



APRIL 2021

COVID-19 Response in Canada



DEAR SUPPORTERS,

It was just over a century ago, during the 1918 influenza pandemic, that the Canadian Red Cross embarked on its first peacetime public health response. At the time, Canada faced many of the same challenges as we are now during COVID-19: economic disruption, overstretched hospital capacity and isolation within communities. Yet the innovations of today have made this experience much different. Video calls have helped keep people connected, personal protective equipment has ensured essential services can continue and vaccines developed in less than a year have given us light at the end of the tunnel.

Of course, this year has not been without significant hardship for Canadians. At the Canadian Red Cross, we've felt many of these difficulties too, but the dedication of our people and of you – our partners and our supporters – has kept us strong. Canadians have truly shown us the power of community spirit and what it means to be resilient during this difficult time.

With your unwavering support, we have met this challenge head on across the country, just as we did more than 100 years ago. From day one, we have adjusted and innovated, finding solutions to the problems Canadians faced. We adapted our emergency field hospital in new ways, providing components of it in Canada for the first time. We created a virtual help desk to support Indigenous communities in preparing for the virus. We enhanced our current programs to provide more mental health support and give Canadians the tools and resources they needed to care for themselves and their loved ones. These are only a few examples you will read about in this report.

Together, we have a lot to be proud of. But the story of the past year is not only about what we did to protect Canadians. It is also about the steps we have taken to ensure Canada is better prepared for future emergencies. To this end, and with your commitment, we have worked to strengthen our humanitarian workforce across the country. Going forward, this will be a truly collective effort alongside government, industry and community partners, as well as individual supporters to ensure our country is ready for the challenges that lie ahead.

None of this would be possible without your generous support. I thank you for your trust in the Canadian Red Cross and for your solidarity with people and communities in need.

Sincerely,

Conrad Sauvé
President & CEO

What we have accomplished together

OPERATIONS



17 engagements in support of the Government of Canada



89 engagements in support of provinces



5 deployments of field hospital equipment to 4 provinces in support of local health authorities



400+ Indigenous Communities supported (virtually and in community)

RED CROSS MOBILIZATION



4,000 staff mobilized to support COVID-19 operations as well as ongoing disaster responses



6 million pieces of Personal Protective Equipment dispatched in support of operations



4,850+ additional humanitarian positions surged to support COVID-19 operations, including **3,650 emergency care workers**



86,000+ emergency stock items (cots, blankets, hygiene kits) dispatched to support communities in need

COMMUNITY PARTNERS



70,000+ Personal Protective Equipment kits provided to community organizations



\$61M+ funds distributed to eligible community organizations through federal grant program



1,350+ Community organization projects funded to support front-line assistance for individuals and families in need



\$700K funds distributed to Black Community Organizations in Toronto providing support to marginalized communities

Note: Stats are as of March 31, 2021. They include Canadian Red Cross' COVID-19 operations funded by the Government of Canada, provincial governments and our donors.

Supporting Canadians during isolation and quarantine



Starting in February 2020, Canadians in several outbreak areas internationally were repatriated back to Canada to quarantine in Trenton and Cornwall, Ontario. The Canadian Red Cross was mobilized to provide comfort and care, supporting travellers during a time of uncertainty with health and wellness checks, meals and basic personal items such as medications and mobility aids.

As more Canadian travellers returned home, the Red Cross was later asked to extend comfort and care services to returning Canadian travellers at isolation sites in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Toronto, Montreal, Fredericton, Halifax and St. John's.

In July, isolation support was also provided to migrant farm workers impacted by outbreaks on several farms in southwestern Ontario. Volunteers were mobilized to arrange safe accommodation, provide basic personal needs and comfort, and help migrant workers connect with their families back home during a worrying time.

870
returning Canadian Travelers supported at mass quarantine sites at Trenton and Cornwall

6,200+
returning Canadian travelers supported at 8 isolation sites across the country

1,050
migrant workers in southwestern Ontario supported during isolation after outbreaks on farms

“It’s been a challenge, but one that our teams were really ready to overcome.”

– Dr. Clare Gibbs, Red Cross Lead Public Health Officer



How lessons from abroad helped travellers at home

In March 2020, with the pandemic worsening globally, a second wave of repatriated travellers arrived back in Canada, this time from a cruise ship off the coast of Japan.

