



Explanation of the Virtual Site Visit Function of the Help Desk for Indigenous Leadership

"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 isolation centre for Peace River, Alberta, May 8, 2020

Leveraging the expertise of the Canadian Red Cross (CRC) and a long history working with Indigenous communities, the Help Desk targets Indigenous leaders and planners working to limit the impacts of COVID-19 on their communities. The heart of this initiative builds on the existing capacity of Indigenous leaders and the directives they are following from their local health authorities, and provides additional information, resources, and training to complement that knowledge.

The Help Desk for Indigenous Leadership is working in collaboration with other Indigenous coordination services such as the InfoPoint service offered through the First Nations Health Managers Association. Further, it works with community/Nation needs for a collective approach to preparing and preventing for any outbreak. The Help Desk for Indigenous Leadership is partly funded by Indigenous Services Canada.

Evolving from community requests, the Help Desk provides information, training and referrals on:

- Planning for Health Emergencies such as guidance and training on how to protect one's community. This piece builds on the World Health Organization's community-based COVID plan and has been adapted for the Canadian Indigenous context. The value of this work is in the community guidance sessions, which 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. This pillar of service also supports communities that are experiencing increasing incidents of violence (including self-directed) and other traumatic loss.

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 one emergency and one health advisor to assess how schools, hotels, recreation centres or other community buildings 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 unable to shelter 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 assess needs and make relevant recommendations on adopting/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 IPC, review of donning and doffing areas, and support for 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 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. The Help Desk is available from **8 am to 8 pm (CST)**, 7 days a week at **1-833-937-1597**.