

ISC Alberta Region-Update for Chiefs

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) develops and delivers holistic approaches to social, healthcare and infrastructure services to our Indigenous partners by working collaboratively to improve access to high quality services for First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

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Measles Edition

Current Alberta Context

There are more confirmed cases of measles in Alberta.

There are now confirmed measles cases in all Alberta zones, caused by separate and independent imported cases with local spread. In recent months there has also been an increase in measles cases in other parts of Canada and the United States.

For information on the current cases and situation in the province, please click [here](#).

Measles is a serious viral illness. It is airborne and highly transmissible.

Measles is one of the most contagious diseases in the world and can lead to serious infection. Children under the age of five, pregnant women, the elderly, and those with a weak immune system are most likely to get complications from measles infection, but anyone can get very sick from the virus.

Those who are not vaccinated or are only partially vaccinated for measles are most at risk for contracting the disease.

For information on all exposure locations in Alberta, please click [here](#).

Two doses of measles vaccine are 99% effective. Being vaccinated can prevent an infection and remove the requirement to isolate if exposed.



Individuals can find out if they, their children, and their families are vaccinated by:

- Contacting their health centre
- Calling Health Link at 811
- Texting "vaccine record" to 88111
- More information can be found at the Alberta Health [measles website](#).

If you have questions, call your health centre.

A message from Chief Conroy Sewepagaham, Little Red River Cree Nation



Chief Conroy Sewepagaham, Little Red River Cree Nation

As Chief of Little Red River Cree Nation, I feel it is important that I share our experience with measles during the recent outbreak and how our communities of Fox Lake, John D'or Prairie and Garden River responded.

We never imagined that we would have measles in our community. Watching the news in January, when we were hearing of increased cases in many parts of the world, we never would have thought that the first reported case of measles in Alberta in 2025 would be in Little Red River Cree Nation. After all, the focus at that time was on those travelling to and from other countries, not on those living in remote communities.

We still don't have all the particulars on how our first case contracted the illness, but it is true that the exposure happened in an AHS facility outside of our Nation. From that one exposure, we ended up with nine cases that affected three households.

It could have been much worse. Fortunately we had learned from past experience with COVID-19. But even knowing what we knew, COVID-19 works differently than measles. The incubation period for measles is longer, and it is contagious before individuals may realize they are sick. We had to adjust our approach for the specific challenges presented by measles - one of the most contagious viruses in the world. The isolation period for those exposed is also longer, so it can really impact people, whether exposed or sick. Contact tracing is a very important part of controlling the spread.

We were very lucky with only nine cases because we mobilized quickly. We got the word out. We partnered with ISC and AHS. We had medical professionals on the ground and we contacted people individually to ensure their vaccines and their young children's vaccines were up to date. They helped us advise people on what to do if they thought they were getting sick or believed they had been exposed. Everyone is part of the response - families, community members, residents. This is how we addressed the needs that were specific to our community and how we were able to take the message to them and deliver it in a way that worked for them.

