

# Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

## Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: January 22, 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)

ISC-AB and Alberta Health are committed to maintaining open communication with First Nations through the vaccine distribution process. Please review the *Vaccine Watch* section in this bulletin, as it contains important updates on the vaccine timelines for First Nation communities. As of January 18, 2021, some province-wide restrictions have been eased; however, the Alberta government will not be loosening any more COVID-19 restrictions until indicators such as hospitalizations and those in intensive care units go down. ISC is closely monitoring the number of COVID-19 cases reported in First Nations communities across the country. The number of reported active cases has reached an all time high in First Nations communities. Even with the arrival of vaccines, it is essential that everyone continue to follow public health measures, as the combination of all these measures are required to stop the spread of the virus.

### Status Update

#### Number of Cases Reported\* as of January 22, 2021:

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

**Alberta:** There are **10,256 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	731,450	14,488	119,114
Deaths	18,622	129	1500
Recovered	645,729	8991	107,358

**First Nations living on and off reserve (Alberta):** There are **9789** confirmed cases of COVID-19 to date and **69** deaths in First Nations living on and off reserve in Alberta. Confirmed cases are: **1689** in Calgary Zone; **2614** in Edmonton Zone; **555** in South Zone; **2654** in North Zone; **2264** in Central zone and **13** 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:

1248 Active Cases	3483 Recovered	36 Deaths	58 Currently Hospitalized	38 Communities with Active Cases
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Location (By Zone)	Confirmed Cases	Active Cases	Recovered
Calgary Zone	884	331	545
South Zone	333	141	190
Central Zone	1475	334	1130
Edmonton Zone	351	32	311
North Zone	1724	410	1307
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4767</b>	<b>1248</b>	<b>3483</b>



## Testing in Alberta – Update

- As of January 22, 2021, the total number of reported swab samples collected to date in First Nation communities in Alberta is **70,870**.
- **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:
  - Any person 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](mailto:sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca)

## Vaccine Watch

- **[New] Timeline for First Nations Vaccine Rollout:**
  - Phase 1a – near completion. All staff and residents of the six senior's congregate facilities on-reserve have been offered vaccines. Many homecare workers on-reserve have received vaccines and work is being done to determine outstanding needs; however, some deferral may be necessary due to shortage.
  - Phase 1b (February- March) –The first allocation of COVID-19 vaccine to all First Nations in Alberta will come from the Moderna shipments expected to arrive in Alberta February 4 and 5. As long as the Moderna vaccine is received as expected, the vaccine will arrive on-reserve no later than the week of February 8, 2021. Allocations to all First Nations are planned based on verified numbers of persons 65 and over living on a First nations reserve and all adults in remote or isolated First Nations reserves. Each First nation can determine how they wish to use their allocated doses.
- **[New]** On Friday, January 16, Alberta was notified of a disruption in supply due to a vaccine plant upgrade in Belgium. The disruption will result in less Pfizer vaccine being delivered to Canada each week from the week of January 18 to the week of February 8 inclusive.
- **[New]** Due to the shortage of Pfizer vaccines, any incoming supply over the next several weeks will be allocated to providing second doses to those who have already received their first dose. First appointments will be rescheduled to later in February.
- **[New]** Some second dose appointments may need to be moved later – it is believed that all second dose appointments will be able to be completed within the 42 day window supported by the WHO and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization.
- **[New]** Alberta is expanding its COVID-19 vaccine distribution to include paramedics and emergency medical technicians in Phase 1.
- **[New]** Canada will buy an additional 20 million doses of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to ensure provinces have an adequate supply. Canada has agreements with Pfizer and Moderna for a total of 80 million doses of their COVID-19 vaccines to be delivered this year.
- **[New]** A presentation on [“Vaccine Hesitancy and First Nations, Inuit and Métis Populations”](#) by Dr. Sarah Minwanimad Funnell, is now available on the National Collaborating Centre for Infectious Diseases. This webinar discussed some of the specific challenges for vaccine uptake amongst First Nations, Inuit and Métis populations.
- **[New]** Alberta 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 runs a vaccine information session every Tuesday from 1-1:30 pm. These will be hosted by Dr. Parminder Thiara and Christina Smith.
- **Reminder:** Alberta Health Services has created an [FAQ](#) on the COVID-19 vaccine. Individuals can also fill out an online form to get their questions answered.
- **Reminder:** ISC has launched a [COVID-19 vaccine page](#) that will be updated regularly.
- **Reminder:** Vaccination is a personal choice. Public health experts agree vaccines are safe, help prevent serious disease, and protect you, your family and your community. Learn about the

[approval process for vaccines](#) and [what you need to know about the COVID-19 vaccine for Canada](#) (for the Cree version click [here](#)). In addition, The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) [website](#) is updated regularly and is an excellent resource.

