Important Not**i**ceon COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout

Dear Community Members,

We are excited to share with you that the first doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine in the Vancouver Island Region are coming, and that our community will be one of the first to receive the vaccine. We will use the same approach to the COVID-19 vaccine as we do for our Flu Immunization Clinics, and will set up a clinic in the community.

Below, we break down some key things you need to know about COVID-19 vaccines and the impact this early availability will have for our communities.

* Health Canada has approved two equally effective vaccines for use in Canada in the fight against COVID-19 – the Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine and the Moderna vaccine. The Pfizer vaccine requires ultra-cold storage and is therefore not available for use in rural and remote First Nations. The Moderna vaccine does not require the same ultra-cold storage and can be transported into rural and remote First Nations communities fairly easily.
* FNHA Medical Officers have reviewed the information on Pfizer and Moderna vaccines and are strongly recommending that all BC First Nations opt to get the vaccine when they are offered the opportunity.
* Vaccines are only approved if the evidence shows they are safe and effective. More than 30,000 people received the Moderna vaccine as part of clinical trials to prove their safety and effectiveness. Only minor side effects were observed, similar to ones you might get from the flu shot.
* The Moderna vaccine will be available to First Nation members or residents that are 18 years of age or older. By taking a “whole community” approach we are hoping to protect everyone in the community from COVID-19 and build “community immunity”. Vaccines protect not just the people that get the vaccine but also the people around them.
* The Moderna vaccine is not recommended for pregnant women or children, or those who are immune compromised. If you have a question about whether the vaccine is safe for you, we recommend you consult your health care provider.
* If you have specific concerns or questions about the Moderna vaccine you can call the First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day program at 1-855-344-3800 or explore information online from the BC Centre for Disease Control ([www.bccdc.ca](http://www.bccdc.ca)) and FNHA ([www.fnha.ca/coronavirus](http://www.fnha.ca/coronavirus)).
* The Moderna vaccine requires 2 doses, given one month apart.
* Like the flu shot, the decision to receive a COVID-19 vaccine is a personal choice. FNHA respect**s** the rights of First Nations members and residents to make their own decision on COVID-19 vaccination.

We are honored to be part of the first round of First Nations communities in BC to receive the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine. While receiving the vaccine in our community is imminent, this does not mean we can let our guard down. Until there is sufficient population immunity, all community members and residents need to continue to do their part in minimizing the spread of COVID-19 by washing your hands, wearing masks, staying home when sick, practicing physical distancing and keeping your bubble small.