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FNLC COMMUNIQUE RE: COVID-19

To: First Nations Chiefs and Leaders

From: First Nations Leadership Council (BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, Union of BC Indian Chiefs)

Date: March 19, 2020

Re: COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Pandemic

BACKGROUND

COVID-19 has been declared a global pandemic. Plans and preparations are in place to deal with transmission in BC and Canada to mitigate the impact of the virus on individuals, the health care system, and the community.

As the situation with COVID-19 continues to evolve, we want to reassure you that our primary concern is the protection of the health and safety of our communities and families. The FNLC is in regular communication with Indigenous Services Canada, Emergency Management BC, First Nations Emergency Services Society, Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, First Nations Health Authority, and First Nations Health Council working on obtaining comprehensive information to keep communities informed.

As a general guideline to safeguard individuals and fellow community members and to prevent transmission as much as possible, we urge the following measures be adopted:

- frequent and thorough handwashing,
- social distancing,
- avoiding mass gatherings and crowded areas, and
- refraining from all unnecessary travel

Additionally, for any individuals who have recently attended large-scale gatherings or meetings, you may need to self-quarantine for 14 days and be extra diligent in monitoring your health for any symptoms of COVID-19 and seek medical assistance if necessary.

MEETING/GATHERING CANCELLATIONS/POSTPONEMENTS

In keeping with the directive by BC Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, all meetings, conferences, consultation sessions and other mass gatherings scheduled to be convened by the First Nations Leadership Council are cancelled or postponed for the foreseeable future.

Examples of these meetings include: April 2020 All Chiefs Meeting on Children and Families, March 2020 BCAFN Black Book sessions, etc.

RELEVANT LINKS

The FNLC recommends continuing to refer to the updated guidance available from the First Nations Health Authority, BC Centre for Disease Control, and BC Ministry of Health.

1. First Nations Health Authority

The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) is the most relevant source for COVID-19 related information relating to First Nations. FNHA has activated its Public Health Response Team and is constantly monitoring and reacting to updated COVID-19 information, and regularly updating its website.

For detailed information on COVID-19 and impacts for First Nations, please visit the First Nations Health Authority for daily updates: <https://www.fnha.ca/about/news-and-events/news/information-on-novel-coronavirus>

OTHER HELPFUL LINKS:

For additional daily information updates please visit the following:

2. BC Ministry of Health COVID-19 Information page: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-feature/coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

3. BC Centre for Disease Control: <http://covid-19.bccdc.ca/>

4. BC COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Tool

A self-assessment tool has been developed with the BC Ministry of Health and will help determine whether individuals may need further assessment or testing for COVID-19. To access the BC COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Tool please visit: <https://covid19.thrive.health/>

Province of BC

HealthlinkBC service navigators can help you find health information or health services, or connect you with a nurse, dietitian, or pharmacist. Call 8-1-1 to speak with a navigator any time of the day or night. Please note that with the high volume of calls being made to 8-1-1 it may take more than one attempt to get through.

The province has created a phone service to provide non-medical information about COVID-19, including the latest information on travel recommendations and social distancing. Information is available in more than 110 languages, 7:30 am - 8 pm PDST at 1-888-COVID19 (1-888-268-4319) or via text message at 604-630-0300.

COMMUNITY GUIDANCE PACKAGE:

As we are at an early stage in this health crisis, the FNLC is preparing a compact community guidance package for distribution to communities in the next few days. This will include information re:

- a. How to access government funding
- b. Contact numbers to seek Emergency Assistance
- c. Information re: Social Assistance
- d. Basic health practices re: COVID-19