

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: August 12, 2021

Office of the Senior Medical Officer of Health

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

Alberta is now in Stage 3 of the [Alberta's Open for Summer Plan](#) and all public health measures have been lifted, except in specific settings. On July 29, 2021, other measures, such as contact tracing and quarantine of close COVID-19 contacts, were lifted and testing of asymptomatic individuals was no longer recommended. On August 16, 2021, the legal requirement for COVID-19 cases to isolate will be lifted, although it is still strongly recommended. Provincial mandatory mask requirements will also be lifted. In the coming weeks, the provincial testing approach will change from widespread testing to more targeted testing for those most at risk of severe outcomes of COVID-19. The FNIHB-AB public health team, including Medical Officers of Health (MOHs) will continue to support First Nations Health staff in responding to cases and outbreaks of COVID-19. There is a rise in COVID-19 active cases across the province and almost 57% of Albertans have now been fully vaccinated with two doses. The provincial re-opening plan is not mandatory and some Nations may choose to keep public health measures in place even as restrictions have been lifted. FNIHB-AB MOHs support Nations who would like to continue recommending voluntary masking in community buildings or at gatherings. MOHs are also supportive of communities who wish to offer symptomatic testing and asymptomatic testing for unimmunized close contacts. Individuals and communities are encouraged to continue to choose lower-risk activities and settings to protect themselves and others. Vaccines continue to be the best path forward towards protecting our health and the health of our communities and the ISC-AB MOHs strongly recommend First Nations aim to have at least **80% of eligible persons** (70% minimum) fully immunized (first and second doses) against COVID-19. ISC-AB is available to support Nations to address key concerns and develop strategies to increase vaccination rates.

Status Update

Number of Cases Reported* as of August 11, 2021:

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

Alberta: There are **3,769 Active Cases** of COVID-19 in Alberta.

First Nations in Alberta: 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>.

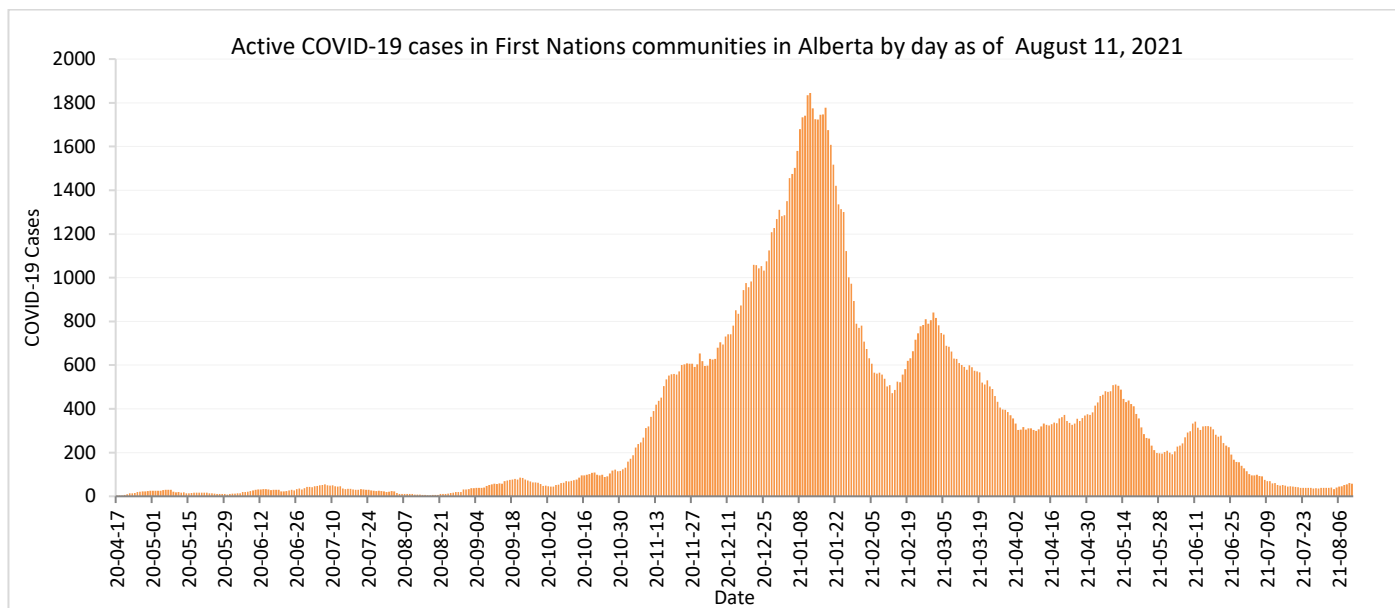
First Nations	Total Cases	Recovered Case	Active Cases	Deaths	Currently Hospitalized	Communities with Active Cases
Living on Reserve in Alberta	9,083	8,933	57	93	6	14
Living on and off reserve in Alberta	18,190	17,818	201	171	15	NA



