

ONTARIO REGION UPDATE

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Help is here whenever you need it

Support is available 24/7 for all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. 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



Emergency Preparedness and Evacuation Resources



Through the wildfire and flood seasons, the Ontario Region Update will include any resources and information that could be helpful to communities at risk. Check these links regularly for updated information.

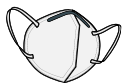
Click the following links for emergency preparedness and evacuation resources:

- *NEW* [Emergency evacuation information for Indigenous peoples webpage](#) and [poster](#). The webpage and downloadable poster include information on evacuation preparation, support for evacuees, temporary status cards, NIHB, and returning home.
- Government of Canada resource: [Wildfires – Canada.ca](#).
- Province of Ontario resource: [Forest fires | ontario.ca](#).
- [Wildfire risk map](#). This map shows the locations of Indigenous communities and their proximity to recent wildfires.

Protecting Your Health During Wildfires

Anyone's [physical health can be affected by exposure to wildfires](#). The following actions can help people limit their exposure to the harmful effects of wildfires and wildfire smoke.

- Check the smoke levels in your area to determine what your risk level is and what kind of protection you need. The [Air Quality Health Index](#) and local weather forecast are helpful tools for this.
- If you must spend time outdoors, consider wearing a well-fitted N95 mask or similar respirator. If you do not have this type of mask, your local leadership or Tribal Council may have some available for you. Community leaders can access NIOSH-certified N95 masks through the Government of Canada.
- Limit outdoor activity and tiring physical activities as much as possible.
- Keep windows and doors closed to protect indoor air from smoke. If available, use air conditioning or a portable air purifier to filter the air.
- If it is difficult to find clean, cool air, contact your band office or local leadership to find out if there are nearby cooling and clean air spaces you can use.



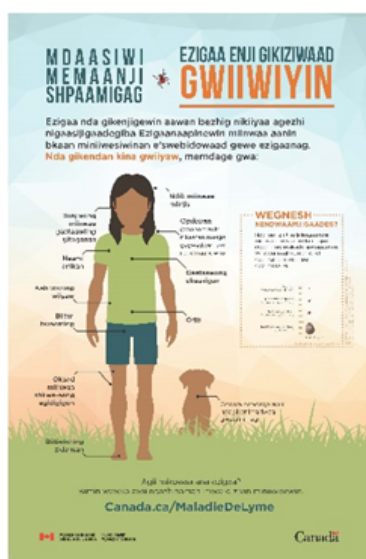
Some people may also struggle with their mental health during a wildfire or wildfire smoke event. [National mental health supports](#) remain active throughout the wildfires, including the [Hope for Wellness Help Line](#).

Preventing Tick Bites This Summer

Lyme disease is the most common illness spread by ticks in Canada. It is often **spread by blacklegged ticks** (or “deer ticks”), who tend to live in forested areas, tall grasses/weeds, forest brush and leaf piles. The best protection against Lyme disease is knowing how to prevent tick bites and doing regular body checks to remove attached ticks. Please consider sharing the following information with your community members to keep them safe during this tick season.

How to reduce your chances of Lyme disease

- Do full-body tick checks on yourself, family, and pets after you are finished outside. [Click here for instructions](#). Poster is available in English, Mohawk, and Eastern Ojibwe (examples below).
- Remove any ticks properly and as soon as possible. Removing attached ticks quickly reduces the chance of infection. [Click here for written instructions](#) on tick removal, or [here for an instructional video](#).
- Learn the [symptoms of Lyme disease](#) and seek medical attention if you have symptoms, even if you do not find a tick.
- Apply [insect repellent](#) containing DEET or Icaridin. Individuals ages 16+ can wear clothing treated with permethrin, which also repels ticks.
- Blacklegged ticks can be as small as a poppy seed, and up to the size of a sesame seed. Wear light coloured, long-sleeved clothing so you can spot them more easily.
- Remove any unnecessary leaf piles, brush, and long grass around your home.
- Walk on cleared trails made by humans whenever possible.



Pictured: Blacklegged tick on skin.

Pictured: posters in English and Ojibwe.

Protect Yourself From Blastomycosis

Blastomycosis is a rare and sometimes serious illness

that can be present throughout Ontario. Early diagnosis and treatment are the best tools to prevent serious health complications from an infection. Please consider sharing this information and [this poster with your community](#) so they have the tools to keep themselves safe.



Blastomycosis is an infection caused by breathing in spores from the *Blastomyces* fungus. It can grow in thickly wooded areas, and along streams and rivers where there is moist soil, leaves, rotting plants, and wood. Digging into contaminated soil or clearing wood are common ways to contract blastomycosis.

