

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: October 7, 2021

Office of the Senior Medical Officer of Health

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

Alberta is still in the fourth wave of the pandemic and active cases of COVID-19 are the highest in Canada. The B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant is highly contagious and is the dominant COVID-19 strain, impacting primarily unvaccinated individuals. The rise in hospitalizations and ICU admissions has put severe strain on the health system and regular ICU capacity is at 175%. With surge beds in place, ICU capacity is 80%. Surgeries have been postponed and additional frontline health support is being provided by the Canadian Armed Forces and the Canadian Red Cross. Alberta Health Services has developed a Critical Care Pandemic Triage Protocol that would be activated when all available resources for critical care have been utilized across the province. Given the high risk of infection among unvaccinated individuals, new health restrictions have been put in place to limit gatherings and individuals are being encouraged to engage in lower risk activities to protect themselves and others.

With the upcoming Thanksgiving long weekend, it is very important to limit participation in visits with family, friends and gatherings in communities. As a reminder:

- Indoor private gatherings for vaccine-eligible, fully vaccinated people are limited to a single household plus one other household to a maximum of 10 people, with no restrictions on children under the age of 12.
- Attendance at any indoor private social gathering **is not permitted** for vaccine-eligible individuals who are unvaccinated.
- Outdoor private social gatherings are permitted to a maximum of 20 people, with two-metre physical distancing maintained at all times.

Please also continue to encourage mask wearing indoors, physical distancing and proper hand washing to limit the spread. ISC-AB and the Medical Officers of Health (MOH) team are available to work with First Nations communities to maintain an enhanced COVID-19 response, which includes supporting First Nations with vaccination, testing, case management, and contact tracing efforts as needed. The most important intervention to reduce transmission and stop the spread of COVID-19 is vaccination for those eligible aged 12 and older. A full vaccine series at the recommended interval (4-12 weeks between doses) is proven to be the best mechanism to significantly reduce the risk of severe health outcomes from COVID-19, including the Delta variant.

Status Update

Number of Cases Reported* as of October 7, 2021:

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

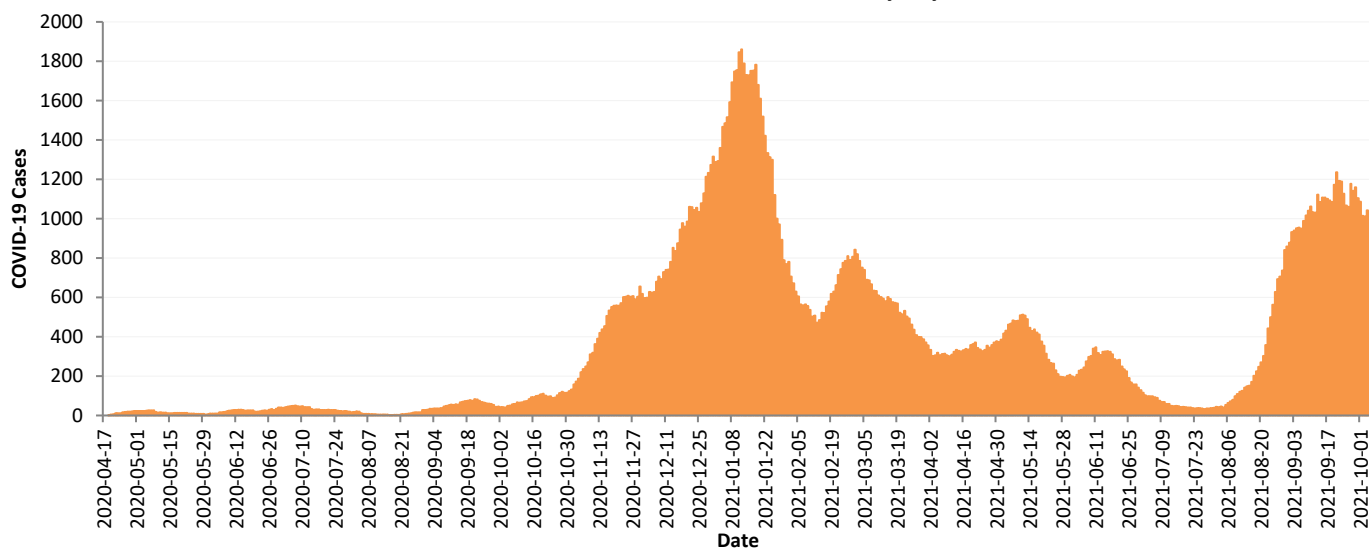
Alberta: There are **18,912 Active Cases** of COVID-19 in Alberta.

