

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: December 11, 2020

Office of the Senior Medical Officer of Health

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

COVID-19 cases in community continue to rise creating a critical situation where strong action is needed in order to protect individuals, families, communities, and the health system. New province wide mandatory measures are in effect as of December 8th. No indoor or outdoor social gathering is allowed and province wide masking is mandatory, in addition to other measures highlighted below. The year does wrap up with some exciting news, with Health Canada approving the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. In Alberta, some critical health-care workers will be receiving the vaccine as soon as next week. On-reserve First Nations people over age 65 will be a priority in the first phase of the vaccine roll out, in addition to long-term care residents and staff, seniors age 75 and older, and critical health-care workers. This year has brought its challenges, but it has also shown us the immense amount of strength that we have when we all work together to protect one another's health. I hope everyone has a safe and healthy holiday season.

Status Update

Additional First Nations on-reserve data (Alberta) is provided at the end of this document (*Appendix A*).

Number of Cases Reported* as of December 11, 2020:

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

Alberta: There are **20,199 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	442,069	5675	75,054
Deaths	13,109	49	666
Recovered	355,735	3526	54,225

First Nations living on and off reserve (Alberta): There are **3,823** confirmed cases of COVID-19 to date and **28** deaths in First Nations living on and off reserve in Alberta. Confirmed cases are: **816** in Calgary Zone; **1,176** in Edmonton Zone; **210** in South Zone; **970** in North Zone; **646** in Central zone and **5** unknown. **Further Information:** 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 living on reserve in Alberta:

390 Active Cases	1230 Recovered	13 Deaths	21 Currently Hospitalized	29 Communities with Active Cases
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Location (By Zone)	Confirmed Cases	Active Cases	Recovered
Calgary Zone	380	68	311
South Zone	101	24	75
Central Zone	440	111	326
Edmonton Zone	112	40	68
North Zone	600	147	450
TOTAL	1633	390	1230



Indigenous Services
Canada

Services aux
Autochtones Canada

Canada

Testing in Alberta – Update

- As of December 11, 2020, the total number of reported swab samples collected to date in First Nation communities in Alberta is **56,577**.
- **Testing continues to be a powerful tool to help limit the spread.** If you have symptoms, please stay home and book a testing appointment.
- Priority testing continues to be available to:
 - Any person exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19
 - All close contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases
 - Anyone linked to a known outbreak
- **Reminder:** Testing outside of the provincial testing criteria must be reviewed and supported by the ISC-AB MOH. Please send testing enquiries to the ISC-AB MOH by: sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca
- Parents/guardians in Alberta can access COVID-19 results for their children through *MyHealth Records*. Albertans aged 14 and up can also access results. [Join today](#).

Vaccine Watch

- **[New]** Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine has been approved by Health Canada and Alberta will deliver a small amount of these vaccines to critical health-care workers next week (click [here](#) for more information). The efficacy of the vaccine was established to be approximately 95% and was well tolerated by participants and has no serious safety concerns.
- **[New]** Moderna COVID-19 vaccine is also expected to soon be available in Canada upon approval from Health Canada. To be effective, both vaccines require two doses, separated by 3 to 6 weeks.
- **[New]** Immunization will be phased and on-reserve First Nations peoples over age 65 will be prioritized in the first phase. This first phase will also include long term care home residents and staff, seniors age 75 and older, and health care workers most needed to ensure workforce capacity and who are most likely to transmit the disease to those at greater risk.
- **[New]** Vaccination is a personal choice. Public health experts agree vaccines are safe, help prevent serious disease, and protect you, your family and your community. Learn about the [approval process for vaccines](#) and [what you need to know about the COVID-19 vaccine for Canada](#) (for the Cree version click [here](#)). In addition, The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) [website](#) is updated regularly and is an excellent resource.
- **[New]** ISC is working closely with Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners to support an integrated and coordinated approach to support the administration of a COVID-19 vaccine for Indigenous Peoples and communities (click [here](#) for more information).
- **Reminder:** Influenza immunizations for this flu season continue to be a priority in the midst of COVID-19. ISC-AB is working with First Nation health centers and communities to support influenza and pneumococcal **immunization programs**. Please contact your local health staff or FNIHB-AB for more information.

Alberta's Relaunch- Update

- **[New]** Alberta has implemented new mandatory public health measures (all existing measures and legal orders remain in place). The following measures are province wide and will be in place until at least January 12, 2021. For more information on these new measures please [click here](#).

Mandatory Measures Effective Immediately

- All indoor and outdoor social gatherings – public and private – are not allowed.
- Close contacts are limited to household members only. People who live alone can have up to 2 close contacts, but they must be the same contacts & no home visits if they do not live alone.
- Weddings/funerals are a maximum of 10 people, no receptions permitted
- Festivals, parades, events, exhibitions, competitions, sport and performance remain prohibited.
- Mandatory indoor public masking requirement.