Indigenous Services
Canada

Services aux
Autochtones Canada

Canada



COVID-19 in First Nations living on reserve in Alberta				
Treaty Area	Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered Cases	Deaths
Treaty 6	4,153	8	4,156	35
Treaty 7	2,339	11	2,308	33
Treaty 8	2,401	25	2,390	21
TOTAL	8,964	44	8,854	89

Variants of Concern (VOCs) in First Nations Living on Reserve in Alberta:

As of August 11, 2021, **1,114** VOCs have been detected in **41** First Nations communities in Alberta.

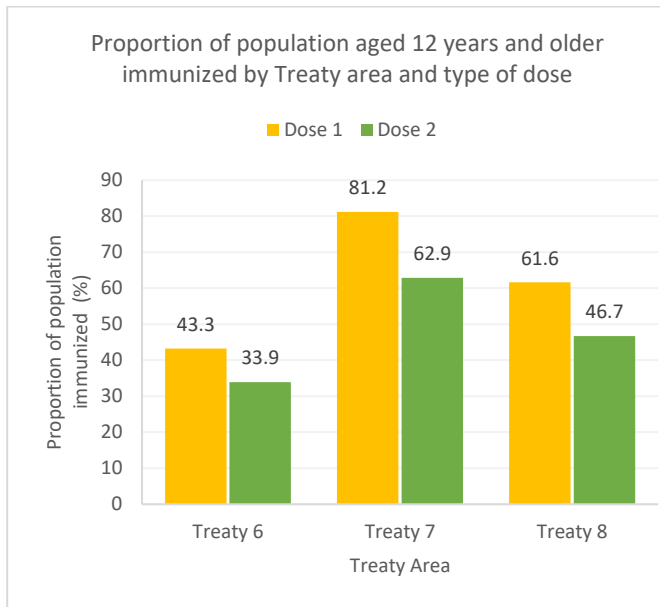
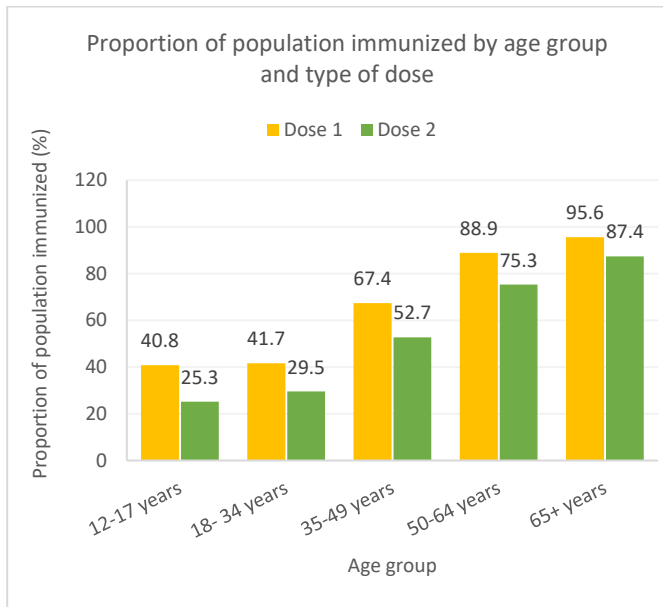
VOC Type	Total Cases	Recovered Case	Active Cases	Deaths	Communities with Active Cases
B.1.1.7 (Alpha)	1048	1027	11	10	6
B.1.351 (Beta)	11	10	0	1	0
P.1 (Gamma)	27	27	0	0	0
B.1.617.2 (Delta)	28	11	17	0	7
Total (VOC)	1,114	1,075	28	11	11

COVID-19 Vaccine

COVID-19 Vaccine in First Nations Communities in Alberta as of August 11, 2021

- **67,674** doses have been administered in **46** Nations (bands) in Alberta
- **38,202** First Nations people living on reserve have received at least one dose
- **29,472** First Nations people living on reserve are fully immunized (2 doses)

Approximately **59.6%** of the total population aged 12 years and older living on reserve have received at least one dose and approximately **46.0%** have been fully immunized (2 doses).



