



JOINT COMMUNITY NOTICE

For Immediate Release:

Enniskó:wa/March 14, 2020

MOHAWK COUNCIL OF AKWESASNE AND SAINT REGIS MOHAWK TRIBE JOINT COVID-19 (NOVEL CORONAVIRUS) INFORMATIONAL BRIEFING (MARCH 14, 2020)

JOINT RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (SRMT) and the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (MCA), including health and emergency staff, are working together to provide information to the community and to ensure readiness in regard to the COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) pandemic. The health of our entire community is a priority.

Please refer to our websites for previous informational updates: www.srmt-nsn.gov and www.akwesasne.ca.

GENERAL INFORMATION/UPDATES:

- A case of COVID-19 has been confirmed in the city of Rockland, Ontario, which is part of the Eastern Ontario Health Unit's jurisdiction that Akwesasne also belongs to. Rockland is 40 km east of Ottawa. The 31-year old patient is believed to have contracted the virus in New York City. She returned from the trip on March 11th, symptoms appeared on March 12th, and she tested positive today, March 14th.
- The Mohawk Council advises community members to self-isolate when returning from "hot spots" including New York City, in order to protect our community and vulnerable sector.
- At this time, no visitors are allowed at MCA's long-term care facilities – Tsiionkwanonhso:te and Iakhihsohtha. This decision has not been made lightly and we appreciate the understanding of our families and community members as we strive to protect our residents. Your loved ones will continue to receive professional care that includes a great amount of love from staff at the homes. More information about these restrictions will be shared in the days ahead.
- MCA asks the community to take enhanced measures to protect our elders and vulnerable.

- Mohawk Council of Akwesasne Grand Chief Abram Benedict states, "We want to remind the community to stay calm and take practical measures to avoid contracting the disease, and more importantly to avoid transmitting it to the vulnerable members of our community. Social distancing, hand-washing, but most of all - avoiding others when you are sick - will help us through this. Akwesasne, we have long prided ourselves on resilience dating back to our earliest ancestors, and we have been through many difficult times together in our own lifetime. This is no different; working together and caring for each other will go a long way."
- If you are feeling distress or have concerns related to COVID-19, MCA's Wholistic Health & Wellness Program is prepared to assist you. Contact them at 613-575-2341, Ext. 3115. The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe's Mental Health staff can also assist and can be contacted at 518-358-3141.
- There are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Akwesasne. At this time, anything to the contrary is rumour. The closest case of COVID-19 in New York State is in Saratoga, New York, and the closest case in Ontario is now in Rockland, Ontario. In Quebec, the closest case is in Montreal.

PREVIOUS UPDATES

- No MCA & SRMT Akwesasne community events will be held until further notice.
- On [Thursday, March 12, 2020](#), the provincial government announced that all Ontario schools will be closed from [Saturday, March 14](#) and reopening on [Monday, April 6](#). The Ahkwesàhsne Mohawk Board of Education is committed to maintaining a healthy school community. Therefore, AMBE will also be closing its daycares, schools, and post-secondary programs from [Saturday, March 14](#) until [Monday, April 6](#).
- AMBE recognizes the significant impact this decision will have on our families and students that we serve. However, this precaution is a necessary response to the COVID-19 pandemic. AMBE is closing for an additional two weeks after the March Break so that our school community can self-quarantine to prevent the spread of the virus or to recover from COVID-19. Please note that this decision affects the Akwesasne Child Care Program, Ahkwesahsne Mohawk School, Building Blocks, Kana:takon School, Tsi Snaihne School, AMBE Foundations, and Iohahi:io Akwesasne Education & Training Institute. Please follow AMBE on Facebook and/or visit www.ambe.ca for important updates.
- According to U.S. Customs, the U.S. – Canada border is not closed despite online reports stating such.
- On March 13, the MCA Economic Development Program announced that the A'nowara'ko:wa Arena will be closing and will be until further notice. This closure has occurred as a precaution and prevention measure following the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne's travel ban for council & employees.
- In response to the travel suspension issued by the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, we wish to clarify that the travel restriction applies to all non-essential travel of tribal employees only--including those working within tribal enterprises. There is NO general travel restriction within the community however, we do encourage individuals to please consider their own personal travel to areas with reported

cases of COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus). We appreciate your cooperation, as we strive to ensure that the ongoing health and safety of our community members remains a priority.

