



Status of Pandemic

Worldwide COVID-19 continues to spread at alarming rates. Many jurisdictions struggle to contain the virus and others are having troubles with flare-ups as they try and deconfine.

After weeks of improvement there is reason to be concerned as COVID-19 cases in Quebec rise above 100 cases per day again. Quebec appears to be having a particular challenge with their deconfinement plan which has permitted flare-ups and clusters of COVID-19 especially in establishments like bars and restaurants.

Within Eeyou Istchee, communities continue to do well, which is a testament to local leadership and more importantly to the people of Eeyou Istchee who respect and remain committed to physical distancing and precautionary measures.

Our region has remained COVID-19 free since beginning Phase 3 on July 7th, 2020.

With 10 cases recovered, regular testing for COVID-19 in Eeyou Istchee is currently at:

- 637 regular tests have been administered
- 625 returned negative
- 2 waiting for results

The Cree Health Board is doing more screening tests focusing on Health Workers, patients returning home and other high-risk groups such as elder's home workers. The current Screening results are:

- 665 screening tests
- 10 awaiting results
- 655 returned negative

Eeyou Istchee Deconfinement Plan

We are currently in Phase 3 of the Deconfinement Plan which involved:

- Resuming activities for children, including daycares, schools, summer camps and all team sports
- Increasing size of indoor gatherings (5 households max.)
- Increasing size of outdoor gatherings (10 households max.)

It is imperative to understand that the Cree Nation can only advance through Deconfinement if we continue to do well protecting our communities from COVID-19. In the event that communities see new cases or a rise in potential cases putting a lot of pressure on our Public Health's contact tracing capacity, we may be required to walk back Phases of our Deconfinement Plan. The time between Phases may be adapted to take into account some new risk that might make things harder to assess. As an example, when the Deconfinement Plan was postponed to see how the Cree Nation fared with all the travel and movement associated with goose break.

We would like to make a correction in anticipation to Phase 5 of the Deconfinement Plan which is needed because we could not have expected that there would be such a difference between the status of the pandemic inside Eeyou Istchee versus the rest of Quebec.

Phase 5 of the Deconfinement Plan should read: "Removing all remaining restrictions ~~including community checkpoints.~~" Even if we eventually reach Phase 5 it would not be recommended to remove or dismantle the community checkpoints. Until there is no risk associated with people travelling and returning home the checkpoints will be a necessary measure. The checkpoints are a function of how other jurisdictions are doing, not how we are doing within Eeyou Istchee. It is very possible that we could be in Phase 5 and the rest of Quebec or Canada does so badly that we must be very restrictive at our checkpoint. Therefore, the Checkpoint should be considered independently from the Deconfinement Plan and likely will be needed for some time in Eeyou Istchee.



Travelling

Region 8- Abitibi continues to do well with no new cases since June 19th, 2020. **Therefore, Region 8 – Abitibi can be considered for exemption from the Mandatory Self-Isolation Law as of July 14, 2020.** It is imperative that people understand: First, there is risk associated with travelling to this area as there is with all travel outside of your community. Extra precautions are required to ensure that people do NOT bring COVID-19 back to the community. Second, as we have seen, the status of a region can change quickly and be considered too risky for travel and travellers could find themselves subject to the Mandatory Self-Isolation Law. Even though as of today, July 14, 2020, travellers returning from Region 8 – Abitibi are not subject to a Mandatory Self-Isolation. People are encouraged to travel only when necessary and with those that need to travel due to the inherent risks.

It is extremely important for people to understand that until there is a vaccine there will always be a risk associated with travelling. The farther you get from your house, your community, your region, the greater the risk is of contracting COVID-19. For example, even though people travelling within Region 10 (Chibougamau or Matagami for example) are NOT required to self-isolate, we know that there are people from other regions or cities like Montreal that come to our region and neighboring municipalities increasing the risk. It is imperative that people remain cautious, no one can say that travelling to any other area is safe, all that we can try to determine is how much riskier it is.

Further, Cree travellers should exercise caution beyond what is permitted in other jurisdictions. For example, movie theaters, bars and sit-down restaurants are open in other jurisdictions and have been linked to a considerable increase in risk of outbreaks. Cree travellers are therefore recommended to avoid all sit-down restaurants, movie theaters or bars when visiting in another jurisdictions.

The Government of Quebec will be making masks mandatory in public places throughout Quebec, people are therefore cautioned that they should be prepared to comply when travelling to other jurisdictions.

Since July 5th, 2020 Region 2 – Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean there have been a total of 21 new cases. We cannot at this time state that Region 2- Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean is only experiencing sporadic cases.

Therefore, for now, the Areas Representing a Risk are:

- Anywhere outside Eeyou Istchee, Nunavik, Region 10 – Nord du Quebec and Region 8 – Abitibi (As of July 14th, 2020)
- Any mine site
- Any forestry camp
- Any Hydro-Quebec site

Travelling to any of these areas will require self-isolation.

It is extremely important to practice physical distancing and precautionary measures. Everyone must do what they can to protect fellow community members. People might be comfortable with accepting a certain level of risk, but you must give thought to those vulnerable people at home to whom you might bring something back to. Please also note that your community may have a more narrowly defined area of where it is considered safe to travel and it is very important to remain informed of your local self-isolation requirements.



Education

As of the end of June, we have 172 Secondary V graduates. We hope to have many more after summer school. Congratulations to all of them!

Summer school classes began on July 13, 2020 with necessary adaptations to ensure the teaching staff and students' safety. Online resources continue to be available to students.

To help ease the financial burden of the pandemic, a supplementary allowance for August will be provided to all PSSS students who were registered in the winter term.

Additionally, the school board has made temporary changes to the sponsorship policy for the upcoming school year, which will allow Post-Secondary students to be supported if they must begin or continue their studies online.

The PSSS Montreal and Ottawa offices remain closed with staff working remotely while continuing to provide services.

The CSB offices in Eeyou Istchee, including the head office, will reopen with adapted rotating schedules to ensure compliance with the health directives. The return to work schedule for the head office in Mistissini has been established with small, rotating groups, with the first group returning to the office on July 20. The offices remain closed to the public.

Resources and Support

Public Health team will continue to provide support to communities and organizations in deciding which services or activities to resume and how to do it safely. Organizations may send their request to: 18tcr.phcovidteam@ssss.gouv.qc.ca or covidrisk@cngov.ca

If you feel like you may need someone to talk to during these challenging times, please contact the Cree Health Board's **Psychosocial** Health Line: **1-833-632-4357**. The Cree Health Board would also like to inform people that specialists with a traditional approach to healing are also accessible through the same number.

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:

- eeyouistcheecovid19.org/
- cngov.ca/covid-19/
- creehealth.org
- eeyoueducation.ca
- quebec.ca/coronavirus
- canada.ca/coronavirus