

Wabaseemoong Pandemic Plan

COVID-19 Pandemic Plan

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Introduction

Historically pandemic flu will arise every eleven to forty-four years or every few decades and can occur at any time of the year. Because a pandemic flu is a new virus, most people will have little or no immunity to infection allowing it to spread easily from person to person and vaccines will not yet be created to protect a population from the virus. The Seasonal flu in comparison occurs every year, usually in winter months and annual vaccines and antiviral medications are readily available to prevent infection.

COVID-19 is a novel (new) virus that has spread quickly across the globe, and is now affecting Canada. It spreads through droplets, such as those produced when coughing or sneezing, and through mucosal surfaces such as the eyes, nose and mouth. The national goal is to prevent the spread and flatten the curve of cases.

In most patients, COVID-19 produces a mild illness similar to that of a cold. The common symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath, and headache. In a small amount of people, it can create a severe infection that may require people to have an oxygen mask or in some cases be on a life support machine. The patients at highest risk for severe infections are persons over 60 and those with significant heart or lung problems. It is extremely important that we protect our Elders through this pandemic, as they are most vulnerable and at risk to experience complications. Despite the majority of young and healthy people having a minor infection, they can easily spread COVID-19 to other people, including Elders; so it is imperative that everyone takes infection control seriously and works together to flatten the curve and prevent the spread through measures such as social distancing.

The best methods of preventing spread to and within Wabaseemoong are to limit unnecessary travel outside of the community, limit social gatherings, promote social distancing, and hygiene methods such as washing hands regularly, coughing/sneezing into an arm, cleaning common surfaces frequently and wearing a mask if any respiratory symptoms are present. We can also reduce the risk of spreading the infection by avoiding direct contact with others, common surfaces and shared objects as the virus can live on surfaces for extended periods of time.

We are now beginning to see cases within Canada and confirmed local cases in Northwestern Ontario and Manitoba.

Throughout this pandemic it is essential that we continue be mindful of everyone's Physical, Emotional, Mental and Spiritual health and find innovative ways to support them in all domains of wellness as we work together over the coming weeks and months.

Our goal is to promote health and prevent the spread COVID-19 to continue to foster health for many generations to come. COVID-19 has and will have great impact on our nation, and it is important to act now and be prepared together as a community.

Leadership / Communication

Pandemic Response Committee

- Health Director (Gretchen Bunting)
- Assistant Health Director (Denise Moose)
- Chief (Waylon Scott)
- Council Members (Rocky Bunting, Glen Kent, Roanne Jourdain-Carpenter)
- Nurse in Charge (Marcie Einarsson)
- Emergency Management Coordinator
- Educational Director (Julia Mandamin)
- Niigonigabow Secretariat Executive Director (Betsy Mandamin)
- Wabaseemoong Child Welfare Authority (Adolphus Cameron)
- Wabaseemoong Social Services Administrator (Gloria Paishk)
- Chief Financial Officer (Harry Green)
- Treat #3 Police (Sgt Cheryl Gervais)

Communications

- The Health Director will be the primary contact person for any outside agency, or during any acute crisis that may arise.
- Daily meetings (in person or by phone) of the Pandemic Response Committee should be attempted to ensure adequate communication amongst involved parties to disseminate pertinent information and provide necessary updates
- Ensure that all nurses working in the Wab Shki Binay Seek Calai Memorial Health Centre are briefed by the NIC about plans that may affect them such as relevant policies, testing, quarantine, community plan and hygiene
- Communication to community members will be done through means of social media at this time to promote social distancing, hygiene, infection prevention measures, COVID-19 updates from credible sources and community based updates relevant to Wabaseemoong residents
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Responsibilities

- Components of this plan that pertain to individual programs within specific buildings should be enacted by the direct manager of that facility or program (ex. School, Band Office, Day Care Centre, Community Centre, Shelter, Clinic)
- The Health Director is ultimately in charge of the implementation of this plan, but will require most tasks to be delegated to other health / social services workers to ensure organized execution of plan

