

# Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

## Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: December 2, 2021

Office of the Senior Medical Officer of Health

Please email questions about COVID-19 to: [sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca](mailto:sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca)

A new variant of COVID-19, Omicron (B.1.1.529), was identified officially as a variant of concern by the World Health Organization on November 26, 2021. Cases of the Omicron variant have now been identified across Canada. Alberta confirmed its first case on November 30, 2021 and three more cases have been confirmed as of December 2, 2021. Of the four total Omicron cases, three individuals are recently returned travelers and one is a household contact. While there is little information so far on the transmissibility and severity of the variant, it is important to remain cautious and follow public health measures such as mask wearing indoors, physical distancing and proper hand washing. Alberta remains in a state of public health emergency and the following [mandatory restrictions for social gatherings](#) remain in place for individuals that are:

- Vaccinated: Indoor private social gatherings are limited to 2 households (yours plus one other) up to a maximum of 10 vaccine-eligible, vaccinated people and no restrictions on children under 12.
- Unvaccinated: Indoor social gatherings are not permitted for vaccine-eligible people who are unvaccinated.

COVID-19 cases are declining in First Nations communities, an encouraging development that can be maintained throughout the upcoming holiday season by remaining vigilant and ensuring gatherings are limited. As always, a full vaccine series of two doses at the recommended interval (8 weeks between doses) is proven to be the best mechanism to significantly reduce the risk of severe health outcomes from COVID-19. Children aged 5 and over can now book their vaccine appointments to receive the pediatric formulation of the Pfizer vaccine. It is very important children receive this vaccine as the 5 – 11 age group currently makes up 20 – 30% of all COVID-19 cases in Canada. Although less common than in other age groups, COVID-19 can lead to severe outcomes in children, including hospitalization. Further information on pediatric vaccination is available here <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17745.aspx>.

First Nations individuals over 18 whose last COVID-19 vaccine dose was over 6 months ago can also be offered a third booster dose to restore protection against infection that may have decreased over time. We continue to encourage everyone aged six months of age and older to get the 'flu shot' to help prevent influenza and related complications and reduce stress on the health care system.

### Status Update

#### Number of Cases Reported\* as of December 1, 2021:

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

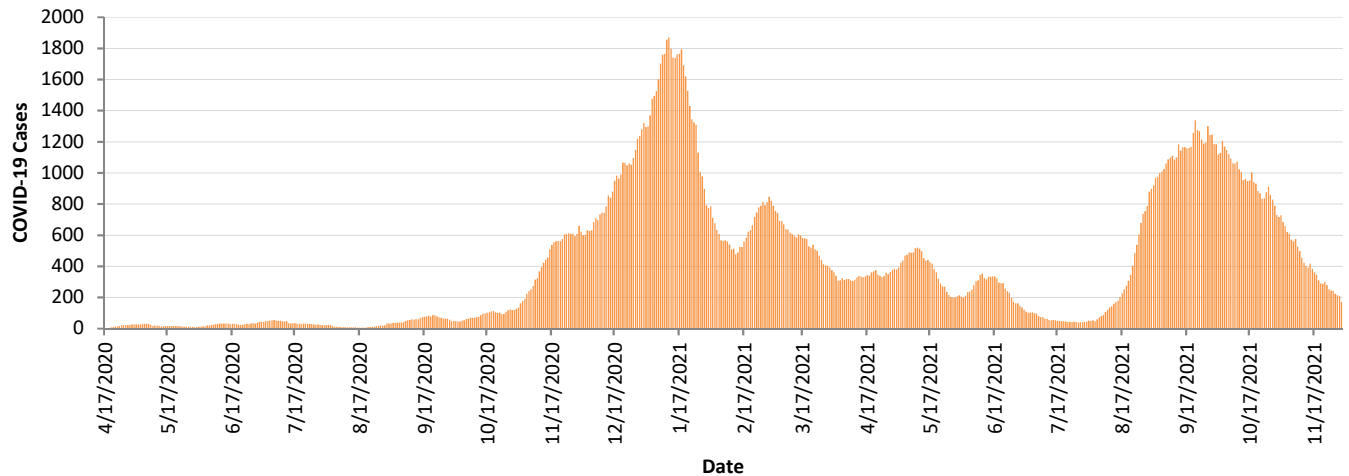
**Alberta:** There are **4,619 Active Cases** of COVID-19 in Alberta.