First Nations in Alberta: 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	Total Cases	Recovered Case	Active Cases	Deaths	Currently Hospitalized	Communities with Active Cases
Living on Reserve in Alberta	12,329	11,366	858	105	44	39
Living on and off reserve in Alberta	24,904	22,852	1,847	205	139	NA



Active COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by day as of October 06, 2021



COVID-19 in First Nations living on reserve in Alberta

Treaty Area	Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered Cases	Deaths
Treaty 6	5,601	466	5,097	38
Treaty 7	2,980	179	2,760	41
Treaty 8	3,748	213	3,509	26
TOTAL	12,329	858	11,366	105

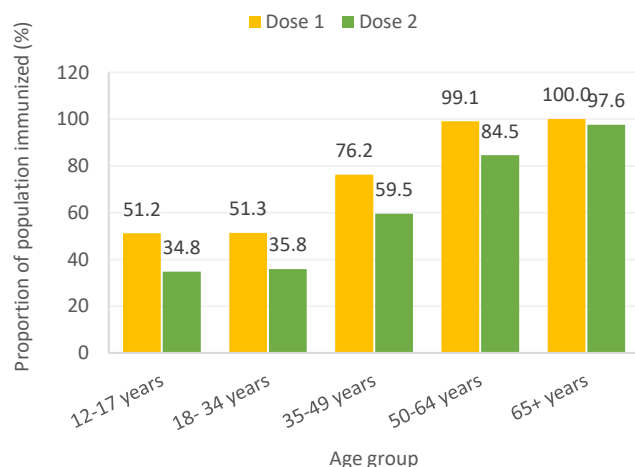
COVID-19 Vaccine

COVID-19 Vaccine in First Nations Communities in Alberta as of October 6, 2021

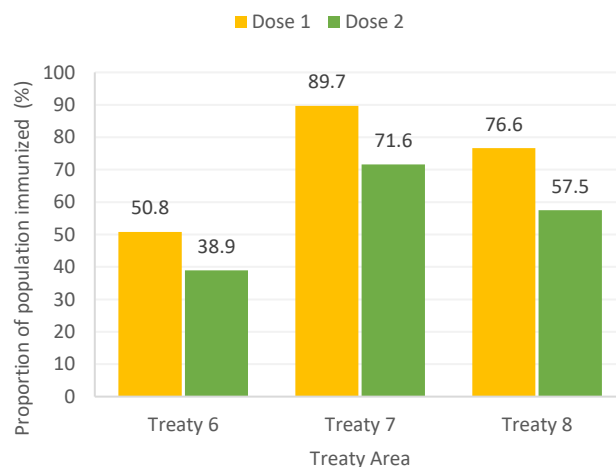
- **78,937** doses have been administered in **46** Nations (bands) in Alberta
- **44,525** First Nations people living on reserve have received at least one dose
- **34,412** First Nations people living on reserve are fully immunized (2 doses)

Approximately **69.5%** of the total population aged 12 years and older living on reserve have received at least one dose and approximately **53.8%** have been fully immunized (2 doses).

Proportion of population immunized by age group and type of dose



Proportion of population aged 12 years and older immunized by Treaty area and type of dose



