

HIGHLIGHTS FROM A Covid-19 Fireside Chat with Indigenous Health Professionals

Hosted by **Idle No More** and
Indigenous Climate Action

FEATURING

Dr. Lana Potts, Blackfoot Nation
Dr. James Makokis, Saddle Lake Cree Nation
Dr. Kawika Liu, Native Hawaiian
Dr. Aleeta Feejo, Indigenous Larakeet Australian
Northern Territory
Dr. Bernice Downey, Ojibwe and Celtic
Dr. Karen Hill, Six Nations of the Grand River
Elisa Levi, Chippewas of Nawash (moderator)

On Saturday, March 21 Indigenous Climate Action and Idle No More **hosted a webinar** on Indigenous Health Practitioners for Indigenous health planners who are working on the ground addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the speakers emphasized, while a vaccine may be at least a year away, now is the time to reflect, to find grounding in Indigenous ways and to consider what Indigenous strategies to support the health and well-being of families and communities could look like.

Here, we share some highlights from the moderated conversation, which covered topics specific to Indigenous communities and answered important and practical questions from live viewers. And, since we continue to learn things every day about the virus, it is important to continue asking questions and to seek trustworthy sources of information. As such, we have compiled links, some of which were mentioned in the webinar, at the end of this document to help with this.

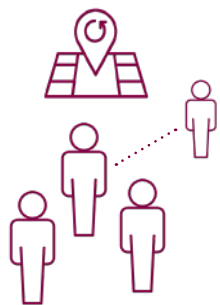
“It’s important for our communities to see this as an opportune time to pick up our traditional knowledge and western knowledge that we’ve gained.

We can mobilize it all together and work together to achieve the best outcome now in the crisis, and in the long run when this is all past us”

- Dr. Karen Hill

Community Social Distancing Strategies

This is a time to look at what we have in a different way to support good health practice.



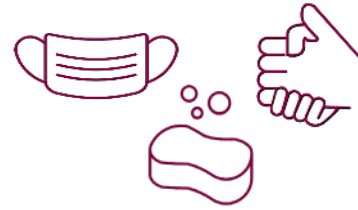
- **Mobilize community spaces** to support those who are experiencing overcrowding and can't isolate/quarantine. For example, use a large space such as a school gym for symptomatic people so they can be separated from asymptomatic people.
- **Close communities** to only health care professionals and essential service workers.
- **Support community members** to live off the land/more remotely, if possible.
- **If someone is ill or has symptoms**, they should self isolate away from the rest of family if possible. If there is a lack of space in the family home set up your tipi, trappers tent, RV trailer or camper as an alternative living space for a family member who needs to self-isolate.

Should you be wearing gloves and masks?

Gloves: They aren't necessary if you're hand washing for 20 seconds.

Masks: People that should wear the mask are those who have symptoms. They should also refrain from touching their face. Masks are made for one time use. Fabric masks have been shown to be ineffective.

Cleaning: Use household cleaning products to wipe down door-knobs, taps and other frequently touched / shared surfaces on a frequent basis (twice a day).



**Soap is king.
Wash your hands and surfaces!**

..... 🧑🏻 Caring for Kids 🧑🏻



**Protect the minds
and spirits
of children**

- **Encourage open communication**
Recognize and acknowledge their fears and worries; ask for/listen to their suggestions on how to deal with challenges

SUGGESTION: Start and end each day with a sharing circle in your household
- **Adult content vs. kid content**
Consider not watching the news around children or discussing topics that are for adults
- **Maintain relationships in new ways.**
For example, grandparents can do storytime with grandkids via video chat; friends can play online games together
- **Encourage hand washing;** keep moisturizer next to the sink to keep their hands from getting dry/raw from washing
- **Get them involved in cleaning** (if age appropriate)

Traditional Medicines

Traditional ways are about prevention and staying healthy. Medicines and ceremonies help us strengthen our immune systems when facing the impacts of colonialism, as well as other stresses on wellbeing.

