



**Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations  
Emergency Management**



**Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations  
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT - PANDEMIC RESPONSE  
FINAL REPORT  
September 30, 2022**

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## Acknowledgements

*The FSIN Emergency Management department would like to acknowledge the grief and loss our communities have experienced over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. We take this moment to remember the many victims of the pandemic, and their families who continue to live with the loss of their loved ones each day.*

*COVID-19 is a truly deadly disease, and the many lives that were lost due to COVID-19 far exceed the number of those who died as a direct result of infection (ie drug overdose fatalities, suicide due to lack of mental health resources, and fatalities due to delayed medical treatment resulting from service disruptions, etc.). The harms of this pandemic have permeated almost every aspect of daily life, and the full extent of the detrimental impacts on mental health, addictions, and population health will be measured for years to come.*

*We also wish to acknowledge the many people in our communities who have worked tirelessly and often beyond their limits to protect our elders and youth, the most vulnerable and precious among us. We acknowledge that without these efforts, the tragic consequences of COVID-19 would be exponentially higher, and take comfort that in a time of great uncertainty and danger, so many gave so much to protect each other.*

*The following report represents a reconciliation and compilation of the efforts to reduce harm and death in First Nations communities in the rural and urban environment. It is our hope that the information contained in this report will be utilized as a tool to effectively reduce harm in any future emergency event.*

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) has maintained an active response through effective communication of public health information and services in a rapidly-changing pandemic environment. FSIN has endeavoured to provide timely and practical responses to First Nation communities both on and off reserve.

In particular the FSIN Emergency Management department has executed an effective and inclusive outreach and communications strategy with focused messaging to the 74 First Nations in Saskatchewan.

The FSIN Emergency Management COVID-19 Response Team, comprised of the Office of the Chief, the FSIN Executive, FSIN Communications, and other FSIN staff have worked tirelessly to ensure that factual, responsive, and vital information is continuously distributed to the 74 member Nations. Much of the information on how to effectively curtail the spread of COVID-19 and maintain safety precautions for the duration of the pandemic has been provided in whole or in part by medical health professionals.

The FSIN has also responded to the COVID-19 crisis by directly supplying First Nations communities, schools, and the Tribal Councils with much needed Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) on an ongoing basis and to support cultural events, as well as delivery of essential supplies addressing the need for Food Security throughout lockdowns, economic shifts, and supply chain barriers. As population growth in Saskatchewan continues to be driven by First Nation demographics, targeted measures were and continue to be needed.

As we navigate the seventh wave and beyond, it is imperative to find more solutions for vaccine hesitancy, misinformation, and mental health issues that have arisen over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has demonstrated the need for a broad spectrum of resources to combat these ongoing threats to the health and safety of our communities. FSIN Emergency

Management will continue to advocate for the initiation and expansion of culturally appropriate initiatives to support communities struggling under these insidious threats.

## 2.0 TALKING STICK COMMUNICATIONS



The graphic is a promotional poster for the Talking Stick app. On the left, it features the 'talking stick' logo with the tagline 'EVERY VOICE MATTERS'. Below the logo, it asks 'Need to chat? You Talk. We Listen.' and lists key features: 'First Nations Peer Advocates are available now.', 'Always Anonymous.', 'Confidential. Safe. Secure.', and '1 on 1 private conversations.' It includes icons for the App Store and Google Play, and the website 'my.talkingstick.app'. At the bottom, it credits the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, Indigenous Services Canada, and TryCycle Data Systems. On the right, a portrait of a woman is shown. To her right, the text reads 'Indigenous Peer Support: One-to-Many Anonymous Support network'. Below this, it describes the app as an anonymous chat platform connecting individuals to culture-based support and confidential conversations. It mentions the program's focus on job creation, skills development, and training, and its goal to create an infrastructure of 200 community-based Indigenous Peer Advocates in Saskatchewan. It also notes the app is available in 7 First Nation languages and is a Nation to Nation program. A list of topics supported includes Vaccine Hesitancy, Mental Wellness & Emotional Health, Violence & Anger, Isolation (Depression, Stress, Loneliness), Trauma, and Grief and Loss.

**talking stick**  
EVERY VOICE MATTERS

**Need to chat?  
You Talk. We Listen.**

- First Nations Peer Advocates are available now.
- Always Anonymous.
- Confidential. Safe. Secure.
- 1 on 1 private conversations.

Download our free app:  
**Talking Stick-Indigenous**

Download on the App Store | GET IT ON Google Play

Or go to our website:  
**my.talkingstick.app**

Brought to you by the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, Indigenous Services Canada, and TryCycle Data Systems

**Indigenous Peer Support:  
One-to-Many Anonymous  
Support network**

Talking Stick is an anonymous chat platform, connecting Indigenous individuals to culture-based support and confidential conversations – "Every Voice Matters".

With an emphasis on Job Creation, Skills Development and Training, this program will create an infrastructure of 200 community-based Indigenous Peer Advocates in Saskatchewan, helping to advance First Nation economic development and assist in strengthening social support systems.

