

Core Principles for Good Healthy Living Messages in First Nations, Inuit and Métis Remote and Isolated Northern Communities

Recommendations from the Task Group on Healthy Living

July 2020

Task Group on Healthy Living Messaging

Forward

The Task Group on Healthy Living Messaging was established to develop and share culturally relevant public health healthy living messaging to support northern Indigenous communities to protect themselves by reducing the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) among the broader community, promote community and family wellness, and build resiliency and empowerment.

As the Co-chairs of the COVID-19 Public Health Working Group on Remote and Isolated Communities, we would like to express our gratitude to the members of the Task Group for their efforts and for producing this final report. These dedicated people volunteered their time and expertise during the COVID-19 pandemic that has already put an extraordinary pressure on those involved with the health care system. Below are the Public Health Working Group on Remote and Isolated Communities member organizations, health authorities and government partners who extend their thanks to the Healthy Living Messaging Task Group and have approved the recommendations and principles put forward in this report.

<i>Assembly of First Nations</i>	<i>Indigenous Services Canada</i>
<i>Council of Yukon First Nations</i>	<i>Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami</i>
<i>Dene Nation</i>	<i>Métis National Council</i>
<i>Department of National Defence</i>	<i>National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health</i>
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<i>Government of Northwest Territories</i>	<i>Pauktuutit Women of Canada</i>
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Acknowledgement

This report is a result of collaborative work amongst federal, territorial and Indigenous partners.

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Introduction

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) established the COVID-19 Public Health Working Group on Remote and Isolated Communities as a forum to share information, develop guidance documents and tools and provide support to territorial and Indigenous governments and organizations' public health response and delivery of health services in a pandemic in remote and isolated communities. This includes assessing the emerging needs and priorities of First Nations and Métis populations and determining what is unique to these areas, what specific planning/response activities are required, and working together to develop guidelines in response to COVID-19.

The Public Health Working Group on Remote and Isolated Communities consists of members from the territorial governments, national and regional Indigenous organizations, Public Health Agency of Canada and other federal departments; and is co-chaired by Yukon Regional Chief Kluane Adamek, Dr. Tom Wong and Dr. André Corriveau.

One key area of interest for this Working Group has been the importance of **healthy living messaging**. A special Task Group on Healthy Living Messaging was struck to advise on clear and culturally relevant messaging to Indigenous communities promoting healthy living practices. This report provides a broad overview of the actions taken to date by the Task Group to assess healthy living messaging on COVID-19 disease from an Indigenous and rural/remote perspective. The recommendations contained in this document are a starting point for discussions at the local and regional level but not a replacement for these localized conversations.

Background

Since the announcement of the COVID-19 disease pandemic in March 2020, Canadians have experienced a significant amount of stressful change in almost every facet of their lives. This is having an impact on all aspects of individual and community health within the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual domains.

The Public Health Working Group on Remote and Isolated Communities identified several ways in which individuals and communities could mobilize to promote health and minimize the risk of contracting, or becoming very ill, from COVID-19. Areas for actions include:

- Mental wellness, stress management and coping during COVID-19;
- Food security and healthy eating;
- Diabetes and other chronic diseases;
- Physical activities;
- Safe hygiene practices;
- Physical distancing;
- Cultural and On The Land activities; and,

- Reduced smoking and vaping.

The Working Group established a dedicated Task Group made up of representatives from federal and territorial government and Indigenous organizations to develop and share culturally relevant public health healthy living messaging to support northern Indigenous communities to protect themselves by reducing the spread of COVID-19 among the broader community, promote community and family wellness, and build resiliency and empowerment.

Task Group Objectives

The Task Group's mandate includes the following objectives:

- Provide real-time updates on healthy public health promotion and disease prevention communications needs in Indigenous northern communities.
- Identify needs, gaps and possible solutions in addressing health promotion and disease prevention by scanning previous materials developed on healthy living practices and best practices.
- Create and/or share culturally appropriate documents, information, fact sheets and messages to assist communities to manage mental wellness and make healthy choices to reduce the risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19.
- Make recommendations to the Public Health Working Group on Remote and Isolated Communities based on the analysis of an environmental scan of existing communication materials on healthy living.