Mandatory Measures Effective December 13, 2020

- Mandatory work from home measures will be implemented, unless employer determines that work requires a physical presence for operational effectiveness.

- Places of worship, and retail services are permitted at 15% of fire code occupancy for in-person attendance.
- Restaurants, pubs, bars, lounges and cafes will be closed to in-person service. Take-out, pickup and delivery services allowed.
- Casinos, bingo halls, gaming entertainment centers, recreational facilities as well as other businesses and services will be closed. For a full list and details please [see here](#).
- ISC-AB has developed several resources to support communities during COVID-19, which are available on [OneHealth](#). ISC-AB Medical Officers of Health (MOHs) and Environmental Public Health Officers (EPHOs) continue to be available to provide public health support.
- **Reminder:** AHS remains the primary source for ordering PPE for staff working in health care facilities and isolation centres in First Nation communities. Order this PPE by completing and forwarding the AHS PPE order form located on [OneHealth](#). PPE required for other workers can be purchased through commercial vendors and cannot be obtained through AHS. PPE for essential workers is an eligible expense through the COVID-19 ISC health needs funding.


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

- **[New]** In November, the Minister of ISC announced additional investments in support of COVID-19 related Indigenous health needs within Alberta. \$11.5 has been specifically identified to address the mental health crisis related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes \$6,000,000 which can be used to provide mental health services addressing the impacts of COVID-19 reflective of eligible activities as noted within general Mental Wellness funding Terms and Conditions. Please submit your proposals to the CDE Inbox as soon as possible.
- **[New]** The next ISC-Alberta COVID-19 First Nations MOH **Telehealth** session is to be confirmed for January 14, 1:30-3:00 pm (MST). Previous telehealth sessions are recorded and are available at: <https://fntn.ca/>

Mental Health and Wellness- Update

- **[New]** We acknowledge the significant impact COVID-19 has had on all those working to support communities during this time. A First Nations telehealth session dedicated to mental health will be held on January 20, 10:00 am- 12:00 pm (MST).
- **Reminder:** Individuals and front-line workers can access mental health and substance use support, resources, and counselling during COVID-19 through **Wellness Together Canada**. [Click here](#) for more information.

Additional Updates

- **[New]** **#ProtectOurElders-** Winter Campaign: A new set of videos are now live online and with targeted spots appearing on APTN. These videos take a humorous but focused look at keeping safe during the pandemic. You can view the videos here: <https://protectourelders.ca/>
- **[New]** The Alberta Indigenous Virtual Care Clinic (AIVCC) is expanding their hours. They are now open on Saturday and Sunday's from 12:30 pm to 4:30 pm, in addition to their regular hours Monday to Friday from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. 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.
-  **Canadian Red Cross** The Canadian Red Cross, with funding from ISC, has launched an online Toolkit and [Help Desk](#) resource for Indigenous Leadership, providing support for **managing the impacts of COVID-19** that best meets the needs of their communities. The Help desk is available from 7am to 7pm seven days a week and can be reached at 1-833-937-1597. Additional information can be found in their video: ['How Red Cross is Working with Indigenous Leadership to Manage COVID-19'](#).
- **[New]** Please note that the next MOH bulletin is set to be released on January 8, 2021.

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-isgc.gc.ca/eng/1581964230816/1581964277298>

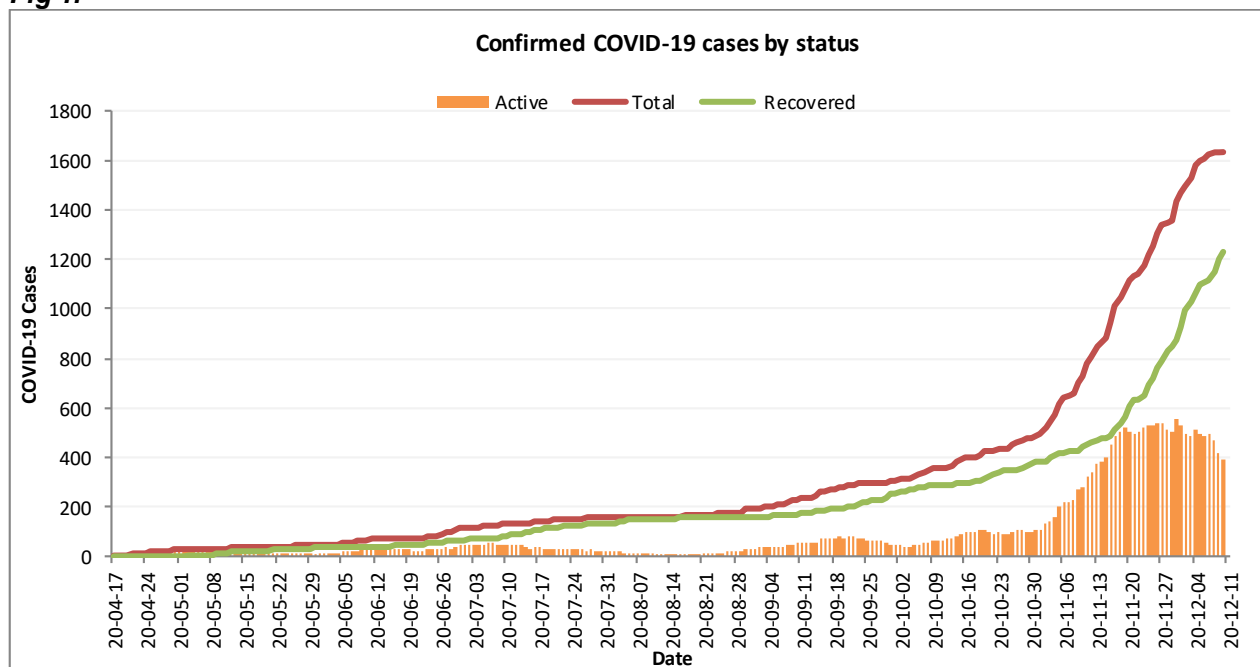
Mental health and coping resources are available for individuals who are struggling or need a little extra support.

