

# COVID-19 Update



For more information:  
[Canada.ca/coronavirus](https://Canada.ca/coronavirus)

Information for Indigenous communities:  
[Canada.ca/coronavirus-info-indigenous](https://Canada.ca/coronavirus-info-indigenous)



## **Indigenous Services Canada Ontario Region: Evergreen Guide to Using the COVID-19 Vaccine Communications Toolkit**

for Indigenous Communities and Organizations in Ontario

December 24, 2020

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## **Preface**

The purpose of this document is to provide leadership and communications professionals in Ontario Indigenous communities and organizations with a guide to disseminate information about the COVID-19 vaccination using the resources in this guide, as well as those in the Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) COVID-19 Vaccine Communications Toolkit.

The examples and resources from the Governments of Canada and Ontario Indigenous communities, and Indigenous organizations found in Annexes A to E are included as reference material only.

## **The Importance of Vaccination**

Vaccination is a personal choice, and like other vaccines in Canada, the COVID-19 vaccine is not mandatory.

By getting the COVID-19 vaccine, Indigenous community members will be protected against the novel coronavirus, and will help prevent the spread of the virus to their families and to those in their communities who may be more likely to contract it. This includes Elders and older adults; and people with certain medical conditions where infection could cause severe illness and death.

The COVID-19 vaccine is complementary to traditional health and medicine approaches. Receiving the vaccine, once available, is a contribution everyone can make to support their community, their Elders, and their family members.

The COVID-19 vaccine will also be an important step to safely resume normal life.

## **Reducing Vaccine Hesitation: Awareness Campaigns**

Identified as one of the first groups of people to receive the vaccines, after health care providers and long-term care residents, some Indigenous peoples may be hesitant to get vaccinated.

It is important to have discussions at both the community and individual levels to listen, understand, and address concerns. Those who choose to become vaccinated can be a powerful influence in the community and lead to even more people getting vaccinated.

To build confidence and trust in vaccinations, it is recommended that trusted sources, such as community leadership, local health authorities, and Indigenous partners, help raise awareness and disseminate information on COVID-19 immunizations.

Objectives of awareness campaigns include:

- ensuring Indigenous people have access to accurate and timely information to enable them to make informed decisions about vaccination in advance of getting a COVID-19 vaccine, and to correct misinformation;
- building trust in immunization efforts ahead of the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine to their communities;
- increasing awareness of the importance of immunization as a health prevention strategy; and
- creating awareness about details related to vaccine roll-out, and the need for continued public health measures.

## **Suggested Communications Activities**

Presenting the facts is only the beginning. Leading by example is another way to make vaccine confidence **visible** in your communities. This can also help dispel some of the misinformation in circulation.

**A sample checklist of activities to promote COVID-19 vaccine confidence is included in Annex A.**

### ***Leadership as vaccine champions and media outreach***

Identify trusted sources and spokespeople from within the community, or local health partners as vaccine leaders. This could include Chief and Council, Elders, youth advocates, and the local health authority, among others.

Invite leaders to share their thoughts and emphasize the importance of vaccination through mediums such as:

- TV and radio interviews and public service announcements;
- short videos or testimonials;
- social media (paid or organic); and
- blog and web articles.

**The ISC COVID-19 Vaccine Communications Toolkit includes public service announcement radio scripts and social media tools and tips to help you get started.**

**For this activity, you will also find examples of COVID-19 social media outreach by First Nation communities and the Weeneebayko Area Health Authority (WAHA) in Annex B of this guide.**

### ***Community discussions and engagement***

Create opportunities to solicit community feedback, including questions and concerns, regarding the COVID-19 vaccination. This can help foster an open dialogue between community members and trusted sources, and also provide input on what the community can do to build vaccine confidence among its members. Community engagement is crucial; how one community chooses to engage with its members may differ from another especially if there are resource or technology limitations.