18 Communities

Have vaccinated over 70% of eligible members with the first dose

18 Communities

Have vaccinated 50 - 70% of eligible members with the first dose

10 Communities

Have vaccinated less than 50% of eligible members with the first dose

COVID-19 Vaccine New Developments

1. **[New]** Booster shots are administered after the protection provided by the original vaccine series starts to decrease over time.
 - Effective October 6, third doses are available to Albertans aged 75 and older and First Nations, Métis and Inuit people aged 65 and older. Individuals that fall within these groups are advised to receive their third dose six (6) months after their second dose. Proof of age is required before the vaccine is administered. Further information is available at the Government of Alberta's COVID-19 Vaccines and Records [webpage](#).
 - The province continues to recommend a booster dose 5 months after the second dose for residents of long term care sites. An additional dose can also be administered to individuals travelling to jurisdictions that do not recognize mixed series doses.
 - Alberta is also continuing to recommend an additional dose to the primary vaccine series for eligible severely immunocompromised individuals.
2. **[New]** As of September 16, Albertans can download their COVID-19 vaccine record at the [Alberta COVID Records](#) webpage. The COVID-19 vaccine record now includes a QR code and Alberta's official app to scan COVID Record QR codes will be available soon. FNIHB-AB is currently working with Alberta Health to ensure that all COVID-19 immunization data completed in First Nations communities is available through the provincial registry. We expect that these vaccination records will be accessible through Alberta Health and online in the coming weeks. In the interim, records provided at the time of immunization and/or CHIP printouts from health centres can be used as proof of vaccination.
3. **[New]** As of September 20, the province has implemented the Restrictions Exemption Program requiring proof of vaccination or negative test result —plus mandatory masking— for businesses, events, etc. to continue operating as usual. Further information is available at the Government of Alberta [COVID-19 Public Health Actions webpage](#).
4. **[New]** In September, Pfizer announced that the company's vaccine is effective in children age 5-11. Pfizer has submitted preliminary data to Health Canada and a complete submission from Pfizer to Health Canada is expected later in October. As a pediatric formulation will need to be manufactured we do not expect availability/rollout of the pediatric vaccines until late 2021/early 2022. Moderna clinical trials are also underway, however, no timeframe has been given on when to expect Moderna's trial data.
5. **[New]** Immunization against COVID-19 is very important, however some people may have needle fears or live with development challenges that make it more challenging to receive the vaccine. There are [supports](#) available to help [reduce pain](#) and distress associated with immunization, and improve the comfort and overall experience of [kids and adolescents](#), those who have needle phobia, or those who live with development challenges that may interfere with them being immunized against COVID-19.

Testing in Alberta - Update

- **[New]** Small and medium sized organizations in Alberta, including Indigenous organizations, businesses and non profits can now access rapid testing kits at pharmacies in their communities. Individuals can request the free COVID 19 rapid tests for their workplaces. Information on how to register and conditions that organizations must agree to can be found [here](#).
- **[New]** Alberta Health and the Government of Canada have publically funded rapid POCT screening programs that are free and available for organizations and communities to implement. Further information and applications are available at the following links: [Alberta Health Rapid Testing Program](#) or [Government of Canada COVID-19 Rapid Testing and Screening in Workplaces](#).
- **[New]** Testing to identify cases of COVID-19 quickly has been an important activity to decrease the spread of infection in Alberta and many health centers in First Nations communities have a point of care testing (POCT) instrument (Abbott ID NOW or GeneXpert). These instruments are used for diagnosing

or ruling out a COVID-19 infection and are similar to those being used in the lab. They must be operated by trained instrument operators and follow the FNIHB POCT and Results Management for COVID-19 Policy, and testing is completed under the authority of the FNIHB MOH. These POCT instruments should not be used to provide a negative result under the Restrictions Exemption Program (REP) or for any other type of screening. Results required under the Government of Alberta's REP that came in to effect on September 20, 2021 cannot be acquired through publically funded testing (i.e., Alberta Health Services, POCT instruments in health centers, provincial or federal Rapid POCT Screening Programs, Alberta Precision Laboratories, etc.). Proof of negative results for the REP need to be acquired from a private testing company.

Alberta's Relaunch - Update

- **[New]** Alberta introduced new public health measures on September 16, 2021 to address the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures include limiting gatherings, restricting indoor gatherings for unvaccinated individuals, work from home directives and mandatory masking in schools. As of September 20, 2021, the restrictions exemption program came into effect, which requires businesses such as bars, restaurants and entertainment venues to check proof of vaccination or face a number of restrictions.
 - Effective October 5, indoor private gatherings for vaccine-eligible, fully vaccinated people are limited to a single household plus one other household to a maximum of 10 people, with no restrictions on children under the age of 12. **Indoor social gatherings are not permitted for vaccine-eligible individuals who are unvaccinated.** Outdoor private gatherings are permitted to a maximum of 20 people, with two-metre physical distancing maintained at all times

More information on the new public health measures and the restriction exemption program can be found [here](#).

