

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: February 19, 2021

Office of the Senior Medical Officer of Health

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

ISC-AB is pleased to hear all the successful vaccine clinic stories that communities are sharing. Congratulations to all the healthcare staff that have been working tirelessly to support, plan and run these vaccine clinics, all your hard work is very evident by all the community members who have been successfully vaccinated! It is an exciting time to see all the careful planning being operationalized; the initial data shows that over 5000 immunizations have occurred in First Nations communities. We also want to acknowledge the many Elders and community members that braved the extreme cold to get vaccinated – a true testament to everyone working together to protect themselves, their families, and their communities. Second doses are anticipated to roll out in early to mid-March and we expect to have more details soon to help assist with planning second dose vaccine clinics. Vaccines are one tool in preventing the spread of COVID-19, **it is important that we continue to adhere to public health measures to protect one another and communities.**

Status Update

Number of Cases Reported* as of February 19, 2021:

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

Alberta: There are **4,887 Active Cases** of COVID-19 in Alberta.

	Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada)	First Nations On Reserve in Canada (Indigenous Services Canada)	Alberta (Alberta Health)
Confirmed Cases	837,497	19,455	130,030
Deaths	21,498	215	1,805
Recovered	783,412	17,975	123,338

First Nations living on and off reserve (Alberta): There are **11,329** confirmed cases of COVID-19 to date and **105** deaths in First Nations living on and off reserve in Alberta. Confirmed cases are: **1954** in Calgary Zone; **2888** in Edmonton Zone; **799** in South Zone; **3194** in North Zone; **2483** in Central zone and **11** unknown. *Further Information:* 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:

306 Active Cases	5336 Recovered	60 Deaths	44 Currently Hospitalized	31 Communities with Active Cases
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Location (By Zone)	Confirmed Cases	Active Cases	Recovered
Calgary Zone	1034	55	969
South Zone	471	65	399
Central Zone	1697	20	1659
Edmonton Zone	373	8	357
North Zone	2127	158	1952
TOTAL	5702	306	5336



Testing in Alberta – Update

- As of February 19, 2021, the total number of reported swab samples collected to date in First Nation communities in Alberta is **84,545**.
- **Testing continues to be a powerful tool to help limit the spread.** If you have symptoms, please stay home and book a testing appointment.
- Priority testing continues to be available to individuals exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19; all close contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases; anyone linked to a known outbreak.
- **Reminder:** Testing outside of the provincial testing criteria must be reviewed and supported by the ISC-AB MOHs. Please send testing enquiries to the ISC-AB MOH by: sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca

Vaccine Watch

[New] COVID-19 Vaccine in First Nations Communities in Alberta as of February 18, 2021