Find creative means to solicit feedback and consider using:

- radio talk shows and podcasts;
- virtual townhalls (include accommodations for non-video participants);
- social media for Questions & Answers (such as live or scripted “Ask Me Anything” sessions on Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter);
- community notices and newsletters; or
- a community hotline or email.

It is recommended to have a credible medical spokesperson available, such as a community health director, to answer health-related questions.

**Resources provided in the ISC COVID-19 Vaccine Communications Toolkit include COVID-19 vaccine narratives you may use when designing your awareness campaign and engaging with your community.**

**This guide includes key messages, examples of podcasts, and what a virtual townhall looks like in Annex C.**

### ***Inform non-medical community staff on the importance of vaccination***

Inform non-medical members of your community’s administration about the importance of getting vaccinated, including how vaccines are developed, approved, and distributed.

Members of the administration are part of the community too. Consider providing feedback mechanisms for staff to provide their input, or on behalf of community members. Helping them understand and emphasizing the benefits of vaccination for them as individuals, their families, and the broader community can help spread critical information about COVID-19 immunization and combat misinformation.

Some helpful ways to do this include:

- virtual staff training, or meetings with a credible medical professional present to answer questions;
- an email or physical drop box in the office for staff to ask their questions; and
- all-staff emails or newsletters with regularly updated FAQs.

**Many of the suggested tools and resources in this guide for obtaining community feedback, such as virtual townhalls, web and email communications, and the COVID-19 vaccine confidence checklist, can be modified to inform and train your non-medical staff.**

***Make the decision to get vaccinated visible***

Taking action adds credibility to the information awareness campaign. It demonstrates there are people in the community who believe the vaccine will help create a safer environment for everyone. This can assist in activating positive emotions among the community, thus encouraging individuals to get vaccinated.

Indigenous communities and organizations can elicit different methods to make the decision to get vaccinated visible, including:

- souvenirs branded with “I got my COVID-19 vaccine”;
- social media campaigns featuring members of the community getting vaccinated, and stickers or badges for social media;
- social media hashtags;
- testimonials from members of the community or trusted sources on their decision to get vaccinated and share with the media; and
- local media outreach to highlight the community’s efforts to provide the COVID-19 vaccine to its members.

**Using hashtags can help increase your reach on social media to a broader audience. You may choose to use trending hashtags (included in the ISC COVID-19 Vaccine Communications Toolkit) or create a unique hashtag for your campaign.**

**This guide provides suggestions for making the decision to get the COVID-19 vaccine visible, including the use of social media stickers and badges (Annex D).**

**A sample communications calendar is included in Annex E to showcase how an organization or community can organize a local communications campaign through the use of the content provided in this guide.**

## Media Relations

If you are contacted by the media, we encourage you to respond if the enquiries are specific to your community or organization. You may also refer the media to Indigenous Services Canada or the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs Ontario (for inquiries related to vaccine distribution in Indigenous communities):

Indigenous Services Canada  
Media Relations  
[SAC.media.ISC@canada.ca](mailto:SAC.media.ISC@canada.ca)  
819-953-1160

Ministry of Indigenous Affairs  
Flavia Mussio, Communications Services Branch  
[Flavia.Mussio@ontario.ca](mailto:Flavia.Mussio@ontario.ca)  
416-314-9455

## Together We Can Do This

Keeping our communities safe is a collective effort and we hope this guide provides you with some new ideas on how to engage with your membership and build COVID-19 vaccine confidence in your community. Finding the balance between your audience's preferences and the resources you have available will help create an effective awareness campaign.