- **[New]** Effective October 6, public reporting of COVID-19 cases in schools will resume, with Alberta Health identifying online [each school with at least 2 COVID-19 cases](#). School COVID-19 outbreaks will be reported at 10 or more COVID-19 cases within a 14 day period that were infectious while at school. Later in October, K-6 schools in Alberta that are experiencing outbreaks will have access to at-home rapid test kits for students and staff. More information on this will be shared when available.
- **[New]** Alberta Health Services has developed a Critical Care Pandemic Triage Protocol, a pre-determined, objective, system wide approach to decision making when there are more patients than available critical care resources, to ensure that care is delivered to those who will benefit the most. Triage would be activated when all available resources for critical care have been utilized across the province using a graduated approach. Phase 1 involves only adults and when provincial occupancy of all available critical care surge available beds is 90% or greater. Phase 2 involves adults and pediatrics and when provincial occupancy of available critical care surge available beds is 95% or greater. More information will be communicated as it becomes available.

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

- **[New]** Canadian **businesses, non-profit organizations, or charities** who have seen a drop in revenue during the COVID-19 pandemic may be eligible for a subsidy to cover part of their commercial rent or property expenses, starting on September 27, 2020, until October 23, 2021. This subsidy will provide payments directly to qualifying **renters** and **property owners**, without requiring the participation of landlords. More information is available [here](#).
- **[New]** The Government of Canada has extended eligibility to apply for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy until October 7, 2021. The next period to apply will open on November 1, 2021. More information is available [here](#). The Canada Recovery Benefit, the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit and the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit have also been extended until October 23, 2021. More information is available [here](#).
- **[New]** The Government of Canada has extended eligibility to apply for the [Own-Source Revenue in Indigenous Communities Initiative](#) (OSRICI) until November 30, 2021. This initiative supports communities that have experienced a reduction in own-source revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic. core community programs and important services to their members. To be eligible for this initiative, Indigenous communities must have experienced an own-source revenue decline in 2020-2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Funding under this initiative is not meant to overlap with other

existing COVID-19 measures, such as the Indigenous Community Business Fund, the Indigenous Community Support Fund, or any other COVID-19 measures related to health, economic, and social support. More information on eligibility and application requirements can be found [here](#).

- **Reminder:** Nations that require additional surge supports for COVID-19 response or vaccine clinics including contact tracing, testing, and vaccine administration support should submit a [request form](#) to ISC-AB at: sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca.

Mental Health and Wellness

- **Reminder:** The COVID-19 pandemic has been stressful for many individuals, families, and communities who have all been affected in several ways. The [Hope for Wellness](#) help line offers immediate, toll-free telephone and online-chat based support and crisis intervention to all Indigenous people across Canada. Help is available in English and French, and upon request in Cree and Ojibway. Call the toll-free Help Line at **1-855-242-3310**, 24 hours a day, and 7 days a week.

Virtual Care Clinic

- **Reminder:** 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 Information and Resources

- **[New]** ISC-AB presented telehealth sessions with COVID-19 updates on **September 16 and October 7**. A recording of the presentations can be found [here](#).

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=IwAR1hzie9aLgDLr0K7Qi80mb9ozNby5dK6VZO3CFhhKgLrALUpo6_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.