13 Communities

Have vaccinated over 70% of eligible members with the first dose

18 Communities

Have vaccinated 50 - 70% of eligible members with the first dose

15 Communities

Have vaccinated less than 50% of eligible members with the first dose

COVID-19 Vaccine New Developments

1. **[New]** Fully vaccinated foreign nationals will be allowed to enter Canada for discretionary travel on the following dates if they meet specific criteria:
 - August 9: American citizens and permanent residents of the United States, who currently reside in the United States, who meet specific criteria to qualify as fully vaccinated;
 - September 7 (tentative): All other foreign nationals who qualify as fully vaccinated. For more information on Canada's border measures for travellers entering Canada, see [here](#).
2. **[New]** The Government of Alberta has updated the [isolation and quarantine requirements](#) for individuals who have been vaccinated. As of August 16, 2021, isolation for cases is strongly recommended but no longer legally required.
3. **[New]** The latest updates on vaccine effectiveness are available [here](#) and the information can be shared to highlight vaccine effectiveness and benefits. Information and developments on vaccines for children is also updated at this [site](#).
4. Between January 1-August 6, there were no COVID-19 deaths among fully immunized individuals. 2 of the 71 hospitalizations were fully immunized, and only 0.7% of all cases were fully immunized.

Alberta's Relaunch - Update

- **[New]** Alberta entered Stage 3 of [Alberta's Open for Summer Plan](#) on July 1st. On July 29, 2021 other measures, such as contact tracing and quarantine of close COVID-19 contacts, were lifted and asymptomatic testing was no longer recommended. All remaining COVID-19 public health measures will be lifted on August 16, 2021 and further information on Alberta public health actions is available [here](#). FNIHB MOHs will work with communities, particularly those with lower immunization rates, on a community specific testing strategy and immunization approaches. As these public health changes are introduced, please reach out to one of us to if you have any questions or are interested in discussing a specific community strategy
- The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has developed an [infographic](#) and general guidance on [Going out Safely](#) to help individuals make informed choices when going out.
- **Reminder:** Any Albertan 18 and older who has received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine can enter the province-wide lottery to win \$1 million and other prizes in August and September. Registration for the August draw closes August 24 at 11:59 pm. Eligible individuals only need to enter once, but must be able to provide proof they have received their second vaccine dose. See the [Open for Summer Lottery](#) for more information and to register online.

COVID-19 Variants

- **[New]** To date, four variants of concern (VOCs) have been identified in Alberta. Currently, the Delta variant makes up the majority of active cases in the province. The best defense against COVID-19 and all variants of concern continues to be getting vaccinated and following best practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (e.g. proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, enhanced cleaning and disinfection, and staying home when sick).

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

- **[New]** On July 30, 2021, the Government of Canada announced additional Canada Child Benefit (CCB) supports of \$300 for each child under age six, which is support provided in addition to the regular CCB benefit. Further information on this announcement is available [here](#).
- **[New]** The Government of Canada has extended eligibility for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy and Lockdown Support until October 23, 2021 and has increased the rate of support employers and organizations can receive during the period between August 29 and September 25, 2021. The Canada Recovery Benefit, the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit and the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit have also been extended until October 23, 2021. More information is available [here](#).
- The Government of Canada is pleased to support the National Institute on Ageing (NIA) to enhance its [COVID-19 Visit Risk Calculator](#), a scientific, evidence-based tool that provides reliable information to help reduce individual risk of COVID-19 infection when going out or visiting others. The Risk Calculator

is web-based and fully accessible on any device connected to the internet with access to a web browser, including phones, tablets and computers.

