

# COVID-19 Update

For more information:  
Canada.ca/coronavirus

Information for Indigenous communities:  
Canada.ca/coronavirus-info-indigenous



## INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA – Ontario Region – February 10, 2022

### Operation Remote Immunity winding down

After coordinating numerous vaccine clinics that served 25 Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority (SLFNHA) communities and six Weeneebayko Area Health Authority (WAHA) communities since Operation Remote Immunity (ORI) 3.0 began in mid-November 2021, the operation is winding down. The last clinic for a WAHA community will be held on February 11, and the final clinic in a SLFNHA community is on February 18, 2022.

Under a shared decision-making model, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) worked with SLFNHA and WAHA to provide booster (third) doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, as well as first, second, and pediatric doses. As of February 7, 2022, nearly 8,500 doses of the vaccine have been administered in remote communities under ORI 3.0.

The health and safety of community members is a key priority for the ORI teams. From the beginning of the operation, ISC implemented a detailed, multi-step mitigation strategy to minimize the risk of having a COVID-positive vaccination team member enter any communities. Some of those steps included:

- 1) Engaging with operation staff weekly to gather information regarding vaccination status to ensure that the team members have each had three doses of the COVID-19 vaccine themselves. While not federally mandated, it is often a community requirement that individuals entering the community must have three approved doses.
- 2) Two weeks before travelling into a community, the ORI staff received a KN95 mask, three rapid antigen test (RAT) kits, and instructions on how to self-administer the test for three consecutive days before a deployment. The final test is completed the morning of scheduled travel. If a team member tests positive, they are instructed to isolate and obtain a confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test if possible, in their region.
- 3) Rapid molecular tests are completed weekly. Daily rapid antigen testing and self-monitoring for symptoms continues for the week before staff are deployed into community.
- 4) ORI On-Site Commanders engage with communities prior to the scheduled mass vaccine clinics to discuss restrictions and requirements (such as PCR testing) prior to arrival in the community, and passes that information on to the ORI Team Leads and team members.

With the operation in its current form winding down, the teams will be transitioning back to surge work, which was in place between 2020 and November 2021. This enables additional maneuverability of the teams to offer surge work complementing resources on the ground in individual First Nations when requested by community leadership. This includes surge support for community-led immunization clinics, case and contact management, and testing.

### COVID-19 Vaccines for Ontario

\*All data reflects totals from 8 PM on February 9, 2022

- **47,423** Daily doses administered
- **31,153,087** Total doses administered
- **11,860,148** People fully vaccinated

### COVID-19 Cases

As of February 8, 2022 at 4:00 PM

- **8,278** confirmed on reserve
- **1,052** active cases
- **52** deaths
- **7,174** resolved (86.6%)

### Accessing the Ontario Portal and Requesting Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs)

First Nations communities can access Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) through Ontario's Provincial Antigen Screening Program. The Ontario Ministry of Indigenous Affairs (IAO) is working with the Ontario Ministry of Health and Indigenous Services Canada to expedite and fulfill requests for tests by Indigenous communities and organizations. Read [this guide](#) developed by IAO for detailed instructions on how to order RATs for your community.

**Operation Remote Immunity 3.0 – Week of February 14, 2022**

During the week of February 14, 2022, teams from the Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority are scheduled to visit Poplar Hill, Sandy Lake, Fort Severn and Kasabonika. Please note that this schedule is subject to change. First, second, and third doses for adults as well as pediatric doses are being offered in accordance with provincial guidance.

**Updated COVID-19 vaccine eligibility for ages 12+; new NACI guidance for ages 5+**

This week, the Province of Ontario released revised COVID-19 vaccine eligibility criteria. Effective immediately, First Nations, Inuit and Métis individuals ages 12 and older can receive a third dose (booster) of a COVID-19 vaccine. Non-Indigenous individuals who are 12-17 and have an underlying medical condition as defined by the Ontario Ministry of Health are also eligible for a booster shot. The recommended timing between second and third doses is three months (84 days).

Additionally, anyone ages 12 and older who meets the provincial criteria as an immunocompromised individual can receive a fourth dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. The recommended timing between third and fourth doses is three months (84 days).

**New infographic explaining vaccine intervals**

ISC Ontario Region published a [new infographic explaining when individuals are eligible for first, second, third and fourth doses](#) of the COVID-19 vaccine in Ontario. This infographic includes space for communities or Indigenous organizations to add their branding before distribution.

**Reminder: mental health benefits and support services are available**

The Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program provides professional mental health counselling to [eligible clients](#) to complement other mental wellness services that may be available in communities. Please visit [this webpage](#) to learn more.

Counselling and support is also available through the [Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program](#) for eligible former students and their families.

The First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line at 1-855-242-3310 or the online chat at [hopeforwellness.ca](#) is available for individuals experiencing emotional distress. It is toll-free and open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you or someone you know is in **immediate danger**, call **9-1-1** or the number for emergency services in your community.

**Funding for Perimeter Security**

Due to ongoing demonstrations against public health measures in Canada, you may have concerns about the potential for individuals entering your community refusing to follow local protocols. Funding for perimeter security at the entry and exit points of First Nations communities is available through the Indigenous Community Support Fund (ICSF). Since April 1, 2020, ISC Ontario Region has provided \$27,897,182.47 in funding for Ontario First Nations to support perimeter security. If this would be helpful for your community, apply for funding using the ICSF request form. It is available as a fillable [PDF](#) and [print copy](#) online. Once completed, send the form to [sac.covid-19fnihbontario.isc@canada.ca](mailto:sac.covid-19fnihbontario.isc@canada.ca).

Requests are assessed for eligibility and priority according to a variety of factors including COVID-19 risk, readiness, human impact and prior funding.

**ISC Survey on the COVID-19 Communications Toolkit**

During the pandemic, you or others in your community responsible for your communications efforts may have accessed the ISC [COVID-19 Toolkit](#).

ISC has set up a short survey to gather input on the usefulness of this toolkit. As you are the eyes and ears of your communities, your insight would be helpful as we refine the resources developed and shared by ISC. You can complete the survey [here](#). You are welcome to share the survey link with relevant staff in your community who may have additional feedback.

**Indigenous Services Canada's national COVID-19 news release**

ISC is publishing regular news releases to provide updates on COVID-19 in Indigenous communities across Canada. You can find the releases in the [newsroom section](#) of the ISC website.

**Updated NACI guidance on COVID-19 vaccination timing for individuals previously infected with SARS-CoV-2**

On February 4, 2022, the Public Health Agency of Canada released updated guidance from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) regarding the timing of COVID-19 vaccination after SARS-CoV-2 infection. These recommendations are based on current scientific evidence and NACI's expert opinion. You can read the [complete guidance document here](#), and a summary can be found [here](#).