



# Cree Nation Leadership COVID-19 Briefing Public Statement October 6, 2020

## Status of Pandemic

COVID-19 continues to spread globally with an alarming rate. Southern Quebec and Ontario continue to see daily case numbers climb to alarming levels implementing ever stricter measures in an attempt to flatten the curve of the second wave of COVID-19.

The Cree Nation and the people of Eeyou Istchee made incredible sacrifices respecting physical distancing and other precautionary measures. The mandatory local self-isolation laws although very challenging to implement and imposing hardship for those that want to and need travel in and out of our communities have provided an incredible tool to protect the most vulnerable members of our communities. The reward for this incredible sacrifice is that we will be able to stay open longer, hopefully not even have to close services or businesses, and keep our schools open trying to give our children as normal experiences as possible during these truly challenging times.

## Testing in Eeyou Istchee

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

- 1,190 regular tests have been administered
- 1,167 returned negative
- 9 waiting for results

The one additional case in Eeyou Istchee is related to a resident of Eeyou Istchee who is suspected to have contracted COVID-19 while in Montreal and visiting a business, that was the subject of contact tracing. The individual is in isolation in Montreal and being monitored.

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:

- 1,440 screening tests
- 1,436 returned negative
- 4 awaiting results





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## Travelling Continued

- 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;

Therefore, people coming from Regions 8, 10, 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.

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

## Managing Health Services

In the communities, services continue to be adapted to provide safe medical services and the Cree Health Board is making efforts to 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. It is therefore safe to go to the clinic and meet with specialists in our communities.

## Eeyou Istchee Deconfinement Plan

As stated above the incredible sacrifice and discipline demonstrated by the Cree Nation over the summer in the development, implementation and compliance with precautionary measures including our local Mandatory Self-Isolation Laws allows us to remain in Phase 4 of the Deconfinement Plan while other jurisdictions have to move into re-confinement as the second wave of COVID-19 begins to take hold in the South. For example on October 5th, 2020 the Premier announced new mask requirements for schools in Quebec, however in Eeyou Istchee there is no reason to deviate from the advice of the Cree Board of Health and Social Services Public Health Department:

- No masks for grade 5 and below unless the student or parents wish to wear a mask;
- Grade 5 and above masks are required in common areas but can be removed once seated.



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## Eeyou Istchee Deconfinement Plan Cont.

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. Any request for advice regarding the Deconfinement Plan or request for advice on what activities and how they can be carried out during a particular phase of the Deconfinement Plan can continue to be sent to: [18tcr.phcovidteam@ssss.gouv.qc.ca](mailto:18tcr.phcovidteam@ssss.gouv.qc.ca) or [covidrisk@cngov.ca](mailto:covidrisk@cngov.ca).

The new committee composed of the Local Public Security Officers is working closely with representatives of the Public Health Department to assess how communities are doing and what best practices can be shared. The Committee will provide practices that can be implemented so that we can give children the best Halloween possible given the status of COVID-19.

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

The Cree School Board has taken appropriate measures to prepare for the second wave of COVID-19 entering our Eeyou Istchee. Teachers are being supported with training to use virtual platforms, and we will continue to prepare for our CSB's Online Learning Platform if online learning should become necessary. We are planning to ensure that students with special needs will continue to receive services as required.

Parents and guardians must complete the Student Health Check daily. By doing the survey, it helps ensure that school can begin smoothly and on time. You can find our Student Health Check form online at [eeyoueducation.ca](http://eeyoueducation.ca).

There have been concerns about staff with increased anxiety from the responsibility to implement COVID-19 measures to ensure students follow new protocols. We are working on a plan to ensure that teaching staff can have rest and recuperation periods.

In light of World Teachers' Day, we want to recognize all teachers who have taken on extra responsibility during this difficult time. Your contribution to student success and community involvement has helped provide our children with a successful academic year in our communities.