

# 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.

February 21, 2023

## Health Information

### Respiratory Illnesses - Current Situation

COVID-19 hospitalizations are declining across the province. As of February 13, there were 622 individuals hospitalized and 19 in the ICU. There were 26 COVID-related deaths reported since the previous update. People are still being hospitalized for influenza and RSV.

On January 26, 2023 Alberta Health Services (AHS) declared an outbreak of pertussis (whooping cough) in the central part of the South Zone, spanning the County of Lethbridge, Coaldale, Taber, Vauxhall, Grassy Lake and Bow Island. These are communities with significantly low childhood immunization rates.

### Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

Pertussis is a bacterial infection that causes severe and prolonged coughing that can last for weeks. It can impact people of all ages. However, infants one year and younger are at greatest risk of serious complications including pneumonia, seizures, brain damage and death.

Pertussis starts with a runny nose, sneezing, fever, and mild cough. Typically, over a week, the cough becomes more severe. Whooping cough gets its name from the “whooping” sound from inhaling during severe, repetitive coughing episodes. In younger children, vomiting following coughing is also common.

### Vaccines

The pertussis vaccine is part of regular childhood immunizations. It is also available to people who are in the third trimester of pregnancy (27 weeks and later) to protect mothers and newborns. Pertussis vaccine is included in adult tetanus boosters that are recommended every 10 years.

As a reminder, influenza vaccine continues to remain available at your health centre. It can be given alone, or in combination with other vaccines, such as vaccine for COVID-19. Both influenza and COVID-19 vaccines can be safely administered to individuals ages 6 months and older.

Getting fully immunized for COVID-19, influenza and pertussis offers the best protection possible against these viruses.

### Treatment for COVID-19

Medication for the treatment of COVID-19 is available and vaccination status is no longer part of the eligibility criteria for access. If you get COVID-19, talk to your primary healthcare provider to learn if you are eligible for these medications.

### From Alberta: Healthcare Action Plan (HCAP)- Faster response times for 911 calls

EMS emergency communications officers are now working closely with a dedicated team at 811 through a new EMS-811 Shared Response team. The Shared Response team will work to efficiently transfer non-urgent calls directly to an 811 nurse, while urgent calls will continue to receive an ambulance response. To learn more about HCAP, please click [here](#).

## *An important message from ISC's Medical Officers of Health on Opioid and Drug Use in Alberta*

ISC remains committed to working with First Nations communities and provincial partners in redoubling our efforts to decrease the harms associated with substance use in Alberta. Community-based approaches such as harm reduction recognize the inherent value of human beings and the importance of an inclusive community that can support people who use substances with compassion. The risk of overdose death in individuals using street drugs remains very high in Alberta. Our goal is to ensure access to overdose interventions that save lives.

No one should use while alone. If the company of others is not an option, there are several virtual interventions that can provide immediate support.

The **National Overdose Response System (NORS)** is an overdose prevention hotline for individuals in Canada that provides support for individuals using alone by connecting them with a person who is living or has lived experience of substance use, or is trained in harm reduction and trauma-informed. To access NORS services, dial **1-888-NORS (6677)**.

NORS is seeking input from communities and individuals to help inform the future development of its services. If you provide support to vulnerable communities experiencing substance use, I encourage you to have your voice heard by completing **this survey**. The survey offers a \$15 honorarium for people with lived experience. It will take 15 minutes to complete if you are a provider and 30 minutes to complete if you have lived experience.

Alberta's Digital Overdose Response System (DORS) is a free, discrete mobile app that can help prevent overdose deaths among people using opioids and other substances while alone. The DORS app can be downloaded from any smart phone's app store, or through the links available on [DORSApp.ca](https://DORSApp.ca).

Naloxone (nasal or intramuscular) is available through most health centres. For more information, contact the [AHS Community Based Naloxone Program](#).

