

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: April 16, 2021

Office of the Senior Medical Officer of Health

Please email questions about COVID-19 to: sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca

On April 6, the Government of Alberta announced that the province was reverting back to Step 1 public health measures due to the increasing number of active cases and spread of variants of concern (VOC). Alberta Government is currently weighing the potential of further increasing public health restrictions in an effort to slow spread following the sharp rise in cases, including among school-aged Albertans. This is a critical time to stop the spread and rapid rise in the number of cases, especially the VOC which are more easily transmissible. These reintroduced public health measures are the best defence against COVID-19 until enough vaccines are available to immunize every individual in the province who wants a vaccine. The Government of Alberta has added new measures to ramp-up the COVID-19 vaccine rollout and individuals are encouraged to get vaccinated as soon as eligible. ISC-AB continues to work closely with the province to support First Nations communities.

Status Update

Number of Cases Reported* as of April 16, 2021:

**numbers are changing rapidly and may change after this bulletin is released*

Alberta: There are **16,223 Active Cases** of COVID-19 in Alberta. **8,682** of active cases are VOC.

	Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada)	First Nations On Reserve in Canada (Indigenous Services Canada)	Alberta (Alberta Health)
Confirmed Cases	1,096,716	25,923	166,177
Deaths	23,500	302	2,034
Recovered	990,073	24,978	147,920

First Nations living on and off reserve (Alberta): There are **14,327** confirmed cases of COVID-19 to date and **137** deaths in First Nations living on and off reserve in Alberta. Confirmed cases are: **2,299** in Calgary Zone; **3,297** in Edmonton Zone; **1,211** in South Zone; **4,722** in North Zone; **2,793** in Central zone and **5** unknown. Aggregate data on COVID-19 First Nations cases in Alberta is available at:

<http://www.afnigc.ca/main/index.php?id=home> and <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-alberta-data.aspx>.

Additional First Nations on-reserve data (Alberta) is provided at the end of this document (*Appendix A*).

First Nations living on reserve in Alberta:

204 Active Cases	7,162 Recovered	77 Deaths	23 Currently Hospitalized	30 Communities with Active Cases
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Location (By Zone)	Confirmed Cases	Active Cases	Recovered
Calgary Zone	1,143	37	1,092
South Zone	710	46	653
Central Zone	1,957	39	1,900
Edmonton Zone	398	5	385
North Zone	3,235	77	3,132
TOTAL	7,443	204	7,162



Indigenous Services
Canada

Services aux
Autochtones Canada

Canada

Testing in Alberta – Update

- As of April 11, 2021, the total number of reported swab samples collected to date in First Nations communities in Alberta is **113,464**.
- **[New]** Alberta has launched a rapid testing screening program for public, private or not-for-profit employers or service providers. Employers and service providers, including those in First Nations communities can apply to the Government of Alberta to receive free rapid test kits for use in their organization. Priority will be given to businesses or organizations involved with: vulnerable populations, high-risk settings and workplaces, essential services and sectors that support reopening of economic and social activities. For more information and to apply, refer to the [Alberta rapid testing screening Program](#). Successful applicants must ensure their program is overseen by an approved health care provider and proper protocols are in place for COVID-19 screening, testing and reporting.
- **[New]** The Alberta government has announced an expansion of the in-school COVID-19 rapid testing screening program to up to 300 schools in Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge and Grande Prairie. Consenting students and staff who do not have symptoms and have not identified as close contacts can get tested while at school, with results available typically within an hour. If interested, schools/school authorities in First Nations communities can apply through the [Alberta rapid testing screening Program](#).
- **Testing remains a powerful tool to help limit the spread.** Priority testing is available to individuals exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19; all close contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases; and anyone linked to a known outbreak. If you have symptoms, please stay home and book a testing appointment.
- **Reminder:** Testing outside of the provincial testing criteria must be reviewed and supported by the ISC-AB MOHs. Please send testing enquiries to sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca.