Available in 7 First Nation languages, Talking Stick is a Nation to Nation program. The Peer Advocate infrastructure is designed to compensate for the lack of resources and cultural supports that exist today for Indigenous people.

Talking Stick encourages confidential conversations and listening as it relates to these and other topics:

- Vaccine Hesitancy
- Mental Wellness & Emotional Health
- Violence & Anger
- Isolation (Depression, Stress, Loneliness)
- Trauma
- Grief and Loss

In 2022, TryCycle and the FSIN have partnered to bring the Talking Stick App to Saskatchewan for First Nations by First Nations. The Talking Stick App is an anonymous chat platform, connecting First Nation individuals to culture-based support and confidential conversations. Those engaging through the app are connected to community based Peer Advocates in Saskatchewan helping to improve the health of First Nations people struggling with vaccine anxiety/hesitancy, mental wellness, emotional health, violence, anger, isolation, trauma, and grief. This communications work plan was designed to create opportunities for individuals struggling in isolation to connect to peer supports on a wider scale, and is only the first phase of a needed expansion of supports to reduce preventable deaths for First Nations.

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### 3.0 FSIN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATIONS

- FSIN is cognizant of the need for a public awareness campaign to stress the necessity of preventative and continued safety measures that curb the spread of COVID-19 and provide lifesaving connections to supports for mental health issues.
- The media play a huge role in getting out messages, and continuous engagement of the media is required to ensure all corners of the Province and Treaty territories are included. Key messaging must also stress the importance of our young people taking an active role as health advocates, defenders/protectors, and champions of our most vulnerable and elderly.
- We have implemented an extensive communications public awareness campaign with a series of radio and newspaper ads and highlighted messaging on FSIN's social media sites and website to encourage vaccination.
- As an ongoing measure, radio ads (30 - 90 seconds) and videos from social media influencers will assist in raising awareness of the Talking Stick app to a generation of youth struggling to adjust to COVID-19 in an era of isolation and lack of trusted resources.
- The FSIN is working directly with First Nations leadership, Tribal Councils, Elders, and community members to ensure we are assisting with their emergencies as requested.



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- FSIN’s pandemic response has been carefully designed to reflect and embed the cultural values and languages of the Nêhiyawak (Cree), Dënësųliné, Saulteaux, and Dakota, Lakota and Nakota. FSIN Emergency Management continues to work closely with FSIN Communications to execute a well designed communications effort to oversee the direction and messaging of ongoing projects. Further engagement must include FSIN Executive, leadership and other FSIN stakeholders, institutions, and traditional knowledge keepers.

### **3.1) Other Communication Tools**

FSIN has utilized the following communications resources in the course of the pandemic response:

<b><i>Press Releases &amp; Media Advisories</i></b>	<b><i>Windspeaker</i></b>
<b><i>Press Conferences</i></b>	<b><i>Alberta Sweetgrass</i></b>
<b><i>Native Newswire (Nation Talk)</i></b>	<b><i>CFWE</i></b>
<b><i>Quarterly and the Annual Reports</i></b>	<b><i>Eagle Feather News</i></b>
<b><i>Communications Zoom meetings</i></b>	<b><i>FSIN Magazine</i></b>
<b><i>Memos</i></b>	<b><i>Native Journal</i></b>
<b><i>Staff Meetings</i></b>	<b><i>First Nations Drum</i></b>
<b><i>Briefing Notes</i></b>	<b><i>Mainstream media outlets</i></b>
<b><i>Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube)</i></b>	<b><i>Aboriginal People`s Television Network (APTN)</i></b>
<b><i>Daily Newspapers (Saskatoon Star Phoenix, Edmonton Journal, etc.)</i></b>	<b><i>Missinipi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC)</i></b>



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## 4.0 FSIN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES

- All emergency management work falls within the four pillars of Emergency Management. The FSIN advocates for member nations for the need to address emergency management work which falls within the four pillars of Emergency Management:

- 1 **Mitigation**- actions and measures taken to minimize damage in the event of a State of Emergency.
- 2 **Prevention** -actions and measures taken to minimize and prevent harm to members and/or damages to homes and infrastructure.
- 3 **Response** -actions and measures taken to directly respond to emergency events.
- 4 **Recovery** - actions and measures taken to recover and rebuild from state of emergency events.



- The Emergency Management department continues to develop and strengthen its mandate, guided by the principles of treaty implementation, the TRC Calls to Action, and the 12 prior recommendations for FSIN Emergency Management, which are:



1. Prioritized EMAP Funding for First Nations
2. Revised ISC Funding Considerations for Emergency Management
3. Continued FSIN Coordination of Engagement and EM Development
4. Create First Nations EM Terms of Reference
5. Clarification of Costs, Mandates and Roles, Government and NGO's
6. Recommended Funding Structures and Priorities
7. ISC Capital Projects Review
8. Promotion of Mutual Aid Agreements at First Nations
9. Emergency Management MOU; FSIN/Canada/Saskatchewan
10. Incorporate Global Warming/Climate Change to EM Program Considerations
11. ISC set new and improved funding provisions for First Nation Firefighters and Community Response
12. Establish a Formal EM Technical Advisory Working Group; Continued FSIN Coordination of Engagement and EM Development

