

(Community name)

COVID-19 Pandemic Plan

Contents

Introduction	3
Leadership / Communication	4
Pandemic Response Committee	4
Communications.....	4
Responsibilities	4
Risk Mitigation and Prevention	5
General Community Risk Mitigation.....	5
Health Promotion / Education	6
Traditional Culture and Medicine	6
Maintaining Essential Services	6
Water / Sewer.....	7
Electricity / Internet / phones	7
Airport.....	7
Food Supply	7
Wood / Oil for heating homes	8
Gasoline	8
Police	8
Child & Family Services.....	8
Band Council / Leadership.....	8
Community Mental Health / Wellness	9
Concerns.....	9
Suggested Plan	9
Community Health Programs	10
Nursing Station.....	10
Suboxone Program.....	11
Home Care	11
Medical Driver	11
Pre-existing Medical Appointments.....	12
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Sanitation Products.....	12
Quarantine	12
Deaths in Community	13

Introduction

Generally, pandemic flu will arise every eleven (11) to forty-four (44) years or every few decades and can occur at any time of the year. Because a pandemic flu is a new virus, most people will have little or no immunity to infection allowing it to spread easily from person to person and vaccines will not have been created yet. The seasonal flu in comparison occurs every year, usually in winter months, and annual vaccines and antiviral drugs are readily available to prevent infection.

Covid-19 is a novel virus that has spread quickly across the globe, and is now in Canada. It spreads through droplets, such as those produced when coughing or sneezing, and through mucosal surfaces such as the eyes, nose, and mouth.

In most patients, it produces a mild illness similar to a cold or a flu. The common symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath, and headache. In a small amount of people it can create a severe infection that may require people to have an oxygen mask or in some cases be on a life support machine. The patients at highest risk for severe infections are persons over 60, and those with significant heart or lung problems. It is extremely important that we protect our elders throughout this pandemic, as they are most vulnerable to this. Despite the majority of young and healthy people having a minor infection they can spread COVID-19 to other people, including elders - so it is imperative that everyone take infection control seriously.

We are now beginning to see local spread within Canada, and so we cannot rule the illness out even if someone has not travelled outside of Canada.

The best methods of preventing spread to and within (*community name*) are to limit unnecessary travel outside of the community, limit social gatherings, promote social distancing, and hygiene methods such as washing hands regularly, coughing/sneezing in an arm/tissue, cleaning common surfaces regularly, and wearing masks if any respiratory symptoms are present. Shaking hands is an important sign of respect and familiarity, but due to the risk of spreading the infection through direct contact we are asking people to refrain from hand contact.

Throughout this pandemic it is essential that we continue to view our community members as complete people. By being mindful of everyone's Physical, Emotional, Mental and Spiritual health we can support them in all domains of wellness as we work together over the coming weeks and months.

Leadership / Communication

Pandemic Response Committee

- Health Director
- Chief
- Council members
- Suboxone Coordinator
- Crisis Coordinator
- Case Manager
- NIC
- Physician

Communications

- The Health Director will be the primary contact person for any outside agency, or during any acute crisis that may arise.
- Daily meetings (in person or by phone) of the Pandemic Response Committee should be attempted to ensure adequate communication amongst involved parties
- There should be community representation on the regular NAN and local health authorities' pandemic teleconferences, notes should be taken and regularly shared with the committee
- Ensure all nurses working at the nursing station are briefed by the NIC about plans that may affect them, such as testing, quarantine and hygiene

Responsibilities

- Components of this plan that pertain to individual programs or buildings should be enacted by the direct manager of that facility/program
- The Health Director is ultimately in charge of the implementation of this plan, but will require most tasks to be delegated to other health / social services workers

