

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: May 14, 2021

Office of the Senior Medical Officer of Health

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

Alberta has recently made some very exciting vaccine announcements, and opened up vaccine eligibility to all individuals 12 years of age and older. The Pfizer vaccine has been approved and deemed safe for children between the ages of 12-17, which will provide children and communities with protection against COVID-19, and bring us all closer to the immunization thresholds required to calm COVID-19 case numbers. As more individuals become vaccinated and the weather warms up, it may be tempting to bend the rules, but it is critical that everyone, including those that are fully vaccinated, continue to remain vigilant and adhere to public health measures until most individuals are fully vaccinated. While fully vaccinated individuals, are less likely to become severely sick with COVID-19, we do not know yet if the vaccine prevents people from spreading the virus. Emerging evidence is continuously being reviewed on asymptomatic and variant transmission and public health guidelines will be adjusted accordingly to reflect the evidence. We will keep you informed when rules for fully vaccinated people are changed.

Status Update

Number of Cases Reported* as of May 14, 2021:

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

Alberta: There are **24,586 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 | 1,312,408 | 28,319 | 215,193 |
| Deaths | 24,825 | 328 | 2,132 |
| Recovered | 1,212,108 | 27,130 | 188,475 |

First Nations living on and off reserve (Alberta): There are **16,320** confirmed cases of COVID-19 to date and **142** deaths in First Nations living on and off reserve in Alberta. Confirmed cases are: **2,702** in Calgary Zone; **3,745** in Edmonton Zone; **1,367** in South Zone; **5,452** in North Zone; **3,049** in Central zone and **5** unknown. 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:

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|--|---|
| 409 Active Cases | 7,710 Recovered | 80 Deaths | 32 Currently Hospitalized | 32 Communities with Active Cases |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|--|---|

| Location (By Zone) | Confirmed Cases | Active Cases | Recovered |
|--------------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------|
| North | 3594 | 209 | 3358 |
| Central | 2076 | 42 | 2016 |
| Calgary | 1300 | 112 | 1174 |
| South | 801 | 31 | 757 |
| Edmonton | 428 | 15 | 405 |
| TOTAL | 8199 | 409 | 7710 |



Testing in Alberta – Update

- As of May 13, 2021, the total number of reported swab samples collected to date in First Nation communities in Alberta is **123,031**.
- **Testing remains a powerful tool to help limit the spread.** Priority testing is available to individuals exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19; all close contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases; and anyone linked to a known outbreak. If you have symptoms, please stay home and book a testing appointment.
- **Reminder:** Alberta has launched a [rapid testing screening program](#). Employers, service providers, and interested schools, including those in First Nations communities can [apply](#) to the Government of Alberta to receive free rapid test kits for use in their organization.
- **Reminder:** Testing outside of the provincial testing criteria must be reviewed and supported by the ISC-AB MOHs. Please send testing enquiries to sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca.

Vaccine Watch

COVID-19 Vaccine in First Nations Communities in Alberta as of May 13, 2021

- **39,791** doses have been administered in **46** Nations (bands) in Alberta
- **25,365** First Nations people living on reserve have received at least one dose
- **14,426** First Nations people living on reserve are fully immunized (2 doses)
- **3,723** First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on reserve have received their first dose
- **3,186** First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on reserve are fully immunized (2 doses)

New Developments

1. Alberta Health has now opened vaccine eligibility to all Albertans aged 12 and over to receive their first dose. Please contact your local Health Centre for further information on how to receive a vaccine in your community. First Nations individuals living off-reserve can [book online](#), or at a [participating pharmacy](#) or call 811.
2. Information on vaccinating those aged 12-17 is the same as vaccinating any other age group, with the exception being parental consent is needed. This consent can be written or verbal, but it is important to ensure parents and the child are fully informed on the vaccine and provide one of these forms of consent. The most recent NACI statement on vaccinating the 12-15 age group can be found [here](#).
3. The ISC COVID-19 Toolkit has been updated and can be found on [OneHealth](#).
4. PHAC has created a [COVID-19: Life after vaccination infographic](#) that shows the progression of relaxing public health restrictions, as more individuals become vaccinated.

