**Summary of Information and Guidance on Best Practices Regarding Safe Isolation / Social Distancing On the Land**

1. **Government of Canada: Individual and community-based measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in Canada**
2. This guidance is intended to support First Nations, Inuit and Métis leadership, local public health departments, regional health authorities and federal, provincial and territorial governments as they implement public health measures for the COVID-19 response in First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities and remote and isolated communities. The considerations included in this appendix are based on principles outlined in the [Canadian pandemic influenza preparedness: Planning guidance for the health sector](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/flu-influenza/canadian-pandemic-influenza-preparedness-planning-guidance-health-sector.html)
3. [Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Indigenous communities](https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1581964230816/1581964277298) provides information to the public about what the Government of Canada is doing to support First Nations and Inuit Communities in preparing for, monitoring, and responding to COVID-19.

A multitude of factors can influence the health status of an individual or a population. For many First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, culture and tradition are integral components of a holistic approach to health and well-being. It is critical to recognize their unique strengths, which contribute to their resiliency, such as teachings from Elders, nurtured relationships of family and community, revitalization of language and culture, connections to the land, traditional healing, and cultural ceremonies.

First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities and remote and isolated communities typically experience higher rates of overcrowding and housing standards that are often below adequacy and suitability standards. This is of concern because overcrowding and inadequate housing conditions contribute to increased likelihood of transmission of communicable diseases. They also pose challenges for people who need to be isolated or quarantined.

**Strategies to consider:**

* Identifying culturally appropriate strategies to house people who need to isolate or quarantine if their housing does not allow adequate physical separation (e.g., use of temporarily repurposed sites such as hotels, schools, recreation centres);
* Using advice, as appropriate, from [How to care for someone with COVID-19 at home](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/how-care-someone-covid-19-home.html), which includes considerations that may be applicable for remote and isolated communities;
* Increasing ventilation in homes where possible, by opening windows and doors and ensuring mechanical ventilation systems are operating properly;
* Encouraging access to on the land activities and living as a physical distancing measure;
* Ensuring access to traditional food harvesting areas and support for traditional food systems;
* Establishing safe food sharing programs; and,
* Finding ways to adjust cultural ceremonies and traditional activities so they can occur safely. This includes considering the number of participants, altering activities that are more likely to generate respiratory droplets and aerosols, such as singing and heavy breathing, ability to physical distance (e.g., wider drum circles), ability for effective hygiene practices, the likelihood of public health measures being followed, and need for enforcement of the measures.

Link to information: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/public-health-measures-mitigate-covid-19.html#a4>

1. **Core Principles for Good Healthy Living Messages in First Nations, Inuit and Métis Remote and Isolated Northern Communities – Recommendations from the Task Group on Healthy Living**

The Public Health Working Group on Remote and Isolated Communities identified several ways in which individuals and communities could mobilize to promote health and minimize the risk of contracting, or becoming very ill, from COVID-19. Areas for action include:

* Mental wellness, stress management and coping during COVID-19;
* Food security and healthy eating;
* Diabetes and other chronic diseases;
* Physical activities;
* Safe hygiene practices;
* Physical distancing;
* Cultural and On The Land activities; and,
* Reduced smoking and vaping.

The Public Health Working Group established a dedicated Task Group made up of representatives from federal and territorial governments and Indigenous organizations to develop and share culturally relevant public health healthy living messaging to support northern Indigenous communities to protect themselves by reducing the spread of COVID-19 among the broader community, promote community and family wellness, and build resiliency and empowerment.

**The full report can be found** [**here**](https://www.nccih.ca/634/Core_Principles_for_Good_Healthy_Living_Messages_in_First_Nations%2C_Inuit_and_M%C3%A9tis_Remote_and_Isolated_Northern_Communities.nccih?id=7)**.**

1. **Nunavut Inuit – Physical Distancing On The Land**

Nunavut Inuit face high levels of overcrowding and homelessness. In the winter, more people couch surf because the weather is too cold for tents. Four generations of individuals may live in one home. Further, many hotels in communities have shut down or are full of critical care workers. The result is that individuals diagnosed with COVID-19 have nowhere else to quarantine except their overcrowded homes.

Regional Inuit Organizations, in the first phase of the federal Indigenous Community Support Fund, provided funds to Inuit to increase physical distancing by going on the land. This helped reduce overcrowding in homes and shelters, as well as improved mental health and learning of culture and language for children.

Priority was given to Inuit who were willing to spend 14 days or more on the land. In the spring, families were provided $1,500. Winter costs are higher for clothing and fuel, so families received more during the winter outbreak in Iqaluit and Kinngait in 2021. The Regional Inuit Organization and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated administered the program.

1. **Northwest Territories**

**Inuvialuit Regional Corporation’s Funding for On the Land Isolation**

Similar to Nunavut, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, the organization that represents collective Inuvialuit interests, announced an On the Land Fund for Inuvialuit people on March 22, 2020. The fund allocates up to $2,000 per family with an established camp or cabin – along with ready transportation and short-term financial assistance, with priority given to beneficiaries who are willing to spend 14 or more days on the land.

