

# Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

## Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: February 10, 2022

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)

On February 8, 2022, the Government of Alberta announced the easing of public health restrictions as the province moves towards an endemic approach to the COVID-19 pandemic. The approach is staged:

- Stage 1 – Effective February 9, 2022, the Restrictions Exemption Program were removed and capacity limits were removed with the exception of large capacity venues.
  - Beginning February 14, 2022, there will be no masking requirements for children aged 12 and under in any setting, and no masking requirements in any schools for children and youth of all ages.
  - Indoor masking requirements elsewhere in the province are still in effect during stage 1.
- Stage 2 – Currently scheduled for March 1 under the condition that hospitalizations continue to decline):
  - any remaining school requirements (cohorting for example) will be removed;
  - youth screening activities for entertainment and sport activities will be removed;
  - capacity on all large venues and entertainment venues will be lifted;
  - indoor and outdoor social gathering limits will be lifted;
  - mandatory work from home requirements will be lifted; and,
  - the Provincial mask mandate will be removed.
- Stage 3 – dependent on the previous stages and hospitalization trends:
  - COVID specific continuing care measures will be removed; and,
  - mandatory isolation will be recommended not mandatory.

More details on each stage is available at [COVID-19 public health actions | Alberta.ca](https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-public-health-actions). There have been **no changes** to current testing processes, case reporting, or measures in health facilities. Isolation requirements are unchanged during stages 1 and 2.

Alberta Health Services will maintain required masking for staff and patients in all AHS sites. It will be important to maintain public health measures, including masking, in health facilities on-reserve to protect both patients and healthcare workers. Patients seeking or receiving care may be more vulnerable than the general population and outbreaks in these settings have a serious impact on patient outcomes and our ability to deliver services. More information on masking in health facilities can be found here: [MOH Memo COVID-19, CMOH Order 01-2022, Rapid Testing, PPE \(N95\) Jan 7 2022 \(1\).pdf \(onehealth.ca\)](#)

While the COVID-19 situation appears to be slowly improving, the Omicron variant (B.1.1.529) is still widespread in Alberta. Case numbers are coming down and we are aware of a small number of recent deaths and ICU admissions from First Nations communities. Although occurring at a lower rate than in previous waves, we recognize the impact these losses have on First Nations. Please continue to be careful and take actions to limit further spread. Vaccination offers the most robust protection against serious illness due to COVID-19. All individuals 18 years old and older in Alberta are urged to get their booster 5 months after their second dose. Third doses will be available starting February 15<sup>th</sup> for individuals ages 5-17 with specific underlying conditions.



Indigenous Services  
Canada

Services aux  
Autochtones Canada

Canada

## Number of Cases Reported\* as of February 8, 2022:

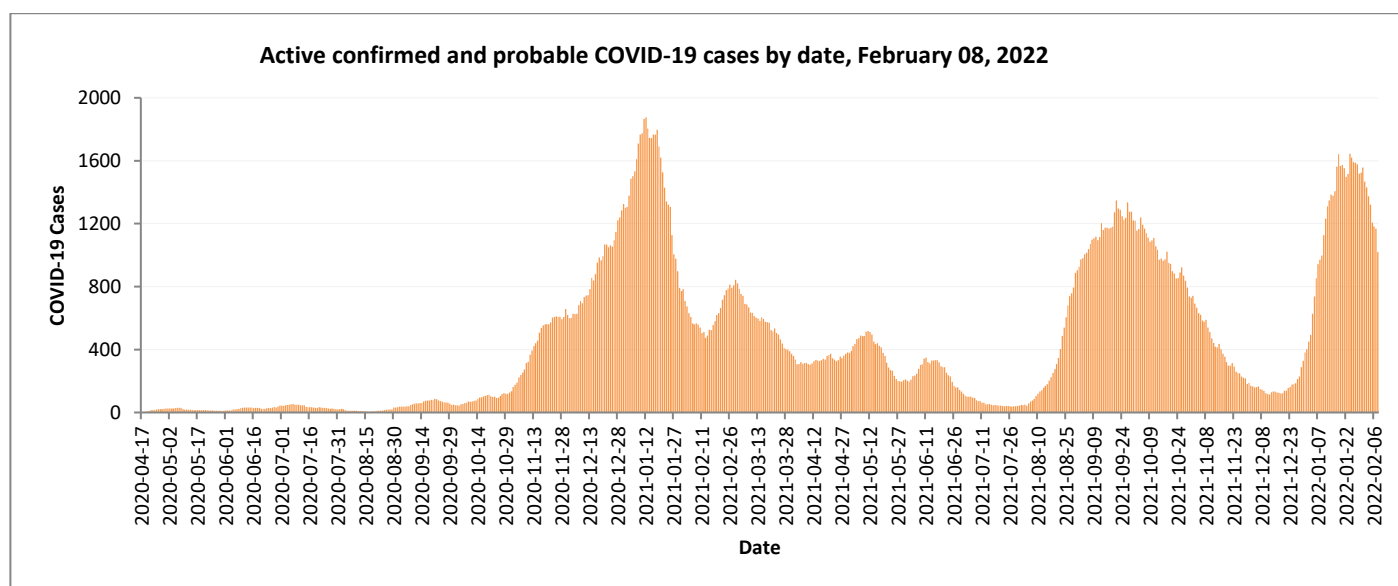
\*numbers are changing rapidly and may change after this bulletin is released

