

ONTARIO REGION UPDATE

Please email the ISC Ontario Communications Team with any questions about or suggestions for this newsletter: ontario-communications@sac-isc.gc.ca.

In this issue...

Health

- [Mental Wellness](#)... 2
- [Blastomycosis Update](#)... 2

Emergencies

- [Mental Health and Extreme Weather](#)...3

Funding & Operations

- [National Seniors Council](#)... 3
- [Environmental Program](#)... 4
- [Climate Change Program](#)... 4

Special Messaging

- [National Day for Truth and Reconciliation](#)... 5



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

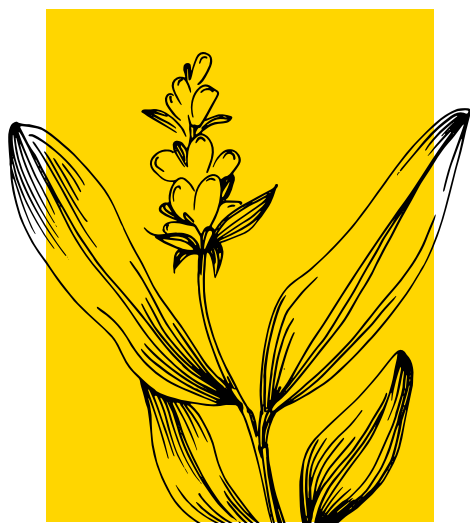
Online chat: www.hopeforwellness.ca

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Support Line

Phone: 1-844-413-6649

Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line

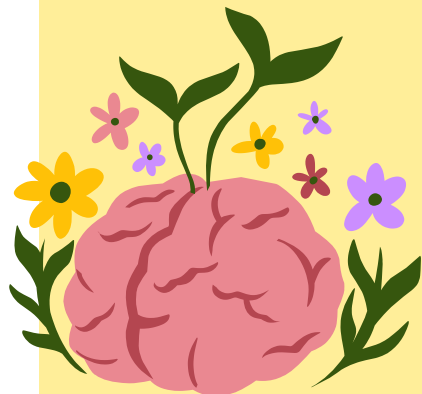
Phone: 1-866-925-4419



Mental Wellness Resources

Suicide Awareness Month is a powerful reminder that fostering mental wellness is a daily effort. As the month comes to a close, we recognize it is important to continue encouraging mental wellness and mutual support, especially during times of change. The back-to-school season and fall transition to shorter and colder days are times when people can be more vulnerable to poor mental health.

The following resources can help support your community's work to increase mental wellness and help keep conversations going all year round. **All new graphics are unbranded** so that communities have the option to use their own branding.



- **Graphic:** [“Talking about your mental health isn’t corny”](#)
- **Graphic:** [“Listening can save lives”](#)
- **Graphic:** [“Asking for help is a sign of strength”](#)
- **Printable wallet card:** Youth mental health supports [JPEG](#) / [PDF](#)
- **Printable wallet card:** Adult mental health supports [JPEG](#) / [PDF](#)
- **BounceBack:** A free program from the Canadian Mental Health Association that helps individuals 15 years of age and older learn to manage low moods, anxiety, depression, and stress.

In Case You Missed It: Blastomycosis Update

Last month's Chiefs Update call included important information about blastomycosis in Ontario. While blastomycosis is relatively rare, it can sometimes cause serious illness or even be fatal. Here are a few key takeaways:

- **Educating your community about blastomycosis is one of the best ways to prevent serious outcomes from the illness.** Blastomycosis is treatable, so it is important to [know the symptoms](#) and see a healthcare provider as soon as possible if you have any.
- The fungus that causes blastomycosis can grow in thickly wooded areas and along streams and rivers where there is moist soil and leaves, rotting plants and wood.
- Cases of blastomycosis may be increasing in Ontario. Since 2018, over 87 cases have been reported in 30 First Nations in Ontario, with 19 of these communities seeing only one case.

Please consider sharing the following resources on your social media pages or in visible locations in your community to help raise awareness about blastomycosis. **All new graphics are unbranded** so that communities have the option to use their own branding.

- **Graphic:** [“Don’t let blasto keep you inside!”](#)
- **Graphic:** [“Should I wear a mask?”](#)
- **Infographic:** [“Should I be worried about blastomycosis?”](#)
- **Infographic:** [“Blastomycosis Fast Facts”](#)
- **Infographic:** “Blastomycosis in winter” [JPEG](#) / [PDF](#)

More information about blastomycosis is available on [page 4 of the June newsletter](#).



