



SPECIAL COVID-19 PANDEMIC UPDATE

ONE YEAR LATER

Newsletter – March 2021

COVID STATE OF EMERGENCY – ONE YEAR LATER

Chief's Message

This year will go down in the history of our Nation as one of the most difficult years we have ever faced. When I was re-elected as your Chief in August 2018 I never imagined the challenges we would have or the decisions that would have to be made to address such a deadly global pandemic. Life for all of us changed so quickly. Our individual liberties and freedoms were dramatically affected. Our children have been affected by changes in their education over the school year. We have been unable to visit family and friends. We have faced anxieties and mental health struggles and fear that this silent killer might find its way into our community.

It has been a daily struggle for us as leaders to try to find the right balance as we took actions to save lives. When we look back on this year, as difficult as it has been for our community, we can proudly say that our Nation lost no-one to COVID-19 so far.

While lockdowns are not fun, they saved lives and they prevented people from getting really sick. Communities all around us have been in crisis at different times throughout the year but we managed to contain

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the virus. We have had only 6 cases due to careful, co-ordinated action.

Unfortunately, a number of our Citizens living in Thompson got sick and suffered. Their stories and experiences helped us to stay the course even when people in the community got mad and called us dictators. Our goal was always the health and safety of our people.

We took our fiduciary responsibilities seriously as every life is important and we did not want to see any of our families and friends suffer the loss of a loved one. We also did not want to see the suffering caused by this awful, unpredictable

disease spread throughout our community. Many of us had to isolate as we became contacts of someone who had or might have COVID-19. We had to get tested and endure anxious moments as we waited for the test results. Last Christmas is one I am sure none of us will ever forget.

Being a leader means showing leadership and this was tough given the rapid and evolving nature of this pandemic. Even now it is a race to vaccinate

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before the variants of the virus spread. But due to the diligence of everyone working to keep our community safe, we have done much better than so many other communities.

On this one year anniversary

please join with me in thanking our health team, our essential workers, our staff, my Council colleagues and all of those in our community who stepped up in so many different ways to help us get through this very tough year.

Spring is in the air and I know everyone is getting restless. I know we are all fed up with being locked up for most of the past year. I am so glad there is light at the end of the tunnel. The vaccine will be here soon. It is important that we all hang on even if it is for a few more months till everyone gets vaccinated. When you think about it, as frustrating and as hard as this year has been, what is a couple more months when we have already survived 12 months of this pandemic!

The experts tell us the COVID-19 virus is not going to go away so we must learn to live with it. This means we have to keep following the fundamentals by



Chief and Council take a short break from Covid concerns by playing a fun game with elders at a Council meeting.

washing our hands, sanitizing, wearing masks, maintaining physical distances and limiting our contacts.

Following these public health measures are critical while we wait to be vaccinated and even after we are vaccinated. If get vaccinated and maintain these basic practices, we can avoid more complete lockdowns and more restrictions can be lifted.

Even though this has been the most difficult year I have faced as a leader in this community, I remain proud to be your Chief because I am so proud of all of you. We came together, followed the rules and kept each other safe. Our ability to care for each other and accept responsibility is what will continue to keep us safe. On this one year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic it is important to remember that Our Nation remains NCN Strong!



Chief and Council mask up and socially distance during important Covid-19 bulletin addresses to the public.



LOOKING BACK – HOPE AHEAD

Chief and Council Declare State of Emergency

On 30 January 2020, the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. This declaration was a rallying call to all countries to immediately take action. On March 11, 2020 after months of COVID-19 cases rising globally, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global pandemic. Within days of this declaration, the world as we knew it changed dramatically.

- Sports Abruptly Ended – no more hockey, basketball or football
- Borders Closed
- Travel Bans Imposed
- Air travel Halted
- Quarantines Imposed
- Businesses Closed
- Schools Closed
- Food and Supply Shortages – toilet paper, cleaning supplies, hand sanitizer
- Employees Told to Work from Home
- Medical Treatment Postponed
- Overcrowded Hospitals and ICUs



As soon as the WHO declared there was a pandemic, Chief and Council moved quickly to update NCN's Emergency Measures Law. On March 20, 2020 NCN declared a State of Emergency. NCN Orders in Council (OICs) provided the legal framework for Chief and Council to put measures in place to keep the community safe. Bulletins, Radio and Social Media Announcements, Posters, Fact Sheets, YouTube videos and the NCN Website have been used extensively to communicate up to date information throughout the pandemic.

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First Lockdown - Spring and Summer 2020

The first lockdown lasted from March 20 to May 20. During this period, a non-essential travel ban was in effect.



HR staff wore masks.



Meetings that took place during Covid-19 pandemic had serious safety measures in place.

Monitoring of entry and exit to the community was put into effect. Public gatherings were limited. Visiting was prohibited. Alcohol was banned. A curfew went into effect. By acting quickly, NCN was able to keep the virus out. We faced many challenges trying to ensure that everyone had enough food and supplies while also keeping the community safe. Bootleggers and drug dealers tried to maintain their supply chains and we had to step up patrols and other activities. During this first lockdown we all learned new lingo:

- Social/Physical Distancing
- PPE (gloves, masks, face shields, gowns, goggles)
- PCR tests
- Nose swabs

- Isolation and Isolation Units
- Essential Workers
- Remote Learning
- Covid, Covid-19 and coronavirus

Our critical infrastructure projects were shut down. Schools were closed. Visitors were not allowed at the PCH.

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Employees were reassigned. Toilet Paper became a precious commodity.

But during this first lockdown there were also positives for our community. Families spent more time together. Violence dropped. There were fewer calls to the RCMP, to CFS, and to the Nursing Station. There was a peacefulness that seemed to descend over the community.

