



April 15, 2021

Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) COVID-19 Update

Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU)	Total Number: 2,992 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active: 61, with 4 new cases reported April 15 • Recovered: 2,875 • Deaths: 56 • Hospitalized: 10 (5 in ICU)
Porcupine Health Unit	Total Number: 423 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active: 64 • Recovered: 359 • Deaths: 25
Northwestern Health Unit	Total Number: 779 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active: 52, with 2 new cases announced April 14 • Recovered: 720 • Deaths: 7 • Hospitalized: 1
Public Health Sudbury & Districts	Total Number: 1,773 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active: 215, with 1 case reported April 14 • Recovered: 1,533 • Deaths: 25
Timiskaming Health Unit	Total Number: 136 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active: 5, with 1 new case announced April 14 • Recovered: 129 • Deaths: 2

NAN Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler – Update

Acknowledgments

- We acknowledge Kasabonika Lake First Nation as they are currently dealing with a COVID-19 outbreak. NAN has been working with the Leadership to ensure they are supported through this difficult time.
- We acknowledge NAN members who have been impacted by COVID-19, including those who have been hospitalized.
- It is important that we remain mindful that the case numbers are not just numbers. They are people with families, loved ones and communities, and we keep all of them in our hearts and prayers.
- Thank you to our partners and NAN Leadership who contributed to the remarkable success of Operation Remote Immunity (ORI). Thanks to their hard work and dedication, NAN members in 32 remote fly-in communities who wished to be vaccinated, were able to be vaccinated.



Urban Vaccine Clinics

- NAN understands there have been challenges in accessing the vaccine in urban centres.
- The public health units continue to lead urban vaccine clinic efforts.
- NAN will provide as much support as possible and will share updates on urban vaccine clinics.
- Information on urban vaccine clinics can be found on page 5 of this Bulletin and also on the NAN web site (<https://nancovid19.ca/>).

Third Dose and Steady State of Vaccine Supply

- FNIHB, SLFNHA and WAHA have been busy making plans to keep a steady state of vaccines flowing into NAN communities. This will ensure that all members have an opportunity to receive both doses.
- The vaccine is available at nursing stations. NAN community members are encouraged to work with the nurse in charge and their Health Authority to book appointments.

Keeping Our Members Safe and Supported

- Our Chiefs Calls continue to be an important part of the effort to keep our communities safe and supported, and we thank all Chiefs and our partners for continued participation.
- Mental health must remain a top priority.
- These are extraordinarily difficult times, and we have tragically lost young people to suicide.
- If you know someone who is struggling, please tell them about NAN Hope.

NAN Hope

- As of last week, NAN Hope has connected **350 clients to care**.
- NAN Hope offers:
 - 24/7 toll-free rapid access to confidential crisis services.
 - Rapid access to clinical and mental health counselling.
 - Navigators who provide connection to existing mental health and addictions support services in home communities and the region.
- We want to highlight that NAN Hope is **not** just a crisis line; the navigation and referral to ongoing care is an important part of the service and of helping those who use the service move forward with their healing journey.
- Traditional knowledge keepers and healers are now part of NAN Hope's roster of counsellors; clients can also be connected to counsellors who speak our languages.
- NAN Hope can be accessed through 1-844-NAN-HOPE (1-844-626-4673) and www.nanhope.ca.

Pikangikum Update

- NAN is pleased to share that 24-hour nursing coverage has been reinstated in Pikangikum.
- We will support Pikangikum with their policing objectives going forward in any way that we can.

Dr. Isaac Bogoch - Vaccine Update

- NAN Leadership is encouraged to reach out to Dr. Bogoch with questions or invitations to other calls. Please contact emergency@nan.ca with any inquiries and we can pass those along.
- The COVID-19 situation in Ontario is more serious than ever. Ontario saw 4700 new cases today. Individuals are at considerable risk of catching COVID-19 in any part of Ontario.
- **In order to modify risks, you can:**
 - 1. Stay at home.**
 - 2. Get vaccinated.**
- Anything that Leadership can do to encourage NAN members to be vaccinated will be helpful.



