January 14, 2021

Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) COVID-19 Update

Thunder Bay District Health Unit	Total Number: 697 • **Active:** 84 cases; 8 more were announced January 14. Yesterday there were 14 cases in Thunder Bay District Jail. 1 death at Southridge LTC (21 now) • Recovered: 590 • Deaths: 23 • Hospitalized: 3 • In ICU: 2
Porcupine Health Unit	Total Number: 167 • **Active:** 25 total – 3 more cases were confirmed January 13. ▪ Out of region cases: 1 • Recovered: 132 • Deaths: 9
Northwestern Health Unit	Total Number: 229 • **Active:** 40 active cases total; 2 new confirmed cases reported in the Fort Frances Region on January 13. • Recovered: 188 • Deaths: 1
Public Health Sudbury & Districts	Total Number: 380 cases • **Active:** 76 total, 5 new cases reported on January 13. • Recovered: 302 • Deaths: 2
Timiskaming Health Unit	Total Number: 86 • **Active:** 5 (2 cases reported on January 12) • Recovered: 80 • Deaths: 1 (First confirmed death announced January 12. The deceased was a man in his 80s.)

NAN Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler – Update

- There was an important motion hearing on January 14 in the inquest into the deaths of Don Mamakwa of Kasabonika Lake First Nation and Roland McKay of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, who died while in custody of the Thunder Bay Police Service.
- We stand in solidarity with the families who argued against the exclusion of a police video from evidence, which depicted the racist and degrading treatment of Indigenous inmates by Thunder Bay Police Services.
- Both Don Mamakwa and Roland McKay were loved by their families, valued by their

communities and are worthy of so much better. The families of Don Mamakwa and Roland McKay deserve answers and we keep them in our prayers.

Provincial Emergency Declaration

- Ontario has declared a second Provincial Emergency and issued a stay-at-home order, effective Thursday January 14 at 12:01 a.m. EST.
- People are required to stay at home except to access health care and pharmacy services, buying groceries, work that cannot be done from home, or outdoor exercise.
- Ontario has introduced the following public health measures effective Tuesday January 12:
  - Outdoor gatherings are restricted to five people.
  - A mask or face covering is required in all businesses or organizations that are open.
  - Masks are recommended while outdoors, if physical distancing is not possible.
  - Hours of operation for all non-essential retailers offering delivery and curbside pickup are restricted to between 7 a.m. and 8 p.m.
    - This does not apply to stores that primarily sell food, pharmacies, gas stations, convenience stores, and restaurants for takeout or delivery.
  - Police can issue tickets to those who do not comply with the stay-at-home order and who do not wear a mask indoors in public places. Violations may result in fines or prosecution.
  - Additional information on enforcement will be provided under the "NAPS Update" section of this bulletin.
- Leadership are encouraged to review these public health measures, discuss with their local pandemic teams, and consider how these measures can be applied at the community-level.
- NAN Chiefs have authority to determine how to public health measures will be applied in their communities.
- These new public health measures will remain in effect for at least 28 days and will then be subject to review.
- Schools in northern public health units' regions will remain open for in-person learning.
- Travel for essential healthcare is considered essential travel.
- Many community members must travel to urban centres for medical appointments.
- NAN's Task Team urges community members with medical appointments not to cancel their appointments. This includes surgeries in hospitals, doctors' appointments, and dental care.
- Public health measures must continue, including wearing a mask, social distancing, handwashing and applying hand sanitizer.

Vaccine Rollout

- A soft launch of the vaccine rollout has already begun.
- NAN Elders in long-term care (LTC) facilities in NAN First Nations and in Sioux Lookout have given their consent to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.
- The first community to be vaccinated will be Peawanuck (end of January).
- The vaccine rollout is underway for communities in Phase I of the rollout.
- Some road access communities have been added to Phase I.
- This week, Grand Chief and Dr. Homer Tien began reaching out to communities in Phase I.
- We will continue to work closely with ORNGE, SLFNHA and WAHA on the details for the rollout, ensuring that communities are fully prepared.
- For communities in Phase I, it is vital that you identify someone in your First Nation who can coordinate this work on the ground.
- We await information from ISC on further funding with respect to the community coordinator positions and other costs related to the community vaccine clinics.
- We will be increasing capacity at NAN in order to ensure that each community has a robust network to help them through this initiative.