Vaccine Watch

COVID-19 Vaccine in First Nations Communities in Alberta as of April 15, 2021

- **28,229** doses have been delivered to First Nations communities in Alberta
- **26,114** doses have been administered in **46** Nations (bands) in Alberta
- **18,229** First Nations people living on reserve have received at least one dose
- **7,862** First Nations people living on reserve are fully immunized (2 doses)
- **3,442** First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on reserve have received their first dose.
- **2,873** First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on reserve are fully immunized (2 doses)

New Developments

1. The Government of Alberta has introduced four measures to ramp-up the COVID-19 vaccine rollout:
 - Booking for the COVID-19 vaccine is open to all individuals in Phase 2B. This includes First Nations people aged 16 or older with an [eligible chronic health condition](#). First Nations individuals living off-reserve or off-settlement can [book online](#), at a [participating pharmacy](#) or call 811.
 - Booking for the AstraZeneca vaccine is available for all Albertans aged of 55 - 64.
 - Rapid flow clinics are expanding across the province. Booking is open for all eligible individuals. Bookings can be made with Alberta Health Services (AHS) online or by calling 811.
 - Alberta is expanding its vaccine rollout at participating pharmacies to allow walk-in bookings. Additional information will be shared when pharmacy walk-ins become available.
2. Phase 2C of the vaccine rollout has started and includes First Nation front-line health-care workers.
3. Emerging evidence shows first doses of all three vaccines used in Alberta provide considerable protection against infection and second doses are necessary to ensure an individual is protected for as long as possible including against VOC such as the B.1.1.7. that is the majority circulating strain in Alberta.
4. The Johnson and Johnson vaccine was approved in Canada and a shipment to Canada is expected by late April or early May. There are reports of very rare blood clots with the vaccine similar to what was reported with AstraZeneca. ISC-AB is awaiting guidance from NACI on the use of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. The vaccine currently administered in First Nations communities is the Moderna vaccine.
5. PHAC has launched their webpage [Vaccines for COVID-19: What to expect at your vaccination](#).
6. Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation has launched a new [outreach campaign](#) entitled “Your Health, Our Strength” to provide Indigenous people with credible information about the COVID-19 vaccines.

Reminders

1. Individuals that book a first dose of vaccine will have their second dose administered [up to 4 months later](#). Individuals who received their first dose prior to March 10 will still receive their second dose within 42 days. All existing appointments for second doses will be honored.
2. Minor and temporary adverse events, such as headache, fever, fatigue, or pain at the injection site, are common after all vaccinations. All individuals are encouraged to seek medical attention if they experience any new or worsening symptoms and to [report any adverse events](#) after immunization.
3. ISC-AB hosts a vaccine information session every Tuesday from 1-2 pm.
4. ISC has launched a [COVID-19 vaccine page](#) that is updated regularly.

Alberta's Relaunch - Update

- **[New]** The province returned to Step 1 COVID-19 restrictions following the increasing number of active cases and spread of VOC. Mandatory, province-wide restrictions are in effect for retail; fitness and performance activities; entertainment and recreation facilities; restaurants and bars. Restrictions on places of worship, social gatherings, personal and wellness services, indoor and outdoor children's sport and performance remain in effect unchanged. See here for the [new health measures](#).
- Metrics based on cases and growth, including COVID-19 variants, are being monitored and will also be used to guide any decisions around the need to pause further steps or potentially increase restrictions.

COVID-19 Variants of Concern

- **[New]** **53.5%** of active cases in Alberta are VOC. Currently there are **165** reported cases of VOC (B.1.1.7) on-reserve in Alberta First Nations. The B.1.1.7 variant is now the majority circulating strain in the province. It is present in over half of all confirmed COVID-19 cases in Alberta and has been identified in 19 First Nations communities. As of April 16, Alberta has detected **13,770** cases of the B.1.1.7 variant first identified in the United Kingdom; **29** cases of the B.1.351 variant first identified in South Africa; and **153** cases of the P.1 variant first identified in Brazil. More information on COVID-19 variants cases can be found [here](#).
- **Reminder:** A person who tests positive or is exposed to a VOC will need to quarantine for longer periods of time. If a person tests positive for a COVID-19 variant and chooses to stay in their own home to isolate, **household contacts need to stay at home in quarantine until 14 days have passed from the end of the case's isolation period, which is 10 days**. This means, household contacts that stay at home need to quarantine for 24 days. Isolating in a different location, such as an isolation facility/hotel is encouraged and will shorten the duration of quarantine for the close contacts. An ISC-AB VOC Fact Sheet can be found on [OneHealth](#).

