

## Fort Hope (Eabametoong)

- We are actively working with the community to ensure the necessary resources and supports are in place, including medical staff capacity.
- We are also continuously monitoring PPE and test swab stock levels. Two shipments of PPE were delivered including surgical and N-95 masks, gowns, gloves and face shields.
- Also, a temporary BLU-MED structure was installed that allows for physical distancing while members undergo COVID-19 assessments.
- We will continue to closely monitor the situation and work with the community to address surge capacity needs.

## **COVID-19 Region-Specific Card**

As of May 5, the total number of reported COVID-19 cases among First Nations communities is 161. Two people have died.

<b>Confirmed cases in Saskatchewan</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>If pressed on surge supports for Northern Saskatchewan</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Confirmed cases in Ontario</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Confirmed cases in Quebec</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>If pressed on death of a Cree elder in Quebec</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Confirmed cases in Alberta</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Confirmed cases in the territories</b>	<b>5</b>

### ***Confirmed cases in Saskatchewan***

- We are paying specific attention to the preparedness and response needs of First Nation, Inuit, and Metis communities.
- We are actively working with the Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority and the Saskatchewan Health Authority; and, the other communities where COVID-19 test positive cases have been confirmed to ensure necessary resources are in place.
- The health and safety of the individuals and the communities is a top priority and to respect the privacy of the individuals sick with COVID-19, we will not be commenting on the specifics of individual cases.
- We will continue to support the communities and address surge capacity as needed.

### ***If pressed on surge supports for Northern Saskatchewan***

- The Department received the \$10M proposal from the Saskatchewan North West Communities Incident Command Centre.
- My department is working closely with First Nations in Saskatchewan to meet community needs.
- We will address the immediate PPE needs and discuss other the elements of the funding proposal with communities and provincial officials on an urgent basis.

***Confirmed cases in Ontario***

- We are paying specific attention to the preparedness and response needs of First Nation, Inuit, and Metis communities.
- We are actively working with the communities where COVID-19 test positive cases have been confirmed to ensure necessary resources are in place.
- The health and safety of the individuals and the communities is a top priority and to respect the privacy of the individuals sick with COVID-19, we will not be commenting on the specifics of the cases.
- We will continue to support the communities and address surge capacity as needed.

***Confirmed cases in Quebec:***

- We are paying specific attention to the preparedness and response needs of First Nation, Inuit, and Metis communities.
- We are actively working with the communities to ensure necessary resources are in place.
- The health and safety of the communities is a top priority and to respect the privacy of those who are sick with COVID-19, we will not be commenting on the specifics of the case.
- We will continue to support the communities and address surge capacity as needed.

## **If pressed on Death of a Cree elder in Quebec**

- The Government of Canada expresses our deepest sympathies to the family and everyone affected in the community.
- We understand from our partners that the deceased individual was being treated at a provincial institution in Montreal.
- All healthcare for the Eeyou (Cree) in Quebec is funded and provided through the provincial health system.
- We are funding Cree Board of Health and Social Services at approximately \$7M per year, directly through a 5-year funding agreement.
- The Government of Canada remains committed to supporting partners and provincial governments in responding to the pandemic.

## ***Confirmed cases in Alberta:***

- We are paying specific attention to the preparedness and response needs of First Nation, Inuit, and Metis communities.
- The health and safety of the communities is a top priority and to respect the privacy of those who are sick with COVID-19, we will not be commenting on the specifics of the case.
- We are working with First Nations across Alberta to address surge capacity needs including capital support for isolation measures and additional nursing frontline care resources.
- Our regional Medical Officers of Health and Communicable Disease Control teams are actively working in partnership with communities where COVID-19 cases have been confirmed to implement disease control and public health measures to support containment and mitigate community spread.

***Confirmed cases in the territories:***

- As of May 4<sup>th</sup>, there were confirmed cases in the NWT, but they are now all recovered. The Government of the Northwest Territories is testing anyone with flu-like symptoms and who travelled outside of the Northwest Territories within the last 14 days.
- As of May 4<sup>th</sup>, there were confirmed cases in the Yukon, but they are now all recovered. As per the communicable disease protocol in the Yukon, the territorial government is not releasing the location of the individuals.