- **9,330** doses has been delivered to First Nations communities in Alberta
- **5,761** doses have been administered in **43** Nations (bands) in Alberta
- **5,293** First Nations people living on reserve have received at least one dose
- **340** First Nations people living on reserve are fully immunized (2 doses)
- **2,364** First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on reserve have received their first dose.
- **70** First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on reserve are fully immunized (2 doses)
- [New] [Phase 2 vaccinations](#) will be offered in a staged approach and once completed, will have vaccinated anyone aged 50 to 74 years, anyone with high-risk underlying health conditions, First Nations and Métis people aged 35 and older, residents and staff in congregate living settings, and eligible caregivers. Timeline for starting each phase is dependent on vaccine supply and availability.
- [New] Eligibility in [Phase 2](#) will move from Group A toward Group D:
 - Group A includes: Albertans aged 65 to 74, no matter where they live; First Nations and Métis people aged 50 to 64, on and off reserve or Metis Settlements; staff of licensed supportive living facilities not included in Phase 1.
 - Group B includes: Albertans aged 18 to 64 with high-risk underlying health conditions. Additional information on specific conditions will be provided prior to Phase 2 rollout.
 - Group C includes: Residents and staff of eligible congregate living settings.
 - Group D includes: Albertans aged 50 to 64, no matter where they live; First Nations and Métis people aged 35 to 49 on and off reserve or Metis Settlements.
- [New] Healthcare workers that had their first doses postponed due to the vaccine supply shortage will be able to soon receive their first doses of vaccine. These eligible healthcare workers, including those working in First Nations communities, will be contacted by AHS to book their vaccination appointments.
- **Reminder:** The two COVID-19 vaccines currently licensed in Canada are mRNA vaccines. More information on how mRNA vaccines work can be found [here](#). In addition, Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority created two COVID-19 Vaccine whiteboard videos, [How the COVID-19 Vaccine Works](#) and [Information about the Moderna Vaccine](#).
- **Reminder:** ISC-AB will continue to support information sharing on clinics and best practices. A number of resources are available on [OneHealth](#), including a clinic planning guide and checklist.
- **Reminder:** AB Health has created a COVID-19 Vaccine Q&A document for healthcare practitioners that can be found on the [Alberta Immunization Policy](#) webpage or accessed directly [here](#).
- **Reminder:** ISC-AB hosts a vaccine information session every Tuesday from 1-2 pm.
- **Reminder:** Alberta Health Services has created an [FAQ](#) on the COVID-19 vaccine.
- **Reminder:** ISC has launched a [COVID-19 vaccine page](#) that will be updated regularly.

Alberta's Relaunch- Update

- [New] The Government of Alberta announced the Critical Worker Benefit (CWB) for approximately 380,000 public and private-sector workers who are eligible to receive one-time payments of \$1200. The CWB is available to workers in the healthcare, social services, education and private sectors who deliver critical services to Albertans or support food and medical supply chains. Eligible

employees working in First Nations communities can apply for the benefit. Additional details, a full list of who can apply and contact information for this funding can be found [here](#).

- **Reminder:** Easing of province-wide health measures will occur in steps based on COVID-19 hospitalization benchmarks. Each step has an associated benchmark of hospitalized COVID-19 patients, including intensive care patients. For more information please click [here](#).
- **Reminder:** The province has expanded their COVID-19 isolation supports to all Albertans – including First Nations living both on and off reserve, and individuals living on Métis Settlements. Call 211 to request access to an isolation hotel. A [FAQ](#) or more information is available [here](#).

COVID-19 Variants

- As of February 18, 2021, Alberta has detected **232** cases of the variant first identified in the United Kingdom (B.1.1.7), and **7** cases of the variant first identified in South Africa (B.1.351). To date, no variants of concern have been identified in a First Nation community in Alberta.
- **[New]** The Government of Canada has a monitoring program in place with provinces and territories to identify new COVID-19 virus variants. Currently we know that the variants make the virus more infectious, causing it to spread more easily. There is also preliminary evidence that some variants have an impact on the efficacy of some vaccines and drugs, but more research is needed to confirm these findings. More information on COVID-19 variants can be found [here](#).
- **Reminder:** The Government of Alberta announced that should a person test positive for a COVID-19 variant, and choose to stay in their own home to isolate (isolating in a different location, such as and isolation facility/hotel is encouraged), **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. More information on COVID variants can be found [here](#).

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

- **[New]** Acknowledging that the COVID-19 is the largest mass vaccination campaign ever undertaken and there are many questions around vaccination, the Public Health Agency of Canada is inviting eligible organizations to submit letters of intent for projects focussed on increasing Canadians' confidence in the COVID-19 vaccine and improving vaccine uptake overall. For more information about this funding opportunity, please visit the [Immunization Partnership Fund's Call for Proposals](#).
- **[New]** Addressing Anti-Indigenous Racism in Healthcare in Canada – Minister of Indigenous Services Canada Marc Miller announced that the federal government will [co-develop legislation](#) alongside Indigenous leaders and look for "concrete steps" to fight racism that includes supporting Indigenous communities in developing and delivering health services.
- **[New]** Second Harvest food security funding application deadline is Feb. 28, 2021. The purpose of the funding is to improve access to healthy food to charities and non-profits supporting people experiencing food insecurity. More information can be found [here](#).

