

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: April 30, 2021

Office of the Senior Medical Officer of Health

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

Alberta has reported its highest ever testing positivity rate this week at over 11 percent, in addition to the highest total of active and daily reported cases since the pandemic began. COVID-19 variants of concern (VOC) continue to increase and the B.1.1.7 variant has become the dominant strain of the virus in Alberta. While COVID-19 proceeds to impact people of all ages, individuals admitted to ICU in the recent weeks have been significantly younger than what was seen in previous waves with more people in their 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s. Circulation of COVID-19 in younger, more socially-connected adults is an on-going risk for spread into high-risk populations and settings. Everyone is encouraged to remain vigilant, and to continue to follow local public health advice, avoid all non-essential travel, and to continue to practice physical distancing and other protective practices. Vaccines continue to arrive in Canada and are successfully being rolled out to First Nations communities. If we continue to all do our part we can get through this together safely.

Status Update

Number of Cases Reported* as of April 30, 2021:

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

Alberta: There are **21,385 Active Cases** of COVID-19 in Alberta. **13,460** 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	1,211,083	27,127	188,727
Deaths	24,169	315	2,048
Recovered	1,103,462	26,105	165,267

First Nations living on and off reserve (Alberta): There are **15,118** confirmed cases of COVID-19 to date and **137** deaths in First Nations living on and off reserve in Alberta. Confirmed cases are: **2,431** in Calgary Zone; **3,500** in Edmonton Zone; **1,282** in South Zone; **4,989** in North Zone; **2,909** in Central zone and **7** 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:

255 Active Cases	7,435 Recovered	78 Deaths	22 Currently Hospitalized	37 Communities with Active Cases
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Location (By Zone)	Confirmed Cases	Active Cases	Recovered
Calgary Zone	1186	40	1132
South Zone	773	25	736
Central Zone	2024	62	1944
Edmonton Zone	417	21	388
North Zone	3368	107	3235
TOTAL	7768	255	7435



Indigenous Services
Canada

Services aux
Autochtones Canada

Canada

Testing in Alberta – Update

- As of April 29, 2021, the total number of reported swab samples collected to date in First Nations communities in Alberta is **119,168**.
- **Reminder:** Alberta has launched a [rapid testing screening program](#) for public, private or not-for-profit employers or service providers and expanded in-school rapid testing screening programs. Employers, service providers, and interested schools, including those in First Nations communities can [apply](#) to the Government of Alberta to receive free rapid test kits for use in their organization.
- **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 29, 2021

- **32,093** doses have been administered in **46** Nations (bands) in Alberta
- **22,389** First Nations people living on reserve have received at least one dose
- **9,704** First Nations people living on reserve are fully immunized (2 doses)
- **3,574** First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on reserve have received their first dose
- **2,990** First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on reserve are fully immunized (2 doses)

New Developments

1. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), Thrombosis Canada and the National Collaborating Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCCID) present a [webinar](#) to inform health care providers on the treatment and reporting of Vaccine-induced Immune Thrombotic Thrombocytopenia (VITT).
2. Albertans eligible in the rest of the [Phase 2C and 2D](#) vaccine rollout will be able to start booking appointments starting today, April 30. This includes First Nations, Métis and Inuit between the ages of 35 and 49.
3. AstraZeneca vaccine eligibility has dropped to age 40 in Alberta; however, in areas of high infection rates including Fort McMurray and the Banff region eligibility has dropped to 30 years of age. [Participating pharmacies](#) and [AHS](#) will be booking appointments for AstraZeneca vaccinations for individuals born in 1981 or earlier. Walk-in vaccinations will be available at the walk-in clinics in Edmonton and Calgary, as well as [specific pharmacies](#) across the province.
4. Shipments of Johnson and Johnson vaccines, along with Astra Zeneca will be diverted to residents that are 30 years of age and older in the Fort McMurray and the Banff region to help curb the spread of COVID-19 in these areas with high case rates. Eligibility for Moderna vaccine is also being lowered to 30 in nearby First Nations communities.
5. ISC-AB FNIHB has been working with Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services, and community health centres to ensure that community members **born in 2004 or 2005 with eligible underlying health conditions** can receive the Pfizer vaccine at the health centre in the community.
6. PHAC has developed video resources for the COVID-19 vaccines including: [How were COVID-19 vaccines developed so quickly?](#), [Do COVID-19 vaccines have side effects?](#), [How do COVID-19 mRNA vaccines work?](#), and [How do I know COVID-19 vaccines are safe without long-term data?](#)
7. ISC has developed a *What to expect when you get vaccinated* information sheet that can be found on [OneHealth](#) under COVID-19 Vaccine.

