

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: May 28, 2021

Office of the Senior Medical Officer of Health

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

There has been a steady decline in the number of new cases across the province over the last few weeks, and more vaccines are being administered every day. On May 26, following the decrease in active cases and the increase in vaccination rates, the Government of Alberta announced a plan to safely ease public health restrictions. Successful progression through the stages of [Alberta's reopening plan](#) will depend on the collective ability to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and a surge in cases that would require restrictions on gatherings and businesses again. Continued testing, vaccination, and adherence to public health measures remains important at this time. ISC-AB will continue to work with Nations to address any barriers that may contribute to low vaccination rates.

Status Update

Number of Cases Reported* as of May 28, 2021:

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

Alberta: There are **10,017 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	1,371,073	29,445	225,937
Deaths	25,411	336	2,199
Recovered	1,303,558	28,421	213,721

First Nations living on and off reserve (Alberta): There are **16,928** confirmed cases of COVID-19 to date and **152** deaths in First Nations living on and off reserve in Alberta. Confirmed cases are: **2,843** in Calgary Zone; **3,871** in Edmonton Zone; **1,403** in South Zone; **5,682** in North Zone; **3,124** 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:



Location (By Zone)	Confirmed Cases	Active Cases	Recovered
North	3682	69	3585
Central	2140	20	2102
Calgary	1358	58	1285
South	809	6	790
Edmonton	432	4	419
TOTAL	8,421	157	8,181

Testing in Alberta – Update

- As of May 28, 2021, the total number of reported swab samples collected to date in First Nation communities in Alberta is **126,083**.
- **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 remains a powerful tool to help limit the spread.** If you have symptoms, please stay home and book a testing appointment. Testing outside of the provincial testing criteria must be reviewed and supported by the ISC-AB MOHs. Please send testing enquiries to sac.cdemergenciasab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca

COVID-19 Vaccine

COVID-19 Vaccine in First Nations Communities in Alberta as of May 27, 2021

- **45,676** doses have been administered in **46** Nations (bands) in Alberta
- **27,987** First Nations people living on reserve have received at least one dose
- **17,689** First Nations people living on reserve are fully immunized (2 doses)
- **3,824** First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on reserve have received their first dose
- **3,330** First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on reserve are fully immunized (2 doses)

New Developments

1. On May 19, Health Canada authorized more flexible storage conditions for the Pfizer vaccine. The vaccine can now be stored at regular refrigerated temperatures (2-8°C) at the point of use for up to 31 days. This change will support additional flexibility in vaccine distribution.
2. Second vaccine doses can be booked three to four weeks after the first dose for individuals residing in a First Nations community. Individuals living off reserve will have their second dose administered within [4 months](#) as per Alberta Health guidance.
3. The Government of Alberta has updated the isolation and quarantine requirements for individuals who have been vaccinated. Individuals are considered partially vaccinated 14 days after receiving one dose of vaccine, and individuals are considered fully vaccinated 14 days after receiving a second dose of vaccine.
 - If a fully vaccinated individual is exposed to a COVID-19 case, they are required to isolate for 10 days if they are symptomatic and should be tested. Fully vaccinated individuals are not required to quarantine if they are asymptomatic.
 - If a partially vaccinated individual is exposed to a COVID-19 case, they are required to isolate for 10 days and should be tested. Quarantine can end early if the partially vaccinated individual tests negative on day seven or later.
 - Further details regarding isolation requirements for vaccinated Albertans is available at the AHS [COVID-19 vaccine program](#) web page.
4. On May 25, Siksika Nation launched its [Rural COVID-19 Immunization Clinic](#). Bookings are available to residents from Siksika Nation's neighbouring municipalities of Strathmore, Gleichen, Wheatland County, Vulcan County and Newell County. Appointments can be made [online](#) or by calling 403-734-5706.
5. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in adolescents 12 to 18 years of age.

Reminders

1. All Albertans aged 12 and over are eligible to receive their first vaccine 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.
3. 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.

