



Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority Inc.



February 24, 2021

ATTN: First Nations Residents in Northern Saskatchewan

Three COVID-19 **variants of concern** are now circulating in Canada. These variants have mutations that makes them more contagious. **Variants of concern have also been reported in Saskatchewan. They may be circulating, so we must take action now.**

Variants of concern are a serious risk to public health in First Nations and have the potential to cause large outbreaks with high rates of hospitalization and deaths.

We must prevent as many cases as possible. Follow the most recent Public Health Order:

- Visits and gatherings between homes are not allowed.
- Stay home except for work, medical care and essential trips like groceries. Do not travel outside your community unless it is essential.
- Short outdoor visits of 10 or less are allowed but keep at least six feet away from others
- Always wear a well-fitting 3-layer non-medical mask outside your home AND keep six feet from others. These must be strictly followed to work well against new variants.
- Provide all necessary information to nurses/contact tracers. This process is confidential.

The only safe gathering or visit is virtual. These variants can infect many people very quickly during in-person gatherings or visits. Non-medical masks **and** physical distancing and cleaning reduce the chance of infection, but do not guarantee a safe gathering or visit. Life-saving vaccines for Elders and older adults are weeks away so these groups should be extra careful to avoid this life-threatening virus.

Immediate testing will prevent cases and save lives: if you feel unwell. don't brush it off! Colds and flus are rare this year, so **if you feel any symptoms or think you were exposed, assume it is COVID-19 and get a test immediately** (do not wait 48 hours). To book a test, call the HealthLine 811 or your community health clinic.

The test is the same for all COVID-19 variants. Along with our Indigenous Services Canada partners, NITHA is monitoring for the new variants in First Nations in Saskatchewan through regular and genetic testing.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Nnamdi Ndubuka".

Dr. Nnamdi Ndubuka
Medical Health Officer, Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority