

KEY MESSAGES: Mental health and substance use impacts of COVID-19

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND COMMUNITIES



COVID-19 HAS EXACERBATED EXISTING INEQUITIES IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The health of Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Inuit, Métis and Urban Indigenous) has been significantly affected by colonization and its on-going impacts, including systemic and intersecting social inequities. COVID-19 has exacerbated these inequities and exposed critical gaps in services including equitable access to culturally safe and distinctions-based mental health and substance use services.



VIRTUAL GATHERINGS MAY HELP RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF SOME INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, BUT ARE NOT A REPLACEMENT FOR FACE-TO-FACE CEREMONIES

Many Indigenous communities have responded to COVID-19 by adapting traditional healing ceremonies and Western therapeutic practices to a virtual context. While this has been successful for some, it has posed challenges for others.

Participants may not have access to technology or the internet, or possess the technological literacy required to participate. In addition, virtual mental health services may not be satisfying for some Indigenous participants. It is therefore important to develop ways to deliver in-person Indigenous-led services and ceremonies safely.



THE PANDEMIC IS NEGATIVELY AFFECTING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN IN RURAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES

Indigenous children are disproportionately impacted by emotional and mental health challenges compared to their non-Indigenous peers. Indigenous children experience unique inequities, are heavily impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, and often lack access to health supports.

Stigma around mental health can be a barrier to accepting support among Indigenous children. Positive messaging resources that promote mental wellness among children and youth may promote mental health and prevent suicide. These educational resources must be culturally safe, strengths-based, grounded in traditional Indigenous knowledges, community-oriented, realistic, and accessible.

Learn more at <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/52001.html>