The numbers in northern Manitoba remained low and by late May we were able to ease restrictions. Summer arrived





and by July 11th there was only one reported active case in Manitoba. Travel was allowed throughout Manitoba and western Canada. Construction on our major infrastructure projects resumed. We all thought we had dodged the virus. Then came August and September and rising case numbers.

Second Lockdown - Fall 2020

On August 30th, we limited travel to Manitoba only. By September 30th we restricted travel to southern Manitoba. As cases developed in Thompson no travel was allowed there either. Isolation requirements were enhanced. The numbers in the north started climbing and various communities saw major outbreaks. Some of our NCN Citizens in Thompson became sick with the virus. We continually monitored all of the information and worked collaboratively with our health team to implement more restrictions to try to keep our community safe. We managed to go nine months with no cases.

THIRD LOCKDOWN - A CHRISTMAS LIKE NO OTHER

On December 18th, just as we were closing for the Christmas holidays we learned that we had the first active case of COVID

in the community. Our health team went to work immediately, spending countless hours doing contact tracing. Barricades went up and a strict stay at home order went into effect. Passes were issued to allow shopping for critical supplies. The challenges of trying to get food and supplies into the

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community just before Christmas was immense. A time of the year that we all looked forward to quickly turned into an anxious time as hundreds of people had to isolate and be tested. We made it through this thanks to our great health team and a core group of our wonderful staff.

FOURTH LOCKDOWN

Since Christmas we lifted some restrictions in the community but still limited the number of people who could come into the community. We have had a couple of really close calls but so far have been able to contain the virus and there has been no community spread. On March 3rd we started to allow shopping in Thompson on a trial basis as the numbers there dropped. We are continuing to monitor these changes as well as the new variants that are spreading globally.

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NNCEA Staff were forced to act quickly with ever-changing Covid-19 safety in schools.

WE'VE COME SO FAR – HOW LIFE HAS CHANGED



Dennis Spence checking temperature to test for Covid-19 symptoms earlier in 2020.

ONE YEAR INTO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Over the past year we have learned to EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED. People who got COVID or became a contact did not expect this to happen to them. While we have only had 6 active cases in the community, we have learned that anytime, anyone does not follow the rules, COVID is there to greet them and it impacts all of us. We have also learned that when there has been a CALL TO ACTION, people in our community have stepped up and gone above and beyond the call of duty to help keep all of us safe.

This past year seems to have distorted time. A year later it feels like nothing has changed, but that everything has changed all at the same time. Things we took

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for granted a year ago like visiting, travel, going to camp, following our traditions for wakes and funerals, or holding community meetings, feasts and

ceremonies have all changed. We have had to find new activities to occupy our time. We know how precious freedom is and how quickly things can change.

We have learned that the inequities that have governed our lives as Indigenous Peoples resulted in COVID-19 disproportionately impacting us. Poor internet and a lack of access to adequate technology prevented our employees from working from home and our schools being able to implement remote learning. With everyone staying home the inadequacies of our housing and infrastructure became even more apparent. Public health measures like hand washing and isolating if sick were often challenges. The requirement to constantly sanitize meant that we had to ensure our Citizens had the necessary supplies provided to them. Staying home meant trying to ensure that food supplies were adequate so arrangements were made to distribute fish and meat packages. Ultimately, we have learned how critical it is to be able to govern ourselves as no-one will look after us unless we do it ourselves. The pandemic has shown us that it is critical to be able to develop our own rules and enforce them.



STORIES FROM NCN

Kaitlin Yetman

On December 8th night I got asked to go have a beer with my friends. I almost didn't but Merv was dying to go out visiting because we hadn't been out in a while. It was only to our friends down the road and another couple so I thought it was safe. There were six of us at first then three more people showed up.

We shared the bottle and hung out in a small room. Three days later on December 11th, I started to feel sick with earaches and cold chills. I didn't go to the clinic right away because I was so stressed out with school and didn't have time. I had just finished writing my managerial exam that day.

I got so I couldn't bear how sick I was feeling so I finally went to the clinic on December 16th. But because I didn't lose my taste or smell they thought it was a kidney infection. After three days of taking my pills I knew there was something wrong cause the pills weren't working I wasn't getting better.

I was asked to go to a party on December 19th and I told them I wasn't feeling good. A friend said my other friend wasn't feeling good either and she didn't want to go. I messaged her, she told me she was sick and we both told each other

how we were feeling. I told her I was having a hard time breathing and I was freezing. I told her Merv was sick and he was burning up and hadn't eaten or gotten out of bed for days.

We started putting the pieces together. I messaged another friend who was at that party and she told me that she was sick too and was going to go for a COVID test. I told her I should go too to be safe. She then went for a rapid test the next day called to tell me she had tested positive for COVID.

I was losing my mind messaging everyone who was at that party to tell them that my friend had tested positive and they should go get tested. After telling them they were like I have symptoms too. We found out on December 14th that our friend was positive. I was very upset that I was not told and that my name was apparently not given to the health authorities.

Merv and I went to get tested. I called my Mom crying. I told her I was really sick and I think I have COVID. I told her that I couldn't look after my kids anymore as I was suffering and never felt this sick in my life. I was trying to cook, clean and take care of 5 kids, plus Merv.

I thought I would post on

Facebook and tell everyone just in case something happened. I wanted others to be aware. I didn't want to do what was done to me and not tell people I was around that I was sick and they needed to watch out for symptoms and limit their contacts.

Two days before I got my test results, my mom came to help and Merv and I went to isolate.

We got our results. They were both positive. It was hard to see on paper. I started crying as you just don't think you will ever catch it. I was so scared that I had given it to my kids but none were showing symptoms.