Environmental Scan of Existing Resources

To gain an understanding of the scope of communications material that has been produced to inform the population of ways to reduce the risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19, and measures to cope and make healthy choices during the pandemic; the Task Group conducted an environmental scan.

To complete the scan, a web search for relevant content using search terms: COVID-19 and Indigenous and/or prevention, smoking, substance use, harm reduction, physical activity, physical distancing, social distancing, mental wellness, mental health, nutrition, culture, First Nations, Inuit, Métis, healthy living, healthy habits.

A search of key partner websites was also conducted: Indigenous Services Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada, World Health Organization, US Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention, National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health, Council of Yukon First Nations, Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, NWT Métis Nation, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., Government of Nunavut, Government of Northwest Territories, Government of Yukon, Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Métis National Council and British Columbia's First Nations Health Authority.

Content was also sought from the Task Group and Public Health Working Group on Remote and Isolated members.

The resources were categorized and sorted based on the subject matter; if the content was Indigenous specific; whether it was from a Canadian source; and, if it was developed to communicate to a specific target population.

Categorization:

- Title
- Source
- Web Link
- Subject Matter: Mental Wellness, stress and resiliency; Substance Use; Physical Distancing; Nutrition; Exercise; Disease Prevention; Smoking; Family Violence; and Safety.
- Target Population: Youth; Families; Elders; General; Leadership; and Other
- Indigenous-specific: No; Pan-Indigenous; First Nations-specific; Inuit-specific; or Métis-specific.
- Based in Canada: Yes or No.
- COVID-19 –specific: Yes or No

The environmental scan included 95 entries; two of which contained multiple links and resources on healthy living and mental wellness. Upon review of the environmental scan results, the Task Group identified key gaps when considering healthy messaging

communication to Indigenous individuals and communities, particularly those residing in remote and isolated northern Indigenous communities.

Findings

Based on the environmental scan, it was agreed that while a great deal of COVID-19 resources have been created for Canadians over the past few months, many are providing generic information on the disease and public health prevention, testing and coping measures.

The group agreed that this pan-Canadian approach to information-sharing does not meet the needs of northern and remote Indigenous communities and their efforts to limit the pandemic's impact. The following is a list of the gaps:

- 1) The information is often technical and text heavy. Wordy documents are not user-friendly, and have less value if they are not easily processed by the reader and do not offer advice on how to access help within the appropriate region. When sharing information on COVID-19. It is important that the key messages are clear, concise, maintain the reader's attention and meet their concerns.
- 2) There is a lack of visual, audio and audio-visual resources, limiting accessibility to the resources and important information being shared during the pandemic. In addition to the audio-visual content such as infographics, images, videos and radio announcements being more engaging, it expands the reach to those that have limited online access, those whose first language is not English, and those that have limited reading skills.
- 3) In many examples, resources were not specifically developed with a target audience in mind, creating very generic messaging that in most instances were not relevant to Indigenous communities. The group suggested that without targeted and specific audiences in mind, such as Indigenous youth or women, messaging can be dismissed by communities and key public health warnings may be ignored.
- 4) The group acknowledged the need to promote healthy living choices such as not smoking or vaping, and not drinking excessively particularly when trying to prevent the spread of COVID-19. However, the group felt that it is equally important to balance messages with an understanding that people will turn to these coping mechanisms and they may be amplified during stressful times. In order to ensure that the healthy living messaging is accepted, it would be more beneficial if messaging focuses on a harm reduction, strengths-based approach rather than a firm "Quit Smoking/Drinking" campaign.
- 5) Another gap identified by the group was the fact that the majority of the messaging attempted to cover all Indigenous groups across Canada, rather than

focusing on distinctions-based (i.e. First Nations, Inuit and Métis) populations. First Nations, Inuit and Métis people require messaging that is culturally appropriate and accessible and specific to the community.

- 6) Related to the previous point, it is critical that messaging reflects the cultural practices, landscape and Indigenous knowledge of the community for whom it being developed. Healthy living messaging is more easily ignored when it is not recognizable to a community. Messaging grounded in cultural and community knowledge will be more accessible and accepted.

The Task Group is interested in ways to re-purpose information so that it can resonate more with people in remote and isolated northern Indigenous communities. There is an opportunity to be more innovative, engaging and collaborate with Indigenous organizations and communities to ensure that important public health resources and tools are relevant.

