

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.

November 21, 2022

Respiratory Illness Information

Alberta Situation

Over the last week, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has reported rapidly increasing levels of influenza activity, a concerning trend noted in Alberta as well. As of November 16, 2022, there are 7 reported cases of influenza on reserve, 5 hospitalizations and 1 death. PHAC is reporting high rates of influenza among children and teenagers, 0 to 19 years of age, representing over 54% of confirmed cases over the last three months. There is also growing evidence that children with respiratory viruses such as influenza and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) are being seen in hospital emergency rooms in very high numbers across Canada and Alberta.

While on-reserve cases of COVID-19 remain low, there is still a strong presence of COVID-19 in the province. 1,141 individuals were hospitalized as of November 14, 2022, with 40 of these in the ICU. There were also 44 deaths in the past week.

Vaccines and Treatments

While the symptoms of influenza and COVID-19 are similar, influenza and COVID-19 are caused by two different viruses and require two different vaccines to protect and prevent serious outcomes. Both the influenza vaccine and COVID-19 vaccine are available at your community health centre, and can be safely administered to your Nation's membership, ages 6 months and older, at the same time.

- **COVID-19:** At this time there is low uptake of COVID-19 vaccine in the child and youth on-reserve populations across the province, and a low uptake of COVID-19 booster doses for those eligible. Being up to date with your COVID vaccines means you have had all **doses that you are eligible for**. While having had the disease offers some protection against future infection, there's not enough data about that level of protection to know when it tapers off or how protective it is against new variants. Getting fully immunized offers the best protection possible from the virus.
- **Influenza:** The "flu shot" is safe and is the best way to prevent influenza. Since launching the provincial influenza campaign on October 17, 2022, a total of 4,060 influenza vaccines have been administered on-reserve in Alberta. The **Toolkit for Promoting Influenza Vaccinations in Communities** is now available on the OneHealth website and can support your community health teams in promoting influenza vaccine uptake.
- There are **outpatient treatments** for COVID-19. To learn more about what is available in Alberta, please visit the AHS website: **Outpatient Treatment for COVID-19**.

Pediatric and infant acetaminophen and ibuprofen shortages

The supply of over-the-counter pediatric/infant and children's acetaminophen and ibuprofen products remain limited in retail locations and hospitals in various parts of the country. Supply of these products has been limited primarily due to unprecedented demand since the summer. Manufacturers that supply the Canadian market have significantly increased production, some producing at record levels and are exploring options to further increase production and expedite re-supply where product is needed most.

Health Canada approved the exceptional importation of ibuprofen from the US, and acetaminophen from Australia, to supply hospitals in Canada and is working with distributors to ensure fair distribution of supply across the country. In the mean-time, pharmacies can establish an agreement with a compounding pharmacy (where the pharmacist prepares the medication on-site) to purchase compounded products. If this medication is needed, please call your local pharmacy for assistance. Compounded pediatric and infant acetaminophen and ibuprofen are covered under NIHB benefits.

For more information on the shortage, please click **here**.

Other Health Information

Rapid tests for COVID-19 available from Alberta Health

To make a request for rapid tests, please email Alberta Health at rapidtesting@gov.ab.ca with the number of tests required. Orders will be processed and shipped as they are received. Reporting on usage to Alberta Health is not required.

Reminder: 2022-2023 COVID-19 Public Health Needs-Based Funding

COVID-19 Public Health funding is available to support First Nations with the on-going administration of COVID-19 vaccines, testing, surge capacity health human resources, and responding to community outbreaks. For more information, including eligible expenses, please refer to [Accessing COVID-19 public health support for First Nations communities \(sac-isc.gc.ca\)](#).

2022-23 COVID-19 Public Health Needs-Based Funding submissions should be made on a month-by-month basis, rather than quarterly. A funding request template is available at [COVID-19 Page \(onehealth.ca\)](#). Funding requests, and/or questions, can be sent to cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab@sac-isc.gc.ca or directed to your COVID-19 Community Liaison.

Question of the Day

What do I need to know about Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and children?

RSV is a common childhood infection. People of any age can get it, but infections later in life are generally less severe. Those at risk for severe disease include: premature infants, young children with congenital heart or chronic lung disease or with compromised immune systems due to a medical condition or medical treatment. It can also be more severe in adults with compromised immune systems and older adults, especially those with underlying heart or lung disease.