On December 25 I got up that morning to go sleep down stairs cause Merv was breathing so heavily and I couldn't get any rest and I was exhausted. I went to check on him three hours later to say Merry Christmas. I was terrified as he looked dead. His lips were blue. He was breathing so hard, so I called 911.

When we got into the ambulance, they said there was no air coming from his left lung. The paramedics said I couldn't go with Merv and I had to stay cause I had COVID. I was so emotional I didn't know if he was okay. I couldn't just leave as I had to isolate and I couldn't

call any of my friends to come over to stay with me cause I was sick. I spent Christmas alone watching romance movies, crying and worrying about Merv and the kids.

In all my life I have never spent Christmas alone or stayed in a house alone. I was so scared. I kept calling and calling the hospital for updates and they said if I didn't call 911 he could have died. He wasn't getting any air.

Merv was in ICU for a week and was on oxygen. He lost a lot of weight and was very weak. He could barely talk when we Facetimed. When he was released from the hospital after 8 days – his face was green and blue and he was still having a hard time breathing.

My mom took our kids to get tested December 28 and all 5 including her were negative. I was so thankful and glad God heard my prayers cause I would not wish COVID on anyone let alone my family.

On January 5th I was allowed to go home. I was told I was COVID free and couldn't give my sickness to anyone. Even though I wasn't sick anymore and I couldn't give it to anyone, I was treated badly by people.

It took Merv over two months to recover at home. He had a hard time breathing for about 2 months. If he walked he sounded like he was running a marathon. As for me, I get really bad back cramps like when you

have cramps in your legs when you dehydrated but on my back.

I felt bad I ruined my kids Christmas and my Mom's also. Without her help I don't know how we would have managed. It only took one night out and from that one night we turned our lives up side down and it is taking a long time to get our lives back to normal.

I was called a COVID bitch on Facebook. My friends were being treated badly for being my friends because they were around me. Still to this day people are scared to be around me even three months after having COVID. All of this hurts emotionally and adds to the physical illness and stress and anxiety we suffered from having COVID.

That's why a lot of people don't share their stories with others because of how they will be treated. On the other hand, I thought people should know and hear from someone they knew instead of just what they heard on the news. Thompson is a small town. Everyone including the cabbies seemed to know I had been sick with COVID and would ask how I was feeling.

I hope that everyone will listen to the NCN OIC and public health rules as they are there to keep us safe. Merv and I never should have gone for a beer in the first place as until everyone is vaccinated there are no really safe contacts for any of us.

Eleanor Brockington (NCN Housing Director)

Late last fall I would stay in the community from Monday to Friday and then commute home to Thompson for the weekend. On Friday, December 11th, when I arrived home from work my adult grandson had a runny nose but otherwise he was not really sick. I spent the weekend with my family. I woke up about 4:00 am Monday morning in horrible pain – my head felt like it was cracking and I felt like I had been body slammed.

My grandson drove me to see the doctor around 10:00 am on Monday, December 14th. Initially he thought I had pneumonia so prescribed antibiotics but told me to get a COVID test to be on the safe side. He also sent me to the hospital for an x-ray and blood work. I got the COVID test on December 14th, but when I got to the hospital, I was told I should not have been sent there until I knew my test results. I went home and continued to feel awful.

I learned on Thursday, December 17th that my grandson's COVID test was positive, and Public Health called to confirm I was positive too the next day. One of my great grandson's friends from school had come over to the house. At the time, none of us knew that his friend was an asymptomatic carrier of COVID. My condition worsened. On Sunday, December 20th I



went to the hospital and was kept overnight in emergency. I was then released with more prescribed medications and went home but again my condition worsened.

On December 26th, I was taken to hospital by ambulance and stayed there for 8 days. In addition to hurting everywhere, I developed a miserable rash and I could not eat anything solid. The admitting doctor told me I had to feed my body so it could fight the virus. I told him I would eat whatever they fed me, which I did at the hospital. My chest felt it was getting squeezed tighter and tighter. I could not breathe, and kept coughing up a very sticky, white substance that was not at all like a phlegm from a cold or a flu pneumonia that I'd had a few years ago. It was very scary not being able to breathe, and I was panicky. It was worse lying down so whatever sleep I had at the hospital was with me sitting upright on the bed since that was the only way I felt I could breathe.

I received oxygen and intravenous medications at the hospital and started feeling well enough to go home. I was very weak and I continued to have episodes of being out of breathe for weeks after I left the hospital. I still feel like I have something in my throat even though it is now months since I recovered from COVID. I also

may have developed diabetes which I did not have before I became sick with COVID. At this point, I still get quite fatigued although I am continuing to work, primarily from home.

I am willing to share my story as I would not wish this experience on anyone. It was very frightening. I strongly encourage everyone to follow all the public health measures. Be very careful who you are in contact with and as soon as you can get vaccinated.

Anonymous

I have decided to remain anonymous as this has been a difficult experience. I do not want to face more stress and anxiety even though I hope my experience will help others be careful and do everything possible to avoid getting COVID because I had COVID but did not even know I had it. I only took a test because I wanted to travel north for a brief time to visit my kids.

I took a test on December 5th and waited 3 days for my test results. I opened my computer and logged into my profile. I was in disbelief when it was displayed as positive. I was home alone and was terrified. I thought I was going to become very, very sick. I waited and waited for the symptoms to surface – but they never did. I was asymptomatic for the

entire 14 day period. I continued to isolate even after 14 days as I wanted to be sure that I was not going to be infectious to other people.

The entire time I was isolating I became more and more anxious and depressed. I debated by existence. I have never ever been a person with suicidal thoughts, but this brought me to my breaking point. It is hard to know if COVID negatively affected my thought processes.

I was able to FaceTime with my family but the isolation caused terrible feelings of loneliness and guilt. I would wake up in the middle of the night and all I could think of was ending it all as I was so scared. Isolation is unbelievably scary for even the people that appear to be the strongest.

