

COVID-19 MESSAGE FROM ISC BC REGION

UPDATE #28 / April 24, 2020

Good Afternoon,

As the end of April approaches, we look ahead to a very different summer than what we are used to. Plans for summer travel and gatherings are on hold, and the dreams and aspirations of post-secondary students finishing school are at risk. In today's update we want to provide a bit more information about a relief package announced earlier this week for the many students and graduates who were preparing to start jobs in May, and some of the options available to First Nations to help your post-secondary students pay rent and cover basic living expenses.

Don't bring the COVID virus home



Help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Indigenous communities. Keeping it clean can keep yourself, your family and your community healthy and safe.



UPDATES

Support for Post-Secondary Students

On April 22nd, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the **Canada Emergency Student Benefit** that provides additional funding for students affected by COVID-19. This also includes more than \$75 million to specifically increase supports for First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Nation students. New legislation will be required in order for the new benefit to be implemented, so we don't yet have all the details and it is not yet possible for students to apply. Also, we are awaiting further information on the increased supports, please stay tuned.

Indigenous Services Canada has confirmed that First Nations can determine whether or not to provide living allowances to students during the suspension of in-class instruction. As First Nations have decision-making authority on funding provided to them under various federal programs, including the Post-Secondary Student Supports Program (PSSSP) and the University and College Entrance Preparation Program (UCEPP), living expenses can continue to be paid for most students not currently attending classes due to the suspension of in-class instruction, in so far as they have not officially

withdrawn from the post-secondary institution they are attending. ISC and the First Nations Education Steering Committee have been working together on more detailed information to help First Nations in their decision making and again, we will be sure to provide updates. For information about the PSSSP and UCEPP please contact aadnc.bceducation.aandc@canada.ca.

The Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training has recently announced additional funding for the **Indigenous Emergency Assistance Fund**. If any of your current students are experiencing immediate financial difficulty as a result of COVID-19 (for example, due to unemployment or underemployment), they can apply for this funding through their institution's Indigenous Affairs Office, as well as for general emergency assistance funding through their financial aid office. A list of bursaries and scholarships is also available on **Aboriginal Learning Links**, which you may consider sharing with your current and prospective students.

Support for small business

Today the Prime Minister announced that the federal government has reached an agreement in principle with



all provinces and territories to implement the **Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA)** for small businesses. This program will lower rent by 75 per cent for small businesses that have been affected by COVID-19. Impacted small business tenants are businesses paying less than \$50,000 per month in rent and who have temporarily ceased operations or have experienced at least a 70 per cent drop in pre-COVID-19 revenues. This support will also be available to non-profit and charitable organizations.

Free Webinar

For more information on the opportunities and challenges facing First Nations Economic Development Corporations and Businesses due to COVID-19, check out a free webinar being hosted by the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of BC (AFOA BC). The panel includes our own David Russell, Director, Lands & Economic Development, BC Region, Indigenous Services Canada.

Date: Monday, April 27

Time: 10:00 a.m.

[Register Here](#)

Scam Warning

BC Hydro is warning customers after it has seen a 350 per cent increase in reported scams in the month of April compared to March. Since announcing its COVID-19 Relief Fund on April 1, BC Hydro has had over 500 reported incidents of attempted scams targeting its customers. To avoid falling victim to these scams, BC Hydro wants its customers to know:

- It has suspended all disconnections for non-payment during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- It does not collect credit card or bank account information over the phone, by email or text.
- It does not accept payment from pre-paid cash or credit cards, or bitcoin ATM.
- It does not offer refunds or credits through Interac e-transfer.

If a customer doubts the authenticity of an email, text, or phone call, they should call BC Hydro at 1 800 BCHYDRO (1 800 224 9376) or check their MyHydro account. Customers are also encouraged to report suspected fraud to their local police department.

Additionally, as shared last week, fraudulent text messages are also circulating saying recipients have received a deposit for the **Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)**. Do not reply or click on the link, delete the text and warn others. Tips are available to help protect community members from fraud and **slam the scam**.

QUESTION OF THE DAY

What is the Government of Canada doing to address issues of First Nations food security?

Food security remains a frequently asked question for ISC-BC Region. On April 3, 2020, the Prime Minister announced \$100 million to support national, regional, and local organizations across Canada that are able to reach people and communities experiencing food insecurity. That means food banks, the Salvation Army and organizations working to meet the urgent food needs of Canadians, including Indigenous peoples and Northern populations.