## Annex A: COVID-19 Communications and Vaccine Confidence Checklist

You may use this checklist to plan your communications strategy to build vaccine confidence in your community.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Activity</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop a presentation with your community’s health director and/or the local health authority) on the basics of COVID-19 vaccination.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify strategies with your health team and members of the administration and the broader community on how to increase vaccine confidence in the community.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide training on the COVID-19 vaccine and how to build vaccine confidence to all staff (depending on the size of the administration or organization, training content may vary for medical and non-medical staff).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Distribute COVID-19 vaccine informational materials for posting in administration buildings and community facilities, such as the band office, and local businesses (i.e., posters, handouts, factsheets, etc.).</p> <p><b>Suggested resources (links in ISC COVID-19 Vaccine Communications Toolkit):</b>  <i>Poster: What you Need to Know about COVID-19 vaccine for Canada</i>  <i>Poster: Stop the spread of COVID-19 (information for Indigenous communities)</i></p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Publish COVID-19 vaccine informational content on your community’s or organization’s web site and social media accounts (i.e., blog or social media posts, COVID-19 webpage, etc.).</p> <p><b>Suggested resources (links in ISC COVID-19 Vaccine Communications Toolkit):</b>  <i>Video on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19</i>  <i>Video on how vaccines are developed</i>  <i>COVID-19 vaccine and Indigenous peoples</i>  <i>General information on COVID-19 Vaccines</i></p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create and publicize ways for the community to ask questions or receive guidance about the COVID-19 vaccination (email inbox or physical drop box, hotlines, point of contact, etc.).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Share regular updates on the community’s COVID-19 vaccination efforts with your membership (i.e., through virtual townhalls, community newsletters and emails, etc.).

□	Once information is available, communicate where, when, and how community members will be offered the vaccine (include cautions about the possible side effects, such as severe allergic reactions, and the health supports available).
□	Discuss with the community about vaccines and use strategies identified in staff and community discussions to make vaccine confidence visible in your community.
□	Share testimonials from leadership, health professionals, and members of the community who volunteer to speak about why they chose to get vaccinated and promote among the community (i.e., through posters, community or organization website, social media, etc.).

## Annex B: Leveraging Social Media

When designing an awareness campaign, it is important to consider how you will share your messaging and engage with your community. Social media can be a power tool to help reach your audience across a number of platforms and through different mediums such as text, images, videos, and audio. Popular social media platforms include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok. It is recommended to choose the platforms and mediums most suitable for your audience.

**The ISC COVID-19 Vaccine Communications Toolkit includes social media tools and tips that may help with your awareness campaign. These include sample messages, trusted social media sources, considerations when using images, and hashtags to boost your reach on social media.**

### *Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation: #ProtectOurElders*

During the first wave of COVID-19, Siksika First Nation in Alberta came up with a creative way to raise awareness about the risks of the virus and how it can adversely impact people in close connections and some of the most vulnerable in the community – the Elders.

With the help of Indigenous leaders and influencers, Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation recorded a series of public service announcements to educate the Indigenous community members on what they can do to limit the spread of COVID-19. The social media campaign used the hashtag #ProtectOurElders to spark a conversation and elicited national media attention.

More recently, the First Nation has partnered with comedians to deliver important messages through a light-hearted tone.



**Weeneebayko Area Health Authority (WAHA)**

The Weeneebayko Area Health Authority regularly posts COVID-19 updates and public service announcements in different languages on their social media platforms. Increasing the availability of information across a number of different platforms and in several languages can help bridge the gap created by cultural and language barriers.



Source: Twitter

### ***Fort William First Nation Facebook Live Updates***

Along with regular posts and COVID-19 updates on the community's Facebook page, Fort William First Nation Chief Peter Collins provides updates via Facebook Live. Social media can be a helpful tool to engage with the community and to communicate important information with the membership.