- Health Director and Front –Line Nurses should be in communication daily to relay updates between ISC and Community Leadership and confirm community preparedness from a health perspective

Risk Mitigation and Prevention

General Community Risk Mitigation

- Cancel or modify any community activity that puts people at risk for virus transmission; if unsure contact health staff who can consult CD for recommendations or answer community questions
 - Groups more than 5 are not currently recommended at this time; avoid any large gathering of people to prevent transmission
 - Consider putting limitations on the number of people that can together at a given time.
 - This can be implemented at the store to limit customers allowed in at any single
 - Consider scheduled pick up times for welfare cheques and pay cheques or consider drop off services
 - Ensure hand washing station is available prior to entry at all community facilities
 - Reschedule events or community gatherings when possible
 - Consider community curfews for members and vehicles within community unless prior approval granted
 - If there are restrictions put in place, contact Treaty 3 police to notify what their role within community consists of and who is to enforce pandemic stipulations put in place by Chief and Council and Health Director
- Consider restrictions on people coming in and out of the community at Discretion of Chief and Council. This could include but not limited to:
 - Limit entry to permanent residents only, restrict persons wishing to visit from out of town
 - Limit entry to only essential personnel (Community Nurses, EMS, Treaty 3 Police, OPP, Water Delivery, essential cargo or grocery delivery)
 - Restrict or ban movement of community members from Wabaseemoong for non essential travel or only with prior approval from Chief and Council or with recommendation from Nursing
 - Consider community lockdown
- Create a check-point where symptom screening can be completed prior to entry to Wabaseemoong regarding recent travel, contact with cases, fever, cough and related symptoms that can be recorded
 - Ensure only 1 entrance to community is used

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- Screening would require the band council to hire someone to stop vehicles as they enter the community
- Screening questionnaire can be developed with assistance from nursing and chief and council
- Plan with freight/delivery trucks to keep driver in the vehicle and have community members unload the cargo, decreasing contact with people from outside the community
 - Have this explained to drive at checkpoint if they have been granted entry to community through prior approval
 - Community staff may be required to be hired to assist with unloading
- Band office and Health Centre should be closed to public with exception of emergencies and pre-scheduled appointments arranged ahead of time
- School, day care, community centre, and all non essential services should close as per direction from Chief and Health Director
- Daily sanitation, minimum four (4) times a day, of communal surfaces such as door handles, phones, faucets, taps, toilets, clean water access points, desks, and counters in common buildings (store, band office, community centre, health centre, shelter, school) as per environmental cleaning standards is essential to reduce risk of person to person transmission
 - Responsibility for this should fall on the custodial staff for each facility and they should report to their direct managers to confirm this is being done regularly. Housekeeping is an essential service.
 - If additional buildings are used for quarantine (ex. School) additional housekeeping will be required to be hired to ensure hygiene
- Perform community census of community members currently residing on reserve, as well as those off reserve in other communities
 - This can be done when creating lists of those eligible for Emergency Relief Funds for band/community members both on and off reserve
- Chief and Health Director to establish protocols for community returning or seeking refuge during the pandemic
 - Self Isolation for 14 days for all returning band members is recommended, but leadership may decide to restrict who can come back into the community
 - Screen all returning community members for active symptoms or possible exposures or pending tests
 - Work with nurses to develop a working document to screen for symptoms and chief to enforce mandatory self-isolation of those entering Wabaseemoong
 - Quarantine any potential cases (at home or in the school as this is the identified quarantine area)
- Screening of Front-line nurses and Health Centre Staff should be completed and reported daily