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

- **[New]** As of January 18, 2021, the province has slightly eased some public health guidelines. Outdoor gatherings of up to 10 people will be allowed and attendees should remain distanced at all times and follow all public health measures. Personal and wellness services are allowed to re-open for one-on-one services and by appointment only. Funeral ceremony capacity has increased to a maximum of 20 people while masked and physically distanced; however, no receptions allowed. All other mandatory and enhanced provincial public health orders are still in effect. Businesses, organizations and service providers will be given at least one week's notice prior to changes to the current health measures that may affect them. For more information on these province wide measures please [click here](#).
- **Reminder:** Alberta has expanded the number of self-isolation hotels and provided new supports for communities that are hit hard by COVID-19. If an individual cannot safely isolate at home they may be eligible for free hotel accommodation and food. Individuals are asked to call 211 to request access to an isolation hotel and can access more information [here](#).
- **Reminder:** Travel restrictions and mandatory quarantining requirements have been put in place for travelers coming from the UK and South Africa to prevent community spread of the new COVID variants. Following public health measures continues to be an effective way at decreasing the spread of COVID-19 and its variants.
- **Reminder:** ISC-AB has developed several resources to support communities during COVID-19, which are available on [OneHealth](#). ISC-AB Medical Officers of Health (MOHs) and Environmental Public Health Officers (EPHOs) continue to be available to provide public health support.

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

- **[New]** Providing communities with the flexibility needed to respond to COVID-19 is essential. To continue to support this work, ISC is allocating an additional \$380 million for the Indigenous Community Support Fund (ICSF3). This will ensure continued critical support for on-the-ground, community-led solutions to prevent, prepare and respond to COVID-19. Funding can be used for a variety of measures, such as promoting food security, improving mental health support services and ensuring the distribution of emergency equipment. If you have any questions about this funding or would like further information, please contact your community liaison team.
- **[New]** Over these next 2 years, \$631.6 million has been announced to support a number of measures in communities including procuring PPE, adapting existing facilities, hiring more staff, and providing surge capacity when needed.
- **[New]** An additional \$186.8 million over two years is also being announced to support needs and gaps in long-term care facilities and to provide additional home care in Indigenous communities.
- **Reminder:** ISC continues to provide First Nations communities access to additional public health support to respond to COVID-19 through [needs-based funding](#).
- **Reminder:** First Nation communities in AB region will receive the necessary supplies to support COVID-19 vaccinations from ISC.

### **Mental Health and Wellness- Update**

- **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**

- **[New]** The Alberta Indigenous Virtual Care Clinic serves individuals self-identifying as First Nations, Inuit and Métis and their families. They are open on Saturday and Sunday's from 12:30 pm to 4:30 pm, in addition to their regular hours Monday to Friday from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. 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 Updates**

- **Reminder:** ISC has developed a [COVID-19 information sharing toolkit](#) for Indigenous communities and organizations.

## ***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=IwAR1hzie9aLgDLr0K7Qi80mb9ozNby5dK6VZO3CFhhKqLrALUp06\\_wGmSxUc](https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17101.aspx?fbclid=IwAR1hzie9aLgDLr0K7Qi80mb9ozNby5dK6VZO3CFhhKqLrALUp06_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>

