

COVID-19 Message from ISC - BC Region March 24, 2020 - Update#7

Good afternoon,

In Vancouver's West End, near where our offices are situated, residents have taken to standing on their balconies at 7 p.m. each evening to clap and cheer for the health care workers on the front line of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In this, our 7th message, we want to give a shout out for our many partners working to support First Nations and minimize the health, economic and social impacts of the situation.

We want to applaud the efforts of First Nations leadership and community members also working to mitigate the affect of COVID-19 at home, along with our partners such as the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) and Emergency Management British Columbia (EMBC) that have been working to ensure a coordinated approach to supporting the needs of First Nations during this crisis.

We also want to again recognize the efforts of the First Nations Public Service Secretariat (FNPSS) which has provided a platform on their [website](#) for Band administrators to access and review timely information from Indigenous Services Canada and our partners. The FNPSS also recently organized a webinar for First Nations to hear Councillor Deanna George of Tsleil-Waututh Nation and COO Sandra Olsen of Nak'azdli Whut'en share the challenges and successes their communities had in responding to the pandemic. More of these virtual sessions are planned. The first session is available to watch here: https://zoom.us/rec/share/1-5-LYnt-01OGqfs6kXya5whDtzPX6a8gHIY_PsOxI9o3KK6nxo7YevtrdCJvMo

We learned through feedback from the webinar that many communities are still wondering about the need for physical signatures on funding agreements and amendments while social distancing and self-isolation measures in effect. As previously shared ([Update #4 – viewable on the FNPSS website](#)), Indigenous Services Canada has adopted measures that include expanding the use of electronic signatures to finalize funding agreements and authorize payments, introducing a streamlined approach to process Amendments and to add funding to agreements (i.e., an Amendment Notice), the extension of deadlines, and increased flexibility to allow unspent funding to be carried forward to next fiscal year. This approach has been approved until such time as we return to normal operations.

First Nations have already received an e-mail from their Funding Services Officer with instructions on how to approve funding agreements by e-mail. If you have not received this e-mail, or are unsure whether it was received, please contact the Funding Services Officer assigned to your community, if you are unable to reach them, please contact: aadnc.isbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca

In addition, Parliament was called back today to debate the new \$305 million Indigenous Community Support Fund to address immediate needs in First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation communities. We will share more information as it becomes available.

The FNPSS webinar was also a good reminder of the many alternatives now available to support virtual gatherings. The Public Health Agency of Canada says now is the time for organizers to be canceling, postponing or modifying events where people gather. This includes social or cultural gatherings. Connecting in these rapidly changing times are important - so is protecting our health care workers and the most vulnerable members of our communities. Be creative. We will get through this together even as we resist meeting in person.

Catherine Lappe
Regional Director General
604-340-7703

Bill Guerin
Associate Regional Director General
604-803-9476

Indigenous Services Canada – British Columbia Region