Alberta's Relaunch - Update

- **[New]** Alberta Government's [Alberta's Open for Summer Plan](#) outlines how restrictions will ease safely in 3 stages as vaccine targets are reached and hospitalizations decline in the province. COVID-19 transmission will continue to be monitored during each stage and if required, a stage may be paused to respond to trends at regional or provincial levels. Alberta will enter Stage 1 on June 1; until then, all current province-wide restrictions remain in place, with additional restrictions in [high case regions](#). These restriction changes apply province-wide and additional details will be released before each stage.
- **[New]** Students across Alberta, except for students in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo returned to in-person learning on May 25. All schools in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo will continue at-home learning for an additional week.
- **[New]** Effective May 31, public health restrictions will change for continuing care residents who have been vaccinated and are returning after trips outside the facility. More information can be found [here](#).
- **[New]** Businesses and non-profits can apply for funding to reduce the cost of hiring and training Albertans for new jobs. Employers can apply for a grant that covers 25 per cent of a new employee's salary for a 52-week period up to a maximum of \$25,000 per employee. Employers have until Aug. 31 to apply. A second intake will open on Sept. 15 and close on Dec. 31. More information can be found at [Alberta Jobs Now Program](#)
- **Reminder:** The rules around exemptions from [wearing a mask due to a medical condition](#) have changed. 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 27th, **689** VOCs have been detected in **34** First Nations communities in Alberta. Currently there are **92** active VOCs in **15** 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.

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

- **Reminder:** [Infrastructure Canada](#) is 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]** Alberta's government is hosting a virtual Mental Wellness Day for Schools across Alberta on June 3 to support and recognize the resilience of students, parents, teachers and staff. Detailed information about the event, including how to attend, can be viewed [here](#).
- **Reminder:** 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

- 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

- **[New]** Canadian Roots Exchange is a multi-level funding program that provides funding to support strengths-based, community-focused and youth-led projects. Funding up to \$25,000 or \$80,000 (for large scale applications) is available to projects/groups that seek to create impactful community change and increase the wellness, resiliency and engagement of Indigenous youth. Projects can be up to 12 months in length. The deadline is June 7th and full details can be found [here](#).
- **[New]** Recovering from COVID-19 is different for everyone. Alberta Health has an [After-COVID](#) information and resource page to support individuals with long-term health effects after 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=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>