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## 5.0 FSIN PANDEMIC RESPONSE EFFORTS

In alignment with the principles of emergency management, the FSIN has responded to COVID-19 through the strategic coordination of the following activities:

- 1 Supplying First Nations, Tribal Councils, First Nations, and schools with much needed Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Provision of PPE has also been provided in support of community and cultural events.
- 2 During the course of the entire pandemic three (3) food security distributions were undertaken for vulnerable members of First Nation Reserve and Urban Communities.
- 3 Ongoing consultation and communication with medical experts and leaders to provide timely and correct information to First Nation communities
- 4 Effective communications designed to connect indigenous people to the information, programs and assistance available to support them in protecting themselves from the harms of COVID-19
- 5 The FSIN Emergency Management Department, in conjunction with the FSIN Office of the Chief have strived to ensure that information has been provided to all stakeholders in a timely manner.
- 6 Despite rapidly evolving conditions, every measure undertaken by the FSIN in response to the global pandemic was intended to minimize harm to First Nations people in urban and rural environments.



### 5.1) FSIN ISC Project Approvals: Total Project Approvals (ISC)

<i>Letter Dated</i>	<i>Wave #</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
20-Apr-20	Wave 1	\$380,000.00	PPE
30-Apr-20		\$413,486.00	PPE
21-May-20	Wave 2	\$2,912,982.00	PPE
26-Oct-20	Needs based	\$1,608,057.00	PPE, public health response, school re-opening
25-Nov-20	Wave 2	\$6,500,000.00	PPE (JSCN PPE)
16-Dec-20	Wave 2 - needs based	\$1,654,775.00	Food Security
8-Jan-21	Wave 3	\$4,500,000.00	PPE
9-Oct-21	Wave 4 - needs based	\$484,900.00	PPE
21-Jan-22	Wave 5 - needs based	\$1,992,000.00	Talking Stick
		\$946,778.00	PPE
11-Feb-22	Vaccine hesitancy	\$1,430,000.00	Talking Stick
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$16,330,978</b>	

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## 5.2) PPE Distribution

- Focused upon the ability to mass distribute masks for First Nation community members and distributed items that included: hand sanitizers, disinfectant wipes, gloves, face shields, gowns, thermometers and other items to support the health of families and individuals.
- FSIN Emergency Management coordinated ongoing delivery of PPE during extremely high demand periods for infection control related products, reducing uncertainty and ensuring First Nation members had the resources to follow public health infection control and hygiene measures appropriately
- Average cost per mask (and other PPE items) inclusive of material, storage, delivery, and staffing was approximately \$0.26
- Total PPE spend of \$11,254,203 also included in kind mass distributions received from James Smith Cree Nation (1 million adult masks), Carry The Kettle First Nation (500,000 adult masks), and the Public Health Agency of Canada (3.5 million masks and other PPE).



## FSIN PPE Distribution Summary Table

<i>Tribal Council</i>	<i>Masks (Non-Surgical)</i>	<i>K-N95</i>	<i>Children Masks (Non-surgical)</i>	<i>Gloves</i>	<i>Hand Sanitizer (l)</i>
<b>ACTC</b>	<b>1,273,500</b>	<b>128,625</b>	<b>135,000</b>	<b>1,350,000</b>	<b>1,260</b>
<b>BATC</b>	<b>1,204,000</b>	<b>143,200</b>	<b>184,680</b>	<b>154,329</b>	<b>1,561</b>
<b>BTC</b>	<b>342,475</b>	<b>459,360</b>	<b>43,650</b>	<b>47,175</b>	<b>448</b>
<b>FHQTC</b>	<b>1,123,395</b>	<b>133,000</b>	<b>149,539</b>	<b>154,490</b>	<b>1,561</b>
<b>MLTC</b>	<b>1,403,438</b>	<b>146,250</b>	<b>180,000</b>	<b>207,400</b>	<b>1,729</b>
<b>PAGC</b>	<b>5,933,250</b>	<b>545,760</b>	<b>582,000</b>	<b>722,500</b>	<b>6,880</b>
<b>STC</b>	<b>1,096,160</b>	<b>109,875</b>	<b>153,135</b>	<b>139,350</b>	<b>1,504</b>
<b>SET4</b>	<b>365,080</b>	<b>37,320</b>	<b>376,600</b>	<b>466,000</b>	<b>4,130</b>
<b>YTC</b>	<b>1,423,350</b>	<b>149,310</b>	<b>155,840</b>	<b>168,992</b>	<b>1,712</b>
<b>TATC</b>	<b>1,046,880</b>	<b>101,775</b>	<b>122,960</b>	<b>125,775</b>	<b>1,183</b>
<b>INDEPENDENT AND UNAFFILIATED</b>	<b>4,944,375</b>	<b>545,760</b>	<b>698,400</b>	<b>722,500</b>	<b>6,055</b>
<b>URBAN ORGS, CULTURAL AND SPECIAL EVENTS</b>	<b>1,590,350</b>	<b>175,500</b>	<b>201,600</b>	<b>219,330</b>	<b>2,250</b>
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>21,746,253</b>	<b>2,675,735</b>	<b>4,279,604</b>	<b>4,477,841</b>	<b>30,273</b>

