

ONTARIO REGION UPDATE



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une version française, please email
Ontario Region Communications:
ontario-communications@sac-isc.gc.ca*



Mpox Virus Update

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently declared mpox – formerly known as monkeypox – a [public health emergency of international concern](#) after a new strain of the virus was identified. As of September 2024, the mpox risk to people in Ontario remains low. Most cases of mpox in Ontario have been reported in the Greater Toronto Area. There have been no reported cases of the newly identified strain in Canada.

What is mpox?

Mpox is a virus that is often spread through close, intimate contact. Most people fully recover from mpox within two to four weeks by managing discomfort at home. Severe mpox infection is rare. Antiviral treatment is available for [severe mpox infection](#) and those at high risk of severe disease.

Who is at a higher risk of mpox exposure?

People who may be at a higher risk of exposure to mpox are encouraged to talk to a healthcare provider about the mpox vaccine. This includes sex workers; sex work clients; and men who both have sex with other men and meet at least one other mpox vaccine criteria, such as having multiple sexual partners. Mpox does not only infect people who fit these criteria. Anyone can contract mpox if exposed to an infected person, regardless of their gender or sexuality. [Click on this link to read the full list of vaccine eligibility criteria from the Ontario Ministry of Health](#) (page 3).

Community health centers, local public health units, and other healthcare providers can give individual advice to patients and help them get vaccinated, if recommended. For more information, please visit the vaccine eligibility page above, [Ontario's public health page on mpox](#), or follow up with your local public health unit.



Help is here whenever you need it

Support is available 24/7 for all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Please find a list of mental health helplines below, able to provide culturally relevant support. To find more services and resources, [click here to go to the Indigenous mental health page](#).

Hope for Wellness Helpline

Phone: 1-855-242-3310

Online chat: www.hopeforwellness.ca

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Support Line

Phone: 1-844-413-6649

Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line

Phone: 1-866-925-4419

Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Services

Phone: 9-8-8 (call or text)



2024 Respiratory Illness Season

The end of September marks the beginning of more cold days, indoor events and respiratory infections, like COVID-19, the flu, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). The same [protection methods that have helped us](#) get through respiratory illness seasons of the past can continue to help us this year. The following lists include communication resources on these topics that you can share with your community.

Respiratory illnesses

- Social media graphic: [5 ways to prevent COVID-19, flu and RSV](#)
- Fact sheet: [Help reduce the spread of respiratory infectious diseases](#)
- Fact sheet: [Comparing respiratory illnesses](#)

COVID-19

- PSA scripts: [Follow public health guidelines and get vaccinated](#) (available in multiple languages including Oji-Cree, and Ojibwe dialects)
- Social media graphic: [Sweaters keep us warm; vaccines keep us safe](#)
- Poster: [A healthy community is a strong community](#)
- [Click here to access more shareable resources on the OneHealth Portal](#)

RSV

- Fact sheet: [Key facts about RSV](#)
- Poster: [Who can get the RSV vaccine](#)
- Social media graphics: [What is RSV?](#) (ZIP file)
- [Click here to access more shareable resources through Immunize Canada](#)

On the Land: Guides & Updates

As community members enjoy the fall weather in a number of ways, please consider sharing the following information and resources about how they can stay safe when hunting, fishing, or exploring the land.

Hunting and trapping

- Shareable poster: [Tips to stop the spread of avian flu](#)
- Re-shareable Facebook post: [Avian flu precautions](#)
- Webpage: [Food safety for hunting](#)
- Webpages: [Wildlife and avian influenza handling guidelines](#) and [reporting hotline](#)

Fishing

- Webpage: [Ontario fishing regulations summary](#)
- Webpage: [Ontario fishing notices and updates](#)
- Webpage: [Ontario.ca - Guide to eating fish](#)

Exploring (walking, hiking, etc.)

- Shareable poster: [Checking for ticks](#)
- Resources for educators and children: [Preventing tick bites](#)
- Information about Lyme disease: [Page 2, May Ontario Region Update](#)
- Webpage: [Working outdoors – information about hazardous plants](#)

Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB): Updates to Senior Management

We are pleased to share NIHB has adjusted its leadership structure to give more attention to each benefit area, increase service capacity, and support teams in delivering client services.

Meet our leadership team:

| Name | NIHB role/benefit area | E-mail |
|----------------|--|--|
| Adan Abdi | Overall leadership and direction in Ontario | Adan.Abdi@sac-isc.gc.ca |
| Julie Caves | Mental health, medical supplies and equipment, vision, dental, and pharmacy | Julie.Caves@sac-isc.gc.ca |
| Cynthia Lucier | Medical transportation, community development and contribution funding arrangement | Cynthia.Lucier@sac-isc.gc.ca |
| Jesse Hayes | Financial Services | Jesse.Hayes@sac-isc.gc.ca |



Our leadership team welcomes feedback and is happy to discuss the continuous improvement of NIHB client services. Please contact us through the emails listed above.

For information about specific client requests with NIHB, please call our direct client line at 1-800-640-0642, or view our NIHB Ontario Contacts Listing.



