

# Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

## Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: March 5, 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)

Indigenous Services Canada, ISC-AB, and the Government of Alberta are closely monitoring the emergence of COVID-19 variants of concern in the province. There have been 2 confirmed cases (one in Treaty 7 and one in Treaty 8) of the B.1.1.7 UK variant in Alberta, and in both these cases the disease was acquired from off-reserve exposures. ISC-AB is working with these communities to ensure enhanced health measures are in place. Alberta has a comprehensive response system in place, and all positive cases of COVID-19 are being screened for COVID-19 variant strains. The ISC-AB MOH team and the ISC variant response team are working with local health staff to provide further guidance and support for impacted communities. The ISC-AB MOH team is committed to informing leadership if and when new variant strains are identified on-reserve. The COVID-19 variant strains are more transmissible within households; therefore, it is recommended, where possible, to isolate cases outside of households. Existing public health measures are effective at preventing transmission. Please remain vigilant and continue following the public health guidelines to help limit the spread of COVID-19.

### Status Update

#### Number of Cases Reported\* as of March 5, 2021:

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

**Alberta:** There are **4,613 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	878,391	21,863	134,785
Deaths	22,151	245	1,911
Recovered	826,337	20,291	128,261

**First Nations living on and off reserve (Alberta):** There are **12,359** confirmed cases of COVID-19 to date and **121** deaths in First Nations living on and off reserve in Alberta. Confirmed cases are: **2,051** in Calgary Zone; **3,028** in Edmonton Zone; **929** in South Zone; **3,842** in North Zone; **2,494** 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:

569 Active Cases	5788 Recovered	67 Deaths	36 Currently Hospitalized	27 Communities with Active Cases
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Location (By Zone)	Confirmed Cases	Active Cases	Recovered
Calgary Zone	1074	54	1009
South Zone	546	61	476
Central Zone	1774	22	1734
Edmonton Zone	386	8	370
North Zone	2644	424	2199
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6424</b>	<b>569</b>	<b>5788</b>



Indigenous Services  
Canada

Services aux  
Autochtones Canada

Canada

## Testing in Alberta – Update

- As of March 5, 2021, the total number of reported swab samples collected to date in First Nation communities in Alberta is **86,339**.
- **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](mailto:sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca)

## Vaccine Watch

### COVID-19 Vaccine in First Nations Communities in Alberta as of March 4, 2021

- **11,530** doses has been delivered to First Nations communities in Alberta
- **9,133** doses have been administered in **46** Nations (bands) in Alberta
- **7,917** First Nations people living on reserve have received at least one dose
- **1,164** First Nations people living on reserve are fully immunized (2 doses)
- **2,934** First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on reserve have received their first dose.
- **418** First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on reserve are fully immunized (2 doses)
- **[New]** Phase 2A is anticipated to start in Late March to April. Phase 2A includes First Nations people aged 50 and over living on or off reserve. In every age-based eligibility category, First Nations people are eligible 15 years younger than the rest of the population. Any First Nations person 18-64 years old with an eligible chronic condition (final list TBD) would be eligible for vaccine in [Phase 2B](#). It is anticipated that by the end of May (or earlier) every First Nations person in Alberta age 35 and over (or younger for those with a chronic condition of high risk) would have the opportunity to be vaccinated, if they wish.
- **[New]** We anticipate that the vaccine allocations to each First Nation for on-reserve members will continue to be Moderna.
- **[New]** Based on emerging evidence of the protection provided by the first dose of a two dose series for COVID-19 vaccines currently authorized in Canada, the [National Advisory Committee on Immunization \(NACI\)](#) recommends that in the context of limited COVID-19 vaccine supply, jurisdictions should maximize the number of individuals benefiting from the first dose of vaccine by extending the interval for the second dose of vaccine up to 4 months.
- **[New]** Starting March 10, 2021, in Alberta, anyone who books a first dose of vaccine will have their second dose timelines [extended up to 4 months](#), and the appointment will be booked at a later date.
- Note: The 16 week (4 month) interval between the first and second doses does not need to be followed for the [current allotment](#) of second doses available to First Nations communities as part of Phase 1B. However, the 4 month interval between first and second doses will commence in First Nations communities for Phase 2A.
- **[New]** Health Canada has [approved](#) the use of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine. There are no important safety concerns and the vaccine was well tolerated by participants. Canada has secured access to 20 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine. At this time, we are not expecting to see any AstraZeneca being administered in First Nation communities.
- **[New]** On March 5, 2021, Health Canada granted an [Interim Order](#) authorization for Janssen Pharmaceuticals single-shot COVID-19 vaccine. Further details will become available regarding the use and availability of the [vaccine](#).
- **[New]** Delivery of the second doses of COVID-19 vaccine for individuals aged 65+ will be available starting next week. Communities can start to reach out to their vaccine depot starting March 4, 2021, to let them know when they would like the second dose shipment of vaccine delivered.
- **[New]** A new [biological page](#) for the COVID-19 Vaccine (mRNA) – Moderna frozen vaccine has been posted by Alberta Health to include the recommended spacing considerations between COVID-19 vaccine and tuberculin skin testing.

