

Support for Indigenous Peoples during COVID-19



SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

- On May 29, 2020, the Government of Canada announced \$285.1 million to support the ongoing public health response to COVID-19 in Indigenous communities. This funds community-led responses to the pandemic and provides targeted increases to primary health care for First Nations communities.
- In case of outbreaks, this funding can be used to provide surge capacity and additional support for community-based services in First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities.
- Communities can access this funding through their **First Nations and Inuit Health regional offices** (in British Columbia, through the First Nations Health Authority). Please consult **Accessing additional public health support for First Nations and Inuit communities during COVID-19** for more information.
- In addition to this, on October 30th, the Government of Canada announced \$59 million for First Nations to adapt their on reserve community infrastructure. First Nations can use the funds to implement public health and safety measures in community buildings by adding hand washing stations, buying hand sanitizers, personal protective equipment for staff, and cleaning supplies, installing signage and barriers to promote physical distancing, and doing safety checks and upgrades to existing ventilation systems. The funds will be made available via Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) through existing funding agreements to First Nations Band communities or Tribal Councils, as well as self-governing First Nations.



ON-RESERVE INCOME ASSISTANCE

- The Government of Canada has invested \$270 million to supplement the **On-reserve Income Assistance Program**, which will support individuals and families with the help they need to meet essential living expenses.
- The funding will help the program meet increased demand for income assistance for individuals on reserve who find themselves without a job, and may not be eligible for, or have easy access to, Employment Insurance. It will also help hire additional staff to better serve First Nations communities.
- To apply for the On-Reserve Income Assistance Program, individuals can contact their community's band office or the **Yukon regional office** for more details.



SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS AND EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE FACILITIES

- The Government of Canada has provided \$112 million to First Nations communities to support a safe return to elementary and secondary schools on reserve.
- First Nations can use this funding to support school and education program reopening needs, which could include salaries for teachers, custodians and bus drivers (who may have to work additional hours during this period), access to technology, purchasing e-learning software and the development of take-home learning materials. As part of this funding, \$12 million can be used for physical changes to schools required to respond to COVID-19.
- First Nations can and will make decisions about their own schools reopening based on what they feel is safest for students and families. This funding, provided directly to First Nations through existing programs, is intended to support their work.
- On October 30th, the Government of Canada announced \$120.7 million to help Indigenous early learning and child care facilities safely operate during the pandemic. The investment is expected to support over 35,000 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation children who access culturally relevant Indigenous early learning and child care programs. This funding will be co-managed through existing early learning and child care partnerships. It will assist Indigenous communities in addressing their most critical needs, including implementing enhanced cleaning protocols, hiring additional staff, and offering training.
- This allocation also includes a base of \$5 million to ensure a minimum threshold to support emergency Indigenous early learning and child care needs. Of the \$120 million in new federal investments for Indigenous early learning and child care:
 - over \$71 million will be managed in partnership with First Nations;
 - over \$10 million will be managed in partnership with Inuit;
 - over \$29 million will be managed in partnership with the Métis Nation; and,
 - over \$8 million will enhance Indigenous early learning and child care services through the Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities program.



INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY SUPPORT FUND

- The **Indigenous Community Support Fund** was created in March 2020 to support Indigenous communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since its creation, the Government has committed \$685 million to the Fund. Funding is distributed through a combination of allocations directly to First Nations, Inuit and Métis leadership; proposal-based funding for urban and off-reserve Indigenous organizations and communities; and needs-based funding, which is application driven.
- This funding can be used in a wide variety of measures, for example: supporting Elders and vulnerable community members, addressing food security, educational and other support for children, mental health assistance and emergency response services, and preparedness measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Of the \$685 million committed to the Fund, on August 12, 2020, the Government of Canada announced that additional needs-based funding will be available through an application driven process. \$159,827,361 is available to First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, as well as organizations serving Indigenous peoples, including First Nations living off-reserve and Indigenous Peoples living in urban centres. For information on how to apply, please visit the **Indigenous Community Support Fund: Needs-based application**. In BC, health related requests from First Nations will be shared with the First Nations Health Authority for input.



MENTAL WELLNESS

- The Government of Canada announced \$82.5 million in mental health and wellness supports on August 25, 2020, to help Indigenous communities adapt and expand mental wellness services, improve access and address growing demand, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of this funding will also go towards national organizations and services, such as the Hope for Wellness Help Line.
- This funding supports the Government of Canada's work with Indigenous partners and communities and is distinctions-based:
 - The First Nations portion is \$55.5 million, and has been allocated based on discussion among regional partnership tables.
 - The Inuit portion is \$12 million, and has been allocated in discussions with Inuit national and regional representatives.
 - The Métis Nation portion is \$7.5 million, and has been allocated through regional Métis Nation governing members.
- The remaining funding is approximately \$7.5 million, and will support coordination and inter-regional activities, such as work with national Indigenous mental wellness organizations and other national organizations that advance the development of resources and tools, as well as addressing the increased call volume of the Hope for Wellness Help Line.
- Individuals who are experiencing depression, anxiety, or excessive stress can contact the **Hope for Wellness Help Line** or their local First Nation, Inuit, or Métis service provider to see what supports may be available in their community.