My message to everyone is follow the public health rules and the rules that Chief and Council have put in place as you could become a carrier of the virus and not even know how you got it.

OUR DIVERSE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO SAVED US

For the past three decades we have taken action to build a diverse portfolio of businesses to provide revenue and services for our community. While revenues are down in many areas, we were able to continue to operate our food and gas businesses and those thrived during the pandemic. They also provided us with the ability to get critical supplies into our community and some of the neighbouring communities where our relatives live.

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NCN staff mobilized quickly with essential food and cleaning supplies for on-reserve Citizens during the pandemic lockdown.





OUR NEW INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Early in the pandemic we had to halt our infrastructure projects. As the pandemic evolved

we were able to find ways to develop mitigation plans so that these important projects

could continue so that they are all on track. Phase 1 of the 4 phase NCN community master plan that was done by Stantec was able to proceed during the pandemic.



L to R : Engineers TJ Schatowsky and Jason Cousin from J.R Cousin consultants, NCN Councillors Jeremiah Spence and Willie Moore, NCN project team members; Dieter Duester, ODK Engineering and Project Management Lead Engineer and Councillor Ron Spence, NCN project team member.

Water Treatment Plant

Our water treatment plant plans were able to proceed and updates for the completion will be sent to Citizens in upcoming newsletters.

New High School

Our school project is on track and will be finished in time for the beginning of school this fall.

New Subdivision

Our new subdivision design is in the final stages and construction. The on-going lobbying efforts to Ottawa for the approval for the infrastructure project also commenced. This gives NCN the ability to have more service lots for the housing development.

Fibre Optic Cable - Improved Internet

This project is in its final stages and by this summer all homes in the community will have access to much improved high speed internet.



GOVERNANCE

Our MOU with Canada on self-governance and the recognition of our rights is in the final stages of completion and we expect to be able to sign it with Minister Bennett soon. We have begun to work on the agreements on jurisdiction and improved funding formulas. As soon as it is safe to do so we will be holding community meetings and workshops to obtain input from our citizens as we move forward.

From the community meetings held last January and February just before the pandemic was declared, we obtained input on the development of our own justice processes. Through the pandemic we have also been able to develop the following laws based on the input we received:

- Othasowacikiwinik Othasowina (Nisichawayasi Court Law)
- Peacekeepers Tribunal Law



- Animal Control Law
- Offences and Tickets Law

We will hold meetings to discuss these laws as soon as it is safe to do so and hope to have packages of information distributed shortly.

Manitoba’s public education system is undergoing major

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structural changes. We will be examining these changes and considering how they will impact the education of our NCN children and youth. We will also be seeking input from the community on the development of our own Education Law to enhance our education system. We need to improve school attendance and graduation rates.





LEARNING TO LIVE WITH COVID-19

Public health officials are telling us that we must learn to live with COVID-19. Even though we expect to have our community vaccinated shortly, COVID-19 is a global virus and it is a major undertaking to vaccinate enough of the world's population to achieve herd immunity. This is a particularly difficult task at the moment as the virus is mutating and new variants are developing. Globally, we have seen lack of access to vaccines, logistical problems in getting the vaccines to different countries including Canada and vaccine hesitancy in countries like the United States where the pandemic has become very political.

Countries like New Zealand and Australia have been able to bring the virus under control by using lockdowns and controlling their borders. We have done the same at NCN. However, the virus continues to circulate all around us which means that as constant lockdowns are very hard on everyone and not sustainable long term, we must somehow figure out how to live with this virus.

Firstly, this means we need to get our Citizens vaccinated with both shots of the vaccine as quickly as possible. Secondly, we must continue to follow all public health measures by:

- washing our hands frequently

- continuing to wear masks whenever we are out in public
- maintaining physical distancing
- being extremely cautious about how and where we socialize with other people particularly those who are not yet vaccinated

At this point we don't know if an annual vaccine will be needed similar to the flu vaccine or if the COVID-19 vaccines will provide protection that is more similar to the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine that is already required for most school aged children. We also don't know if the mRNA vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna) will continue to provide protection against all variants or if a booster shot will be needed.

But what we do expect is that once enough people are vaccinated our lives will become more normal. For this reason, we encourage everyone to get vaccinated as soon as possible.

Numerous discussions are underway about the types of policies that should be implemented to be able to return to normal. Some of the discussions are global, others are by country and others are at the local level. For example, discussions about "immunity passports" are underway. Such documents would indicate a person has been vaccinated



The community rallied together to protect and educate one another.

and therefore is allowed to return to work or to travel freely. There are other discussions underway about the steps needed to improve public health infrastructure and approaches to public health so that viruses can be better monitored and contained.

In the meantime, scientists and public policy analysts will continue to study the issues so we can learn more about how to keep our communities safe not just from COVID-19 but from future pandemics. It is clear that we all need to be much better prepared as there will be other pandemics in the future. With this in mind, we would like to hear from our Citizens about what you found the hardest so far and what positive steps we should consider to better prepare our community for future pandemics.

REFLECTING ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC YEAR

It's hard to believe that it's been a year since the world, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, and everywhere in between was introduced to COVID-19. (Remember when we called it "coronavirus"?)

We are fortunate that, thus far, our community has remained safe and has had very few cases, among our on- and off-reserve Citizens. The vast majority of our people have realized the grave danger and made large and small changes to protect themselves and each other. Ekosani!

While shipments of the vaccine continue to arrive in our community, we must remain vigilant until health officials feel comfortable saying we can let down our guards a little and return to "the new normal."

We are fortunate that, thus far, our community has remained safe and has had very few cases.

In the meantime, give yourself time to acknowledge the year you've had, and indulge your emotions, instead of pushing them away. Maybe you have a close friend to talk to. Consider writing a letter to yourself.