Hundreds of Canadians made the very long journey home; many were frightened, overwhelmed and exhausted. As they stepped off the plane, the travellers were warmly welcomed by Dr. Clare Gibbs and the Red Cross team, who had set up their rooms with items to make them feel at home and safe: hygiene kits, snacks, and personal protective equipment.

As lead Red Cross Public Health Officer, Dr. Gibbs worked alongside the health authorities to ensure a smooth and safe operation for the duration of the two-week quarantine period in Cornwall, Ontario.

“It’s been a challenge, but one that our teams were really ready to overcome,” she said, pointing to the resourcefulness that comes with disaster response.

Dr. Gibbs, a family doctor in a rural community in B.C., drew on experiences working internationally, where quick-thinking and adaptation is key.

Building on the success in Cornwall, the Canadian Red Cross was requested by the Government of Canada to replicate this model at a number of isolation sites across Canada, supporting thousands of Canadians as they self-isolated to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Reaching out to the most vulnerable in our communities



The COVID-19 pandemic has posed challenges for all Canadians, regardless of their circumstances.

For those living on their own or without a social network, this has been a particularly difficult time. Thanks to supporters, the Red Cross has been able to expand its wellness checks program across the country to ensure the health and safety of those most at risk.

By phone and in person with proper protective measures, hundreds of Red Cross volunteers have reached out to isolated people in our communities, especially seniors, to provide a listening ear and ensure individuals have access to their basic needs, including food and medications. Trained to identify signs of mental health issues, volunteers have also provided referrals for additional help within the health network, when needed.

14,100+

people, mostly seniors, received regular check-in calls to ensure their health and wellbeing

51,000+

calls made by trained volunteers and staff

8,000+

people received door-to-door wellness checks (Ottawa)

“They were so happy to see us, to talk to us, and to have us listen and comfort them.”

– Adèle, Red Cross friendly visits volunteer



Adèle, there to comfort and support

“It’s heartwarming to see the difference we can make,” says Adèle, a student and Red Cross volunteer in Ottawa.

As the virus spread and Canadians were asked to stay home, it was a chance for Adèle to pass on the Red Cross help that once made a difference in her life. “My uncle was in Haiti during the 2010 earthquake and was lost for two weeks,” she says. “It was the Red Cross that found him.”

Alongside other volunteers, Adèle have been making door-to-door visits to check in on people isolated or new to Canada as part of a program in partnership with the City of Ottawa.

“For some, we were the only people they had spoken to in two or three weeks,” says Adèle.

The check-ins, together with more than 51,000 calls made by volunteers, are part of a dedicated effort

to break the isolation that many people, especially seniors, are feeling.

“Many people were living alone, without family, and the lockdown only made the feeling of loneliness worse,” says Adèle. “They were so happy to see us, to talk to us, and to have us listen and comfort them.”

More than a friendly chat, volunteers like Adèle ensure individuals have access to essential items such as food, clothing and medication, as well as any extra support they needed. Volunteers also take the time to find out how people were really doing, listening carefully for any signs of serious mental health issues.

“On occasions, we’ve been able to do things like connect someone to professional mental health support, or arrange transportation to see a doctor,” says Adèle.

Providing emergency food assistance to households in need



COVID-19 has had far-reaching consequences beyond its effects on physical health. Many individuals and families have also been negatively impacted by the pandemic's social and economic fallout, which in some cases has meant the added struggle to put food on the table.

Over the past year, in partnership with the City of Toronto and other organizations, the Emergency Food Program has been able to reach residents in particularly vulnerable situations, including seniors at greater risk when leaving their homes, individuals in self-isolation or quarantine, and those without a social network to help them get food. Canadian Red Cross volunteers and staff safely deliver food hampers straight to the clients' door at no cost. The program was adapted from our Mobile Food Bank, which has been delivering food parcels for a number of years to families across Toronto who are unable to access grocery stores or traditional food banks.