**Grand Total**

**Distributions 31,913,505**

<b>FSIN Remaining Stockpile</b>	<b>8,685,903</b>	<b>963,960</b>	<b>261,887</b>	<b>1,127,802</b>	<b>8,140</b>
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**Grand Total PPE**

**Units Remaining 11,046,814**

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### 5.3) Current FSIN PPE Stockpile

- The bulk of FSIN Pandemic Response funding was received in the first half of the pandemic.
- Funding requirements and conditions for PPE purchase and distribution have been adhered to.
- Canada has recently focused upon directly providing PPE to First Nations from a federal stockpile.
- PPE Stockpiled from flow through funding, donations, and from Public Health Agency of Canada total 11,046,814 units currently housed at the FSIN PPE Warehouse.
- Of the remaining stockpile, approximately 10 tonnes (1000 L) of hand sanitizer is expired.
- KN95 mask utilization among children has been low due to uncomfortable fit.
- Strong demand and supply chain interruptions impacted procurement costs at different points of the pandemic.



### 5.4) FSIN Pandemic Response Financial Transparency

- All Government of Canada approved pandemic response project costs and expenses have been vetted through FSIN Financial Audit Committee for formal approval and authorization.
- All audit required financial information is duly provided to FSIN's financial auditors and subsequently to our funding agencies.

- 
- FSIN maintains a 10 per-cent administration fee on all projects that are administered by FSIN, unless expressly permitted by funding agencies, or by FSIN Financial Audit Committee.
  - All FSIN Financial Audit Committee Records of Decisions pertaining to pandemic response projects are included in the appendix of this report, in addition to being available upon request. (FSIN FAC RODs).
  - Activities undertaken by the FSIN Pandemic Response have been performed on an ongoing basis through multiple, separate proposals of which funding approvals occurred at different times with various reporting requirements.
  - This report is provided to produce a comprehensive summary of all pandemic funded projects administered by or flowed through the FSIN.
  - **Average cost per unit inclusive of material, storage, delivery, and staffing = \$0.26 (Total PPE spend \$11,254,203).**
  - At the height of the pandemic, a maximum of 30 staff were employed in relation to PPE and food security reception, storage, and distribution.
  - Factors impacting cost included disruptions to the supply chain caused by global lockdowns, significant demand pressures driving prices higher, and challenges delivering supplies remote communities in the vast geographical area serviced.
  - PPE distributions were made regularly on a per capita basis as well as upon special requests to support cultural and traditional activities and events including ceremonies, wakes, and funerals. This PPE was provided to ensure events were conducted in the safest manner possible.



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- PPE volume as reported in the Summary Table on page 9 are approximate total values for reporting purposes.

#### **5.5) The Government of Canada's Investment in Pandemic Response & Support for First Nations Pandemic Safety**

- The Government of Canada has provided tangible support of First Nations communities throughout the pandemic, recognizing the acute vulnerability of the First Nation population.
- Factors contributing to this vulnerability include high rates of poverty, overcrowded housing, high morbidity rate, and other intergenerational trauma stemming from Residential Schools and other government-imposed policies.

<b>2021-22 COVID-19 Investments (As of February 7, 2022)</b>		
<b>ISC Investment (21-22)</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>SK Regional</b>
Own Source Revenue (OSR) - First Nations/Tribal Councils Covid-19 impacts to OSR	\$322.8 M	\$10.2 M Initial  \$10.0 M Top-Up - Proposal Based \$7.7 M Top-Up - Application Based
Education:		
-Safe Return to School E/S	\$112 M	\$19.8 M
-Safe Return to School P/SPP	\$23.9 M	\$3.56 M
-PSSSP	\$65.5 M	\$10.2 M
Indigenous Community Support Fund 4 (21-22)	\$760.8 M -\$200 M - direct allocation to FN, Inuit, Metis (June 2021) -\$200 M - direct allocation to FN, Inuit, Metis (Oct 2021) -\$360 M - needs based to support to communities (including Urban)  -\$800,000 - administration of funds	\$20.9 M -direct allocation to First Nations (June 2021) 20.9 M - direct allocation to First Nations (Oct 2021) \$33.5 M - needs based for First Nation proposal-based needs requests and outbreak community supports  \$10 M - Urban
Indigenous Community Business Fund - Stream 1	\$58.7 M	\$8.5 M
Indigenous Community Business Fund- Stream 2	\$38.34 M	\$1.67 M
Income Assistance COVID-19 Supports		\$35.6 M
Additional Public Health Measures	Multiple Announcements	\$51.97 M
Infrastructure Response		\$3.3 M
Pandemic Supportive Care Initiative		\$6.5 M (FNIHB) + \$1.9 M (RO)
Direct COVID-19 Public Health Measures Community Allocation	\$125 M	\$17.565 M
January 20, 22 Announcement		
Metis Nation Saskatchewan		\$1.04 M
<b>Total 21-22 Investments a/o February 7, 2022</b>	<b>\$1,519.04 M</b>	<b>\$274.805 M</b>