**Alberta:** There are **28,265 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         | 18,083      | 16,904         | 1,019        | 160    | 32                     | 33                            |
| Living on and off reserve in Alberta | 35,952      | 33,804         | 1,850        | 298    | 155                    | NA                            |



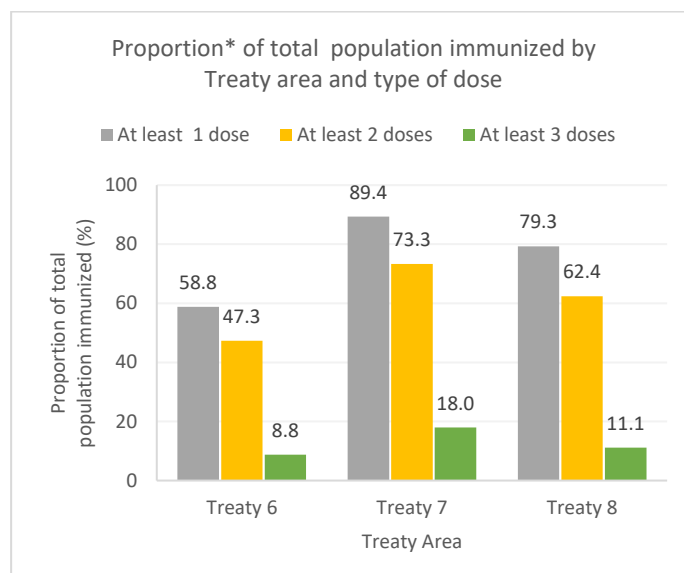
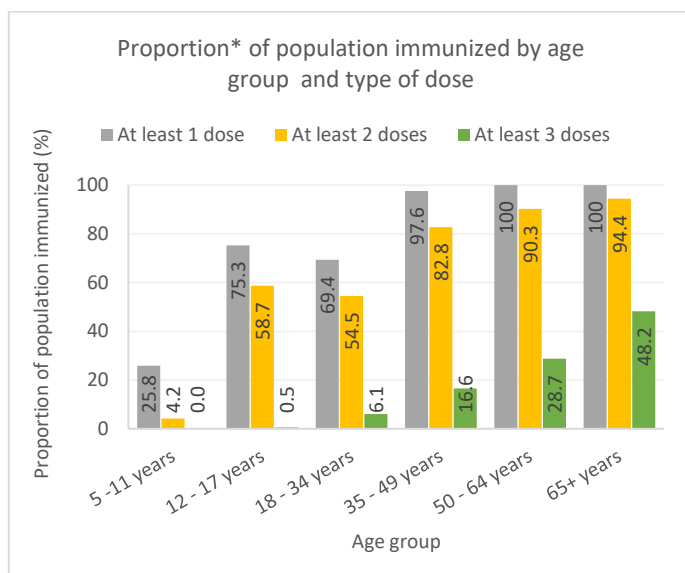
| COVID-19 in First Nations living on reserve in Alberta |               |              |                 |            |
|--|---------------|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| Treaty Area  | Total Cases   | Active Cases | Recovered Cases | Deaths     |
| Treaty 6   | 8,317         | 443          | 7,811           | 63         |
| Treaty 7   | 4,766         | 387          | 4,319           | 60         |
| Treaty 8   | 5,000         | 189          | 4,774           | 37         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>18,083</b> | <b>1,019</b> | <b>16,904</b>   | <b>160</b> |

