



Cree Nation Leadership COVID-19 Briefing Public Statement November 10, 2020

Status of Pandemic

Worldwide COVID-19 cases continue to rise at an alarming rate. The United States continues to set record numbers of cases. Canada, especially Quebec and Ontario are struggling to keep COVID-19 cases under control. COVID-19 is starting to hit First Nations communities in Western Canada especially hard as populations get fatigued from the measures needed to keep COVID-19 out of our especially vulnerable communities.

Region 2 –Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean and urban centres like Montreal continue to be the source of COVID-19 cases in the North.

The completion of contact tracing of the recent clusters in Chibougamau and Chapais taught us very valuable lessons:

- **Early detection and contact tracing are imperative:** The Cree Health Board lent resources to the Nord-du-Québec Public Health authority so that the contact tracing could be completed as efficiently and thoroughly as possible.
- **Physical distancing and precautionary measures in schools work:** Although students and staff had contracted COVID-19 from family and friends, contact tracing did not provide evidence that any cases were transmitted in the school setting.
- **People must be very careful when visiting with family or friends who have arrived from high risk areas:** All clusters from Chibougamau and Chapais have been traced back to Region 2 - Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean.

The most valuable contribution that people can make is to reduce the size of social circles and the number of social interactions.

Testing in Eeyou Istchee

16 cases with 13 recovered, regular testing for COVID-19 in Eeyou Istchee is currently at:

- 1,374 regular tests have been administered
- 1,353 returned negative
- 5 waiting for results

The Cree Health Board continues to make efforts to increase screening capacity doing more screening tests focusing on Health Workers, patients returning home and other high-risk groups such as elder's home workers. The current Screening results are:

- 1,724 screening tests
- 1,712 returned negative
- 12 awaiting results

Travelling

Northern regions of Ontario and Quebec are doing well generally in keeping COVID-19 cases low and quickly undertaking the contact tracing necessary to shut down the spread once a case is identified. This was the case in Chibougamau where contact tracing has been completed on 3 clusters by the Public Health Department of Region 10 with the assistance of our Public Health Department. Because these clusters can pop up quickly and get out of control if the capacity is not there to do the contact tracing and management of isolations, the people of Eeyou Istchee are asked to exercise extreme caution when travelling outside their communities.



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Travelling

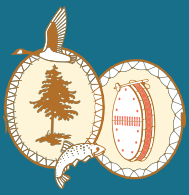
An alarming number of cases has been under surveillance in the region of Sudbury and there is concern that the cases are not contained and there is community transmission, for this reason, the **region of Sudbury will be reassessed as an Area of Risk effective 1:00PM, November 10th, 2020.**

After evaluation of the **Areas Representing a Risk**, those individuals who have in the last 14 days travelled:

- anywhere outside Quebec, except for the Ontario regions of Porcupine and Timiskaming, which includes the municipalities of Timmins, Moosonee and North Bay;
- within Quebec to:
 - > Region 1 – Lower St-Lawrence
 - > Region 2 – Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean
 - > Region 3 – Quebec Capital
 - > Region 4 – Mauricie and Centre du Québec
 - > Region 5 – Estrie
 - > Region 6 – Montreal
 - > Region 7 – Outaouais (Gatineau)
 - > Region 9 – North Shore
 - > Region 11 – Gaspé and Magdalen Islands
 - > Region 12 – Chaudière-Appalaches
 - > Region 13 – Laval
 - > Region 14 – Lanaudière
 - > Region 15 – Laurentians
 - > Region 16 – Montérégie
- any Hydro-Quebec site;
- to any mine site, please note:
 - > Workers coming from the Windfall Mining Exploration Site of Osisko Mining Inc with the appropriate documentation will NOT be required to self-isolate;
 - > Workers coming from the Renard Mine Site of Stornoway, with the appropriate documentation will NOT be required to self-isolate;
 - > Workers coming from the Éléonore Mine Site of Newmont, with the appropriate documentation will NOT be required to self-isolate;
- any forestry camp, please note:
 - > Workers coming from the Forestry Camp at km 105 on the James Bay Highway with the appropriate documentation will NOT be required to self-isolate effective immediately; will be required to self-isolate for 14 days under the Local Mandatory Self-Isolation Laws.

As of November 10th, 2020 @ 1:00PM the Region of Sudbury is considered an Area of Risk. Therefore, people coming from Regions 8, 10, 17 and 18 in Quebec and the regions of Sudbury (**Prior to 1:00PM, November 10th, 2020**), Porcupine, Timiskaming and North Bay in Ontario DO NOT need to self-isolate under the local Mandatory Self-Isolation Laws.

It is extremely important for people to understand that until there is a vaccine, there will always be a risk associated with travelling outside of Eeyou Istchee.