Reminders

1. COVID-19 vaccine is open to all individuals in [Phases 1 through 2D](#). Contact your local Health Centre for an appointment. First Nations individuals living off-reserve can [book online](#), or at a [participating pharmacy](#) or call 811.
2. Evidence shows first doses of all 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.
3. Individuals that book a first dose of vaccine will have their second dose administered [up to 4 months later](#).
4. 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.

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.
7. ISC-AB hosts a vaccine information session every Tuesday from 1-2 pm.
8. ISC has launched a [COVID-19 vaccine page](#) that is updated regularly.

Alberta's Relaunch - Update

- **[New]** Alberta has expanded its public health measures for [hot spot regions](#) and **effective immediately** all indoor fitness activities, including indoor sports and recreation are prohibited. Outdoor fitness training and group physical activity with different households may continue provided that 2m physical distancing can be maintained at all times and the number of people is 10 or fewer. **Starting on May 3**, in order to limit in-person interactions, all junior and senior high school students in hot spot regions will shift to online learning.
- **[New]** Alberta's government has passed legislation that amends the Employment Standards Code to ensure working Albertans can access paid, job-protected leave to get each COVID-19 vaccine. Every working Albertan can access up to three hours of paid, job-protected leave for each dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. All employees are eligible regardless of job status or length of employment.
- **[New]** Starting May 10, updated public health measures will come into effect for continuing care facilities in Alberta. Indoor social visits with up to four visitors will be able to resume again, with certain restrictions and health measures in place. Full details available [here](#).
- **Reminder:** The province returned to [Step 1 COVID-19 restrictions](#) following the increasing number of active cases and spread of variants. 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

- **62.9%** of active cases in Alberta are VOC. As of April 29, **320** VOC have been detected in **30** First Nations communities in Alberta. The B.1.1.7 variant is now the majority circulating strain in the province. As of April 30, Alberta has detected **28,287** cases of the B.1.1.7 variant first identified in the United Kingdom; **77** cases of the B.1.351 variant first identified in South Africa; **885** cases of the P.1 variant first identified in Brazil and **1** case of B.1.617 variant first identified in India. More information on VOC 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**. 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]** The Government of Canada has announced [Budget 2021: Strong Indigenous Communities](#). This budget works towards supporting Indigenous communities in the fight against COVID-19 and improving health outcomes in communities.
- **Reminder:** 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.
- **Reminder:** The deadline for new applications for a [Canada Emergency Business Account \(CEBA\)](#) is June 30, 2021. CEBA provides interest-free loans of up to \$60,000 to small businesses/not-for-profits.

Mental Health and Wellness

- **Reminder:** 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.
- **Reminder:** 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 on the next intake to come.

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 Resources

- **[New]** Schools.healthiertogether.ca is a virtual space to explore comprehensive school health as a framework to help students, staff, and school communities stay well during COVID-19, and beyond.
- **[New]** There are new PHAC publications available in Indigenous languages, including: [Going out safely during COVID-19](#), [Reduce the spread of COVID-19: Wash your hands infographic](#), and [Vaccine development and approval in Canada](#).
- **[New]** ISC has created a document that provides guidance on holding elections during COVID-19. It can be accessed on [OneHealth](#) under Gatherings and Events.

