

Yellowknife Centre Newsletter

COVID Update

The Public Health Emergency is now over, but the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority remains ready to provide testing, vaccinations and outbreak management. Continued COVID-19 infections are almost inevitable given the circulation of more contagious variants. Infections are expected to increase in the short term, as they have after each relaxation of public health orders during the pandemic.

We have learned that the best way to protect yourself from COVID-19 is to use layers of protection. Determining personal risk is now a personal responsibility. You will continually need to assess your personal level of risk when choosing to attend gatherings or events and respond to the increase of COVID-19 cases in your community.

Here is what is changing as of today:

Masking: Masks will no longer be required. People can choose to wear a mask based on their personal preference. Masking indoors is strongly recommended for those who are at high risk of severe outcomes.

- Businesses and organizations may continue to require customers to wear masks on their premises.
- Students and school staff will no longer be required to wear masks in the classroom. For the time being, masking will remain in place outside of classrooms, in communal areas of schools and school buses.

Gatherings: Since March 1st, there have been no capacity limits on gatherings in the NWT. Residents are encouraged to complete their own risk assessment prior to attending or organizing high-risk gatherings.

Isolation: NWT residents will no longer be legally required to isolate upon their return from travel or if they test positive for COVID-19, but anyone who has COVID symptoms should stay home until they are symptom free. The CPHO recommends that masks be worn and that contact with others be minimized for a full ten days after the onset of symptoms. High-risk activities and gatherings should also be avoided during this period.

Testing: Residents may access testing if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 but will no longer be required to report a positive test. Individuals at higher risk of severe COVID-19 outcomes should seek assessment by a health care provider if they have COVID symptoms. This will allow timely access to treatment for those who need it.

Physical Distancing: While it is still recommended that residents practice physical distancing when gathering, they will no longer be required to do so.

Healthy Habits: Hand washing, enhanced cleaning, and good respiratory hygiene, like covering coughs and sneezes, are still recommended to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection and transmission of other viruses.

Other things you can do are:

- **Get vaccinated**
- **Take safe travel precautions**
- **Get the latest guidance on school precautions**

Read on to see:

- It̓'ò School
- Childcare Fee Reduction
- Time Change Elimination Consultation
- Passing of Harold R. Johnson
- Innovation in Mental Health and Addictions Care
- Etthen Island #2" Northwestel Cover
- Patient Experience Questionnaire
- Ukraine Relief
- Be Ready for Emergencies
- Youth Parliament 2022
- GNWT Conservation Planning for the Next Five Years
- Tourism Restart Investment Program

The huge gym with performance stage at the new It̓'ò School (formerly JH Sissons) is now the lay-down area for materials going into the new building. The project is on-time and budget for opening in September.

Childcare Fee Reduction

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) has announced the Child Care Fee Reduction (CCFR) subsidy. The subsidy will reduce child care fees by 50% on average for families who have children five years of age and younger attending licensed programs that opt into the CCFR Subsidy program.

Information can be found on a **fact sheet for families** and a **fact sheet for licensed programs**, and by talking to your licensed program providers. ECE staff have begun to follow up with individual programs to answer questions and address concerns. There is **information available online** to answer questions that families and licensed program operators may have.

ECE will continue to work with licensed programs and encourage operators to reach out to their Early Childhood Consultants (ECC) with any questions or concerns. Advertising will begin soon on the subsidy, how to become a licensed provider, and the highlights and timelines of the *Canada-wide Agreement and Action Plan*.

Time Change Elimination Consultations

Public engagement on whether to eliminate the seasonal time change in the NWT begins next week. Seasonal time change occurs twice a year when we move our clocks ahead an hour in mid-March and then back an hour in early November. People are being asked to say whether they would like to continue with seasonal time changes, or if they would prefer to end them and observe a permanent, year-round time standard. People can complete an online survey or provide written submissions. The survey, including further information, will be available on Monday, April 4 at: www.gov.nt.ca/TimeChange

I recently spoke in the Assembly in personal tribute to Harold R. Johnson, who died last month. Mr. Johnson was Cree from Montreal Lake First Nation in northern Saskatchewan, and author of the book *Firewater: How Alcohol is Killing My People and Yours*. The book contains his reflections on decades as a Crown prosecutor witnessing the damage caused by alcohol abuse.

