



# Cree Nation Leadership COVID-19 Briefing Public Statement September 1, 2020

## Status of Pandemic

All indications are that a second wave of COVID-19 is beginning. Jurisdictions which had done very well at keeping COVID-19 are seeing a rise in cases, while jurisdictions that had not done well are seeing case numbers climb to the high levels or higher than what we saw this Spring. This is putting an extreme amount of stress on educational institutions which are attempting to find ways to re-open safely in the context of COVID-19.

Eeyou Istchee continues to do exceptionally well, remaining COVID-19 free since early May. Schools in Eeyou Istchee are able to plan safe re-openings in confidence, adapted public events such as Assemblies and adapted family events such as weddings and walking out ceremonies are able to go ahead. Despite having a population that travels and is more mobile than most regions there are two reasons why Eeyou Istchee is doing well. The people's commitment to physical distancing and precautionary measures and the leadership's commitment to measures that insulate our communities from the status of the pandemic in the South. The local mandatory self-isolation laws and the 14-day isolation period are a perfect example of this.

## 14-Day Isolation Period

It is very important to understand the distinction between the 14-day isolation period of Eeyou Istchee and the 10-day isolation period recently announced by the Government of Quebec.

Quebec's new 10-day isolation period can only be prescribed by a physician as it only applies to a patient who has been diagnosed or tested positive for COVID-19. The 10-day period is meant to cover the period during which someone is considered "infectious".

In Eeyou Istchee due to our vulnerable population and health care system which has a limited capacity we are relying on the 14-day isolation period which covers the "incubation" period, this is how long COVID-19 is in the body without showing symptoms. When someone completes a 14-day isolation period in Eeyou Istchee and they show no symptoms, this is the best guarantee that the person does not have COVID-19. The only way to get such a guarantee that someone is COVID-19 free through testing requires the administration of multiple tests. This is why we are able to be confident and secure in Eeyou Istchee. If we did not have the tool of the local self-isolation law and the 14-day period to guarantee that COVID-19 is not in Eeyou Istchee we would have to be much more restrictive on the activities that would be allowed within Eeyou Istchee.

Considering how well we have done and the powerful tool that the 14-Day Mandatory Self-Isolation represents, we have good reason to be hopeful that in Eeyou Istchee will remain COVID-19 free throughout the second wave which is arriving earlier than expected. In Eeyou Istchee it is important that we remain confident and optimistic about how we will get through the COVID-19 without becoming complacent.



## Status of Other Jurisdictions

Worldwide COVID-19 cases continue to rise at an alarming rate.

Quebec is seeing a gradual increase in the number of cases with the Premier needing to threaten to re-impose lock down measures.

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

- 913 regular tests have been administered
- 894 returned negative
- 9 waiting for results

The Cree Health Board continues to make efforts to increase screening capacity 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:

- 1,077 screening tests
- 1,070 returned negative
- 7 awaiting results

## Travelling

Everyone is reminded that the Cree Health Board will be making greater efforts to re-introduce more specialists into the communities. It will be much safer for Eeyou Istchee to have the critical health specialists come into the communities under strict screening, precautionary measures and supervision than to high numbers of patients south to see needed specialists. It is important to keep in mind that for the last seven months, the COVID-19 cases in Eeyou Istchee did not come from the medical professionals that come to our communities. As the province braces for a second wave we are going to need the services of these specialists along with the other health care professionals we rely on.

Neighboring regions to Eeyou Istchee continue to do well with no significant outbreaks since mid-July. The regions are being closely monitored throughout Quebec, although there is a slight rise in cases, except for the urban centres around Montreal and Ottawa it is not felt necessary to change the status of regions at this time.

The status of regions in Ontario remains unchanged where the regions around North Bay, Timmins and Moosonee continue to do well.

Stornoway and Osisko continue to be the only two companies in Eeyou Istchee that have adopted COVID-19 testing protocols to allow us to be confident that their works sites do not represent a risk for COVID-19.



## Travelling

Aside from carrying out testing protocols there are other manners in which work sites or development sites can ensure that their sites do not represent a risk for COVID-19 and that is through the commitment not to employ or allow individuals who have travelled to high risk areas on their site. This measure combined with the physical distancing and precautionary measures that all work sites are legally required to respect under Quebec regulations can reassure us that workers coming home from these sites do not represent a risk to the communities. Such is the case for the Cree operated Forestry Camp located at km 105 on the James Bay Highway.

After evaluation of the **Areas Representing a Risk**, those individuals who have in the last 14 days travelled:

- **anywhere outside Quebec**, except for Porcupine and Timiskaming, which includes the municipalities of Timmins, Moosonee and North Bay;
- **within Quebec to:**
  - Region 6 – Montreal
  - Region 13 – Laval
  - Region 14 – Lanaudière
  - Region 15 – Laurentians
  - Region 16 – Montérégie
- **any Hydro-Quebec site;**
- **to any mine site, please note:**
  - Workers coming from the Windfall Mining Exploration Site by Osisko Mining Inc with the appropriate documentation will NOT be required to self-isolate;
  - Workers coming from the Renard Mine Site by Stornoway, as of September 8th, 2020 with the appropriate documentation will NOT be required to self-isolate;
- **any forestry camp, please note:**

Workers coming from the Forestry Camp at km 105 on the James Bay Highway with the appropriate documentation will NOT be required to self-isolate effective immediately;

**will be required to self-isolate for 14 days under the Local Mandatory Self-Isolation Laws.**

Therefore, people coming from Regions 1-5, 7-12, 17 and 18 in Quebec and the regions Porcupine, Temiskaming and North Bay in Ontario DO NOT need to self-isolate under the local Mandatory Self-Isolation Laws.

It is extremely important for people to understand that until there is a vaccine there will always be a risk associated with travelling.

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 other jurisdictions.



## Eeyou Istchee Deconfinement Plan

In Eeyou Istchee we remain in Phase 4 of the Deconfinement Plan. The cooperation and the respect of physical distancing and precautionary measures has allowed the Cree Nation to protect our Health care capacity and protect community members from COVID-19.

- Activities like weddings, graduations, etc. subject to the gathering size restrictions
- Indoor gatherings (50 people max.)
- Outdoor gatherings (150 people max.)

It is our respect for physical distancing of 2 metres and respecting other precautionary measures that allowed us to reach Phase 4, and it will be our continued respect for these measures that will allow us to stay in Phase 4 for as long as possible for the benefit of all community members.

The 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](mailto:18tcr.phcovidteam@ssss.gouv.qc.ca) or [covidrisk@cngov.ca](mailto: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.

## Education

Local schools are now all open except for Whapmagoostui that will open after Labour Day. It will take some time to adjust and get used to new safety protocols in place, but lots of assistance is available. Precautionary measures are also in place for school bus transportation. Seating is limited due to safety protocols and parents who can are asked to bring their children to school.

A daily health checklist for COVID-19 symptoms is now available online at [www.eeyoueducation.ca](http://www.eeyoueducation.ca) for parents to complete each day before school. Parents are strongly encouraged to keep children home if any symptoms are apparent.

All staff, parents, and families are asked to report any travel to Areas of Risk. The continued respect of the isolation period following travel is what has allowed our schools to open in the communities. It is important at this stage for students to be able to return to school, not only for their emotional and mental health but also to support their academic success. Thank you to the leadership for acknowledging the importance of the local Mandatory Self-Isolation Law.