Source: Facebook

## Annex C: Community Discussions and Engagement

### Radio Talk Shows and Podcasts

Some people may prefer to get their information by audio and in some communities, this may be the most reliable way to receive information. Radio talk shows and podcasts are great alternatives and widely accessible over the air through a radio, computer or mobile device – at home, or on the go. Here are two examples of how communities and organizations connect with their audiences through podcasts:

#### *Six Nations of the Grand River COVID-19 Update Podcasts*

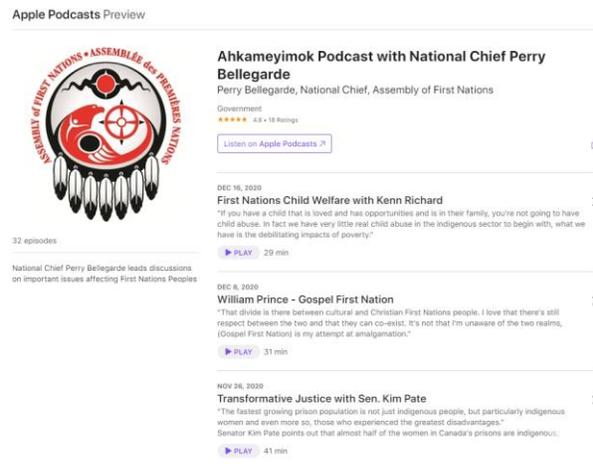
From April to September 2020, Six Nations of the Grand River regularly recorded podcasts with COVID-19 updates for the community. The podcasts were hosted by Lori Davis Hill, Director of Six Nations Health Services, and featured members of the Six Nations administration and community and health professionals. The podcast series explored a variety of topics including community response plans, misinformation in the media, and mental health and addiction services. The podcasts were shared with the community through YouTube.

#### *Ahkameyimok Podcast with National Chief Perry Bellegarde*

A podcast series developed by Assembly of First Nations and hosted by National Chief Perry Bellegarde discussed issues affecting First Nations Peoples. The podcasts are available on Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, and other popular podcast services.



Source: YouTube



Source: Apple Podcasts

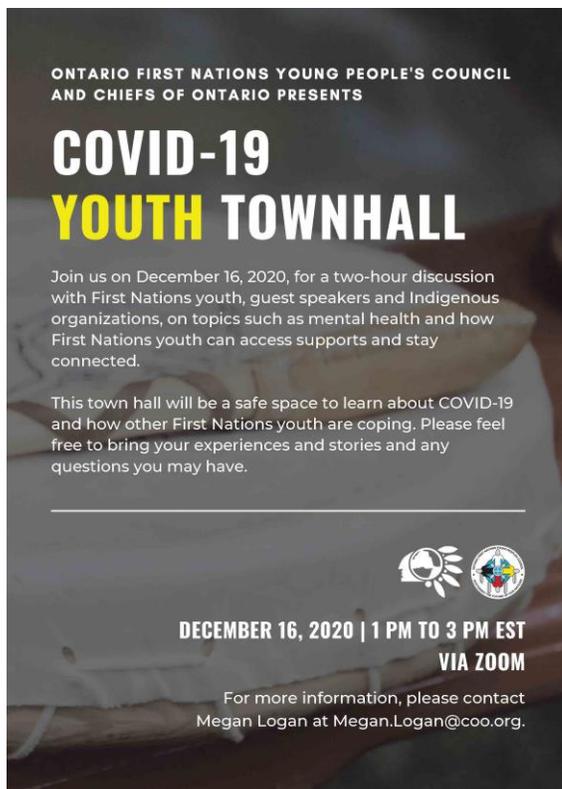
## Virtual Townhalls

Another way you can create an open forum and solicit feedback from your community (while limiting in-person gatherings) is by hosting virtual townhalls. Technology has provided more ways for us to stay connected and informed. However, it is important to note that not all communities or participants may have the resources or technology for video conferencing.

It is recommended to use a service, such as Zoom, Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams, and Cisco Webex, that supports dial-in from a cell phone or landline.

### *Ontario First Nation Young People’s Council (OFNYPC’s) Youth Townhall*

On December 6, 2020, the Ontario First Nation Young People’s Council hosted a COVID-19 townhall for First Nations youth across Ontario. The townhall featured youth and leadership across the province and provided an opportunity for participants to learn more about the virus and the supports available, to share their own experiences with COVID-19, and to hear what actions are being taken to ensure the safety of First Nation youth and their communities.



