

FEDERATION OF SOVEREIGN INDIGENOUS NATIONS- EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT


COVID-19 Pandemic
Response & Lesson Learned,
September 2021




FSIN

The world-wide pandemic declared in March of 2020, is still in full effect across Canada and the world. Vaccinations have been made available to the general population, and the race is on to achieve herd immunity across the nation. This daunting task has been complicated by widespread vaccine hesitancy.

Vaccine hesitancy is a very serious concern for First Nations due to the very low uptake compared to the general population. In Saskatchewan, in First Nations communities **only 45% of people 12 years of age and older, are fully vaccinated (As of Sept 09,2021).**

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With demand for the vaccine plateauing, uptake has slowed to a trickle. Because unvaccinated individuals comprise 84.% of infections, and 95% of those hospitalized from the virus, it is now more urgent than ever, that additional strategies and support be provided to First Nations in order to minimize the harm to First Nation communities.

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During the current world-wide pandemic crisis of COVID-19, the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) has maintained an active response and effective communication in the rapid, and ever-changing pandemic environment. FSIN has endeavoured to provide timely, relevant, and practical responses to First Nation communities both on-off reserve, and their concerns surrounding this particularly lethal disease.

FSIN Pandemic Response Communications have included;

- Regular Meetings of FSIN Chiefs Emergency Management Task Force.
- Direct Email Communications with all 75 First Nations in Saskatchewan.
- 1-800 Helpline Communications with FSIN First Nations band members in and on-reserve and urban populations.
- Social Media and Website updates directly related to Covid-19 response and current vaccine messaging.

FSIN Pandemic Communications Cont'd:

- Radio advertisement promoting both the vaccine and public health practices.
 - Printed and radio advertisements published in English, Cree, Dakota, Saulteaux, Dene, Nakota, and Lakota languages.
 - Digital billboards and various public advertising in high traffic, urban cities including, Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert and Yorkton.
 - Infographics for sharing on social media and website to target age groups/audiences about COVID-19.
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Other Pandemic Response Tasks to Support First Nation Communities

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Provision to all 75 First Nations in Saskatchewan through FSIN. (22 million non-surgical face mask, and other various forms of PPE)
- Food Security Distribution to all 75 First Nations in Saskatchewan through FSIN. (3 Million Dollars worth of PPE was distributed at crucial points of the pandemic)
- Cultural & Community Events-Pandemic Support to all 75 First Nations in Saskatchewan through FSIN through PPE provision for safe practises.

Lessons learned from Covid-19 Pandemic: Vulnerable Communities

- First Nations are historically underfunded in all areas of the social-funding envelope, placing First Nations community at the greatest risk of all sectors of the Canadian population.
 - Due to a high incidence of poverty and a low level of social support services, and related health factors, First Nation communities are particularly vulnerable to wide ranging impacts from pandemics.
 - First Nation communities possess a distinct lack of trust for the government given the history of this countries genocidal policies and practises against First Nations people.
 - First Nations must be recognized as equal partners in tackling emergency response issues in First Nation communities.
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Lessons Learned From COVID-19-Conclusion;

During the current pandemic, our isolation has helped us to see one another more clearly and completely, and to appreciate our safety and well-being in new ways. Our communities desire is to return to a normal life, without fear of infection.

The lessons learned from Covid-19 will require further study of the wide reaching effects and ramifications of the virus on our people and communities.

There is no timeline for living under the cloud of this world-wide pandemic, but the FSIN along with our First Nation members, stand ready to undertake any strategy necessary to sustain the valuable work of political and social advocacy for First Nations across Saskatchewan.