What the Government of Canada and ISC/FNIHB-AB Are Doing

- **[New]** Nations that require additional surge supports for COVID-19 response or vaccine clinics including contact tracing, testing, vaccine administration support should submit a [request form](#) to ISC-AB at: sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca. Submissions will be reviewed and an ISC-FNIHB staff member will contact the Nation's representative to discuss the requested support.
- **Reminder:** The deadline for new applications for a Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) is June 30, 2021. This program provides interest-free loans of up to \$60,000 to small businesses and not-for-profits. More information can be found [here](#).

Mental Health and Wellness

- **[New]** All communities will receive enhanced Land Based Healing funds to support the provision of critical services grounded in culture and tradition. More details will be shared as it becomes available.
- **[New]** Mark Amy Treatment Centre is launching a Virtual Intensive Day Treatment Program. This program is open to all First Nations persons in Alberta, and will work collaboratively with existing community supports for each individual client. More details are available [here](#). Information on the next intake will be communicated as it becomes available.

Virtual Care Clinic

- **Reminder:** The Alberta Indigenous Virtual Care Clinic (AIVCC) serves individuals self-identifying as First Nations, Inuit and Métis and their families. AIVCC provides same-day care to rural and urban Indigenous people residing in Alberta via secure video or phone service and can be reached at 1-888-342-4822 or www.aivcc.ca.

Additional Information

If you have general questions about COVID-19 or require current information, please refer to the following websites which are trusted information sources and are being regularly maintained and updated. **Should you have questions about COVID-19, please do not hesitate to email: sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca**

OneHealth - <https://www.onehealth.ca/ab/ABCovid-19>

InfoPoint (First Nations Health Manager Association) – This site is designed for First Nation health managers to access credible sources of information related to COVID-19. To access this service, call the toll-free number at **1-855-446-2719**, or email InfoPoint@fnhma.ca

Alberta Health

- Coronavirus info for Albertans: <https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx>

Alberta Health Services

- Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19): <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx>
- Indigenous Peoples & Communities (COVID-19):
https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17101.aspx?fbclid=IwAR1hzie9aLgDLr0K7Qi80mb9ozNby5dK6VZO3CFhhKgLrALUpo6_wGmSxUc

Indigenous Services Canada COVID-19 (Updates available in several Indigenous languages)

- COVID-19 & Indigenous Communities: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1581964230816/1581964277298>