## COVID-19 Vaccine

**COVID-19 Vaccine for First Nations people living on reserve in Alberta as of February 08, 2022.**

- **115,963** doses have been administered to First Nations people living on-reserve in Alberta.
- **58,892** First Nations people living on reserve have received at least one dose
- **47,380** First Nations people living on reserve have received at least two doses
- **9,691** First Nations people living on reserve have received three doses

Approximately 87.6% of the population aged 12 years and older living on reserve have received at least one dose (73.6% of the total population), 73.5% have received at least two doses (59.2% of the total population), and 15.2% have received three doses (12.1% of the total population).



\*Percentages are calculated using unadjusted ISC-IRS on-reserve and Crown land population as of December 31, 2020. If the proportion of population immunized in any age group exceeds 100% because of population data limitation, we keep the proportion at 100% by adjusting the population to be equal to the number of first doses administered in that age group

## COVID-19 Vaccine

- **[New]** A new fact sheet on vaccinations for children aged 5 – 11 has been released by the Government of Canada. It is available here [Covid-19-get-facts-vaccinating-children-eng.pdf \(canada.ca\)](#)
- **[New]** Effective February 15, 2022, Alberta will be allowing additional doses for the following age groups with certain health conditions that may put them at higher risk of severe outcomes of COVID-19:
  - Adolescents 12 to 17 years of age with eligible underlying health conditions will be able to book a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. This includes those with certain immunocompromising conditions who may have received a three-dose primary series (now eligible for a fourth dose booster).
  - Children 5 to 11 years of age with certain immunocompromising conditions will be eligible to book a third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine as part of a three-dose primary series. Booking begins on February 15, and eligible Albertans 5 to 11 years of age are recommended to schedule their third dose at least 8 weeks following their second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.
- Alberta continues to recommend that Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty COVID 19 vaccine be offered as the preferred choice of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine for Albertans 12 to 29 years of age to start and/or complete their primary series and for their booster dose (including immunocompromised eligible for a three-dose primary series). The Moderna (Spikevax) vaccine could be used if preferred by the patient with informed consent. Information and additional guidance on these changes can be found at [COVID-19 Immunization](#). In addition, all current information, including all vaccine and case data in Alberta can be found at [COVID-19 Alberta statistics | alberta.ca](#).

## Personal Protective Equipment

- **[New]** While the province moves towards easing health restrictions, for staff and physicians in AHS facilities, there are **no changes at this time** to the [existing PPE policies](#). It is recommended health centres continue to follow these policies as well.
- Alberta Health Services remains the primary source for ordering PPE for staff working in Indigenous health care facilities and isolation centres in First Nations communities. Continue ordering [health related](#) PPE by completing and forwarding the AHS PPE order form to [CPSMOperations.EOC@ahs.ca](mailto:CPSMOperations.EOC@ahs.ca). A copy of the AHS order form can be found [here](#). Indigenous communities and organizations can also get [non-health related](#) PPE from the following agencies:
  1. Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA). AEMA currently has two streams of PPE available:
    - Excess/Expiring PPE Expanded Portal: This is a portal where AEMA offers PPE that has reached 75% of its lifecycle. PPE available from this portal **is free**, to ensure that PPE is not

wasted. It can be reached here: <https://xnet.gov.ab.ca/ppe/other-order/>. Currently on this site there is ATSM Level 3 surgical masks as well as KN95 masks.