**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	14,275	13,964	164	147	29	27
Living on and off reserve in Alberta	28,356	27,768	316	272	59	NA



Active confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases by date, December 01, 2021



COVID-19 in First Nations living on reserve in Alberta

Treaty Area	Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered Cases	Deaths
Treaty 6	6,510	71	6,383	56
Treaty 7	3,371	28	3,289	54
Treaty 8	4,394	65	4,292	37
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14,275</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>13,964</b>	<b>147</b>

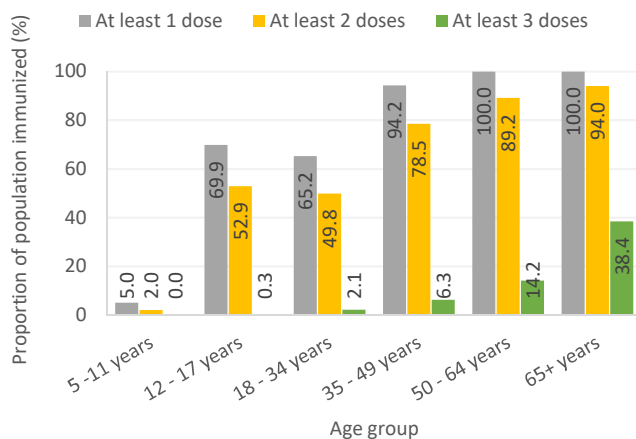
## COVID-19 Vaccine

COVID-19 Vaccine in First Nations people living on reserve in Alberta as of December 1, 2021.

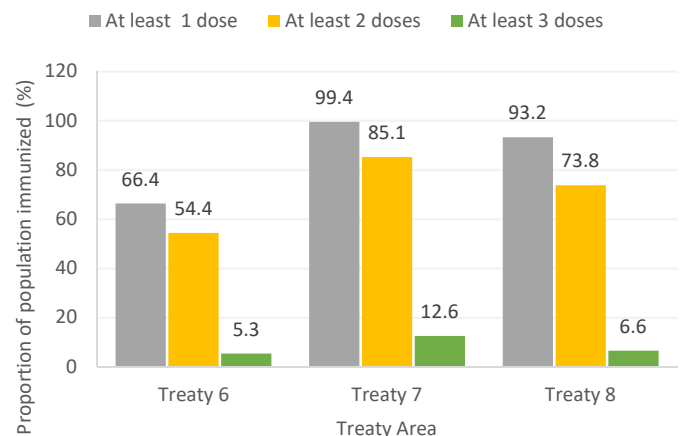
- **103,200 (20,905 are imported)** doses have been administered to First Nations living on-reserve in Alberta.
- **54,003** First Nations people living on reserve have received at least one dose
- **44,224** First Nations people living on reserve have received at least two doses
- **4,973** First Nations people living on reserve have received three doses

Approximately 83.7% of the population aged 12 years and older living on reserve have received at least one dose (67.5% of the total population), 68.9% have received at least two doses (55.3% of the total population), and 5.5% have received three doses (6.2% of the total population).

Proportion\* of population immunized by age group and type of dose



Proportion\* of population aged 12 years and older immunized by Treaty area and type of dose