## **False positive case in Nunavut:**

- The health and safety of the communities is a top priority for our Government.
- The Government of Nunavut is the lead in addressing and investigating potential COVID-19 cases. Testing in Nunavut is the responsibility of the territorial government and the Public Health Agency of Canada.
- Government of Canada officials are on the COVID-19 Inter-agency Group, a working group lead by the Government of Nunavut to collaborate and provide support for the COVID-19 responses.
- The Government of Canada remains committed to supporting provincial and territorial governments in responding to the pandemic.

## **M'Chigeeng First Nation Travel Ban**

- **We recognize that many Indigenous communities face unique challenges in addressing COVID-19.**
- **On April 25, M'Chigeeng First Nation initiated a non-essential travel ban that includes checkpoints on two provincial highways that run through the community.**
- **Travelers entering the First Nation's territory may be stopped at the checkpoint and advised to reroute to secondary roads to avoid transit through the community.**
- **We will continue to facilitate dialogue between First Nations, police services and public safety authorities on the issue of enforcement related to travel-bans.**

### **If pressed on escalating tensions and potential conflicts**

- **The United Chiefs and Councils of Mnidoo Mnising (UCCM) Police Service and the Ontario Provincial Police have indicated that they will not enforce the checkpoints, but are aware and prepared to respond to calls related to conflicts.**



**Background**

As of May 5, 2020, 86 First Nations in Ontario have implemented COVID-19 related travel restrictions, and 67 have declared a State of Emergency.

On April 9, M'Chigeeng First Nation established a checkpoint on Hwy 540. Initially the checkpoint was established to gather data about travellers using the highway. Chief Linda Debassige stated that the community saw an increase in non-essential travel, including cottagers, in the month of April.

On April 25, Chief Debassige and council instituted a non-essential travel ban that includes checkpoints on provincial highways 540 and 551, which run through the community. A volunteer team staffs the checkpoints to notify vehicles that the First Nation is only open to residents and essential services. Non-essential travellers include cottagers, campers, seasonal residents, and trailers and RVs, which are being rerouted through secondary roads and detours around M'Chigeeng First Nation.

Al MacNevin, Mayor of the neighbouring Town of Northeastern Manitoulin and the Islands, positions that the checkpoints are illegal in the absence of a provincially issued travel ban and believes his residents are unnecessarily burdened by the delays and detours. MacNevin claims that the secondary roads are not suitable for increased traffic; and fears that conflicts could ensue, without the support of police presence. MacNevin has requested formal intervention by the province to remove the checkpoints.

UCCMM Tribal Chair Chief Patsy Corbiere (of Aundeck Omni Kaning), has attempted to mediate the issue by offering to establish a leadership committee on Manitoulin Island, with First Nation, municipal, health and public safety representatives "to set a more positive tone moving forward and increase Island-wide collaboration in a challenging time".

Algoma-Manitoulin MPP Mike Mantha said at a press conference on Monday May 5th, that he "supported the committee because he felt respectful dialogue was the only way to move forward constructively". He offered his assistance as an MPP to help promote the health and security of Island communities.

Chief Debassige was re-elected Chief of M'Chigeeng First Nation on March 28, 2020. On April 23, 2020 she was sworn in as the First Nations Trustee of the Rainbow District School Board, representing the 11 First Nations communities served by the Board. Chief Debassige maintains regular communication with the ISC Ontario RDG.

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## Gull Bay

- Indigenous Services Canada is in daily contact with Gull Bay First Nation leadership to provide support for their COVID-19 response efforts.
- We have increased nursing staff to support the enhanced testing requested by community leadership and have addressed three requests for PPE.
- We have also installed a temporary BLU-MED structure in the community that allows for physical distancing while members undergo COVID-19 assessments.
- We will continue to closely monitor the situation and work with the community to address surge capacity needs.