- Main PPE Portal: <https://xnet.gov.ab.ca/ppe/>. Items available include hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, thermometers, face shields, gloves (Nitrile), gowns, masks (Procedural, KN95-Non Medical, N95-Non Medical). It is important to note that the costs plus shipping is charged at cost.
2. Public Services and Procurement Canada's Essential Services Contingency Reserve (ESCR)
- Essential Services Contingency Reserve is offering PPE items such as hand sanitizer, gloves (Nitrile), masks (non-medical, KN95 respirators), face shields, safety goggles, disposable coveralls, and disinfection products at **no cost** to Indigenous communities and organizations. For more information on eligibility and application process, visit the [ESCR web page](#).

### **COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Tests**

- COVID-19 rapid antigen testing kits for at-home use can help identify infections early and help stop the spread of COVID-19. These tests are intended for at-home personal use for screening in symptomatic and asymptomatic people. These rapid tests cannot be used for the Restrictions Exemption Program. Unvaccinated people must pay to obtain proof of a negative test result through a private vendor or pharmacy to gain admission. Watch this [video](#) to learn more about how to perform a rapid test at home. Only certain people need to confirm RAT results with PCR testing. To find out what to do if you get a positive, negative, or invalid rapid antigen test result, refer to [Rapid testing at home | Alberta.ca](#). First Nations communities requiring at-home test kits should continue to email [rapidtesting@gov.ab.ca](mailto:rapidtesting@gov.ab.ca)
- **Reminder:** Employers and service providers can apply to receive free rapid test kits for use in their organization's COVID-19 screening program. More information on the rapid testing program for employers and service providers can be found [here](#).

### **Steps Individuals Can Take**

- **[New]** ISC-AB has developed a document to provide guidance on masking during the COVID-19 pandemic. The resource is available at [ISC-AB Guidance for masks February 2022.pdf \(onehealth.ca\)](#). If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you can assume you have COVID-19 and likely the Omicron variant. You do not need to be tested to confirm, but you can use an at-home rapid test if you have access to one. Most people recover from COVID-19 without special treatment and can manage mild symptoms at home. Resources are available to help you manage mild symptoms at home and take care of someone who has COVID-19. AHS has developed a [COVID-19 Self-Care Guide](#) if you need further information on how to manage COVID-19 at home. In addition, the Alberta Medical Association has [Patient Resources for COVID-19](#) available on their website that can help determine when you may need to talk to your doctor. It is not always necessary to get in touch with your doctor, as most people with mild symptoms can manage at home with no problems.

### **Mental Health and Wellness**

- **[New]** Windspeaker held a special town hall session on mental wellness and self care featuring Dr. Evan Adams, Kairyn Potts and Elder Pam Heavyhead. The session is available here [Mental Wellness Town Hall - Let's Talk Self-Care](#)
- **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).

- **[New]** FNIHB-AB held a telehealth session on February 10, 2022 providing an update on the COVID-19 situation in the province. Information on the session and recordings of this, and previous sessions, can be found at <https://fntn.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>