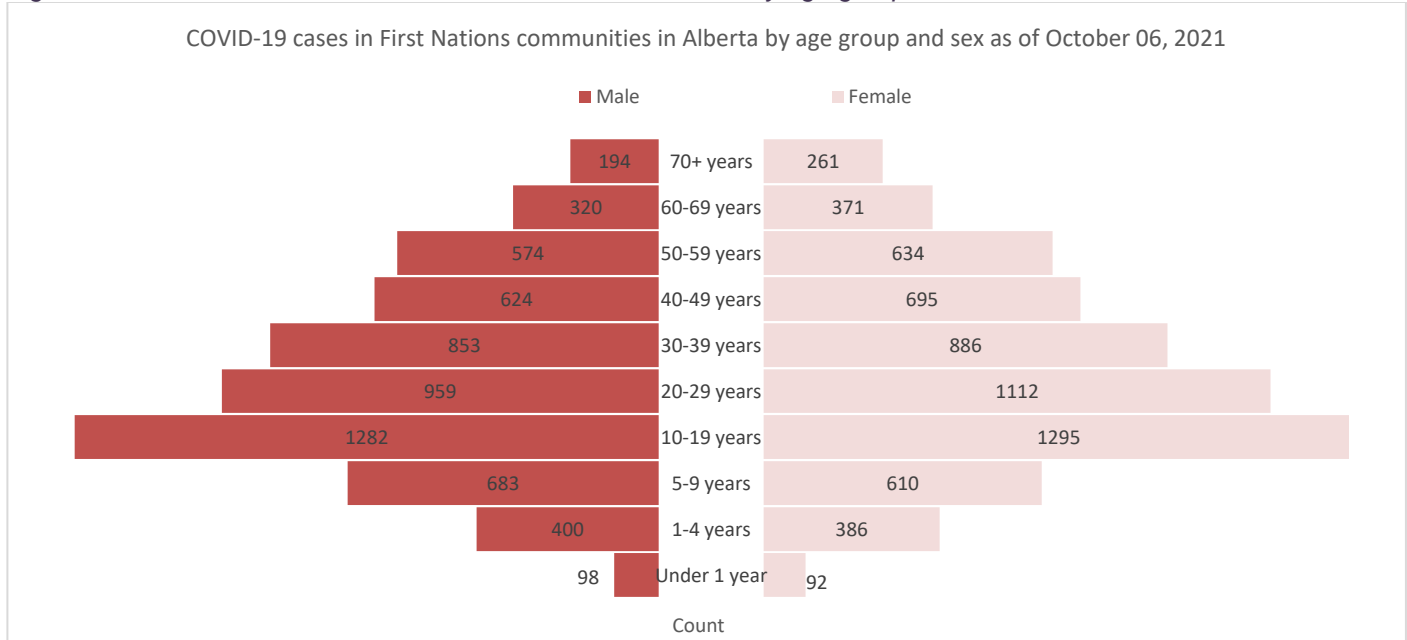
Indigenous Services
Canada

Services aux
Autochtones Canada

Canada

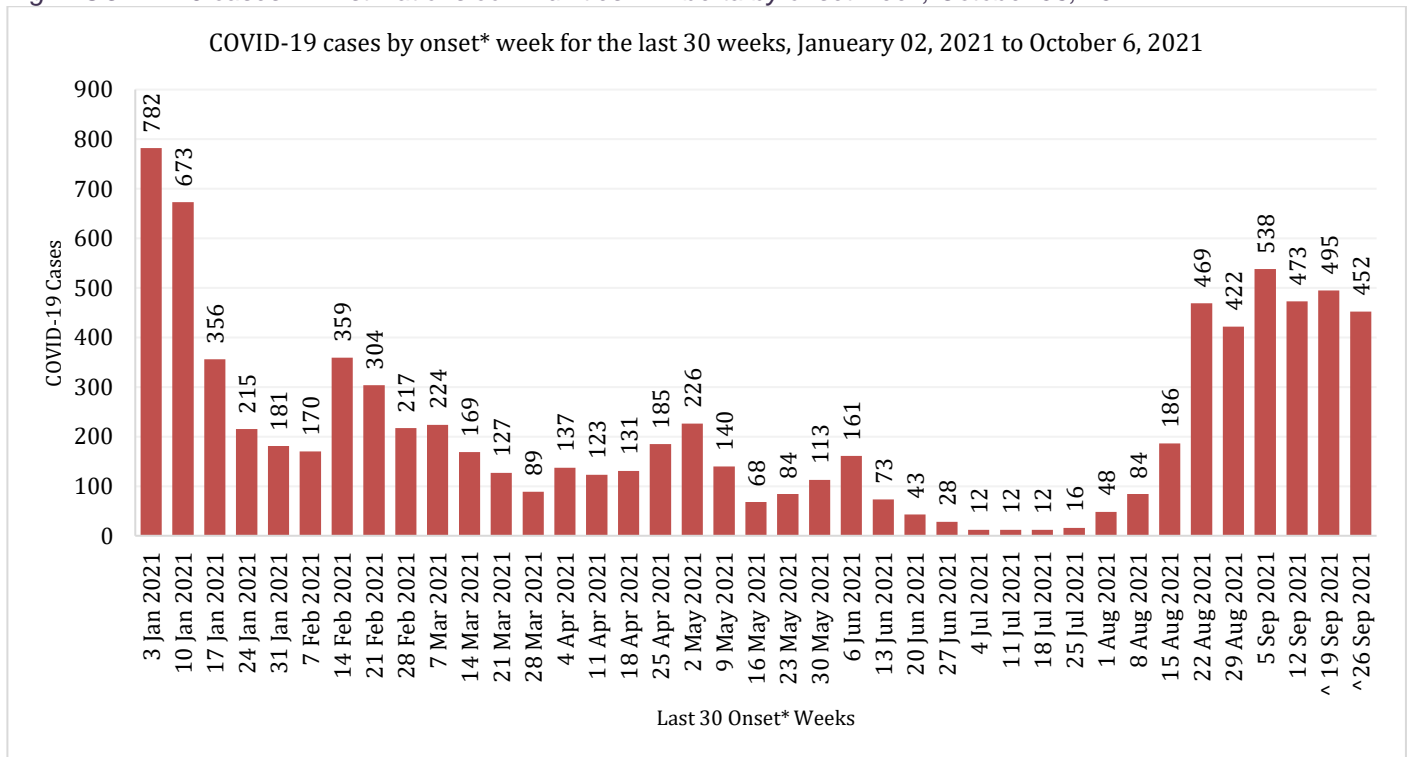
APPENDIX A: Additional COVID-19 Data in First Nations On-Reserve in Alberta