Managing Health Services

It is important to remind people that special protocols have been adopted to allow Cree patients who need to go South to undergo a supervised 7-day self-isolation in the South so that they only have to do a 7-day isolation when they return home. This isolation is only available to those that make use of the Cree Health Board transportation services. When travelling by vehicle from an area of risk the exemption cannot be received by patients.

In the communities, services continue to be adapted to provide safe medical services and the Cree Health Board is making efforts to introduce more medical specialists into the communities. It will be much safer for Eeyou Istchee to have the critical health specialists come into the communities rather than high numbers of patients travelling to the South. The Specialists are respecting strict screening protocols, supervision and precautionary measures that includes the administration of multiple tests.

It is important to keep in mind that for the last seven months, the COVID-19 cases in Eeyou Istchee did not come from the medical professionals that come to our communities. It is therefore safe to go to the clinic and meet with specialists in our communities.

Every effort is being made to preserve and increase the testing capacity of the Cree Health Board so that it can be used for urgently needed medical personnel, emergencies and hopefully to assist in reducing the period that students will need to self-isolate when returning home from the holidays.

We are seeing promising signs of vaccine development. Although we can be hopeful that it will eventually help us tackle this pandemic, the road ahead is still long, and we must continue practicing all precautionary measures.

Eeyou Istchee Deconfinement Plan

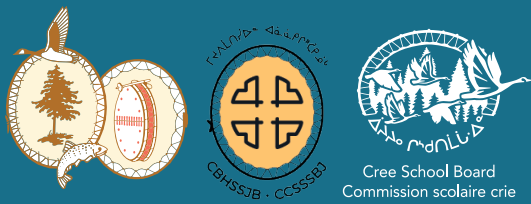
The incredible sacrifice and discipline demonstrated by the Cree Nation over the summer in the development, implementation and compliance with precautionary measures including our local Mandatory Self-Isolation Laws allows us to remain in Phase 4 of the Deconfinement Plan while other jurisdictions have to move into re-confinement:

- No masks for grade 4 and below unless the student or parents wish to wear a mask;
- Grade 5 and above masks are required in common areas but can be removed once seated.

The cooperation and the respect of physical distancing and precautionary measures has allowed the Cree Nation to protect our Health care capacity and protect community members from COVID-19.

- Activities like weddings, graduations, etc. subject to the gathering size restrictions
- Indoor gatherings (50 people max.)
- Outdoor gatherings (150 people max.)

As stated above, every effort is being made to develop a protocol which could see a reduced self-isolation period of seven (7) days, for Cree School Board students returning home for the Christmas holiday. The hope is to have the protocol ready for November 17th, 2020.



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Eeyou Istchee Deconfinement Plan

The Public Health team will continue to provide support to communities and organizations in deciding which services or activities to resume and how to do it safely. Any request for advice regarding the Deconfinement Plan or request for advice on what activities and how they can be carried out during a particular phase of the Deconfinement Plan can continue to be sent to:

18tcr.phcovidteam@ssss.gouv.qc.ca or covidrisk@cngov.ca.

The Public Health team is also available to answer questions about risk assessment in situations related to COVID-19. Please call the Infoline at 1-866-855-2811 for support on making decisions about control measures. The PSOs and CMCs can also call the Public Health on-call team for support.

If you feel like you may need someone to talk to during these challenging times, please contact the Cree Health Board's **Psychosocial Health Line: 1-833-632-4357**. The Cree Health Board would also like to inform people that specialists with a traditional approach to healing are also accessible through the same number.

Education

Two of our schools can expect additional support personnel on a temporary basis: Whapmagoostui and Nemaska.

Our Material Resources Services department is doing inventory to keep up with the needs for PPE in our schools and other workplaces.

Work continues on laptop preparation and delivery for students in Secondary 4, Secondary 5, and Adult Education.

The Cree School Board is increasing measures under the Digital Action Plan and will be creating a department of Digital Learning. The Director position has been created and approved and the mandate of the department is being defined. This department will support both the youth and adult sector in virtual learning and other digital initiatives.

Our Education Services department continues to provide online workshops to teachers and is now planning for special education services to continue online. This work includes hiring Speech-Language Pathologists, a Psychologist, and other Consultants.

A new school calendar will be distributed this week after approval by the Council of Commissioners. This new calendar will allow for the necessary isolation period when staff return to the communities after the Christmas break.

Post-Secondary Student Services (PSSS) requires students to send a travel request if they intend to return to their communities for the Christmas break. PSSS is informing students to contact their communities for information regarding the entry protocol when they return from the South. Post-Secondary is also determining additional support needs for those students who have high school-aged children with them in the South, specifically students whose children require laptops to attend virtual or blended learning models.