

# ISC Alberta Region-Update for Chiefs

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) develops and delivers holistic approaches to social, healthcare and infrastructure services to our Indigenous partners by working collaboratively to improve access to high quality services for First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

December 19, 2022

## Respiratory Illness Information

### Current Situation

Due to high numbers of respiratory illnesses, such as COVID-19, Influenza and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) in Alberta and across Canada, emergency rooms are at capacity and in some cases over capacity. Severe illness and death in the under 20 age group is particularly concerning and vaccine campaigns have been expanded to get people immunized quickly.

In Alberta, cases of respiratory illnesses are present in large numbers and it is difficult to predict whether the impact on First Nations has peaked. High numbers of COVID-19 and influenza hospitalizations continue across the province. As of December 12, 992 individuals were currently hospitalized due to COVID-19 with 32 in the ICU. From the beginning of the influenza season to December 10, a total of 1,413 individuals have been hospitalized due to influenza. About a third of those hospitalized for influenza were under the age of 20. Similarly, to date, 25% of First Nations admitted to hospital due to influenza have been under 20 year of age. As people participate in seasonal gatherings, it is expected that hospital admissions will rise in the coming weeks.

Ensuring individuals are fully immunized for COVID-19 and influenza is the best strategy to minimize severe outcomes and death related to these viruses.

### Vaccines and Treatments

Both influenza vaccines and COVID-19 vaccines are available at your community health centre, and can be safely administered to your Nation's membership, ages 6 months and older, at the same time.

- **COVID-19:** Being up to date with your COVID vaccines means you have had all **doses that you are eligible for**. While having had the disease offers some protection against future infection, there's not enough data about that level of protection to know when it tapers off or how protective it is against new variants. Getting fully immunized offers the best protection possible from the virus.
- **Influenza:** The influenza vaccination is safe and is the best way to prevent influenza. Since launching the provincial influenza campaign on October 17, 2022, a total of 6,470 influenza vaccines have been administered on-reserve in Alberta. The **Toolkit for Promoting Influenza Vaccinations in Communities** is now available on the OneHealth website and can support your community health teams in promoting influenza vaccine uptake.
- There are **outpatient treatments** for COVID-19. To learn more about what is available in Alberta, please visit the AHS website: **Outpatient Treatment for COVID-19**.

### Rapid tests for COVID-19 available from Alberta Health

To make a request for COVID rapid tests for both health centres and schools, please email Alberta Health at **rapidtesting@gov.ab.ca** with the number of tests required.

### Changes to AHS COVID-19 online assessment tool

Alberta Health Services has expanded the online assessment tool to provide individuals with guidance to manage a wide-range of respiratory illnesses, including how to care for symptoms at home and when to seek additional care. Click **here** to access the assessment tool.

### Reminder: Telehealth Session Recordings Available

Recordings of recent telehealth sessions, along with their resources and presentations, are available on First Nations Telehealth Network website for subsequent viewing. To view the library of recordings, click **here**.

## A Message from Dr. Chris Sarin, ISC-AB Senior Medical Officer of Health



Dr. Chris Sarin

It has been another challenging year, but we have worked together to keep communities safe.

As I look at the current data on respiratory illness and hospitalizations in Alberta, and specifically for those living on reserve, I am very concerned. This is not a typical year for respiratory illnesses. We are in the middle of a significant influenza surge that is causing severe disease including hospitalizations and deaths, and it has been particularly hard on young people. 25% of First Nations influenza hospitalizations to date have been individuals under the age of 20. Even though our COVID-19 numbers in First Nations are relatively stable at present, I am concerned that we will see more cases in the New Year because of holiday gatherings. The viruses are with us and they will spread. I am fearful that we will see more serious outcomes, including

deaths, if we don't make significant efforts to keep ourselves and each other safe. I am most concerned for our Elders and those that are medically fragile.

If you asked me what the most important message to circulate at this time is, I would say it is this:

**If you are someone or you know of someone who has been on the fence about whether or not to get vaccinated for influenza or COVID-19 and have been waiting for the right time, now is that time. Don't wait. Please get vaccinated before the holiday gatherings begin.**

I do believe that families and friends can come together safely and celebrate this important time of year. We have learned a lot from nearly three years of living with Covid 19. Perhaps the most important lesson is that we need to take care of the mental health and wellbeing of our communities. As we move forward I want you to know how tremendously grateful I am for the leadership you have shown. It is truly admirable. As 2022 draws to a close I wish you all the very best for the new year ahead. I hope that this holiday season brings much joy to you and your loved ones.

-Dr. Chris Sarin

## Question of the Day

### What is the status of the Shigella outbreak in Edmonton?

Alberta Health Services declared a Shigella outbreak in Edmonton's inner-city on September 8, 2022, and there have been 185 confirmed cases since the onset. Based on current data, the number of Shigella cases is declining, with less than 5 per week being detected. Although it is improving, the situation has not yet resolved.

A high proportion of people living in Edmonton's inner-city are Indigenous. This outbreak is impacting primarily the inner-city population, and those experiencing homelessness. Spread is exacerbated by close quarters and lack of proper sanitation. Personal hygiene is one of the ways to limit transmission and the City of Edmonton is working to provide facilities that individuals can access easily.

Shigella is a bacterial infection that transmits through contaminated surfaces, food, or water. Symptoms included persistent diarrhea, stomach cramps, vomiting, severe dehydration, and fever. Shigella can be diagnosed, if those who are ill seek medical care, and may be treated with antibiotics; however, if left untreated, an individual can become very sick and may require hospitalization. It can also spread more easily if untreated.

Although the risk to the public remains low, proper hand hygiene helps prevent the spread of many illnesses, including Shigella. Anyone experiencing symptoms that might be related to Shigella or anyone with questions or concerns about their health is encouraged to speak with their healthcare provider or call Health Link at 811.



# Links and Resources

As respiratory illness rates in Alberta continue to increase, sharing trusted information with community members become more challenging. For your awareness, Community Health Centres have been sent toolkits to assist with communications messaging.

- [Toolkit for Promoting Influenza Vaccinations in Communities](#)
- [COVID-19 communication resources for community health and safety](#)
- [AHS – Health Education and Learning \(HEAL\)](#)

**COVID-19 - ISC Alberta MOH COVID-19 Telehealth Session - September 29 - [link to recording](#)**

## **Wastewater Monitoring**

If you would like to observe current trends in wastewater data, please click [here](#). To view wastewater data from the University of Calgary, click [here](#).

## **Health Canada**

- Webpage link with downloadable poster: [COVID-19: Stay up to date with your vaccinations - Canada.ca](#)
- [Video: COVID-19 vaccines: Continue to take action \(canada.ca\)](#)