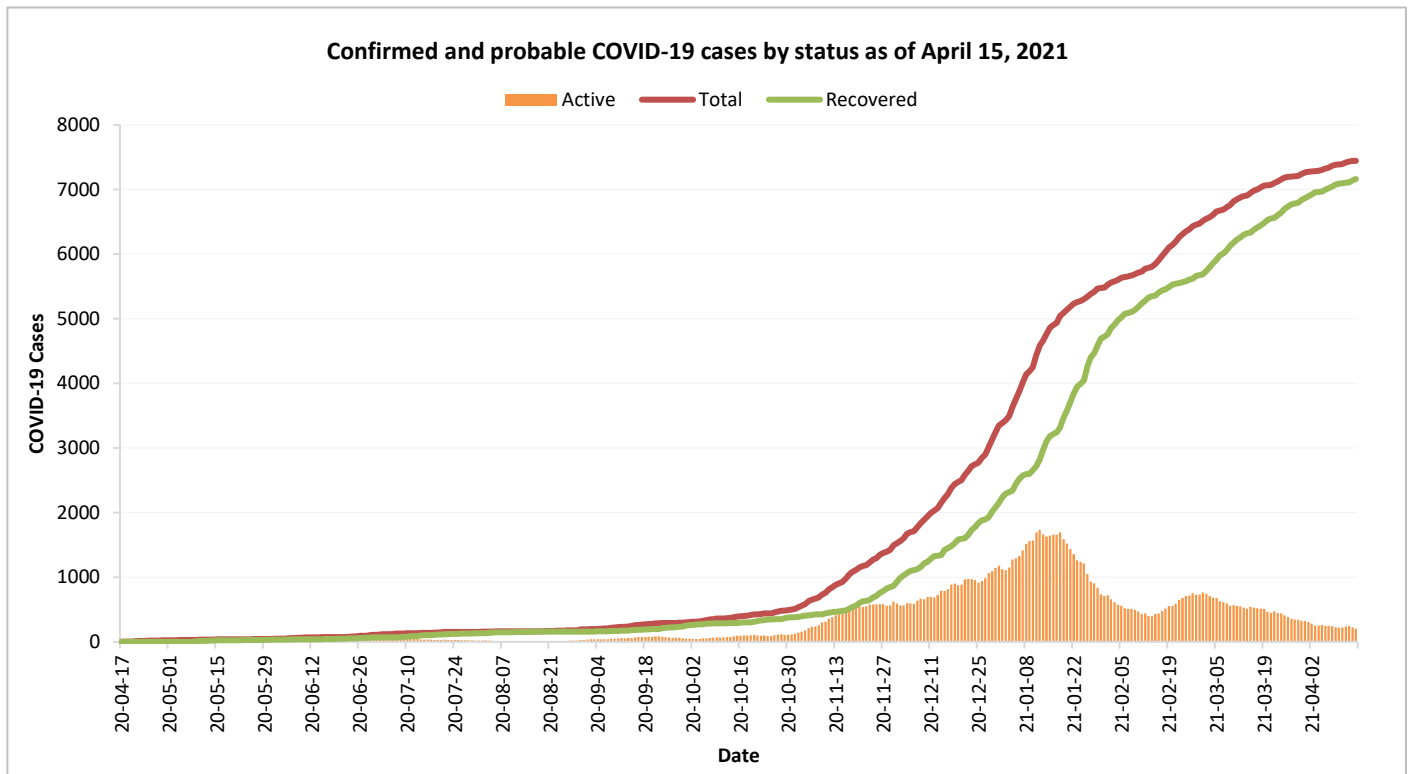
Mental health and coping resources are available for individuals who are struggling or need a little extra support.

- The Mental Health Help Line [1-877-303-2642](tel:1-877-303-2642) is available 24/7 to provide advice and referrals to community supports near you.
- Hope for Wellness Help Line [1-855-242-3310](tel:1-855-242-3310), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Kids and teens can call the Kids Help Phone: [1-800-668-6868](tel:1-800-668-6868).
- Text COVID19HOPE to [393939](tel:393939) to subscribe to a free service supporting mental health and wellness in a time of stress and isolation.
- Family Violence Resources: <https://www.alberta.ca/family-violence-prevention-resources.aspx>
- **Text4Hope-Addiction Support** is designed to help Albertans dealing with psychological issues related to addiction. Text “Open2Change” to [393939](tel:393939) to subscribe.

Anyone with specific questions or concerns about their health is encouraged to call Health Link at 811 for health advice.