**Hotıì ts’eeda and the Government of the Northwest Territories developed posters for people to be *Safe on the Land*,** and they are available in 11 languages ([https://www.covidresourcesnwt.info/posters-safe-on the land](https://www.covidresourcesnwt.info/posters-safe-on-the-land)). It is recommended that healthy living messaging be conveyed in an accessible manner. Information conveyed in a variety of multimedia formats (videos, radio, infographics, newspapers, inclusion of closed captioning and multi-Indigenous languages) provides options for people to receive the information in the manner that works best for them.



The Dehcho First Nations also developed a similar poster to promote access to safe on the land isolation in response to COVID-19:



In November 2020, the Northwest Territories On The Land Collaborative distributed $1 million in funding to support projects meant to revitalize and strengthen connections to the land. The funding supported 55 projects across the territory. The grants ranged from $2,500 to $60,000.

**Link to article:** [https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/nwt-on the land-collaborating-one-million-funding-1.5812982](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/nwt-on-the-land-collaborating-one-million-funding-1.5812982)

1. **What factors may help protect Indigenous peoples and communities in Canada and internationally from the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts?**

In a review prepared by the National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools and The National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health, a key protective factor from COVID-19 outcomes/impacts included community-driven and controlled public health measures, including:

* Isolation is a traditional practice for some Indigenous communities that has increased relevance in response to the pandemic.
* Rules on community entry, checkpoints, roadblocks, travel restrictions and curfews have been employed through community coordination to maintain boundaries against transmission of COVID-19.
* Contact tracing has been facilitated, when required, through community connections.
* Places and spaces provide the space for individuals to self-isolate by living on the land and/or a place for trailers or housing within a community for people who are isolating.

**Link to the publication:** <https://www.nccmt.ca/uploads/media/media/0001/02/99c03498ac3fcd1a492be93846836aa4087e3aa7.pdf>

1. **Article: *Indigenous in Canada turn to the land to survive coronavirus***

The Petrin family, who live in Inuvik, spent much of the time isolating at their cabin with family and friends during the pandemic. **Excerpts from the article:**

* Their cabin is big enough to accommodate about 15 people, comfortably. The Petrins are taking several family and friends there with them to wait out the threat of COVID-19. “There’s a lot of people that want to go back out on the land to feel safe. There’s fresh air there and a lot of room for social distancing. But we don’t want to overcrowd there, either, so we’re trying to limit who we can take.”
* Although there is a hospital in Inuvik should anyone get sick, its facilities are limited, so many feel their best chance is to leave town and isolate themselves on the land.
* According to Petrin, there are approximately 100 camps about 10km (six miles) from each other along the Raymond Channel of the Mackenzie River. He estimates that hundreds of people are either on the land already or preparing to leave for it.
* “It is not easy living at the cabin. There is constant work to do: gathering and cutting wood to keep warm, maintaining the upkeep of the cabin and harvesting food from the land,” he explains. But he would not have it any other way. “We can do whatever we want out here. The kids play. We hunt, fish, and trap. The Earth is here for us – the animals, the plants, everything. The water is good, it’s clear in spring.”

In northern Ontario, a group of Indigenous friends stayed in a camp along the North Shore and Manitoulin Island region. Isaac Murdoch, an Anishinaabeg artist and cultural teacher, helps to oversee the Nimkii Aazhibikong language revitalization and land-based practices initiative set up in 2017.

* Murdoch and a group of five adults, two children and one elder are currently on lockdown in a cabin home there, but are utilizing the teachings of their ancestors and the land to get through it. He says the elders have passed down knowledge through the generations to help sustain them at times like these.
* “For a lot of people this is very scary, but we have to also remind ourselves that we’ve been through this and our culture has the teachings and all of those good things in our teachings to help us.”
* “The elders are reminding us to go back to the land. And so, for us, the land is the biggest healthcare system, and so we know that through the cultural practices of how we survived great sicknesses before, that the land is the answer.”

**Link to article:** <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/4/4/indigenous-in-canada-turn-to-the-land-to-survive-coronavirus>

1. **Article: Why on the land educators see opportunity in a global pandemic**

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, students were turfed from traditional classroom settings and are now finding their feet out on the land. "Indigenous communities have taken this as an opportunity to kind of reintroduce their youth back onto the land themselves," said Doug Dokis, the director of InSTEM, a land-based STEM education program from Actua, an educational charity that has worked with communities across the North. "Many of the communities we're working with are taking their kids out onto the land as we speak." Indigenous leaders and outdoor education advocates are hopeful post-pandemic schooling will leave more room for learning on the land.

Even before a pandemic forced schools to close, interest in outdoor education was climbing. Across Canada and around the world, public school systems are integrating on the land learning as the benefits for students become increasingly clear. In the territories, on the land programming is often organized by local First Nations or regional groups, and at least partly funded by the territorial government. Kristen Tanche, the regional wellness coordinator for Dehcho First Nations in the Northwest Territories, organized multi-day excursions that pair Indigenous elders and youth on the land.

Like other school boards across the North, when the pandemic forced classrooms closed, Etua Snowball, the director of educational services for the Kativik Regional School Board in northern Quebec said he encouraged parents to spend that time teaching their children how to hunt, fish, and be safe on the land. Indigenous organizations and even territorial governments across the North encouraged parents to take to the land to prevent the spread of COVID-19. New funding from federal and territorial governments provided families with the resources to do so. The result has been an explosion in informal, on the land learning.

**Link to article**: [https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/on the land-education-covid-19-1.5571602](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/on-the-land-education-covid-19-1.5571602)