**Recovering from Covid-19, Long Covid and Post-Covid condition**, please click [here](#).

**A Layered Approach to Protect Against COVID-19** poster, please click [here](#)

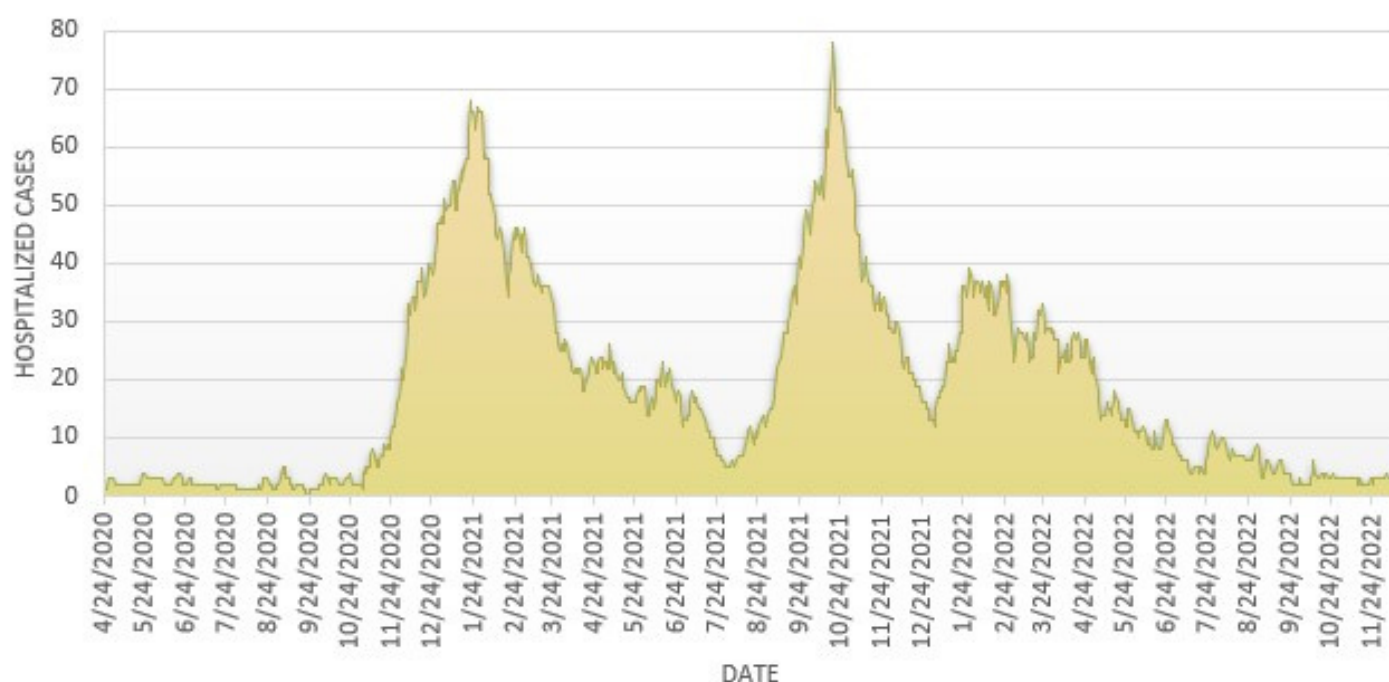
## **Seasonal Social Media posts:**

- Vaccinate Before You Celebrate [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#)
- Baby It's COVID Outside [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#)
- Put Vaccination First on Your List [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#)



# COVID-19 Epidemiological Data

Number of Current COVID-19 Cases from First Nations Communities in Hospital



Confirmed COVID-19 Cases in First Nations Communities in Alberta, December 13, 2022

Treaty Area	Total Cases	Hospitalizations* Ever (includes incidental hospitalizations)	ICU (includes incidental ICU admissions)	Currently in Hospital (includes incidental hospitalization)	Deaths
Total (First Nations Communities)	20,800	1,103	257	2	180
Treaty 6	9,358	451	101	1	72
Treaty 7	5,941	355	93	1	64
Treaty 8	5,501	297	63	0	44
Alberta <sup>^</sup>	621,512	32,533	4,518	992	5,308

\*Each ICU admission is also included in the total number of hospitalizations

<sup>^</sup>Data are up-to-date as of end of day December 12, 2022

## VACCINE SNAPSHOT



**145,532** doses of vaccine have been administered in **46** Nations (bands) in Alberta.

At least **48.9%** of First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on-reserve or Crown land have received **three doses** of the vaccine.

At least **20.2%** of First Nations people aged 12+ living on-reserve or Crown land have received **three doses** of the vaccine.

At least **19.6%** of First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on-reserve or Crown land have received **four doses** of the vaccine.

At least **68.8%** of First Nations people aged 12+ living on-reserve or Crown land have received their **first dose** of the vaccine.



# Additional Updates

## From Indigenous Services Canada

### Registrations offices update

The Edmonton Registration & Status Card office will be returning fully to walk-ins starting the month of January. The hours of operation will be 8 am – 4 pm Tuesday to Friday at Room 140, 9700 Canada Place, Edmonton. This eliminates the need for an appointment and allows individuals to come at their own convenience. The Edmonton office continues to be open for appointments and walk-ins during the month of December, with priority given to appointments. Hours of operation for December are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday 8 am – 4 pm. The office is closed December 26 and 27 and January 2, 2023.

For enquiries regarding Calgary Registrations and SCIS card applications, please call 403-292-5901.

The Tsuut'ina office remains closed until further notice.

For further information regarding Registrations and SCIS card applications, please visit our [website](#) and/or search “how to apply for Indian status” in your search engine toolbar to find applicable information and forms. We are also available by telephone at (780) 495-2773.

### Funding still available under the Pathways to Safe Indigenous Communities initiative

The Pathways to Safe Indigenous Communities Initiative provides funding to assist First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities and partners, both on and off-reserve, to implement Indigenous-designed projects to improve community safety and well-being.

This initiative supports projects which:

- recognize the importance of traditional knowledge and practices to contributing to greater community safety and well-being
- recognize holistic models of community safety and well-being
- address existing and emerging needs relating to the safety and well-being of Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people

To request funding for your community or organization's project, please [contact us](#).

## From the Government of Canada

### Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund – Apply now

The Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund is a funding program of the Public Health Agency of Canada that aims to prevent chronic disease, including diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular disease. These chronic diseases have common behavioural risk factors, including [tobacco use](#), [unhealthy eating](#) and [physical inactivity](#).

The Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund focuses on priority populations who are at greater risk of developing chronic disease due to health inequalities. Priority populations for this program are identified through research, evidence and consultations in the areas of health equity and chronic disease prevention and include Indigenous peoples and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

The deadline for submitting your completed advanced screening form is December 21, 2022 at 3 pm ET. For more information, as well as [applicant guide](#) and [how to apply](#), please visit the [Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund](#).

### National Day for Truth and Reconciliation 2023 – funding available

The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation component of the Commemorate Canada program provides funding up to a maximum of \$10,000 per organization to eligible recipients for initiatives that increase awareness and commemorate the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (September 30). The deadline to apply is January 23, 2023. For eligibility criteria and how to apply, please click [here](#).