- **Reminder:** The Government of Canada's [Indigenous Community Business Funds](#) (ICBF) provides non-repayable financial contributions to Indigenous microbusinesses and community- or collectively- owned businesses that do not qualify for other existing business supports. Stream 1 of the funding will be transferred directly to communities and collectives to immediately support their COVID-19 economic priorities, no applications are required. Stream 2 of the funding will be proposal based. [Applications](#) must be submitted by the community or collectives on behalf of the business and funding will be transferred directly to communities and collectives.
- **Reminder:** The Government of Canada's [Own-Source Revenue in Indigenous Communities Initiative](#) (OSRICI) supports communities that have experienced a reduction in own-source revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Recipients can use this funding to provide core community programs and important services that would have been funded by own-source revenue. Funding under this initiative is not meant to overlap with other COVID-19 measures including the Indigenous Community Business Fund, Support Fund or other health, economic and social supports. All applications must be submitted to Indigenous Services Canada by August 31, 2021. More information on eligibility and application requirements can be found [here](#).
- **Reminder:** Nations that require additional surge supports for COVID-19 response or vaccine clinics including contact tracing, testing, and vaccine administration support should submit a [request form](#) to ISC-AB at: sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca.

Mental Health and Wellness

- **Reminder:** The COVID-19 pandemic has been stressful for many individuals, families, and communities who have all been affected in several ways. The [Hope for Wellness](#) help line offers immediate, toll-free telephone and online-chat based support and crisis intervention to all Indigenous people across Canada. Help is available in English and French, and upon request in Cree and Ojibway. Call the toll-free Help Line at **1-855-242-3310**, 24 hours a day, and 7 days a week.

Virtual Care Clinic

- **Reminder:** The Alberta Indigenous Virtual Care Clinic (AIVCC) has updated their hours and they are now **open until 8:30pm on Wednesdays**. The 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 and Resources

- Windspeaker Radio held a virtual COVID vaccine town hall co-hosted by Dene Tha' First Nation with Chief James Ahnassay; Delbert Salopree, Dene Tha' First Nation Elder; and Dr Parminder Thiara, Deputy MOH ISC-AB, as speakers. The link to the video recordings can be found [here](#)
- **[New]** The Indigenous Services Canada COVID-19 communications toolkit, last updated on July 12, 2021, is available [here](#).
- **[New]** ISC-AB presented a telehealth session on Long COVID on **Friday July 16**. A recording of the presentation can be found [here](#).

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=IwAR1hzie9aLgDLr0K7Qi80mb9ozNby5dK6VZO3CFhhKgLrALUp06_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.