<b>2020-2021 COVID-19 Investments</b>		
<b>ISC Investment (20-21)</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>SK Regional</b>
Indigenous Community Business Fund - Stream 1	\$49.22 M	\$8.35 M
Indigenous Community Business Fund- Stream 2	\$24.5 M	\$1.79 M
Indigenous Community Support Fund 3 (Direct First Nation Allocation, Needs Based)	\$262 M	\$52.5 M
Indigenous Community Support Fund 2 (Direct First Nation Allocation, Needs Based, Long-Term Care Homes)	\$266.8 M	\$45.9 M
Indigenous Community Support Fund 1 (Direct First Nation Allocation, Emergency Shelters)	\$305.2 M	\$32.9 M
Additional Public Health Measures	Multiple	\$82.19 M
Infrastructure Response	Announcements	\$22.48 M
e-Health/Virtual Care		\$1.3 M
Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Programs		\$13 M
Mental Health & Wellness		8.13 M + 1.875 M MN-S
Additional Direct Supports		13 M (FNIHB/RO)
Social (Income Assistance, Family Violence Prevention, Assisted Living Wage Subsidy/Long Term Care Homes)	\$109.4 M	\$54.9 M
Education and Return to School (PSSSP, FNIYES, Education Program Support, Minor Capital Support, Additional Infrastructure Support)	\$528.8 M	\$36.4 M
LED (Indigenous Community Business Fund, Reserve Land Management & Environment Program)	\$133 M	\$11.9 M
Adaptation (Assisted Living, Community Infrastructure, Family Violence, FNNWEP)	\$59.5 M	\$12.19 M
Urban		\$24.97 M
Metis Nation Saskatchewan		\$16.07 M
<b>Total 20-21 Investments</b>	<b>\$1,738.42 M</b>	<b>\$439.85 M</b>

<b>2019-2020 COVID-19 Investments</b>		
<b>ISC Investment (19-20)</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>SK Regional</b>
EMAP Support (2019-20)	\$56 M	\$8 M
Income Assistance		\$5 M
Additional Public Health Measures - Infrastructure Response		\$5.58 M
<b>Total 19-20 Investments</b>	<b>\$56 M</b>	<b>\$18.58 M</b>

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## **6.0 FSIN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PANDEMIC RESPONSE COST ANALYSIS**

The following sections provide a review of cost factors relating to the FSIN Emergency Management pandemic response.

### **6.1) Warehousing and Staffing Costs**

- All warehousing and staffing costs from the various approved projects have been provided for FSIN Audit and Reporting purposes and requirements.
- All warehouse and staffing costs are in alignment with approved funding purposes.

### **6.2) Equipment & Fuel Costs & Insurance**

- All equipment, fuel, and insurance costs from approved projects have been provided for FSIN Audit and Reporting purposes and requirements
- All equipment, fuel, and insurance costs are in alignment with approved funding purposes.

### **6.3) FSIN Food Security Distributions**

- Total cost of food directly purchased from Food Warehouse Distributors has been duly approved by FSIN Financial Audit Committee approval.
- Identification and acquisition of the amount of food required for purchase and available supply required extensive coordination with First Nations and Tribal Councils.
- At the height of the pandemic response the FSIN hired up to 30 workers to prepare and distribute food hampers for vulnerable First Nation community members.

- 
- In spite of the many challenges the FSIN was able to provide timely food distribution assistance in correlation with funding provided by Canada, and with approval of FSIN Financial Audit Committee.
  - Due to financial limitations, urban food security response could only be provided to the most vulnerable among urban First Nation populations and was focused First Nations urban service organizations, food-kitchens and other vulnerable support services.

#### **6.4) Communications and Consulting**

- For the duration of the pandemic, the FSIN has secured expert medical advice in all matters related to FSIN Pandemic Communications.
- Further expert communications services were employed through various media and technical related service consultants.
- All related costs were designed to provide effective messaging of First Nations public health education and information, with factual COVID-19 data and facts for social media, printed communications, and billboards in First Nations languages.
- Ongoing projects include the Talking Stick Project, which is strategically formulated to address First Nations Vaccination Uptake.
- Other ongoing costs include First Nations engagement via FSIN political consultations.
- Continuous engagement Efforts to reduce vaccine hesitancy must move to the forefront of this strategy, as vaccine hesitancy is having a demonstrable negative impact on traditional childhood vaccination rates as well as COVID-19 infection rates further exposing our communities to preventable illness

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### 6.5) FSIN Compliance with Pandemic Funding Requirements

- The activities comprising the FSIN Pandemic Response have complied with all stated funding objectives identified in pandemic funding applications.
- The activities comprising the FSIN Pandemic Response has complied with all stated objectives authorized by FSIN Financial Audit Committee.
- All FSIN spending information related to Pandemic Response projects is duly submitted to FSIN Auditors and funding agencies.

