



Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority Inc.



March 9, 2020

To: All Nurse-In-Charge
Event Organizers

From: Dr. Nnamdi Ndubuka, Medical Health Officer, Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority (NITHA)

Re: Guidance for public events and mass gatherings in First Nations Communities

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness caused by a novel virus that has been spreading worldwide. No travel related nor community-acquired cases have been confirmed in Saskatchewan, at the time of providing this guidance, however based on global epidemiology the situation can change very quickly even over a few days. With cases and local transmission being reported in places in Canada and North America, we are gaining more understanding of COVID-19's epidemiology, clinical course, immunogenicity, and other factors as time progresses.

The following guidance is for people planning, working at or attending public events or mass gatherings where many people are together in one place, at one time for a set period. Examples include but not limited to pow wow, conferences, weddings, sports event and festivals. The advice below will also be helpful to those organizing of these events.

Mass gatherings and large community events bring people from multiple communities into close contact with each other and these have the potential to increase COVID-19 transmission. One method to slow the spread of respiratory virus infections, including COVID-19, is by increasing social distancing i.e. reduce close contact. The goals of this guidance are:

- 1) to protect people attending and working at mass gatherings and the local community from COVID-19 infection; and
- 2) to reduce community transmission and introductions of COVID-19 into new communities.

A. Event organisers

1. How to proceed with large public events

If you are an event organizer, you should focus on:

- reminding potential attendees and event workers not to attend if they are feeling unwell
- reminding potential attendees and event workers not to attend if they have been in mainland China, Iran, northern Italy or the Republic of Korea, or been in close contact with someone confirmed with COVID-19 in the past 14 days
- ensuring your emergency management plan is up to date
- briefing your event staff on how to practice good hygiene and making it easy for staff and attendees to practice good hygiene (see below).

- collaborating with community partners including the local community health team, hotels where participants are staying, airlines, the event venue(s), and other partners to share communication and explain this guidance.
- isolating event staff or participants in a designated space (at the event venue) who become ill with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and providing a clean disposable procedure facemask, to the extent available, to wear for those who become ill. It is not necessary to distribute masks to healthy participants.
- maintaining a registration list of participants and staff; this will significantly assist local public health in contact tracing in the event a COVID-19 case should later be identified as having attended the event.
- ensuring that persons coming from locations for where current advice is self-monitor and avoid large crowds but not self-isolate for 14 days do not attend mass gatherings even if asymptomatic.
- recommending that participants minimize close contact (e.g., recommending no hand shaking or hugging)
- discussing event details with NITHA Public Health and prepare to implement an emergency contingency plan based on specific guidance
- ensuring that multi touch surfaces are cleaned frequently.
- staying informed about the local COVID-19 situation. Get up-to-date information about COVID-19 activity in Saskatchewan on the Saskatchewan Department of Public Health web page. www.saskatchewan.ca/coronavirus

2. How to brief event staff

As always, anyone scheduled to work at a public event should stay home if they feel unwell. Staff should be reminded to always practice good cough etiquette and hand hygiene. This includes:

- covering coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues or clothing, or coughing/sneezing into your elbow
- disposing of used tissues appropriately in a bin
- washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and drying them thoroughly or using alcohol based hand sanitizer:
 - before eating or handling food
 - after using the toilet
 - after coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose or wiping children's noses
 - after caring for sick people.

Food handlers should be extra vigilant with hand hygiene and should not work if they feel unwell.

3. Health precautions for staff and attendees

- Display signage at the event entry, near toilets and food preparation areas reminding people to practice good hygiene.
- Ensure you have adequate equipment and/or facilities to support good hygiene practices, such as soap and water and/or hand sanitizer, paper towels and tissues.
- Where appropriate, ensure there are supplies to enable regular cleaning of surfaces. Increase the frequency of cleaning commonly used areas.
- Remind people who feel unwell to stay at home.

- Remind the public and event workers not to attend if they have been in mainland China, Iran, northern Italy or the Republic of Korea, or been in close contact with someone confirmed with COVID-19 in the past 14 days.

4. Advice on face masks

Face masks are not recommended for most people as there is limited evidence that they prevent the spread of disease. Good cough etiquette and hand hygiene will have a bigger impact. Information about the effectiveness of face masks and how to wear and remove them is available at [who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks)

5. Risk assessments and ongoing response

Before deciding to proceed with, restrict, modify, postpone or cancel your event, we recommend you complete a thorough risk assessment. This means you should consider:

- the latest local, national and international advice on COVID-19 (the Ministry of Health, your local public health unit and the Public Health Agency of Canada will provide reputable, evidence-based information and updates)
- whether people attending your event may have been exposed to, or infected with, COVID-19 and what risk this might pose to others
- the characteristics of your event (for example, the number of people expected; accommodation arrangements; indoor or outdoor, duration, the countries that participants, performers and attendees are travelling from; etc. and whether they might increase the risk and/or spread of COVID-19)
- what measures you could put in place (see above) to help reduce the spread of any disease.

B. Event attendees

1. Attending public events

The following people should not attend events:

- anyone who is unwell
- anyone who returned from high risk countries or been in close contact with someone confirmed with COVID-19 in the last 14 days is being asked to self-isolate and call 811 HealthLine for guidance once self-isolated.

2. How to minimize the risk of getting sick at an event

The most important thing to do is practice good hygiene. This means:

- covering coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues or coughing/sneezing into your elbow
- disposing of used tissues appropriately in a bin
- washing hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water and drying them thoroughly, or using hand sanitizer:
 - before eating or handling food
 - after using the toilet
 - after coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose or wiping children's noses

- after touching public surfaces
- trying to keep a metre away from people who are unwell
- limiting alcohol and drug use (as this may affect your ability to adequately follow the advice above).

If you are sick, do not attend public events.

Persons at higher risk for example elderly over 65years and persons with underlying health conditions (such as those with diabetes, renal failure, chronic lung disease or who are immunocompromised) should reconsider attending events based on risk assessment of self and event.

Useful links and resources

Updated information can also be found at:

Fact sheet <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/covid-19/coronavirus-factsheet-eng.pdf>

Information sheets on self-isolation and COVID-19 <https://pubsaskdev.blob.core.windows.net/pubsask-prod/115767/Self-Isolation-Sheet-Feb-26-2020.pdf>

Thank you,



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