



## CONSTANCE LAKE FIRST NATION

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### *MEDIA RELEASE*

January 21, 2021

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **CONSTANCE LAKE FIRST NATION DECLARE 2<sup>ND</sup> COVID-19 STATE OF EMERGENCY**

**Constance Lake, ON:** – Constance Lake First Nation (CLFN) Chief Rick Allen and Council have declared a 2<sup>nd</sup> COVID-19 State of Emergency in response to COVID-19 outbreak in the community which was identified by the Porcupine Health Unit as beginning on January 16, 2021. With some of the positive cases being identified as coming from school-aged children—the elementary schools in the community have since closed moving to homeschool learning. In the 5 days that have passed since first identified, cases have soared from 2 to 11 positive cases as contract tracing began revealing the extent of the spread in the community. A COVID-19 State of Emergency was first issued from March 17 – April 3, 2020.

“We are seeing an exponential spread in our community in a span of less than a week—this is why a second COVID-19 State of Emergency was declared,” said Chief Rick Allen. “For a community that has not had cases for the past 10 months, and with a number of cases in our community affecting children—we are alarmed but we are urging calm. We are calling on federal and provincial governments to come together to provide funding and emergency management supports in order for CLFN to effectively respond to the outbreak,” he added.

The community plans to undergo community-wide COVID-19 testing in the near future and anticipate further identified positive cases. The community says that their inability to mount a response to the COVID-19 outbreak in CLFN is impacted by overcrowded housing, lack of assessment and isolation space, lack of COVID-19 testing kits and personal protective equipment, lack of logistical supports for infected families, amongst other challenges.

CLFN Chief Allen also said, “We are extremely frustrated that non-remote communities such as ours in Ontario, who have similar socio-economic conditions as remote communities and are not prioritized for vaccination despite ours being more susceptible to outbreaks being closer to neighbouring municipalities. We need vaccinations immediately,” he concluded.

On January 20, 2021, MPP Guy Bourgouin (Mushkegowuk-James Bay) wrote to the office of Ontario Premier Ford notifying of the outbreak and reiterating that the Constance Lake First Nation does not have the health care capacity nor the infrastructure to respond and that critical services and resources are required. It included an urgent request for a COVID-19-specific isolation site for residents that have tested positive of COVID-19 and are unable to stay in their homes; the deployment of additional nurses and health care workers to help with quarantined members; access to and delivery of COVID-19 rapid tests; personal protective equipment for health care workers and residents; and the active participation of the local Ontario Provincial Police to aid with the local lockdown measures.



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The community has been in a lock-down position since January 16, 2021. The second COVID-19 State of Emergency will remain in effect until rescinded by CLFN Chief and Council. Community-wide testing will take place after contact tracing has been completed on the 11 identified cases.

— 30 —

Constance Lake First Nation is located in the District of Cochrane, 32 km west of Hearst, Ontario. The community's on-reserve population is 900.

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