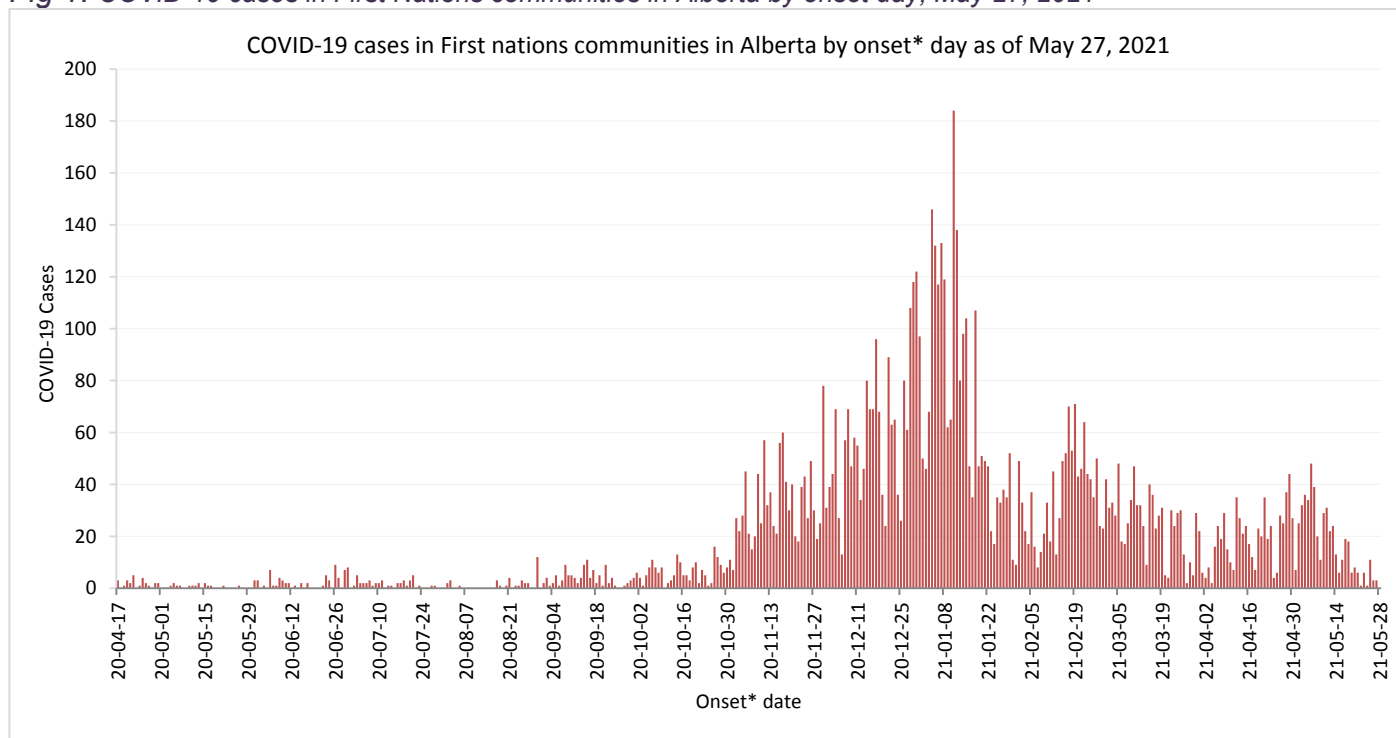
Mental health and coping resources are available for individuals who are struggling or need a little extra support.

- 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.

<p>Anyone with specific questions or concerns about their health is encouraged to call Health Link at 811 for health advice.</p>

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 27, 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 decreasing since the beginning of May 2021 (Fig 1).

Fig 2. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by status, May 27, 2021