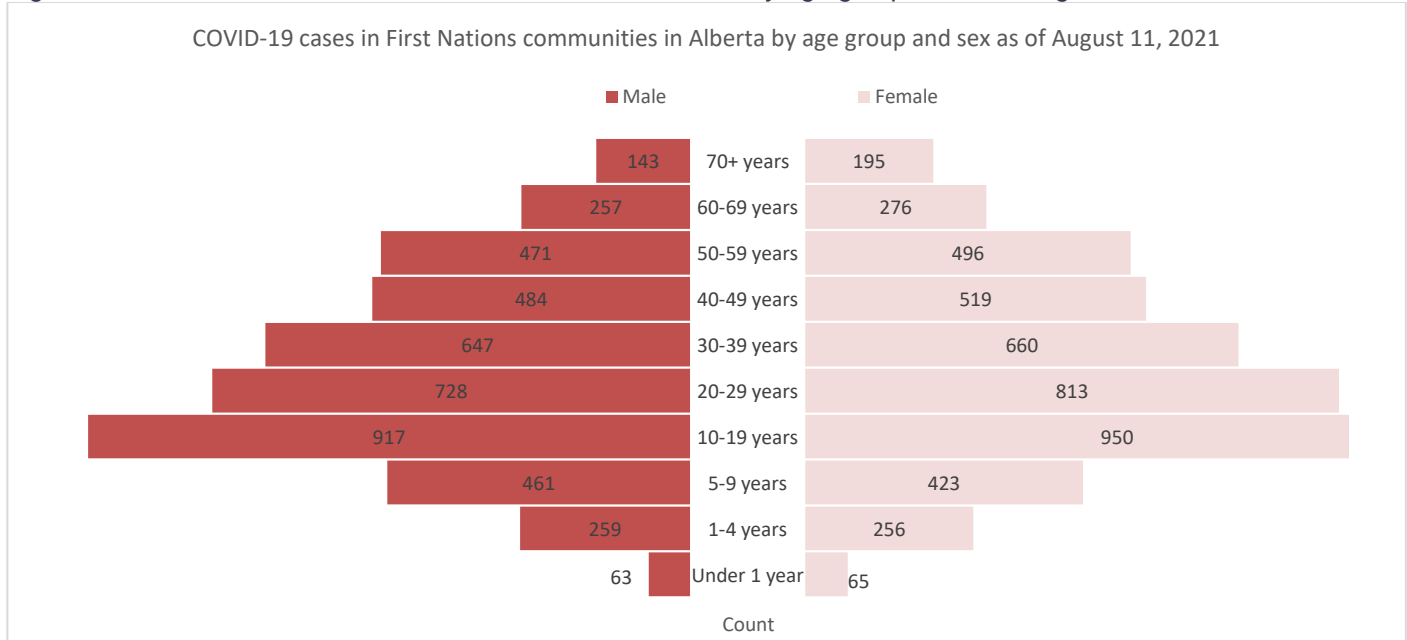
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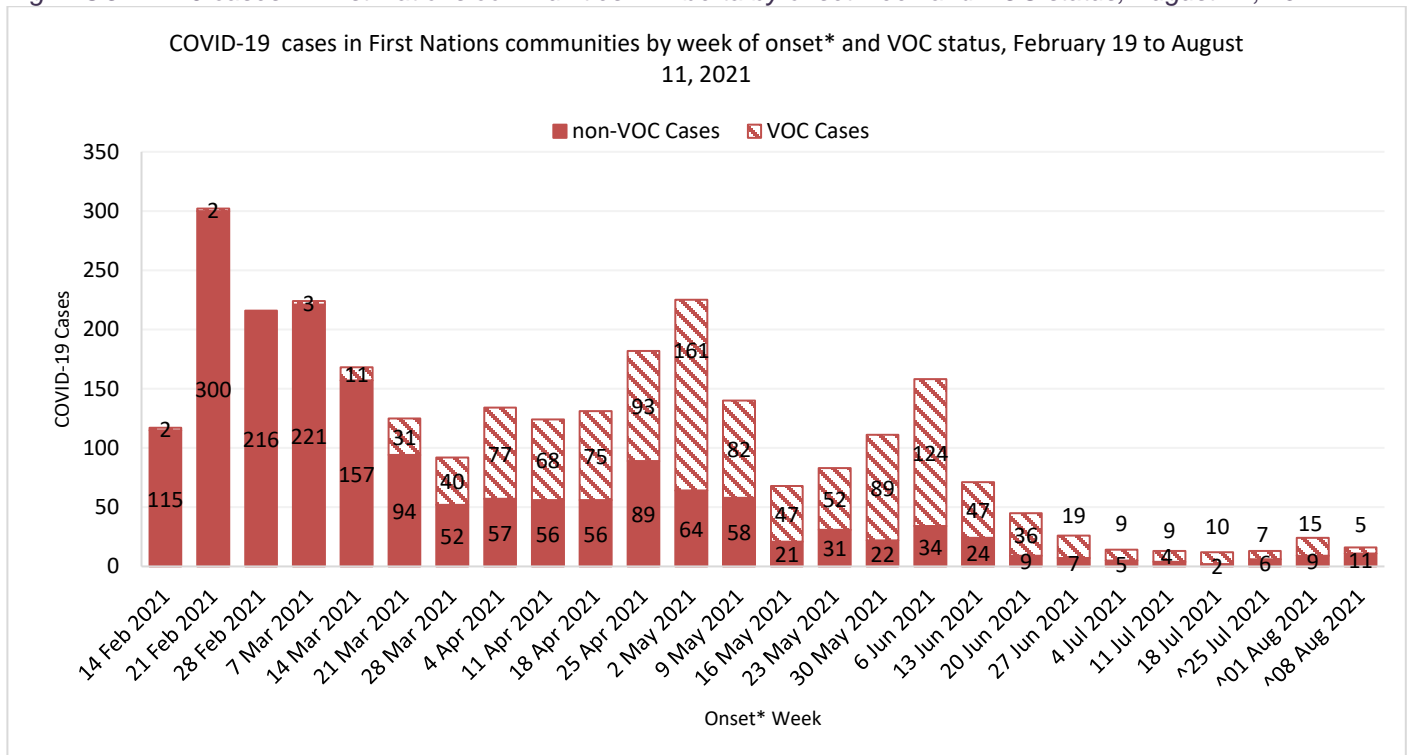
APPENDIX A: Additional COVID-19 Data in First Nations On-Reserve in Alberta