Risk Mitigation and Prevention

General Community Risk Mitigation

- Cancel or modify any community activity that puts people at risk for virus transmission
 - Eg. winter carnivals, BINGO, community meals
- Avoid any large gatherings of people
- Consider putting limitations on the number of people that can be in the store at a time
- Consider restrictions on people coming in and out of the community (at Chief's Discretion)
- All people coming into the community from the winter road or airport should be questioned about active symptoms, recent travel or any contact with possibly infected persons
 - Screening on the winter road would require the band council to hire someone to stop vehicles as they enter town
- Plan with freight trucks and airplanes to keep drivers / pilots in the vehicle and have community members unload the cargo, decreasing contact with people from outside the community
- Chief and Health Director to consider closing airport and winter road to all traffic excluding medical emergencies, cargo or travel approved by Chief/Council
- Daily sanitization, four (4) times a day, of communal surfaces such as door handles, phones, faucets, taps, toilets, clean water access points (RO machine), desks, and counters in common buildings (store, band office, community centre, nursing station, suboxone building, school)
 - Responsibility for this should fall on the custodial staff for each facility, and they should report to their direct managers to confirm this is being done
- Perform census of community members currently on reserve, as well as those off reserve in other communities or nearby cities
 - Chief and Health Director to establish protocols as necessary for community members returning / seeking refuge during the pandemic
 - Self Isolation for 14 days for all returning band members is recommended, but leadership may decide to restrict who can come back into community
 - Screen all returning community members for active symptoms / exposures and test / quarantine any potential cases

Health Promotion / Education

- Posters and signs should be posted around the nursing station informing people of pandemic signs, symptoms, preventative measures, and changes in our community
- Educational material should also be distributed to northern store, band office, community center, school and suboxone building
- Consider handing out pamphlets to each household about infection control practices
- Regular radio broadcasts should be done to educate people on the general information around the virus, including signs, symptoms, and tips on hand hygiene, social distancing, and other preventative measures
 - Health Director / Nurses / Physician to continue radio broadcasts throughout pandemic, suggested at least twice per week
- Health Authority develops information documents to be distributed - contact them to get copies for distribution

Traditional Culture and Medicine

- Elders and healers should be involved in incorporating traditional medicines and wisdom pertaining to contagious illnesses such as this
- Practices like smudging and prayer should be supported as long as they are safe from an infection control perspective
- Consider avoiding sweat lodges and other ceremonies that involve multiple people in an enclosed space
 - There are some reports that saunas or sweat lodges may be helpful in treating the infection. As of now there is not sufficient knowledge to say if this is truly helpful. Care should be taken if someone is considering this ceremony as it may increase transmission risks.
- Traditional medicines and practices are fundamental to many Anishinaabe people, and careful thought must be taken when promoting or recommending against these

Maintaining Essential Services

Throughout the pandemic, it is important that routine services are still functional to support the well being and ongoing health of the community. Plans must be made to protect vital services and those trained to maintain / operate them.

Water / Sewer

- Water treatment plant manager + workers need to maintain health and wellness throughout pandemic - ensure they have adequate teaching about infection control
- Consider cross training other community members in basic functions of the water treatment plant in the event all trained workers get ill
- Water treatment plant manager should communicate with regional education and support groups about their suggestions for pandemic planning and how to get additional help

Electricity / Internet / phones

- Band office to communicate with utility organizations and local employees to ensure pandemic plans have been made
- Consider cross training other community members in basic functions of telecommunications / electricity grid operations in the event all trained workers get ill

Airport

- Maintenance of the runways and passenger terminals for the airport is essential to allow transportation of food / necessary products, as well as emergency medical care
- MTO workers at the airport to liaise with managers about backup plans should they become ill or forced to quarantine
- Consider cross training more staff to reduce reliance on one or two individuals in the event they get ill

Food Supply

- Collaboration with the Northern Store Manager re: Shipments of food into the community
- Have a policy about avoiding individual stockpiling of food / material from the Northern Store so that all community member have equal access
- Consider having the band pay for some food to be brought up from local urban hub in case of transportation limitations in the future
- Encourage hunting and fishing - great outdoors activity, healthy food, and improves food sovereignty

