



Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority Inc.



October 1, 2020

To: Chief and Councils
Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority

From: Dr. Nnamdi Ndubuka, Medical Health officer, Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority

RE: Public Health Approach to a Second Wave of COVID-19

In recent weeks, we have seen a concerning rise in COVID-19 cases in Canada and Saskatchewan, largely due to “pandemic fatigue.” I am concerned we will see a similar trend in First Nations in Saskatchewan.

We still have a chance to prevent a large resurgence if we all act together now. But public health officials and community leaders cannot do this alone, [individual actions to prevent exposure](#) and limit the number of close contacts are a must. Right now, it is important to re-emphasize public health messages on:

- Staying home when sick (unless for medical appointments)
- Keeping your social circle very small
- Limiting non-essential travel in and out of communities, especially interprovincial travel
- Keeping physical distance and wearing non-medical masks when distancing is difficult
- Avoiding crowds and personal contact (hugs, handshakes)
- Adhering to handwashing and respiratory hygiene

I acknowledge pandemic measures strain overall health for many, but **maintaining overall health is central to avoiding severe COVID-19 outcomes for people and communities.** To minimize the potential impact(s) of a second wave, strive for optimal health and empower everyone in your community to do the same:

- Get your seasonal influenza vaccine and promote vaccines in the community
- Enable access to recommended vaccines for everyone, especially flu and pneumococcal vaccines.
- Keep up with regular health care (e.g. dental care, check-ups, cancer screening)
- Promote harm reduction and sexual health initiatives
- Enable a healthy diet and regular exercise
- Follow public health advice and discourage rumours and misinformation.

By keeping better control of underlying conditions such as diabetes, cardiopulmonary conditions, hypertension and obesity as well as addressing vitamin D deficiency and avoiding commercial tobacco smoking and vaping, we are contributing to improving health outcomes. While COVID-19 can make anyone sick, some are at risk of more severe disease or outcomes because of their age or medical

conditions. The Public Health Agency of Canada recently published [new factsheets for people at high risk of severe disease](#) in various Indigenous languages.

Lastly, we need to appeal to our collective ingenuity and focus on measures targeted at improving mental health in communities, such as optimizing virtual care and land activities (with precautions) to support mental wellness.

I look forward to learning from communities their best practices and strengthening our response to the imminent second wave.

Thank you,



Dr. Nnamdi Ndubuka
Medical Health Officer

CC: Nurse Managers
Health Directors