Reminders

1. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), Thrombosis Canada and the National Collaborating Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCCID) present a [webinar](#) to inform health care providers on the treatment and reporting of Vaccine-induced Immune Thrombotic Thrombocytopenia (VITT).
2. ISC has developed a *What to expect when you get vaccinated* information sheet that can be found on [OneHealth](#) under COVID-19 Vaccine.
3. Evidence shows first doses of vaccines used in Alberta provide considerable protection against infection and second doses are necessary to ensure an individual has both an antibody and cell mediated immune response. Individuals that book a first dose of vaccine will have their second dose administered within [4 months](#).
4. Minor and temporary adverse events, such as headache, fever, fatigue, or pain at the injection site, are common after all vaccinations. All individuals are encouraged to seek medical attention if they experience any new or worsening symptoms and to [report any adverse events](#) after immunization.
5. PHAC has launched their webpage [Vaccines for COVID-19: What to expect at your vaccination](#).
6. ISC-AB hosts a vaccine information session every Tuesday from 1-2 pm.
7. ISC has launched a [COVID-19 vaccine page](#) that is updated regularly.

Alberta's Relaunch - Update

- **[New]** Due to the rising number of COVID-19 cases and the presence of highly transmissible variants of concern, additional restrictions have been in place for [high case regions](#) as of May 5, 2021. Province-wide measures continue to apply to all other areas. The [additional measures](#) will remain in place for three weeks and will be extended if necessary. Some of the additional measures include:
 - All outdoor social gatherings must be limited to no more than five people and a maximum of two household contacts (cohorts). Mandatory physical distancing must be maintained at all times between members of different households. All indoor gatherings remain prohibited.

- Funerals or bereavement services are limited to a maximum of 10 people, including participants and guests. Funeral receptions and/or gatherings are not permitted.
- Working from home remains mandatory unless the employer requires the employee's physical presence to operate effectively.
- **[New]** Effective May 13th, the rules around exemptions from [wearing a mask due to a medical condition](#) are changing. Individuals are now required to obtain a medical exception letter verifying their health condition from an authorized health-care provider (nurse practitioner, physician or psychologist).

COVID-19 Variants of Concern

- As of May 13th, **575** VOCs have been detected in **34** First Nations communities in Alberta. Currently there are **247** active VOCs in **22** First Nations Communities on-reserve in Alberta. Due to changes in the VOC screening process, active variant cases are based on a sample of positive cases only and should not be considered representative of total COVID-19 cases.
- **[New]** Variants of Concern (VOC) now make up a significant proportion of COVID-19 cases in Alberta. As such, Alberta Health announced changes to the public health follow-up of cases and contacts of COVID 19. FNIHB has changed processes to align with the new provincial guidelines and Alberta Health Services. Variant Screening for COVID-19 cases are as follows:
 - The provincial lab will no longer be running variant screening on all positive COVID-19 samples. Instead it will run the variant screening on positive samples from the following groups:
 - Those tested in the emergency room or admitted to hospital
 - Those tested as part of an outbreak
 - Health Care Workers
 - Recent international travelers

Samples tested in First Nations using a rapid testing machine will also be screened for VOC.

- **[New]** WHO recognizes B.1.617, first detected in India, as a VOC. The Public Health Agency of Canada will be updating its guidance shortly around this VOC. The most recent statement on VOCs made by Canada's Chief Public Health Officer can be viewed [here](#).

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

- **[New]** [Infrastructure Canada](#) is currently accepting applications for retrofits and new building projects for community buildings. [Applications](#) for projects under \$3 million are being accepted on an ongoing basis and applications for projects that are between \$3 million and \$25 million are being accepted until July 6.
- **Reminder:** Nations that require additional surge supports for COVID-19 response or vaccine clinics including contact tracing, testing, vaccine administration support should submit a [request form](#) to ISC-AB at: sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca.

Mental Health and Wellness

- **[New]** The National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health is hosting a [webinar](#) on First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and physical activity during COVID-19. It will focus on strategies and innovative approaches that prioritize Indigenous experiences, practices and community voices within this field.
- **[New]** Mark Amy Treatment Centre is launching a Virtual Addiction Treatment Program from June 14 – July 30. This program is open to all First Nations persons in Alberta, and applications will be accepted until June 7, 2021. Applications can be found [online](#) and all applications can be emailed to MATCintake@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com

Virtual Care Clinic

- **[New]** 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.

Additional Resources

- **Reminder:** ISC has created a document that provides guidance on holding elections during COVID-19. It can be accessed on [OneHealth](#) under Gatherings and Events.