### 27 Communities

Have vaccinated over 70% of 12+ year olds with the first dose

### 16 Communities

Have vaccinated 50 - 70% of 12+ year olds with the first dose

### 2 Communities

Have vaccinated less than 50% of 12+ year olds with the first dose

## COVID-19 Vaccine - New Developments

- **[New]** Research into the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines against the Omicron variant is ongoing. vaccine manufacturers, such as Pfizer and Moderna, are evaluating the effectiveness of the vaccines against the Omicron variant. Results may be available in a couple weeks.
- **[New]** Pediatric vaccinations in Alberta are now underway. The pediatric formulation of the vaccine is more stable and can be stored longer, up to 6 months in freezers and refrigerated for 10 weeks. The vaccine can be unrefrigerated for up to 12 hours and has an orange cap to ensure children receive the correct formulation. An 8 week interval for children aged 5 – 11 is recommended. Contact your local health centre for more information or to book an appointment.
- **[New]** As of November 30, unvaccinated individuals over the age of 12 will be unable to board a plane or train in Canada and negative COVID-19 tests will no longer serve as a substitute for being vaccinated. Alberta's vaccine record now meets the recommended Canadian standard for domestic and international travel. Vaccine records from First Nations, military, other provinces, and international travelers will continue to be accepted as proof of vaccination. In recognition of the unique needs of remote communities, interim accommodations continue to be in place including
  - Unvaccinated travelers flying out of remote communities are exempt from the mandatory testing requirement before they depart until local testing capacity is in place.
  - Currently, free, rapid high-quality COVID-19 testing is available at “gateway” airports for an interim period to enable these travelers to be tested as soon as possible in their journey to ensure their travel is safe for themselves and others.
- **[New]** A telehealth update was held on Thursday, December 2, 2021 featuring updates on vaccination efforts and COVID-19 response to date. Dr. Stephen Freedman, a pediatric emergency physician and leading expert on the impacts of COVID-19 in children, also presented. The session is available at [www.fntn.ca](http://www.fntn.ca).

## COVID-19 Vaccine Reminders

1. All First Nations, Metis and Inuit aged 18 and over, on and off reserve are eligible to receive a third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine as long as it has been 6 months since their last dose. Front-line health workers are also eligible for the booster dose if the interval between their first and second dose was less than 8 weeks **and** it has been at least 6 months since their last vaccine.

## COVID-19 Treatment in Alberta

- **[New]** Alberta Health Services (AHS) has begun administering a new monoclonal antibody treatment for COVID-19 that was recently approved by Health Canada. Sotrovimab is a new drug that was developed specifically for treating individuals with COVID-19 who have mild to moderate COVID-19 symptoms. It is the first treatment to be offered to outpatients. For maximum effectiveness, it must be administered by intravenous infusion within 5 days of symptom onset. The treatment is being rolled out across the province in a phased approach, starting with individuals with mild to moderate COVID 19 symptoms but are at the highest risk of severe outcomes. On December 2, 2021, AHS expanded Sotrovimab eligibility to individuals with COVID-19 if they can receive the treatment within five days of symptom onset who are:

### 1. Unvaccinated and are:

- Age 55 and older
  - OR
- Age 18 and older with a pre-existing health condition including
  - diabetes (taking medication for treatment)
  - obesity (BMI >30)

- chronic kidney disease (estimated glomerular filtration rate, <60 ml per minute per 1.73 m<sup>2</sup> of body-surface area)
  - congestive heart failure (New York Heart Association class II, III, or IV)
  - chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and moderate-to-severe asthma
  - OR
  - pregnant
- 2. Immunocompromised, due to one of the following reasons (vaccinated or unvaccinated):**
- have received a transplant;
  - is an oncology patients who has received a dose of any IV or oral chemotherapy or other immunosuppressive treatment since December 2020;
  - has an inflammatory condition (e.g. rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, inflammatory bowel disease) receiving a dose of any systemic immunosuppressive treatment since December 2020.
- If you believe you are eligible, please call Health Link at 1-844-343-0971 and leave a message. Health Link staff will call you back and ask you some questions before referring you to a health professional who will determine if you are eligible, get your consent and book your appointment. If you have any questions about the eligibility status, additional information can be found in the [Patient FAQ](#). Eligibility criteria will continue to expand based on supply and capacity capabilities. More information on Sotrovimab can be found in the [Sotrovimab Patient Information Sheet](#), [FAQs for Patients/Public](#) or the [Alberta Health Website](#).