Health Promotion / Education

- Posters and signs should be posted around the health centre with information for people regarding COVID-19 pandemic, new protocols, symptoms to monitor for, preventative measures and changes within Wabaseemoong and how to contact a nurse
- Education materials should be distributed to the store, band office, community centre, school, shelter and community centre
- Consider handing our pamphlets to each household about infection control and practices
- Regular posts on community Facebook page should be done by CHR to educate people on the general information around the virus, including signs and symptoms, tips on hand hygiene, social distancing, and other preventative measures Wabaseemoong is taking at a community level
 - Health Director / Nurses / Local health services to continue to share information with community throughout pandemic about measures we are taking to ensure safety and health of Wabaseemoong
 - Health Authority to develop information documents in collaboration with nurses or partner organizations such as KCA, NWHU, and WNHAC to be distributed or shared on social media

Traditional Culture and Medicine

- Elders and healers should be involved in incorporating traditional medicines and knowledge pertaining to contagious illness such as this
- Cultural and traditional practices should continue to be supported as long as they are safe from an infection control perspective; if unsure contact nurses who can consult with CD line for further recommendations
- Consider avoiding any sweat lodges and other ceremonies that involve multiple people in an enclosed space
- Traditional medicines and practices are fundamental to many people, and careful thought must be taken when promoting or recommending against these

Maintaining Essential Services

Throughout the pandemic, it is important that routine services are still functional to support the well-being and ongoing health of the community. Plans must be made to protect vital services and those trained to maintain and operate them. Chief and Council in collaboration with the Health Director is responsible for defining essential services and required support staff during this time.

Water / Sewer

- Water treatment plant manager and workers need to maintain health and wellness throughout pandemic – ensure they have adequate teaching about infection prevention and hygiene practices
- Consider cross training other community members in basic function of the water treatment plant in the event all trained workers get ill
- Water treatment plant manager should communicate with regional education and support groups about the suggestions for pandemic planning and how to get additional support if needed
- Chief and Council should maintain a list of all trained personnel and their contact numbers to reach them if required

Electricity / Internet / Phones

- Band office is to communicate with utility organizations and local employees to ensure pandemic plans have been made and services continue
- Consider cross training other community members in basic functions of telecommunications and electricity grid operations in the event all trained workers get ill
- Chief and Council should maintain a list of all trained personal and contacts

Food and Water Supply

- Develop a plan to order / receive shipments of food into the community rather than have individuals travel to and from Kenora unnecessarily
- Consider having the band pay (through proposal writing and emergency funds) for some non-perishable food to be brought up from Kenora in case of transportation limitations in the future
- Encourage hunting and fishing – great outdoors activity, healthy food and improves food sovereignty with Wabaseemoong
- Clean drinking water should be secured and available within community and housed in safe and secure location
- Water drop off should be made available and left on door steps to avoid direct contact with individuals

Wood / Oil for Heating Homes

- Encourage community members to have at least a week supply of wood/oil ahead of time to guarantee people do not run out of resources necessary
- Support elders who need wood/oil with deliveries to their homes
 - Ensure those delivering screen negative on the COVID-19 Screen
 - Oil delivery services must receive preapproved entry to community from Chief and Council and screen negative for COVID-19
- Establish a plan for wood/oil delivery to those in quarantine so that they reduce unnecessary interactions with others

Police – Treaty #3 Police

- Band Council to communicate with Treaty #3 Police to ensure they have a plan for staffing if officers are required to self isolate or are ill
- Band council to ensure they have stock of cleaning supplies and PPE
 - Officers must wear PPE appropriately to prevent spread and possible transmission
 - Officers must ensure vehicles, holding areas and equipment are cleaned according to environmental standards
- Treaty #3 Police must be aware of how to respond to community concerns and are briefed by Chief and Council to ensure consistency and promote overall community health and well-being of community
 - Ex. Community members not following self-isolation or quarantine guidelines, out of town visitors, large gatherings of people

Child & Family Services

- To maintain at least one worker available and in the community at a time
- Consider working from home or only having one worker in the office per day
- Communicate with Chief and Council and Health Director to ensure following community pandemic plan accordingly
- Ensure children in care have stock of chronic medications and essential health related supplied
- If children in care are in living quarters with positive or suspect case, have an isolation plan in place for contacts related to case
 - A relocation plan must be developed for those children in care to safe space so isolate can occur accordingly
 - Workers may be required to self isolate with children in care to prevent transmission to others