Core Principles

Pursuant to analyzing the available literature, the Task Group discussed the findings and what elements distinguished particularly impressive materials from the rest. Seven core principles were identified as essential for effective communication and messaging.

The seven core principles consist of:

1. Accessibility
2. Context Matters
3. Distinctions-Based
4. Clear and Concise Messaging
5. Taking a Strength-Based Approach
6. Grounding Messaging in Cultural Identity and Cultural Knowledge
7. Evidence Based / Wise Practices

These core principles formed the basis of the recommendations brought forward to the Public Health Working Group on Remote and Isolated Communities.

Recommendations

Accessibility

It is recommended that healthy living messaging is conveyed in an accessible manner. To ensure that the messaging, resources and tools have the broadest reach it is critical that they be conveyed in an accessible manner. This includes considerations for people with low literacy or visual impairments (i.e. descriptive voices) or those whose first language is not English or French. Information conveyed in a variety of multimedia formats (videos, radio, infographics, newspapers, inclusion of closed captioning and multi- Indigenous languages) provides options for people to receive the information in the manner that works best for them. We also know that people need to hear a message several times, and ideally in different ways, for it to be committed to memory. So a varied approach is recommended.

Examples: Image 1¹

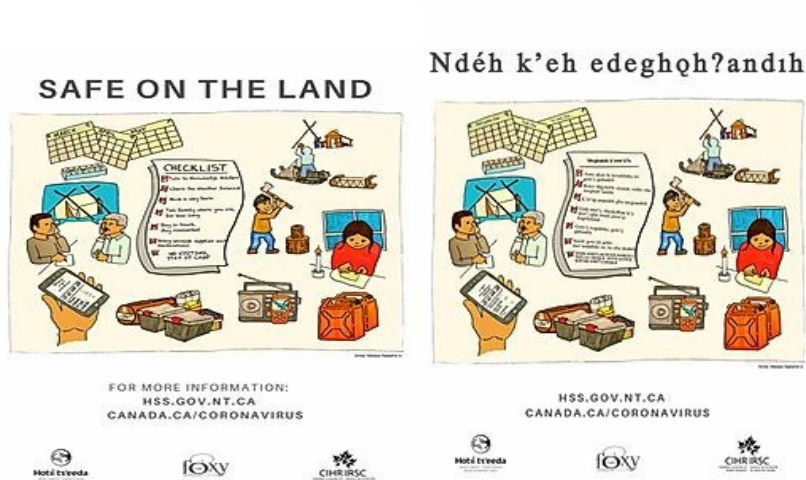
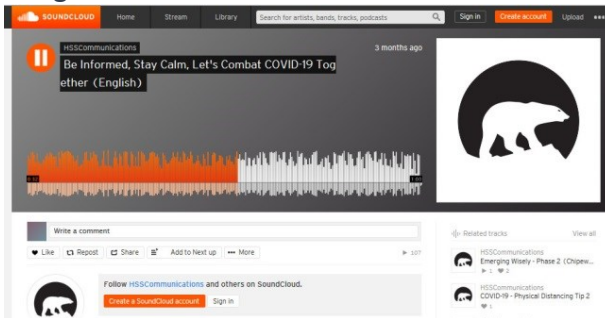


Image 2²



¹ Hoti ts'eeda and Government of Northwest Territories. Poster: Safe on the Land.

<https://www.covidresourcesnwt.info/posters-safe-on-the-land>

² Government of Northwest Territories. Be Informed, Stay Calm, Let's Combat COVID-19 Together (audio).

<https://soundcloud.com/hsscommunications/be-informed-stay-calm-lets-combat-covid-19-together-english>

Context Matters

It is recommended that healthy living messaging be framed within a context that resonates and meets the unique circumstances of the target audience. Effective healthy living messaging is not generic. Rather, for example, it is age-specific (i.e. designed for children, youth, adults, or elders) or population-specific – focused on particular sub-groups within an age demographic (i.e. single parents; people experiencing homelessness). This specificity is valuable as it allows the resource to point people in the direction of the appropriate support or information for their context. When addressing youth, it is of particular importance that they see the message as relevant and that they feel empowered, as opposed to having it come across as authoritative. Some mechanisms that may prove to be effective are the use of social influencers (i.e. Instagram Influencers or You-Tubers), music, arts and sports.

