

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

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News Release

September 11, 2020

Wave of COVID-19 is Hitting Vancouver's DTES: Residents Encouraged to Take Precautions; UBCIC Welcomes Urgent, Transparent Action from VCH

((X^wməθk^wəy^əm (Musqueam), Sk^wxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/ Vancouver, B.C. – September 11, 2020) The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) has learned that there are confirmed cases of COVID-19 throughout Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES) among residents and front line staff, with multiple cases in some locations. UBCIC is calling on all residents of the DTES, neighbours and staff, to take heightened safety precautions and get tested if they are presenting any symptoms of COVID, while ensuring that existing services continue to be used. To halt what could be a disastrous and fatal outbreak, UBCIC is seeking an updated urgent, public, comprehensive action plan from Vancouver Coastal Health and the Province, that will target and protect the DTES' vulnerable populations, especially Indigenous peoples.

Many residents, particularly women, seniors, people of colour and people with compromised immune systems, are at heightened risk. Indigenous peoples are disproportionately represented in this vulnerable population, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic stand to exacerbate the intergenerational trauma, marginalization, violence, cultural and traditional knowledge loss inflicted by colonization.

Given the confirmed cases in multiple sites, we are once again calling for an urgent, transparent, public, and culturally appropriate action plan that provides immediate safe and secure housing units for people who test positive and need a place to recover; increased testing capacity; relevant wrap-around services; access to safe drug supply; increased distribution of PPE including non-medical masks to DTES residents; immediate provision of free wi-fi throughout the DTES to allow people to isolate if necessary yet remain connected to friends, family and services; and a commitment to publicly report any cases in the DTES so that residents of the densely populated neighbourhood can take extra precautions for their health and safety.

There is a testing site located in the DTES at [429 Alexander Street](#), which can be accessed from 10am to 5pm from Monday to Friday. A full listing of sites in Vancouver can be found [online](#).

Drug users are encouraged to continue to use safely and never use alone.

UBCIC recommends continuing to refer to the updated guidance available from the [First Nations Health Authority](#) and [BC Centre for Disease Control](#). [HealthlinkBC](#) service navigators can help you find health information or health services, or connect you with a nurse, dietitian, or pharmacist. Call 8-1-1 to speak with a navigator anytime of the day or night. If you or someone in your care has chest pains, difficulty breathing, or severe bleeding, it could be a life-threatening emergency. Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number immediately.

OTHER HELPFUL LINKS:

Information on novel coronavirus (COVID-19) - <https://www.fnha.ca/about/news-and-events/news/information-on-novel-coronavirus>

Canadian Government COVID-19 updates - <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>

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UBCIC is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

For more information please visit www.ubcic.bc.ca