

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: January 8, 2021

Office of the Senior Medical Officer of Health

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

The Government of Canada is closely monitoring the genetic variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 identified in the UK, South Africa and elsewhere. Several cases of the UK variant have been identified in Canada, including Alberta. Early reports demonstrate an increase in the transmissibility of this variant compared to other circulating strains. There is no evidence that the variant is linked with increased severe disease or mortality, but investigations are continuing. It is expected that other variants of concern will likely be found in Canada as monitoring continues. While assessments are still underway, Health Canada scientists consider it very likely that the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine will be effective against this variant. Following public health measures continues to be an effective way at decreasing the spread of COVID-19 and its variants; everyone is encouraged to continue following existing measures. As of January 6, Alberta has administered 33,864 COVID-19 vaccine doses, which includes some staff and residents that work or live in on-reserve senior congregate facilities.

Status Update

Additional First Nations on-reserve data (Alberta) is provided at the end of this document (*Appendix A*).

Number of Cases Reported* as of January 8, 2021:

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

Alberta: There are **13,298 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	635,134	9968	108,469
Deaths	16,579	95	1217
Recovered	538,267	6585	93,954

First Nations living on and off reserve (Alberta): There are **7450** confirmed cases of COVID-19 to date and **48** deaths in First Nations living on and off reserve in Alberta. Confirmed cases are: **1224** in Calgary Zone; **2253** in Edmonton Zone; **347** in South Zone; **1865** in North Zone; **1743** in Central zone and **18** 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>

First Nations living on reserve in Alberta:

766 Active Cases	2474 Recovered	21 Deaths	37 Currently Hospitalized	37 Communities with Active Cases
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Location (By Zone)	Confirmed Cases	Active Cases	Recovered
Calgary Zone	541	82	454
South Zone	187	35	150
Central Zone	1032	251	777
Edmonton Zone	306	74	225
North Zone	1195	324	868
TOTAL	3261	766	2474



Indigenous Services
Canada

Services aux
Autochtones Canada

Canada

Testing in Alberta – Update

- **[New]** All travelers who have arrived from the UK and South Africa since December 7, 2020, should immediately get a COVID-19 test, whether they have symptoms or not. Also, returning travelers currently in quarantine must remain in quarantine for the full 14 days, regardless if they have had a negative COVID-19 test.
- As of January 8, 2021, the total number of reported swab samples collected to date in First Nation communities in Alberta is **67,986**.
- **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
- Parents/guardians in Alberta can access COVID-19 results for their children through *MyHealth Records*. Albertans aged 14 and up can also access results. [Join today](#).

Vaccine Watch

- **[New]** ISC will run a vaccine information session every Tuesday from 1-1:30 pm. These will be hosted by Dr. Parminder Thiara and Christina Smith. Contact your Community Liaison Team for more information
- **[New]** Moderna COVID-19 vaccine was approved by Health Canada on December 23, 2020. Both Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are mRNA vaccines that have similar efficacy rates. In order to ensure a timely distribution of the vaccine we please ask that communities plan for receiving either vaccine, as vaccine availability will determine which vaccine a community will receive.
- **[New]** Long-term care residents inclusive of those in 6 First Nations communities have already started to receive the vaccine in Alberta.
- **[New]** **The first phase** of the First Nation Vaccine Rollout in Alberta will be split into two parts. **Phase 1A** (December- February) includes staff and residents in the six seniors' congregate facilities on-reserve, and on-reserve homecare workers. **Phase 1B** (February- March) includes persons 65 years of age and over living on a First Nations reserve, and all adults in remote or isolated First Nations reserves (Fort Chipewyan and Fox Lake). Each First Nation can prioritize their allocated doses; 10,000 doses have been allocated to First Nations reserve for use in this phase. Communities are encouraged to review their respective COVID-19 epidemiologic data and engage the FNIHB MOHs to prioritize immunization.
- **[New]** Alberta Health is committed to engaging more comprehensively with First Nation partners and organizations on vaccine planning and rollout for Phase 2 and onward. ISC-AB has also launched a regional Vaccine Planning Working Group currently composed of representatives from the relevant Health Co-Management subcommittees, non-signatories HCoM representatives, in addition to representatives from Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services and Public Health Agency of Canada.
- **[New]** 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.
- **[New]** ISC has launched a [COVID-19 vaccine page](#) that will be updated as new information becomes available.
- **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]** all students will return to in-person learning, as planned, on January 11, 2021. Alberta's enhanced mandatory public health measures will remain in place province wide until at least **January 21, 2021**. 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](#).
- **[New]** 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](#).
- **[New]** 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.
- **Reminder:** AHS remains the primary source for ordering PPE for staff working in health care facilities and isolation centres in First Nation communities. Order this PPE by completing and forwarding the AHS PPE order form located on [OneHealth](#). PPE required for other workers can be purchased through commercial vendors and cannot be obtained through AHS. PPE for essential workers is an eligible expense through the COVID-19 ISC health needs funding.