Symptoms of RSV are runny nose, decreased appetite, coughing, sneezing, fever, wheezing, difficulty breathing. With very young infants, the only symptoms may be irritability, decreased activity, and/or breathing difficulties.

These symptoms are very similar to those of COVID-19 and influenza, so if you are concerned seek care.

There is no vaccine for RSV, so the best preventative measures are hand-washing and respiratory etiquette, such as covering coughs and sneezes. .

MOH Rx

In addition to immunization for influenza and COVID-19, what else can be done to protect individuals, families and communities?

It is important to remember that there are a number of basic infection prevention and control practices that play a key role in preventing the spread of viruses and bacteria. As we move forward, it may become challenging to determine whether symptoms are being caused by the influenza virus, COVID-19, RSV, the common cold or other respiratory viruses. Therefore, if an individual or family is feeling unwell, it is important to:

- Stay home when sick;
- Practice proper respiratory etiquette (e.g. covering coughs and sneezes);
- Wash hands and sanitize; and,
- Ensure masking in crowded indoor spaces.

Individuals at high risk of severe disease are encouraged to take additional measures to protect against respiratory viruses including indoor mask wearing and to get tested for COVID-19 when symptomatic. The majority of First Nation Health Centres in Alberta are equipped with point of care devices/diagnostic testing to support COVID-19 testing. Some of these devices also now allow for expanded testing capacity inclusive of influenza, COVID-19 and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV).

Links and Resources

As respiratory illness rates in Alberta continue to increase, sharing trusted information with community members become more challenging. For your awareness, Community Health Centres have been sent toolkits to assist with communications messaging.

- [Toolkit for Promoting Influenza Vaccinations in Communities](#)
- [COVID-19 communication resources for community health and safety](#)
- [AHS – Health Education and Learning \(HEAL\)](#)

COVID-19 - ISC Alberta MOH COVID-19 Telehealth Session - September 29 - [link to recording](#)

Wastewater Monitoring

If you would like to observe current trends in wastewater data, please click [here](#). To view wastewater data from the University of Calgary, click [here](#).

Health Canada

- Webpage link with downloadable poster: [COVID-19: Stay up to date with your vaccinations - Canada.ca](#)
- [Video: COVID-19 vaccines: Continue to take action \(canada.ca\)](#)

Recovering from Covid-19, Long Covid and Post-Covid condition, please click [here](#).

Science Up First


- [You should get your child vaccinated - ScienceUpFirst](#)
- [Vaccine hesitancy in parents - ScienceUpFirst](#)
- [Is the #Under5 vaccine effective? - ScienceUpFirst](#)
- [How does the COVID vaccine affect menstruation? - ScienceUpFirst](#)

Monkeypox


- [Outbreak update - Canada.ca](#)

A layered approach to protect against COVID-19


Even if your vaccination is up-to-date, it's still possible to contract and spread COVID-19. That's why it's important to use multiple layers of public health measures to protect yourself against COVID-19.




Stay at home when sick




Improve indoor airflow by opening windows when possible




Consider wearing a mask as an added layer of protection, even if it's not required




Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer often




Use caution in closed and crowded spaces



Clean frequently touched surfaces/objects



Follow travel-related measures



Like wearing layers to avoid the cold in the winter, there are many ways to protect against COVID-19.

