of children or other dependents because their care facility is closed due to COVID-19
- Your regular or fishing EI benefits have run out (any time between December 29, 2019 and October 3, 2020)

WILL THE CERB BE TAXABLE IF IT'S RECEIVED BY SOMEONE WITH STATUS LIVING ON RESERVE?

The CERB a person receives will be treated in the same way as the total income that entitled that person to the CERB.

- The CERB is tax-exempt if the total income that entitled a person to the CERB was tax exempt under section 87 of the *Indian Act*.
- The CERB is taxable if the total income that entitled a person to the CERB was taxable.
- The CERB is partially tax-exempt if the total income that entitled a person to the CERB is partially exempt from tax. The CERB will be treated as exempt in the same proportion as the total income that was partially exempt.

HOW CAN A PERSON APPLY IF THEY HAVE NEVER FILED A TAX RETURN?

Indigenous workers who have never filed a tax return can still apply for the CERB as long as they meet the eligibility requirements. In this situation, the applicant will need to register their Social Insurance Number (SIN) with the CRA by calling 1-800-959-8281. Current Income Assistance (IA) clients should consult with their Band Administration Office before applying. There may be impacts on current or future IA benefits. Claimants found to be ineligible for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit will be contacted to make arrangements to repay any applicable amounts.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO EARN SOME INCOME AND STILL RECEIVE CERB?

Yes, however, you cannot have earned more than \$1,000 in employment and/or self-employment income for a period of 14 or more consecutive days within the four-week benefit period of your claim. When submitting subsequent claims, you cannot have earned more than \$1,000 in employment and/or self-employment income for the entire four-week benefit period of your new claim.

On a related note, new and updated information about the CERB and other federal initiatives is now available at these links:

- [CERB – Questions and Answers](#)
- [Examples of how COVID-19 supports can help Indigenous individuals](#)

PARTNER INFORMATION

New Resource Guide

The First Nations Leadership Council has developed a [Resource Guide](#) to help Indigenous communities, businesses and individuals navigate to access supports and resources during COVID-19. It provides links on how to access funding and its respective criteria including the Emergency Management Assistance Program and the Canada Summer Jobs program for students.

BC Child and Youth in Care Week

This year is the 10th anniversary of BC Child and Youth in Care Week. Earlier this week, Mary Teegee, Chair of the Delegated Aboriginal Agencies Directors Forum, shared a message encouraging everyone to take their unique spirit and talents and share them with the world:

“This week we come together to celebrate you, to hold you up!

As Indigenous people we are strong and resilient. Our history has been one of hurt and injustice but we have survived and thrived. Remember where you come from and who you are. Regardless of what has happened to bring you to your current circumstance, you are children of chiefs, you belong to your land and inside you flows the strength of your Ancestors.

It is us up to each and every one of you to take up the gifts of the Creator – your unique spirit, energy, personality, culture, traits and talents – and share them with the world. These gifts are what make you Indigenous and what give you your light.

We celebrate you this week to remind you that you matter and that your single being makes us stronger as Indigenous people. There comes a point in all our lives when we decide what kind of future we want for ourselves.

When you come to that point, remember this: you are part of a broader vision, part of a vibrant people and you have a responsibility to be your best self, whatever that may be.

By deciding to take up the gifts of the Creator you are making us all stronger and for this we thank you. In difficult times don't forget to reach out for support and don't ever forget that you are loved.”

