

# ONTARIO REGION UPDATE



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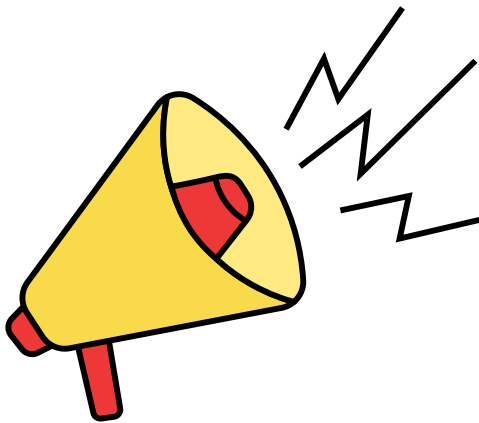
For newsletter questions, or to ask for a French version of the newsletter, please email Ontario Region Communications: [ontario-communications@sac-isc.gc.ca](mailto:ontario-communications@sac-isc.gc.ca)



## Blastomycosis Awareness

With spring approaching, more people may be out on the land in places where they can be exposed to the fungus that causes blastomycosis. There are several communication resources to help talk about blastomycosis in-community on the OneHealth Portal. This includes a poster for social media, “[Don’t let blastomycosis keep you inside](#),” and a set of “Blastomycosis Fast Facts” slides for social media. JPEGs can be found at the following links: [Slide 1](#), [Slide 2](#), and [Slide 3](#).

To access the most recent blastomycosis content, please visit the [Environmental Public Health](#) page on OneHealth.



### Memo: Toxic Drug Supply

This month, Dr. Kieran Moore (Chief Medical Officer of Health in Ontario) sent out an update about the current toxic drug supply and latest exposure risks to people who use drugs in Ontario. A copy of this memo can be [found here](#) on OneHealth, to read and share with local community services.

### 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](http://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)



## Protecting Against iGAS

Sometimes the germs that cause common illnesses such as strep throat, ear infections, scarlet fever, and impetigo can develop into extremely serious health issues. This development is called [Invasive Group A Streptococcal Disease](#), or “iGAS”. There has been an increase of iGAS cases in recent months, but most people are not familiar with the disease, or how to protect against it. The following script can be used as a PSA on community radio, or repurposed for other mediums, like social media.

### Script

- You probably know someone who has had strep throat or a mild skin infection, like impetigo. Did you know these common illnesses can sometimes turn into “iGAS”?
- When Strep A infections like strep throat enter deeper parts of our bodies, it's known as iGAS. iGAS is a serious illness that can cause severe infections, organ failure, and other life-threatening health complications.
- iGAS is rare, but it's risky for our loved ones who have weakened immune systems, like those living with diabetes, HIV, or cancer. Elders and little ones are also at a higher risk of developing iGAS.
- There are several ways you can lower your risk of spreading the germ that causes iGAS. And the good news is, you're probably already doing them!
- They're the same tried and true methods that help limit the spread of most illnesses. This includes not sharing personal items, like straws and toothbrushes; regularly washing your hands; staying up to date on your vaccinations; covering your mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing; and keeping all cuts, wounds and sores clean and covered.
- The most important thing to remember about iGAS is that quick treatment prevents serious complications. To learn more about iGAS and iGAS symptoms, talk to your healthcare provider or the community health nurse. And as with any illness, if you think you may have iGAS or are unsure, seek medical care right away.
- iGAS is just one of many health issues we don't think about on a daily basis, so it's important to keep using prevention methods. They help protect you, your family, and our community.
- Thank you (Miigwech / Chi-miigwech / Mîkwec / Niá:wen / Niawen'kó:wa) for listening, and doing your part to keep our community safe.



## Contacts for Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) and More!

We are pleased to share a new NIHB resource with you. Download our [NIHB Ontario Contacts resource](#) to find all of the key contacts you need in one convenient place. You can post it on the fridge, share it with friends and family, and use it to answer any NIHB questions you may have.

The NIHB program provides coverage for a range of health services for registered First Nations and recognized Inuit, including:

- prescription drugs
- over-the-counter medications
- dental and vision care
- medical supplies and equipment
- mental health counselling
- transportation to access health services that are not available locally.



If you use the NIHB medical transportation benefit, a reminder that the allowance rate remains at 26.5 cents per km in Ontario when a privately owned vehicle is used to access medically eligible health services. Contact your regional NIHB office for more information on tracking your kilometers.

As of Feb. 15, 2024, there have also been changes to the NIHB medical transportation services for Sioux Lookout and area clients. We invite you to read the [Sioux Lookout client notice](#) for details. French versions of NIHB documents are available upon request. Learn more about NIHB at [www.canada.ca/NIHB](http://www.canada.ca/NIHB).



