



First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Alberta Region
Suite 730, 9700 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4C3

April 16, 2021

Rene Houle, Director of Emergency Management
Whitefish Lake (Goodfish) First Nation #128
Box 272 Goodfish Lake, AB T0A 1R0

Dear Mr. Houle,

I am writing to provide further information regarding the positive case of COVID-19 B.1.1.7 variant that has been confirmed in Whitefish Lake (Goodfish) First Nation. The First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Alberta Region (FNIHB-AB) Medical Officers of Health (MOH) and Communicable Disease Control (CDC) teams are working closely with community health staff and leadership to support extensive public health response efforts to ensure continued health and safety of your members. We appreciate the efforts undertaken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your community to date.

The FNIHB-AB MOH team continues to review and adapt protocols as we learn more about managing the variant cases and their contacts. An active public health investigation is currently underway in Goodfish Lake that is inclusive of contact tracing, testing of close contacts and case management. **Currently, if an individual has tested positive for a variant strain, they are legally required to isolate for 10 days.** Following the initial 10-day isolation periods, all close contacts of the individual (i.e. household members) must isolate for 14 days as they are considered recent exposures for the entirety of the initial 10-day isolation period. Additionally, all contacts of cases will be offered testing upon initial contact notification and 10 days after exposure.

The MOH team strongly recommends that, when possible, isolation of a variant of concern case take place outside of the household. This is in alignment with current direction from Alberta Chief Medical of Health Dr. Deena Hinshaw, and it has been noted that the isolation of variant of concern cases outside of the immediate household has been shown to reduce the quarantine period for uninfected individuals, lessening the overall impact. Understanding this isolation-period can cause hardship for impacted households, there are options available to support individuals to quarantine outside of their impacted household in an isolation facility. FNIHB-AB is available to support Goodfish Lake in accessing these alternate isolation resources should they be of interest to community members. I recognize that self-isolation measures can present challenges and can also result in stigma and unnecessary speculation. I want to reiterate the importance of respecting the privacy and dignity of individuals who are required to self-isolate.

At this time, it is important that your Nation's membership continue to follow all current public health measures to limit the spread of COVID-19. Although symptoms of the B.1.1.7 variant are the same as the original COVID-19 virus, current evidence suggests it is more contagious and spreads much more quickly within households. **We ask that all community members wear a mask in public, practice good hand hygiene and physical distancing, limit non-essential travel, monitor for symptoms, and limit your contacts to your immediate household.** Should community members require COVID-19 testing or have any questions they are encouraged to contact the Goodfish Lake Health Centre at 780-636-3638.

Immunization is one of the most important measures that can be taken to stop the spread of COVID-19 in Goodfish Lake over the long term and for the protection of the most vulnerable members of the community. There is already evidence that cases of COVID-19, and severe outcomes, have been significantly reduced amongst those age groups already immunized. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) released their Summary of Extended Dose Intervals Statement on April 7, 2021, which shows a high level of effectiveness after the first dose. Information continues to be made available, but mRNA vaccines are showing effectiveness against the B.1.1.7 variant. Although there is still a chance of infection after the first dose, it is significantly less. Once 80% of adults in community receive the vaccine, there is a much better chance of limiting widespread outbreaks of COVID-19. I am pleased to say that, as of April 16, 392 doses have been administered in Goodfish Lake, with 154 of those being second doses. I wish to commend you, Goodfish Lake health staff, and your Nation's membership for your hard work in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and protecting the wellbeing of all community members during this difficult time.

As always, the health and safety of your Nation's membership remains our priority. Thank you again for your continued dedication, partnership, and support as we work together during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

Parminder Thiara

Dr. Parminder Thiara, Regional Director, Primary and Population Health, FNIHB-AB, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

Cc: Rhonda Laboucán, Regional Executive Office, FNIHB-AB, ISC
Dr. Wadieh Yacoub, Senior Medical Officer of Health, FNIHB-AB, ISC
Dr. Chris Sarin, Deputy Medical Officer of Health, FNIHB-AB, ISC

Annex: Current Public Health Measures

Due to the rising number of cases, the province has delayed Stage 3 re-opening, moved back to Stage 1 restrictions as of April 6, 2021. Adherence to public health guidelines are all critical steps to preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus, regardless of what strain it is, and all Albertans have a responsibility to [help prevent the spread](#). Take steps to protect yourself and others:

- Practice physical distancing (at least two meters) and wear a mask in public;
- Practice good hygiene: wash hands often for at least 20 seconds, use hand sanitizer, cover coughs and sneezes, and avoid touching face;
- Monitor for symptoms: cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat;
- Self-isolate for the legally-required 10 days if you have any symptoms that are not related to a pre-existing illness or medical condition; and,
- Take the [COVID-19 self-assessment](#) to access testing.

All Albertans are still required to practice physical distancing and are required to wear a mask in public places where it is difficult to maintain two metres of physical distance. All indoor social gatherings are prohibited – public and private. Outdoor social gatherings can have up to 10 people with two metre physical distancing between households and indoor components or movement in/out of homes are not permitted. Close contacts are limited to household members only. People who live alone can have up to two close contacts, however:

- These must be the same two contacts throughout the duration of the restriction.
- If the close contacts do not live alone, visits cannot be held at their home.
- Single parents who only live with their children under 18 are permitted to have up to two close contacts.
- This restriction does not apply to:
 - Co-parenting arrangements;
 - Service visits from caregivers, health or childcare providers;
 - Childcare can include providing post-partum support for new mothers. Parents are allowed to remain in the home while another person is there to provide childcare services;
 - Home maintenance and repairs; and
 - Mutual support group meetings.

COVID-19 can take up to 14 days to cause [symptoms](#). Some people who get it only have minor symptom or don't have any symptoms at all but could still be infectious. In addition to the self-isolation guidelines for those in contact with an individual who may be positive for COVID-19, anyone with new symptoms, even if they do not meet the above criteria, should self-isolate for 10 days from the beginning of symptoms or until they are feeling well, whichever takes longer. Guidelines for self-isolation are to:

- Stay home – do not attend work, school, social events or any other public gatherings;
- Avoid close contact with other people, including members of your household and especially seniors and people with chronic conditions or compromised immune systems;
- Don't take public transportation like buses, taxis or ride sharing, where possible;
- Watch for symptoms in yourself or a family member.

When a case of COVID-19 is confirmed, the health of the impacted individual and their contacts is closely monitored. ISC-AB ensures all individuals adhere to the *Mandatory Quarantine and Isolation: Chief Medical Officer of Health Order 05-2020*. **Individuals are legally required to isolate if they have COVID-19 or quarantine if they are a close contact to someone who has COVID-19.** Public health orders can be legally enforced to protect the health and safety of others.

The privacy and disclosure of personal health information is protected and governed under the provincial [Health Information Act](#). This Act identifies the very specific parameters under which health information is protected and prevents disclosure of personal health information outside of the circle of care. Therefore, we cannot emphasize enough that only health providers within the circle of care team have access to the personal health information of the confirmed cases and contacts of COVID-19 in the community.