Related links:

[National Overdose Response System \(NORS\)](#)

[Opioids | Alberta Health Services](#)

[AHS Community Based Naloxone Program](#)

[Opioid Overdoses: What To Do \(fact sheet\) - Canada.ca](#)

[Get help with substance use - Canada.ca](#)

[Awareness resources for opioids - Canada.ca](#)



## **March 16 Telehealth: Food Security and Indigenous Food Sovereignty**

Celebrate **Nutrition Month** by joining ISC Medical Officers of Health, the ISC Nutrition Team, Clifford Gladue (Kee Tas Kee Now Education Authority) and others for a special MOH telehealth focused on food security in a post-COVID world and food sovereignty initiatives across Alberta.

Produced by the First Nations Telehealth Network. Register [here](#).

# Question of the Day

## What do I need to know about the syphilis outbreak in Alberta?

Individuals should consider getting tested for syphilis because cases in Alberta have been steadily increasing since 2014. A province-wide outbreak was declared in 2019.

Syphilis is preventable and treatable. Infected individuals may experience a wide range of symptoms or have no symptoms at all. If left untreated, syphilis can damage the body, the brain, blood vessels, heart, and bones. Syphilis can also be passed from mother to baby during pregnancy and can harm the baby's brain, bones and other organs.

**It is concerning that the data show that First Nations people are disproportionately affected by syphilis.**

In 2021, more than half of all syphilis cases occurred among First Nations individuals. Accounting for population size, in 2021, syphilis cases among First Nations individuals in Alberta were 28 times higher than among non-First Nations individuals. This number represents a 39% increase in overall cases compared the number of cases reported in 2019.

Fortunately, syphilis is preventable and treatable. A simple blood test can be ordered by your primary care provider, or by some health centre nurses. It is treated with antibiotics.

ISC is working with health centres and communities across Alberta to raise awareness of syphilis and to increase testing and treatment options in communities. Help stop the spread of syphilis by learning about syphilis, using condoms and getting tested. Call the local health centre to ask about testing options.

## Links and Resources

### For Syphilis, STIs and Sexual Health:

- [Syphilis Outbreak - Information for Albertans](#)
- [Syphilis - Health Canada](#)
- [Fact Sheet: Syphilis - Health Canada](#)
- [sexandu.ca](http://sexandu.ca) (Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada)

### For Opioids and Drug Use:

- [Opioids | Alberta Health Services](#)
- [AHS Community Based Naloxone Program](#)
- [Opioid Overdoses: What To Do \(fact sheet\) - Canada.ca](#)
- [Get help with substance use - Canada.ca](#)
- [Awareness resources for opioids - Canada.ca](#)