Example: Image 3³

The image shows a booklet titled "A Special Book From Us To You" designed for caregivers. The booklet is divided into three main sections:

- Header:** Features logos for "Child Services" and "Foster Family Coalition of the NWT".
- Message to Caregivers:** A text block explaining the resource's purpose: "This resource is intended to help children (aged 4-11) learn about and understand the current COVID-19 pandemic. This booklet will provide information on what is COVID-19, how to keep safe and prevent infection, how to stay connected with friends and family when in-person visits are not possible, and some strategies to cope with stressful emotions. We know this is a stressful time for everyone, and we hope that this resource will help you and the children in your care. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us or to others if you have questions or concerns."
- Form:** A section titled "This Book is For:" with a blank line, and "From your Social Worker:" with a blank line.
- Footer:** A small text box stating: "A short story and activity book made especially for you by NTHSSA's Child and Family Services, Tlicho's HSSA and Hay River's HSSA with help from your Social Worker."

To the right of the booklet is a photograph of a child and a caregiver sitting on a snowy slope, looking at a book. Below the photo is a short story snippet:

**Hi there,
It's me, your social worker!**
Since I am not able to visit with you, I thought I would share a story with you and your caregiver. I can't wait to hear all about what you've been doing these past weeks! Everything is starting to melt and Spring is finally here! But it sure feels different than last Spring.

5

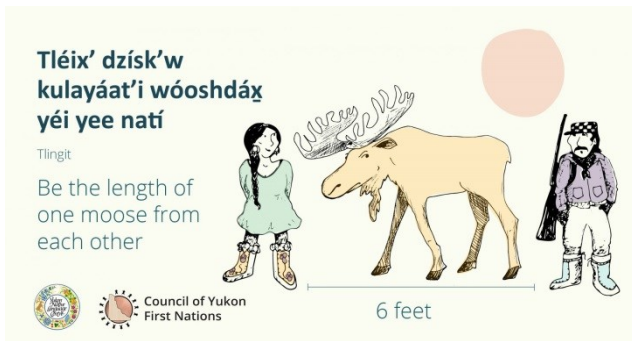
Distinctions-Based

It is recommended that healthy living messaging be developed with a distinctions-based lens that acknowledges the different contexts for First Nations, Inuit and Métis, including diversity within these groups.

Similar to context, but more specific to Indigenous experiences, the Task Group agreed that content that was distinctly focused on either First Nations, Inuit or Métis populations was preferable to content that was geared towards Indigenous peoples as a whole, otherwise known as pan-Indigenous. In addition, even within these groups, there exists tremendous diversity and regional variation. When items are not developed by Indigenous language speakers, care must be taken to ensure that the format, approach and wording are all reviewed with an Indigenous lens so that materials are interpreted and translated correctly so the dialect and associated nuances in the publication's message are not lost.

³ Foster Family Coalition of the NWT and Government of Northwest Territories (2020). A Special Book from Me to You: A short story and activity book made especially for you by NTHSSA's Child and Family Services, Tlicho's HSSA and Hay River's HSSA with help from your Social Worker.

Examples: Image 4⁴ & 5⁵



Clear and Concise Messaging

To be more effective, it is recommended that the healthy living messaging use clear, concise and simple language.

The most impactful resources are clear and concise, and focus on one message at a time. This is particularly critical when there are multiple languages at play. Messaging with densely packed content can be confusing or overwhelming for target audiences and could potentially have a de-motivating effect on the target audience; this was seen in the much of the healthy living messaging reviewed by the Task Group.

Example: Image 6⁶



Strength-Based Approach

To invest in the inherent strengths of communities, it is recommended that healthy living messaging start from a strength-based approach.