Fig 1. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by age group and sex, October 06, 2021



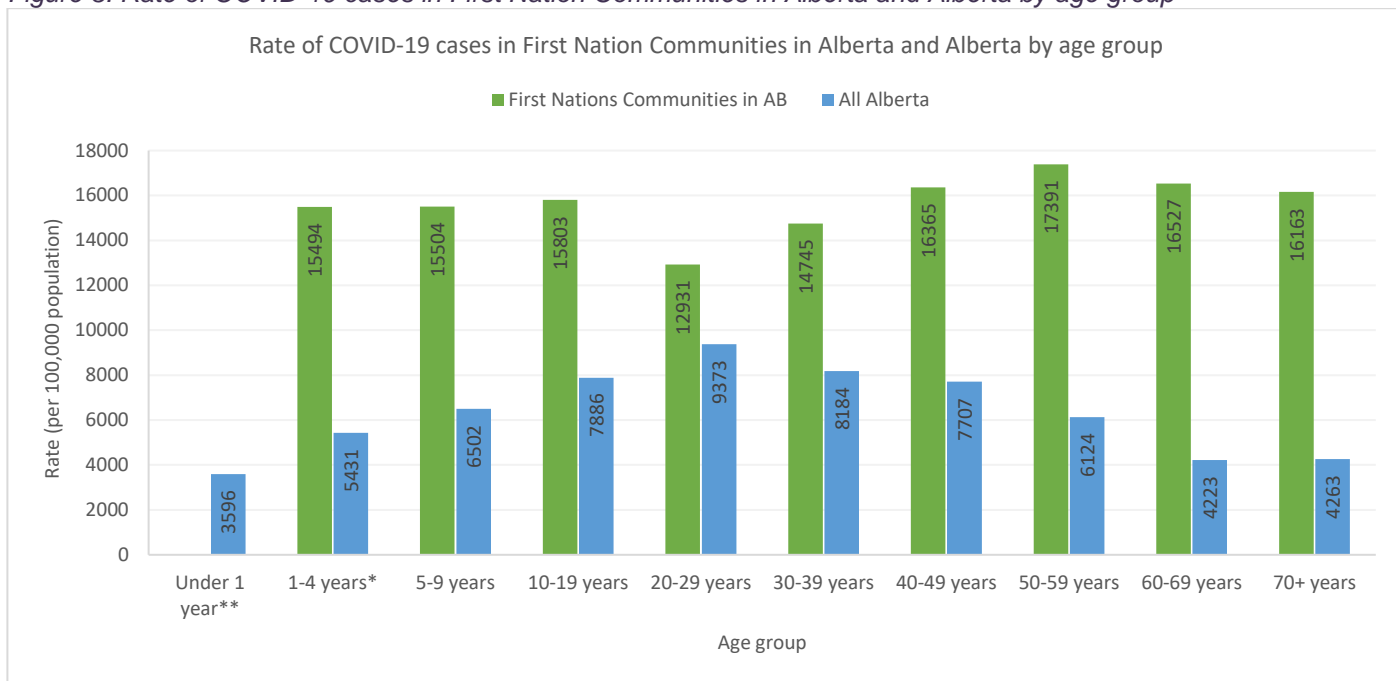
Individuals between the ages of 10 and 39 years accounted for 51.8% of all cases in First Nations communities in Alberta and 51.0% of all cases in Alberta. Females accounted for 51.4% of all cases in First Nations communities in Alberta and 49.6% among all Albertans.