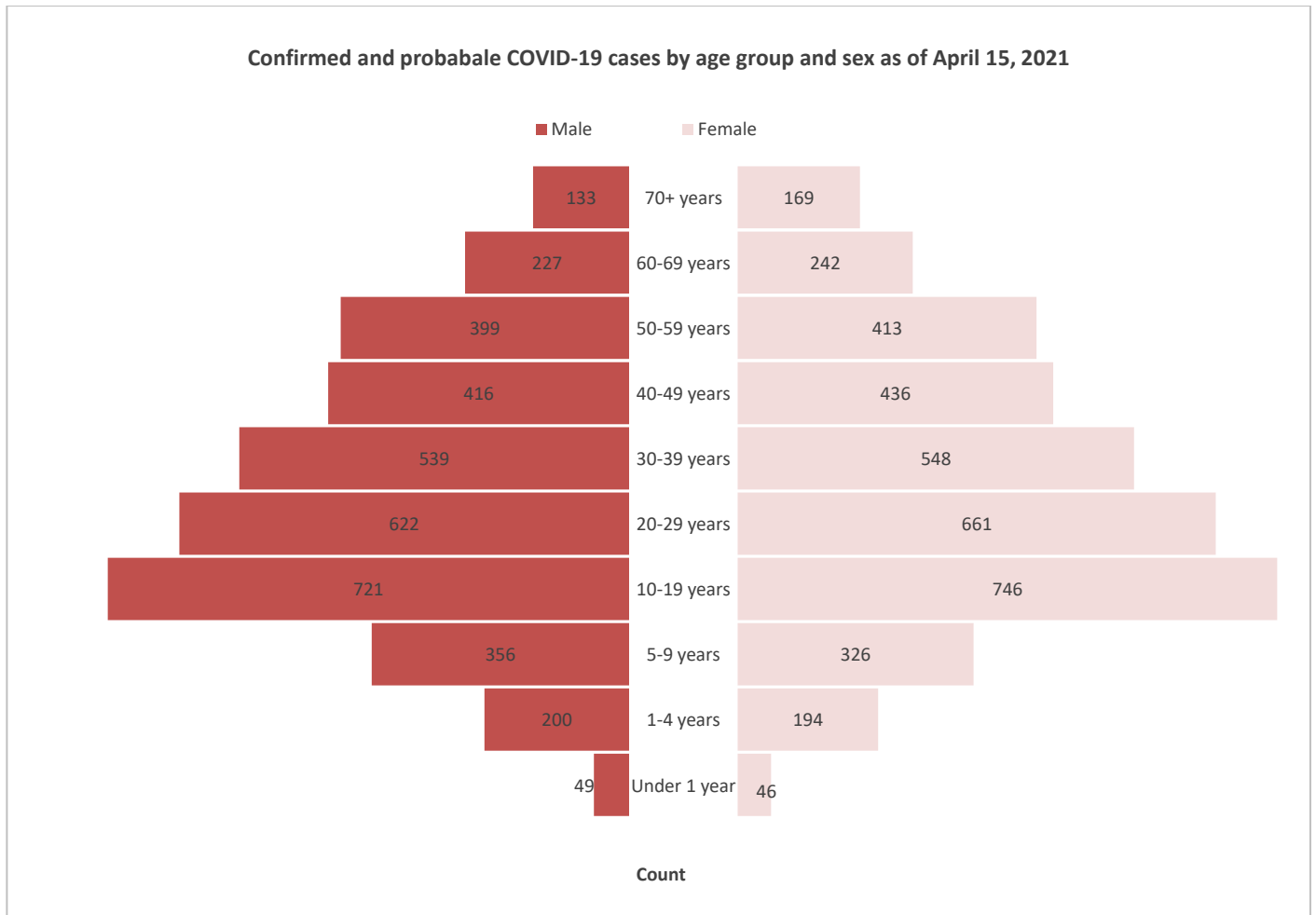
APPENDIX A: Additional COVID-19 Data in First Nations On-Reserve in Alberta

Fig 1.



The number of active cases in First Nations communities increased from 3 on April 17, 2020 to 29 on May 8, 2020 and then gradually decreased to 8 on May 30, 2020. Thereafter, the number of active cases began to increase again peaking at 54 on July 7, 2020 followed by a period of decline until August 17, 2020. Subsequently, there was a relatively slow increase in active cases up until November 2, 2020 when cases began increasing more rapidly to a high of 1,731 active cases on January 12, 2021. In the following month, the number of active decreased until it reached a low of 396 on February 14, 2021. The number of daily active cases increased again reaching a peak of 758 on March 01, 2021. The number of active cases has been decreasing since March 1, 2021. At the time of this publication, there were a total of 7,443 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in First Nations communities in Alberta out of which 204 cases are currently active and 7,162 have recovered.

Fig 2.



While 51.6% of all cases among individuals living in First Nations communities in Alberta occurred between the ages of 10 and 39 years, 50.0% of all Albertans cases occurred among those ages between 10 and 39 years. Females accounted for 50.8% of all cases in First Nations communities in Alberta and 49.6% among all Albertans.