



Assembly of  
Manitoba Chiefs



Manitoba Keewatinowin  
Okimakanak



FIRST NATIONS HEALTH AND SOCIAL  
SECRETARIAT OF MANITOBA  
First Nations Health and  
Social Secretariat  
of Manitoba

## Applying Current Public Health Orders and Guidance to Community Events

As Manitoba continues on to Phase 3 of the restart strategy and we enter the summer, communities may be starting to consider hosting gatherings and events such as Pow Wows or Treaty Day celebrations. There are benefits to different types of gatherings that celebrate culture and connection and so we want to consider how to support some types of events in ways that follow public health orders and guidance to minimize the risks related to COVID-19.

There have been reports that 20-50% of people who are infected with COVID-19 may not develop symptoms, and we also know that people can spread the virus before they develop symptoms. This is one of the key reasons why there are limits to gathering sizes. Even if everyone who has any symptoms stays home and away from events, there is still a risk that someone without symptoms could be infected and if they attend a large event it increases the number of people they could be in contact with and spread the virus to. There have been a number of COVID-19 outbreaks related to large gatherings including sporting events and conferences early on in the pandemic. More recently, Saskatoon declared an outbreak of COVID-19 linked to two large family gatherings. This is important when we consider that Saskatoon also had very low case numbers in the few weeks prior to when that outbreak was declared. It highlights that low risk- based on case numbers doesn't mean that there is no risk, and that large gatherings do increase the risk.

The following information is based on current Public Health Orders (<https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/soe.html#current>) and the Government of Manitoba Restoring Safe Services Phase Three Plan (<https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/restoring/phase-three.html>).

### Outdoor Community Events

Wherever possible, holding community events outdoors will assist in lowering the risk of spreading COVID-19.

#### Gathering Sizes

These outdoor events are subject to the public health order that limits gathering size to 100 people, unless there is a way to separate participants into subgroups of 100 or fewer people. The set-up of these events should include seating or standing areas that allow for physical distancing of 2 meters/ 6 feet for individuals who do not live in the same household. When individuals are interacting with people from outside of their household, they are advised to keep this distance except for brief encounters (e.g. taking a photo together).

### **Drive-in Events**

Communities could consider holding events with a drive-in component in order to allow for more people to participate. Organizations are allowed to hold outdoor events without limitation on numbers if people stay inside their vehicles with members of their own household, stand outside on the left side of their vehicle as long as the windows of the vehicle next to them are closed, and people not from the same household remain two metres apart at all times.

Perhaps one example of how this could be applied for a Pow Wow would be to have only a limited number of dancers, singers, judges or pow wow staff in an arena outside with spectators parked around outside to observe and support.

The following guidelines should be followed by all attendees, staff, volunteers and participants in order to minimize the risk of spread of COVID-19:

- Physical distancing must be observed at all times when outside the vehicle for essential purposes, such as to use the washroom, with a minimum of two metres between individuals when outside of their vehicles.
- Vehicles must be separated by a minimum of two metres.
- Windows and sunroofs may be open; doors and trunks should remain closed.
- Only individuals from the same household may occupy the same vehicle.
- If staff or volunteers are required to have contact with any equipment (e.g. speaker), the equipment must be cleaned and disinfected after each use.
- Where washroom access is provided, frequent cleaning and disinfection must take place before, during and after the service.
- Physical distancing of two metres must be maintained for those waiting for washroom facilities.
- Food/concession services that are provided should follow applicable restaurant guidelines.
- Where possible, payments should be accepted through contactless methods.
- All other services and common areas must be suspended, including picnic areas and play areas.
- Employees must have access to soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer for hand hygiene, as well as appropriate cleaner and disinfectants.
- Employees and volunteers are required to stay home if they are sick or symptomatic.
- Patrons should be reminded that anyone who is feeling sick or symptomatic must remain at home, even if they stay in their vehicle at all times.
- Patrons and participants could consider wearing non-medical masks to protect others when physical distancing is not possible to maintain.

If possible, consider live streaming the events so others can support and connect virtually.

