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DATE: March 10, 2020

To: Chiefs for Saskatchewan First Nations Communities and Tribal Councils

Re: Update on Saskatchewan First Nations Coronavirus Planning and Response

I am writing to provide you with information regarding the public health measures that are in place to support the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) response within Saskatchewan First Nations communities.

COVID-19 (previously known as 'novel coronavirus') was first identified in China at the end of December, and has since spread to many other countries around the world. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing, and the majority of cases are mild and fully recover without any interventions. Similar to other respiratory illnesses, individuals who are elderly or who have underlying medical conditions are at a higher risk for developing more severe illness.

At this time, the risk of COVID-19 in Canada remains low. To date, there have been no cases of COVID-19 identified within Saskatchewan.

Even though the risk is currently low, FNIHB and NITHA are proactively working together to ensure effective public health measures are in place to prepare for and quickly respond to an outbreak if needed. Activities implemented to date include:

- Working closely with the Ministry of Health and Saskatchewan Health Authority to ensure response plans are aligned and coordinated across the province;
- Providing regular written updates and resources to health directors and nurses in communities to keep them informed on the status of COVID-19;
- Offering weekly teleconference sessions targeted towards community health staff to enhance their knowledge on COVID-19 and provide them with the opportunity to ask questions;
- Sharing resources and tools with communities to support routine public health measures that should be in place to reduce the risk associated with any outbreak (i.e. acquiring routine personal protective equipment, updating pandemic plans, and promoting infection prevention and control practices);
- Offering targeted workshops and webinars for health staff to respond to key questions from communities; and
- Planning for the implementation of public health measures (i.e. surveillance systems, clinical guidelines, and self-isolation) to reduce spread of disease in the event that a case of COVID-19 is identified.

As the Medical Health Officer for south and central communities, I will provide direction on any public health follow-up related to COVID-19 within this jurisdiction. Similarly, as the Medical Health Officer in NITHA communities, Dr. Nnamdi Ndubuka will provide this direction within the northern communities. We will continue to work closely with the health directors and nurses in your communities to implement any public health preventative and response measures that may need to be in place.



Thank you for your continued support of public health activities that will equip your community to respond to any potential outbreak, including COVID-19. These activities include updating pandemic plans annually, encouraging routine infection prevention and control practices, sharing information with community members, and ensuring that personal protective equipment is available for healthcare providers. Dr. Ndubuka and I will continue to provide regular updates to health directors within our respective jurisdictions.

For additional information on COVID-19, please refer to the following sources:

- General information on COVID-19 and provincial resources: www.saskatchewan.ca/coronavirus
- Information on current travel advisories: <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/travel-health-notice>
- Considerations for mass gatherings to reduce risk associated with COVID-19: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/mass-gatherings-risk-assessment.html>
- Individual concerns about symptoms or risks related to COVID-19: call **Healthline 811**

Kind regards,

Dr. Ibrahim Khan, Medical Health Officer
Indigenous Services Canada First Nations and Inuit Health Branch
Saskatchewan Region

cc: Bobby Cameron, FSIN Chief
Health Directors for Saskatchewan First Nations Communities
Dr. Nnamdi Ndubuka, NITHA Medical Health Officer
Tara Campbell, NITHA Executive Director
Keith Conn, ISC FNIHB Assistant Deputy Minister
Jocelyn Andrews, ISC FNIHB Regional Executive Officer
Rob Harvey, ISC RO Regional Director General