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>

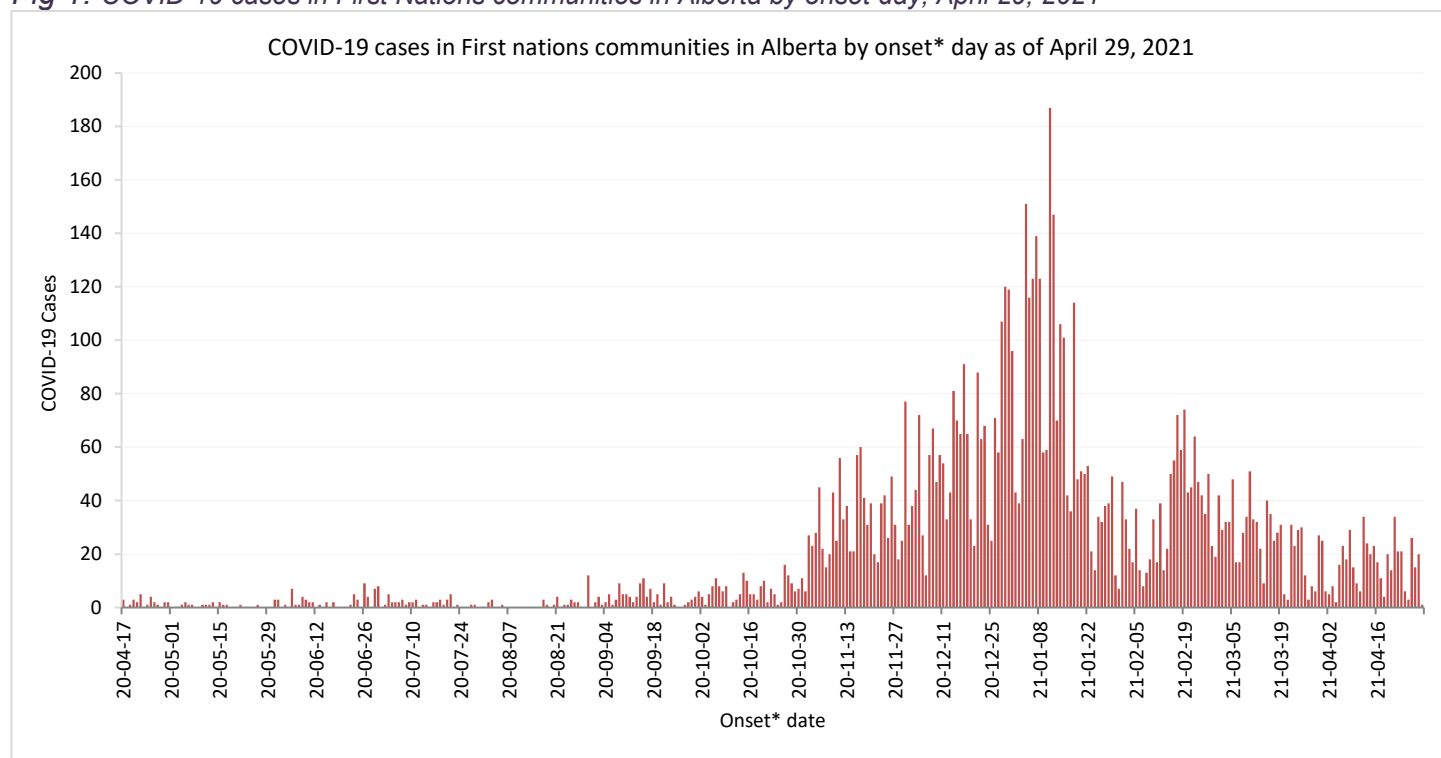
Mental health and coping resources are available for individuals who are struggling or need a little extra support.

- 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. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by onset day, April 29, 2021



Note: *Onset date is the earliest of the “date of onset of symptoms” and “specimen collection date”.

In general, the number of daily confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta has been decreasing since Mid February 2021 (Fig 1).

Fig 2. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by status, April 29, 2021

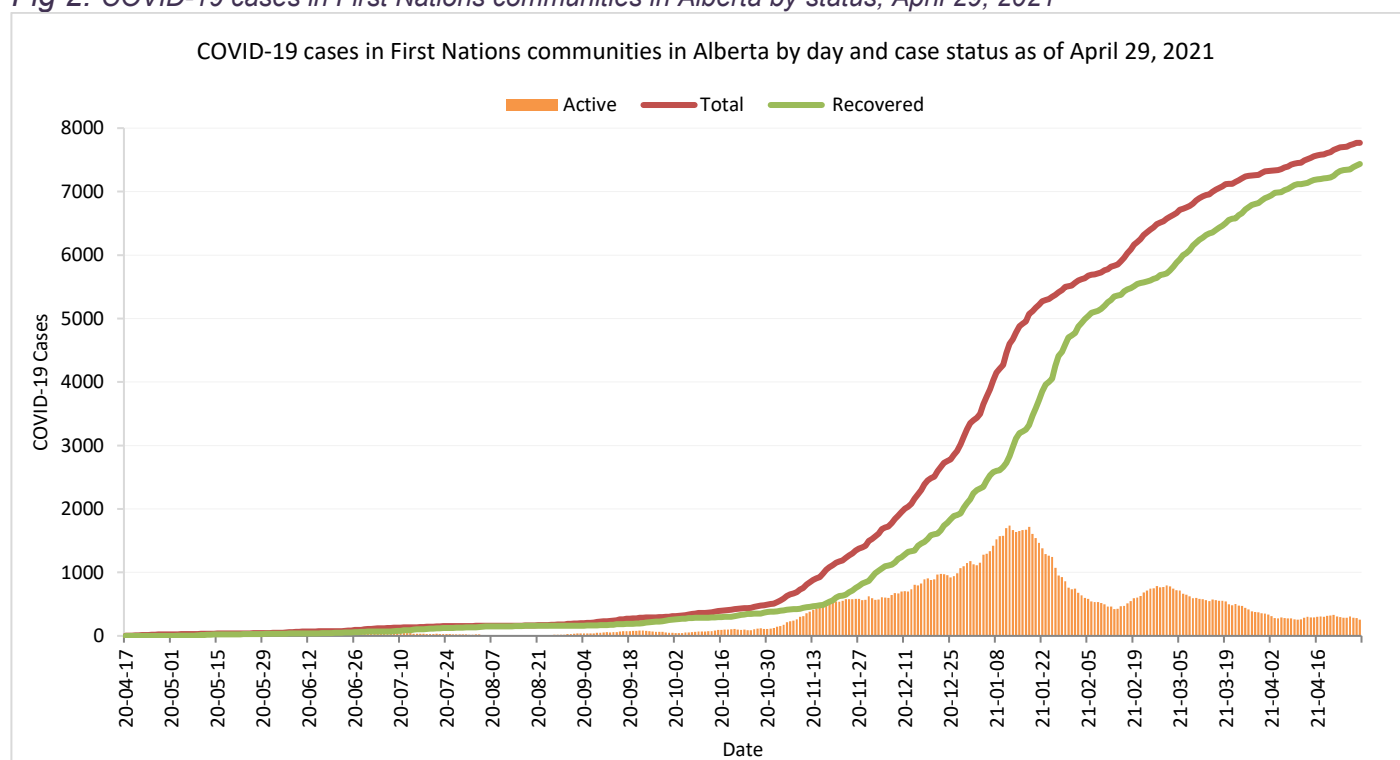
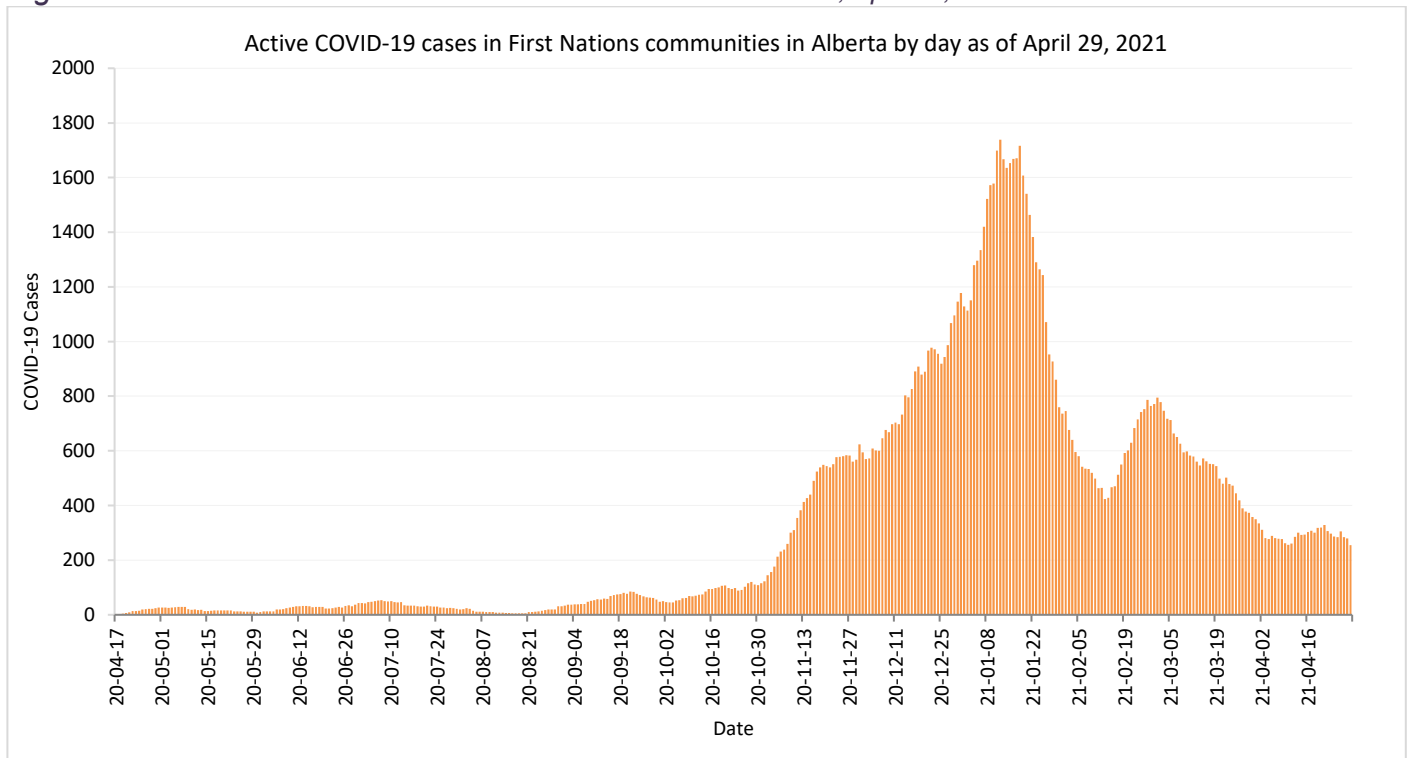