- **Reminder:** The four COVID-19 vaccines currently licensed in Canada are mRNA vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna) and non-replicating viral vector vaccines (AstraZeneca and Janssen Pharmaceuticals). More information on how mRNA vaccines work can be found [here](#).
- **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]** Effective as of March 1, 2021, [updated health measures](#) are in place for indoor fitness and libraries as pressure eases on the health system and hospitalizations remain well below 450. Libraries can now open but must limit capacity to 15 percent of fire code occupancy and unsupervised low intensity individual/group exercises are now allowed by appointment only.
- **[New]** A decision on [Step 3](#) will be made after at least three weeks of evaluation to assess the spread of COVID-19. Metrics based on cases and growth, including variant cases, are being monitored and will also be used to guide any decisions around the need to pause further steps or potentially increase restrictions.
- **Reminder:** The Critical Worker Benefit will provide \$1200 to approximately 380,000 public and private-sector workers. Eligible employees working in First Nations communities can [apply](#).

### ***COVID-19 Variants***

- As of March 4, 2021, Alberta has detected **531** cases of the variant first identified in the United Kingdom (B.1.1.7), and 10 cases of the variant first identified in South Africa (B.1.351).
- **Reminder:** The [COVID-19 variants](#) are 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.
- **Reminder:** If a person tests positive for a COVID-19 variant, and chooses to stay in their own home to isolate (isolating in a different location, such as an 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. An ISC-AB COVID-19 Variants Fact Sheet can be found on [OneHealth](#) under COVID-19 variants.

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

- **[New]** Through the Community Foundations of Canada, the [Healthy Communities Initiative](#) supports communities as they create and adapt public spaces, and programming and services for public spaces to respond to ongoing needs arising from COVID-19 over the next two years. Applications must be submitted by **March 9, 2021, at 6:00 PM MST.**
- **Reminder:** Minister of Indigenous Services Canada Marc Miller announced that the federal government will [co-develop legislation](#) with Indigenous leaders and look for “concrete steps” to fight racism, including supporting Indigenous communities in developing and delivering health services.

### ***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 COVID-19 Toolkit, has been updated to include radio public service announcements and social media messages translated into 17 Indigenous languages, as well as, new resources, and can be found on the [OneHealth](#) website.

