



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

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[www.fnha.ca](http://www.fnha.ca)

## Recommendations on Large Gatherings during COVID-19 Pandemic

**The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) is strongly advising communities to cancel or postpone all community and cultural gatherings until the COVID-19 pandemic subsides.**

Furthermore, given the unprecedented risk COVID-19 presents, physical distancing is vital to prevent serious illness and death in our communities. Please stay at least six feet apart from each other at all times. We are particularly concerned about Elders and Knowledge Keepers, young children, and those with chronic disease. It is imperative that all of us take responsibility to care for each other by following this public health advice.

With the increasing evidence about the rapid spread of COVID-19 in British Columbia (BC), and on the advice of public health physicians, the FNHA also strongly recommends against any unnecessary travel.

We do not make this recommendation lightly—we acknowledge the significance of cultural gatherings and events for First Nations communities, but from a public health standpoint we all have the responsibility to communicate the severity of this rapidly evolving situation. Please cancel upcoming events, and reschedule until after this pandemic has passed.

BC's Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, has used her emergency powers to prohibit mass gatherings of more than 50 people. This is being done to slow the spread of the coronavirus and ensure that the health system does not become overwhelmed with patients. This is a responsibility we all share.

Even smaller gatherings of fewer than 50 people can contribute to the transmission of respiratory illnesses and put lives at risk.

FNHA honours and is respectful of the importance of cultural events and practices, and supports community self-determination around holding time-sensitive and important events like funerals. During this time, families may choose to have a smaller, more intimate event in memory of a loved one, with a larger event in the future when the risk subsides.



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Before gathering in large numbers, please consider the following risk considerations and health recommendations. **Remember, even following the recommendations to the letter only reduces the possibility of transmission. The risk is real and no-one is immune:**

**1. The population attending the event – this cannot be more than 50. FNHA recommends it be kept to fewer than 10:**

- a. Advise people who are sick to self-isolate at home. Prohibit sick persons from attending the event until they fully recover.
- b. Advise persons who are not sick but who live with and/or have close, unprotected contact with a suspected or known case of COVID-19 to self-isolate at home.
- c. Advise persons who have recently travelled from outside Canada to self-isolate at home for 14 days starting from their arrival into Canada and self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms.
- d. Advise elders and immunocompromised persons to not attend the event.
- e. Advise parents and guardians to not bring their children to the event under any circumstances.
- f. Advise persons in critical community service and infrastructure roles such as healthcare workers and water treatment plant operators to not attend. Self-isolation of these individuals could lead to disruptions to critical community and infrastructure services.
- g. Limit the number of persons allowed at the event to reduce the likelihood of spreading the disease, and ensure a maximum of 10 people at any one time.



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## **2. Event activities:**

- a. Do not have self-serve buffets or potlucks. Have food and beverages prepared and served to attendees by individuals with FOODSAFE training. Advise attendees to avoid sharing food and beverages.
- b. Ensure that the kitchen, bathrooms and common areas at the event venue are disinfected – e.g., with a 1:10 bleach disinfectant solution – before, during and after the event. Frequently disinfect high-touch surfaces such as toilets, tables, door handles and tap handles. Avoid dumping undiluted bleach into wastewater systems.
- c. Do not practice the usual close greetings such as handshakes, kissing and hugging in order to limit transmission of COVID-19. Strongly advise attendees to avoid touching their face and to cough/sneeze into tissues or the bend of their arm. Tissues should be disposed in lined waste baskets followed by proper hand washing.

## **3. Crowding and Social Distancing:**

- a. Move events from indoors to outdoors. There is higher ventilation and greater capacity for separation between attendees outside.
- b. Request attendees practice social distancing and maintain a two-metre distance from each other.

## **4. Event duration:**

- a. Shorten the duration of events as much as possible to reduce the likelihood of transmission.

## **5. Event resources:**

- a. Have arrangements in place to safely isolate and transport people who become ill on-site in order to prevent transmission. This includes setting up a



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designated area/vehicle at the event for self-isolation prior to transport off-site and having appropriate personal protective equipment (e.g. face masks) and infection prevention and control measures in place.

- b. Have hand hygiene stations available throughout the event venue. Hand hygiene stations include hand sanitizer stations and hand wash stations with lined waste baskets, soap and paper towel dispensers. Advise attendees both verbally and through signage at every hand hygiene station to apply hand sanitizer and/or practice proper hand washing often at the event.
- c. Have healthcare and emergency services available either on-site at the event or at a nearby town/city centre. Postpone the event if healthcare and emergency services are not readily available.

Prior to the event, it is imperative to provide clear communication to participants on the risks of attendance and the precautions to take in order to reduce virus transmission and promote informed individual decision-making (i.e. advise people not to attend). Be creative about other ways to be supportive, and care for each other and yourselves.

**If you have employees who have attended a large gathering, and you are concerned about possible exposure, individual employers may consider:**

- Asking them to self-isolate for the 14-day incubation period of the virus.
- Asking them to self-assess themselves with this online tool – <https://covid19.thrive.health/>
- Asking them to stay away from work until they are cleared by a physician.
- Decisions on whether to pay employees for the time away are each employer's responsibility.

If you have any questions about your health, you are encouraged to call \*811.

For more information please go to [www.fnha.ca/coronavirus](http://www.fnha.ca/coronavirus) or contact your community engagement coordinator (CEC).