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=IwAR1hzie9aLgDLr0K7Qi80mb9ozNby5dK6VZO3CFhhKgLrALUp06_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>

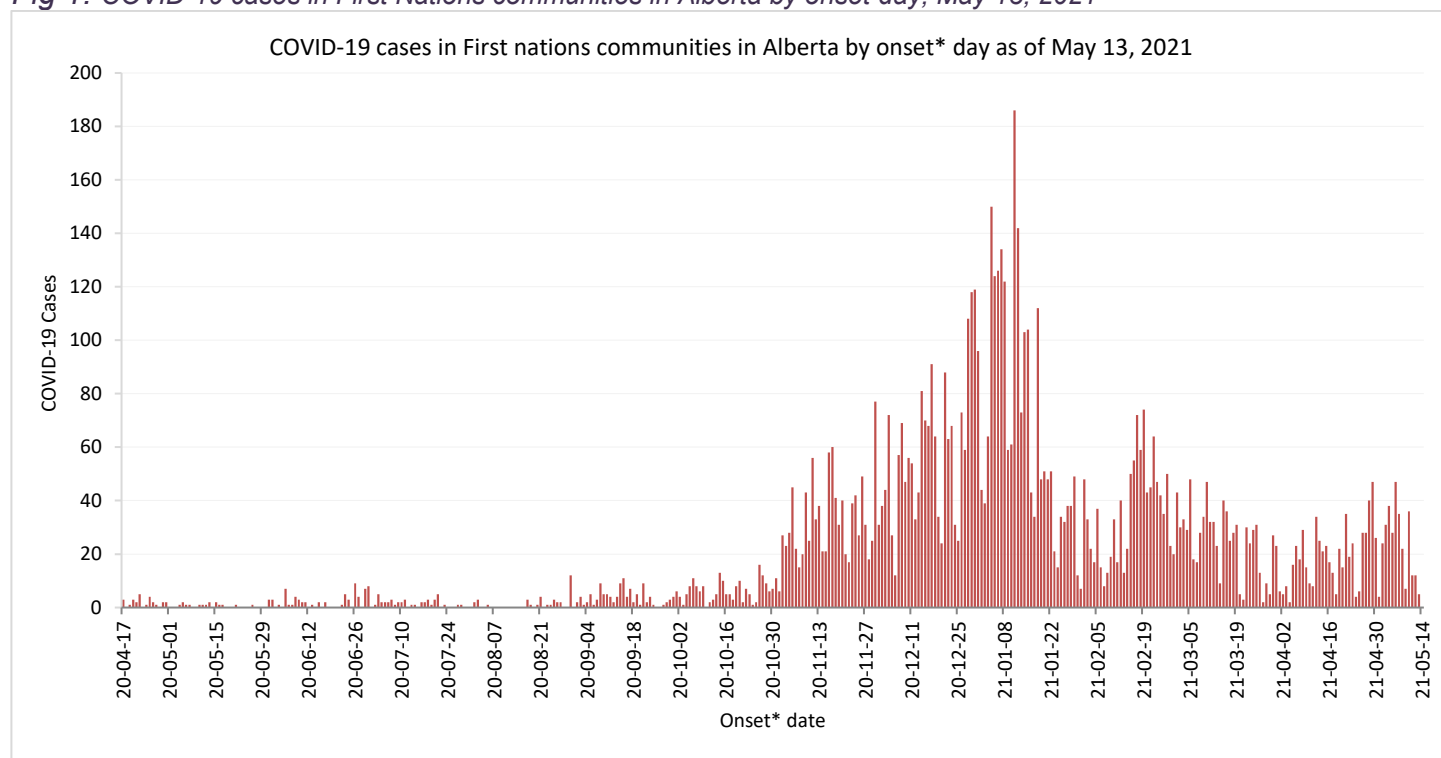
Mental health and coping resources are available for individuals who are struggling or need a little extra support.

- 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 onset day, May 13, 2021



Note: *Onset date is the earliest of the “date of onset of symptoms” and “specimen collection date”.

In general, the number of daily confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta has been increasing since the beginning of April 2021 (Fig 1).