*Pictured left:
Adan Abdi, Director of Client and Community Response*

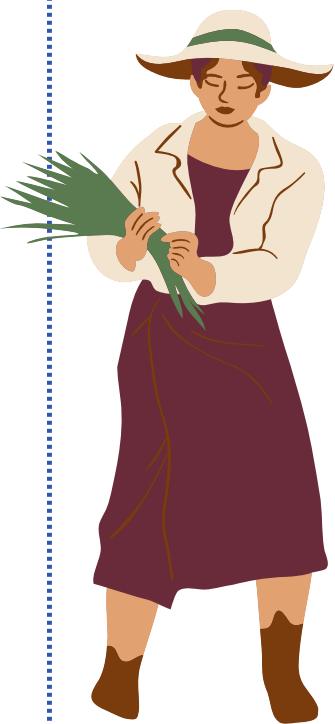
Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB): Changes to Sioux Lookout Medical Transportation

We invite you to [read our community notice](#) for details about changes in the booking process for medical transportation requests coordinated through the NIHB Sioux Lookout office. We've heard clients have experienced challenges and have made changes to make things better.

We are also introducing a new travel request form for this area. [Please view our poster to learn more.](#)

The new travel form is only for those served by the Sioux Lookout office. There are no process changes to other Ontario NIHB offices.





Funding Opportunity: Local Food Infrastructure Fund

The Local Food Infrastructure Fund (LFIF) will accept applications from **October 1 to 31, 2024** for Small Scale Projects that help prevent hunger through infrastructure needs. Funding requests for this stream should be between \$25,000 and \$100,000.

The LFIF supports locally-driven production-focused projects that strengthen community food security and resilience through the purchase and installation of infrastructure that increase the availability and accessibility of local, nutritious and culturally appropriate food for equity-deserving groups, particularly Indigenous and Black communities. More information is available on the [LFIF application website](#).

Indigenous applicants can contact the Indigenous Pathfinder Service for additional support:

E-mail: aafc.indigenouspathfinder-exploreautochtone.aac@agr.gc.ca

Phone: 1-866-367-8506



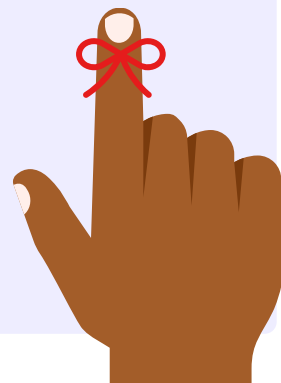
In Case You Missed It: Registering for Joint Gathering

Indigenous Services Canada, Ontario Region is pleased to invite you to this year's Joint Gathering from November 5 to 7, 2024. A welcome reception will be held on the evening of Monday, November 4.

The Joint Gathering brings together leadership from First Nations, Canada, and Ontario to strengthen relationships and define joint priorities. ISC will sponsor First Nations Chiefs (or a proxy) and a plus one. Sponsorship is also extended to Indigenous Representative Organization leadership, Executive Directors of Tribal Councils and Health Directors.

Book your hotel room by October 21 to receive the group rate on accommodations. [Click here to book your hotel](#) at the Sheraton Toronto Airport or call 1-866-932-7058 and reference "Joint Gathering 2024."

[Click here to register](#) for the Joint Gathering by October 25.



National Day for Truth and Reconciliation & Orange Shirt Day

Message from the ISC Ontario Region Leadership

In just a few days, we will mark the fourth annual National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (NDTR) and 12th annual Orange Shirt Day. Together, these days are critically important for all Indigenous and non-Indigenous people living in Canada and around the world to honour the Survivors of residential schools, the children who never returned home, and the families and communities of all those affected.

This day is also a time to reflect on the transformational work we are honoured to do alongside you; on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action; and on our ongoing role in reconciliation. We also know that true reconciliation goes beyond these Calls to Action – it requires a steadfast commitment to honouring your perspectives, respecting and supporting your right to self-determination, and working in partnership towards our shared goals.

While these days are a vital step as we continue on the path of reconciliation, it can also be very heavy. We understand the toll it takes to reflect on and recount the stories of Survivors and those taken from their loved ones, homes, and communities too soon. Please take good care, and seek support if you need it.

Lisa Westaway, Regional Executive

Michael O'Byrne, Regional Director General

Reflections from ISC Ontario Region Staff

ISC Ontario employees are commemorating NDTR through a number of office events. In one initiative throughout September, staff were invited to share what truth and reconciliation means to them, and how they put these principles into action in their work and personal lives. Written on orange paper t-shirts, their reflections decorate all of the regional offices as a reminder of our commitment to work in solidarity with you to improve the lives of Indigenous people.

I will take the time to reflect not only what Ontario Region and myself as RDG have done to support the journey of reconciliation, but to think about what actions I can take going forward to do better. I will also spend time in my own community and neighbourhood to listen and participate in the activities planned to recognize the day.

– **Michael O'Byrne**, Regional Director General

I spend this day outside in the woods; quiet and disconnected so that I can reflect and honour in a place that is both private and filled with life.

– **Sandy Berry**, Assistant Director of Nursing

This day reminds me to hold my children close. To think of our past and the trauma and devastation it has caused, and to go forward with more kindness, understanding, and the aim to do better and make a difference.

– **Jodi Wright**, Communications Advisor

I will honour and acknowledge the day with family, reflecting on the past, and recommitting to continuously working to ensure that historical practices are not repeated.

– **Lisa Westaway**, Regional Executive