This funding will be used to purchase food and other basic necessities. It will help these organizations find new, creative ways to reach people in need, so they can continue to carry out their important work while respecting physical distancing guidelines.

In addition, we have been working in three areas critically important to food security:

- **Coordination with Other Levels of Government** – We are working with emergency management and ministries to look at the need for supplies and equipment across the province. We want to assure you that we are aware of the importance of food security and that the Province sees all communities as a priority, including First Nation communities. They realize that this is not just a federal priority and will be working with us to address your concerns.
- **Use of Emergency Funds** – Allocations, that communities have already received, allow for the flexibility to purchase food to address the most urgent needs of your vulnerable populations, as determined by the community. If you have questions regarding these allocations we are available to

discuss your needs around the use of funds and distribution of resources.

- **Access to Traditional Foods** – We have been, and will continue to meet with all federal departments to discuss issues such as permits that impact hunting and fishing and access to traditional foods. We have a small team dedicated to reaching out to communities to try to identify how we can assist where there are supply chain issues in procuring food. We recognize that we are all looking at supply shortages across the country and we will see how needs can be met.

We have put up security checkpoints to manage people entering and leaving our community and to share public health info. These costs are significant. How or where do we get them covered?

The Indigenous Community Support Fund provides Indigenous leadership with the flexibility needed to design and implement community-based solutions to prepare for and react to the spread of COVID-19 within their communities. These funds could be used for measures including, but not limited to:

- support for Elders and vulnerable community members
- measures to address food insecurity
- educational and other support for children
- mental health assistance and emergency response services
- preparedness measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19

Security costs would be eligible under the Indigenous Community Support Fund as a preparedness measure. Where possible, it is recommended that First Nations consult with law enforcement and health professionals for guidance regarding how measures can best address public health objectives.

A recent message from our partners at the First Nations Health Authority discussed the benefits and risks of check points and community closures as an additional measure to potentially decrease the burden of illness resulting from the pandemic. If you missed it, the letter

from the office of Chief Medical Officer noted that the benefits and risks of check points vary, and it shared an **Ethical Decision-Making Framework** from the Province of British Columbia to help guide you in your response decisions. This Framework includes a checklist and decision-making tool that communities may find useful to use to work through this important decision to run a checkpoint or not.

Some measures, such as removable barriers, may be eligible for reimbursement through Emergency Management BC. Costs for security personnel can only be reimbursed by Emergency Management BC if there are specific orders for these measures under the Office of the Provincial Health Officer or medical health officer of jurisdiction.

USEFUL LINKS

- Economic measures to help stabilize the economy during this challenging period. As information is rapidly changing we strongly encourage you to visit the **federal** and **provincial financial supports** websites often for the latest information.
- First Nations Health Authority – **Information for community leaders**
- **COVID-19 BC Support App and Self-Assessment Tool**
The app will let you receive the latest updates, trusted resources, and alerts. The Self-Assessment Tool is built in.



NATIONAL INFORMATION

- **Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Prevention and risks**
- The Government of Canada has made announcements regarding financial assistance for those who will be impacted during these unprecedented times – these individuals and business are encouraged to apply for assistance. You can find further information on how to apply for financial or economic support at: Canada.ca/coronavirus and [Questions and Answers on the Canada Emergency Response Benefit](#).
- For a great description of what flattening the curve means, consider watching [Prime Minister Trudeau's video tweet](#)
- **Public Health Agency of Canada**
- **Resources for Canadian Businesses**
- **Transport Canada – COVID-19 measures, updates, and guidance issued by Transport Canada**

REGIONAL CONTACTS

We've set up a dedicated email for any non-health COVID-19-related questions and requests: aadnc.iscbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca

The email address and other information are also available on the [FNPSS website](#).

As we head into the weekend we would also like to take this opportunity to share the contact information for our Executive Leadership Team should you or your team need to reach out regarding specific programs or services within their respective areas:

- **Regional Director General**
Catherine Lappe / 604-340-7703
- **Associate Regional Director General**
Bill Guerin / 604-803-9476
- **Community Infrastructure**
Paula Santos, Director / 604-790-8451
- **Programs and Partnerships**
Wendy Rogers, Director / 604-363-8117
- **Lands and Economic Development**
David Russell, Director / 604-817-2644
- **Funding Services**
Angela McCarthy, A/Director / 604-209-1251
- **Child and Family Services**
Chiara Taylor, Director / 778-668-9067
- **Community Development**
James Moxon, Director / 604-367-8241
- **Corporate Services**
Harold Powell, A/Director / 604-219-1737