— Mary Teegee, Chair of the Delegated Aboriginal Agencies Directors Forum

Spring Flooding

Many parts of BC have experienced or are experiencing flooding, and Emergency Management BC is **asking residents in affected regions to take precautions**. They have shared some practical advice on how to prepare:

1. **Protect your home.** Move equipment and other assets from low-lying areas to higher ground, where possible. Clear perimeter drains, eaves troughs and gutters. Sandbags also help.
2. **Create grab-and-go bags.** Assemble an individual emergency grab-and-go bag for each member of your household with the essentials you'll need if you are asked to evacuate.
3. **Recognize the danger signs.** If you live near a waterway, a change in water colour or rapid change in water level (especially a drop) could indicate a problem upstream.
4. **Protect your assets if possible.** If you face a threatening flood situation, park vehicles away from streams and waterways, move electrical appliances to upper floors and anchor fuel supplies.
5. **Stay in contact with emergency partners should it be necessary to evacuate.**

In the event of flooding, here are some tips on what to avoid:

- **Steer clear of river shorelines:**
 - » Keep away from river edges and shorelines. During periods of high flow, river banks may be unstable and more prone to sudden collapse. Stay well away and keep young children and pets away from the banks of fast-flowing streams and flooded areas or bridges.
- **Do not drive through flood water:**
 - » Never attempt to drive or walk in flood water. Just 152 millimetres (six inches) of fast-moving water can knock over an adult. And 0.6 metres (two feet) of rushing water can carry away most vehicles, including SUVs and pickup trucks.
- **Landslide risk:**
 - » Heavy rain and snowmelt may contribute to landslides and dangerous debris in creeks and waterways. Be safe and do not go down to watch the rushing water. If you notice trees beginning to lean or bend near your home, or cracks developing in the hillside, consult an engineer or contact local authorities.

Useful links:

- [The Flood Preparedness Guide](#)
- [Tips on how to prepare grab-and-go bags](#)
- [Information on evacuation alerts and orders](#)
- [Follow EMBC on Twitter](#)
- [BC River Forecast Centre](#)
- [Drive BC – road conditions](#)

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

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

- **Tahltan** shared photos of the wild rose pins their members created to show appreciation for essential workers that live in the community.
- **Quatsino First Nation** shared an information sheet on protecting your family from COVID-19 while widening your social circle.
- **Tsilhqot'in National Government** shared that after a five-year journey, their solar farm is finally operational as of May 28. They also noted that TNG employees will be returning to their offices on June 3, but will remain closed to the public until further notice.
- **Lower Similkameen Indian Band** shared some emergency preparedness links.
- **Ucluelet First Nation** shared some safety tips and a wildlife activity report from WildSafeBC. They also posted some information on benefit payments and tax filing.
- **Tobacco Plains Indian Band** shared information on a Virtual Indigenous Peoples Day celebration.
- **Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc** shared information on a virtual regional conversation with BC's Human Rights Commissioner that will take place on June 11.

QUESTION OF THE DAY

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The **Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB)** provides income support to eligible post-secondary students and recent graduates who may be unable to secure and retain summer employment due to COVID-19.

The Canada Student Loan Program (CSLP) and the CESB are not connected. If a student has defaulted with their student loans they would still be eligible for the CESB provided they meet the eligibility criteria.

Additionally, there is currently a six-month student loan repayment pause – this includes loans that are in good standing, as well as loans in collections with CRA. It took effect on March 30 and ends on September 30, 2020.

More information can be found here: **Canada Student Loans – COVID-19**.

Information on federal supports for youth, post-secondary students, and recent graduates, secondary students can be found at **Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan**.

NATIONAL INFORMATION

- **Accessing student financial benefits and support during the COVID-19 outbreak (NEW)**
- **Accessing financial benefits and support during the COVID-19 outbreak (NEW)**
- **On-line Resources for Indigenous Communities – Food and COVID-19 (NEW)**
- **Service Canada Programs and Services – for youth (NEW)**
- **Service Canada Programs and Services – for seniors (NEW)**

- **Service Canada Programs and Services – for businesses (NEW)**
- **Practical advice, articles and information to help you #GetReal about how you really feel**
- **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 business 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**.
- **Public Health Agency of Canada**
- **Resources for Canadian Businesses**
- **Transport Canada – COVID-19 measures, updates, and guidance issued by Transport Canada**

USEFUL LINKS

- For information about economic measures to help stabilize the economy, please 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**.