## **Grassy Narrows – Mercury Contamination**

- **We share the goal of Grassy Narrows in finding a solution that meets their needs.**
- **As previously agreed, the expansion of the existing health facility will begin in summer 2021.**
- **On April 2, I met with Chief Rudy Turtle to sign a Framework Agreement to build and operate a mercury care home in the community of Grassy Narrows.**
- **This agreement provides \$19.5 million to the community towards its construction, and supports a design the community envisioned.**
- **We continue to work together with the community leadership to get this facility built.**

<b>If pressed</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>If pressed on funding</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Mercury-related Data</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>If pressed on the Lancet article</b>	<b>3</b>

### **If pressed:**

- **Building a mercury treatment facility in the community is an absolute priority for our government and we are pleased with the progress made to-date including the signing of a historical Framework Agreement.**
- **We are also providing enhanced health services to individuals in the community, including additional nurses and increased mental health supports.**
- **We continue to work with community representatives and leadership on advancing the next phases of the mercury care home project.**

Mercury-related Data :

- **We are committed to ensuring that the residents of Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong have access to their community mercury-related data.**
- **Personal medical information that includes mercury data has been, and will continue to be, provided to individuals.**
- **We continue to offer free analysis of hair and blood samples to all residents of Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong, at their request.**
- **We will continue to work with community leadership and health services to answer questions and provide support to individuals in the community.**

If pressed on Lancet Article

- **As acknowledged in the article, the Department was pleased to have actively supported the community and this research.**
- **With the support of the community leadership, ISC worked closely with Dr. Mergler by providing foundation data to aid in investigating the long-term health impacts of historic mercury exposure on the Grassy Narrows community members.**
- **These data were shared at the request of Dr. Merger, in accordance with the Canadian Privacy Act and as supported by Grassy Narrows First Nation Chief and Council.**

*If pressed further on the Lancet study:*

- **Dr. Mergler had obtained approval from the Health Canada Research Ethics Board to allow for the release and use of the identifiable data without prior consent.**
  - **The release was allowed under the Privacy Act as the purpose of Dr. Mergler's research project is consistent with the original purpose of the data collection, to determine the health impacts of mercury exposure in the community of Grassy Narrows.**
  - **With the support of the community's leadership this data was shared in summer 2019. The data was not released to the community as a whole.**
  - **Dr. Mergler is legally responsible for complying with all appropriate privacy legislation.**
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**Background**

High levels of mercury contamination in the English-Wabigoon River system, discovered in 1970, caused very high levels of mercury exposure among people residing in the First Nations communities of Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong. Levels of exposure in the late 1960s and 1970s were sufficient to cause mercury poisoning among several highly exposed community members. The First Nations and Inuit Health Branch completed extensive annual monitoring for mercury in Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong First Nations, as well as other nearby communities, between 1971 and 2000.

Indigenous Services Canada's Environmental Health Officer conducts regular health visits in Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong, including ongoing surveillance of the community's drinking water system. Kenora Chief's Advisory annually monitors the communities' drinking water systems for chemical parameters under a devolution agreement. Mercury has never been detected in any of the Grassy Narrows drinking water samples.

In response to the community's request for immediate suicide prevention crisis support, the Department is providing \$618,226 under Jordan's Principle to Kitapinoonjiiminaanik Family Services, to address the immediate mental health needs of children and youth in Grassy Narrows. The Department also provided a permanent increase in Medical Transportation to ensure community members can access treatment where provided.

\$9 million was identified in Budget 2017 for the construction of a mercury treatment centre and funding was provided to Grassy Narrows First Nation to undertake a feasibility study. The final report outlined that a long-term care facility and specialized medical services were required to improve health outcomes in the community. Additional funding will be required to support the construction and operations of the mercury treatment centre.

On April 2, 2020, Minister Miller and Chief Rudy Turtle of the Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek signed a framework agreement to provide federal support to the community to support a mercury care home. This facility will provide access to health services to meet the needs of community residents who are living with methylmercury poisoning by providing a facility where they can access specialized care, close to home.

The Framework Agreement outlines mechanisms for improved coordination, cooperation, operational and technical support in the provision of health services to residents of the community.

Through this framework agreement, ISC will provide \$19.5 million to Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek towards the construction of the mercury care home, supporting a design the community envisioned.

Furthermore, ISC is working towards obtaining additional funding to support operations of the mercury care home for the next 30 years.

The implementation of elements of the Framework Agreement have begun and the community is anticipating hiring a Professional Project Manager as next steps for the project.

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