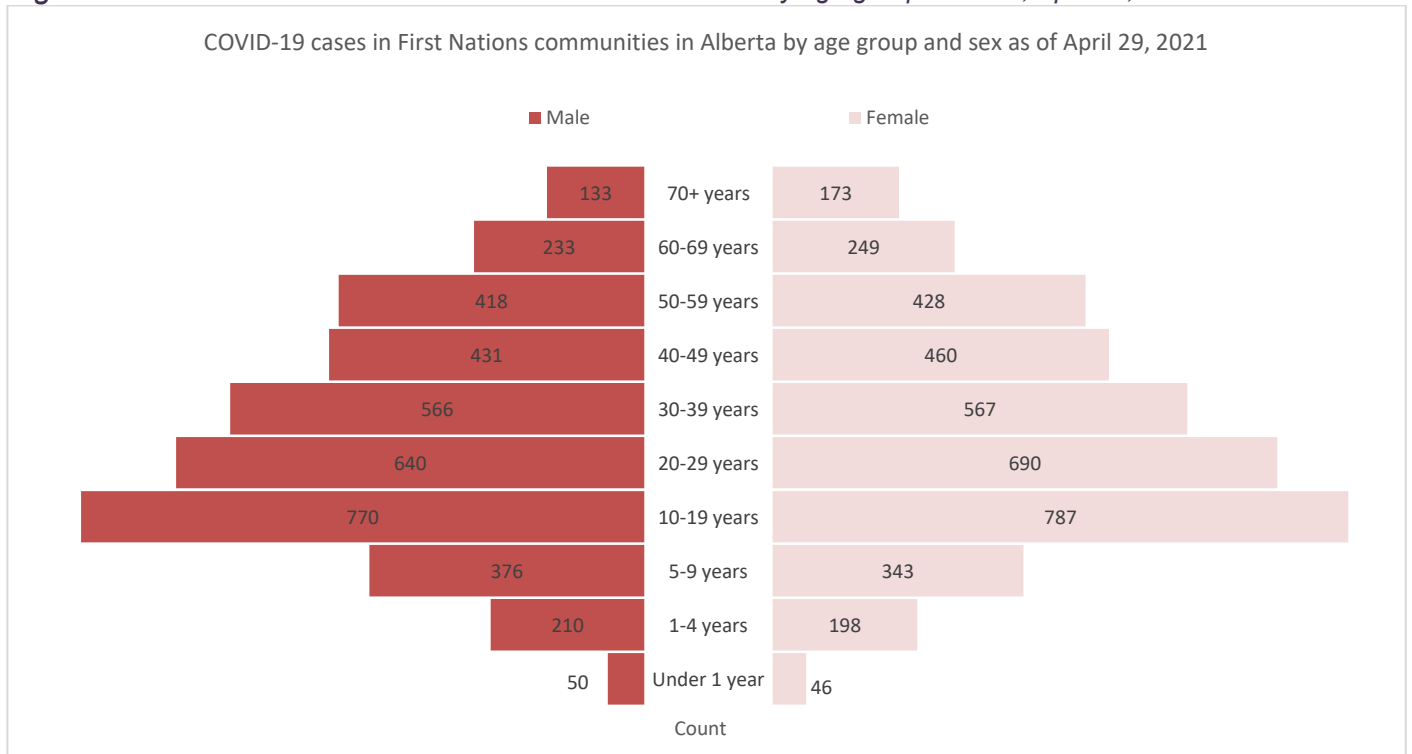