## 7.0 FIRST NATIONS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ENVIRONMENTAL SYNOPSIS

As the world continues to adapt to living with COVID we must ensure our most vulnerable community members are adequately protected and continue to receive focused outreach to improve health outcomes.

The effects of COVID-19 and long COVID complications continue to impact population health indicators. Many of these impacts were named directly in the TRC Call to Action 19:

***“infant mortality, maternal health, suicide, mental health, addictions, life expectancy, birth rates, infant and child health issues, chronic diseases, illness and injury incidence, and the availability of appropriate health services”***

Mental health, arguably already at crisis levels prior to COVID-19, led to the preventable deaths of untold youth and families. Addiction comorbidity and overdose rates are currently rising unchecked. Health outcomes for indigenous people in Saskatchewan were at unacceptable levels prior to COVID-19, and although these metrics are showing damage to the health of the general population, the impact of these losses on vulnerable

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communities will be devastating if left unaddressed, and constitute an ongoing and widespread state of emergency.

**Accessibility:** Access to health care is continually shrinking due to system pressures, exacerbating existing barriers and cutting off previous relationships indigenous people have forged with health services.

**Active Vaccination Strategies:** The need for additional COVID boosters will persist in the medium term to mitigate the risk of ongoing COVID waves. First Nation populations experience vaccine hesitancy at higher than average rates, and the diminishing uptake for boosters signals the need for a series of community-based targets public health campaigns in indigenous communities.

**Communications:** Misinformation and distrust of the health care system are having fatal impacts on our communities. Maintaining a strong network of culturally safe localized strategies for outreach and support of vaccine work and health education is integral to improving health outcomes for indigenous communities in SK.

**Continued Efforts:** Increased desensitization to COVID-19 risk and mis/disinformation campaigns present a significant threat as the commitment to public health recommendations, vaccine uptake, PPE utilization, social distancing, and hand hygiene continues to wane. There is an acute need to reconcile the growing disconnect between the impacts COVID continues to have on the health system and larger population with the individual experience and response to the pandemic.



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## 8.0 FSIN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

The FSIN EM department continues to support the following:

### 8.1) Develop FSIN First Nations Emergency Management Secretariat/ Commission



- To respond to the need for an identified and coordinated network of widespread emergency response mechanisms for First Nations and to further advocate for continued development and implementation of such mechanisms
- To identify political/jurisdictional/  
treaty/departmental considerations of First Nations Emergency Management.
- To discuss further alignment and correlation of the current FSIN Emergency Management Technical Advisory Body/Working Group and FSIN Emergency Management department
- Any proposed FSIN Emergency Management Commission/Secretariat would consist of accepted formal representation from Tribal Councils, Grand Councils, Independent First Nations and Agencies otherwise identified and accepted as per the *FSIN Convention Act*.
- To advocate for the development and implementation of strategies or programs that serve First Nations Emergency Management needs and interests.
- In correlation and conjunction with proposed Emergency Management Technical Advisory Group, provide communications that monitor Fire and Flood forecast situations for communication and advisory purposes.

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- In correlation and conjunction with any existing Technical Advisory/Working Groups, monitor, and provide communications to First Nations and other relevant bodies about insurance related matters that may affect First Nation housing and infrastructure protections or losses.

**8.2) Further development of an effective Emergency Management Technical Advisory Group for Saskatchewan Region:**

- To consist of Tribal Council/Grand Council/Independent First Nation or Agency otherwise identified and accepted
- To ensure that all technical and program supports and developments are in conjunction and collaboration with First Nations Jurisdiction and Political Leadership.
- To ensure that all technical and program developments and supports are made in respect of First Nations autonomy, and in collaboration with First Nations leadership.
- To ensure that development of Emergency Management occurs in a uniform manner across all of Sask. Region First Nations.
- Would work in conjunction and correlation to the direction provided by the FSIN Emergency Management Secretariat/Commission/Task Force

**8.3) Formal Revision of the current Letter of Understanding:**

FSIN supports a Formal Revision of the current Letter of Understanding (LOU) for ISC Saskatchewan Region Emergency Management. A revised LOU should acknowledge and support the continuing capacity development and expansion of First Nation Emergency Management resources and structures both collectively and at the individual First Nations level.

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#### **8.4) Assist Saskatchewan First Nations Emergency Management Services:**

Saskatchewan First Nations Emergency Management Services (SFNEM) has formally received a mandate from FSIN Legislative Assembly (May 2022) to provide Emergency Management Services to all Saskatchewan First Nations in partnership with Saskatchewan First Nations. FSIN Emergency Management shall work to advocate for further uniform development and recognition of the need for coordinated services.

#### **8.5) Identify and Define Critical Issues Affecting First Nations Emergency Management:**

Acknowledge the critical aspect of social issues that are prevalent in First Nation communities and include them in the formulation of strategic response to Emergency Management in an All-Hazards approach to service First Nations more effectively.