- 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.

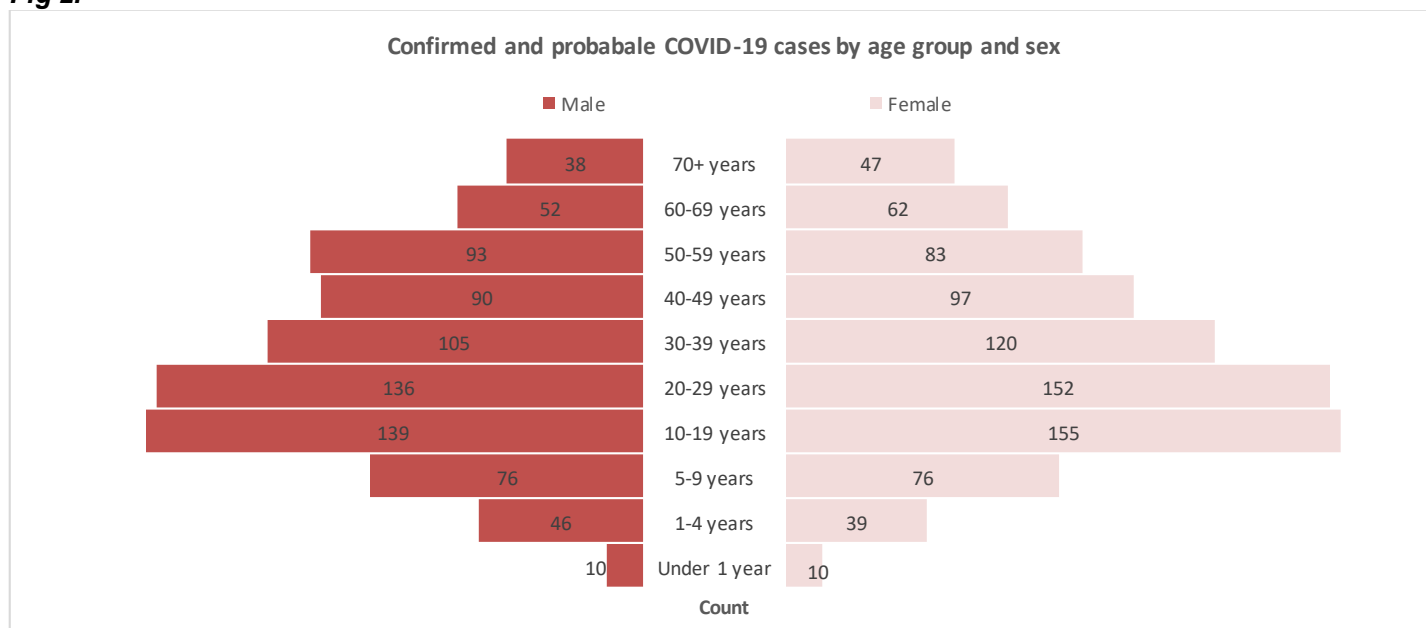
APPENDIX A: Additional COVID-19 Data in First Nations On-Reserve in Alberta

Fig 1.



The number of active cases in First Nations communities increased from 3 on April 17th to 29 on May 8th and then gradually decreased to 8 on May 30th. Thereafter, the number of active cases began to increase again peaking at 54 on July 7th followed by a period of decline in active cases until August 17th. As of August 17th, there was a relatively slow increase in active cases up until November 2nd when cases began increasing more rapidly to a high of 556 active cases on November 30th. At the time of reporting, there were a total of 1633 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in First Nations communities in Alberta out of which 390 cases are currently active and 1230 have recovered.

Fig 2.



Note: 7 cases were excluded from figure due to missing data on age or sex.

Almost half (49.6%) of all cases occurred among individuals between the ages of 10 and 39 years. Females accounted for 52.9% of cases in this age group.