Fig 2. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by onset week, October 06, 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.

Figure 3: Rate of COVID-19 cases in First Nation Communities in Alberta and Alberta by age group

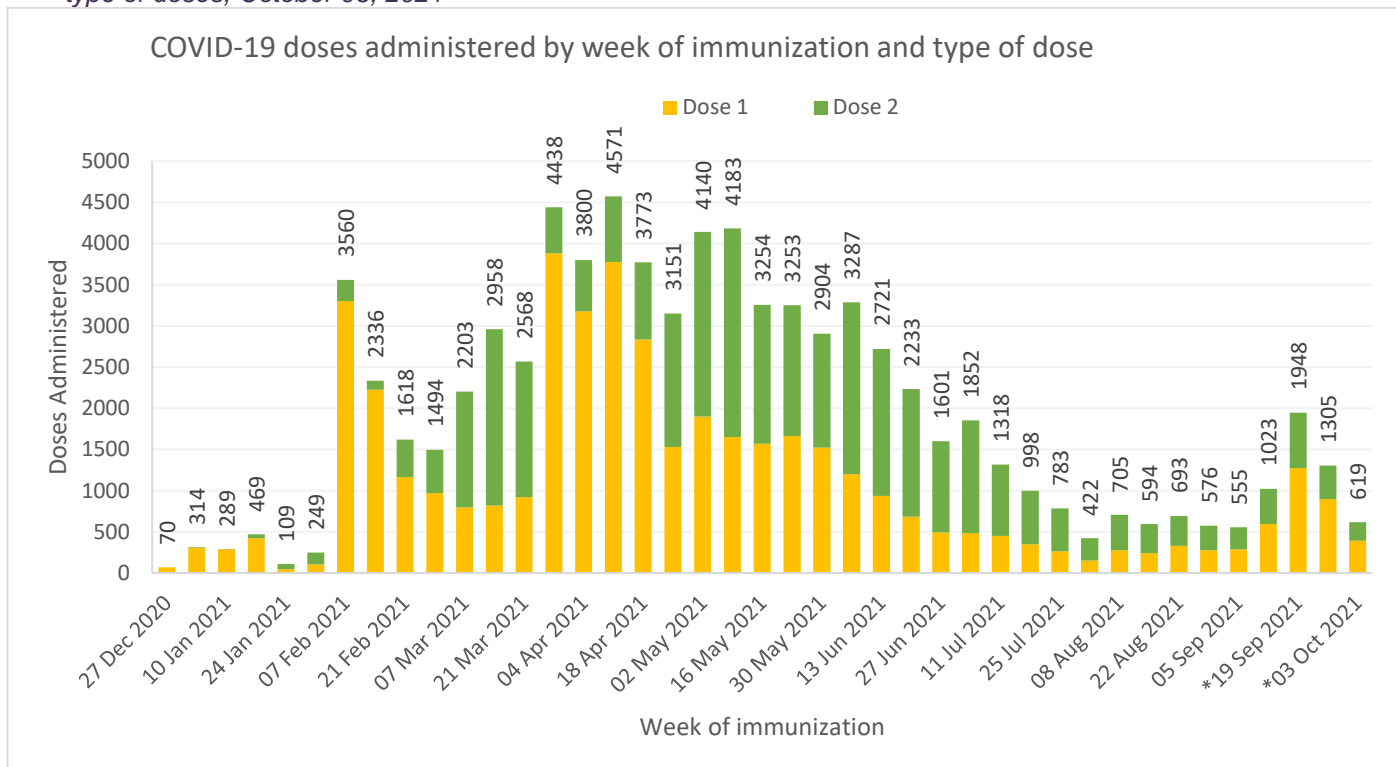


Note: **Due to late reporting and registration of birth, the rate in this age group is not calculated for First Nations communities.

*Due to late reporting and registration of birth, this rate may be overestimating

There is a higher burden of COVID-19 cases in First Nations in Alberta compared to the general Alberta population in every age group.

Fig 4. COVID-19 Vaccine doses administered in First Nations communities in Alberta by week of immunization and type of doses, October 06, 2021



*May be incomplete due to late reporting and data entry

A total of 78,937 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered to 44,525 people in First Nations communities in Alberta, of whom 34,412 are fully immunized with two doses.