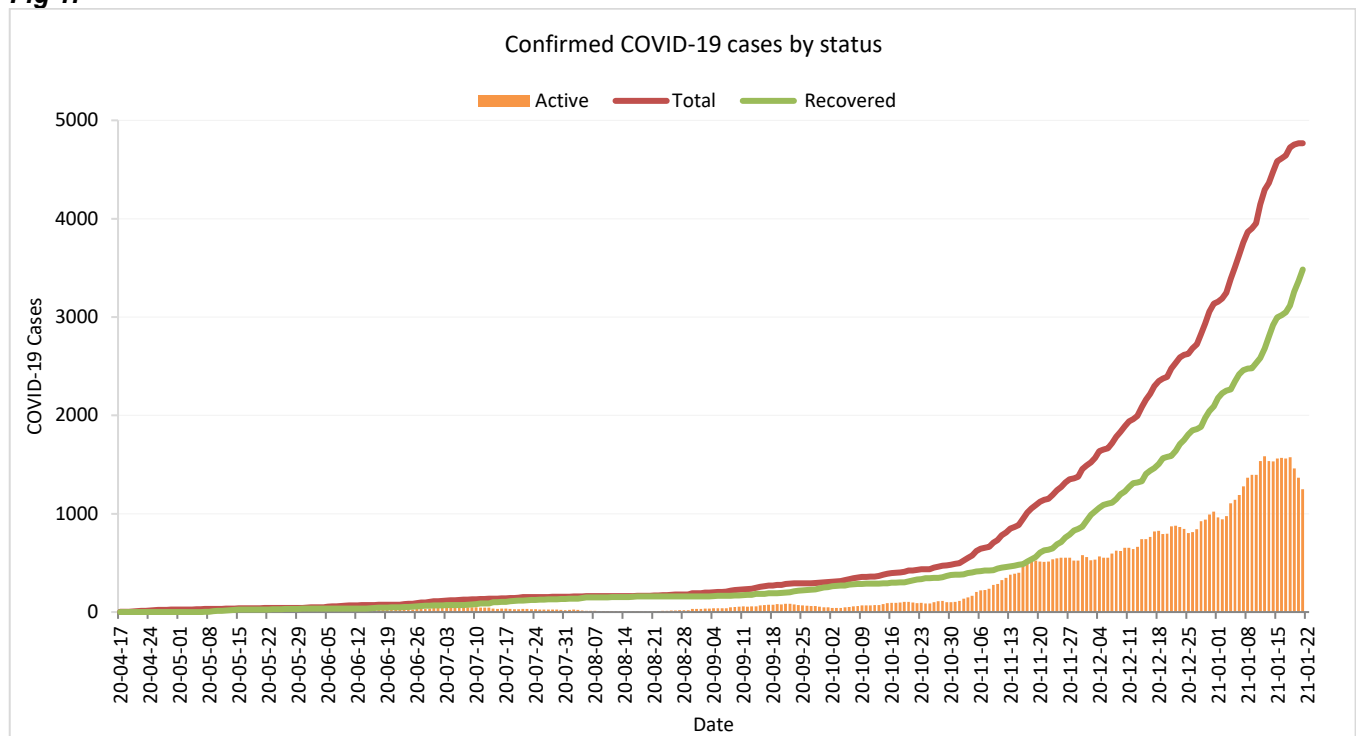
### **Mental health and coping resources are available for individuals who are struggling or need a little extra support.**

- 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.**

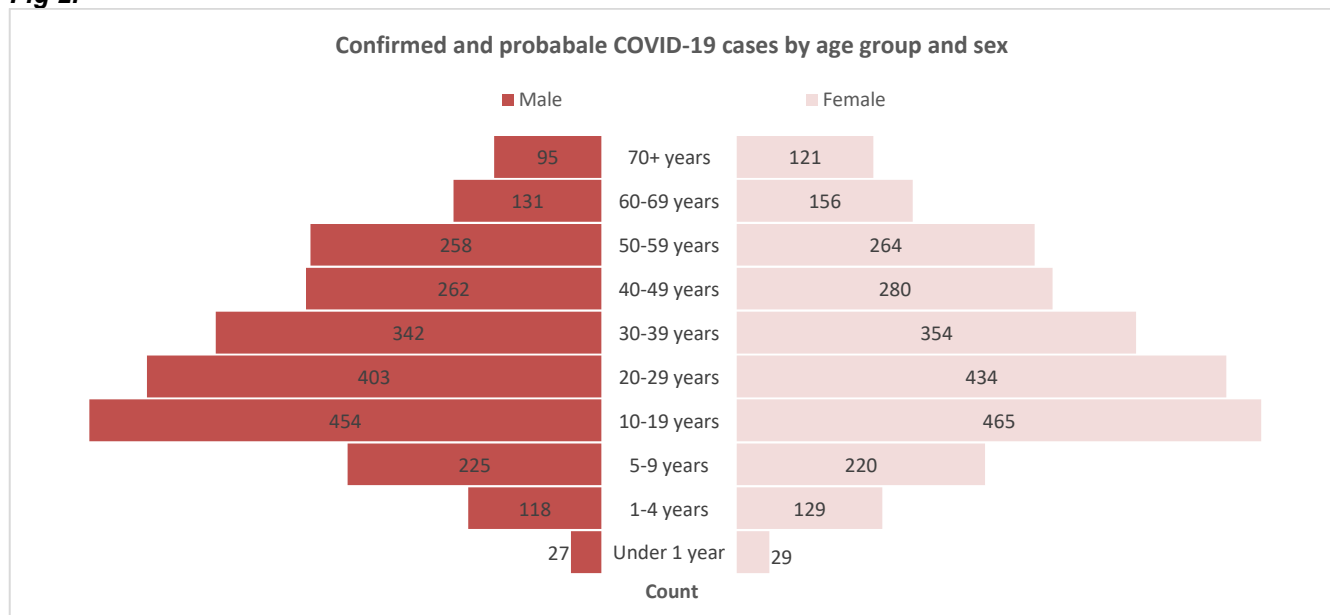
## APPENDIX A: Additional COVID-19 Data in First Nations On-Reserve in Alberta

**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 1585 active cases on January 12th. At the time of reporting, there were a total of 4767 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in First Nations communities in Alberta out of which 1248 cases are currently active and 3483 have recovered.

**Fig 2.**



Half (51.4%) of all cases occurred among individuals between the ages of 10 and 39 years. Females accounted for 51.1% of cases in this age group.