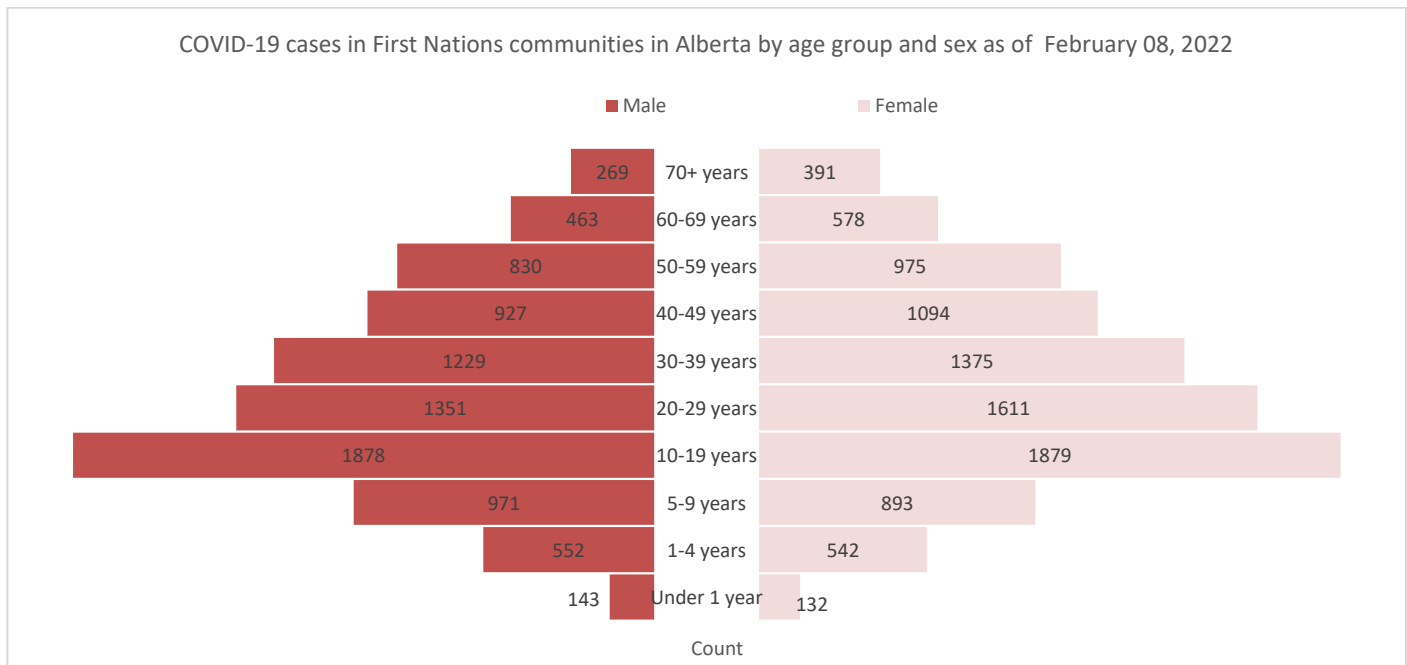
### **Mental health and coping resources are available for individuals who are struggling or need a little extra support.**

- 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.**

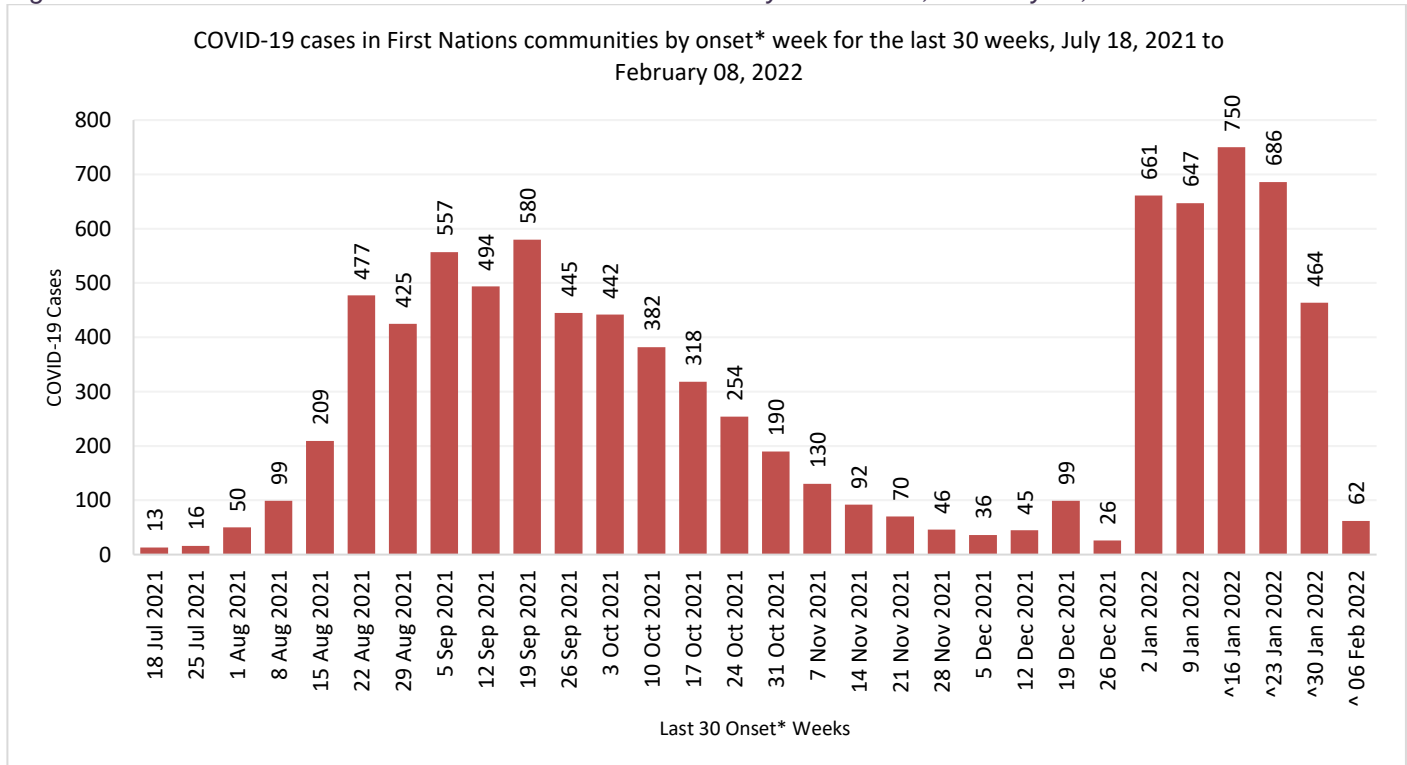
## APPENDIX A: Additional COVID-19 Data in First Nations On-Reserve in Alberta

