

# ONTARIO REGION UPDATE

## Indigenous Services Canada – Ontario Region – May 2023

### Renewing your OHIP card

As of March 31, 2023, people who do not have valid health cards through the OHIP [will not have their non-emergency medical treatments covered by the Province of Ontario](#). This change does not impact nursing stations, where patients are not required to show an OHIP card for regular medical services; nor will it stop anyone from getting emergency medical care at a hospital, even if their health card is expired.

However, a valid health card is important for other forms of health care. A valid health card makes it easier to access health services through the Non-Insured Health Benefits Program (NIHB). It also makes sure people are covered if they need health services outside their community, such as specialty diagnostic assessments.

Renewals are free and many individuals are now [able to renew their health card online](#). For those who need to renew in person, they can bring their supporting documents to their [closest Service Ontario](#) office. Please note, renewals for children under 15.5 years old and seniors over 80 years old can typically be done through the mail. For information on how to renew a health card, call [\(416\) 326-1234](#) or visit [ontario.ca/page/health-card-renewal](#).

### Save the date: Chiefs of Ontario Annual Assembly

The Chiefs of Ontario (COO) are hosting their Annual Chiefs Assembly from **June 13 to June 15, 2023**. It will be held in Thunder Bay, Ontario. This year's theme is "Moving Forward: Strengthening Relationships for Future Generations." COO will be accepting resolutions until June 6, 2023. For more information or to register, visit [www.chiefsmeeting.com/aca-2023](http://www.chiefsmeeting.com/aca-2023).

### Community Story: Graduation in Pikangikum First Nation



**Top row, L to R:** Doug Pamment, Devon Wanakamik, Mathew Hoppe, Amanda Sainnawap, Chief Shirley Lynne Keeper, Ron Laverty, Sam Manitowabi, Nick Rhone, Jenna Johns, and Roger Graham. **Bottom row, L to R:** Jesselyn Gray, Gino Hill, Buster Kurahara, Roley Peters, Daren Strang, Nadine Strang, Steven Strang, Sylvester Suggashie, and Andrew Strang.

On March 31, 2023, the first graduating class of Emergency Medical Responders (EMRs) was honoured in Pikangikum First Nation. Following tragic house fires and loss of life in the community, gaps in emergency response for remote communities were drawn into the spotlight. At the end of March, these new EMRs were celebrated as a major step forward in closing some of those gaps.

The class of ten community members is the first of a training program developed by the Independent First Nations Alliance (IFNA) to establish EMRs in each of their member communities. Emergency Medical Response training teaches more advanced knowledge than First Aid and CPR, basic life support, care for a variety of chronic and acute conditions, complete pre-hospital care, and patient transport. Including EMRs in the healthcare provided in-community will help improve emergency response, and begin to fill in the gaps in in-community healthcare.

*Thank you to IFNA for contributing this community story. For more about the IFNA EMR training program, contact IFNA Integrated Emergency Services at 1-888-253-IFNA (4362).*

**Help is available  
whenever you need it.**

Immediate support is available 24/7  
for all Indigenous people in Canada.

Hope for Wellness Help Line and Chat  
1-855-242-3310 or [www.hopeforwellness.ca](http://www.hopeforwellness.ca)

Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line  
1-866-925-4419

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women  
and Girls Support Line  
1-844-413-6649

# Additional Updates

## Staying up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations

Ontario recommends staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations. Staying “up to date” [varies depending on factors like your age and general health](#). Ontario created an online tool to assist individuals in ensuring they are up to date: [ontario.ca/booster-recommendation](https://ontario.ca/booster-recommendation).

Those at high risk of developing serious illness from COVID-19 are considered “up to date” if they received a booster dose this spring (at least 6 months following their last dose or COVID infection). For individuals 6 months to 4 years old, a primary series is recommended to stay “up to date”. For those 5 years old and older, a primary series and a booster dose is recommended on or after September 1, 2022.

For the most up-to date information about COVID-19 vaccines, please visit [ontario.ca/page/covid-19-vaccines](https://ontario.ca/page/covid-19-vaccines).

## Promoting the status card to retailers

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) currently has two initiatives to help retailers better understand status cards (e.g., stores, vendors):

**1. New Status Card Validity Number:** To verify if a laminated Certificated of Indian Status card is valid, any retailer can call 1-800-567-9604. This service is available Monday to Friday, from 9:00am to 6:00pm (ET).

**2. Status Card Information Pamphlet:** An informational pamphlet is being sent across the country to various retailers. It includes information for retailers about accepting all forms of proof of registration (i.e. *Indian Act* status), including the Certificate of Indian Status card, Secure Certificate of Indian Status card and Temporary Confirmation of Registration Documents.

To help increase awareness, please consider sharing these initiatives with your community. If you would like copies of the pamphlet for distribution, please contact us at [surveillancetconformitemonitoringandcompliance@sac-isc.gc.ca](mailto:surveillancetconformitemonitoringandcompliance@sac-isc.gc.ca). For more information on status cards, please visit [Is your status card valid](#) on ISC’s website.

## Online resources for the avian flu

Game birds that migrate north for the summer can occasionally carry the “bird flu” (avian flu). Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency created some online resources that outline safety practices for hunters and any others who may come into contact with wild birds. The following resources include up-to-date information about the avian flu. Please consider sharing them widely with your community.

- [“Prevent the spread” poster](#)
- [Social media graphic about the avian flu](#)
- [Live update page for avian flu cases in the wild](#)
- [Food safety facts for First Nations and Inuit](#)
- [Recommendations for hunters of wild birds and other susceptible wildlife](#)

These resources provide information about [actions people can take to lower the chances of being infected](#) with avian flu. This includes: washing your hands frequently while handling birds or eggs (or using hand sanitizer); wearing protective clothing such as boots, gloves and masks in certain situations; reducing your and your children’s contact with the bodily fluids of harvested birds (i.e., blood, feces, secretions); and only eating fully cooked birds and eggs.

## Apply for funding: Alternatives to incarceration

The [Indigenous Community Corrections Initiative](#) (ICCI) is **accepting applications until June 12, 2023**. The ICCI provides funding support for grassroot alternatives to incarceration. They also support projects for reintegration for Indigenous offenders from prison. From 2023 to 2023, \$5.21 million will be available to the ICCI for these kind of projects. After 2024, \$12 million will be available to support organizations that rehabilitate or reintegrate Indigenous offenders through methods like project development, training, communications and direct interventions.

Organizations who can apply include: Indigenous not-for-profit organizations (on and off-reserve); Indigenous governments; Canadian universities and colleges; and local governments working with Indigenous organizations and/or communities on incarceration issues. **For more information or to apply for funding through the ICCI, please visit the [ICCI 2023 website](#).**

For the most up-to-date national information on COVID-19, visit the [Indigenous Services Canada](#) website or Twitter and Facebook pages at [@GCIndigenous](#) and [@GCIndigenousHealth](#).