Band Council / Leadership

- Strong leadership is important to maintain order and pandemic support in the community
- Health Director and Chief and Council to be well educated in infection control practices and newest related information on COVID-19 being released by credible sources
- Leadership will be responsible for updating community with precautions and steps being taken to ensure safety and health of community
- Participation in meetings with Pandemic Response Committee is essential to devising, modifying and executing plan effectively
- A community based State of Emergency can be declared if deemed fit to do so
- Leadership should avoid unnecessary travel to other communities when necessary or partake in virtual meetings or teleconferences rather than face to face meetings when possible
- Chief and Council must enforce facilities within the community and service providers are following pandemic plan
- Chief and Council should follow up with facilities and services to ensure the resources to execute pandemic plan are secured, received, stocked and readily available

Community Mental Health / Wellness

Concerns

- School closures and decreased social activities put youth and young adults at risk for deteriorating Mental Health
- Research has shown there to be a significant MH risk for those in quarantine and at baseline there are many individuals that have pre-existing mental health concerns
- Limited resources at the Health Centre or in the community due to possible restriction of Mental Health workers further limits access to adequate care
- IRS Resolution Health Support Programs or external MH appointments may cancel appointments or travel may be disrupted

Suggested Plan

- Increase the number of outdoor activities that permit people to maintain safe distances of at least 2 metres, while allowing them to socialize and stay physically active
- Encourage land based traditional activities like hunting, fishing and snow shoeing
- Ensure universal hand washing and symptom monitoring for those participating in group outdoor activities
- Youth workers and community mental health workers to attempt phone call check ins with affected or isolated individuals to assess wellness and engage with socially
- Plan online or virtual activities for community members to stay connected
- Health and Social Services staff that are self isolating can still provide some support for telephone or online based activities
- Involve youth in preparing / delivering wood and food / water to elders or those who are quarantined
- For those who attend regular spiritual or religious ceremonies, trying to shift these events to online or over the phone as this will keep people safe while maintaining their spiritual wellness
- Encourage families to spend time together while in isolation
 - Promote sharing stories from parents, grandparents and other elders
 - Use this time together to preserve knowledge for all future generations about First Nations history and culture
 - Pass on knowledge of language amongst family members
 - Play board games, card games, activities, puzzles or read books
- Distribute information about all available mental health resources both within and outside of community as well as phone help lines available

Community Health Programs

Wab Shki Binay Seek Calai Memorial Health Centre

- Health Centre is only open for emergencies or prior scheduled appointments made with nurses to limit non-urgent visits to clinic to limit potential exposure to virus or spread of infection to healthy individuals
 - General follow ups may need to be postponed
- Community physician will not be visiting regularly and other services such as those provided by WNHAC or Lifelabs will be postponed or done virtually
- Health Centre staff who do not have critical roles or who are able to work from home may be asked to do so at the discretion of the Health Director
 - Nurses are deemed essential services to provide emergency care and must continue to address urgent health needs. Nurses will be available Monday – Friday for telephone consults and for emergencies for community members during this time
 - Security is required 24/7 during this time to ensure infection control measures are enforced and crowd control to limit number of individuals in the waiting room or clinic at a given time
 - Housekeeping during clinic hours is required to clean exam rooms between patient visits, waiting room and general building. Funding will need to be secured to ensure this service and additional training may need to be completed to ensure environmental standards of cleaning are met. After hours cleaning should continue as normal.
 - Support staff is essential to ensure nurses can perform clinic tasks, post information regarding clinic updates and COVID-19 related materials, assist with triage and COVID-19 screening, book patients, dispense patient medications, direct community questions and concerns as well as assist with continuation of core services
 - Ex. (1) CHR, (1) Reception
 - Health Director and Assistance Health Director to continue to provide services as required and participate in meeting health needs of community as outlined in COVID-19 Pandemic Plan
- All staff and patients who enter the Health Centre should be screened with brief symptom questionnaire and temperature check
- Patients requesting to be seen by a nurse must call ahead and make appointment to be seen so that patients are not waiting in waiting room together and they can be screened for COVID-19 so that nurses are aware of how to receive them
 - Patients screening positive must be brought through back entrance to avoid contamination of lobby and others, and brought straight to assigned COVID-19 pandemic assessment room that is set up
 - This is essential to maintaining infection control and prevention of virus to others in clinic

