



Nooksack Indian Tribe
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Nooksack Indian Tribe Ahead of Many Communities in the COVID-19 Pandemic

To: Nooksack Tribe Community Members

From: Nooksack Pandemic Response Team, Tribal Government & Emergency Management

Subject: Situational Report: Notable Accomplishments During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Date: March 30, 2020

Like much of Whatcom County, the Nooksack Indian Tribe is currently responding to the outbreak of a respiratory disease caused by a novel coronavirus in Washington State. The Nooksack Tribe has been preparing for this response and has developed a Nooksack Pandemic Response Team to keep abreast of the current COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on the Nooksack Indian Tribal Community.

“Nooksack is ahead of many communities in the COVID-19 pandemic preparation,” says Dr. Frank James, Public Health Office for the Tribe and San Juan County. The Nooksack Tribe was noted for its commendable efforts in pandemic preparation, distribution of food and supplies to its members, and being proactive in mental health outreach to existing clients.

The virus that caused COVID-19 is spreading easily in the state of Washington and the Whatcom County. Community spread means that people have been infected with virus in an area, including some who are not sure how or where they became infected.

Nooksack Pandemic Response Team (NPRT) members include Katherine Romero, General Manager; Lona Johnson, Health Director; Frank James, Health Officer; Heidi Davis, Social Services Director; Elizabeth Ames, Chief Financial Officer; Charity Bernard, Chief of Staff.

Nooksack Pandemic Response Team Main Objectives:

1. Prevent the spread of disease in our community
2. Protect the safety of and provide the health and wellness of all community members and staff
3. Provide timely, complete and accurate guidance to Tribal community members on the incident, response, disease, prevention, and when to seek medical care
4. Continuing to provide essential community support services

The Pandemic Response Team has been addressing difficult questions for several weeks, such as: how and when to operate the Tribal government and Nooksack Health Clinic safely; how to assess the realistic capacity of our medical clinic and provide medical assistance for our community; where and how to obtain COVID-19 test kits and other medical supplies; how to coordinate efforts between tribal, county, and state public health efforts; what funds and grants are available to pay for emergency pandemic efforts; assessing what support the Tribal government can provide to members such as housing assistance; how to distribute food and supplies to elders following strict new safety procedures; and how to provide essential services to members during government closure, such as emergency food.

Within a month the Nooksack Tribal government has rapidly mobilized to provide innovative solutions to services such as the delivery of over 300 meals, preparation of 200 of the planned 400 isolation kits, and 150 care packages for elders. Strict home delivery protocols have been implemented including dropping supplies at the porch, wearing gloves, and maintaining a 6-foot distance.

“This is ahead of where everyone else is,” says Dr. Frank James, “I’m incredibly proud of Nooksack. This will make the difference in saving lives.”

Nooksack Tribe’s Notable COVID-19 Response Accomplishments

- Emergency Management prepared an isolation and quarantine plan
- Developed a plan for testing, communication, public health code, mutual aid agreement, data system roll-out
- Implemented employee screening tool for temp checks at clinic, market, administrative offices
- Coordinated with Whatcom County Council and Lummi to discuss availability of testing kits; economic impact and mitigation; and homelessness funding
- On three calls per week with FEMA to relay national information and to coordinate Nooksack as a recipient for emergency medical supplies
- Tribal leaders meet with Governor Inslee regarding COVID-19 issues tribes are facing
- Lona Johnson attended Tribal Leaders conference call with the White House
- Nooksack Tribal Council conference call with Congresswoman Suzan Delbene
- Weekly calls with Tribal Leaders from Nooksack, Lummi, Swinomish, and Upper Skagit
- Nooksack Indian Housing Authority announces no late fees, delinquencies, or evictions during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Prototyping a system for telemedicine option between the Health Clinic and patients
- Nooksack Behavioral Health is providing remote counseling services, reaching out to existing Nooksack clients. Development of telemedicine method for counseling services.
- Built quarantine and isolation care packages for Tribal members
- George Swanaset Jr. has been leading efforts to smoke 3,600 pounds of fish from the cold storage for Tribal distribution
- Prepared 200 of the planned 400 isolation/quarantine bags with food and supplies
- 300+ meals delivered to eligible recipients through a home delivery program with medical supplies
- 150 care packages prepared for Whatcom County Elders were delivered

- Approximately 400 medication kits available for members

Important Dates

Please find all documents on <https://nooksacktribe.org/departments/health/covid-19/>

3/27/20 [Nooksack Tribal Operations During COVID-19](#) The Nooksack Tribe will remain closed until it is determined safe to return to regular operations.

3/24/20 [Tribal Council Approves a Shelter In-Place Order](#) The Nooksack Indian Tribe is mandating that all residents shelter in-place, which will remain in effect until Noon on April 7, 2020. This is to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. This means that all residents residing on Nooksack Tribal land are required to stay in their homes at all times, unless for essential activities.

3/24/20 [Shelter In-Place Order Summary](#)

3/23/20 [A Message from Nooksack Behavioral Health](#) NIT Behavioral Health is open virtually to support you in this time of high anxiety. We will continue to accept new clients.

3/20/20 [Emergency Office Closures Due to COVID-19](#) The Nooksack Tribal Government activates Essential Personnel Workforce to enforce social distancing efforts to help flatten the curve of the virus spread effective 3/16/20.

3/17/20 [Nooksack Housing Authority Public Notice](#) Nooksack Indian Housing Authority announces no late fees, delinquencies, or evictions during COVID-19. Those who wish to continue payments during this time, please use online banking or mail a check or money order to Nooksack Indian Housing Authority, PO Box 157, Deming, WA 98244.

3/17/20 [Notice of Temporary Casino Closure](#)

3/16/20 [Tribal Council Approves a One-Time Emergency General Welfare Assistance](#) Tribal Council approves COVID-19 assistance distribution of \$250 per adult tribal member.

3/16/20 [Limited Clinic Hours](#) Clinic 10:00 am-3:00 pm. Dental Emergency 10:00 pm-3:00 pm (Dental emergencies only).

3/13/20 All NIT youth programs, Head Start classes, and elders' lunch programs are closed. Governor Inslee closes all public schools in Washington.

3/7/20 [Council Declares a Public Health Emergency for COVID-19](#), appointing a Tribal Public Health Officer, and Execution of the Mutual Aid Agreement for Tribes and Local Health Jurisdictions in Washington State.

3/5/20 [Public Health Notice](#) Preventative measures in place at the Nooksack Clinic and Administrative Buildings