

Help Desk for Indigenous Leadership COVID-19 Planning and Information



“I think it has been fantastic – I have a confidence level I did not have and a second opinion as a back-up. Things I did not think of, the doffing and donning stations, I would have set it up differently and might not have thought of any that. This is way more organized with your help.”

Coordinator for the COVID-19 positive center Isolation centre for Peace River, Alberta, May 8, 2020

Leveraging the expertise of the Canadian Red Cross and a long history working with Indigenous communities, the Help Desk targets Indigenous leaders and planners working to keep their communities safe from COVID-19. The heart of this initiative builds on what Indigenous leaders already have put in place, the directives they are following from their local health authorities and provides additional information, resources, and training to complement that knowledge. Evolving from community requests, the Help Desk provides:

Information and referrals on:

- Planning for Health Emergencies such as guidance and training on how to protect your community. This piece builds on the World Health Organization’s community-based COVID plan and has been adapted for Canadian Indigenous context. The value of this work is in the community guidance sessions so the guidance is contextualized and customized for each community’s needs.
- Response measures developed based on community resources.
- Health Guidance such as handwashing, physical distancing and Infection Prevention and Control (IPC).
- Community Wellness and Protection such as online information for children and youth, suggestions for family activities while physical distancing, and Psychological First Aid.

Virtual Site visits: Through a tiered referral system, subject matter experts at the highest tier enter a dialogue with Indigenous leaders and nurture that relationship until leaders are satisfied that the COVID-19 planning issue that prompted them to reach out has been resolved.

- CRC is offering to accompany leaders on a virtual “walk-through” with a joint team of 1 emergency and 1 health advisor to assess how schools, hotels, recreation centres or other community building can be safely adapted to isolation or quarantine sites. The target population for these sites can range from COVID-19 positive clients not requiring medical care, COVID 19 negative individuals traveling back or not wanting to shelter at home for whatever reason, spillover of non-COVID community members unable to quarantine at home, or those being evacuated due to floods and fires in a COVID-19 context and needing shelter. During the virtual site assessment Indigenous leaders use their phone to walk through the structure so the CRC team can get a sense of needs and make relevant recommendations on adopting and adapting IPC protocols.
- The CRC team then submits a written report to the community with findings from the virtual site assessment and IPC recommendations (i.e. guidance on setting up donning and doffing areas, PPE needs of staff, considerations for cleaning, laundry, provision of means, recreation areas, medical check-ups and setting up medical transport if needed).
- The CRC team also offers virtual training in Infection Prevention and Control (IPC), review of donning and offing areas once set-up, and support to contact tracing and identification of community members with conditions that make them more vulnerable.

The knowledge, resources and referrals shared through the Help Desk include a number of Indigenous-focused COVID-19 tools/messaging evidence from resources such as the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the International Federation of the Red Crescent/Red Cross, the Center for Disease Control, the Public Health Agency of Canada, local health authorities and traditional healers.