



Vuntut Gwitchin Government

**Message to Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Communities Members
and Vuntut Gwitchin Government Staff RE: COVID-19**

Dear VGFN and community members,

March 20th, 2020

We know the COVID-19 virus is a cause of concern and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government shares your concerns as this is the top priority for our government. We are in daily communication with the Chief Medical Officers of Non-Insured Health Benefits (**NIHB**) and the Yukon government, as well as organizations such as: Assembly of First Nations, Johnston Builders (**JBL**) (working on our capital projects), Old Crown Development Corporation (**OCDC**), Yukon First Nation leadership, as well as keeping lines open with Stephanie Speroni the Parliamentary and Operations Advisor for Canada as new information emerges daily. We will continue to do our best to respond as quickly as we can with the information that is provided to us from the Yukon and **NIHB** Chief Medical Officers.

It is vital that our community and members stay calm. We are happy to report that there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Yukon after 398 tests, nor any northern territory or region in Canada. The closest case to the Yukon as of today is in Northern Alberta. It is our mission to remain vigilant as the health and wellbeing of our community, staff and all Yukoners are at the forefront of our efforts. For accurate, up-to-date information on COVID-19 as it develops in the Yukon region, please visit **Yukon.ca** and click on: **information about coronavirus (COVID-19)**.

We have had discussions with **OCDC** and **JBL** that have covered all assurances that go above and beyond recommendations to continue production as any threat remains low. They will be enforcing staff to stay out of public spaces, limit any physical interactions with community members, as well as there will be daily symptom checks as well as anyone flying to the community mandated to go through an assessment center in Whitehorse where they will be processed for any potential virus before being able to travel to our community. No one with respiratory issues or possible exposure will be allowed to travel to Old Crow and we are currently planning with **JBL** possible shut-down of operations should the situation change. This is also the practice Territory wide as mines, construction projects and even daycares continues to operate as the threat remains low.

We have also had discussions with Air North who will keep cargo runs in operation and may limit passenger flights down to two scheduled flights per week. There will also be an announcement from the Prime Minister tomorrow (Saturday, March 21st) limiting non-



Vuntut Gwitchin Government

essential travel to the North as we have heard from his staff whom we continue to keep in communication with.

We ask that community members limit any visitation to the Government building down to essential business only and please call if you can conduct your business over the phone. Best practices are to limit any physical contact, remain at least 6 feet away from people, wash hands, buy only what you need from the Coop as others may need supplies and food as well, limit touching your face or others (eyes and mouth) with your hands and please be aware of any possible symptoms such as: cough, fever or difficulty in breathing. If you recognize any symptoms please self-isolate and call the nursing station as opposed to going there as there may be others you could expose especially elders, pregnant mothers, babies and those with health conditions.

Our government will be applying for federal funding so we may purchase supplies such as, but not limited to: radios, non-perishable foods and cleaning supplies that will last us for months in the unlikely case that the situation may escalate. We are also hiring hunters to stockpile traditional foods and even for people to run deliveries should there be households that needs to be under quarantine.

VGG has also taken measures and is prepared to shut-down the government building except for essential services should the need arise. We are prepared to support workers who will be unable to work due to closure or illness. We have also opened up an “On the Land” support program to assist with community members who would like to go out on the land. Please see the Finance Department and it is critical to keep receipts as well as the harvest booklet that will be provided and will be expected back to confirm proper usage of these funds. We are assessing all measures and concerns and will ensure our fuel and services continue. Every aspect that may affect our community will be continuously monitored.

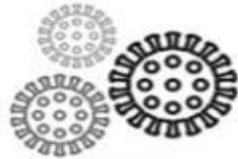
We can assure our citizens that we are on top of every aspect and can report that all hospitals in the Yukon are preparing for any influx of patients as well as hiring extra staff. At this point experts don’t expect to see a rise in cases as is being experienced in other jurisdictions in Canada and around the world. There is unprecedented efforts and communication with all levels of government and it is our preparations that will ensure the safety of Yukoners. At this point it is most important to continue communications within our government and community, but also that community members educate themselves from credible sources.

<https://yukon.ca/en/health-and-wellness/health-concerns-diseases-and-conditions/find-information-about-coronavirus-covid>



Vuntut Gwitchin Government

What is a coronavirus?



Coronaviruses are a group of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases, such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

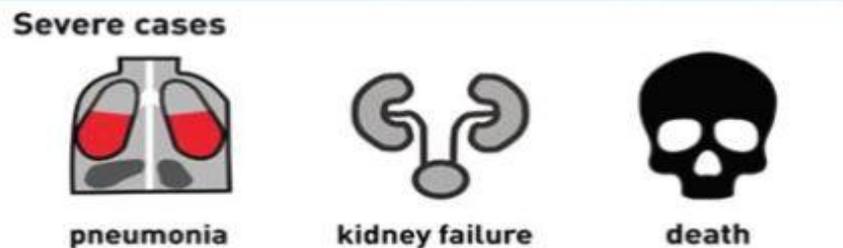
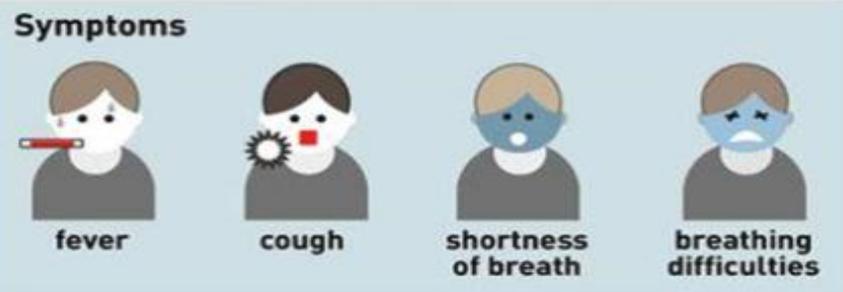


Image credit: CBC News at www.cbc.ca/news

Also please continue to visit the VGFN website, VGG Facebook page and listen to Chon FM for local information.

Immediate Actions:

Chief and Council are taking the following immediate actions to address this matter:

- Chief as lead on all external communications.
- Executive Director as lead on all internal communications.
- No leisure visits to the VGG administration building, Airport, JTC, Co-Op and other buildings in Old Crow. (Regular business will continue.)
- Individuals to be hired for hunting, food deliveries, home check-ins, delivering of information packages on current situation and recommendation for social distancing.



Vuntut Gwitchin Government

- We are engaging in discussions with Air North and the Yukon and Federal governments to continue with freight but possibly limit passenger flights (medical flights are the exception and will continue as needed).
- Posting at Air North for Visitors, Citizens, and Workers regarding: self-awareness for symptoms and social distancing and self-quarantining.
- We are in discussions regarding future events such as Caribou Days and Biennial Gwitchin Gathering and will share information with you as it becomes available.

Recommendations:

- **Please practice social distancing wherever possible.**
- **If you have health concerns, please call the Health Center before visiting in-person.**
- We encourage community members to be proactive and be prepared, but also practice common sense. Have enough food, fuels and supplies in case of emergency, but please do not hoard goods.
- We encourage citizens to be out on the land and to access “On the Land” funding.
 - Paul Josie Coordinator of Emergency Services (pick-up/deliveries), Contact 966-4616, paul@oldcrowadventures.com

The Vuntut Gwitchin Government is committed to your continued health and safety during these challenging times. We will be monitoring the Yukon-wide communication updates to ensure we have the most up-to-date information.

Mahsi cho,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dana Tizya-Tramm', with a long, sweeping underline that extends across the width of the signature.

Dana Tizya-Tramm
Chief of the Vuntut Gwitchin Government