Emergency Preparedness and Evacuation Resources

With fewer fires, this will be the last 2023 Ontario Region Update with this resources box. Any future emergency preparedness and extreme weather resources will be shared as needed until the next fire season. All previous Ontario Region Updates are posted on the Ontario [OneHealth Portal](#). Visit the Portal to access these resources any time.

NEW RESOURCES

- **Communications Toolkit:** [“Mental Health and Extreme Weather”](#). Includes information about services, as well as social media content to raise awareness about mental health resources. The **messaging emphasizes supporting mental health** during times of environmental distress. E.g., wildfires and evacuation.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Poster/infographic:** [Emergency evacuation information for Indigenous Peoples living in Ontario](#)
- Follow @GCIndigenous on [Facebook](#) and [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#) for regular updates.
- **Webpage:** [Emergency evacuation information for Indigenous peoples](#)
- **Government of Canada resource:** [Wildfires – Canada.ca](#)
- **Province of Ontario resource:** [Forest fires | ontario.ca](#)
- **Map:** [Wildfire risk](#)

Government of Canada Seeks Applicants for National Seniors Council

The Government of Canada is seeking applicants to fill vacancies on the [National Seniors Council](#). The National Seniors Council was established in 2007 and examines issues affecting seniors. It provides the federal government with recommendations on matters related to the health, well-being and quality of life for seniors. The Council wants to ensure that it reflects a diverse range of lived experiences in Canada, including that of First Nations, Inuit and Métis individuals. Other individuals encouraged to apply to the National Seniors Council include 2SLGBTQI+ people, women, visible minorities and persons with disabilities.

Interested individuals are asked to **apply by October 3, 2023** on the [Governor in Council appointments website](#). If you have questions about the Council, they can be reached through their online contact form.



First Nations Environmental Contaminants Program

Indigenous Services Canada provides funding through the [First Nations Environmental Contaminants Program](#) (FNECP) to help First Nations improve health. The program supports communities in identifying, investigating and characterizing the impact of exposure to environmental hazards. The FNECP includes activities such as community-based research, monitoring, risk assessment, risk communication, and knowledge integration.

To apply, [download the Call for Proposal document](#) and contact FNECP at fnecp-plcepn@sac-isc.gc.ca. FNECP will help with your submission, and provide advice on project ideas and how to submit a proposal. If you are eligible, they can provide feedback on your draft. **The deadline to submit your proposal is October 21, 2023.** [Click here to read about past projects.](#)

The FNECP also host a series of webinars to provide information and guidance on how to develop a research proposal. To register, visit the [webpage](#).

Funding: Climate Change and Health Adaptation Program

The [Climate Change and Health Adaptation Program](#) funds First Nations and Inuit communities' efforts to identify, assess and respond to the health impacts of climate change. Supporting projects focused on human health and a changing climate, the program enables communities to:

- Develop and implement health-related adaptation or action plans
- Develop knowledge-building and communication materials
- Support adaptation decision-making at the local, regional and national levels



Detailed profiles of projects supported through the program can be found at [ClimateTelling](#). **The deadline to submit your proposal is October 20, 2023, 11:59 pm Mountain time.** For more details on applying, please contact the program at cchap-pccas@sac-isc.gc.ca. Program staff will provide you with an application guide and template to help you with your submission.



Message from the Regional Director General and Regional Executive National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released their report in 2015, it was clear that Canadians had failed to reckon with our colonial history and the continued injustices to which Indigenous Peoples are subjected. Public servants working directly with and for Indigenous Peoples have a responsibility to respond to the Calls to Action. With the creation of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in 2021, we were again reminded to continually reflect on the ways we have responded to those calls in our work, as well as the work that remains for us as leaders in the Ontario Region of Indigenous Services Canada. Part of this effort is increasing the cultural competency of public servants at ISC and providing opportunities to better understand what anti-racism looks like in the context of our work. Thank you for all that you have shared with us as we walk this path, and for welcoming us into your communities. We look forward to further strengthening our partnership in support of a better future for all Indigenous Peoples.

Michael O'Byrne
Regional Director General

Lisa Westaway
Regional Executive

Marking the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

In honour of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, employees from five ISC Ontario offices took part in a tobacco pouch making workshop to increase their cultural competency. Elder Sheila Decourte gave a tobacco teaching, explaining the significance of tobacco and the protocol for offering it. After making their own tobacco pouches, employees learned the correct way to return unused animal hide to the earth.