- We are considering adding an additional Chiefs Call on the alternate Thursdays, for the First Nations involved in the Phase I roll out. That way, we can ensure our regular all-Chiefs calls can maintain the regular format, without going overtime every time.
- As always, if you need any help or information, please do not hesitate to engage our Task Team at emergency@nan.ca

Funding

- On January 13, ISC Minister Miller announced another Indigenous Community Support Fund allocation (part is needs-based and part is allocation-based).
- Additional public health funding is to continue with their proposal system.
- We expect more information to be provided on ISC/FNIHB Ontario Region call on January 14 at 4:00 p.m. EST with Garry Best and Anne Scotton.
- The deadline for proposal-based funds is not yet known.
- We encourage Leadership to check the ISC web site.
- We have heard from Leadership about the need for ongoing support into the second wave of the pandemic, and we have advocated for more financial resources to support communities.
- There is a need to increase efforts to prevent the virus from entering communities, and this work must be financially supported so that communities do not experience financial hardship.
- As soon as we receive additional information on this funding announcement, we will share with the Leadership.

Outbreak at the Jail and Correctional Institution

- There is an outbreak at the Thunder Bay District Jail and the correctional institution.
  - 14 positive cases among inmates at the jail, and 2 cases at the correctional institution.
- This is a highly vulnerable population.
- Grand Chief has raised this urgent matter with SOLGEN Minister Sylvia Jones.
- The institutions are currently in lockdown and public health advice is that no inmates are transferred in or out of the institutions.
- Outreach with Crown/MAG re: early release of inmates.
- There is a recommendation to test all inmates and retest some who have tested negative, but had close contact with positive cases.

Critical Infrastructure Meeting

- Since April 2020, NAN has been hosting regular conversations with Tribal Councils, Independent First Nations, ISC, Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks and OFNTSC on maintaining water and wastewater operations during the pandemic.
- These calls are currently occurring monthly (initially they were bi-weekly).
- In the absence of a water/wastewater tri-lateral table, this has been an excellent forum for technical experts to share information and solutions to challenges faced throughout NAN territory.
- ISC has been present on all of the calls, providing updates and answering questions on current federal water/wastewater initiatives.
- Last month AFN representatives on the call provided updates on Operation and Maintenance reform efforts and Bill S-8 the Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act.
- These calls may continue after the pandemic, as they appear to be providing value.
- Any First Nations interested in participating are encouraged to contact NAN for details.

NAN COVID-19 Task Team – Mae Katt

Active Cases in NAN

- Total new cases: 7
  - Long Lake #58 First Nation: 5 cases
  - Aroland First Nation: 1 case
  - Fort Albany First Nation: 1 active case
- Fort Frances schools delayed in-person learning until at least January 25.
- The health unit has declared an outbreak at the Pathways Atelier Day Care in Fort Frances and has issued a closure order. The facility has been closed.

Manitoba Update

- The number of new daily cases and test positivity rates have dropped recently.
- Unfortunately, cases are surging in Northern Manitoba.
- First Nations people continue to be disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and about 2/3 of the active cases in the province are now among First Nations people.
- As of January 13, there were a total of 1,967 active cases among First Nations people, with 1,563 of these on-reserve.
- A total of 118 First Nations people have died from COVID-19 in Manitoba.
- Some First Nations communities in Northern Manitoba have started to receive the Moderna vaccine.

Task Team Update

- The Task Team continues to meet weekly to discuss issues and questions related to the COVID-19 response in NAN Territory.
- Focusing on education & awareness opportunities.
- Acting as "Champions" for the vaccine in support of the rollout.
- SLFNHA & WAHA are leading the production of educational and promotional materials.
- Finalizing an "Interim Guidance on Privately Initiated Rapid Testing" document.
- NAN and SLFNHA continue to work with the Ministry of Health on rapid testing barriers.
- In early February, Grand Chief will meet with Health Minister Christine Elliott to discuss challenges with rapid testing experienced by communities. An update on meeting outcomes will be shared as soon as possible following this meeting.

Winter Roads Guidance

- The Task Team has finalized Winter Road Guidance Documents (attached).
- Communities that are considering implementing checkpoints on winter roads during the COVID-19 pandemic are encouraged to refer to these resources.
- There are two versions available - a detailed version that provides a high level of detail, and a summary version that may be more useful for guiding community and leadership discussions.
- Both versions include a screening questionnaire.

PPE Resource Package

- A PPE Resource Package is attached to this bulletin.
- This resource was reviewed and approved by the Task Team.
- Includes information on how to order PPE, how to access funding, and how to check the quality of PPE received.
- We thank the members of the NAN COVID-19 PPE Working Group, which includes SLFNHA, WAHA, Matawa Health Co-op, Wabun Tribal Council, and the Ontario North Supply Chain, for their contributions to this resource.

NAN Hope

- If you know someone who is struggling, please tell them about NAN Hope.
- As of last week, NAN Hope has connected **235 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 wanted 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 helping those who use the service to 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 the 3 language dialects across NAN.
- NAN HOPE is now involved with discharge planning from the Adolescent Unit at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre.
- NAN Hope can be accessed through 1-844-NAN-HOPE (1-844-626-4673) and www.nanhope.ca.