SUPPORT FOR WOMEN'S SHELTERS AND SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRES

- \$10 million was provided to ISC's existing network of 46 emergency shelters on reserve and in Yukon to support Indigenous women and children fleeing violence.
- An additional \$44.8 million over 5 years has been provided to build 12 new shelters through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's **Shelter Enhancement Program**.
- The government will also provide \$40.8 million to support operational costs for these new shelters over the first five years, and \$10.2 million annually ongoing. These new investments will bring the total number of program-funded shelters to 58.
- Starting this year, \$1 million per year ongoing will also be provided to support engagement with Métis leaders and service providers on shelter provision and community-led violence prevention projects for Métis women, girls, LGBTQ and two-spirit people.



SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS BUSINESSES

- The Government of Canada is providing up to \$306.8 million in relief measures for small and medium-sized Indigenous businesses in the form of interest-free loans and non-repayable contributions.
- With support from ISC, financial supports are available through Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFIs), administered by the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association, and through Métis Capital Corporations (MCCs).
- Businesses can contact their **Aboriginal Financial Institution or Métis Capital Corporation** to apply for support.
- The Government of Canada has also announced the Indigenous Community Business Fund (ICBF), which provides \$117 million in new funding to support community-owned and micro-businesses whose revenues have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Business can apply for ICBF funding by completing the ICBF application form available on the dedicated ISC **webpage** and submitting their application package to the ISC Regional Office representative by email.
- The Government of Canada also created the COVID-19 Indigenous Tourism Stimulus Development Fund which provided \$16 million in new funding to support Indigenous tourism through the pandemic into recovery.
- The Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) administered this fund to Indigenous tourism businesses across the country that have lost revenue due to COVID-19.
- The above funding compliments the suite of relief measures available to Canadian workers and businesses through Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan.



SUPPORT FOR POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS

- The Government of Canada is providing an additional \$75.2 million to the Post-Secondary Student Support Program for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation students pursuing post-secondary education.
- How students can determine their eligibility:
 - First Nations students: contact your band council office or the organization that administers the **Post-Secondary Student Support Program**
 - Inuit students: contact your respective Inuit land-claim organization
 - Métis Nation students: contact your respective Governing Member
- On October 30, the Government of Canada announced \$25.9 million to provide immediate support to Indigenous post-secondary institutions in 2020-21. The investment will help these institutions address increased costs and financial uncertainty resulting from the pandemic, including putting in place supports to retain staff, automating services to process student applications and registrations, adapting courses for online learning, and implementing public health and safety measures for in-person services.
- This one-time funding will be administered through existing Indigenous post-secondary education strategies including the Post-Secondary Partnerships Program, the Inuit Post-Secondary Education Strategy and the Métis Nation Post-Secondary Education Strategy – and will support Indigenous post-secondary institutions to offset costs and financial uncertainty caused by the pandemic.



OTHER SUPPORTS

- The Government of Canada transitioned from the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) to a simplified and more accessible **Employment Insurance (EI)** program. In most cases, those who were previously receiving the CERB through Service Canada, do not need to apply for EI benefits. Those who are eligible for EI, will receive a minimum benefit rate of \$500 per week before taxes, or \$300 per week before taxes for extended parental benefits but could receive more.
- The **Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB)** provides \$500 per week for up to 26 weeks, to workers who have stopped working or had their employment/self-employment income reduced by at least 50% due to COVID-19 and who are not eligible for EI. These workers must be available and looking for work, and must accept work where it is reasonable to do so.
- The **Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB)** provides \$500 per week for up to two weeks (can be split into two one-week portions), for workers who are unable to work because they contracted COVID-19; self-isolated for reasons related to COVID-19; or have underlying conditions that would make them more susceptible to COVID-19.
- The **Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit (CRCB)** provides \$500 per week for up to 26 weeks per household, for eligible workers unable to work because they must care for a child under the age of 12 or family member because schools, day-cares or care facilities are closed due to COVID-19 or because the child or family member is sick and/ore required to quarantine.
- For information about these benefits including eligibility requirements, how to apply, and eligibility period dates, we encourage Canadians to visit the **CRA's webpages**.
- There are additional measures to support individuals and businesses. Visit the Government of Canada's **COVID-19 Economic Response Plan** for details.