Fig 1. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by age group and sex, August 11, 2021



Individuals between the ages of 10 and 39 years accounted for 51.9% of all cases in First Nations communities in Alberta and 51.0% of all cases in Alberta. Females accounted for 51.2% of all cases in First Nations communities in Alberta and 49.2% among all Albertans.

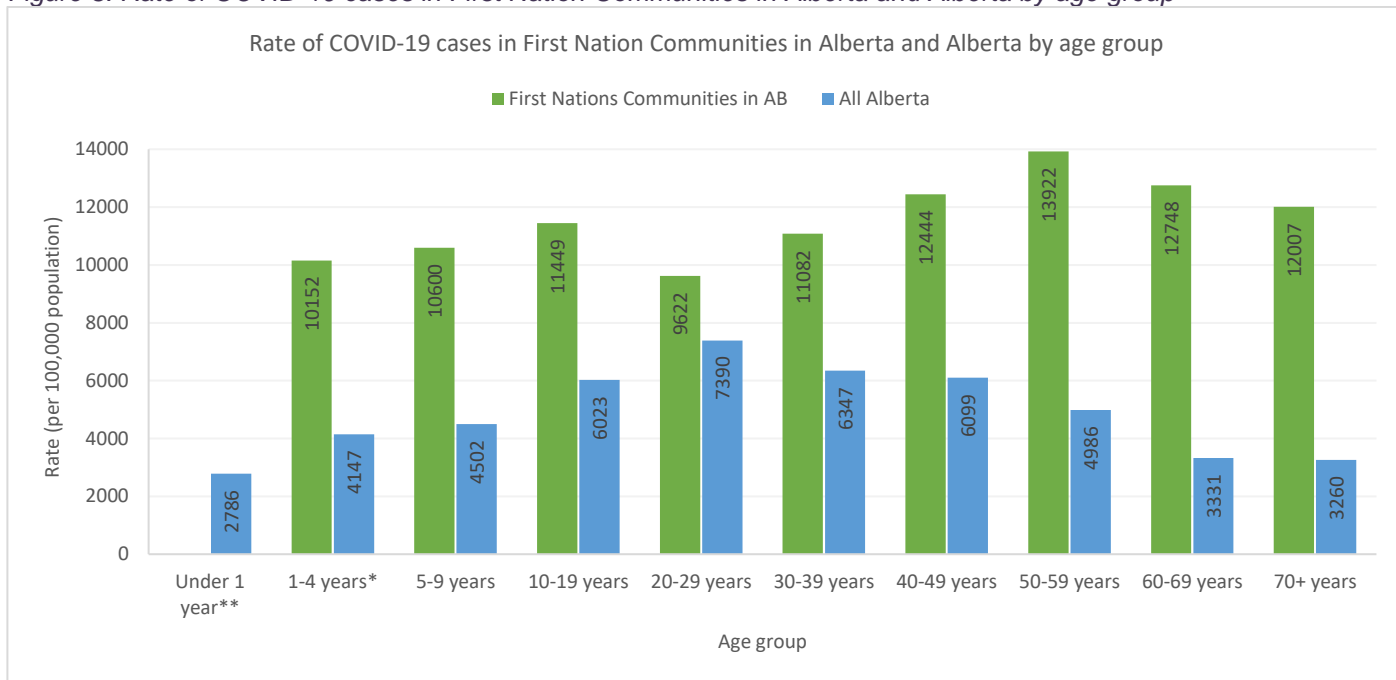
Fig 2. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by onset week and VOC status, August 11, 2021



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.