Fig 2. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by status, May 13, 2021

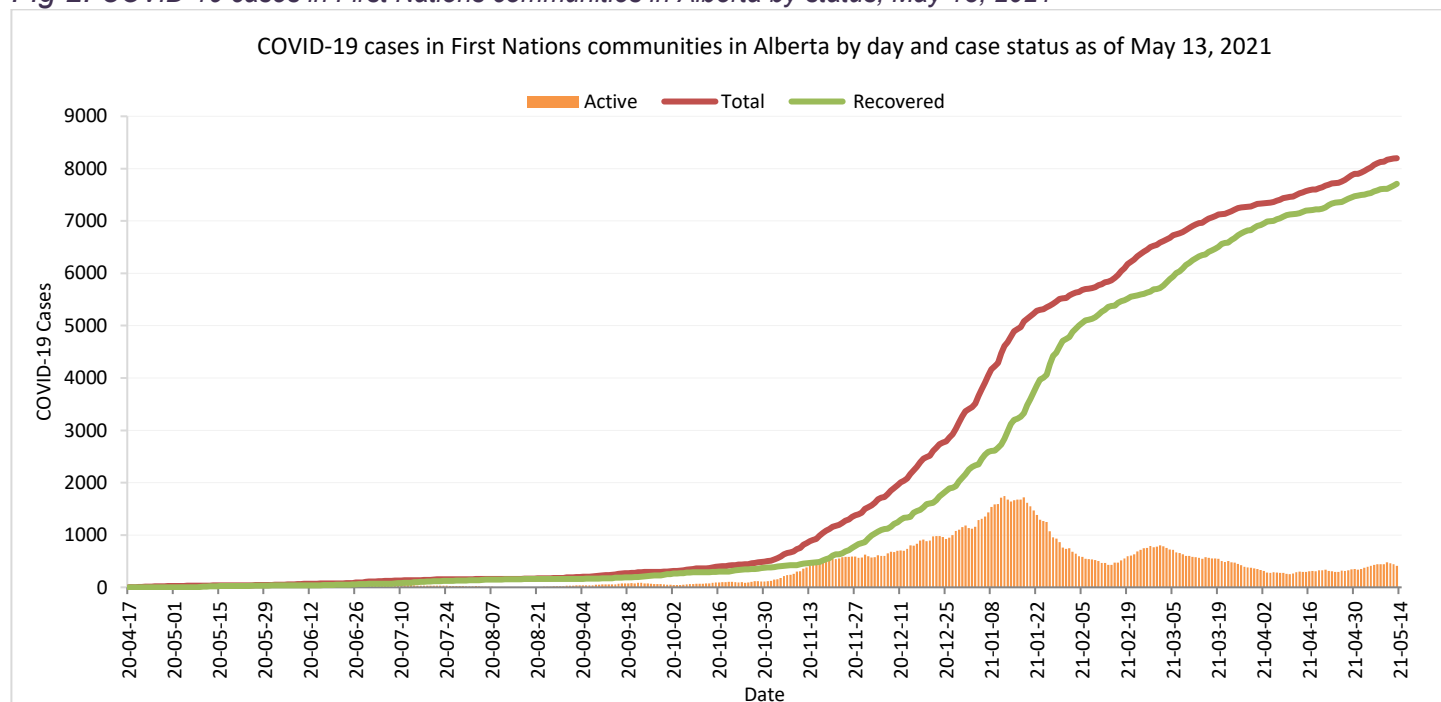
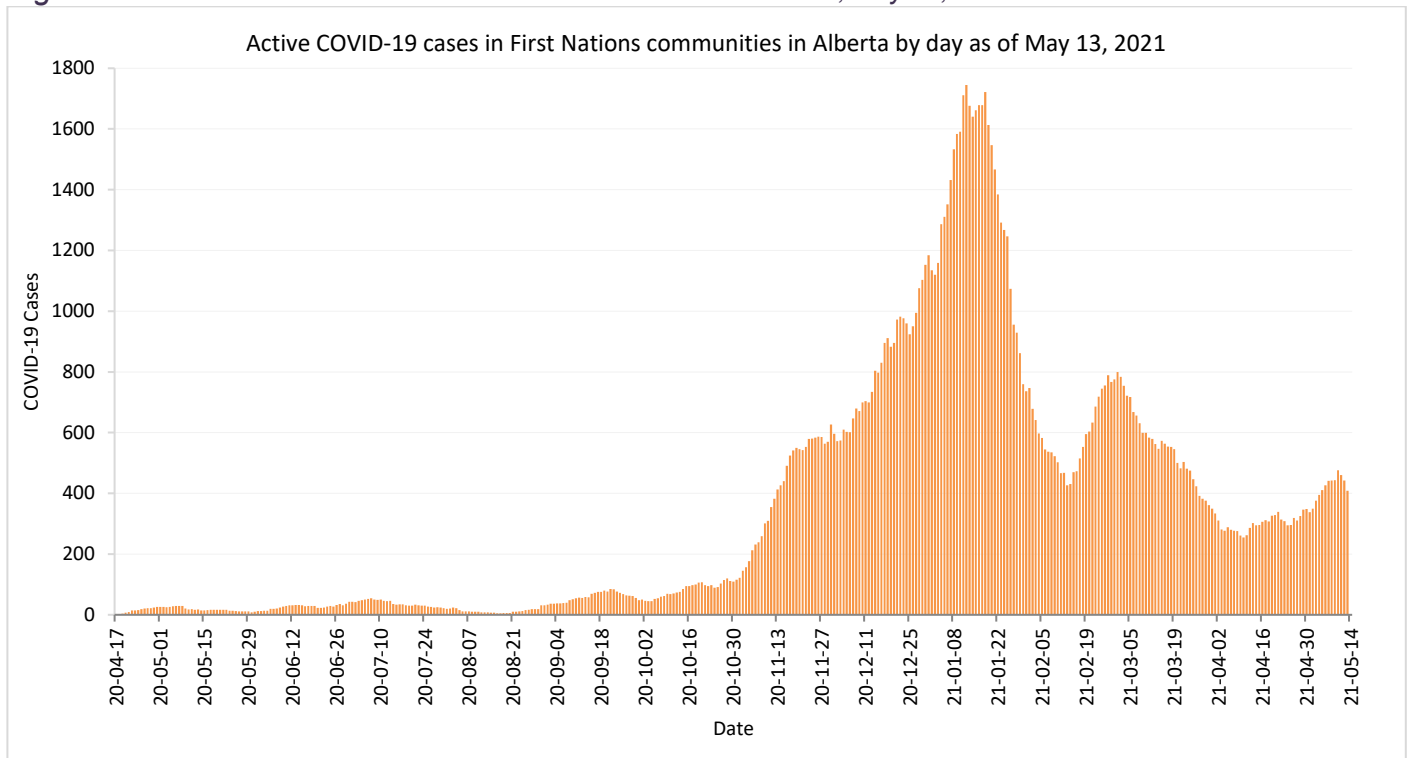
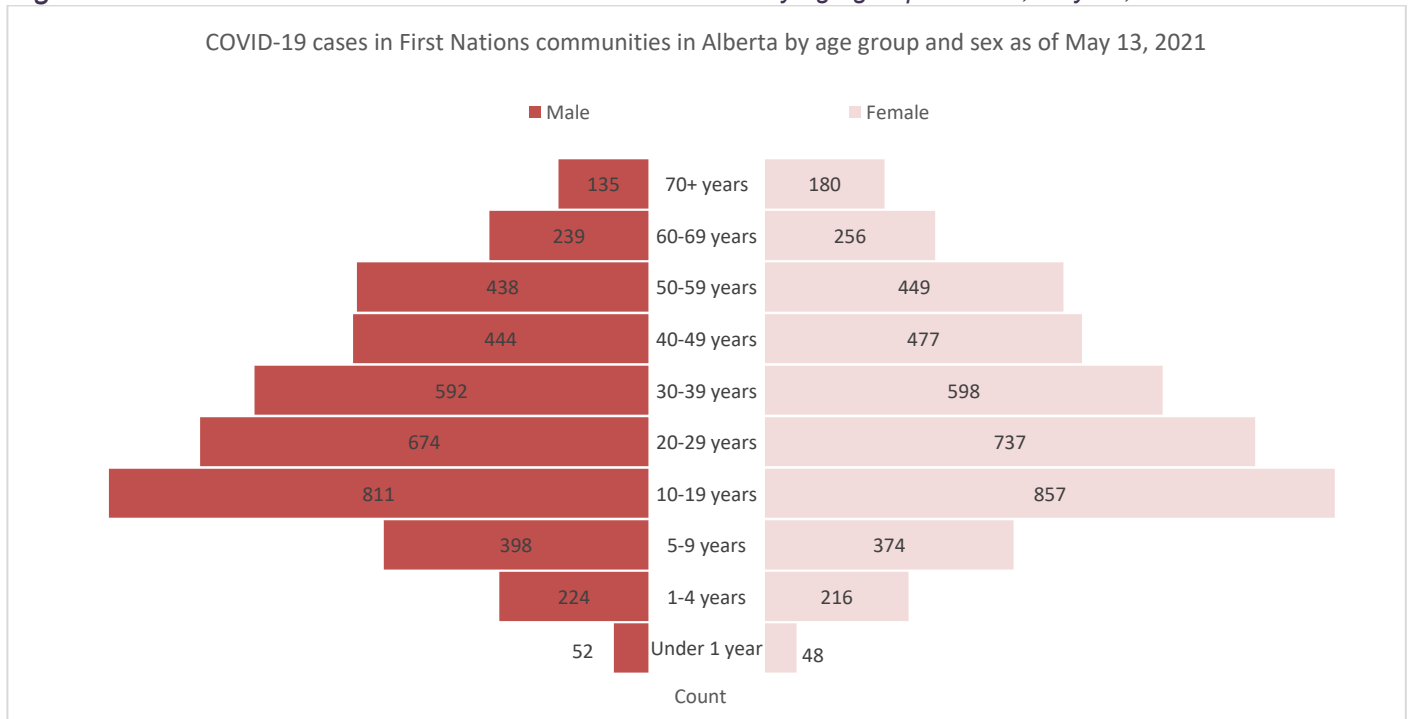