- MCA's travel ban remains in affect for six weeks and includes all work-related travel and Council travel. Meetings are being re-arranged as teleconferences and videoconferences.
- MCA asks community members to reconsider personal travel.
- The Saint Regis Mohawk Traffic Court is postponing initial appearances and hearings until April 20, 2020. Notices providing new initial appearances and hearings dates to those individuals that have a traffic case will be sent out. For more information, please call the Court at (518) 358-6300. The Tribal Court is also asking individual experiencing an illness to contact them for possible postponement of their case.
- The Saint Regis Mohawk Police Department has postponed client probation meetings with Franklin County for the coming month.
- Due to college and university closures or delayed returns for Spring Break, the Tribe's Education Division has made arrangements for impacted students to utilize the classroom at Ionkwakiokwaroron (1st floor), for the purposes of providing a learning space and equipment needed to complete their remaining semester via online learning.
- The Ronthahiohsthà:ke Clubhouse urges members to not attend the Clubhouse if they are feeling sick, or if any household member is feeling sick. If you have any questions, please call (518) 333-0221. Niá:wen.
- Due to the rapidly changing statistics and data, we will no longer share that information and refer you to the links at the bottom of this release as well as the John Hopkins University website: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html> or Government of Canada website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>

- As of March 10, 2020, 3 locations within our local area (on the U.S. side) are now able to provide testing for COVID-19: Canton-Potsdam Hospital, Alice Hyde, and Saranac.
- On the Canadian side, the Eastern Ontario Health Unit is in the process of establishing assessment and testing centres for our region. This information is preliminary and the EOHU will provide further updates as necessary.
- A preliminary testing site in Akwesasne is currently under discussion with the EOHU.
- MCA has implemented new measures at their two long-term care facilities, Iakhihsohtha and Tsiionkwanonhso:te, under the advisement of the Ministry of Long Term Care. Health officials continue to update their procedures to accommodate changes in the situation.
- As of March 10, the SRMT Family Support Program, under the advice of the NYS Office of People with Developmental Disabilities, is implementing a pre-screening process in response to COVID-19. This applies to any individual not directly involved in providing care in our IRA Facilities, Supportive Apartments and the Family Support Program Building; such as family members, care managers, advocates, and tribal staff not directly employed by the Family Support Program.

- Learn more at <https://www.srmt-nsn.gov/news/2020/family-support-implements-screening-process>.
- If you have been displaying symptoms and/or believe you have been exposed to the new coronavirus, please call prior to visiting a hospital or your healthcare provider.
 - Health service providers in the area will be able to assist you over the phone and make arrangements for safe transport, if needed, without the risk of exposing others to the virus.
 - It is extremely helpful to have a documented fever to show your healthcare provider. A documented fever just means the fever is measured — a fever is usually defined as a core body temperature of 100.4°F / 38°C.
 - Local health services recommend that temperature measurements be taken orally.
 - You can find a thermometer at the nearest grocery store, drug store and also within medical kits that have been provided at community events held throughout Akwesasne.
- Cleaning and disinfecting is the best practice measure for prevention:
 - Hand hygiene is important — washing your hands with soap for at least 20 seconds and utilizing hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content.
 - Bleach is a powerful for protection — the CDC recommends 1/3 cup of bleach per gallon of water or 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water.
- It is important for members of our community to be diligent in protecting themselves, as well as others. Practicing hand hygiene often, cleaning/disinfecting commonly-touched surfaces and staying home when you are sick are actions that can have a big impact on maintaining your health and the health of those around you.
- Post-secondary students preparing to return to their respective college or university are encouraged to please check with your academic institution for any updates prior to returning to campus.
- Regarding those that are symptomatic the MCA Community Health Program can offer a telephone screening. The MCA Community Health Program is the program within the MCA Department of Health that will monitor the virus and any cases. They can be reached at 613-575-2341 Ext. 3220 during office hours. If you need to speak to a health representative during evenings or weekends, Telehealth Ontario provides free, confidential service for health advice or information. A Registered Nurse will take your call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They can be reached toll free at: [1-866-797-0000](tel:1-866-797-0000)
- The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe's Health Services will screen patients concerned with COVID-19 at 518-358-3141 Ext 7130.