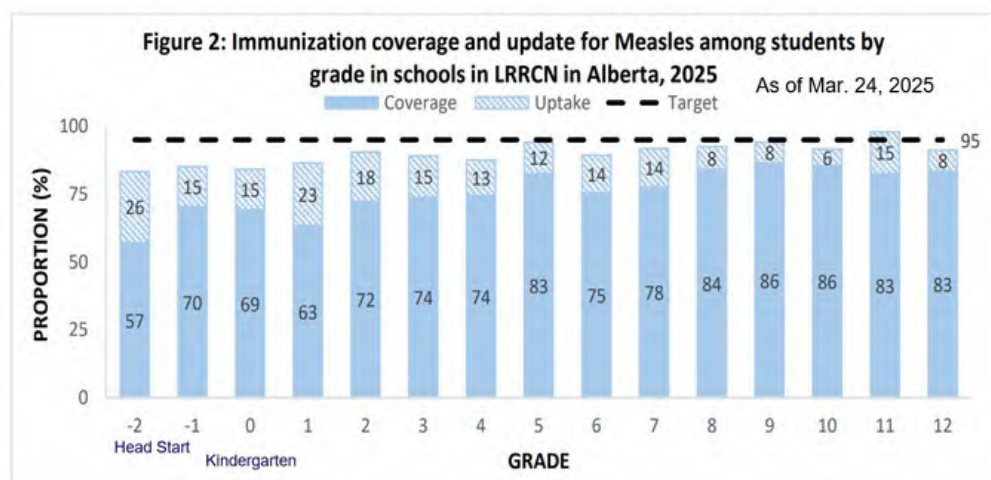


We had to adapt our plan as we went. We made the decision to keep the schools closed and close the daycares for an additional week during spring break. We set up vaccine clinics in our gymnasiums in all three of our communities. With the help of the health professionals on the ground from the ISC CDC team, ISC Nursing team and the ISC surge nursing team, as well as our nursing station staff and homecare staff, we had the ability to monitor cases (confirmed and suspected) undertake contact tracing, set up school vaccine clinics, home visits, check hundreds of vaccine records as well as maintain our usual healthcare services.

I also gave regular video updates that were approved by our Council and Administration and then posted on Facebook. I provided important information in both English and Woodland Cree, because we have people in Little Red River Cree Nation that only speak Cree. This was very effective for us. The posts received thousands of views.

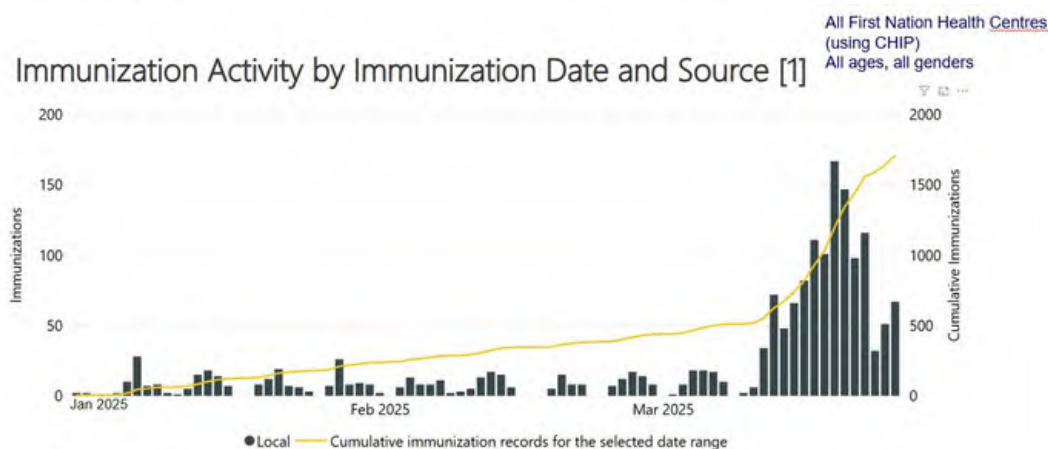
Nearly 800 vaccines were delivered in a three-week period. Today, our measles vaccine coverage rates are better than many communities in northern Alberta.

It is my wish that none of you end up having measles cases in your Nations, but if it happens you will be able to address it if you have a plan in place that considers the unique needs of your communities. That is what we have learned in Little Red River Cree Nation.



Total population: >2000 students

Immunization Activity by Immunization Date and Source [1]



Immunizations by Vaccine and Immunization Date

Vaccine	Week:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Total
Measles/Mumps/Rubella		1	5	7	5	4	1	5	4	8	5	90	288	37	460
Measles/Mumps/Rubella/Varicella		3	53	53	50	56	47	54	32	50	67	220	484	81	1250
Total		4	58	60	55	60	48	59	36	58	72	310	772	118	1710



**Little Red River
Cree Nation**



1 case can lead to many

One person with measles can spread it to 12 to 18 other people if they are not vaccinated. This makes measles one of the most contagious diseases we know. Because measles spreads so easily, it's important to get vaccinated

2 doses of vaccine

Receive two measles shots- stay protected and keep the virus at bay!

Getting two doses of the measles vaccine gives you the best protection (99 %). It helps your body build strong immunity so you don't get sick if you're exposed to the virus. People born in 1970 or later are encouraged to obtain two doses of the measles vaccine. Vaccination against measles is routinely recommended for children aged 12 months and then at 18 months.

4 days before and after the rash appears

Four days before and after the rash appears is the time during which an infected person can transmit the virus to others. So people can transmit measles before they even know they have it. That is why vaccination is very important.