Wood / Oil for heating homes

- Encourage most people to have at least a week's supply of wood/oil ahead of time
- Support elders who need wood/oil with deliveries to their homes
- Establish a plan for wood/oil delivery to those in quarantine so that they reduce unnecessary interactions with others

Gasoline

- Both the Northern Store and private gas stations in the community should be prepared for possible disruptions in the supply chain
- A balance must be struck over being prepared and hoarding resources
- Encourage common sense practices for all community members like avoiding unnecessary idling of cars to conserve fuel stocks

Police

- Band Council to communicate with NAPS - ensure they have a plan for staffing police stations

Child & Family Services

- To maintain at least one worker available and in the community at a time
 - consider working from home or only having one worker in the office per day
- Communicate with main office over organizational policy during pandemic about routine operations

Band Council / Leadership

- Strong leadership is important to maintain order and pandemic support in the community
- Health Director and Chief + Council to be well educated in infection control practices
- Reduce unnecessary travel to other communities

Community Mental Health / Wellness

Concerns

- School closures and decreased social activities put youth and young adults at risk for deteriorating Mental Health
- Research has shown there to be a significant MH risk for those in quarantine
- At baseline there are many people in our region with high risk mental health concerns
- Limited resources at the Nursing Station and possible restriction of Mental Health workers further limits access to care
- IRS Resolution Health Support Programs may cancel appointments - and even if they still run, travel may be disrupted and people may decide not to go to the city to get care

Suggested Plan

- Increase the number of outdoor activities that permit people to maintain safe distances of at least 2m, while allowing them to socialize and stay physically active
- Encourage land based traditional activities like hunting, fishing and snow shoeing
- Ensure universal hand washing and symptom monitoring for those participating in group outdoor activities
- Choose Life / Youth workers / community mental health workers to attempt phone call check ins with affected / isolated individuals to assess wellness, and engage with socially
- Nurse in Charge to maintain a list of high risk mental health patients in the community, and to plan for regular phone calls to check-in with these people
- Plan online / radio based activities for community members to stay connected
 - Eg. Radio Bingo
- Health / Social Services staff that are self isolating can still provide some support for telephone, or online based activities
- Involve youth in preparing / delivering wood and food to elders or those who are quarantined
- For those who attend regular spiritual or religious ceremonies, trying to shift these events to online/ over the phone / on the radio as this will keep people safe while maintaining their spiritual wellness
- Encourage families to spend time together while in isolation
 - Collect and share stories from parents, grandparents and other elders

- Use this time together to preserve knowledge for all future generations about First Nations history and culture
- Pass on knowledge of language amongst family members, or over the radio
- Distribute information about all available mental health resources
 - Eg. Kids Help Phone

Community Health Programs

Nursing Station

- Limit number of non-urgent visits to nursing station; general follow ups for diabetes, dental etc. may have to be postponed
- For anyone having respiratory symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath), they must call the nursing station first and be screened over the phone. They should not to enter unless indicated by the screening tool or otherwise directed by the staff
- If someone screens positive for pandemic risk factors and requires testing or further assessment they should not enter through the main entrance, but should be directed towards the rear entrance of the clinic where a pandemic assessment room will be set up
 - Nurses assessing possible pandemic cases should be in full personal protective equipment (PPE), and the room should be thoroughly cleaned after each person is seen
- Anyone with respiratory symptoms who is entering the nursing station, must wear a mask
- Everyone entering the nursing station must wash their hands prior to entering.
 - Hand washing station to be present at the front door, with appropriate signage
 - Consider placing security guard or Community Health Representative there to enforce hand hygiene + mask wearing if symptomatic
- If staffing allows, consider screening all staff and patients who enter the Nursing Station with brief symptom questionnaire and temperature
- Nursing Station staff who do not have critical roles, or who are able to work from home may be asked to do so at the discretion of the Health Director
 - Daily cleaning, at least four (4) times per day, of commonly touched surfaces in the Nursing Station
 - Nurses / Physician / Community Health Representative should clean the chair / desk / door after each patient

