

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** First Nation Leadership, Leadership Council  
**FROM:** Ontario Regional Chief RoseAnne Archibald  
**DATE:** March 12, 2020  
**RE:** COVID-19 Information Update

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As you know the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic. The WHO defines a pandemic as “a worldwide spread of a new [virus]. An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges and spreads around the world, and most people do not have immunity.”

Moreover, the Center for Disease Control said 80% of those who came down with illness had mild symptoms and they fully recovered. 15 to 20% developed serious illness with only about 2% younger than 19. The highest risk of serious illness and death is in people older than 80 years as well as people with serious underlying health conditions such as diabetes, cancer and chronic lung conditions. It's these, our most vulnerable that we have to focus on during this difficult time.

Further, our response must factor in the lack of capacity, services and infrastructure in many of our communities. We must be decisive yet calm and measured in our approach. Due to Intergenerational Trauma, many of our people lack coping skills and are easily agitated under everyday stresses of life, therefore this is as much a mental health concern as it is a potential health crisis. It's my aim to provide peaceful and grounded leadership, especially during difficult times. I know and trust that all leadership in Ontario are doing the same.

We must all ask ourselves: how can I keep my family and community safe and healthy? It's important to not add unnecessary suffering for our close-knit communities during this tumultuous time.

We, like many Nations, are in a position to prevent the spread of the virus. While contracting COVID-19 is a threat to health, the larger threat is bringing the virus back into our communities from our travels and having it spread widely. The Government of Canada has released guidelines regarding gatherings that outlines risk-informed decision-making for mass gatherings during the COVID-19 global outbreak, these guidelines can be found here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/mass-gatherings-risk-assesment.html>

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Large gatherings increase the risk of contracting the virus. While decisions to attend are made by individuals, families and communities, I urge extra caution in order to protect our most vulnerable. I also suggest that all travel to cities and countries who currently have cases of COVID-19 be avoided, if possible. In addition, please relay the following steps as recommended by the WHO to slowdown transmission:

### Coronavirus prevention



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Stay home when you are sick.

The Chief of Ontario's Health Department will also be issuing a communique with more details including pandemic planning.

The COVID-19 pandemic is an opportunity to show a deep and abiding love and care for one another. While we may have to physically isolate, let's connect in other ways, emotionally and spiritually, as we are inherently spiritual peoples. Updates will be provided as they become available.

Take care of yourselves and each other.