# Additional Updates

## Alberta funding recipients for the prevention of gender-based violence that targets Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ announced

On December 9th, the Department of Women and Gender Equality Canada announced up to \$2M in funding for six organizations in Alberta. This funding will bolster the capacity of Indigenous and 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations to provide gender-based violence (GBV) prevention programming aimed at addressing the root causes of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. The recipient organizations are:

- Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society
- Red Deer Native Friendship Society
- Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women
- Nisohkamakewin Foundation
- Edmonton Heyoka Healing Society
- Native Counselling Services of Alberta

To read more, click [here](#).

## Funding opportunities for sport projects that promote social development in Indigenous communities

On December 7, 2022, the Government of Canada **announced the launch of a funding opportunity under the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities program**. Through the program's **first and second streams**, \$8.9 million is available for projects serving First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities across the country in the 2023-2024 fiscal year. This program supports Indigenous communities in accessing culturally relevant physical activity. Eligible projects must be Indigenous-designed and Indigenous-led and must address community-identified social development goals such as providing alternatives to risky behaviour or improving opportunities for employment and education.

For more information on the different streams of funding and how to apply, please **visit Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities – Sport Support Program**. Applications for funding under Stream One close January 9, 2023, and for Stream Two on January 17, 2023.

## New First Nations Guardians Network Announced

On December 9 the new First Nations Guardians Network was jointly announced by Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Indigenous Leadership Initiative. The new network will expand and support individual First Nations Guardians initiatives from coast to coast to coast. The network will connect First Nations Guardians initiatives across the country, so that Guardians can do more together than on their own. This Network will enable a Nation-based model of self-determination and a Nation-to-Nation-based model of reconciliation and partnership for responsible land and marine stewardship. To learn more, click [here](#).

## Library and Archives Canada launches new Listen, Hear Our Voices funding cycle for 2023–2024, in support of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation documentary heritage

Library and Archives Canada (LAC) has **launched the 2023–2024 funding cycle of its Listen, Hear Our Voices initiative**. Listen, Hear Our Voices provides funding to support First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation organizations throughout Canada in their efforts to digitize and preserve language and culture materials, and build digitization and preservation capacity for their communities. **Twenty-five Indigenous organizations across the country received funding** totalling \$1.7 million for 2022–2023 as part of the initiative's third funding cycle.

Interested organizations should consult the **Listen, Hear Our Voices** section of the LAC website for information on **how to apply**. Program staff are available for advice and support with funding applications. The deadline for applications is January 31, 2023.



# Additional Updates

## From the Government of Alberta

### Strengthening addiction treatment for youth and young adults

The province of Alberta is investing \$4.5 million over three years to expand the award-winning **Virtual Opioid Dependency Program (VODP)** to deliver more comprehensive support to youth and young adults in their pursuit of recovery.

VODP is an innovative program that provides treatment on demand for people struggling with opioid addiction. Through this program, any Albertan in any corner of the province can receive same-day access to opioid addiction treatment medication with no fees and no waitlist. Click [here](#) to learn more.

### Alberta secures supply of children's pain relief medication

Alberta Health Services have secured a supply of five million units of acetaminophen and ibuprofen from Atabay Pharmaceuticals and Fine Chemicals. The Government of Alberta and Alberta Health Services are working with Health Canada on completing the drug establishment licensing approval process. Once the approval is granted, the medication will be delivered to Alberta and distributed to community and retail pharmacies. To read the full media release, click [here](#).

## Learning Opportunity



**First Nations Educator's Conference**

Join educators from Treaty No. 6, No. 7, & No. 8 and be part of a positive impact on education for children in our communities!

**February 1-2, 2023**

In-Person and Virtual Conference  
(limited in-person registrations)

Theme: **Advancing First Nation Education**

Prices:

- In-person - \$395 + plus tax
- Online - \$195 + plus tax

Virtual Registration Form

In-Person Registration Form

**Keynote Speakers**

- The Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould**  
"Indigenous Rights & Reconciliation"
- Dr. Pam Palmater**
- Dr. Leroy Little Bear**
- Michael Redhead Champagne**  
"Kinship in the Classroom"
- Dr. Dwayne Donald**  
"Unlearning Colonialism and Renewing Kinship Relations"
- Kerrie Moore**
- Youth Panel**  
Treaty 6, Treaty 7 & Treaty 8
- Emcee**  
**Daryl Kootenay**

For more information contact: [fnec@ikwc.org](mailto:fnec@ikwc.org) [ikwc.org](http://ikwc.org) [stoneeducation.ca](http://stoneeducation.ca)

Co-Hosted by Stoney Education Authority and The Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom Centre (IKWC)

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) develops and delivers holistic approaches to social, healthcare and infrastructure services to our Indigenous partners by working collaboratively to improve access to high quality services for First Nations, Inuit and Métis.