### ***Alberta's Relaunch - Update***

- **Reminder:** Alberta Education's kindergarten to Grade 6 At-Home Rapid Testing Program has been extended to include all Kindergarten to Grade 12 students attending schools in First Nations. Outbreak status is not required for First Nation schools wanting to participate in the program. Rapid screening tests are another tool, along with health measures already in place at schools, to keep students and staff safe. Participation is voluntary for students and staff. If you have questions about the At-Home Rapid Testing Program, please email [EDC.SchoolRapidTesting@gov.ab.ca](mailto:EDC.SchoolRapidTesting@gov.ab.ca).
- **Reminder:** Alberta's public health measures remain in place. These measures include limiting gatherings, restricting indoor gatherings for unvaccinated individuals, work from home directives and mandatory masking in schools. More information on the public health measures and the restriction exemption program can be found [here](#).
- **Reminder:** Small and medium sized organizations in Alberta, including Indigenous organizations, employers, and service providers can apply to the [Alberta Health Rapid Testing Program](#) to receive free rapid test kits for use in their organization's COVID-19 screening program.

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

- The Government of Canada has committed new funding to support the reopening of the arts, culture, heritage and sport sectors. The [Making Cultural Spaces Safe During COVID-19 Initiative](#), administered by Canada Cultural Spaces Fund, aims to help Canadian arts and heritage organizations prepare their spaces to reopen while following public health guidelines. The support can be used for renovating or adapting spaces, and for the purchase and installation of health and safety-related specialized equipment. There is no deadline to apply to the fund. Applications will be accepted on a continuous basis for projects to be carried out before March 31, 2022. To discuss your project and request an application form, please contact [erica.potie@pch.gc.ca](mailto:erica.potie@pch.gc.ca).
- **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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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](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>

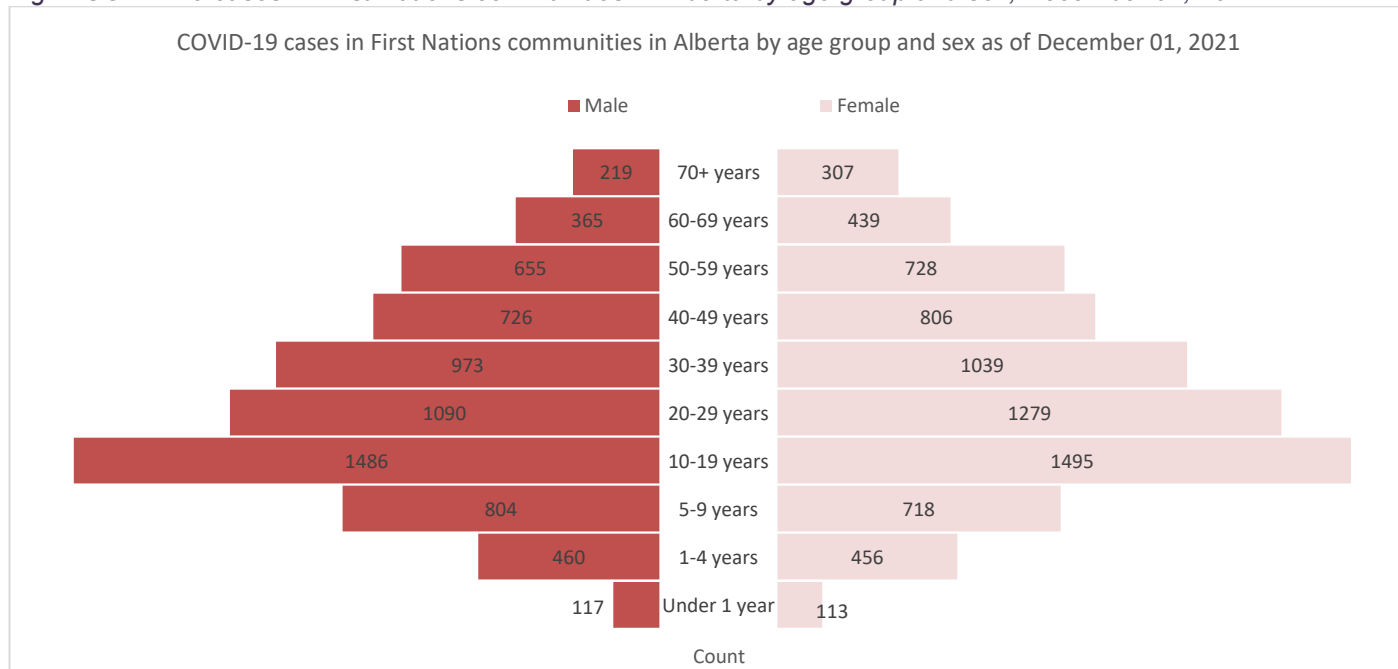
### **Mental health and coping resources are available for individuals who are struggling or need a little extra support.**