- Substandard Housing is common at many First Nations due to inadequate funding for housing on First Nations.
- Drug and Alcohol Recovery and Counselling Programs accessibility was limited prior to the onset of the pandemic.
- Drug and Alcohol related abuse and deaths have increased during the pandemic causing financial strain and emotional burden to First Nation communities.

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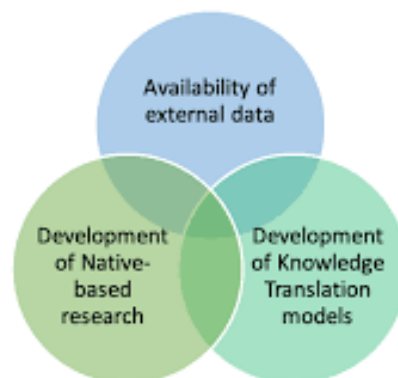
## 8.6) Identify Data Sovereignty issues affecting First Nations Emergency Management:

Track the pandemic impacts upon First Nations communities and organizations  
COVID-19 has impacted First Nation



communities in many ways. To create an official record of these impacts the following issues are listed as items for future reporting;

- Benefit Impacts
- Mental Health challenges
- Addictions & Counselling Services
- Domestic Abuse Services
- Child and Family Service Impacts
- Overdose & Drug Related Deaths
- Community Closures, Policing and Response
- Long COVID



## 8.7) Continuing Engagement with First Nations for First Nations Emergency Management

FSIN will continue to engage with First Nations regarding Emergency Management within the context of the *FSIN Convention Act*. The FSIN will continue to work towards the fulfillment of the recommendations contained in previous Emergency Management reports. More specifically they will continue to respect and align with:

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- ***Inherent and Treaty rights implementation principles***
  - ***Self determination and jurisdiction to First nations***
  - ***94 Truth and Reconciliation recommendations***
  - ***United nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples***
  - ***Free, prior and informed consent***
  - ***FSIN Consultation Policy***

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## 9.0 ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FIRST NATIONS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



The FSIN is grateful to have worked for First Nations to ensure the provincial and federal government and health services provide a timely response to this unprecedented global health emergency. However, the primary function of the organization is not service provision, and

accordingly, FSIN's Emergency Management portfolio has focused on winding down PPE distribution activities to focus once again on advocacy and treaty implementation principles as they relate to the Emergency Management needs of its member Nations.

### 9.1) TRC Calls to Action

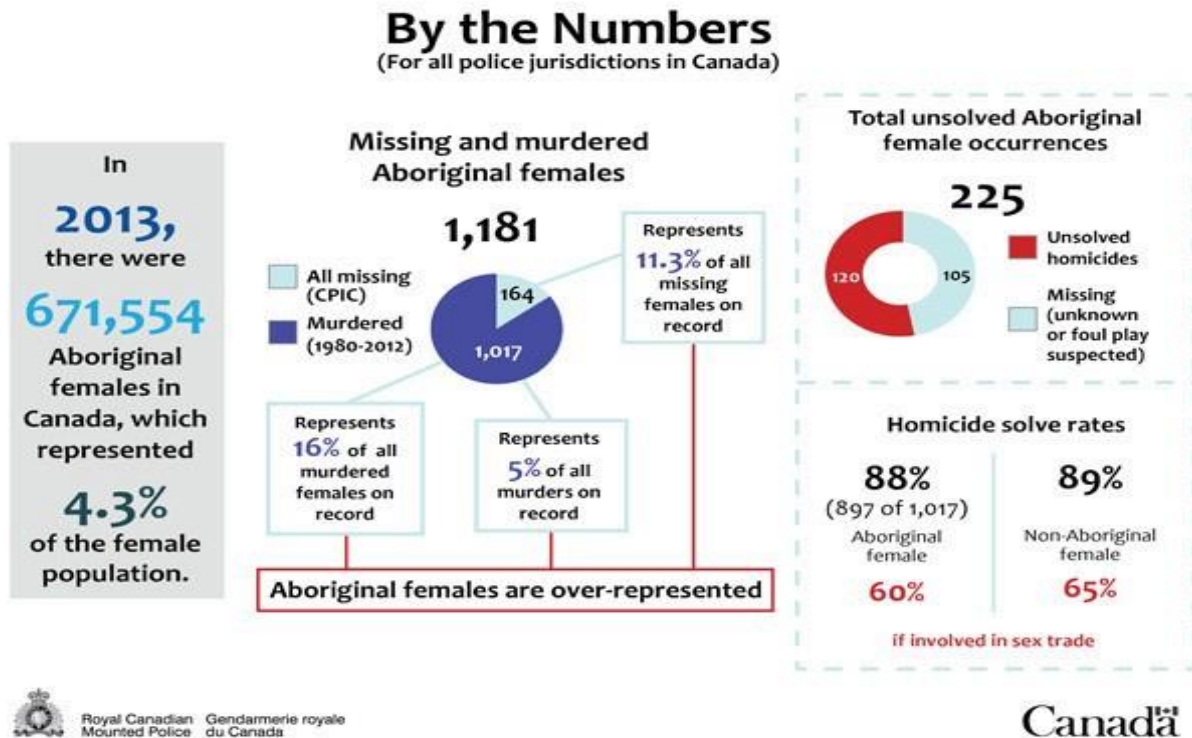
In accordance with the TRC calls to action, the mandate of the FSIN, and the existing recommendations for development of the Emergency Management activities for First Nations, departmental priorities for the coming year will focus on submissions for core funding for the establishment of an Emergency Management Secretariat, Communicable Disease response, expansion of the Talking Stick app, and communication and continuing engagement.

