



Cree Nation Leadership COVID-19 Public Statement September 15, 2020

Status of Pandemic

As cases appear to be rising across Canada and Quebec it is important that members of the Cree Nation remain calm and rely on the tools that we have put in place to protect our communities. When the pandemic first arrived even the best projections of what would happen in Eeyou Istchee were very worrisome. With the dedication of our people, the communication from our leadership, we not only did better than expected, we are among the jurisdictions that performed the best in the Country. This will not change. We are now screening and testing processes that we did not have before that the Cree Health Board is always working to improve capacity and efficiency.

We also have in place our local Mandatory Self-Isolation Laws which provide the best protection and provides an important buffer to our communities so that schools can open with confidence and services can be maintained in our communities. We even have partners like Osisko and Stornoway working hard so that our people are protected as they work outside our communities.

The Cree Nation is in a very different position from when the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Testing in Eeyou Istchee

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

- 1,025 regular tests have been administered
- 1,000 returned negative
- 13 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:

- 1,235 screening tests
- 1,204 returned negative
- 31 awaiting results

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 theatres, 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 theatres or bars when visiting in other jurisdictions.



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Travelling

Neighboring regions are being watched very closely for any increases in cases, changes in the ability of regions to manage outbreaks and their contact tracing capacity.

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

- anywhere outside Quebec, except for the Ontario regions of Sudbury, Porcupine and Timiskaming, which includes the municipalities of Sudbury, Timmins, Moosonee and North Bay;
- within Quebec to:
 - Region 3 – Quebec Capital – since September 11th, 2020 at 12:00am
 - Region 5- Estrie – since September 11th, 2020 at 12:00am
 - Region 7 – Outaouais (Gatineau) – since September 11th, 2020 at 12:00am
 - 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 1,2,4,8-12, 17 and 18 in Quebec and the regions Sudbury, Porcupine, Timiskaming and North Bay in Ontario DO NOT need to self-isolate under the local Mandatory Self-Isolation Laws.

Managing Health Services

In the communities, services continue to be adapted to provide safe medical services and the Cree Health Board is making efforts introduce more medical specialists into the communities. It will be much safer for Eeyou Istchee to have the critical health specialists come into the communities rather than high numbers of patients travelling to the South.

The Specialists are respecting strict screening protocols, supervision and precautionary measures that includes the administration of multiple tests. 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.



Managing Health Services

The recent cases identified at Espresso have provided very valuable lessons.

1. 7-day/7-day self-isolation. The 7-day self-isolation in Montreal and then only a 7-day isolation in the community provides a very important tool to diagnose a COVID-19 case in the small chance that an individual contracts COVID-19 prior to returning to the community. Being diagnosed in South provides greater protection to the vulnerable and the children in our communities and in the event greater medical attention is required, the individual is already closest to the best services available in the province.
2. Close coordination is required with local authorities in Eeyou Istchee in regard to the 7-day isolation. In the event an individual fails or willingly breaches the conditions of the 7- day isolation the South, the receiving community will need to be notified so that when the individual returns home they will not benefit from a reduced isolation period of 7 days but rather will be subject to the local regulations and must complete an additional 14 days like all travelers who do not have an exemption.
3. The Espresso was not initially designed for stays of long duration or the need to manage different types of isolation. Services continue to be adapted and increased. The recent hiring of a new kitchen staff greatly improved the quality of food services. Upon the completion of recent survey, issues are being addressed such as the cleaning schedules and protocols for rooms which is to be increased, new appliances to be introduced in all the rooms, the introduction of equipment and services for laundry.

It is extremely difficult to adapt and implement changes in an economy and city where COVID-19 restrictions are an obstacle, every effort is being made to improve the conditions for patients at facilities like Espresso.

The Espresso was locked down recently due to the two cases that were identified and more recently, a third case being identified. The collaboration between the Cree Health Board and the communities to assist in ensuring that contract tracing was carried out was extremely important in ensuring that any risk of COVID-19 getting into the communities was properly managed and mitigated. The testing and screening that has been done in the communities and the testing and screening that is being done at Espresso are demonstrating that excellent efforts were done to contain COVID-19 and that there is NO evidence of community transmission of COVID-19 at hotel Espresso or in the communities. All indications are that the COVID-19 cases in question at Espresso, which have been added to the Eeyou Istchee region count, stem from an individual(s) traveling from a work site or jurisdiction of risk and then coming into contact with community members OUTSIDE Eeyou Istchee.

There is no doubt that the recent cases were a source of stress and anxiety for patients and community members, but all should be reassured that the cases were so quickly identified and contained, patients kept safe and we continued to keep the communities of Eeyou Istchee safe from COVID-19.

The restrictions and regulations are very hard and people are making incredible sacrifices self-isolating in the South or in the communities. The sacrifices are working and invaluable to our communities while we wait for the arrival of a vaccine.



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Eeyou Istchee Deconfinement Plan

Our local Mandatory Self-Isolation Law allows us to remain in Phase 4 of the Deconfinement Plan while other jurisdictions have to move into re-confinement in anticipation of the second wave. 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 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](tel: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

Cree School Board buildings remain closed to the public. However, non-employees can access our offices by appointment only.

We are grateful to parents for filling out and submitting the daily health questionnaire. Please continue to access the questionnaire at <https://eeyoueducation.ca/youth/health-check>

You can also find the 2020-2021 CSB Covid-19 Health & Safety Information guide with details about the measures in our schools and answers to frequently asked questions at <https://eeyoueducation.ca/docs/pub/covid-19-response/2827-health-safety-guidebook/file>

We are preparing a survey for feedback from parents about the start of the school year. Please be on the lookout for the survey in the coming week. The Cree School Board looks forward to hearing back from parents and caregivers.



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Education

Sabtuan Adult Education Services will resume the General Education program this week for their continuing students. Extra health and safety measures are in place for Adult Education students and teachers. There is a daily health check to be completed with an online form available at <https://eeyoueducation.ca/adult/student-health-check>

The Cree School Board has been meeting with Public Health on a regular basis. Each school has been assigned resource persons at the Cree Health Board to maintain a connection to the local COVID response teams.

Many of our Post-Secondary students are settled in their places of study now. We wish them a successful school year and remind them to stay safe and follow precautions.

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/

■ eeyoueducation.ca

■ creehealth.org

■ cngov.ca/covid-19/

■ quebec.ca/coronavirus

■ canada.ca/coronavirus