One thousand and one hundred and fourteen (1,114) VOC cases have been detected. Currently there are 28 active VOCs in 11 First Nations Communities making up 49.1% of all active COVID-19 cases in communities.

Figure 3: Rate of COVID-19 cases in First Nation Communities in Alberta and Alberta by age group

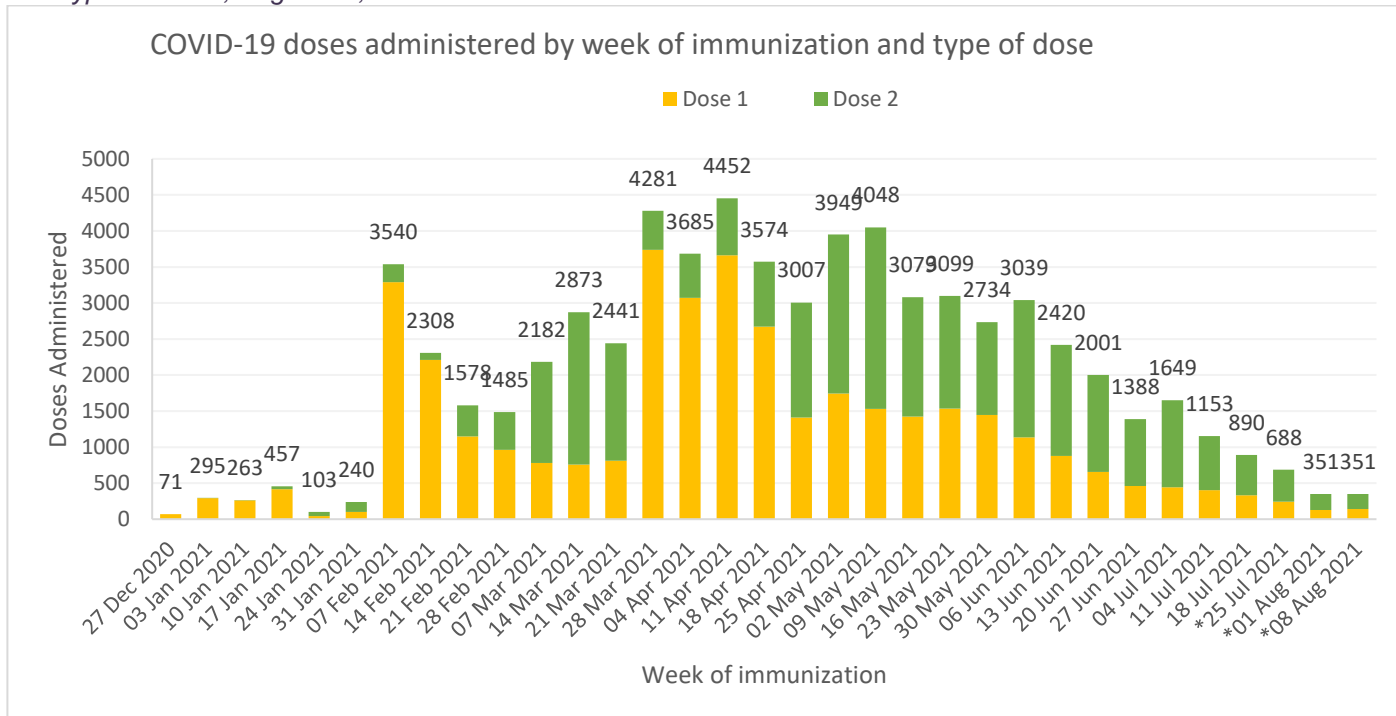


Note: **Due to late reporting and registration of birth, the rate in this age group is not calculated for First Nations communities.

*Due to late reporting and registration of birth, this rate may be overestimating

There is a higher burden of COVID-19 cases in First Nations in Alberta compared to the general Alberta population in every age group.

Fig 4. COVID-19 Vaccine doses administered in First Nations communities in Alberta by week of immunization and type of doses, August 11, 2021



*May be incomplete due to late reporting and data entry

A total of 67,674 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered to 38,202 people in First Nations communities in Alberta, of whom 29,472 are fully immunized with two doses.