## ***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=IwAR1hzie9aLgDLr0K7Qi80mb9ozNby5dK6VZO3CFhhKqLrALUpo6\\_wGmSxUc](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>

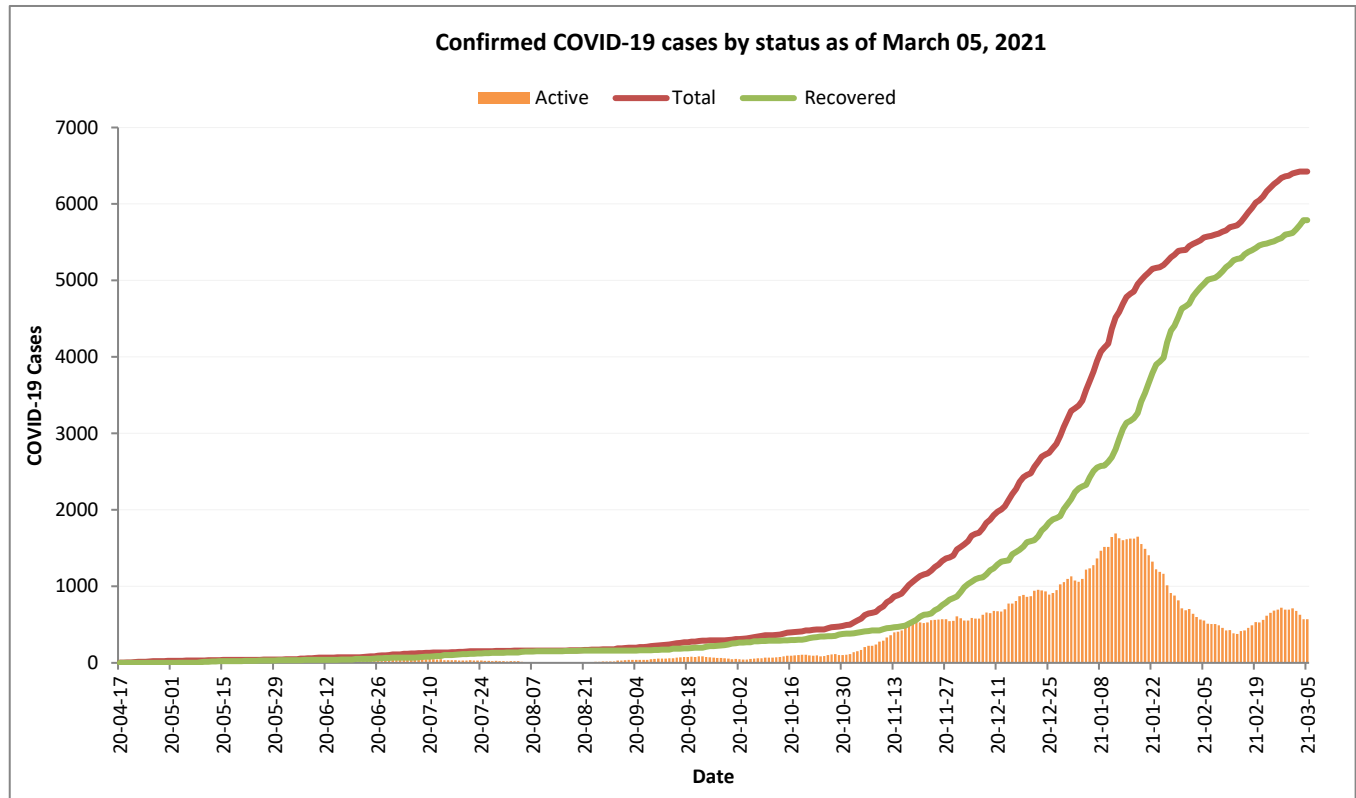
### **Mental health and coping resources are available for individuals who are struggling or need a little extra support.**