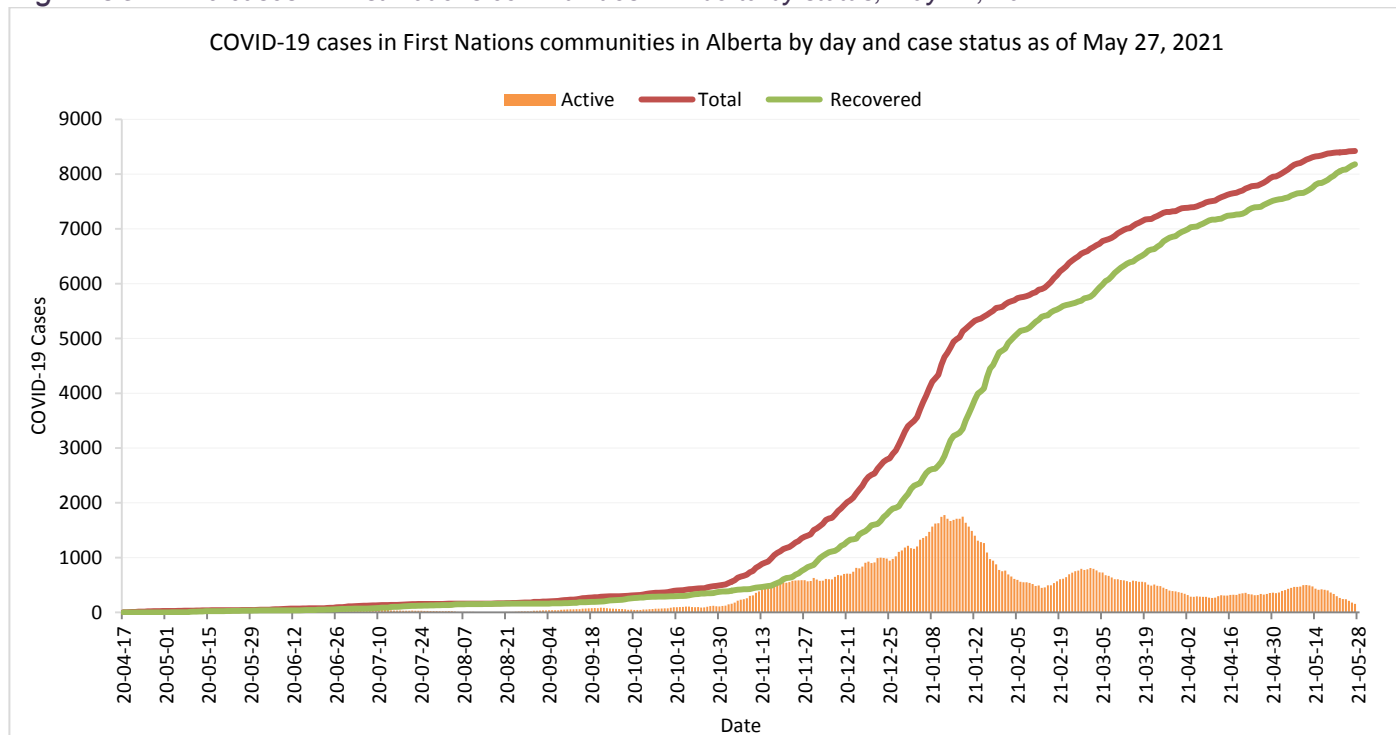
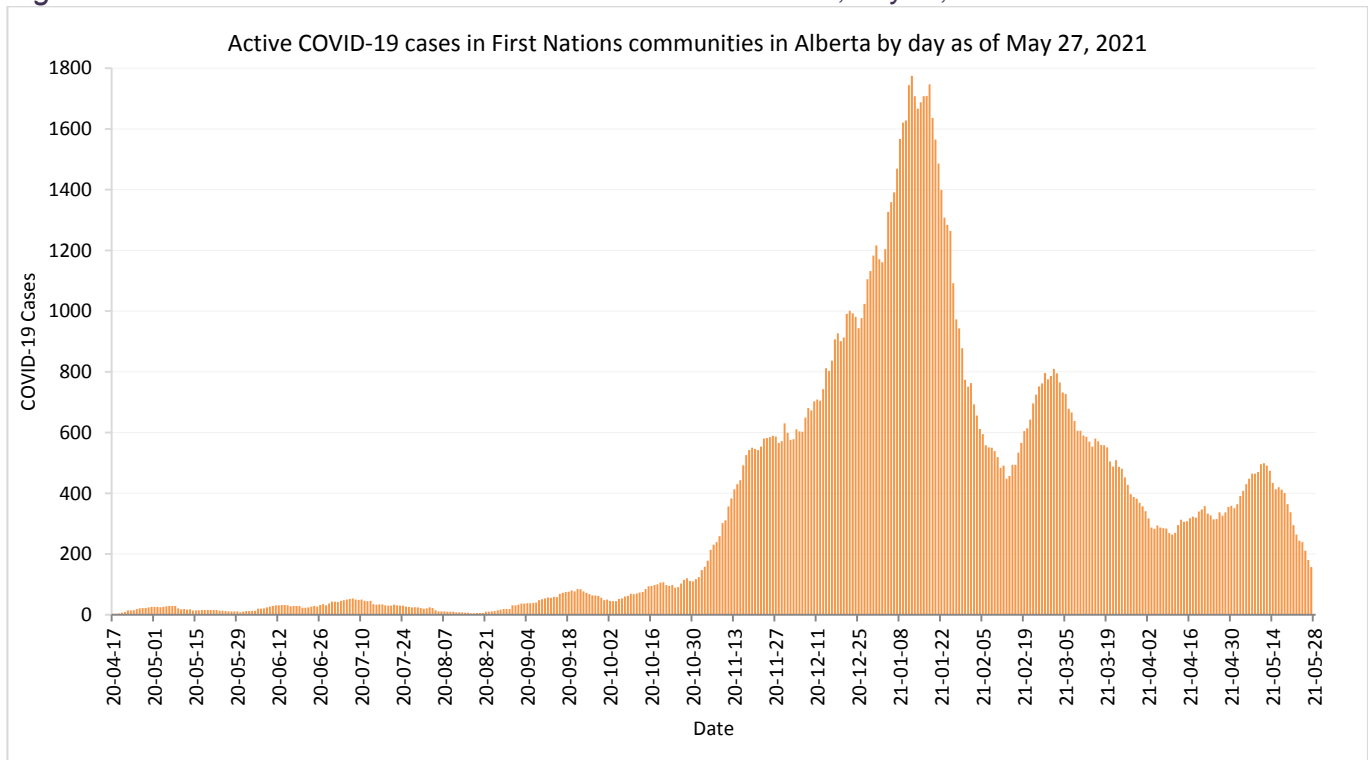