Fig 3. Active COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta, May 13, 2021



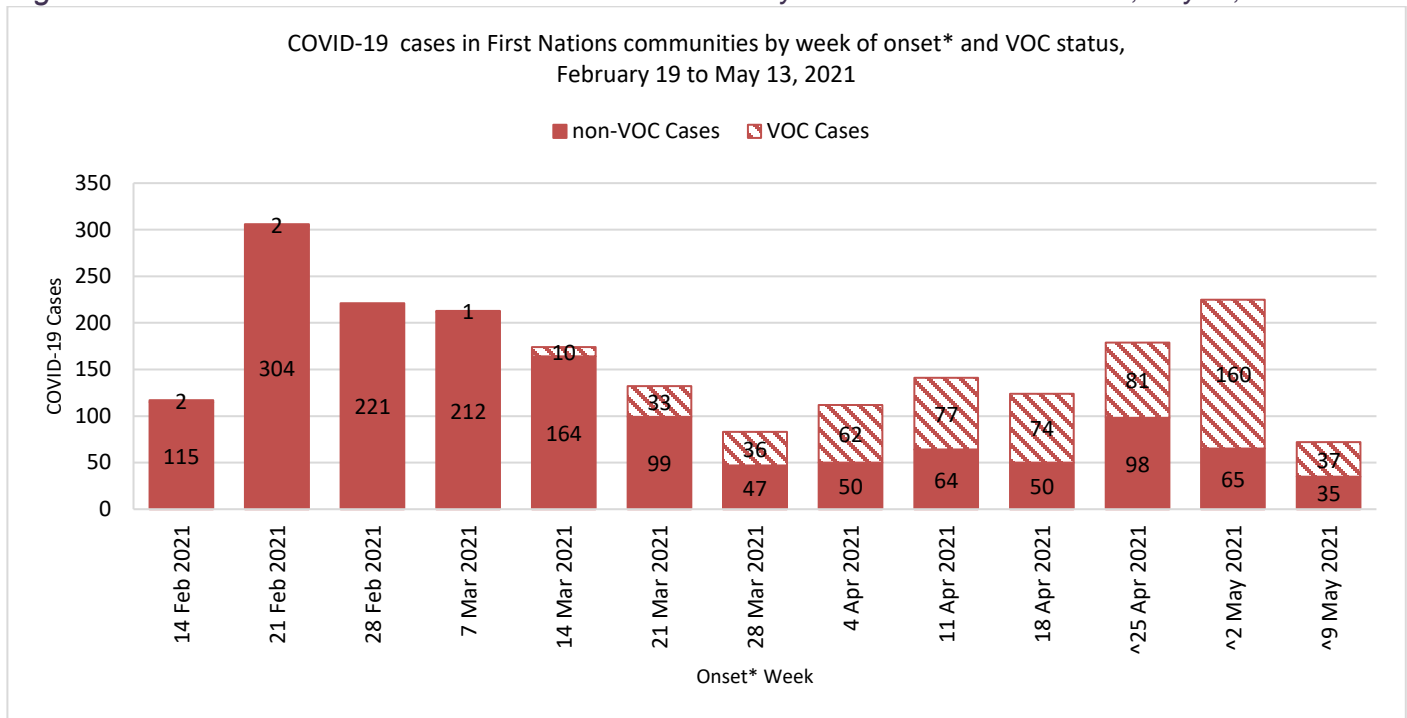
In general, the number of daily active confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta have been increasing since mid-April 2021 (Fig 3).