Source: Twitter

## Annex D: Make It Visible with Promotional Materials

Providing promotional products, such as stickers or a treat, to those who choose to get the COVID-19 vaccine can help activate positive emotions in the community and to encourage others to get vaccinated.

### *Instagram Stories Stickers*

In 2019, Instagram introduced a set of voting stickers ahead of the Canadian federal elections. Users could choose to apply the stickers to their Instagram stories to encourage their followers who had yet to cast their ballots to do so.

It is unclear if Instagram or other social media platforms will introduce similar stickers to encourage people to get the COVID-19 vaccine; however, it is possible to create your own social media stickers, filters, and badges if none exists.



Source: CTV News

## Annex E: Sample Communications Calendar

This calendar demonstrates how an organization or community could use the content provided in this guide and the ISC COVID-19 Vaccine Communications Toolkit. We hope that this will help to generate ideas as to how and when to share information related to COVID-19 and the COVID-19 vaccines.

### Disclaimers:

- FB refers to Facebook and could be replaced by any social media channel used by your organization.
- Potential spokespeople from your organization could include: health director, community health nurse, Chief, Council, physician, Elder, etc.
- First person testimonials (from someone who has had COVID-19, been affected by COVID-19 or who has received one of the COVID-19 vaccines) would be of interest to your networks. Consider sharing a quote, a short story, video or interview with a photo from someone who is comfortable sharing.
- If you have the funds to purchase ads on local radio or in local papers, or even on Facebook, the content in this guide could be used for ad messages.

Week 1	
SUN-TUES	Place posters around community <b>Record radio and video</b> PSAs (key facts vaccines; vaccines and traditional medicine; priority immunization) featuring community figure (ex. Chief)
WED-THURS	Begin playing PSAs on <b>radio</b> <b>FB</b> post with visual about vaccines coming soon, continue to follow public health measures
FRI-SAT	Share <a href="#">Keep it Clean video</a> on <b>FB</b> Post a photo on <b>FB</b> of health centre preparing vaccine clinics
Week 2	
MON-TUES	Visual <b>FB</b> post re. COVID is serious, follow public health measures Share <a href="#">video</a> on <b>FB</b> about how vaccines are developed
WED	Share video PSA via <b>FB</b>

THURS-SAT  
 Share vaccine clinic schedule via **FB, posters, email** and **during visits** to the health clinic  
**Schedule radio interview** for XX date about first vaccine clinic

### Week 3

MON-TUES  
**Schedule FB live** event for THURS for a Q&A session about vaccines  
 Post **FB** reminder re. vaccine clinics  
 Post COVID-19 vaccines [resource](#) on **FB**

WED  
**FB** reminder of event tomorrow

THURS  
**Live Q&A via FB** with Health Director and Chief

FRI-SAT  
**FB reminder** that clinics start Monday  
**FB post** (FRI afternoon or Saturday) re. vaccine does not replace traditional medicine

### Week 4

MON-TUES  
 Clinics open! **Share visuals on FB** (health director, nurse, etc.)  
**Schedule FB live** for Thursday re. clinics

TUES-THURS  
 Interview on local radio about first clinics

WED  
**FB** reminder of THURS FB live

THURS  
**FB live** with Health Director and nurse

FRI  
**Visual FB post** about safety of vaccines

SAT  
**FB post** about [stopping the spread of COVID-19](#)

### Week 5

MON-TUES  
**Email short summary** (and photo) of progress to ISC Communications to amplify via GCIIndigenous channels  
**FB post** and photo about vaccine clinics

WED	<b>FB</b> post about <a href="#">how vaccines are developed</a>
THURS	<b>FB</b> post about <a href="#">going out safely during COVID-19</a>
FRI	<b>FB</b> reminder to “ <a href="#">mask</a> ” up for the weekend
SAT	Feature <a href="#">#ProtectOurElders video</a> via <b>FB</b>