### For Respiratory Illnesses:

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

### Wastewater Monitoring:

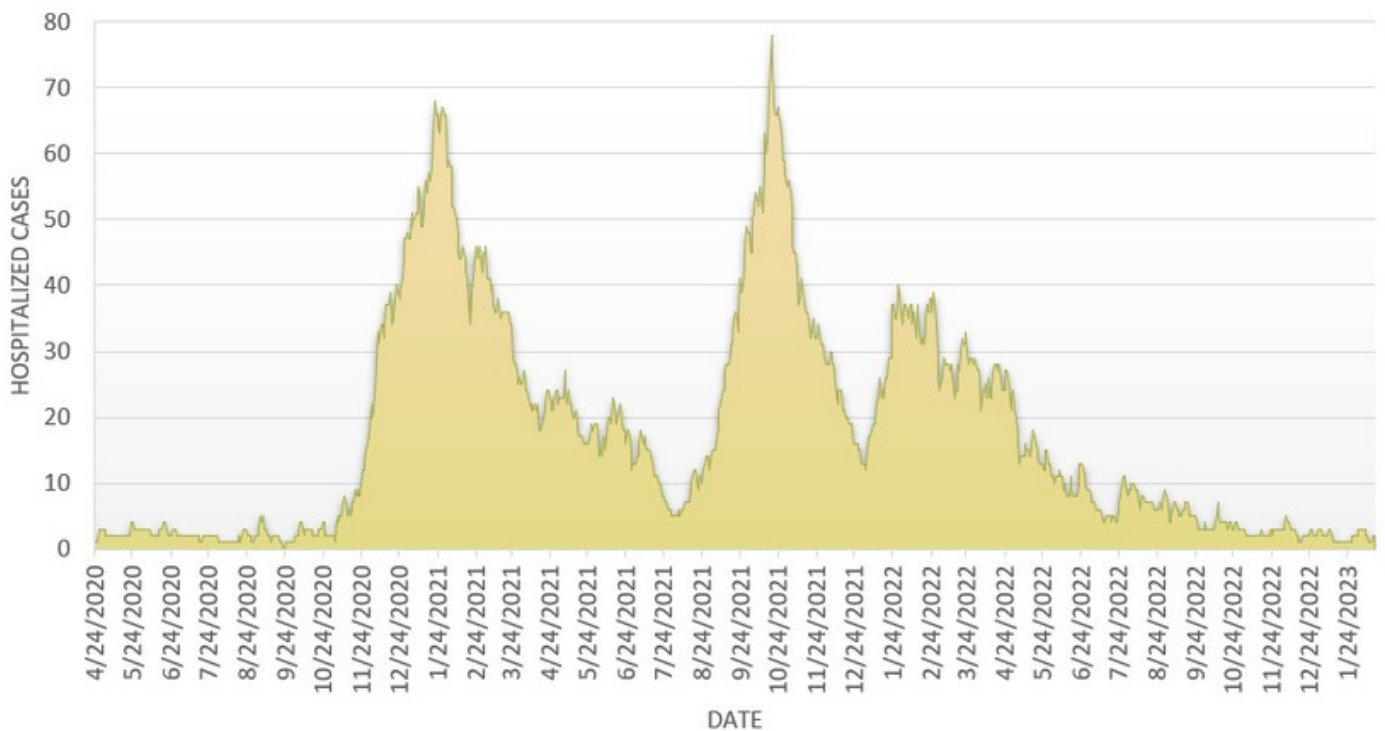
If you would like to observe current trends in wastewater data, please click [here](#). To view wastewater data from the University of Calgary, click [here](#).

### Reminder: Telehealth Session Recordings Available

Recordings of recent telehealth sessions, along with their resources and presentations, are available on the First Nations Telehealth Network website for subsequent viewing. To view the library of recordings, click [here](#).

# 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, February 15, 2023

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)	21,073	1,119	258	2	185
Treaty 6	9,477	461	101	1	73
Treaty 7	6,033	356	93	0	67
Treaty 8	5,563	302	64	1	45
Alberta^	628,150	33,927	4,636	622	5,536

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

^Data are up-to-date as of end of day February 13, 2023

## VACCINE SNAPSHOT



**146,001** doses of vaccine have been administered in **46** Nations (bands) in Alberta.

At least **48.4%** of First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on-reserve or Crown land have received **three doses** of the vaccine.

At least **20.2%** of First Nations people aged 12+ living on-reserve or Crown land have received **three doses** of the vaccine.

At least **20.2%** of First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on-reserve or Crown land have received **four doses** of the vaccine.

At least **68.5%** of First Nations people aged 12+ living on-reserve or Crown land have received their **first dose** of the vaccine.

# From Indigenous Services Canada

## Extension of Programming until March 31, 2024

Indigenous Services Canada has received approval for the extension of the temporary COVID-19, Indigenous Community Support Fund (ICSF), authorities in the Emergency Management Assistance Program (EMAP) and the Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples' (UPIP) until March 31, 2024. The extension of these authorities provides the department with the ability to approve carry forward requests of ICSF funding from fiscal year 2022-2023 into fiscal year 2023-2024. As a result, should your community or organization have a balance of ICSF funding that needs to be carried forward into next fiscal year to continue pandemic-related activities, please submit a request for approval to your Field Services Officer or Program Officer. All requests should include the amount of the carry forward being requested and a high level plan of how the funding will be expended in 2023-2024. Any remaining funds at the end of March 31, 2024 will become a debt to the Crown. We trust this information is helpful in your program planning for the remainder of the fiscal year.

## REMINDER: Call for Nominations - 2023 National First Nations Water Leadership Awards

The nomination period for the 2023 National First Nations Water Leadership Award is now open until **March 31, 2023**. Eligible candidates include First Nations individuals, community members or leaders, organizations or communities who have demonstrated leadership and made outstanding contributions to the advancement of clean and safe drinking water in First Nations communities through their extraordinary involvement in First Nations water-related issues. To learn more about the nomination process and to learn about last year's winners, please click [here](#).