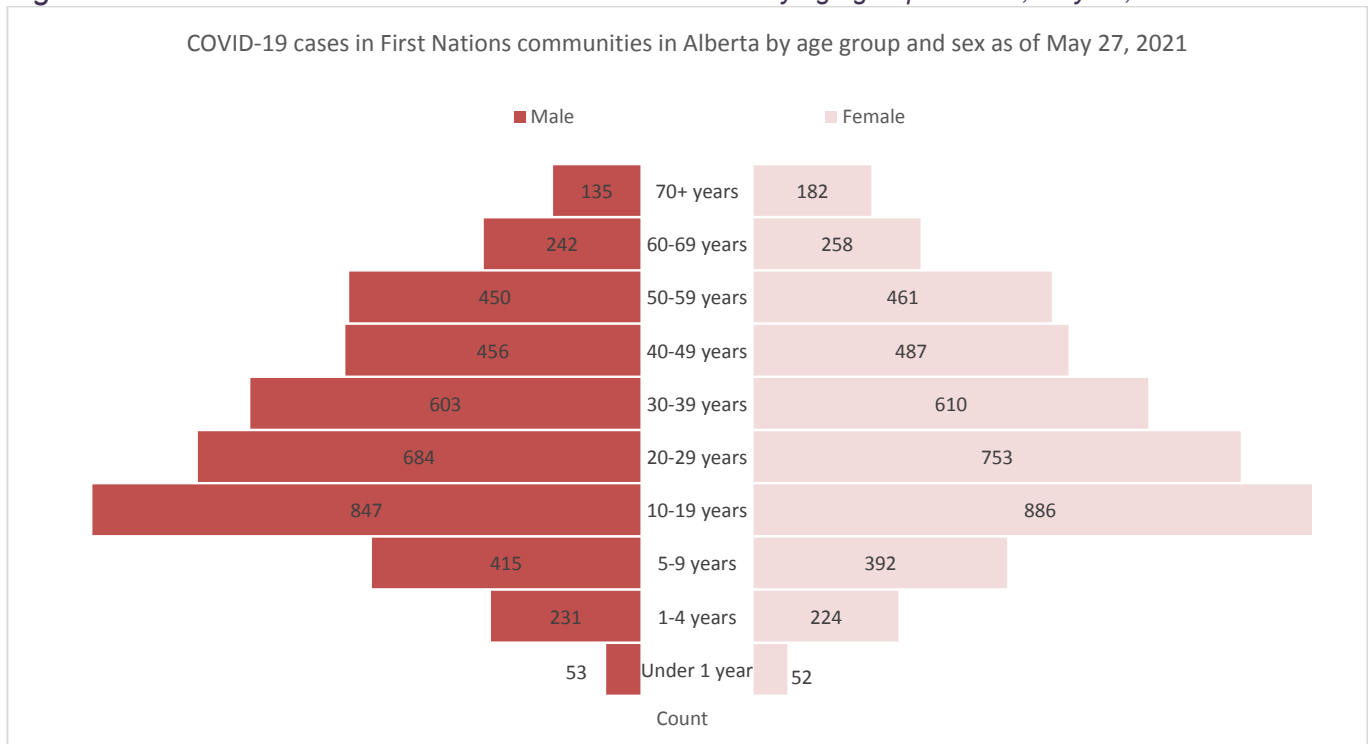