Mental Health and Wellness

- **Reminder:** Individuals and front-line workers can access mental health and substance use support, resources, and counselling during COVID-19 through [Wellness Together Canada](#).

Virtual Care Clinic

- **Reminder:** The Alberta Indigenous Virtual Care Clinic 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]** The Radio Public Service Announcements found in the COVID-19 Toolkit that was previously shared with communities has been translated into 17 Indigenous languages and can be found [here](#). The COVID-19 Toolkit, as well as resources and posters to address vaccine hesitancy can be found on the [OneHealth](#) website. Public Health Agency of Canada has also developed a Tool Kit for Health Care Providers that can be accessed [here](#).
- **[New]** ISC-AB has developed a [Public Health Guidance for Community Health Centres during COVID-19](#) document to offer guidance for community health centres to develop and implement policies and procedures to help minimize the spread of COVID-19.

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=IwAR1hzie9aLgDLr0K7Qi80mb9ozNby5dK6VZO3CFhhKqLrALUpo6_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>

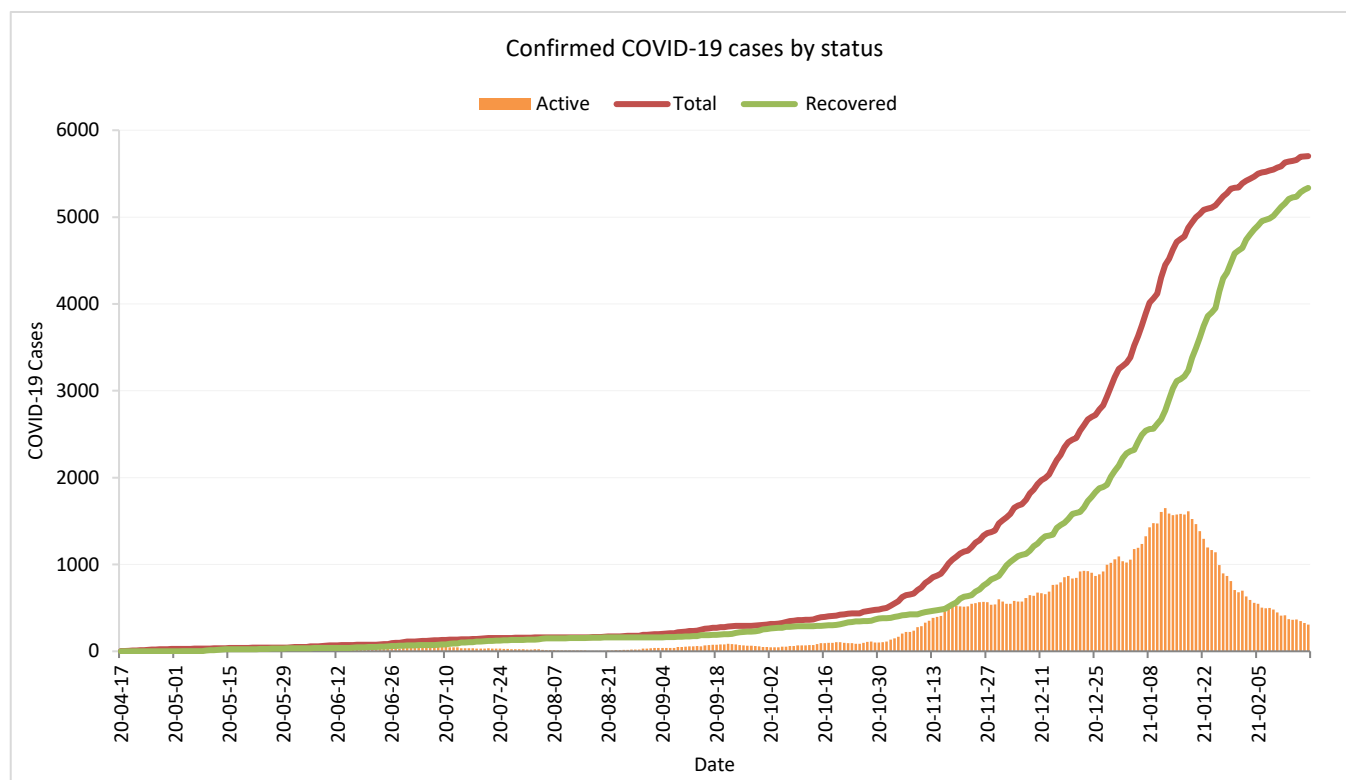
Mental health and coping resources are available for individuals who are struggling or need a little extra support.