### REMINDER: Drinking Water Class Action Claims

The claims period is open for compensation under the First Nation Drinking Water Settlement.

The **deadline to submit is March 7, 2024**. For more information, visit [firstnationsdrinkingwater.ca](http://firstnationsdrinkingwater.ca).



### New Syphilis Resources

Two new communication resources about syphilis are available for use. One is a poster about congenital syphilis in Indigenous communities, available as a [PDF](#) and [JPEG](#). The other is a factsheet about syphilis in Indigenous communities, available as a [PDF](#) and [JPEG](#). Information can also be pulled from these resources to make social media posts.

## 2024 National First Nations Water Leadership Award

The annual National First Nations Water Leadership Award recognizes First Nations individuals or organizations that have demonstrated leadership and outstanding dedication to the advancement of clean and safe drinking water in First Nations communities. The winner will receive a trophy and \$500 art piece.

**The nomination period** for the 2024 National First Nations Water Leadership Award is now **open until March 31, 2024**.

Please visit the National First Nations Water Leadership Award website for more information about award eligibility and criteria. To submit a nomination, please fill out this online submission form or send an email to [prixdeau-wateraward@sac-isc.gc.ca](mailto:prixdeau-wateraward@sac-isc.gc.ca) to request a PDF version.



## Cyber Security: Tips and Tricks on Safeguarding Your Organization

Online safety is important to company/organization security. The following are important tips and resources for increasing cyber safety in your offices and community.

**1) Know who you're dealing with:** Watch out for invoices using the name of legitimate companies. Scammers will use real company names to make the invoices seem authentic. Make sure you inspect invoices thoroughly before you make a payment.

**2) Don't give out information on unsolicited calls:** Ask employees at every level to be wary of unsolicited calls and texts. Spoofing is used by fraudsters to mislead victims and convince them that they are communicating with legitimate people, companies, or organizations.

### 3) Protect your online accounts:

- Create strong passwords and keep them secure
- Enable multi-factor authentication
- Only log into your accounts from trusted sources



To learn more about cyber security, visit these **helpful resources**:

- Get Cyber Safe: [Bank on cyber security](#)
- Canadian Centre for Cyber Security: [At home and in the office- Secure your devices, computers and networks](#)
- Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre: [Protect yourself from scams and fraud](#)

## Domestic Lane Made Permanent at Cornwall Port of Entry

The Domestic Lane for border travel is now permanent at the Cornwall Port of Entry. This lane can be accessed by travellers who are commuting within Canada, including Akwesasne community members travelling to and from Kawehno:ke (Cornwall Island). Previously, travellers had to pass through customs while using the port, even if they did not enter the U.S. For more details about the permanent Domestic Lane, or the pilot project that led to it, [please read the news release](#).





## Student Success at Kendomang Zhagodenamnon Lodge



*Pictured: Students working on the tiny homes project at different stages.*

On February 16, 2024, the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, LC·ᑭ Matawa First Nations, and Lakehead Public Schools celebrated the completion of a second tiny home as part of an Indigenous skills learning program. Kendomang Zhagodenamnon (KZ) Lodge –home to the Indigenous Skills Trades Training Program at Hammarskjold High School– marked the completion of its second modular home, destined for a Matawa First Nations community.

The program creates a unique learning experience for students by connecting skills training with cultural teachings and language. The Tiny Home Pilot Project is a pre-apprenticeship extension of the Grade 9 KZ Lodge North program, and engages Indigenous youth in the build of a one-bedroom 14x40 foot modular home. As part of the program, KZ Lodge students learn how to read blueprints and identify building materials; the principles of carpentry; apply mathematics skills in a trade; and safely operate common power tools. Once completed, the Tiny Home Pilot Project provides the young builders with Interdisciplinary Studies secondary school credits, and a Working at Heights Certificate through the Carpenters' Local Union 1669.

Lakehead Public Schools works with LC·ᑭ Matawa First Nations and Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre to create this exceptional learning opportunity. Partners that support the program by supplying funding and/or building materials includes Indigenous Services Canada, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Smart Modular Canada, Lakehead Social Planning Council, Park Electric Service, Home Depot, and many others!

*- A special thank you to Kendomang Zhagodenamnon students for sharing their story.*



## 2024 Little Native Hockey League

The 50th Little Native Hockey League (NHL) Tournament and Cultural Festival is happening March 10-14 in Markham, Ontario. A gala will be hosted to commemorate the 50th anniversary, and honour and recognize the inductees into the Little NHL Hall of Fame. Congratulations on 50 incredible years of bringing together young hockey players from across Ontario, and giving them the opportunity to play competitively, make lasting memories and new friends, and learn valuable lessons. Good luck to all the teams this year!