- 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.**

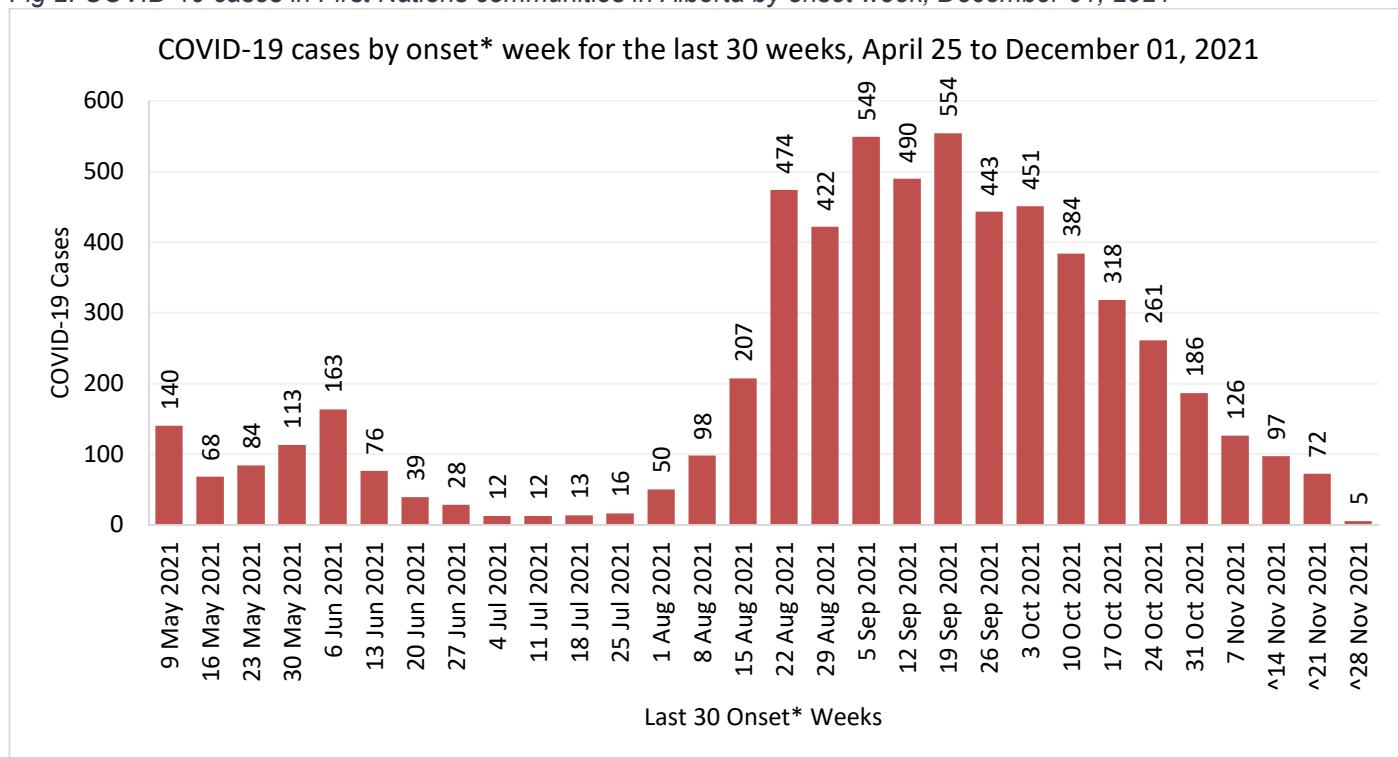
## APPENDIX A: Additional COVID-19 Data in First Nations On-Reserve in Alberta

Fig 1. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by age group and sex, December 01, 2021



Individuals between the ages of 10 and 39 years accounted for 51.6% of all cases in First Nations communities in Alberta and 50.5% of all cases in Alberta. Females accounted for 51.7 % of all cases in First Nations communities in Alberta and 49.7% among all Albertans.