### 9.2) Search and Rescue Response/Recovery Protocol

Special attention must be paid to capacity development and departmentalization of search and rescue/search and recovery operations, especially regarding Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women community response. Saskatchewan indigenous people continue to be victims of violence at exponentially higher rates than the general population, and these individuals and their families are subject to ongoing trauma as a result. Formal

partnerships and standardized response protocols are needed to provide uniform response capacity throughout the province.

### 9.3) MMIW Concerns and Priorities



Communities cannot heal while in a constant state of crisis. Efforts at reconciliation cannot find footing while indigenous people continue to suffer from the long term impact of colonization and genocidal legislation and structures. Formalized agreements between provincial and federal services and indigenous people are needed to access services that are culturally sensitive, gender inclusive, and LGBTQ2IA+ friendly Intergovernmental cooperation as described in the TRC Call to Action #20 is essential to ending the cycles of abuse inherent to existing institutional orders:

***“In order to address the jurisdictional disputes concerning Aboriginal people who do not reside on reserves, we call upon the federal government to recognize, respect, and address the distinct health***

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***needs of the Métis, Inuit, and off-reserve Aboriginal peoples.”***

FSIN Emergency Management will work to ensure there is a generally accepted and coordinated response to this pressing issue.

**9.4) Continuing FSIN Advocacy for Saskatchewan First Nations Emergency Management**

To continue to advocate for initiatives to support First Nation people when accessing emergency services. Indigenous service providers are uniquely suited to provide culturally safe services, and FSIN Emergency Management will continue to advocate for agreements that allow individuals to engage with trusted front line services who can liaise with governmental institutions.

**9.5) Continuing FSIN Engagement for First Nations Emergency Management and Search and Rescue Capacity**

FSIN shall continue to support the development of partnerships and agreements for MMIW related and other Search and Rescue/Recovery activities to ensure that families going through terrible tragedies are able to access trusted, community based supports without losing access to financial and operational resources of current emergency service providers and agencies.



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## **10.0 Saskatchewan First Nations Emergency Management:**

### **Moving Forward 2023 and Beyond**

The FSIN will continue to work in collaboration and under the direction of First Nations leadership and organizations to provide a timely and responsive support to those First Nations suffering and/or enduring any unprecedented emergency event.

#### **10.1) Addressing First Nations Emergency Management Capacity**

COVID-19 has been in some ways a testing ground of the Emergency Management framework. The scale and speed of the pandemic required creative and dramatic system changes and adjustment of priorities in all aspects of society, highlighting the gaps and inequalities in infrastructure and service capacity for indigenous people and organizations.

#### **10.2) Identifying Social Spending Envelope Gaps & Barriers**

These gaps consistently lead to poorer outcomes and lower resilience against lingering and knock-on effects of the pandemic, including:

- reduced infection control capacity due to substandard housing
- higher mental health impacts resulting from extended isolation
- reduced service availability and loss of community connections due to lockdowns and stay-at-home orders.

#### **10.3) Identifying Vulnerable Community Impacts & Cost**

The pandemic highlighted many acknowledged gaps contributing to the vulnerability of First Nations people due to chronic underfunding on social spending envelopes made exponentially worse by prolonged periods of isolation.

#### **10.4) HIV/Communicable Disease Response**

Additionally, communicable disease management is at the forefront of health emergencies in First Nation communities. The development of practical and effective tactics to save lives from these preventable illnesses must be prioritized, and the pandemic experience

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provides significant insight into how these campaigns may be designed and executed by First Nations.

#### **10.5) First Nations Insurance & Provincial Disaster Assistance**

It has also brought less obvious gaps to the forefront, including the need for insurability of First Nations assets to mitigate damage to communities in emergencies, and the need to insulate remote communities against supply chain disruptions. Similarly, barriers to accessing appropriate and effective search and rescue/recovery services must also be reduced.

#### **10.6) Improved Communications for Effective Management of First Nations Emergency Events**

Going forward, it is imperative that the FSIN and its stakeholders seize the benefits of improved technology, cultural shifts, and reduced-barrier practices developed over the course of the pandemic by health care, government, education business, and service delivery to improve outcomes for the present and future generations. Considerable learning around procurement and distribution strategies must also be carried forward to ensure effective and efficient preparedness models are developed by service providers.

### **11.0 Conclusion**

It has been the honor of the FSIN Emergency Management department to work alongside caring and courageous front line workers, subject matter experts, and leadership over the course of this unprecedented global emergency.

We are pleased to offer this report as a reconciliation of the work performed over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic and to offer our experiences and learnings to strengthen emergency response planning and execution and prevent unnecessary deaths in the course of future emergencies.