Mr. Johnson didn't believe in what he called the victim model of dealing with alcohol, or in aggressive law enforcement and alcohol bans. Instead, he tried to inspire people to change the story they tell themselves about alcohol and promote local solutions where sober

leaders turned their communities into treatment centres seeking healthy alternatives. Changing the story means having sober people in our communities tell their story of sobriety.

I salute Harold Johnson on his passing, and how he inspired us to learn and tell a new story. His philosophy has informed the development of an alcohol strategy, due next spring." (Photo: University of Regina Press)

Innovation in Mental Health and Addictions

Canada's Premiers have announced the Council of the Federation (CoF) Award for Innovation in Mental Health and Addictions Care. The Award is presented in each province and territory for an initiative that positively impacts mental health and addictions care. One individual and one organization are recognized from each jurisdiction.

Award recipients will receive a certificate signed by the Premier and a \$5,000 prize to advance their project and foster further innovation. This one-time Award will provide recognition and support for non-governmental, private sector, academic, and Indigenous-led initiatives.

See the [Nomination Package](#) for the Northwest Territories. Nominations are open until April 30, 2022.

Yellowknife Centre constituent Maggie Davies is the featured artist on this year's Northwestel telephone directory, with her watercolor creation *Etthen Island #2*. The Directory Art Contest winner depicts the majestic cliffs of the island at the entrance to Great Slave Lake's East Arm. (Photo: Northwestel)

Patient Experience Questionnaire

The *2022 Patient Experience Questionnaire* for clients of health care programs is now available in print or online. The Department of Health and Social Services offers the questionnaire to gather feedback on the quality of services received by patients, and to monitor changes in clients' views on quality of care.

NWT residents who have accessed healthcare services in the past 12 months are encouraged to participate by completing the confidential Patient Experience Questionnaire before May 2, 2022. The questionnaire can be completed:

- [Online](#), or
- By obtaining a paper copy or requesting one by mail from your local hospital or health center or call my office at 767-9143 ext 12113

The GNWT has worked with the Canadian Red Cross to open a donation portal for Northwest Territories' residents. NWT donations totaling up to \$50,000 are being matched by the GNWT. Go to the [Red Cross portal](#) to donate.

The Government of Canada has a variety of measures to aid in relief efforts. See the Government of Canada [webpage](#) summarizing measures to relieve the humanitarian crisis.

Be Ready for Emergencies

With spring flood and wildfire seasons approaching, GNWT has launched a new campaign to help residents prepare. The marketing campaign uses radio, newspapers, community-focused print, and social media advertising.

The campaign focuses preparation, including:

- Understanding the most common risks in the NWT
- Knowing your community's emergency plan
- Making an emergency plan for your home
- Building an emergency kit
- Staying up to date with government and local news sources
- Understanding and planning for evacuations
- Avoiding misinformation and disinformation

See the [MACA website](#) for details.

Youth Parliament 2022

The Legislative Assembly's Youth Parliament resumes this year. The Parliament runs from May 9 to 13, 2022 with an application deadline of April 6, 2022. Youth Parliament provides a unique opportunity for students in Grades 9 and 10 from across the NWT to

take on the role of an elected Member and participate in the daily workings of consensus government at the Legislative Assembly. It's interesting AND a lot of fun to connect with students from other parts of the territory.

Interested students must complete an application explaining why they should be selected for Youth Parliament. One student will be selected from each constituency to participate in this year's event. To apply, contact Crystal Cockney at crystal_cockney@ntassembly.ca or call 767 9130 Ext. 12022.

GNWT Conservation Planning

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) is gathering public feedback on how the GNWT works to protect the land, water, wildlife, and traditions of the Northwest Territories. A draft work plan has been produced based on feedback collected in 2021, and now the public is invited to provide feedback on that work plan and on the advancement of the conservation network in the NWT for the next five years.

To participate, go to the Healthy Land, Healthy People Renewal [website](#).

Tourism Restart Investment Program

Tourism operators are welcoming tourists back following the March 1 reopening of leisure travel. To help with re-opening efforts, the GNWT and the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor) are offering the Tourism Restart Investment Program (TRIP).

Operators can receive support for:

- marketing activities for Canadian and international audiences,
- recruitment, training, and capacity building for new and returning employees,
- adapting or enhancing protocols for tourism activities, and
- infrastructure upgrades to meet health and safety requirements.

See the Industry, Tourism and Investment [website](#) to apply.



Meet Julie!

Message Julie!

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