21 days of incubation

21 days is the maximum incubation period for measles. Symptoms can show up as soon as 7 days or may take up to 21 days from the time someone is exposed to the virus until they start showing symptoms (like fever, cough, or rash). If someone was near a person with measles, they might not get sick right away. If they stay healthy after 21 days, it's unlikely they caught measles.



Reviewing the Basics

Initial symptoms of measles include:

Fever – Red and watery eyes – Cough – Runny nose – Sore throat

Following this, a **rash** appears three to seven days after the symptoms start. The rash looks like **red spots and starts on the face and upper neck**. This rash then spreads down to the rest of the body, including hands and feet. The rash lasts another four to seven days.

“I think I might have measles. What should I do?”

If you or your child are showing symptoms of measles, **stay at home, avoid contact with others**, and call your health centre or Health Link at 811 before visiting any hospital, clinic, or healthcare provider. It is important to not visit the health centre before calling, as you may put others at risk. **If it's an emergency, do go to the health centre as normal, but advise the nurses and other staff about your symptoms.**

Tournaments and gatherings: Let's share memories, not measles

During large gatherings and events, we encourage communities and coordinators to **promote precautionary measures to help reduce spread of infection including washing hands, covering coughs, not sharing utensils and water bottles and staying home when sick.**

Event organizers may wish to consider **advising attendees and participants to check if they are protected against measles.**

Event organizers should also **keep attendance records to assist in contact tracing, should a case of measles occur.**



“I think I've been exposed to measles. What should I do?”

If you suspect that you have been exposed to a confirmed case of measles, you should check your immunization history. See [page two](#) for details on who is considered immune to and protected from measles.

It can take seven to 21 days after being exposed for symptoms to appear. If you become ill, contact your health centre. Do not visit in person before calling, as you may put others at risk.

Protecting children in schools and daycares: healthy practices

Hygiene practices play a big role in keeping schools and daycares safe. Encourage children, students, fellow staff and visitors to:

- **stay home from school when not feeling well**
- **wash their hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer**
- **place used tissues into a waste basket and then perform hand hygiene**
- **cough or sneeze into their elbow, or wear a mask to limit spread**
- **not share water bottles, lipstick, lip balm or drinks**

Schools, daycares, and community gathering spaces should also clean more frequently with disinfectant cleansers, paying extra attention to high touch surfaces like doorknobs, children's toys, light switches and washrooms.

Further Reading and Resources

Information sources

[Statement from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada on the Increase in Measles Cases and the Risk to People in Canada - Canada.ca](#)

[Measles - myhealth.alberta.ca](#)

[Measles vaccine - Indigenous Services Canada](#)

[Immunize Canada - measles webpage](#)

[Global Measles Notice - Travel.gc.ca](#)

Past editions of the Chiefs Update focused on measles:

[Chiefs Update #173 - March 14, 2025](#)

[Chiefs Update #174 - March 21, 2025](#)

Current situation in Alberta:

The Alberta measles page is being updated daily at 12:30 PM. To access this information, click [here](#).

Health Promotion

ISC - Measles Vaccine: Protect your children. Protect yourself. Protect your community. ([poster](#))

ISC-AB - Share Memories Not Measles ([poster](#))

ISC-AB - Measles is Extremely Contagious ([poster](#))

ISC-AB - Do you suspect you have measles? ([poster](#))

ISC-AB - Stop the Spread! Measles is extremely contagious ([poster](#))

Vaccine Hesitancy

[Dealing with needle pain and fear](#)

[Ask a scientist: What do I do if I'm scared of needle pain?](#)

Mental Wellness Resources

First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line:

1.855.242.3310 or [**www.hopeforwellness.ca**](http://www.hopeforwellness.ca)

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to First Nations, Inuit, and Peoples seeking emotional support, crisis intervention, or referrals to community-based services

Alberta Health Services Indigenous Support Line:

1.844.944.4744

Connecting Indigenous callers with Indigenous listeners 12pm-8pm, Monday to Friday.

Alberta Indigenous Virtual Care Clinic:

1.888.342.4822

Serves individuals self-identifying as First Nations, Inuit and Métis and their immediate family members.

