

# Stigma during COVID-19



## Supporting our wellness during COVID-19

This fact sheet is part of Thunderbird Partnership Foundation's commitment to provide culturally-grounded and strength-based supports for First Nations people during COVID-19. These resources can provide guidance as our communities navigate the current global health crisis, while continuing to face existing health challenges, including substance use and mental health issues.

We must draw from our strengths, cultural ways of knowing, values and practices to help reduce stigma against those who fall ill with COVID-19.

The First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum points to All My Relations as we come together to support one another, and our communities – even if we can't do that physically, we can do it through virtual means or prayer. (Thunderbird, 2015)

**All My Relations** – *The Creator cares for his creation. The Earth cares about her off-spring and all of earth-life. The beings within creation care about each other and about how they relate to one another within the interconnectedness and interdependence of the web of life. In that the creation originated in this way, it sustains itself and thrives by means of an underlying orientation toward kindness. The key to harmony in a life that is conceived as all my relations is respect. Respect is understood as the honouring of the harmonious interconnectedness of all of life, which is a relationship that is reciprocal and interpersonal. The Indigenous person is predisposed to have in his or her interest both the greatest good for the individual as well as the collective good.* — Elder Jim Dumont. (Thunderbird, 2011).

## STIGMA INCREASES BECAUSE OF FEAR

### We don't understand the pandemic.

This can lead to discrimination against

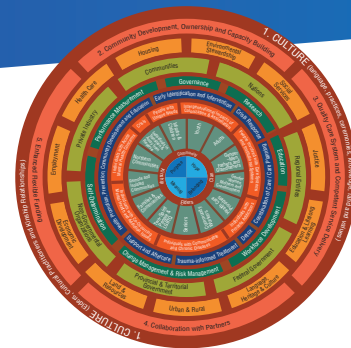
- people who have the virus and their families
- people from countries where the virus originated
- people who have travelled recently
- people who have had contact with someone who has the virus
- homeless people or those with substance use issues because they are on the street or moving from place to place

## WORDS, BEHAVIOURS AND MISCONCEPTIONS THAT CREATE STIGMA AROUND COVID-19

- Asian or Chinese flu
- blaming people for being careless if they have the virus
- the virus only attacks old people
- pets can give you the virus (some may abandon pets)
- mouthwash, antibiotics, cigarettes, and liquor with high alcohol can kill COVID-19
- food items are contaminated

## Tips for reducing stigma

- Use caution with social media and seek credible sources of COVID-19 information (World Health Organization, Thunderbird, Assembly of First Nations) to raise awareness, not fear.
- Support people and respect their privacy
- Try to focus on the positive
- Demonstrate caring behaviour



## THE IMPACT OF STIGMA

### Stigma can

- make people feel guilty or bad about themselves
- cause people to become more isolated to avoid discrimination
- stop people from getting tested or seeking treatment because of fear of facing discrimination
- stop people who are sick or may be in contact with someone who is infected, from going into quarantine to avoid comments in the community
- increase anxiety, doubts, fear, depression, hopelessness

## REFERENCES

Canadian Association of Mental Health. (2020). *Mental health and COVID-19*. Retrieved from: <http://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19/information-for-professionals>

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For more information visit: [thunderbirdpf.org/covid-19](http://thunderbirdpf.org/covid-19)