

Covid-19 Pandemic Support Program Update

For immediate release - Vancouver, B.C. BC Métis Federation is proud to confirm that the COVID-19 Phase Two Support Program has now been completed. Back in April 2020, shortly after the pandemic swept the country, Indigenous Services Canada announced funding support available to impacted Indigenous communities. BCMF applied on behalf of our members for financial relief due to job loss, potential COVID-19 infections, food security issues, Métis owned businesses closing and housing security concerns. In addition to these concerns, it was discovered that a high COVID-19 infection rate was present amongst polled members with an estimated infection rate of 5-7%. Initial funding was made available in June 2020, and BCMF distributed funds to over 180 families and individuals across the Province. BCMF also provided partner communities with \$5,000 to assist with PPE and support for community members in the form of gas cards, gift certificates for groceries, medical expenses, and transportation costs.

A second round of funding was made available through Indigenous Services Canada this past November 2020 and BCMF urgently applied for additional funding in December. For this second round, BCMF was able to increase their efforts and has now assisted 380+ individuals/families with financial support as well as payments of \$7,500 sent to partner communities.

BCMF President, Keith Henry stated, "As President of the BC Métis Federation, I want to extend a quick thank you to our team here. Our COVID-19 project coordinator has been in constant communication with our members so that we can collect data and develop a comprehensive report on the overall impact of COVID-19 on our members and partner communities. We appreciate the patience and support of our members throughout the pandemic, the number of families that have reached out to us and told us of their experiences and hardships as a result of the coronavirus pandemic has been overwhelming. I'm immensely proud of our team here to be able to respond in the way we have and get support out to our partner communities and members quickly."

Another area of concern for BCMF members was vaccine access. It has been established that persons of Indigenous ancestry are at increased risk if they become infected with the COVID-19 virus, and BCMF had already seen a high infection rate amongst their members as previously noted. When vaccinations became available across the country, BCMF began to lobby for their members to be included in the rollout plan. "We are thankful to Dr. Bonnie Henry's team for working with us and building an inclusive access plan. As a result, we were able to communicate a vaccination registration schedule for our members and all self-identifying Métis." Henry stated.

BCMF President Henry concluded, "Thank you to the Government of Canada and Indigenous Services Minister Marc Miller for their recognition and support for our members. This pandemic has hit our members hard, and we all need to work together to ensure our Métis families are supported."

BCMF is committed to advocating for all members, and partner communities as the pandemic continues, as it unfortunately does not appear to be slowing down. BCMF continues to lobby for ongoing support and will update members as the Federal Government continues to invest in these important programs.

For additional information and resources, you can visit the COVID-19 support page of the BCMF website at bcmetis.com/covid-19-resources/ and apply for membership at bcmetis.com/membership/.

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