### **Drum Groups/ Singers**

The Province has not permitted choirs or musical theatre activities to resume at this time as there is a higher risk of transmission through singing as compared to speaking. Keeping that in mind but

recognizing the central role of the drum and singers at events like Pow Wows the following measures may help reduce COVID-19 related risks.

- Hand drums with singers physically distanced and not facing each other would be a lower risk than many people gathered around a big drum.
- Position drum groups in open air instead of in a closed space and ensure appropriate physical spacing between drum groups.
- Consider limiting the number of singers around a big drum in order to allow for more spacing.
- Do not allow people to gather around drum groups as spectators.
- Ensure any equipment such as microphones that are moved between singers/ drum groups is appropriately cleaned between uses.

### **Pow Wow Arena Considerations for Dancers**

Guidance on how to safely manage the dancers during a pow wow can be informed by different aspects of the Phase Two Plan as well as general public health measures. The Risk Assessment and Mitigation Tool for Recreational Activities Operating During the COVID-19 Pandemic (available at: [https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset\\_library/en/coronavirus/activities-guidelines.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/activities-guidelines.pdf)) has some useful questions and considerations.

- The number of dancers should be limited to the number that can be in the arena while maintaining 2 metres of separation from all other dancers (for example, 1 dancer per 4 square metres).
  - This might mean not including large participation in intertribals, or splitting categories/ age divisions if there are a large number of dancers.
- Grand Entry should be set up and managed to maintain 2 metres of separation between participants.

If there is fixed seating such as bleachers around the arena, then occupancy must be limited to 50% of the site's usual capacity, and follow the outdoor gathering size orders, so that people can reasonably maintain a separation of 2 metres.

### **Food/ Concession Vendors**

Any food vendors need to follow applicable restaurant guidelines. Wherever possible payments should be accepted through contactless methods to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Frequent hand hygiene of employees is required.

- Customers must maintain a distance of at least 2 metres with employees except for brief exchanges such as ordering or paying.
- Lines must be managed to maintain 2 metres of separation between customers.

- Self-service condiments such as ketchup, mustard, salt, pepper, milk or cream should not be used. Disposable condiments (e.g. single serve packets) should be used instead.
- Provide napkins or similar items to customers instead of using self-service napkin dispensers.
- Drink refills are not allowed unless a clean cup is provided. Cups, straws and lids should be behind a counter and handed to customers.
- Frequently touched surfaces such as counters or tables should be cleaned frequently using an appropriate disinfectant or bleach solution.

### **Travel Restrictions**

Participation in community gatherings or events must respect the current Public Health Orders with respect to travel. As of June 21, 2020 people entering Manitoba from BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, the Territories, and Northwestern Ontario do NOT need to self-isolate when entering MB. Travelers from anywhere else do still need to self-isolate in Manitoba for 14 days. The Northern Travel Restriction remains in effect with the exception of travel directly to a cottage, cabin, provincial park, campground or hunting or fishing lodge. People are advised to limit their use of local services. In addition, and travel restrictions enacted by First Nations communities need to be respected.

### **General Mitigation Measures**

- Participants, employees, volunteers and attendees can use the [self-screening tool](#) before attending the community event. Anyone who has any symptoms should stay home.
- Minimize the number of entry points to the event spaces.
- Have hand hygiene stations available at entry points and throughout the site.
- Place signage about physical distancing, hand hygiene, and cough etiquette throughout the event site.
- Patrons and participants could consider wearing non-medical masks to protect others when physical distancing is not possible to maintain. More information about the use of non-medical masks is available from the Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/about-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html>.

The Pandemic Response and Coordination Team (PRCT) recognizes all First Nation community efforts to reduce the spread of Covid-19 and supports the need for maintaining wholistic health and connection. The PRCT also recognizes First Nation sovereignty and has confidence in our communities' ability to make informed decisions that will keep themselves safe during the extraordinary time in history.

When and where needed, members of the PRCT would welcome an invitation to offer moral support, public health expertise and witness the good work of our communities.