**RECOMMENDED DEFINITION FOR**

**REMOTE AND ISOLATED COMMUNITIES**

Members of the Public Health Working Group on Remote and Isolated Communities recommend using the definition referenced by the **Remote and Isolated Task Group of the Public Health Network H1N1 Task Force** in 2009 with additional considerations being given to unique circumstances related to additional risk factors, including social isolation and social determinants of health, which impact the health outcomes of Indigenous populations. Consequently, some communities which fall outside the geographic understanding of remote and isolated should still be considered within the scope of this definition.

The definition below also reflects the wishes of Inuit Communities to be defined as **Inuit Nunangat,** not remote and isolated communities, to respect the unique language and culture of Inuit regions.

**RECOMMENDED DEFINITIONS FOR REMOTE AND ISOLATED COMMUNITIES**

**For First Nation and Métis Communities:**

* **Remote** describes a geographical area where a community is located over 350 km from the nearest service centre1 having year-round access by land and/or water routes normally used in all weather conditions2.
* **Isolated** means a geographical area that has scheduled flights and good telephone service, but is without year-round access by land and/or water normally used in all weather conditions2.
* **Remote-Isolated** means a geographic area that has neither scheduled flights nor year-round access by land and/or water routes normally that can be used in all weather conditions2, irrespective of the level of telephone and radio service available.

1Within the health context, service centre refers to physician and primary care services, hospital and pre-hospital care, and other health services required to address the health needs of the community.

2 Taking into account weather conditions throughout the year, including its impact on the accessibility to reliable communication (cell, radio and satellite phones) and modes of transportation (road, water taxi, boat, ferry, seaplane or plane), and routes normally used to go in and out of the community.

**For Inuit Communities:**

* **Inuit Nunangat:** Inuit Communities to be referred to as Inuit Nunangat**,** not remote and isolated communities to respect the unique language and culture of Inuit regions, as well as the common challenges in social determinants of health, access to care, and infrastructure found across all Inuit communities.

**For Indigenous Populations:**

* **Social Isolation**: Social isolation is a situation in which an individual has infrequent and/or poor-quality contact with other people. Typically, social isolation is more prevalent among Indigenous elders and others living in urban settings due to the lack of traditional Indigenous support systems based on the values of individual wellness, shared responsibility, shared care, and kinship connections. In addition to geographical barriers, social isolation should be considered within the scope of this definition as it is a key determinant of health.
* **Key Risk Considerations for Social Isolation:**
  + **Health:** Physical or mental health challenges, including mobility issues; being a survivor of abuse, including neglect and financial abuse
  + **Social and cultural:**Lack of friends or family; lack of access to transportation; loss of independence; lack of communication access (e.g., telephone/cell phone); and discrimination
  + **Economic:**Inability to afford essentials (healthy foods, medication) and poverty
  + **Additional risk factors:**Racism; past institutional experience; Indian Residential School trauma; living in overcrowded housing; insufficient or remote family supports; cultural differences; language differences; political/jurisdictional isolation; lack of access to services; lack of culturally appropriate activities and/or ability to access activities

**Other Considerations when Prioritizing the COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution**

* **Social Determinants of Health:**

Indigenous peoples, both on-reserve, in remote and isolated communities, and in urban settings, experience a high burden of illness due to social, environmental, and economic factors, rooted in the history of colonization. Social determinants of health, such as community infrastructure, access to drinking water, food insecurity, poverty, and overcrowding place Indigenous populations at higher risk for communicable disease outbreaks, including elevated risks for infection and adverse health impacts.