Suboxone Program

- The Suboxone program should be moved out of the nursing station and into an alternative location
- We suggest patients be put on an every other or every third day DOT with carries in between
- Patients should be scheduled on staggered days to avoid a large volume of people presenting at one time
- If someone tests positive the virus, or is in quarantine the Suboxone program will arrange for delivery to the person's house
- Health staff are aware that this system of carries and reduced monitoring may result in diversion, but all reasonable efforts will be made to keep patients safe
- A contract needs to be written up for all patients to review about these changes

Home Care

- Limit services that require home care workers to enter the house
 - Eg. cleaning
- For high risk patients (those older than 60 or with significant health conditions), consider arranging deliveries of groceries, water, prescriptions, and wood/oil
 - Prescriptions and groceries may need to be placed on an elevated surface to avoid dogs or other animals getting into them, the worker may also call ahead so the client can receive the package shortly after drop off

Medical Driver

- Medical drivers should be educated in infection control techniques, and posters should be placed on the outside of the vehicle for passengers to read
- It is recommended in each vehicle the driver has: Masks, garbage bags, tissues, hand sanitizer, gloves, disinfectant wipes
 - These should be provided by the Nursing Station
- Clean the vehicle twice in the morning and twice in the afternoon with disinfectant wipes, as well as after carrying any passenger with a cough or fever
- Provide a mask to any patient with a cough or fever. Do not give masks to anyone else to preserve stock
- Encourage all patients to cover their cough and sanitize hands when they get into the vehicle
- Ensure the Nurse is aware of any patient coming in with a cough or fever

Pre-existing Medical Appointments

- Medical Doctor appointments may be rescheduled for most general follow-up purposes, these will be rebooked by the Medical Doctor on the basis of need and urgency
- If necessary, some appointments may be performed by phone, OTN, Skype, Facebook video, or other video software means
- Many diagnostic imaging and specialty appointments in urban centers will be cancelled. Patients, medical travel coordinator and nurses are to collaborate to determine which appointments will be kept

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Sanitation Products

- Nursing Stations should have sufficient cleaning chemicals and PPE for their operations, but community members will need to secure their own
 - It is the Nurse in Charge responsibility to request further stock from FNIHB for the nursing station

Quarantine

- Patients who test positive or are suspected positive will require quarantine. Due to the high number of persons per household, and limited number of buildings this will be difficult
- Quarantine means strict isolation of the affected person from non-infected people
 - All efforts should be made to completely limit direct contact with others
 - Wood, water, food, household supplies and chronic medications (including suboxone) will need to be dropped off regularly to those in quarantine
 - The NIC should be in regular contact by phone with each quarantined person to assess their health status, and whether they need to be seen in the Nursing Station
 - Ideally any infected person should stay away from the nursing station unless they are extremely sick
 - Mental health / social wellness supports should be extended to quarantined individuals to ensure wellness
- Sites for possible quarantine
 - Teacherages are available as the school is currently closed - they have kitchens, showers, beds, plumbing and heating
 - Other options include the hotel, school or community center, though this limits our ability to separate people as they are large open spaces
 - Ideally different classrooms at the school could be used for suspected versus confirmed cases

- Community Leadership as well as the Nurse in Charge and Medical Doctor will decide about the location of quarantine facilities when they are required

Deaths in Community

- There are limitations in our ability to hold, isolate, and transport bodies should an outbreak happen in the community that leads to the deaths of community members
 - Communication between the Nurse in Charge, Health Director, Medical Doctor and funeral homes will be necessary to respectfully and safely store and transport the deceased
- The grieving process is necessary, though funerals and mass gatherings of people will increase the risk of further viral spread; alternative methods or a delayed memorial or ceremony may be recommended
 - This may be difficult to compromise with traditional ceremonies and beliefs
- Body bags and PPE for those that will be in contact with the bodies of those who die in community from the pandemic will need to be procured and kept in the Nursing Station