



TSAWOUT FIRST NATION

February 1, 2021

Notice to community members,

Re: COVID-19 response

There have been increasing concerns regarding COVID-19 and Tsawout. COVID-19 has now shown up in First Nations communities on the Island. As of today, we are not aware of any confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Tsawout.

Last Monday, January 25/21 we were informed of a possible COVID-19 exposure within the building. We quickly isolated the risk, closed the building and sent all staff home. In the meantime, the building was thoroughly sanitized, and contact tracing took place. All those involved were closely monitored and have not developed any symptoms at this time. Through consultation with Public Health contact tracing and the First Nations Health Authority we have reopened the building and essential services. There are no further safety concerns regarding this potential exposure at this time. All those involved in this case were responsible and cooperative. We are grateful that they spoke up as early as they did, and potentially stopped an outbreak. Our hands are raised to them.

Tsawout has put in place the following actions:

- Policy and operations- We have established through our Health Clinic a comprehensive safety protocol approved by Chief and Council. It is rigorously enforced within the Band office operations and in services to the community at large. All essential services to our Elders and vulnerable families have been maintained throughout with oversight by the Health Clinic and Community Health nurse. For example, the Meals on Wheels Program is now using contactless delivery and coolers. Public Works has been active as required on emergency circumstances. (Water Sewer/garbage accumulation)
- Internal Security- We have increased the hours of our licensed Indigenous security service who patrol the entire reserve on a 7 day a week basis. Particular emphasis is placed on monitoring incoming activity and particularly discouraging gatherings/camping on the beach - a well-known place for intruding partiers considered to potentially put our local members at risk.
- The local RCMP have been particularly responsive backing up in potentially challenging situations and monitoring international travelers who may be returning to our community.
- Perimeter Awareness and Security - Signage has been utilized since March and recently increased to emphasize the social element of the current restrictions. (No Visiting)! And No Beach access.
- In addition to extra cleaning by our Janitorial Staff we have contracted to do a weekly COVID19 specific treatment of our entire administrative office

- Risk - The First Nations Health Authority, Vancouver Island Health Authority, Provincial Contact Tracing have worked with us on evaluating any possible exposures as well as the application of effective responses to risk.
- Travel- We have amended our Pandemic personnel policy to include travel disclosure reporting guidelines for staff and restrictions within return to work provisions.
- Confidentiality - as you know privacy and confidentiality are afforded all members of our community in a Public Health process - which is difficult as some accusations are made of a “lack of transparency” when our professional staff are legally restricted from providing names or identifying information. This does unfortunately lead to imagination and rumours going wild.

The biggest key to keeping COVID-19 out of our community is the cooperation of community members. The Band is working on prevention and response; however, the biggest risk is a community member or visitor bringing it in. It is important to understand that everyone in Tsawout has the responsibility to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by:

- Socially distancing, wearing a mask when in public or with others, and washing hands.
- Reducing non-essential trips away from home.
- Avoiding gatherings and mixing of households.
- Monitoring for symptoms and getting tested.

We are living in a pandemic; we are all at risk. It is important to not blame someone for feeling sick or being cautious. If you are at risk of being exposed to someone confirmed with COVID-19 a Health Care Provider will contact you. Blame and stigma will cause fear and make people not feel safe to speak up or access the care they need. When someone chooses to get tested it is brave and kind. Not everyone who is tested has COVID-19. Those who are getting tested and isolating are keeping our community safe and preventing spread.

The COVID-19 vaccine is coming to Tsawout. The BC Centre of Disease Control is aiming to have it here in February or March. The vaccine will be offered for those living in Tsawout who are indigenous or part of an indigenous household and staff. Tsawout will not be giving vaccine for those who live in *the housing developments separate from the community*.

Tsawout has put in place plans to support community members with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. If you suspect you have COVID-19 and would like to talk about testing, you can call the Tsawout First Nation Health Department. All individual medical information is private. We legally cannot disclose names or information about someone, even if they are positive. We can be reached confidentially at 250-652-1149 if you need to make an appointment with the Community Health Nurse, Nurse Practitioner, and or the General Practitioner.

Kind Regards,

Nick Claxton
Chief

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Interim Band Manager

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