## REMINDER: March 7 - Nominations for Award of Excellence in Nursing

Indigenous Services Canada is accepting nominations for the 2023 Awards of Excellence in Nursing! Each year, the award is presented to 3 exceptional nurses who provide care in First Nations and/or Inuit communities. The deadline for nominations is **March 7, 2023**.

Celebrating the dedication, initiative and distinction of nurses who are helping to improve the health of First Nations and Inuit in Canada. For more information click [here](#).

## Innovation in Education Program

The Innovation in Education program supports innovative programs and projects which aim to improve outcomes for communities, schools and students. The program supports development and implementation of innovative education program pilots, for example, projects related to technology, land-based learning or Indigenous language and culture.

The deadline to submit a proposal is 11:59 pm Eastern time on **April 30, 2023**. Additional deadlines may exist in each region. For more information, click [here](#).

# From Indigenous Services Canada

## Research and Learning Program

The Research and Learning Program supports research projects that contribute to educational initiatives that are positively impacting First Nations students and their educational outcomes, with the objective to increase awareness and knowledge of best practices in Indigenous education among educators, policy-makers and First Nations leaders across Canada. In addition, recipients share learnings and present the findings of their research at a First Nations education event of their choosing.

The deadline to submit a proposal is 11:59 pm Eastern time **on April 30, 2023**. Additional deadlines may exist in each region. For more information, click [here](#).

## Indigenous Services Canada or Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada

For your convenience please see the lists of services below to assist with pathfinding.

Visit [Indigenous Services Canada - Canada.ca](#) for:

- Indian status and status cards
- Indigenous health
- Jordan's Principle
- Education
- Water in First Nations communities
- First Nations housing
- First Nations community infrastructure
- Social programs
- Establishing a new fiscal relationship
- Emergency management

Visit [Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada - Canada.ca](#) for:

- Indigenous peoples and communities
- Treaties and agreements
- Northern affairs and new Arctic and Northern Policy Framework
- New permanent bilateral mechanisms
- Delivering on Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action
- Indian Residential Schools
- Reconciliation
- National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

# From the Government of Canada

## Sport for Social Development in indigenous Communities (SSDIC) – Stream Three

The Stream Three application intake for the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities is currently underway for activities that will take place between April 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024.

This program is part of the **Reconciliation and Strength for Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ People Through Sport** (SSDIC Stream Three) fund, which allocates \$2.5 million annually to Indigenous governments, communities, and organizations, including delivery organizations working in authentic partnership with Indigenous communities for projects that provide meaningful sport and physical activity to Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ peoples. These projects promote community-identified social development goals based on the MMIWG Calls for Justice, such as physical and mental health; suicide prevention; sexual trafficking awareness and prevention; safe and healthy relationships; sexual positivity (2SLGBTQI+).

The deadline to apply is **March 22 2023**. For more information on the program, click [here](#).

## Call for proposals to help support high-quality Indigenous early learning and child care

On January 31, Employment and Social Development Canada launched a call for proposals for the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Quality Improvement Projects. The funding for Quality Improvement Projects aims to advance the vision and goals of the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework through research and innovation. It will complement and inform the other Indigenous-specific investments in place to build governance systems, expand access to culturally-appropriate programs and services, support training and retaining a skilled early learning and child care workforce, undertake repairs and renovations of existing Indigenous ELCC centres, and build new centres in additional communities.

Indigenous communities, governments and organizations are encouraged to submit a proposal by **April 11, 2023 at 2:00 pm EDT**. To access the applicant guide, please click [here](#).

## Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) - Rapid Housing Initiative Funding

The Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) provides funding to facilitate the rapid construction of new permanent affordable housing units for people and populations who are in severe housing need. As part of the National Housing Strategy (NHS), the RHI takes a human rights-based approach to housing. CMHC will prioritize projects that support our objectives regarding people and populations who are vulnerable including Indigenous Peoples and Black Canadians. At least 25% of the money for this round will go towards women-focused affordable housing projects.

To learn more about the Rapid Housing Initiative and how to apply, click [here](#).