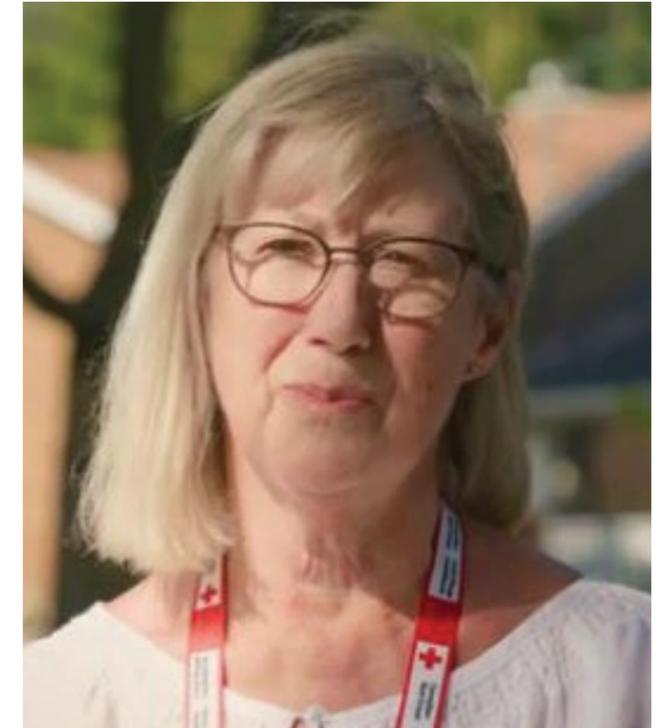
4,000+
households in Toronto supported by
emergency food delivery program

106,560
food hampers provided to those in need

7,880+
volunteer hours served to support those in
need through the food program

“The program brings us into their world a bit more, and makes you see how we all need to help each other out.”

– **Rena Tallis**, Emergency Food Program volunteer



What your support meant during the most difficult of times

For those already facing personal hardships during the pandemic, wondering where your next meal will come from is yet another challenge.

This was the case for Janine* when she reached out to the Red Cross Emergency Food Program. The young, single, and pregnant mother was already struggling when she found out she had tested positive for COVID-19.

Fortunately, the Emergency Food Program provides so much more than just a meal.

Janine's call was taken by a trained volunteer who recognized her difficult situation and was able to provide much-needed emotional support. The volunteer then registered Janine for food deliveries and scheduled a check-in for later that day to ensure the young mother was doing alright and to see what other resources could be of assistance.

The volunteer reached out to Jessie's Centre, which agreed to provide counselling, parenting groups, health services and housing support. Janine was then connected with Toronto Cares so she could receive essential supplies for her toddler.

Janine was so grateful, not only for the emergency food deliveries but the additional support over the long-term.

Like many in the program, Janine found a sense of relief in not having to worry about food but also in the connection she received through our delivery team. During the difficult weeks, the Red Cross deliveries were an essential point of human contact, a chance to have a nice conversation with someone who cares.

**Name changed to protect privacy.*

Leveraging our emergency field hospital across the country

VANCOUVER, BC

The Canadian Red Cross, at the request of *Vancouver Coastal Health*, provided components of the emergency field hospital. A seven-person technical team was also provided to support the site.



CHISASIBI, QC

At the request of the Cree Nation of Chisasibi in Northern Quebec, the Canadian Red Cross worked with the community to provide a safe care site for displaced Elders.



MONTREAL, QC

In January 2021, at the request of the Government of Quebec, the Canadian Red Cross mobilized to set up an emergency isolation shelter for people experiencing homelessness who had tested positive for COVID-19. With capacity for 150 people, the shelter has provided a safe space to isolate, helping to limit the spread of the virus.



EDMONTON, AB

The Canadian Red Cross provided emergency field hospital components to the Government of Alberta in preparation for a pandemic response unit, if needed, on the University of Alberta campus in Edmonton.



TRENTON, ON

In March 2020, the Canadian Red Cross sent components of its field clinic to Canadian Forces Base Trenton to provide basic health services for returning Canadian travellers from the Grand Princess cruise ship who were completing a 14-day quarantine.