- In response to a question about the length of time that the vaccine protects against COVID-19, Dr. Bogoch stated that the vaccines work incredibly well at the six-month mark, and there is no reason to believe they won't work incredibly well at the nine-month mark or twelve-month mark. With respect to booster shots, specific details are not yet known.
- When millions of people get vaccinated, some people will still get infected - some might even go to the hospital - but this is rare. Most people who get vaccinated will not get infected or go to hospital.
- Dr. Bogoch explained that there are a few points which can affect household transmission:
 1. Not all houses are created the same. Some people can isolate better within their homes than others.
 2. Viral shedding is a factor (or how much a person is transmitting the virus to others).
 3. On average, with a positive COVID-19 case in a household, about 30%-50% of others in the household could become infected. With variants of concern (VOCs), that average increases to 70%-90%.
- One or two new COVID-19 cases in a remote community is considered an outbreak.
- Dealing with an outbreak requires a coordinated effort that includes community engagement, communication, isolation of positive cases, and informing people about how they can behave to avoid getting infected.

NAN COVID-19 Task Team – Mae Katt

COVID-19 Situation in Ontario

- Last week, the Government of Ontario announced its third state of emergency and issued a province-wide stay-at-home Order. The Order is set to remain in place for 4 weeks.
- There are now many restrictions for retail and other businesses in urban centres.
- IAO confirmed that retail outlets in remote NAN First Nations are considered essential.
- Local community leadership retains the authority to make decisions about whether to mandate the closure of their community stores (including Northern Stores) and/or limit store capacity and hours.
- Variants of concern (VOCs) are now regularly being detected in northern Ontario and have been found in urban and rural communities. In the last week, at least 23 cases in the Porcupine Health Unit screened positive as VOCs. A total of 9 cases involving VOCs in the Thunder Bay District Health Unit have been identified. The Northwestern Health Unit has recorded VOCs in the Dryden, Kenora, Sioux Lookout, and Fort Frances areas.

Active Cases in NAN and Other Communities

- In communities served by SLFNHA, we are aware of the following active cases:
 - Kingfisher Lake First Nation- 1 Case
 - Kasabonika Lake First Nation - 14 Cases (with many tests outstanding)
 - Pikangikum First Nation - 1 Case
 - Lac Seul First Nation - 2 Cases
 - Sachigo Lake First Nation - 5 Cases
 - Keewaywin First Nation - 6 Cases
- SLFNHA also announced active cases in members from the following communities (these cases are currently isolating in Sioux Lookout):
 - Fort Severn First Nation - 1 Case
 - Wunnumin Lake First Nation - 1 Case
 - Constance Lake First Nation also announced 1 new case in its community this week.

Public Health Measures



- There is growing evidence that there is an increased risk of hospitalizations, Intensive Care Units (ICU) admissions and death from the variants of concern (VOCs).
- These VOCs are driving a dangerous third wave in Ontario.
- ICUs in Ontario are at or nearing capacity. Hundreds of ICU patients have been transferred between hospitals to avoid any one site being overwhelmed with COVID admissions.
- Elective surgeries are being cancelled and pediatric wards repurposed as ICUs.
- It is imperative to remain vigilant with public health recommendations - **even if you have received the COVID-19 vaccine**. This includes physical distancing, handwashing, wearing close fitting 3-layer masks in public where physical distancing cannot be maintained, and getting tested if you have any symptoms of COVID-19.
- If you get tested for COVID-19 it is important to isolate with your entire household until you get your results. You should also avoid non-essential travel or having people over for visits. Instead, reach out to people you care about online or over the phone to check in.
- **If you have not received the COVID-19 vaccine, consider getting it.** Contact your community's nurse-in-charge or the health clinic if you wish to be vaccinated.
- **Masks and vaccines are just additional protection. Stay at home if you can and stay 6 feet apart from each other.**
- Leadership should look at how they can continue to keep their communities safe during this third wave. Communicate community protocols and public health measures to your membership and ask that they be followed.
- The Task Team recommends that communities implement and develop community protocols for the detection of VOCs in the community and continue to maintain strong protocols around the testing and isolation of returning community members.
- NAN will release a joint statement (attached) about the risks of the current COVID situation and the important measures we must all take to keep our communities safe that is signed by physicians, nurse practitioners and nurses from SLFNHA, WAHA, the Matawa Health Co-operative and the NAN COVID-19 Task Team.
- We know it has been a long year of fighting this pandemic, but we must remain strong and united to succeed against this virus.

Safe Pathways to Care

- Last week, we heard about the heartbreaking experience of two community members who contracted COVID-19 in Thunder Bay and passed away from the virus. They were staying at the Prince Arthur Hotel, which was also being used as a COVID isolation centre at the time.
- A couple from another NAN community had a similar experience; while they both survived COVID-19, the husband is now dealing with long-term complications from his illness.
- Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler sent a letter to ISC Minister Marc Miller on April 8th, requesting that efforts be made to ensure that NAN members have safe pathways to care in urban centres.
- A call was held on April 12th with partners to discuss these experiences and how to ensure that this never happens again to another NAN community member. Participants included representatives from NAN, Windigo First Nations Council, Matawa First Nations, TBDHU, St. Joseph's, SLFNHA, Chiefs of Ontario NIHB Navigators, and ISC.
- Wequedong Lodge will use the Comfort Inn as a preferred partner from now on when booking additional medical travel accommodations. This hotel offers direct outside access to each room.
- ISC has committed to providing information in writing on the Lodge's policies/changes made.
- We continue to follow up on the process for information-sharing regarding public spaces, such as hotels, that are being used as COVID-19 isolation shelters.



