



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

# COVID-19: Keep Gatherings Small During the Fall

The FNHA is encouraging First Nations individuals and communities to continue observing physical distancing, maintain small social bubbles, and avoid gatherings as the daily count of new COVID-19 cases remains high.

Acting Chief Medical Officer Dr. Shannon McDonald said that a recent spike in COVID-19 positive tests in BC First Nations communities shows that the threat remains real. The virus does not respect closed roads and checkpoints, and it spreads during ceremonies and large gatherings that then become known as “super spreader” events.

## **RECENT DATA (AS OF OCT. 6, 2020) SHOWS THAT STATISTICALLY THE COVID-19 POSITIVITY RATE AMONG BC FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE IS RISING:**

- 325 per 100,000 people among BC First Nations
- 175 per 100,000 people among other British Columbians
- 74% of cases occur in community clusters/gatherings
- 4.5% of tests for First Nations individuals are positive
- <2% of tests for British Columbians as a whole
- 451 total cases among First Nations since March 1, 2020
- 185 active cases

As COVID-19 cases rise in First Nations communities, Dr. McDonald is recommending that people limit their bubbles to their immediate families, communities and Nations.

## **LARGE GATHERINGS AND FUNERALS HAVE BEEN CITED AS CAUSES THAT LED TO SEVERAL COVID-19 CLUSTERS. ALTHOUGH FUNERAL RITES FOR LOVES ONES IN INDIGENOUS CULTURES ARE OFTEN HELD IN ACCORDANCE WITH TRADITIONAL CEREMONIES IN LARGE GATHERINGS, IT'S IDEAL TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS:**

- Small: Fewer than 10 people
- Outdoors only, such as a graveside ceremony
- Make larger group plans at a later date when it's safer

COVID-19 is particularly dangerous for Elders, those with compromised immune systems, or people with pre-existing health conditions.

The FNHA is urging people to treat one another with [kindness](#), love and respect as the best way to come through this crisis. Stigma creates fear, and fear stops people getting tested and this makes it hard to prevent the spread in the community.

To keep yourself, your family and your community safe, please observe the [COVID-19 safety guidelines](#).