Sometimes people record voice memos.

- How would you describe the year in one word? Why?
- Did you experience loss (job, finances, friendships, health)?
- What was the most difficult part of the pandemic? Why?
- What made you sad? Angry? Scared?
- Did your emotions change over time? How?
- How did your family members deal with the changes?
- Can you do something to acknowledge this time? Write a song? Create a photo book?
- Did you make any changes you would like to keep as you move forward?

This may sound ridiculous, but try to find a positive aspect to the pandemic. Did you enjoy spending more time with your family? Did you save money because there was nothing to spend it on? Did you spend less time on your phone because you were avoiding the news? Did you learn some new recipes while you were out of work? Did you start a healthy habit?

It's important to end self-reflection on a positive note, so you can walk away feeling resilient and peaceful. If there



were truly no upsides to the last year, look into the future and find something you can look forward to. Your first hug when it's safe to do so. Sharing a meal with extended family. Going to see a movie in the theatre. Watching a hockey game in a crowd. Fishing with your grandkids.

It may take awhile, but someday we will look back at 2020 and 2021 and realize we lived through a historic time, and our families and our community grew stronger because of it.



SHARE YOUR STORIES SO WE CAN DOCUMENT THEM FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

This has been one of the strangest years for our Nation, but Chief and Council agree it's important to record our pandemic stories.

"Whether you've had COVID-19 yourself or in your family, or the pandemic has affected your life in other ways, we want to hear from you," says Chief Marcel Moody. "I'm sure we don't even know yet all the ways COVID-19 has affected our community, but we need to start recording

these stories, so they can become part of our history."

You may feel that your story isn't interesting, or that you'd rather not share it. Keep in mind that children who learn about the difficult times that their family endured, and how they survived and thrived, tend to be more resilient. They believe they're able to deal with challenges in their own lives because they have the characteristics, like endurance

and hope, of their ancestors.

Tell your story as completely as you can. Tell us about:

- how the pandemic affected you
- how you coped
- what emotions you've experienced
- what you've learned
- how you've changed
- what you look forward to doing when Covid is hopefully gone

NCN administration will compile everyone's stories and determine the best way to share them.

Send your recollections to the Trust Office or to achimowina@gmail.com We're excited to hear from you...and we will hold a random prize draw for the submitted stories!

Whether you've had COVID-19 yourself or in your family, or the pandemic has affected your life in other ways, we want to hear your stories.





We Masked Up

We Washed Up



Now it's time to roll up our sleeves!

**NCN Citizens must get the COVID-19 vaccine
to help us return to normal quicker.**

The vaccine is safe, quick and free and getting it will help protect our community.



CHIEF AND COUNCIL URGE ELIGIBLE RESIDENTS 18 YEARS AND OLDER TO GET THE COVID-19 VACCINE

NCN Plans for Next Vaccine Shipment

People around the globe heave a cautious sigh of relief as the COVID-19 vaccine continues to make its way around the world, across the country, and right here to NCN.

“The end of lockdowns and restrictions is in sight, as long as people get their vaccines. The sooner we have herd immunity through a large majority of our population getting their COVID shots, the sooner we can get back to normal,” says Chief Marcel Moody.

At this time, NCN Citizens who are living on-reserve and are essential frontline workers, nurses, teachers and RCMP officers are priority. They may call 204-484-2341 to make an

appointment for their vaccine.

But to ensure a smooth roll-out as shipments of the vaccine arrive over the next weeks and months, NCN Chief and Council and Public Health encourages

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everyone to pre-register for their shot.

“Once our elderly and vulnerable have received their shots, I’ll be first in line,” Chief Moody laughs.

To pre-register and avoid lineups, you’ll need a consent form, which is widely available around the community from the schools to stores to NCN buildings. Complete the form and bring it to the Family and Community Wellness Centre during regular

business hours. Bring your treaty number and medical number, too!

When the next shipment of shots is available, the Community Vaccination Clinic will be at the Norman Linklater Memorial Multiplex. Watch for Facebook announcements and



Public Health department had information readily available for Citizens.



Chief Marcel Moody rolls up his sleeve to receive and promote the Covid-19 vaccination. He encourages everyone in the community to do likewise, when eligible.

listen to 98.1 NCN Cree FM for dates and times.

“We are in the homestretch of a very challenging year,” says Chief Moody. “Let’s stay vigilant! Continue to wear a mask, social distance, and wash your hands. I think we’re going to make it.”

“We are in the homestretch of a very challenging year,” says Chief Moody.

NCN CITIZENS

WEARING IS CARING

Wearing a mask when travelling to Thompson.

You must wear a face covering in any public place and where social distancing of 6 feet is impossible.



 Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY
Wellness Centre™

 **NISICHAWAYASIHK**
CREE NATION

Support the Health of your Community

A message from the NCN public Health and Safety Department

-  Absolutely no visiting allowed while in Thompson
-  Please sanitize/wash hands frequently and properly
-  Maintain and keep safe distance away from others and avoid prolonged contact with others.



COVID-19 VACCINE: HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Why We Need a Vaccine

Being vaccinated against COVID-19 is one of the best ways to protect yourself and everyone around you. Vaccines, along with wearing a mask, washing your hands, and staying 6 feet apart, help prevent more illness and deaths. The vaccines against COVID-19 are excellent tools in our toolbox to stop the spread of the virus. By stopping the spread of COVID-19, we can keep businesses, schools, and other venues open.

Vaccine Safety

Having a safe and effective vaccine is the top priority. The makers of the vaccine presented their data and went through a rigorous review process before the vaccine became available for most people. Each company, the NACI and Health Canada continue to watch and review information.