Fig 2. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by onset week, December 01, 2021

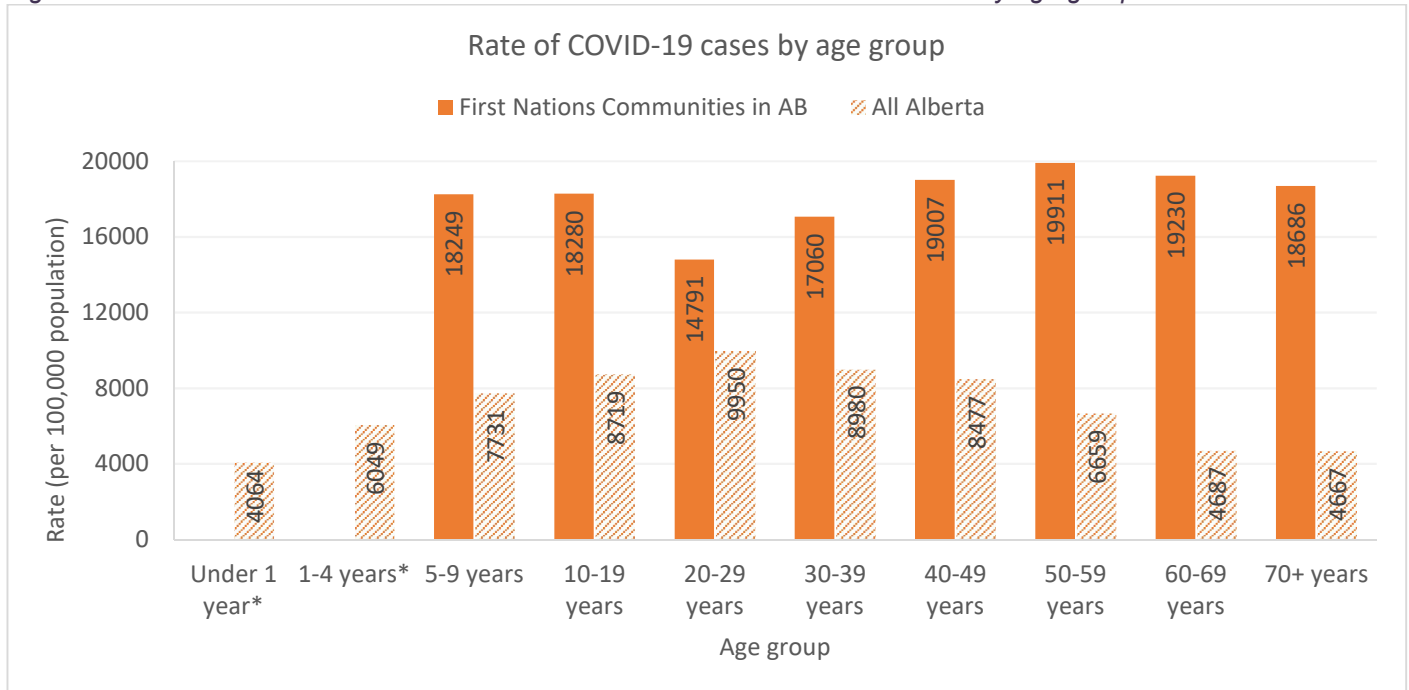


Note: ^Data may be incomplete due to late receipt of lab reports. \*Onset date is the earliest of the "symptoms onset" and "specimen collection" date.

In general, the weekly number of new COVID-19 cases have been decreasing since the week of September 19-25, 2021 in First Nation communities in Alberta.