Fig 3. Active COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta, May 27, 2021



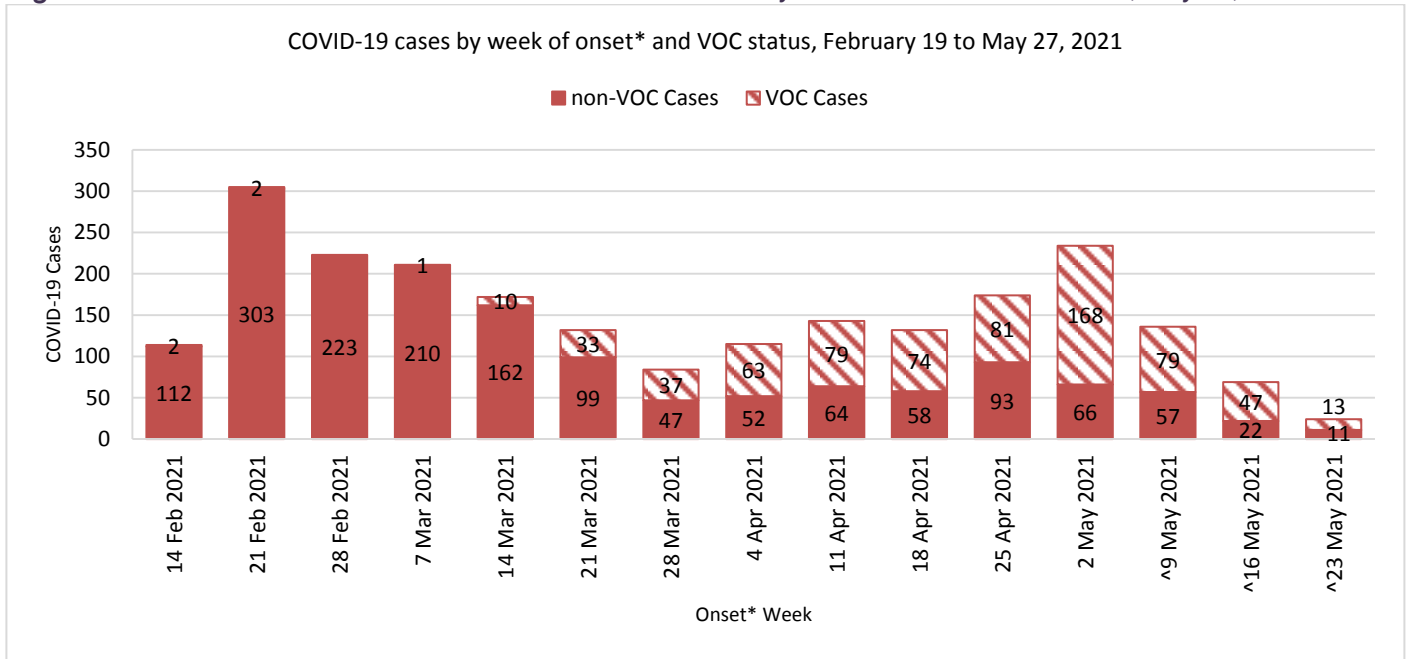
In general, the number of daily active confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta has been decreasing since mid-May 2021 (Fig 3).