Side Effects

Some side effects are common after any vaccine, including soreness where you got the vaccine, muscle aches, headaches, and tiredness. Less common are fever and chills. When you get the COVID-19

vaccine, you will be asked to wait for 15- 30 minutes afterward to be monitored for allergic reactions, which can be serious. All locations giving COVID-19 vaccine are prepared to help patients who may have allergic reactions. Allergic reactions to COVID-19 vaccine are rare, with roughly 1 in a million people experiencing one. The COVID-19 vaccine cannot give you COVID-19.

How Well Does the Vaccine Work?

The vaccines are very effective at protecting you from the virus. They reduce the risk of infection very well. Based on what we know about vaccines from other diseases and early data from studies, experts believe that

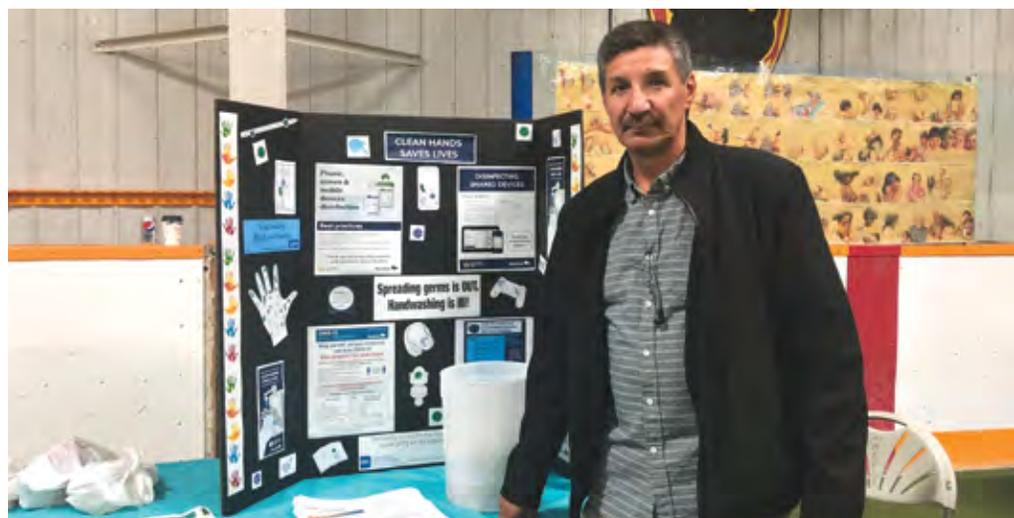
getting a COVID-19 vaccine may also help keep you from getting very sick even if you do get COVID-19.

It's Free

COVID-19 vaccine is provided at no cost to the patient. However, you may be asked about insurance because the sites giving vaccine can bill insurance. They cannot charge you. They can charge your insurance. If you don't have insurance, they cannot deny you the vaccine.

Why do I Need Two Doses?

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are two-dose vaccines, recommended at three weeks apart for Pfizer and four weeks for Moderna. NACI says that if vaccine supply is limited there



can be up to four months between the first and second dose. Getting more than one dose is not unusual for a vaccine. In fact, it's the norm. Many vaccines require more than one dose for maximum protection. When you get your vaccine, you will get a card with the name of the vaccine on it. It is important that your second dose be the same as your first dose.

Building Immunity Takes Time

It takes at least two weeks after your first shot for you to develop some immunity to COVID-19. Recent studies show that one shot was about 70% to 80% effective so NACI recommended that the second dose be delayed for up to four months in order to be able to vaccinate more people quicker. A second shot of Moderna, Pfizer and AstraZenica/COVISHIELD will still be needed. It is currently unknown what percentage of the community must be vaccinated to achieve community immunity so continuing to follow the public health measures is critical – wash your hands and sanitize homes and vehicles frequently, wear a mask when in public and stay home as much as possible.

Protect yourself and our community Get Vaccinated Now!



Community Vaccination Clinics

Fill out your consent form in advance (pre-register to avoid delays at clinic)

Norman Linklater Memorial Multi-Plex
Clinic starts on **March 25th and March 26th**
and run **March 29th to April 1st**

The vaccine is safe, quick and free and getting it will help protect our community.

- Canadian Military arrive to start Mass Immunization on Monday March 29th and will continue all week (this is current plan but is subject to change)
- Wear short sleeve and bring health card if have one - if don't then come anyway.

A message from
Chief and Council





COVID-19 VACCINE: MYTHS VS. FACTS

MYTH: COVID-19 vaccines are not safe.

FACT: COVID-19 vaccines are safe and went through full review by experts.

Safety is a top priority of the Health Canada vaccine safety development and approval process. The development process for COVID-19 vaccines involved several steps comparable with those used to develop other vaccines such as the flu or measles vaccine, which have successfully protected millions of people for decades. Health Canada as well as independent medical experts on the National Advisory Committee on Immunizations (NACI) have ensured that every detail of COVID-19 vaccines is thoroughly and rigorously evaluated. Evidence shows that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and work to prevent COVID-19.

MYTH: COVID-19 vaccines were rushed; not thoroughly tested.

FACT: The COVID-19 vaccine development and clinical trials were thorough, and developed quickly thanks to streamlined processes and a worldwide effort.

There have been no shortcuts in the vaccine development process. The process has been quicker as a result of strategic efforts to run

concurrent trial phases, as well as a commitment to help condense timelines and reduce or eliminate months-long waiting periods during which documents would be prepared or be waiting for review. Vaccine manufacturers and the scientific community globally dropped everything to develop a vaccine. The CEOs of AstraZeneca, BioNTech, GlaxoSmithKline, Johnson & Johnson, Merck, Moderna, Novavax, Pfizer, and Sanofi made a historic pledge to the world, outlining a united commitment to uphold the integrity of the scientific process as they work toward potential regulatory filings and approvals of the first COVID-19 vaccines. Although the COVID-19 vaccines themselves have been developed recently, the technology used in messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines, like those developed by Pfizer BioNTech and Moderna, has been studied for decades and carried out in early-stage clinical trials for influenza, Zika, rabies, and cytomegalovirus (CMV). The missing link to developing this vaccine was learning the genomic sequence of the coronavirus.