Fig 1. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by age group and sex, February 08, 2022



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 52.4% of all cases in First Nations communities in Alberta and 51.2% among all Albertans.

Fig 2. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by onset week, February 08, 2022

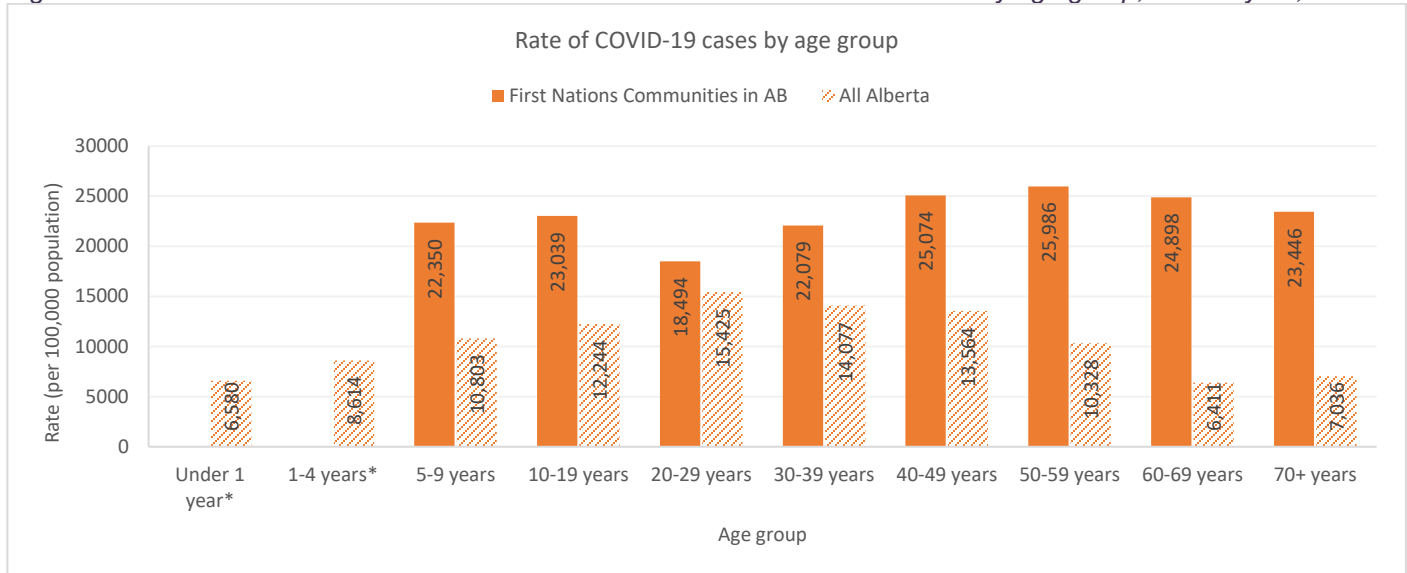


Note: ^Data may be incomplete due to late receipt of lab reports. \*Onset date is the earliest of the "symptoms onset" and "specimen collection" date.



