

COVID-19 Message from ISC - BC Region March 20, 2020 - Update#5

Good afternoon,

We're writing again to provide a recap of the week and update you and your communities on the measures Indigenous Services Canada is taking to respond to your needs during the rapidly evolving COVID-19 emergency.

First off, thank you very much for participating in this morning's Indigenous Leadership Update on COVID-19 town hall. I greatly appreciated your comments during and after the call. The town hall was certainly evidence of the partnerships we have forged with your communities, the First Nations Health Authority, and provincial officials.

It's important to reiterate we are all in this together and that we are working hard to set up clear processes and information sharing. No door is the wrong door. If your community is in need, please reach out to us – be it the First Nations Health Authority, Emergency Management BC, or Indigenous Services Canada.

While ISC works on addressing questions that were raised this week and during today's town hall, here are other updates.

Business Continuity

The 1138 Melville building is currently closed and undergoing a deep cleaning. We anticipate the building will be re-opened for critical functions by mid-next week. We will keep you posted once we have a confirmed date. We do not anticipate the Status Card Counter to be reopened in the immediate future.

Information Sharing

We will continue to provide information, program and funding details as they become available. We ask that if your community becomes unable to provide any essential services to your members, that you please contact ISC, BC Region as soon as possible so that we can work together on solutions.

Additionally, if you have an election coming up in the foreseeable future, we will be in touch or feel free to contact us to discuss what mitigations or other measures might be required.

For non-health related questions and requests during this time, please email: aadnc.iscbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca. This will help ensure all requests are tracked and responded to promptly.

For COVID-19 updates, follow Catherine Lappe on Twitter: @Catherine_RDGBC

Support for Social Distancing

Given the very fluid situation with respect to virus transmission, we would like to reinforce the importance of practicing social distancing in order to prevent virus transmission, and to remind everyone of the importance of self-monitoring for symptoms.

Regional and national health officials have been urging the public to practice social distancing to prevent the spread of infection and the requirement to socially isolate if we have travelled or may have come in contact with an infected person (*please see attached [info graphic for you to post in your community](#)*).

Dr. Theresa Tam, head of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), says "We need to plank the curve, not just flatten it" when referring to the need to stop the escalating number of cases. The First Nations Health Authority is also actively monitoring the situation and is taking the threat seriously.

The Department understands the particular vulnerability of Indigenous communities. The Honourable Marc Miller, Minister of Indigenous Services has stated we need to back up our concern with action and this is what we have done.

Your leadership is critical for protecting your members and helping Canada to succeed in preparing and responding to the public health crisis. We appreciate the difficulty of weighing the social and cultural benefits of any community gathering against the very real risk to your elders and knowledge keepers.

We commit to continuing to provide these updates in a timely manner and responding to your requests for information and assistance as soon as we are able.

Thank you and please stay safe,

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Indigenous Services Canada – British Columbia Region