- For those with minor symptoms not requiring emergency care - will be triaged via phone and are recommended to stay home and self-isolate as well as call Northwestern Health Unit for further information if required at hotline 468-3147
- For anyone having respiratory symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath, recent travel), they must call the health centre prior to arrival at clinic. They should not enter unless indicated by the screening tool or otherwise directed by the staff
 - Patient screening positive will be required to wear mask and preform hand hygiene prior to entering building through back door
 - Extra people in exam room, including immediate family during this time may be denied as restrictions may be in place to prevent spread of COVID-19. Clinic will be restricted and those not requiring immediate care will be directed to return home to self isolate until plan is established by nurses with CD unit
 - Nurses assessing possible pandemic cases should be in full Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). There will be a “clean nurse” and “dirty nurse” to preform assessment and care as required.
 - The room will be cleaned thoroughly after each person is seen before another patient is seen in clinic to uphold environmental sanitation standards of health centre.
- Everyone entering Health Centre must wash their hands prior to entering
 - Hand washing station to be present at the front door with appropriate signage
 - Security guard and CHR should be placed in lobby to enforce hand hygiene and mask wearing if symptomatic
- ISC nurses are required to ensure PPE is stocked for nurses providing primary care, medications are received, are aware of guidelines and health care needs required by COVID-19 patients in community
- Nurses are required to stay up to date on policies and information provided by ISC to provide safe and competent care to community members

Home Care

- Home and Community Care nurses to continue with program and follow-up with high risk Elders and patients admitted to program to ensure needs are met and assist with clinic tasks
 - Ensure dressing supplies are ordered and contingency plan developed for required dressing changes
 - Ensure a supply chronic medications are received and given to patient or held in Health Centre until patient due for refill during this time
- To follow up with Elders in community or patients admitted to home care program for symptom monitoring

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- Limit services that require home care workers to enter the house; get patients to come to clinic whenever possible and screen for COVID-19 prior to arriving for scheduled appointment
- Consider arranging deliveries of groceries, water, prescriptions and wood/oil
 - Prescription and grocery drop odd may need to be placed on an elevated surface to avoid dogs or other animals getting into them, the worker may also call ahead so the client can receive the package shortly after scheduled drop off
- Home and Community Care is responsible for ordering and securing their own supplies of PPE and cleaning materials

Medical Driver

- Medical drivers should be educated in infection control techniques and posters should be placed on the outside of the vehicle for passengers to read
- It is recommended in each vehicle the driver has: Masks, garbage bags, tissues, hand sanitizer, gloves and disinfectant wipes
 - These are to be provided by the Health Centre
- Clean the vehicle in the morning and in the afternoon with disinfectant wipes as well as after carrying patients
- Do not transport passengers who do not have preapproved medical appointments
- Any passenger with a cough or fever should be wearing a mask prior to entering medical vehicle and all passengers must sanitize hands

House Keeping

- Health Centre will require additional housekeepers to ensure sanitation of building, waiting room, and patient rooms between every patient.
 - This will be the responsibility of the Health Director to secure funding and hire for this position
- Housekeeping is essential for the clinic to remain open during the COVID-19 pandemic as this virus is highly infectious to best protect the health of the community. Additional housekeeping support is crucial to the operations of the Health Centre at this time.
- The environmental sanitation standards should be reviewed but housekeeping staff and additional training may be required
- Housekeeping sanitation supplies are to be purchased by community funds
- Day housekeeping must wipe down waiting area and exam rooms between each patient visit to prevent transmission