Update - Dr. Isaac Bogoch, Infectious Diseases Physician and Scientist

- Dr. Bogoch re-stated his commitment to providing advice or information to NAN Chiefs about the COVID-19 vaccine upon request.
- NAN Chiefs are encouraged to submit any questions that they or their membership may have about the COVID-19 vaccine to emergency@nan.ca, and NAN will work to obtain answers to those questions from Dr. Bogoch directly, and then share that information back.
- Millions of people have already been vaccinated.
- Over 300,000 vaccines have been administered in Canada, over 5 million have been administered in the United States, and over 1 million in the United Kingdom.
- **Four key take-away messages on the COVID-19 Vaccine:**

    1. The COVID-19 vaccine will reduce the risk of infection.
    2. If you are vaccinated and you still manage to get infected, the COVID-19 vaccine will reduce the severity of the infection.
    3. The vaccine will reduce the risk of spreading the infection to others in your home and in your community.
    4. You could experience some mild side effects after receiving one or both doses of the vaccine, including headaches, or muscle aches and pains. These side effects go away.
- Dr. Bogoch committed to participating in a townhall-style meeting to give NAN citizens opportunities to ask questions and learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine. NAN will work to plan this event and share information.

- This townhall meeting will be recorded and shared widely online, as part of overall efforts to make COVID-19 vaccine information accessible at the NAN community-level.

NAN Legal Update – ED Irene Linklater, DGC Derek Fox

- Grand Chief spoke to SOLGEN Minister Sylvia Jones on January 13 to raise concerns about the outbreaks at the Thunder Bay District Jail and correctional facility.
- Minister Jones confirmed that she is getting briefed on the issues.
- NAN will invite SOLGEN Deputy Minister Deborah Richardson to join the next regular Chiefs Call on January 28.
- DGC Derek Fox is leading political push to ensure inmates are vaccinated.
- NALSC Executive Director Irene Linklater provided the below update.

Memorandum of Understanding

- In May 2020 a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by NAN, NALSC, SOLGEN, MAGIJD.
- MAG provides funding to support individuals released from institutions during the pandemic with costs such as hotel accommodations and transportation.

Discharge Planning:

- NALSC currently has one full time Discharge Coordinator and two part-time Bail Coordinator-Discharge Workers to assist on a case-by-case basis with releases to NAN Territory.
- **209** NAN members have been assisted with returns to home communities.
- NALSC staff communicate and coordinate with Community Pandemic Team Coordinators in NAN First Nations, who in turn communicate with their Chiefs and Councils.
- NALSC staff also communicate and coordinate with provincial and federal jails.

North East	North Central	North West	Other locations provincially
43	21	149	6

Procedures when NAN citizens are released from custody:

- No mandatory COVID-19 test on release from custody at provincial jails or corrections.
- No 14-day isolation prior to release.
- No vaccination of inmate population by Province of Ontario.
- Federal prisons are vaccinating inmate population.
- It is unknown if Federal prisons are implementing 14-day isolation prior to release.

Q & A

Question: Is it possible to get infected, even if I receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Answer:

Yes, it is possible you could still get infected. The COVID-19 reduces the likelihood of infection. If you are vaccinated and you still become infected, the vaccine will reduce the chances of a severe infection. That is why it is so important that public health measures continue (such as wearing masks, handwashing etc.) until enough people in the community are vaccinated.

Question: What about vaccinations for children?

Answer:

At this time, we do not have enough information about vaccinations for young children, but people aged 16 and older will have access to the vaccine. It is expected that more information will become available in the Spring or Summer of 2021. There are studies happening on the exact same vaccine (Moderna) that are enrolling people as young as 12. Once these studies are complete and the vaccine is approved for people in the 0-16 age category, NAN will revisit the vaccine rollout process and work to make the vaccine available for children in NAN communities. This is part of our overall plan. Public health measures should continue to be followed to ensure that children do not get infected. We know that children are much less likely to get sick, and if they do get sick, they are likely to have a mild infection. However, kids can infect each other as well as older members of their family. The risk of severe infection increases dramatically for those who are over 60, 70, and 80. If everyone aged 16 and up in a community is vaccinated, it will be much safer.

Question: How long does it take for the COVID-19 vaccine to begin kicking in?

Answer:

There are two vaccine doses. 12 to 14 days after 1st dose, you start to get some protection against infection. It's not perfect protection, but it is very helpful. On day 28 you get the 2nd dose. We now see maximum protection around 7 days.

Question: It would be ideal to vaccinate the whole community. If 70% of the community were vaccinated, would that be enough to ensure protection of vulnerable community members from COVID-19?

Answer:

You often hear the term "herd immunity", which is reached around 70%. Herd immunity means that if someone brought the virus into the community, it would not spread like wildfire. 70% is certainly good, but we think we can do better.