LASALLE, QC

The Canadian Red Cross provided emergency field hospital equipment to assist Dorval, Lachine and LaSalle residents served by the Montreal West Island Integrated University Health and Social Services Centres in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

ADAPTING TO CANADA'S NEEDS

For the very first time, the Canadian Red Cross sent equipment and personnel from its emergency field hospitals – normally reserved for international missions – to multiple locations throughout Canada to bolster local health capacity in response to COVID-19.

As part of this support, the Red Cross developed new field hospital configurations to help local health authorities if requested.



SURGE CARE

The Severe Acute Respiratory Infection field hospital can assist local health facilities by providing triage and consultations for up to 100 outpatients per day, and admission and treatment of 50 inpatients. It consists of tented and non-tented versions, with initial stocks of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).



ALTERNATE CARE SITES

Tented sites equipped with cots, blankets, hygiene kits and other personal items can provide a comfortable and safe space to meet various needs within communities. The sites can be set up inside existing infrastructure and are supported by epidemic prevention specialists to ensure proper safety measures.



TESTING AND VACCINATION ASSISTANCE UNITS

Leveraging our global health expertise, new testing and vaccination assistance units were developed to support health authorities upon request. Standing sites can be set up inside of existing infrastructure, while mobile teams can move from place to place to ensure that vulnerable groups are reached – individuals in long-term care homes, shelters, migrant worker camps, remote and Indigenous communities.

Preventing and managing outbreaks



With years of experience on the frontlines of disease outbreaks around the world, the Canadian Red Cross has been called upon to leverage our expertise in Epidemic Prevention and Control throughout the pandemic.

The work began in Quebec after outbreaks hit several long-term care centres. At the request of the provincial government, teams were immediately mobilized to take quick action to assess the environment, make recommendations to stop transmission of the virus, and train personnel and community members in adopting safe practices and using personal protective equipment.

Since then, epidemic prevention and control teams have been mobilized across the country to support various sites, including additional long-term care centres, rehabilitation centres, correctional facilities, and Indigenous communities in an effort to prevent and manage outbreaks.

360

sites (long-term care centres, rehabilitation centres, correctional facilities) and Indigenous communities supported with Epidemic Prevention & Control expertise

350

public health specialists surged for rapid assessments and recommendations

“Canada has been very kind to us and it was time to give back and contribute to the health and wellbeing of our seniors who did so much to build this nation.”

– Dr. Mubariz Tariq, Public Health Specialist



A public health specialist gives back

Dr. Mubariz Tariq has been on the frontline nearly everywhere. The doctor, who came to Canada from Afghanistan five years ago, spent years with the Red Cross internationally, supporting local healthcare staff in country after country, from Pakistan to Malaysia, Yemen and India.

But when the pandemic arrived in Canada, his expertise was needed here at home. In April 2020, only days after his cousin in Afghanistan sadly died from COVID-19, Dr. Tariq joined the Red Cross Epidemic Prevention and Control team.

Over the next months, the public health specialist worked tirelessly as he was sent across the country to fight against the virus, from long-term care homes in Quebec and Ontario to isolated Indigenous communities in northern Manitoba.

Wherever called to help, it was Dr. Tariq’s role to liaise with local teams and community leaders, assess the situation, look at what measures are in place to prevent and control the spread of the virus, and advise on additional steps that could be taken to help minimize its impact. Training local staff on the appropriate use of personal protective equipment is also offered.

“The principles of our work remain the same regardless of whether we’re working in a long-term care home or in a remote community,” says Dr. Tariq. “What changes is our approach so that we communicate and identify solutions that work within the local context.”

Supporting long-term care homes



Since the first cases of COVID-19 were reported in Canada, perhaps none have been more affected than the residents and workers of long-term care homes.

At the request of several provincial governments, the Canadian Red Cross has been mobilized to provide much-needed assistance in the form of surge personnel, training, personal protective equipment and public health guidance.

The operation started in Quebec, where the Canadian Red Cross launched a mass recruitment and training campaign in response to critical shortages in long-term care personnel. Over many months, site managers and teams of Emergency Support Workers have been deployed to work alongside existing staff to help meet the needs of long-term care residents and provide comfort and care services, including assistance with basic daily living activities.

Support has since been extended to long-term care homes in Ontario, Manitoba, New Brunswick and British Columbia.

157

long-term care homes in 5 provinces supported

13,500+

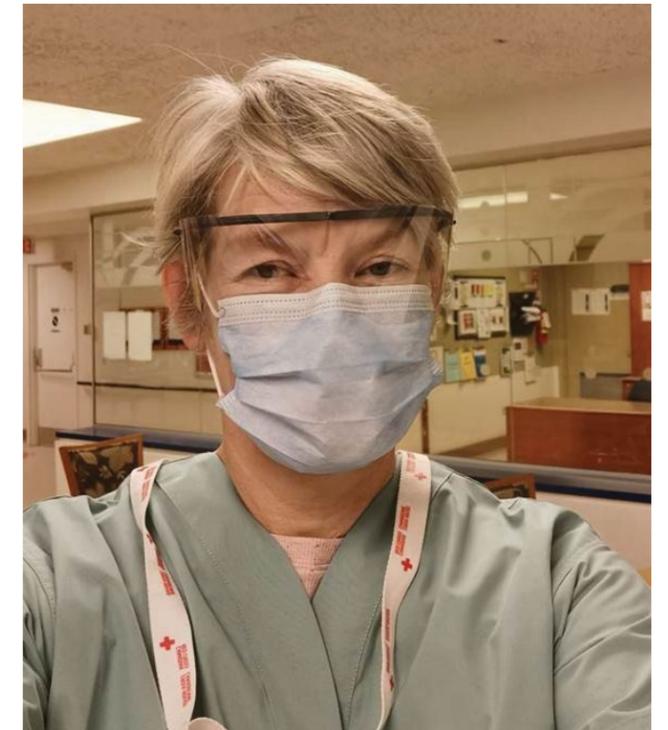
frontline workers trained by the Red Cross in epidemic prevention and control measures through 1,000+ trainings

2,150+

Red Cross emergency care workers recruited and deployed to support long-term care homes

“We helped to make residents feel less lonely and less afraid, just by being there.”

– Liane Greter, Red Cross volunteer



New Brunswick volunteer joins the Red Cross response at a LTC home in Manitoba

In normal times, Liane Greter helps people in her community in New Brunswick as an emergency management volunteer.

But in January, as the virus began to spread in Manitoba, she knew that her help was needed elsewhere.

She joined one of the teams of Red Cross volunteers, mostly from within Manitoba or the neighboring provinces of Ontario and Saskatchewan, to assist several long-term care (LTC) homes with their COVID-19 response.

Before arriving, Liane completed several online training courses from home, then completed two days of in-person training on long-term care, dementia, infection control and using personal protective equipment.