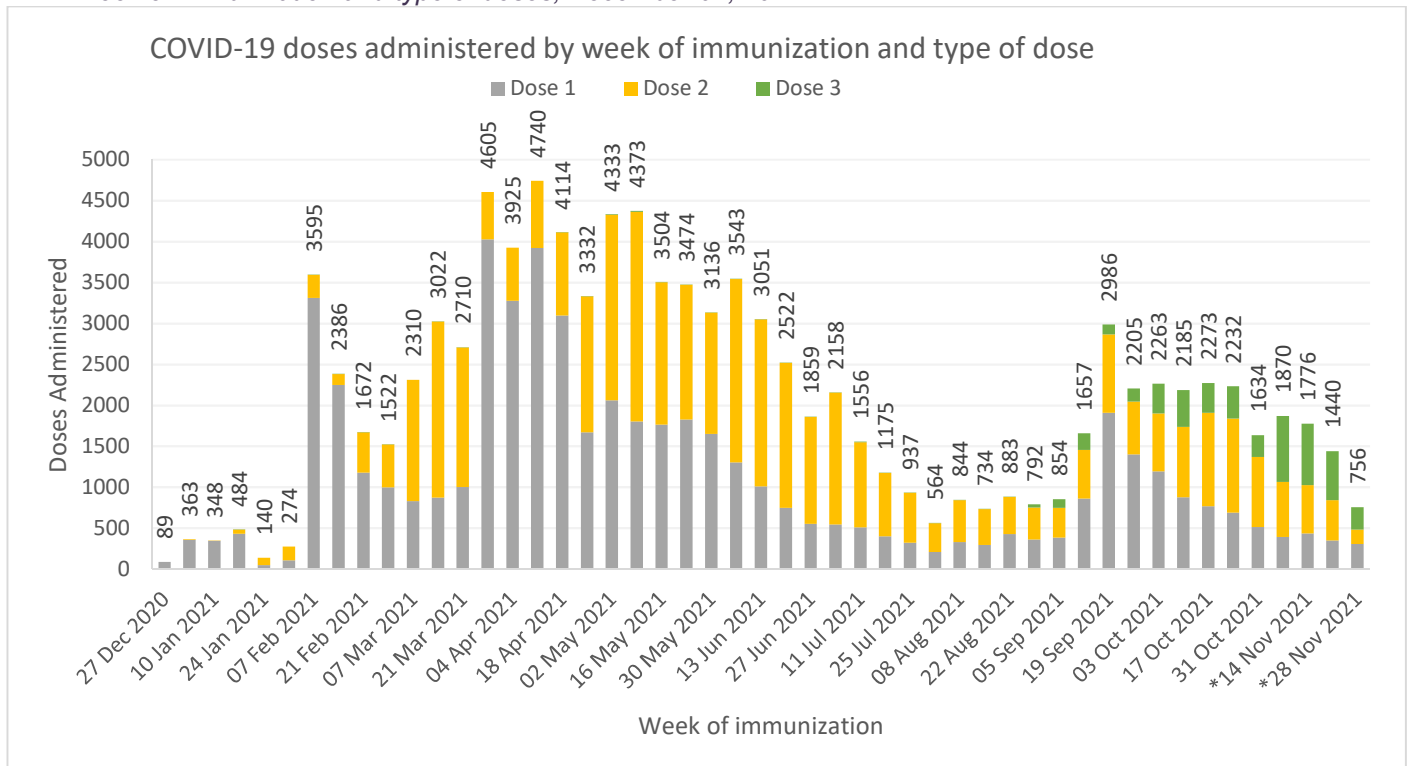
Fig 3: Rate of COVID-19 cases in First Nation Communities in Alberta and Alberta by age group



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

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 to First Nations people living in First Nation communities in Alberta by week of immunization and type of doses, December 01, 2021



\*May be incomplete due to late reporting and data entry

A total of 103,200 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered to 54,003 people living in First Nations communities in Alberta, of whom 44,224 have received at least two doses and 4,973 have received three doses.