MYTH: The COVID-19 vaccines will alter my DNA or genetic makeup.

FACT: Receiving an mRNA Vaccine like Moderna or Pfizer or a Viral Vector Vaccine like AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD will not alter

your DNA.

Neither Messenger ribonucleic acid, or mRNA or Viral Vector vaccines alter or modify a person's genetic makeup (DNA). They never enter the nucleus of the cell where your DNA is kept, and therefore do not affect or interact with your DNA in any way.



mRNA Vaccines (Moderna/Pfizer)

The mRNA from COVID-19 vaccines can most easily be described as a set of instructions (or recipe) for your body on how to make a harmless piece of "spike protein" to allow our immune systems to recognize that this protein doesn't belong there and begin building an immune response and making antibodies. Essentially, COVID-19 vaccines that use mRNA work with the body's natural defenses to safely develop immunity to the virus, giving your cells a blueprint of how to make antibodies.

Viral Vector Vaccines

Viral vector vaccines use a modified version of a different

virus (the vector) to deliver important instructions to our cells. For COVID-19 viral vector vaccines, the vector (not the virus that causes COVID-19, but a different, harmless virus) will enter a cell in our body and then use the cell's machinery to produce a harmless piece of the virus that causes COVID-19. This piece is known as a spike protein and it is only found on the surface of the virus that causes COVID-19. Our immune system recognizes it doesn't belong there and begins producing antibodies.

MYTH: COVID-19 vaccines will be mandatory for everyone in living at NCN.

FACT: There is currently no NCN government mandate to get the COVID-19 vaccine but this issue is being reviewed.

Chief and Council urges everyone to get the COVID vaccine to help us return back to normal sooner. Canada and the other G7 Nations are looking at issues related to the issuance of vaccine passports and other matters. Employers and Schools may require mandatory vaccinations similar to the flu shot or any other vaccines. Chief and Council will consider more information about mandatory vaccination as it becomes available and will seek input from the community about the pros and cons of being required to be vaccinated to be able to enter NCN Lands, work for NCN or NCN Entities, attend ATEC

and K-12 schools and daycares once there is a vaccine for children and youth.

MYTH: You can get the virus from COVID-19 vaccines.

FACT: The vaccines will not give you COVID-19.

None of the COVID-19 vaccines currently approved use the live virus that causes COVID-19. The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are messenger ribonucleic acid, or mRNA, vaccines. The goal of these COVID-19 vaccines is to teach our immune systems how to build a protein. In this case, it's telling your body to make the spike protein that's on the coronavirus. The proteins your body makes are solitary, and they do not connect or reproduce. Then your immune system recognizes the protein as foreign and develops antibodies to destroy it. Your immune system remembers the protein and is ready to attack and eliminate the virus that causes COVID-19. It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination, and some vaccines require two doses. That means it is possible that a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before, or just after, getting the vaccination and become sick, since it takes the vaccine time to provide protection.

MYTH: If I have recovered from COVID-19, I don't need to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

FACT: People who have recovered from COVID-19 may still benefit from getting vaccinated.

At this time, experts do not know how long someone is protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19, and because re-infection with COVID-19 is possible, people may be advised to get a COVID-19 vaccine even if they have been sick with COVID-19 before. The immunity someone gains from having an infection, called natural immunity, varies from person to person. Both natural immunity and vaccine-induced immunity are important aspects of COVID-19 that experts are trying to learn more about, and Health Canada, the National Advisory Committee on Immunizations and the Manitoba Vaccine Task Force are continually reviewing the data and we will keep NCN informed as new evidence becomes available.

MYTH: COVID-19 isn't very serious, so I don't need to get the vaccine.

FACT: The severity of COVID-19 symptoms varies widely and getting vaccinated can help prevent infection with COVID-19.

While many people with COVID-19 have only a mild illness, others may get a severe illness or die. There is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you, even if you are not



at increased risk of severe complications. Also, if you get COVID-19, you may spread the disease to friends, family, and others around you while you are sick. COVID-19 vaccination helps protect you by allowing your body to create an antibody response without having to experience sickness.

MYTH: You will get a positive COVID-19 viral test if you receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

FACT: COVID-19 vaccines will not cause you to test positive on COVID-19 viral tests.

The vaccines do not contain live virus and won't cause you to test positive on a PCR or antigen test, which are used to see if you have a current infection. If your body develops an immune response, which is the goal of vaccination, there is a possibility you may test positive on some antibody tests. Antibody tests indicate you had a previous infection and that you may have some level of protection against the virus. Experts are currently looking at how COVID-19 vaccination may affect antibody testing results.

MYTH: Other vaccines, like the flu shot, will prevent COVID-19.

FACT: Only vaccines designed specifically to prevent COVID-19 will protect you from the virus.

Other vaccines, such as those for flu, measles, or other

diseases, will not protect you from COVID-19. Only the vaccines designed specifically to protect you from COVID-19, once approved for use by Health Canada, can prevent it. While a flu vaccine will not prevent you from getting COVID-19, it can prevent you from getting influenza (flu) at the same time as COVID-19.

MYTH: There will not be enough vaccines for everyone.

FACT: As production of vaccine continues to grow, every NCN Citizen and resident on NCN Lands who chooses to get one will be able to do so.