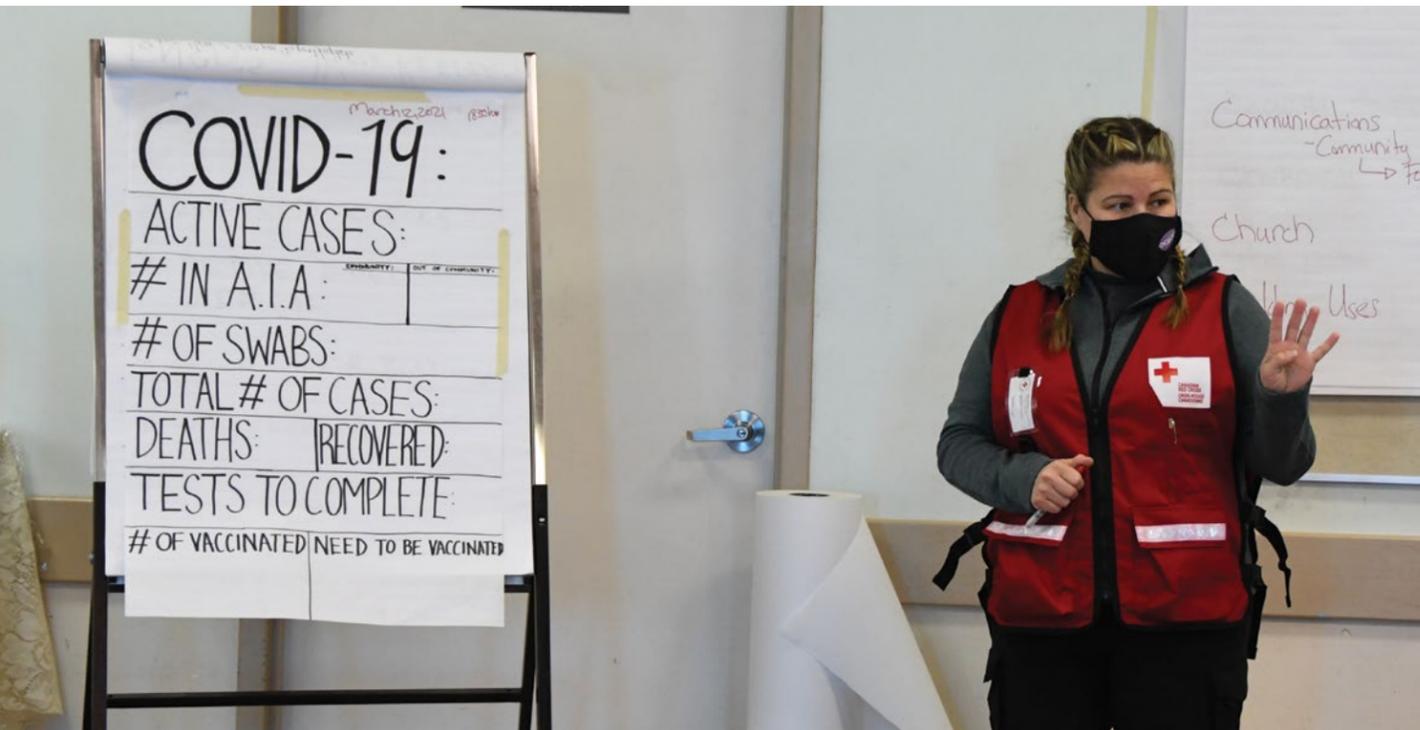
“Imagine being elderly, alone in your room with no visitors for weeks,” says Liane. “The staff work hard but there’s no time for chit-chat because they have to wash, clothe, feed, provide care to residents continuously.”

That’s where Red Cross volunteers stepped in to provide much-needed social support for residents, while enabling staff to focus on other needs of the residents.

“We helped to make residents feel less lonely and less afraid, just by being there. We talk, read, play games, anything that makes them feel more comfortable.”

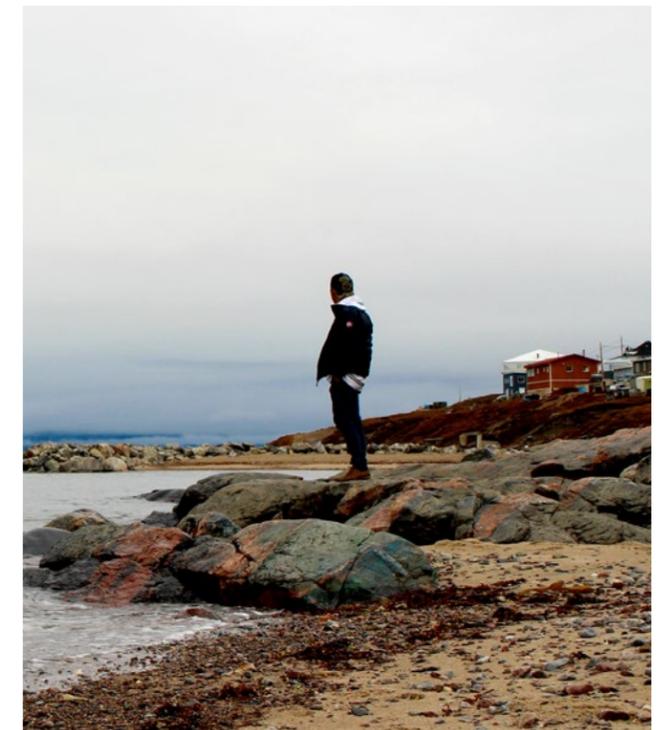
Liane says staff at the LTC home were appreciative of the Red Cross’s help but was quick to add, “it’s us who appreciate them.”

Working alongside Indigenous communities



“Youth are experiencing a lot of stress right now. Having a virtual education session to give them information about self-care, about how to handle stress in their lives is really important.”