⁴ Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (2020). COVID-19 Infographic: Provide for Elders by dropping off food at the door. <https://www.itk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/5-e1585245093849.jpg>

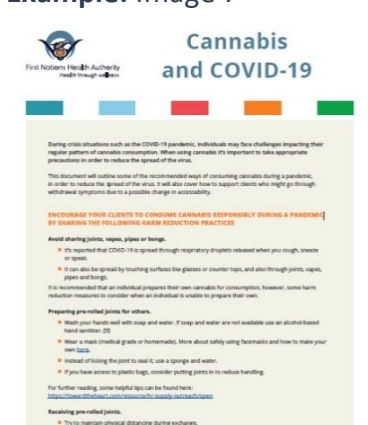
⁵ Council of Yukon First Nations (2020). CYFN Posters in Yukon First Nation Languages: Stay 6 feet apart – Tlingit. https://cyfn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/6-feet_final.jpg

⁶ Dehcho First Nation (2020). Community COVID-19 Support. <https://dehcho.org/community/covid-19-support/>

In all health communications, it is widely considered wise practice to take a strength-based approach when promoting health behaviour change. This is particularly important in an Indigenous context where we seek to counter a legacy of colonization that was centered on stripping individuals and communities of their sense of independence and agency. Underlying a strength-based approach is the understanding that people (and groups of people i.e. organizations, neighborhoods, and communities) have the knowledge and expertise to identify and address their own concerns. The best resources focus on the strengths of Indigenous peoples and communities (i.e. traditions, land knowledge, the foundational ways that people support each other in community, resiliency), rather than starting with the deficits.

In more general terms, a strength-based approach also acknowledges that people are at different places in life and ‘health’ is defined differently by people, based on their lived experience. Harm reduction messaging often employs strength-based messaging as part of their communications strategy and resources that aimed to ‘meet people where they were at’ were of special interest to the Task Group, as they completed their literature scan.

Example: Image 7⁷



Cultural Identity and Cultural Knowledge

It is recommended that good messaging be grounded in cultural identity, traditional ways and culturally relevant actions.

Indigenous peoples are working hard to revitalize cultural practices that have been negatively impacted by colonialism. Culture is so important for the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples that it is considered a social determinant of Indigenous peoples’ health. In recognition of this, the Task Group supports messaging that is grounded in cultural knowledge and teachings. Not only is this culturally appropriate, but it also builds the cultural identity of Indigenous community members through knowledge

⁷ First Nations Health Authority (2020). Cannabis and COVID-19. <https://www.fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA-Cannabis-and-COVID-19.pdf>

sharing while simultaneously documenting these important teachings for future generations.

This is an opportunity for communities to come together and learn from each other, as well as to share knowledge and customs with the wider population. Innovative resources have been created by individuals and communities with a cultural teaching emphasis alongside secondary messaging on healthy living during the pandemic. Developing these resources as governments in close partnership with Indigenous communities and respected knowledge holders is extremely important. From a systemic perspective, increased Indigenous representation within government can also facilitate imbedding cultural knowledge into the development of resources that meaningfully reflect the diversity and wealth of Indigenous traditional knowledge on health and wellness.

A good example of Indigenous communities working with a territorial government is, in April 2020, when the community of Mackenzie Delta, Northwest Territories moved their annual traditional Peel River Jamboree online in order to respect the territory's public health directive on physical distancing (*Image 7*)⁸.

Image 7



Wise Practices

It is recommended that wise practices, alongside evidence-based and practice-based evidence, guide the information in resources and messaging.

As a final principle, and in alignment with those foregoing, are wise practices. Identified as an alternative to “best practices”, wise practices acknowledge that pathways to achieving desirable outcomes are contextual and inclusive of diverse knowledge systems. From an Indigenous perspective, wise practices are informed by Indigenous ways of knowing, principles, and solutions. Best practices, in contrast, have been

⁸ Morritt-Jacobs, Charlotte (2020). “Pandemic won’t stop Mackenzie Delta’s love for jamboree”. APTN National News. <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/pandemic-wont-stop-mackenzie-deltas-love-for-jamboree/>

critiqued for its universal and de-contextual approach. In other words, best practices assumes a one-size fits all approach without taking into account the unique circumstances and histories of communities. Given the tremendous cultural diversity within Indigenous communities across Canada, it is important to note that wise practices recognize the wisdom in each Indigenous community and in the community's own stories of achieving success⁹.

Considerations Moving Forward

When developing future communications material, whether it is messages, posters, resources and tools, not only should the core principles be applied, other potential considerations should be taken into account.

As we have heard, it is anticipated that a second wave of the pandemic will affect Canadians, including Indigenous remote and isolated northern communities. Should the second wave of the virus peak during the fall months, it will likely coincide with the usual influenza season. Therefore, most likely the two awareness campaigns will be taken place simultaneously; which amplifies the need for new fresh, clear, meaningful and targeted messaging and supporting tools and resources.