Health Canada has granted emergency use authorization for four COVID-19 vaccines so far. Initially, there will be a limited number of doses available, with prioritization of administration to populations at the highest risk. Canada and Manitoba have committed to making the vaccine widely available, for those who want to receive it, as quickly as possible as supply increases. In time, as vaccine production ramps up and large quantities are available, every Manitoba resident who chooses to do so will be able to get vaccinated. But as supply is limited, vaccine administration will initially target specific high-risk populations.

MYTH: COVID-19 vaccines will implant tracking microchips in people.

FACT: Vaccine injections do not contain tracking microchips.

No vaccine injections or nasal sprays – including the shots for COVID-19 – contain microchips, nanochips, RFID trackers, or devices that would track or control your body in any way. Much like the way any shipment or delivery is tracked, shipments of vaccine doses will be monitored as they are shipped and administered across the country. However, the notion that these shots will contain tracking devices implanted into people is false.

MYTH: COVID-19 vaccines cause infertility or other serious medical problems.

FACT: The vaccines do not cause infertility and side effects, such as inflammation at the injection site, mean the vaccine is working.

No serious safety concerns were observed in the clinical trials for the four approved vaccines. The most common side effects were fatigue, headache, soreness or redness at the injection site, and muscle or joint pain. Side effects like these, while unpleasant, are a sign that your body is responding properly to create immunity from the virus that causes COVID-19.

MYTH: My children will be forced to get a vaccine.

FACT: Children are not yet eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccines.

NCN is examining the issues related to mandating COVID-19 vaccines, but at this time, the COVID-19 vaccines that have received emergency use authorizations are not recommended for children or youth. While additional clinical trial data is being gathered, children, like adults, should wear a mask, watch their distance, wash their hands, and avoid congregating in groups in order to protect themselves from COVID-19.

MYTH: Pregnant and breastfeeding women should not get COVID-19 vaccines.

FACT: Pregnant and breastfeeding women may choose to be vaccinated.

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada (SOGC) indicated that COVID-19 vaccinations should be offered to pregnant and/or breastfeeding individuals who are at high-risk of infection and/or may experience serious complications from COVID-19. They have determined that the risk of not getting the vaccine is greater than the risks if a person gets COVID-19. There is currently no safety data specific

to use in pregnancy or during breast feeding but there is some data on the impact of COVID-19 on pregnant women. Manitoba has identified the following risk factors for experiencing severe COVID-19 in pregnant women:

- Age (35 years and older)
- Asthma
- Obesity
- Pre-pregnancy diabetes
- Pre-pregnancy high blood pressure
- Heart disease

MYTH: Once I get a vaccine, I can stop wearing a mask and social distancing.

FACT: You should continue to wear a mask and practice social distancing even after being vaccinated.

The vaccine will protect you from getting ill from COVID-19, however, not enough is known about whether or not you can still carry the virus and spread it to others. Also, children and youth will not initially be vaccinated so it is very important that those who get the vaccine continue to wear masks and practice social distancing.

MYTH: Vaccines cause autism.

FACT: Vaccines do not cause autism.

Studies conducted across the globe continue to show that there is no connection between autism and vaccines.

MYTH: The internet has lots of information about the vaccine but I don't know which information to believe.

FACT: Chief and Council and the NCN Family and Community Wellness Centre try to provide accurate, up to date information to NCN Citizens and residents.

It can be difficult to know which sources of information you can trust. The internet, unfortunately, is filled with dangerous misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines. The best thing you can do is educate yourself about the vaccines with trustworthy information. Chief and Council and the Family and Community Wellness Centre will continue to try to provide the most current, accurate information as it becomes available.



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YOUR COMMENTS ARE IMPORTANT TO US

Please let us know your thoughts, concerns and feedback on these and future plans. We hope to maintain a government that will listen to you and act only in your best interest.

SPECIAL COVID-19 PANDEMIC UPDATE

ONE YEAR LATER

VACCINE

COVID-19 STORIES FROM NCN

Roger Linklater

I had the first COVID-19 case in our community. I am willing to share my story to help others learn from my experience. I had a medical appointment in Thompson. The medical van dropped me off for my appointment and when it was finished, I decided to walk to the Liquor Mart while I was waiting for the medical van to pick me up. I missed my ride so I went out with a few friends of mine and everything started from there even though I wore my mask and I kept my distance.

I stayed on the street and then went to the shelter and they let me in when I explained to them that I had missed my ride back home. They sent me for a COVID test at the Burntwood Medical Walk-In Clinic on December 11th. The test initially came back negative and I had no symptoms at all (well I had a hangover but

thought it was from drinking not from COVID).

I returned to NCN on December 14th. Public health was notified that I had been at the shelter in Thompson. On December 15th I was moved from my family's house to the ATEC isolation unit and then to the Medicine Lodge isolation unit. I had another test on December 19th. It was positive. I was so scared and depressed when I found out I had COVID. I was afraid I

was going to pass it on to my nieces and nephews. I felt so bad. I kept on thinking about them and the rest of our community. I even said a few prayers while I was in isolation. It is a good thing the RCMP and nurses found me and I went into isolation so I could not spread it to others.

I had no symptoms at all except for the hangover. I was freaking out and I was so scared. I have had no long-term effects although I was told I could have effects later. So far it has been almost 4 months and I have had nothing. Unfortunately, because

Even though I had no symptoms I plan to get vaccinated as I don't want to go through that kind of fear again. I want to encourage everyone to get the vaccine.



Roger Linklater shared his experience of having Covid-19.

I was in contact with my family for that one day and they were in touch with other people in the community, many people had to isolate.

Even though I had no symptoms I plan to get vaccinated as I don't want to go through that kind of fear again. I want to encourage everyone to get the vaccine.

I still feel so bad going for my medical appointment and then not waiting for my ride home. All of this caused our community a lot of stress especially at Christmas and for that I am truly sorry.