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

- **[New]** First Nation communities in AB region will receive the necessary supplies to support COVID-19 vaccinations from ISC.
- **[New]** ISC continues to provide First Nations communities access to additional public health support to respond to COVID-19 through [needs-based funding](#). For additional information please contact your community liaison team.
- **[New]** ISC-AB regularly meets with Nations to support outbreak management, isolation and vaccine planning and prioritization.
- **Reminder:** In November, the Minister of ISC announced additional investments in support of COVID-19 related Indigenous health needs within Alberta. \$11.5 has been specifically identified to address the mental health crisis related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes \$6,000,000 which can be used to provide mental health services addressing the impacts of COVID-19 reflective of eligible activities as noted within general Mental Wellness funding Terms and Conditions. Please submit your proposals to the CDE Inbox as soon as possible and no later than January 22, 2021.
- **Reminder:** The next ISC-Alberta COVID-19 First Nations MOH **Telehealth** session is scheduled for January 14, 1:30-3:00 pm (MST) and the priority topic area will be COVID-19 Vaccine. For registration information, please see: <https://fntn.ca/>. Previous telehealth sessions are recorded and are available at: <https://fntn.ca/>

Mental Health and Wellness- Update

- **[New]** A First Nations telehealth session dedicated to mental health titled *Helping the Helper: Resources and tools to support resilience and mental health for front end workers* will be held on January 20, 10:00 am- 12:00 pm (MST). For registration information, please see: <https://fntn.ca/>.
- **Reminder:** Individuals and front-line workers can access mental health and substance use support, resources, and counselling during COVID-19 through [Wellness Together Canada](#).

Additional Updates

- **[New]** ISC has developed a COVID-19 information sharing toolkit for Indigenous communities and organizations. The toolkit has been designed to support those who have the responsibility to share information about COVID-19 public health measures and the vaccine with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people. This toolkit has been distributed to Health Directors, Directors of Emergency Management, Band Managers, Community Health Nurses, and is available on [OneHealth](#) under COVID-19 vaccine.

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=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>

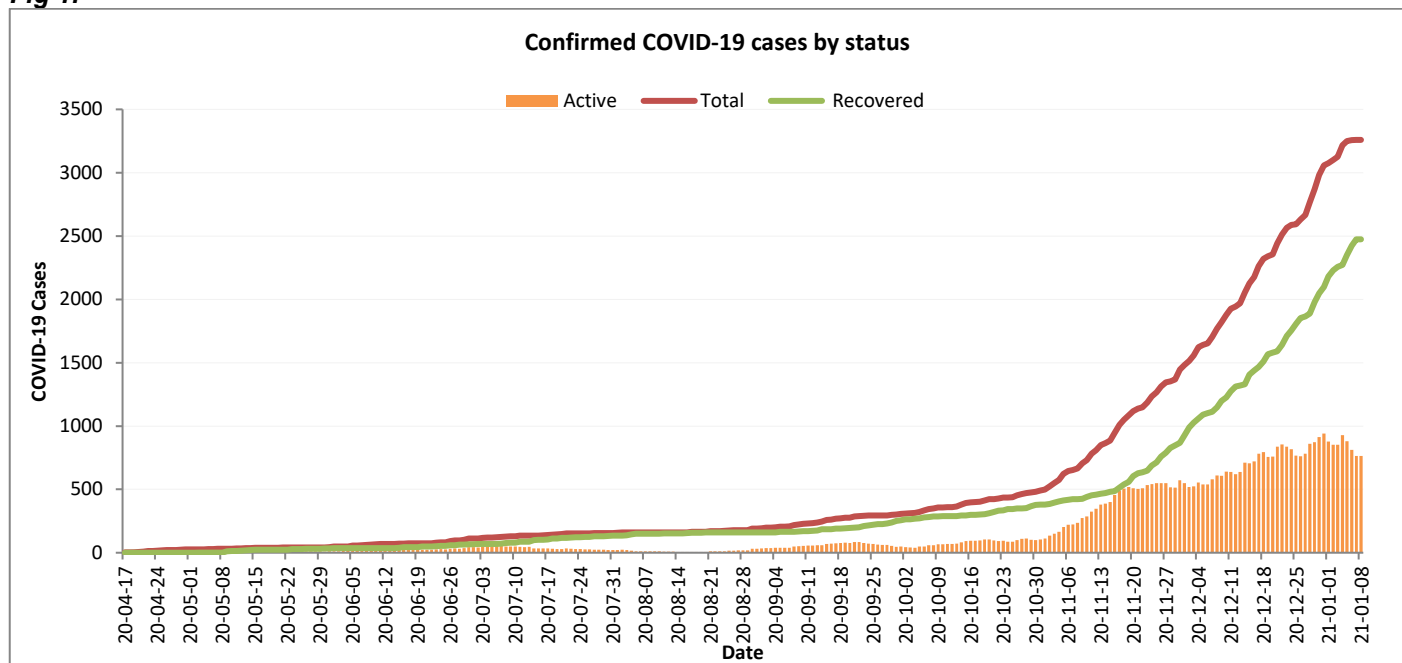
Mental health and coping resources are available for individuals who are struggling or need a little extra support.