Over the summer and leading into the second wave of the pandemic, there may be evidence of confinement and restriction fatigue from the population, thereby increasing the risk of public health measures, guidelines and precautions being dismissed. It is important that public health messaging emphasize that it is critical to maintain healthy habits while continuing to take the necessary measures to prevent contracting and spreading the virus. Particularly, in First Nations, Inuit and Métis remote and isolated northern communities, it remains essential even when there are no active cases as long as the risk of the COVID-19 continues. The potential human cost of an outbreak in Indigenous remote and isolated communities, due to the social and economic inequities, is significantly higher than within non-Indigenous communities.

The social determinants of health must be considered when developing future recommendations and public health measures for Indigenous communities, addressing their unique context, for example overcrowded house, access to healthy and safe food, personal and family safety, etc....

- There may also be a need for increased communications and resources focusing on the return to school and the possibility that children and youth may be required to return home should the territorial governments decide to shut down the schools again. In which case, communities and families would benefit from

⁹ Wesley-Equimaux, Cynthia and Calliou, Brian (2010). Best Practices in Aboriginal Community Development: A Literature Review and Wise Practices Approach. <http://communities4families.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Aboriginal-Community-Development.pdf>

enhanced mental wellness tools and resources and clear direction on how to access educational supports and services.

The fore mentioned considerations are in addition to improving existing communications.

Conclusion

For effective and engaging messaging, tools and resources it is recommended that all the seven identified core principles be applied:

1. Accessibility
2. Context Matters
3. Distinctions-Based
4. Clear and Concise Messaging
5. Taking a Strength-Based Approach
6. Grounding Messaging in Cultural Identity and Cultural Knowledge
7. Evidence Based / Wise Practices

When supporting First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, public health healthy living messages should be distinction-based.

Upon review of over 94 resources, a limited number met the recommended core principles for good public health healthy living messaging, and of those, only a few were distinctions-based, and even fewer specific to remote and isolated northern geographical locations. Northern remote and isolated First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities live very unique experiences and face their own specific set of challenges that need to be taken into consideration. An effective approach is to collaborate and engage with First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities and organizations to ensure that the information being relayed is relevant and culturally appropriate, while empowering communities to take action and protect their people.

Annex A: Task Group on Healthy Living Messaging – Terms of Reference

Mandate

Established as a short-term measure, the Task Group on Healthy Living Messaging will serve as a platform to share guidance documents and tools and develop recommendations to the Public Health Working Group on Remote and Isolated Communities to enhance public health responses by providing clear and culturally relevant messaging to communities promoting healthy living practices.

Scope

The Task Group will develop and share culturally relevant public health healthy living messaging to support northern Indigenous communities to protect themselves by reducing the spread of COVID-19 among the broader community, promote community and family wellness, and build resiliency and empowerment.

- Discussions, issues and solutions will be examined through an Indigenous lens to ensure that the unique context is considered.
- All proposed solutions will be considerate of the unique needs of northern and remote communities with the ability to be adapted to meet the needs of a particular jurisdiction
- Once proposals are brought forth to the Public Health Working Group on Remote and Isolated Communities, each member may use or adapt the recommendations to apply within their jurisdiction as there is no source of funding affiliated with the Public Health Working Group on Remote and Isolated Communities.
 - Should any jurisdiction move forward with concrete action based on the recommendations from the Task Group on Healthy Living Messaging, the jurisdiction will be responsible for providing funding.

Objectives

- Provide real-time updates on healthy promotion communications needs in Indigenous northern communities.
- Identify needs, gaps and possible solutions in addressing health promotion by scanning previous materials developed on healthy living practices and best practices.
- Create and/or share culturally appropriate documents, information, fact sheets and messages to assist communities to manage mental wellness and make healthy choices to reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19, and to recognize and address lifestyle factors that could increase the risk of more severe illness among those who contract COVID-19.

- Make recommendations to the Public Health Working Group on Remote and Isolated Communities on the most appropriate public health healthy living messaging to make available or disseminate to communities.