Rapid Testing

- SLFNHA and Mushkegowuk Council have taken the lead in implementing rapid molecular testing in the communities that they serve. Wabun Tribal Council and the Matawa Health Co-operative are also actively supporting implementation for their communities.
- Regulatory changes made by Ontario have made it easier for communities to implement rapid testing. In recent weeks, more communities have been able to bring their instruments online.
- There remain certain barriers to full implementation of rapid testing in some communities. Leadership and health staff are encouraged to communicate issues to Ika Washington at SLFNHA (ika.washington@gmail.com) if they are a SLFNHA community, or to their Tribal Council Health Director or Co-op contact.
- The NAN Rapid Testing Working Group met for a second time to discuss various issues, including the need for in-person training, the situation Chief Russell raised last week about GeneXpert test results, and to share regional updates.
- The National Microbiology Laboratory is standing up a mobile training team to support in-person training in communities. We anticipate that they will be active within weeks.
- The Task Team heard a presentation from the Ontario Ministry of Health about their Provincial Antigen Screening Program on April 6.
- The Task Team will reach out to Health Authorities and Tribal Councils to develop a NAN-wide strategy on how rapid testing can best be used to support communities.
- The Task Team will release related recommendations in the coming weeks.

Urban Vaccination Clinics

- The rollout of vaccinations for road-access communities and urban members is underway.
- Vaccination clinics will be held in Sioux Lookout through the Northwestern Health Unit.
 - For more information on these clinics and to register, please visit www.nwhu.on.ca.
- Tribal Councils and SLFNHA are organizing upcoming clinics in Sioux Lookout that are specific to their members. To book an appointment please contact your Tribal Council or, if you are from an independent community, contact Charles Meekis at 620-1468 or charles.meekis@slfnha.com.
- The Porcupine Health Unit (Timmins and surrounding areas) is holding vaccine clinics for Indigenous Peoples in their area who are 18 years and older.
 - Information on these clinics is available at www.phu.fyi/coronavirus.
- Members living in Thunder Bay have many options when it comes to booking a vaccine:
 - Matawa Health Co-op: Now open to all urban Indigenous people in Thunder Bay aged 18+ and their immediate household members. To register, email mhc-reception@matawa.on.ca or call (807)-346-2370.
 - ONWA's Mindimooyenh Vaccination Clinic, for urban Indigenous Peoples and their families (over 16 years old): More information is available at <https://www.onwa.ca/covid-19-resources>.
 - Anishnawbe Mushkiki's vaccination clinic, which is open to all Indigenous residents of Thunder Bay who are over 18 years old and non-Indigenous household members. Book online at www.mushkiki.com or by calling (807) 624-1871.
- Information is regularly posted and shared on NAN social media and www.nancovid19.ca.

Manitoba Update

- The total number of active cases among Indigenous people is 749 (569 on-reserve).
- There are no on-reserve VOC cases yet. There is a total of 24 off-reserve VOC cases.



NAPS Update – NAPS Chief Roland Morrison

- NAPS is working to arrange for civilian staff to be vaccinated.
- Annual requalification training for NAPS officers will commence during the week of April 19th.
- The COVID-19 outbreak at the Ontario Police College (OPC) is resolved.
- OPC plans to vaccinate all staff and new officers before completion of the Basic Constable Training program.
- The 18 NAPS officers at OPC will return to Thunder Bay on May 10th to begin their Post-Police College training. The badge ceremony for the officers will take place on May 27th.
- NAN, NAPS Board and NAPS management are meeting with SOLGEN representatives on April 15th to discuss NAPS opting into the new provincial legislation for police services.

Urban Communities

- NAN has posted specific information on the NAN website for members living off-reserve in urban centres across northwestern and northeastern Ontario, including how to find shelters, food banks, social and mental health services, as well as Indigenous organizations that can provide assistance. Please visit www.nancovid19.ca.

Closing

NEXT REGULAR NAN CHIEFS CALL: Thursday, April 29, 2021 | 1p.m. EST | 12p.m. CST