Fig 3. Active COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta, April 29, 2021



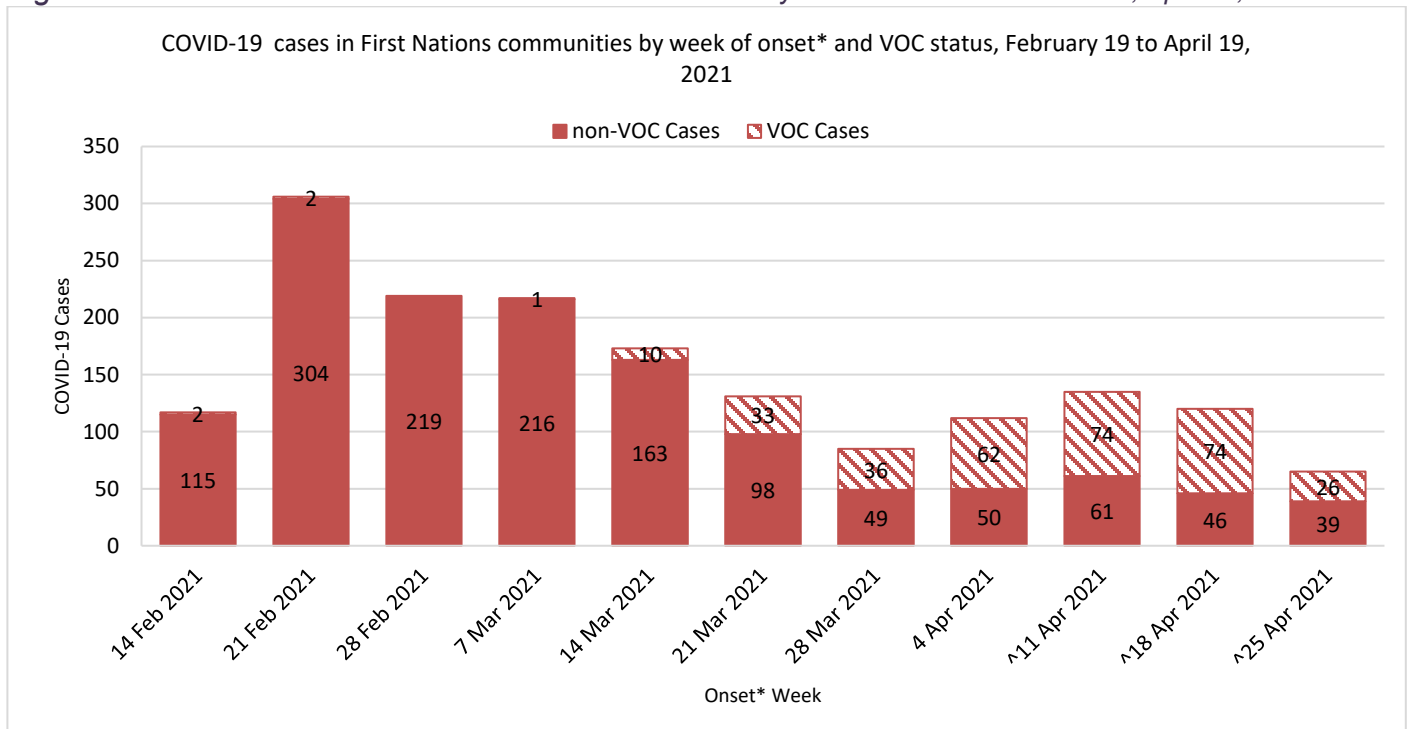
In general, the number of daily active confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta has been decreasing since early March 2021 (Fig 3)

Fig 4. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by age group and sex, April 29, 2021