Fig 4. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by age group and sex, May 27, 2021



Individuals between the ages of 10 and 39 years accounted for 52.0% of all cases in First Nations communities in Alberta and 50.6% 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.

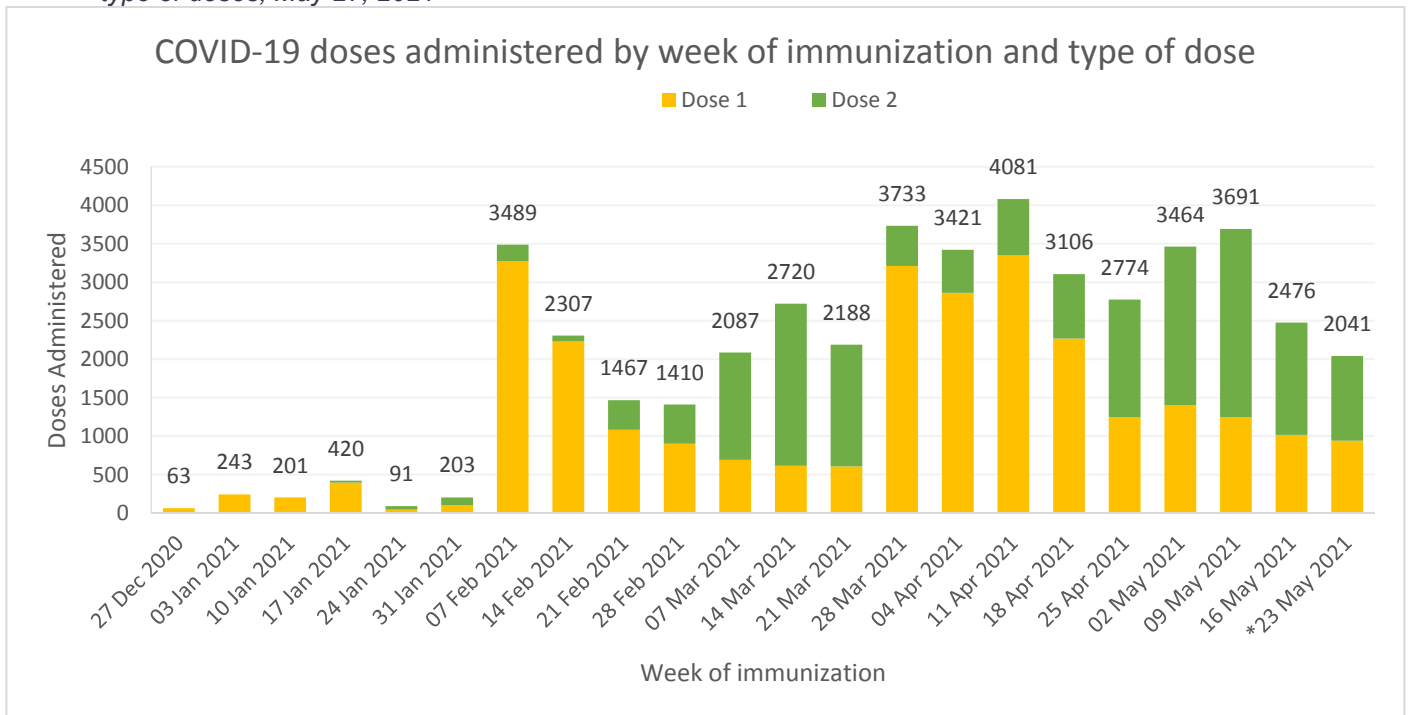
Fig 5. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by onset week and VOC status, May 27, 2021



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.

Six hundred and eighty-nine (689) VOCs have been detected and currently there are 92 active VOCs in 15 First Nations Communities making up 58.6% 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 27, 2021



Note: *Data is incomplete for the week of May 23, 2021.

A total 45,676 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered to 27,987 people in First Nations communities in Alberta, of whom 17,689 are fully immunized with two doses.