TRAVEL ADVISORIES

Both the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne and Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe have issued travel bans to staff for work related travel effective immediately.

Government of Canada:

As of March 9, 2020, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is **recommending that Canadians avoid all cruise ship travel** due to the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak.

Cruise passengers include travellers from around the world who may be arriving from areas with known or unknown spread of COVID-19. The virus can spread quickly on board cruises due to the close contact between passengers. Older people and people with a weakened immune system or underlying medical condition are at a higher risk of developing severe disease.

Recent cruise ship outbreaks of COVID-19 indicate that a large number of individuals onboard can become infected. While the majority of affected passengers may experience mild symptoms, there have been a **significant** number of cases requiring hospitalization and **critical care**, and some deaths have been reported.

Registration of Canadians Abroad is a free service that allows the Government of Canada to notify you in case of an emergency abroad or a personal emergency at home. The service also enables you to receive important information before or during a natural disaster or civil unrest. Individuals can sign up to receive important information about COVID-19 at: travel.gc.ca/register

United States — CDC & Department of State:

CDC recommends that travelers avoid all nonessential travel to the following destinations. Entry of foreign nationals from these destinations has been suspended:

- China (Level 3 Travel Health Notice)
- Iran (Level 3 Travel Health Notice)

CDC recommends that travelers avoid all nonessential travel to the following destinations (no entry restrictions):

- South Korea
- Italy

Individuals can receive COVID-19 country-specific information at:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/COVID-19-Country-Specific-Information.html>

Before You Travel

Due to the current public health situation, many countries have begun implementing strict screening procedures in order to prevent the spread of the COVID-19.

- Any U.S. citizen returning to the United States who has been in Hubei province, China in the previous 14 days may be subject to up to 14 days of quarantine.
- Any U.S. citizen returning to the United States who has been in the rest of mainland China within the previous 14 days may undergo a health screening and possible self-quarantine.
- Please read these Department of Homeland Security supplemental instructions for further details.

- U.S. citizens are encouraged to monitor media and local information sources and factor updated information into personal travel plans and activities. You may also follow us on Twitter and Facebook.
- If you travel, you should enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program to receive updates.

EMERGENCY ALERTS

Individuals who live in New York State can subscribe for NY-Alert to receive critical information and emergency alerts on what is happening in their area. NY-Alert contains critical, emergency-related information including instructions and recommendations in real-time by emergency personnel. To sign up, please visit <https://alert.ny.gov/>.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also offers a subscription service (emails and text messages), should individuals will to receive information on COVID-19 directly. Learn more at <https://www.cdc.gov/other/emailupdates/index.html>.

PREVENTION

There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus, but the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to viruses in general by:

- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Staying at home when you are sick
- Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue or inside area of your elbow
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces
- Washing your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.

NOTE: Facemasks should only be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 and health professionals to help prevent the spread of the disease to others.

SYMPTOMS

Reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death for confirmed coronavirus disease cases.

The following symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

IF YOU HAVE SYMPTOMS

- Please do not visit Urgent Care or the Emergency Room, including the SRMT Health Clinic or MCA's health clinics, without notification, should you have symptoms of COVID-19 and have recently travelled or believe you have been exposed to the virus. If you have difficulty breathing, it is important to notify a health care provider or visit an ER with a call first to notify them.
- Contact SRMT Health Clinic at (518) 358-3141 or MCA's Department of Health at (613) 575-2341 for remote screening.
- Self-quarantine until symptoms disappear.

NOTE: Individuals should have sufficient supply of food, medicine and other essential items for a 14-day quarantine period.

USEFUL LINKS

EASTERN ONTARIO HEALTH UNIT

- WEBSITE: www.eohu.ca
- FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/EOHUhealth>
- TWITTER: https://twitter.com/EOHU_tweet
- YOUTUBE: www.youtube.com/EasternOntarioHealth

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

- WEBSITE: www.who.int

PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA

- WEBSITE: www.canada.ca/publichealth

U.S. CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

- WEBSITE: www.cdc.gov

NYS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH NOVEL CORONAVIRUS HOTLINE

- PHONE: 1-888-364-3065