While long term planning can include advocating for and supporting access to healthy and nutritious food in your community, here are four strategies related to traditional medicines that you can use now to support your wellbeing and that of your family and community:



1. **Share a list of traditional medicines** and ways to access them with people in your community
2. **Eat traditional foods and immune boosting foods,** and drink medicines on a regular basis to give your body maximum strength to fight the virus
3. **Share and seek out knowledge.** People in your community have different pieces of knowledge (for example: healers, knowledge keepers and seed savers)– when community comes together, the full picture can be pieced together again
4. **Listen to guidance from traditional leaders and from trusted western sources too.**
We must use the best of both worlds in making our bodies as well prepared as possible

What about gathering and participating in ceremony?.....

Those who do not have symptoms of the virus may want to gather and participate in ceremony. Consider the following when making this decision:

- **Assess the risk in your own community** and ask what is appropriate. Consider your own risk and how it could affect others; now is a time to protect Elders and ceremonial people.
- **Gathering in enclosed spaces with many people is not a good idea at this time;** small groups, outside, maintaining distance with no touching or hugging is a better option.
- **Do ceremonies as a family.** Avoid multiple households coming together at this time.
- **Participate in the National calls** for prayers, pipe ceremonies, jingle dress dancers with others from across Turtle Island with your family in your own home. We are stronger together.

Words of Hope and Encouragement

Find Strength in Family & Community



"This is a time, not live in fear but to draw ourselves together."

"Practice love and compassion for each other."

"Start getting to know each other again."

Honor Elders



"Reach out to elders for teachings and listen for their messages. Create spaces to bring their voices to the fore"

"We have to be calm so that we can listen to the voices of the guiding ancestors, our traditional healers and the doctors who are working for us, guiding us through to safety."

"We all have our part to do, to take care of ourselves and to take care of each other."

- Dr. Bernice Downey

"Stay positive and enjoy the silences."

- Dr. Kawika Liu

"We have this greatest strength of being our own community as Indigenous peoples and that is full of love and that is what we need to remember. Make those strong connections, develop those connections and share love..."

- Dr. Aleeta Feejo

Practice Self-Care



"Be in ceremony, eating well, staying hydrated, being active, being in our bodies, the place we are at."

"Recognize that this will pass... continue to pray and self-reflect on what's important."

Trust in what we Know



"It's time for us to honor this earth that is our body. All the knowledge is there. We just need to embody it and move forward."

"Never forget who we are. Always remember our teachings and always remember our ancestors. We're seeing people returning to know what medicines to use...we have that in our blood memory, our teachings and our families."

Where to find (updated) information

Knowledge is power, but we need to ensure that we are consulting trusted sources for information. Don't rely on what you see on Facebook! The following are links to information and resources, most of which were mentioned in the webinar:

Infectious Health Questions:
A Public Health Podcast

National Collaborating Centre for Infectious Diseases in partnership with the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health

COVID-19: First Nations
Community Guide on Accessing Additional Supports
Assembly of First Nations

Indigenous Services Canada's Preparedness and Response to Covid-10
Government of Canada

Updates on Covid-19
National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health

COVID-19 Resources for Indigenous Peoples
Indigenous Climate Action

Government of Canada Covid-19 Website

Provincial Links

Government of BC
BC Centre for Disease Control

Government of Alberta
Alberta Health Services

Government of Saskatchewan
Saskatchewan Health Authority

Government of Manitoba
Manitoba Regional Health Authorities

Government of Ontario
Public Health Ontario

Government of Quebec

Government of Nova Scotia
Nova Scotia Health Authority

Government of New Brunswick

Government of Prince Edward Island

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

Government of Nunavut

Government of Yukon
Chief Medical Officer of Health Yukon

Government of Northwest Territories
NWT Health and Social Services Authority

Watch the full webinar hosted by Idle No More and Indigenous Climate Action on Facebook here.

Read bios of all the webinar speakers here.

This factsheet was compiled by
Yellowhead Institute.

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