April 29, 2020

Public Update on COVID-19

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Public Statement

The leadership continues to monitor Quebec's announcements to reopen certain activity sectors in the province. The Cree Nation will continue to use caution and adapted measures appropriate for maintaining the health and safety of our communities.

Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay

The Cree Board of Health continues be confident and proud of the staff and team working hard to ensure the local capacity is there when we need and working on the front line to take care of immediate concerns. It was explained that regular care is maintained for Cree patients and that it is only cases that really need to be transferred to the south that will be sent.

There are two new cases in Eeyou Istchee, making the total 8 since the beginning of the pandemic.

Of the 8 there are only 7 that are in region: 2 have officially recovered, while the other 5 continue to be monitored and are considered active.

All cases have come from travel outside Eeyou Istchee, 2 were related to international travel and 6 related to travel from Montreal. It is important to note that even if Cree patients had contracted COVID-19 while in Montreal, they represent a significant MINORITY when there are actually hundreds of patients that travel to Montreal and return to Eeyou Istchee. This combined with the fact that even a patient who has traveled home, who was later discovered to be positive with COVID-19 has never transmitted the disease to any fellow passengers. This demonstrates that the precautionary measures on flights and throughout the travel process work. Further the overall risk for a Cree patient who must go South for necessary medical measures remains relatively low considering all the precautions that are being taken.

Precautionary measures and contract tracing are working.

- 260 tests have been administered, therefore approximately 2,600 contact investigations (10 per test) requiring a 14-day, daily verification by staff.
- 240 tests returned negative.
- 12 awaiting results

Even though precautionary measures are working the Cree Nation will continue to be conservative in plans on opening the economy. Jurisdictions such as Quebec are being more aggressive than other European jurisdictions for example risking the potential for outbreaks and spikes in COVID-19 cases. The Cree Nation leadership will choose a path based on logical progressive opening that is tied to the capacity of Health Care system to respond to current and future needs. Now is not the time to put at risk what the Cree Nation has worked so hard to hold back. Even if the Government of Quebec announces the removal of checkpoints for example it will not be advised that the community remove their own checkpoints.

It is important that everyone keeps in mind that if you maintain physical distancing, follow precautionary measures of washing hands, coughing and sneezing into tissue or elbow you will remain safe from COVID-19. A mask can protect people from you but should not be relied as a preventive measure from catching COVID-19. Following these measures will help maintain COVID-19 to the current low levels in Eeyou Istchee.

Cree School Board
Commission scolaire crie

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Cree School Board

The Cree School Board remains confident in its decision to suspend all in-class instruction and will continue to place public health first. The Board is grateful for the support from the CNG and CHB leadership that helped guide this decision.

The Online Learning Platform is being well received with a constant increase in daily engagement. All secondary IV and V students have been assigned mentors to provide support to ensure promotion and graduation.

In collaboration with the CHB, Air Creebec, Creeco, and the local band authorities, the Cree School Board is working hard to ensure the safe return of post-secondary students. Students returning north must contact the post-secondary office to confirm their travel plans and ensure that they are aware of the necessary public health protocols that need to be taken upon their arrival in their communities.

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Eeyou Eenou Police Force

The EEPF issued 8 tickets for failing to respect COVID-19 Precautionary measures over the last week. The police are careful to explain and review precautionary measures during every intervention to remind people of their importance. Also, the police open a file on every intervention even for minor ones not resulting in a ticket to make sure there is a record for those that consistently fail to respect measures requiring greater intervention.

The Police force is working at full capacity with no officers out sick, including all Senior Officers.

The EEPF is being more proactive regarding crime prevention measures such as domestic violence reporting campaigns and the use of Crime Stoppers. The EEPF would like to employ greater use of “Crime Stoppers” in Eeyou Istchee which would alleviate pressure on elected officials while providing access to rewards which lead to arrests.

Eeyou Istchee Construction Industry

The Government of Quebec has announced they will open the construction industry on May 11th, 2020 however the Cree leadership has decided to adopt a more conservative and progressive approach. The Cree construction is not expected to open until June 9th, 2020 and only subject to the following conditions:

- May 14th, 2020 it is clear that students coming from Southern urban centers have reintegrated into the communities without incident;
- June 5th, 2020 the return of community members to the communities following goose break has not resulted in a spike in COVID-19 cases or other maladies that could stress the local health care system.
- Only construction sites subject to the appropriate precautionary measures and protocols using local labour from Eeyou Istchee and not labour from outside the region would be considered.

Cree leadership will plan and observe what happens in neighboring jurisdictions in identifying what is the best path for the Cree Nation to protect our people, our economy and most important the capacity of our health care system.

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Leadership Calls

The leadership has determined that considering the expected reduced activity during goose break the leadership conference calls would change from Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays to Tuesdays and Thursdays starting the week of May 4th, 2020.

Reliable Sources

People are advised to continue exercising caution on where they get their information in relation to COVID-19 and to keep in mind that the reliable sources of information remain:

https://eeyouistcheecovid19.org/
www.cngov.ca/covid-19/
www.creehealth.org
www.eeyoueducation.ca
https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/
https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.htm

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