Fig 4. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by age group and sex, May 13, 2021



Individuals between the ages of 10 and 39 years accounted for 52.1% of all cases in First Nations communities in Alberta and 50.5% of all cases in Alberta. Females accounted for 51.1% of all cases in First Nations communities in Alberta and 49.2% among all Albertans.

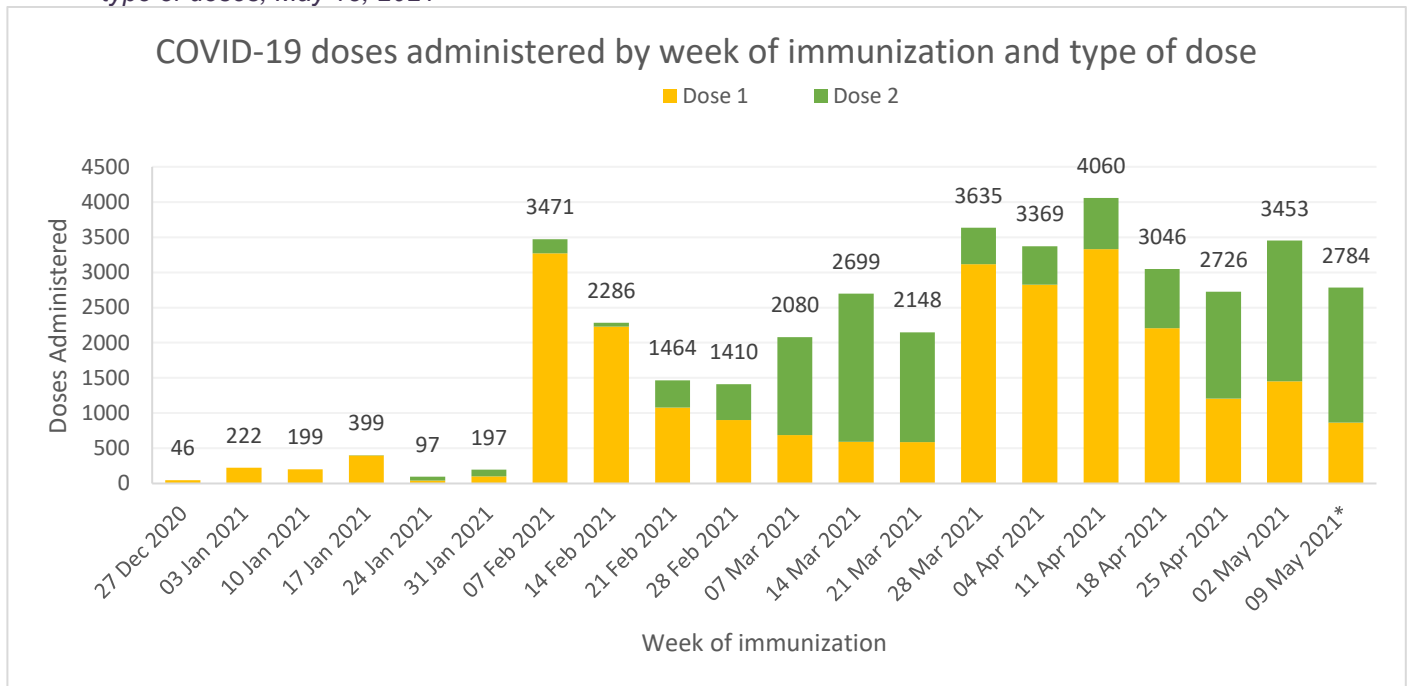
Fig 5. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by onset week and VOC status, May 13, 2021



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.

Five hundred and seventy-five (575) VOCs have been detected and currently there are 247 active VOCs in 22 First Nations Communities making up 60.4% of all active COVID-19 cases in communities.

Fig 6. COVID-19 Vaccine doses administered in First Nations communities in Alberta by week of immunization and type of doses, May 13, 2021



Note: *Data is incomplete for the week of May 9, 2021.

A total 39,791 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered to 25,365 people in First Nations communities in Alberta, of whom 14,426 are fully immunized with two doses.