Symptoms of blastomycosis can take up to 3 months to develop and can include a cough that will not go away; difficulty breathing; chest pain, fever and/or night sweats; extreme fatigue; and unexplained weight loss. Blastomycosis cannot be passed between people, or between people and animals.

If **someone has blastomycosis symptoms**, or breathing issues that do not go away, they should see a healthcare provider as soon as possible and tell them they are worried about blastomycosis. Blastomycosis symptoms can look similar to those of other illnesses like a cold or flu. It is important to talk to a healthcare provider who can figure out what is going on and give the appropriate treatment.



Summer Jobs For Youth

The 2023 Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) program has officially opened to youth with more than 70,000 CSJ placements available to young people between the ages of 15 and 30. The last date to begin a job placement is July 24, 2023. Job opportunities can be found online through www.jobbank.gc.ca/youth or on the [Job Bank mobile app](#). Applicants can look for jobs in emerging sectors such as the digital economy, green jobs, environmental science and technology, and natural resources.

Community Story: Pikangikum's top security team



Pictured: Pikangikum Security Team outside the nursing station, March 12, 2023. **L to R:** Raphael Peters, Clavis Suggashie, Nadine Strang, Andrew Strang, Buster Kurahara, Mya Suggashie, Gary Strang, Liam Black, and Carlton King. **Not pictured:** Thirston Keeper, Damien Keeper, Bennett Quill, Darian Strang, Xavier Quill and Adrian Keeper.

In 2021, security guards from Pikangikum First Nation met with the Independent First Nations Alliance (IFNA) to outline what they felt was missing in their workplace and how it was impacting their ability to serve the community. Their advocacy led to better working conditions for the community-based team who keeps the peace at the Pikangikum Nursing Station. Now, in 2023, the community is seeing the benefits of a happier and better-supported security team.

Security employees now receive a higher salary, paid sick days, and are part of a team of full-time and casual employees. This means employees can use their paid leave without a gap in security or their own pay. They also now receive overtime pay and recognition when they work on holidays and community celebrations. This is especially important as the security employees are also members of Pikangikum First Nation. The improved security services are a combined effort by the community, IFNA, Pikangikum Health Authority, and Indigenous Services Canada, which provided funding to support these changes.

The security team, IFNA and nursing staff have all noticed positive changes since the new working conditions started. One nurse reported a better flow of patients through the nursing station, meaning care can be delivered more effectively. Several security team members have been able to take a more hands-on approach that has been helpful to the station thanks to their new training in Emergency Medical Response. The team's knowledge and compassion has also gone beyond their regular duties, with Pikangikum security guards often stepping up in times of crisis. In one case, the nursing station's phone lines went down during a medical emergency. Guards went door to door to wake the nurses and bring them to the station to help the patient in need. In other cases, the security team has helped elders, providing direction in Ojibwe.

It is no wonder why the Pikangikum Security Team is considered one of the very best to provide security services. *Thank you to the Pikangikum First Nation Security Program, IFNA, and the community health nurses who contributed to this story for the Ontario Region Update.*

Celebrating National Indigenous History Month & National Indigenous Peoples Day



Pictured: ISC Ontario Region employees participate in the Fort William First Nation pow wow on National Indigenous Peoples Day.

ISC Ontario Region employees eagerly took part in a number of activities to recognize National Indigenous History Month and National Indigenous Peoples Day.

More than 200 employees from across Ontario Region attended a special presentation by Teddy Syrette (Ozhawa Anung Kwe/Yellow Star Woman), a Two-Spirit and First Nation Anishnabe from Rankin Reserve of Batchewana First Nation. From Teddy, the gathering learned about what it means to be Two-Spirit, the gender diversity of Two-Spirit identities across Indigenous cultures, and the lived experiences of these peoples past and present. It was a meaningful way to expand our knowledge of Indigenous histories and the gender diversity that has long been part of them.

Employees also joined a book club spotlighting Indigenous authors, participated in National Indigenous History Month trivia, and attended local events. To celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day, employees in the Thunder Bay office had the privilege of attending a pow wow at the top of Anemki Wajiw (Mount McKay) on Fort William First Nation.

As part of our responsibility as public servants – and Canadians – to advance reconciliation and respond to TRC Call to Action #57, we continue to encourage our colleagues to keep showing solidarity with Indigenous Peoples, embrace learning opportunities, and participate in events throughout the year.