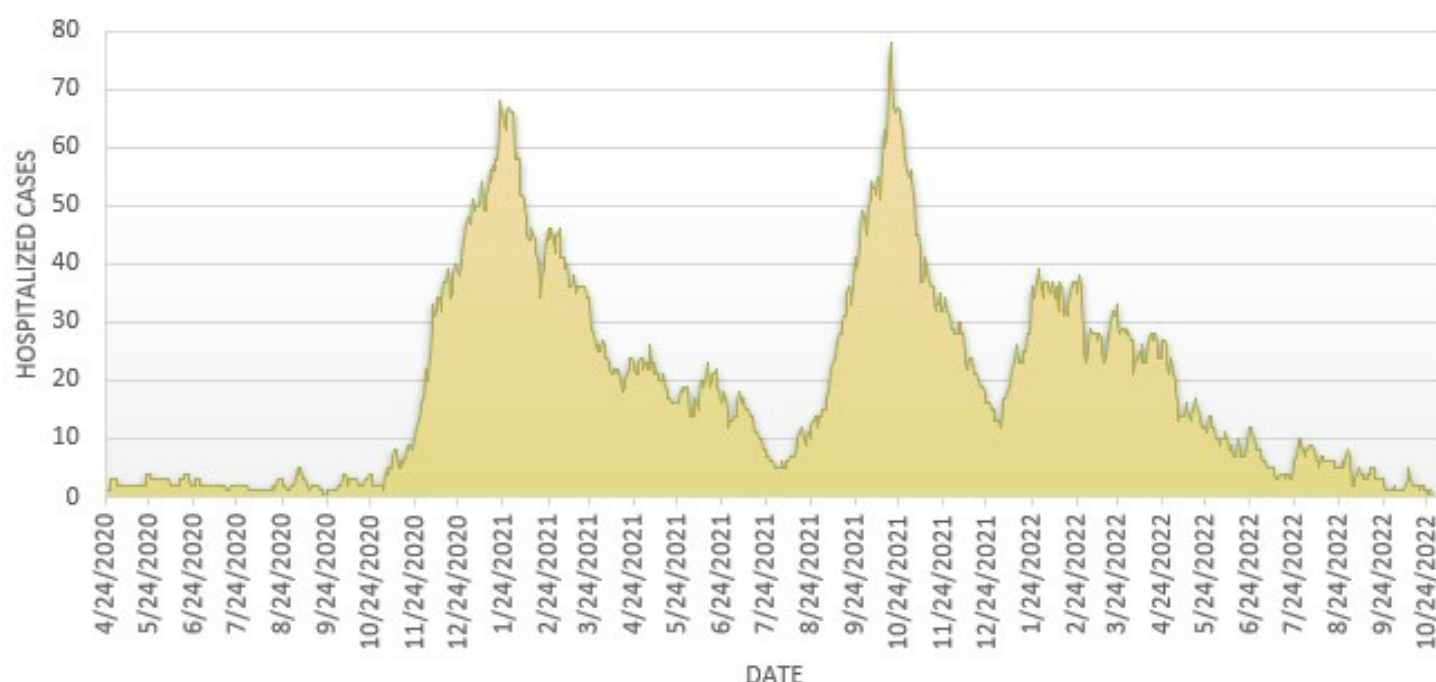
Canada.ca/coronavirus-info-indigenous

Canada

Click [here](#) for poster

COVID-19 Epidemiological Data

Number of Current COVID-19 Cases from First Nations Communities in Hospital



Confirmed COVID-19 Cases in First Nations Communities in Alberta, November 15, 2022

Treaty Area	Total Cases	Hospitalizations* Ever (includes incidental hospitalizations)	ICU (includes incidental ICU admissions)	Currently in Hospital (includes incidental hospitalization)	Deaths
Total (First Nations Communities)	20,771	1,096	257	0	180
Treaty 6	9,345	447	101	0	72
Treaty 7	5,927	352	93	0	64
Treaty 8	5,499	297	63	0	44
Alberta^	616,682	31,792	4,461	1,141	5,137

*Each ICU admission is also included in the total number of hospitalizations

^Data are up-to-date as of end of day November 14, 2022

VACCINE SNAPSHOT



142,865 doses of vaccine have been administered in **46** Nations (bands) in Alberta.

At least **48.3%** of First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on-reserve or Crown land have received **three doses** of the vaccine.

At least **19.6%** of First Nations people aged 12+ living on-reserve or Crown land have received **three doses** of the vaccine.

At least **17.6%** of First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on-reserve or Crown land have received **four doses** of the vaccine.

At least **68.3%** of First Nations people aged 12+ living on-reserve or Crown land have received their **first dose** of the vaccine.

Additional Updates

From Indigenous Services Canada

Engagement and feedback – Introduction of Bill in Parliament on Registration and Membership Provisions of the “Indian Act”

As per Minister Hajdu’s letter to Chiefs across Canada sent out in early November, a Bill will be introduced in Parliament as soon as possible to address enfranchisement, deregistration, natal band affiliation, and some of the offensive and outdated language in the Indian Act. An **engagement kit** has been created that includes details on the proposed changes, instructions for providing feedback and contact information. Should you have any questions or wish to attend a virtual engagement session, please contact Indigenous Services Canada officials at: engagementinscriptionpn-fnregistrationengagement@sac-isc.gc.ca.

Funding still available under the Pathways to Safe Indigenous Communities initiative

The Pathways to Safe Indigenous Communities Initiative will provide \$103.8 million over 5 years to assist First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities and partners, both on and off-reserve, to implement Indigenous-designed projects to improve community safety and well-being. This initiative will support projects which:

- recognize the importance of traditional knowledge and practices to contributing to greater community safety and well-being
- recognize holistic models of community safety and well-being
- address existing and emerging needs relating to the safety and well-being of Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people

To learn more about the initiative, click [here](#).