Individuals between the ages of 10 and 39 years accounted for 51.8% of all cases in First Nations communities in Alberta and 50.4% of all cases in Alberta. Females accounted for 50.7% of all cases in First Nations communities in Alberta and 49.4% among all Albertans

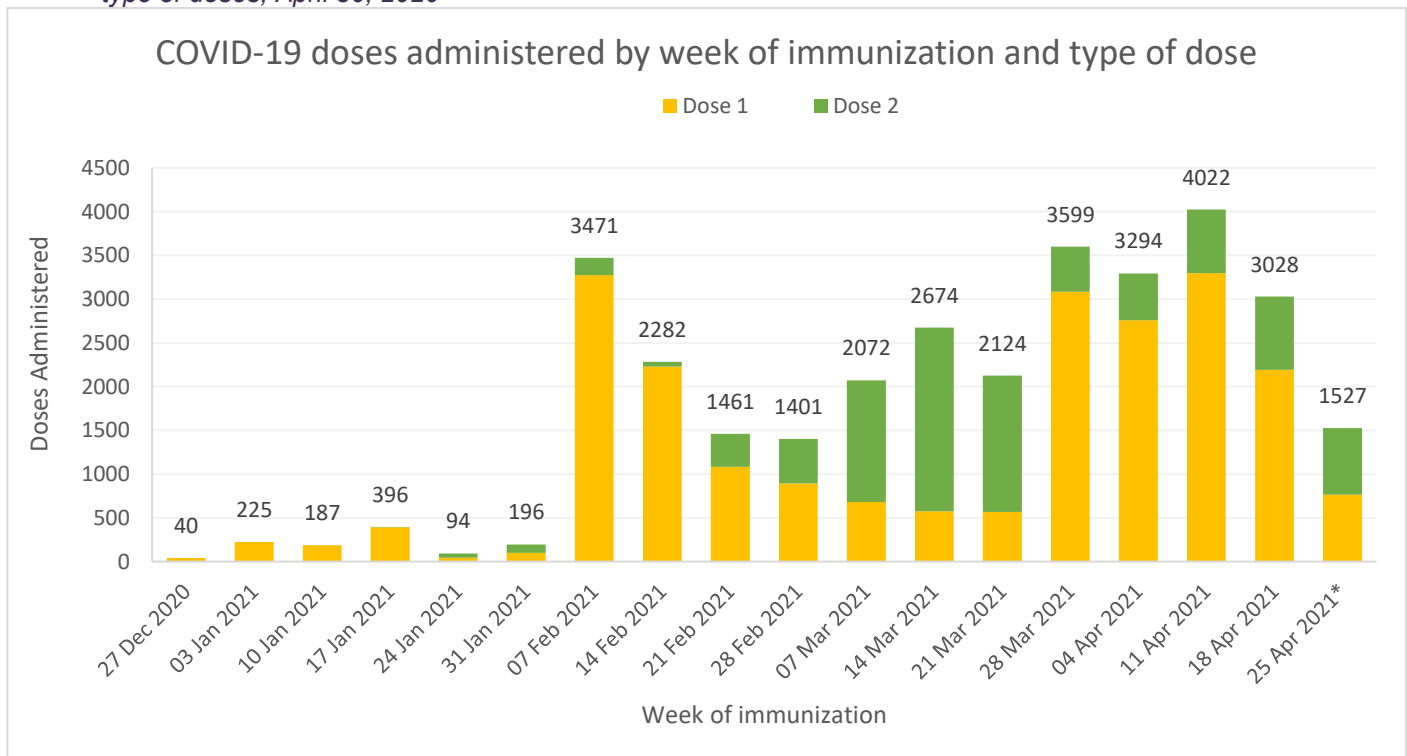
Fig 5. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by onset week and VOC status, April 29, 2021



Note: ^Data may be incomplete due to late receipt of lab reports. *Onset date is the earliest of the “symptoms onset” and “specimen collection” date.

Three hundred and twenty (320) VOC have been detected and currently there are 134 active VOC in 25 First Nations Communities making up 52.5% of all active COVID-19 cases in communities.

Fig 6. COVID-19 Vaccine doses administered in First Nations communities in Alberta by week of immunization and type of doses, April 30, 2020



Note: *Data is incomplete for the week of 25 Apr 2021

A total 32,093 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered to 22,389 people in First Nations communities in Alberta, of whom 9,704 are fully immunized with two doses.