A significant increase in the number of COVID-19 cases are seen in January 2022 compared to December 2021 in First Nation communities in Alberta. The increase is mainly due to the spread of the COVID-19 Omicron variant.

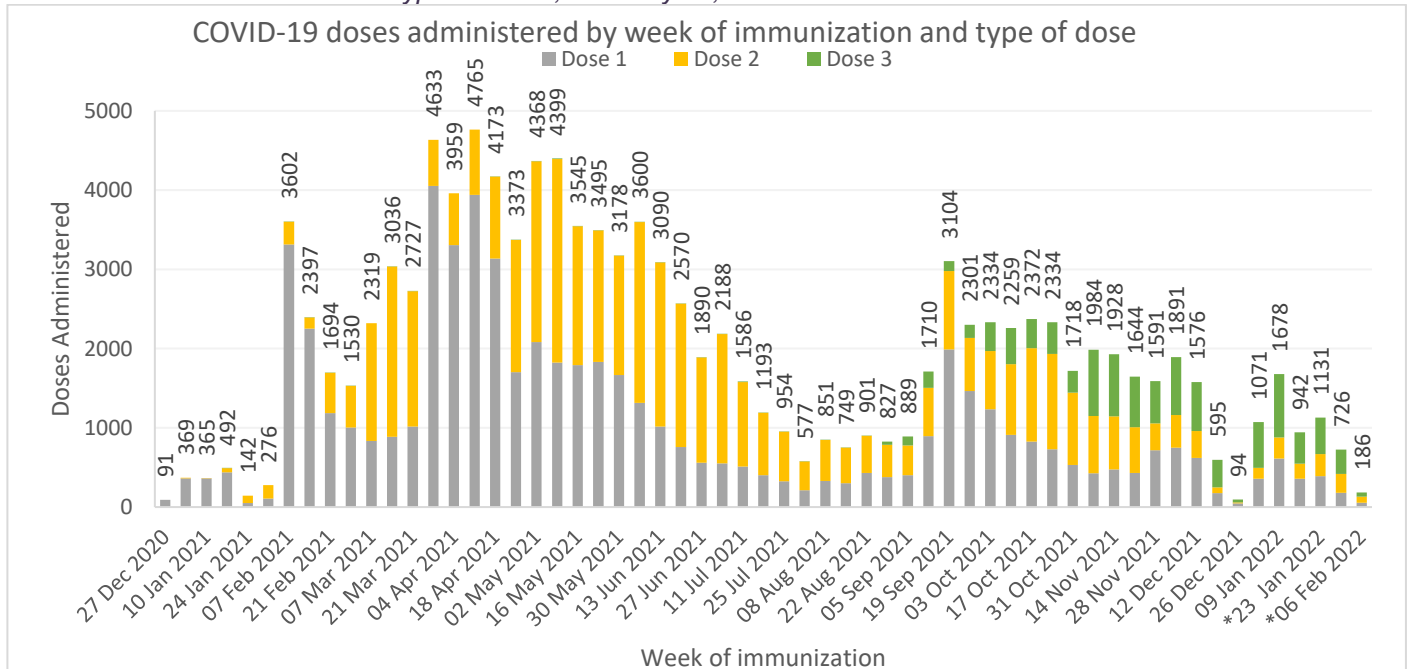
*Fig 3: Rate of COVID-19 cases in First Nation Communities in Alberta and Alberta by age group, February 08, 2022*



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, February 08, 2022*



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

A total of 115,963 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered to 58,892 people living in First Nations communities in Alberta, of whom 47,380 have received at least two doses and 9,691 have received three doses.