- 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.

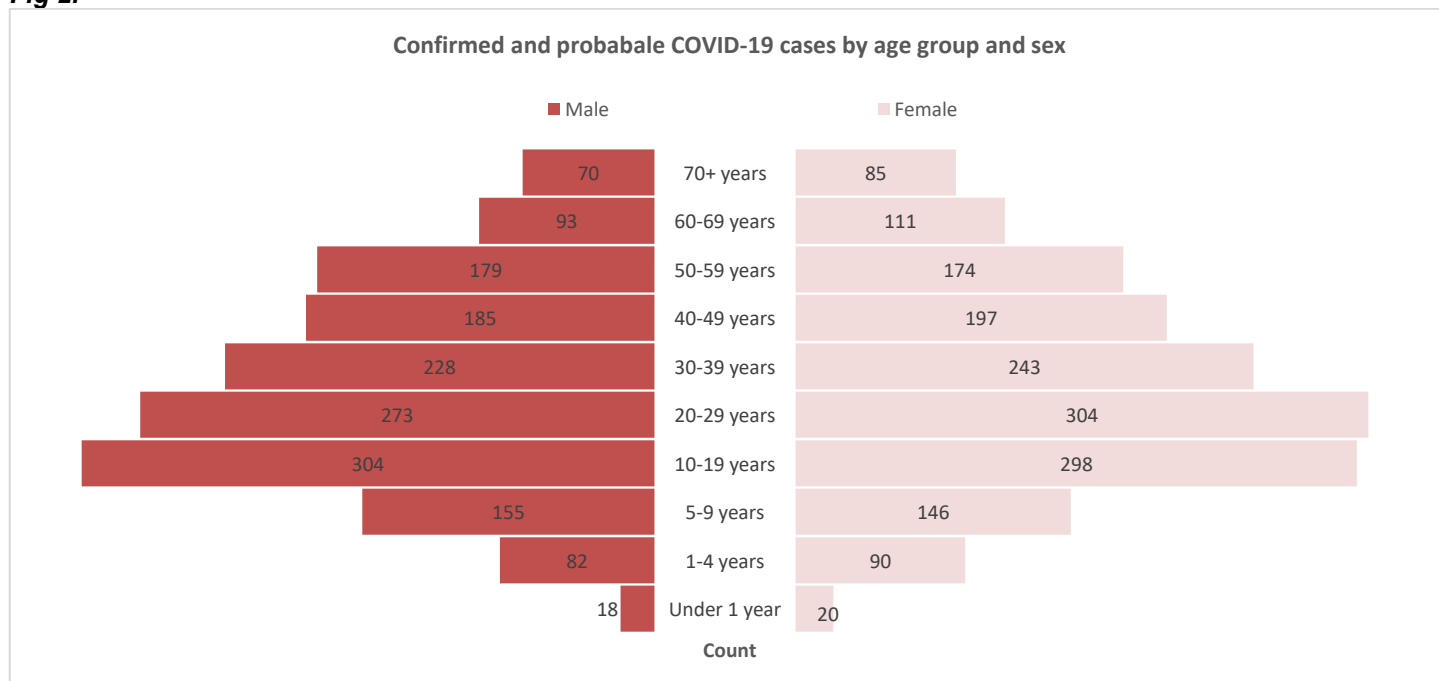
APPENDIX A: Additional COVID-19 Data in First Nations On-Reserve in Alberta

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 940 active cases on December 31st. At the time of reporting, there were a total of 3261 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in First Nations communities in Alberta out of which 766 cases are currently active and 2474 have recovered.

Fig 2.



Note: 6 cases were excluded from figure due to missing data on age or sex.

Half (50.6%) of all cases occurred among individuals between the ages of 10 and 39 years. Females accounted for 51.2% of cases in this age group.