Question: With respect to the variant:

a) Is the variant more transmissible?

b) Will we be updated on the effectiveness of the vaccine against the new variant of South African origin?

Answer:

a) Yes, the variant is more transmissible in general. The variant is now here in Ontario, but only 8 cases of the UK variant have been detected. The goal is to vaccinate as many people as possible before the variant takes off. The vaccine programs have already started, and if we

scale up quickly, this should not be an issue.

b) There was a case of the South African variant detected in Alberta. In Ontario, special tests are being done (300-400 per week) to get a sense of what is circulating in the province. If the variant is detected in Ontario, this information will be shared widely with the public. The existence of variants is all the more reason to vaccinate as quickly as we can and promote public health measures.

Question: Can a Townhall video be developed focusing on questions & answers on the vaccine?

Answer:

Dr. Bogoch confirmed his willingness to participate and assist in any way possible with this. NAN will follow up to help make this happen.

Question: Is it safe for pregnant and breastfeeding women to be vaccinated?

Answer:

People who are pregnant and breastfeeding were not included in testing of the COVID-19 vaccine. When you look at how the vaccine works, it should be safe and effective. We know that pregnant women are more likely to have a severe reaction to the COVID-19 virus than non-pregnant women. It is recommended that pregnant women consult with their family physician. Pregnant women can decide for themselves whether to vaccinate, as long as they are aware of the risks and benefits. There is growing data and early evidence supporting that the vaccine is safe in pregnant and breastfeeding women. This information is coming out, because pregnant women have included themselves in studies. It is too soon to say if it is super safe, but women can make the decision for themselves.

Question: Can people residing in NAN communities who are not members of the community receive the vaccine?

Answer:

Yes – people who are non-Indigenous and/or non community members residing in a NAN First Nation, may request the vaccine. This could include teachers or NAPS officers, for example. It is the community coordinators' responsibility to include non-members in the community's headcount.

Question: We realize that the vaccine was developed quickly, how do we help our community members to understand that this vaccine is safe?

Answer:

The technology now is so much better than it was 15 years ago. This was done very quickly. The process started in January and it took about a year. The vaccines were approved in December. All three phases of clinical trials in humans - known as Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 Clinical Trials -

were completed. These clinical trials involved testing on tens of thousands of people. The Moderna vaccine was tested on over 30,000 people. The Pfizer vaccine was tested on over 43,000 people. They looked at the safety and efficacy of the vaccine. Then, even after tens of thousands of people were tested and this was studied, all of the data went to Health Canada. Without any political pressure, Health Canada reviewed the data and they approved the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. This is how you get a vaccine to market. It sounds fast, but technology really helped speed it along.

Question: Can animals transmit COVID?

Answer:

Animals can get COVID-19, but the probability of transmitting the virus to humans is extremely low.

NAPS Update – Chief Roland Morrison

- Acknowledge and express appreciation for Sgt. Raymond Sutherland, who will be retiring in February after 34 years of service to NAN communities. Most of Sgt. Raymond Sutherland's service was in his home community of Kashechewan, and we thank him for his tireless work.
- Officer John Paul (JP) Spence is returning to NAPS as a Professional Standards Investigator.
- On January 13 there was a meeting between all chiefs of police in Ontario and SOLGEN Minister Sylvia Jones about enforcement of the lockdown.
- There remains a lack of clarity on how police are to enforce the lockdown.
- Fines can be issued through the Provincial Offences Act, but this is not applicable to many NAN communities.
- NAPS will be telling people to stay at home, and officers will make occurrence reports.
- If individuals are repeatedly found to be in non-compliance, this can result in officers pressing charges under section 180(1) of the Criminal Code for "Common Nuisance".
- NAPS recognizes that First Nations have the authority to make band bylaws.
- For the week of January 4 to 11, there were 23 major occurrences including 7 domestic assaults, three assaults, one sudden death in a remote community, and possession of drugs.
- NAN Leadership expressed the need to prioritize the recruitment of young NAN members to NAPS, as well as ensuring that NAPS services are provided in the language.
- On the next regular chiefs call (January 28th), there will be an update provided by NAPS Board Chair Mike Metatawabin.

Urban Communities

- NAN has posted specific information on the NAN website for members living off-reserve in urban centres across northwestern and northeastern Ontario.
  - This includes 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**. It is updated daily with the most current information.

Closing

- The upcoming Chiefs Call on January 21 will focus on vaccine rollout for Phase I communities.
- Going forward, Chiefs Calls will alternate between "regular calls" and "vaccine rollout update calls for communities in Phase I of the vaccine rollout".

NEXT CALL: Thursday, January 21, 2021 | 1p.m. EST | 12p.m. CST