- 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.

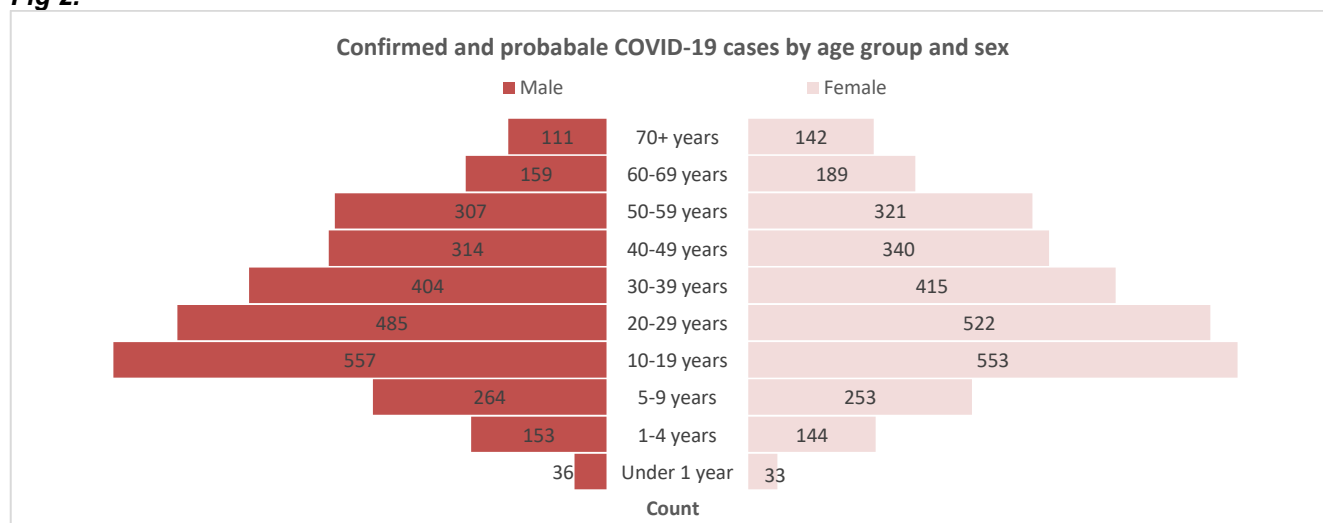
APPENDIX A: Additional COVID-19 Data in First Nations On-Reserve in Alberta

Fig 1.



The number of active cases in First Nations communities increased from 3 on April 17th to 29 on May 8th and then gradually decreased to 8 on May 30th. Thereafter, the number of active cases began to increase again peaking at 54 on July 7th followed by a period of decline in active cases until August 17th. As of August 17th, there was a relatively slow increase in active cases up until November 2nd when cases began increasing more rapidly to a high of 1650 active cases on January 12th. The number of active cases have been decreasing since January 12th. At the time of reporting, there were a total of 5702 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in First Nations communities in Alberta out of which 306 cases are currently active and 5336 have recovered.

Fig 2.



Half (51.5%) of all cases occurred among individuals between the ages of 10 and 39 years. Females accounted for 50.7% of cases in this age group.