Federal Contaminated Sites Action Plan (FCSAP) training on project management tools

The FCSAP program is offering an opportunity for First Nations Persons who are involved in the management of contaminated sites to receive training on project management tools pertaining to activities that might assist with contaminated site remediation or risk management. The training is open to First Nations members and Tribal council representatives who participate in the undertaking of assessment and remediation, risk management and long-term monitoring of contaminated sites (CS), as well as ISC CS program/project staff, project partners and stakeholders. The training will be delivered virtually and offered January 31 to February 3, 2023 and **the registration deadline is November 28, 2022**. To learn more, please contact Ethan MacQueen at ethan.macqueen@sac-isc.gc.ca

Additional Updates

From the Government of Canada

Engagement to support the development of the Indigenous Justice Strategy

On November 1, 2022, the Honourable David Lametti, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, announced the launch of engagement efforts led by Justice Canada to inform the development of the **Indigenous Justice Strategy (IJS)**. To start this process in the right way, the inaugural dialogue session was held with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Elders and Knowledge-Keepers from across Canada.

Engagement efforts will take place in the form of dialogue sessions and online engagement opportunities. Information about next steps for the development of the IJS is available on Justice Canada's **IJS webpage**. Individuals and organizations can also **register to participate** in dialogue sessions, participate in online engagement activities and submit feedback through the **IJS online engagement platform**.

Government of Canada announces new partnership to create at least 4,000 apprenticeships across Canada

The Government of Canada has **announced more than \$53 million to the Native Women's Association of Canada for the Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and Gender-Diverse Apprenticeships** with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) project. The project will provide financial incentives and a suite of online training and resources to SMEs across Canada to help them participate in the apprenticeship system and create a safe, inclusive and supportive environment for at least 4,000 apprentices.

The organizations that are being funded under the **Apprenticeship Service** will provide first-year apprentices in eligible Red Seal trades with the hands-on experience and training required to progress toward becoming certified journeypersons in the Red Seal trades. Organizations can apply for funding through **the Women in the Skilled Trades Initiative** and **Innovation in Apprenticeship Stream between October 12, 2022 to December 1, 2022**.

50 per cent loan forgiveness to support economic recovery of Indigenous businesses announced

On October 18th Indigenous Services Canada, the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA) and Métis Capital Corporations announced support for Indigenous small and medium-size enterprises by forgiving up to 50 per cent of the COVID Indigenous Business Initiative loans, which provided much needed assistance during the pandemic. To learn more please click **here**.

Learning Opportunity

Free Opioid Harm Reduction Training and Certification from the Canadian Red Cross

The Canadian Red Cross has two free on-line training courses that are geared towards helping underserved communities reduce opioid-related deaths through increasing access to response training and to helping Canadians better understand the risks, stigmas and misconceptions of opioid poisoning. To learn more about the courses, please visit:

- **Becoming an Opioid Harm Reduction Champion**
- **First Aid for Opioid Poisoning Emergencies**

Additional Updates

From the Government of Alberta

Fire services grants announced

Fire Services Training Program grants are being reintroduced as a key way to support the safety of both firefighters and the public. The grants are intended to supplement training supports already provided by municipalities, First Nations and Metis Settlements to their fire services departments. Because each community is different, recipients will be able to determine which training programs best suit their local needs. The grants cover a wide range of eligible costs, from basic skills training to specialized expertise such as ice water rescues and toxic materials responses. Details on the Fire Services Training Program grant, including eligibility criteria, types of training covered and application forms will be available on [alberta.ca](#). Click [here](#) to read the Government of Alberta news release.

Restorative justice grants available

As a modern approach to reducing crime the Government of Alberta is offering grants to organizations that provide restorative justice services. In Alberta, restorative justice has been used for more than 20 years and has seen success in reducing recidivism, healing affected communities and empowering victims. These programs focus on those most affected by crime and serve as an alternative or a supplement to sentencing.

Organizations that provide restorative justice services, including community-based coalitions, registered non-profits, Indigenous communities and youth justice committees, can apply for grants of up to \$50,000. In total, Alberta's government is making \$720,000 available through the Victims of Crime and Public Safety Fund.

Grant applications are available online and open until Dec. 2. Click [here](#) for further information.