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Sanitation Products

- Health Centre should have sufficient cleaning chemicals and PPE for their operations
 - Nurses are responsible for their own supplies of PPE and sanitation products
 - The nurse in charge is responsible to request stock from FNIHB and Stores to secure stock for Health Centre
 - Housekeeping is responsible for purchasing their own supplies to clean building
 - Community members will need to secure their own or may be purchased through band funding

Quarantine

- Patients who test positive or are suspected positive will require quarantine. Due to the high number of persons per household, and limited number of buildings this will be difficult
- Quarantine means strict isolation of the affected person from non-infected people and is more than social distancing
 - All efforts should be made to completely limit direct contact with all others
 - This means, individual testing positive and all symptomatic people in the household will be removed and placed in designated quarantine living quarters (TBD by Chief and Council & Health Director)
 - Ex. School, day care
 - All non symptomatic individuals residing in house will remain in home on isolation for 14 days unless they become symptomatic
 - Daily symptom monitoring will be required through telephone communication with individuals in isolation or quarantine by community nurses to determine if patients are required to be seen in health centre or sent to Kenora to receive care
 - Ideally, any infected person should stay away from the Health Centre unless they are extremely sick
 - If patients deteriorate; they will be sent by EMS to LOTWH for care. At this time we are unable to support deteriorating patients within the community who require oxygen or that need to be placed on life support machines. EMS needs to be notified that patient is positive for COVID-19, are a contact or are symptomatic to they are aware of how to receive these patients
- Wood, water, food, household supplies and chronic medications will need to be dropped off regularly to those in quarantine or in home isolation
- Mental health and social wellness supports should be extended to quarantined individuals to ensure wellness

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- Sites for possible quarantine
 - Classrooms in the school as it has been closed
 - They have kitchens, showers, plumbing, heating, but do not have beds or cots. Determine what designated telephone can be used to contact quarantined patients for symptom monitoring
 - Other options include day care, community centre, arena. These facilities may limit our ability to separate people as they are large open spaces
 - Ideally different classrooms at the school could be used for suspected versus confirmed cases
- Community Leadership and the Pandemic Committee will together decide on the location of the quarantine facility and how essential supplies will be delivered to individuals living in quarantine spaces

Deaths in Community

- There are limitations in our ability to hold, isolate, and transport bodies should an outbreak happen in the community that leads to the deaths of community members
- Our Kenora Hospital may be at full capacity, EMS may be delayed due to overwhelmed amount of calls and transportation; this could lengthen the amount of time a community member remains within Wabaseemoong before transfer to a higher level of care occurs
- Community between the Nurse in Charge, Health Director, Leadership, Treaty 3 and funeral homes will be necessary to respectfully and safely store and transport the deceased
- The grieving process is necessary, though funerals and mass gatherings of people will increase the risk of further viral spread; alternative methods or a delayed memorial or ceremony may be recommended
- Body bags and PPE for those that will be in contact with the bodies of those who die in community from the pandemic will need to be procured and kept in a decided location (TBD)

Debriefing

- Debriefing following the COVID-19 pandemic should be organized by Pandemic Committee and include Leadership, all Health Centre Staff and community members that participated in the execution of plan.
- Together we can evaluate what went well, what could have been done differently and what the outcome was
- An evaluation helps ensure that lessons learned from the real-life even are captured and used to revise future pandemic plans
- Mental Health workers should be brought into community to support front-line workers during this time

Recovery

- After the emergency is over, Wabaseemoong together may recognize losses, celebrate the community's resilience and being the healing process.

Final Note:

This document has been developed to identify a community based plan to prepare for COVID-19 should Wabaseemoong be affected by the virus. The goal is to prevent COVID-19 from entering the community, however should we feel the effects and impacts we are prepared for worst-case scenarios going forward.

Wabaseemoong Independent Nation is built on strength and resilience and we must all work together during this pandemic to implement an integrated, comprehensive and coordinated plan to protect the community and foster health for generations to come.