– Lisa Evanoff, Red Cross program developer and instructor



Since the beginning of the pandemic, First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities have taken action to prevent and respond to outbreaks of COVID-19 in their communities. However, remote locations, barriers to healthcare, lack of adequate housing and other systemic inequities made this difficult.

Over the past year, the Canadian Red Cross has been engaged with over 400 Indigenous communities across the country to support them in overcoming these challenges. In May 2020, a new Indigenous Help Desk was launched to serve as a hub of health information, guidance, emergency planning, training, and wellness resources. Further support has been provided through emergency stocks of PPE and shelter supplies for isolation needs, as well as public health specialists to support communities facing outbreaks.

580

Indigenous leaders from over **400 communities** supported with health and emergency guidance from our Help Desk

3,600+

resources shared through the Help Desk, including infection prevention and control tips, operational guidelines and mental health and wellbeing support

How virtual inspiration led to real-life application

Among those who have been hit hardest by isolation are youth. They've missed milestones like graduation, have been unable to celebrate birthdays in person and have been disconnected from their friends. For Indigenous youth in Inuvik, Northwest Territories, it's been incredibly hard. Although they live in a remote area, they aren't used to being distant from each other.

The youth in the small community decided to take a course on Psychological First Aid through the Red Cross Help Desk. The Psychological First Aid training is hosted online through Zoom and takes participants through strategies for what to do in situations where they are struggling with mental health. The training also equips people with the tools to identify when others are struggling and provides advice on how to support. The sessions turn individual growth into community healing, as participants are encouraged to look after themselves and each other.

“I'm thinking about more ideas on connecting with people, making sure my family is safe and my friends are okay. I'm just being more thoughtful about everybody's health,” said Paden Gordon-Ruben, one Indigenous student from Inuvik.

Paden and her friend Bonnie Jacobson have felt very supported by the Red Cross instructors, as well as their peers. “They listened to what we had to say. They made us feel comfortable just being ourselves,” Bonnie said. Inspired by the course, Paden has taken up music and is using it as a creative outlet, while Bonnie is working on her college applications and looking forward to the future.

The Indigenous Help Desk has seen an increase in calls about mental health services as stricter physical distancing measures have been implemented over the last few months. Virtual training like the Psychological First Aid course has helped the youth in Inuvik connect and cope together, no matter how remote they are.

New operations



As Canadians continue to do their part to limit the spread of COVID-19, the rollout of vaccines across the country is an important milestone in the continued fight against the virus.

At the request of health authorities and Indigenous leaders, the Red Cross has begun providing clinical and non-clinical support to various vaccination operations across the country. This includes managing vaccination sites, greeting and registering individuals, monitoring waiting and post-vaccination areas, providing clinical after-care, and conducting door-to-door visits to help residents register for vaccination.

Teams have also been mobilized to support the provision of self-administered COVID-19 tests at various land-border locations across Canada, the request of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

2

COVID-19 testing teams mobilized and deployed

30+

vaccination sites supported in 10 vaccination operations across Canada

“This is a key part in the public health response to COVID-19 and I’m looking forward to working with the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services and the different villages over the next three weeks.”

– Jean Ismert, Canadian Red Cross Operations Manager



With Red Cross support, vaccines reach remote communities in Northern Quebec

The start of a mass immunization campaign marks a key turning point in Canada’s response, but the task will not be an easy one. Among the many challenges is bringing vaccines to those living in some of the country’s most remote and isolated regions.

In February 2021, the Canadian Red Cross, at the request of the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS), sent supplies and a team of humanitarian specialists to provide on-site logistics support for the community vaccination campaign. Vaccinations began in the towns of Kangirsuk and Akulivik and will reach a total of 14 northern villages in Nunavik.

In addition to offering logistical and staff support for the campaign coordination, the Canadian Red Cross is supporting the planning and implementation of community mobilization strategies, also in partnership with the NRBHSS, the Tulattavik and Inuulitsivik health centres.

Vast territory, remote locations and frigid conditions all present challenges to the teams, but they are determined to support the local health authorities in providing vaccines to protect the communities.

Thank you

To our individual and corporate supporters, as well as our community and government partners, thank you for your trust and financial support in helping Canadian families and communities through this pandemic.

