



## Canadian Red Cross update to First Nations in Manitoba

The Canadian Red Cross, working in conjunction with the Manitoba First Nations Pandemic Response Coordination Team (MFNPRCT), has drafted a plan for supporting First Nations during evacuations due to natural disasters – such as wildfires, floods and storms – in the context of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Canadian Red Cross will continue to fulfill its agreement with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to support First Nations in Manitoba during disasters, which includes evacuations. Due to the extraordinary precautions that are necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, this plan includes numerous protocols that will be undertaken in the case of an evacuation response. Here are the key aspects of that plan:

- **Shelter-in-place:** As much as possible, during a situation, the Red Cross will encourage First Nations to have their residents shelter-in-place in the community. If it is possible to avoid moving individuals, especially those who are at greater risk or who may have been in contact with the virus and need to self-isolate, shelter-in-place is ideal where possible.
- **Registration in community:** In the case that a First Nation community needs to partially or completely evacuate to a larger centre, such as Winnipeg, the Red Cross will work with community leadership to have registration done in the community, by the leadership, as opposed to doing it in a crowded setting at a reception centre in the receiving community. Also, the Red Cross will try to avoid sending a team into the community to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus in the community.
- **Transportation out of the community:** In the event of an evacuation of a community that has safe road access, it will be best for individuals to evacuate in their own vehicles, reducing the risk of virus transmission. However, if community members must be evacuated either by bus or airplane, extra precautionary steps will be put in place to reduce the risk of transmission as much as possible.
- **Lodging in hotels:** For evacuees are staying in hotels outside of their community, the Canadian Red Cross protocols will address issues around physical-distancing, while still providing all necessary support, including food, supplies and other needed assistance. There will be measures in place to restrict access to visitors and to encourage evacuees to not leave the hotels, to contribute to the reduction in risk. These measures will require the support of community leadership.
  - If an individual has been determined to have contracted COVID-19, steps will be in place to ensure they receive all necessary support, while minimizing the risk of spreading the virus.

### **Potential emergencies – as of April 6, 2020**

#### **Roseau River First Nation**

- The Canadian Red Cross is working very closely with the leadership of Roseau River First Nation as there is currently a heightened risk of river flooding impacting the community in the coming days.
- The Red Cross emergency management team is in regular contact with leadership of the community to determine the risk and the community's needs.
- Roseau River First Nation has a community emergency response plan that it completed with the support of the Canadian Red Cross.
- Using that emergency plan, the First Nation prepared for a potential evacuation due to flooding in spring 2019, which did not happen. It is taking similar steps to prepare for an



evacuation this year, keeping in mind the extra precautionary steps that are required due to the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic and are detailed above.

### **Support to First Nations in COVID-19 response**

- On behalf of First Nations in Manitoba, ISC-FNIHB contracted the Red Cross to procure and distribute isolation kits.
- These kits include cots, blankets and pillows to be used if communities need to set-up self-isolation centres for individuals who need to be separated temporarily from other members of their residence due to COVID-19.
- The Canadian Red Cross has contacted every community to determine if they wish to receive the isolation kits. Most First Nations have received the supplies they requested. The remainder are currently being distributed.
- Some communities opted out of receiving these materials.
- In total, 2,500 cots, 5,000 blankets, 2,400 pillows and 3,000 hygiene kits have been procured by the Red Cross, with most being distributed to First Nations.
- There will be some remaining stock in Winnipeg that can be shipped when and where needed.
- On behalf of ISC-FNIHB, the Red Cross is also procuring personal protective equipment (cleaning materials, soap, hand towels, gloves, masks and hand sanitizer.) These materials will be distributed to First Nations for use by community workers supporting self-isolation.
- The personal protective materials have not yet been received by the Red Cross as of April 6. They will be distributed once they have been received.