Discussions, issues and solutions will be examined through a northern Indigenous lens to ensure that the unique context is considered. Topics of discussion will be identified by the Task Group members, and may include:

- Mental wellness, stress management and coping during COVID-19;
- Food security and healthy eating;
- Diabetes and other chronic diseases
- Physical activity
- Safe hygiene practices;
- Physical Distancing;
- Cultural and On The Land activities; and
- Reduced smoking and vaping.

Accountability and Reporting

- The Task Group on Healthy Living Messaging will report back to the Public Health Working Group on Remote and Isolated Communities.
- Members of the Task Group on Healthy Living Messaging will act as liaisons to the health care sector within their respective jurisdictions and provide jurisdictional views to the Task Group on Healthy Living Messaging to ensure that the full continuum of the health sector is considered when developing and sharing healthy living messaging to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- Individual members of the Task Group on Healthy Living Messaging will remain primarily accountable to their respective organizations, and will continue to represent those organizations

Membership

- Alana Kronstal, Manager, Social Marketing, Government of Northwest Territories
- Karen Blondin Hall, Senior Advisor, Indigenous Health and Community Wellness, Government of Northwest Territories
- Darlene Hackett, Public Health, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
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- Andrejka Lokar, Healthy Living, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Indigenous Services Canada

- Louis Dumulon, Regional Executive, Northern Region, Indigenous Services Canada
- Alisar Ibrahim, Senior Policy Analyst, Northern Region, Indigenous Services Canada

Chair

The meetings will be co-chaired Alana Kronstal, Manager, Social Marketing, Government of Northwest Territories. Secretariat support will be provided by Indigenous Services Canada, Northern Region.

Meetings

- Regular meetings will be held on a weekly basis via teleconference.
- Additional teleconferences will be scheduled on an ad-hoc basis.

Decision Making

- Consensus: To the extent possible, decisions shall be made by consensus where consensus is defined as general agreement, verbally or by poll.
- Majority and minority reports: Majority opinion will be taken as the decision and/or recommendation to the Public Health Working Group on Remote and Isolated Communities. Minority dissenting opinions will be noted and communicated to the Public Health Working Group on Remote and Isolated Communities.
- Approval to use documents created by the Task Group on Healthy Living Messaging rests with the Public Health Working Group on Remote and Isolated Communities.

Activation and Deactivation

At the discretion of the Public Health Working Group on Remote and Isolated Communities, the Task Group on Healthy Living Messaging will be activated and deactivated as needed.

Annex B: Core Principle for Good Messaging Quick Reference

Healthy Living Messaging in First Nations, Inuit and Métis Remote and Isolated Northern Communities: Core Principles and Criteria

The Task Group on Healthy Living Messaging, made up of representatives from federal and territorial government and Indigenous organizations, was established to support, build resiliency and empower northern Indigenous communities through developing and sharing culturally relevant healthy living messaging. Upon reviewing a number of resources relating to Indigenous peoples, COVID-19, and a number of determinants of health, the group determined that in order for healthy living messaging to be most effective, it is recommended it contain each of **seven core principles**.

Accessibility

In order for messaging to have a broad reach, it needs to be conveyed in an accessible manner. This means special considerations or those with low literacy, visual impairments, or a different first language. Information should be conveyed through different media outlets and the inclusion of closed-captioning in Indigenous languages should be considered.

Strength-Based Approach

The most effective messaging and best resources focus on the strengths of Indigenous peoples and communities (i.e. traditions, and knowledge, resiliency etc.). A strength-based approach also acknowledges that people are at different places in life and may define 'health' differently, based on their lived experience.

Context Matters

Healthy living messaging is not generic – it should be population and demographic-specific – specificity is essential for messaging to have the greatest effect.

Cultural Identity and Cultural Knowledge

Culture is important for the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples. Messaging should be grounded in cultural knowledge and teachings, and should build on the cultural identity of Indigenous community members, while simultaneously documenting these important teachings for future generations.

Distinctions-Based

Messaging should acknowledge the different contexts or First Nations, Inuit and Métis and the diversity within these groups. A pan-Indigenous approach is not always effective.

Wise Practices

In contrast to 'best practices', from an Indigenous perspective, wise practices are informed by Indigenous ways of knowing, principles and solutions. Rather than assuming a one-size fits all approach, wise practices take into consideration the unique circumstances and histories of different communities.

Clear and Concise Messaging

The most effective messaging uses clear, concise and simple language, and focuses on one message at a time.