- 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.**

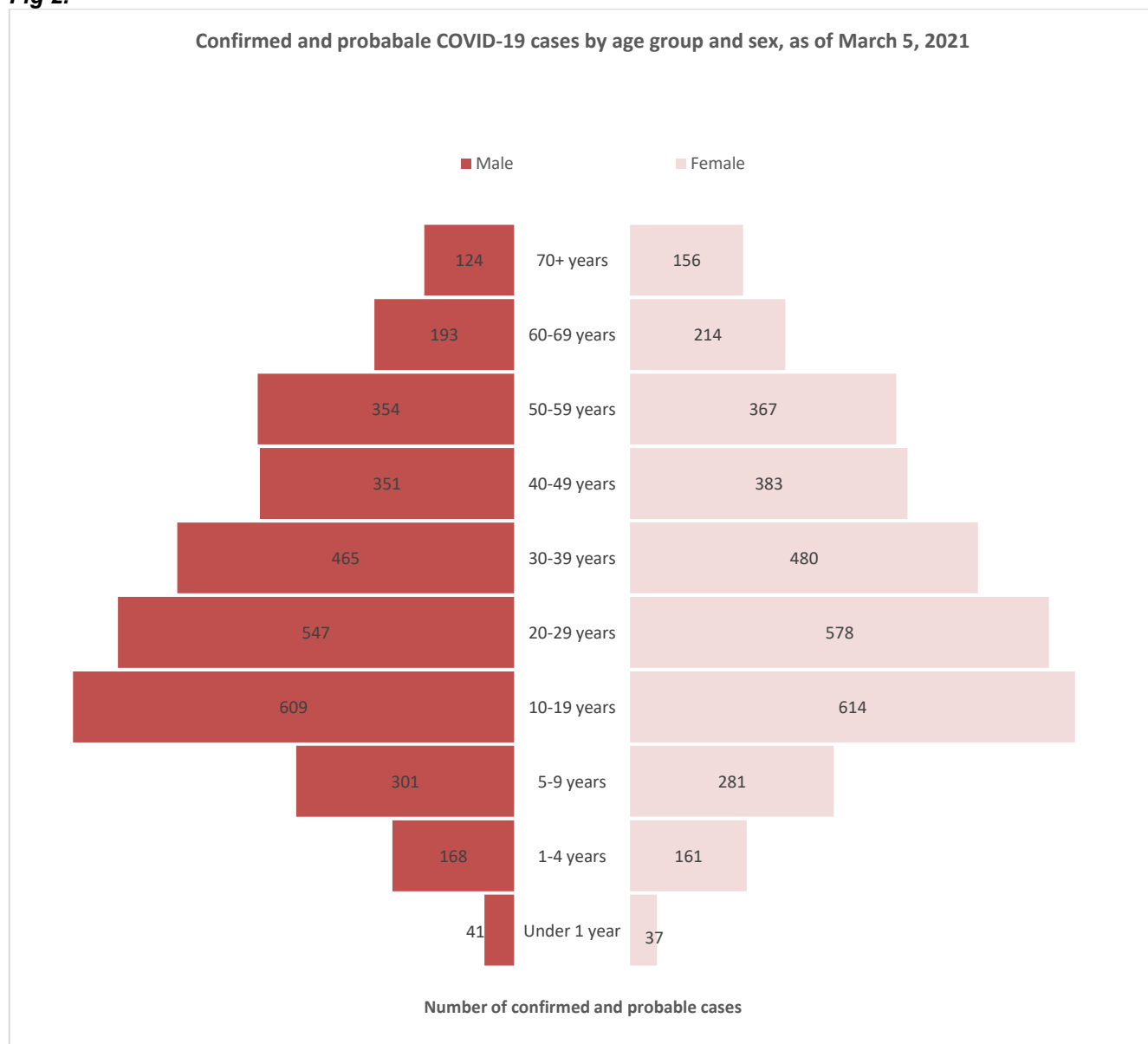
## APPENDIX A: *Additional COVID-19 Data in First Nations On-Reserve in Alberta*

**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. There was a relatively slow increase in active cases there after up until November 2, 2020 when cases began increasing more rapidly to a high of 1650 active cases on January 12, 2021. The number of active cases began to decrease to a low of 387 on February 13, 2021. The number of active cases have been increasing since February 13. At the time of reporting, there were a total of 6424 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in First Nations communities in Alberta out of which 569 cases are currently active and 5788 have recovered.

**Fig 2.**



Approximately half (51.3%) of all cases occurred among individuals between the ages of 10 and 39 years. Females accounted for 50.9% of all cases.