



SECWEPEMC NATION – FUNERAL PROTOCOL – COVID 19

PURPOSE:

To enact a Secwepemc Nation Funeral Protocol to take effect during the Covid 19 Crisis. This protocol will help to ensure the safety of our nation members dealing with funerals during Covid 19. The Funeral Protocol will be lifted when the Provincial Health Officer lifts the restrictions on mass and/or group gatherings.

CURRENT SITUATION:

On March 23, 2020, A Secwepemc Declaration of State of Emergency within Secwepemculecw was endorsed by all 16 Chiefs who are members of the Secwepemc Health Caucus (SHC). In planning for the Covid 19 Crisis it has been identified that a Secwepemc Funeral Protocol is a high priority. As such the following outlines the Secwepemc Nation approach to a funeral during Covid 19.

Please note: The Secwepemc Nation Funeral Protocol does not supersede any Community protocols but should be considered in addition with the more stringent standard being recommended.

SECWEPEMC NATION FUNERAL PROTOCOLS – DURING COVID 19

Traditional and Western Funeral Practices

The Secwepemc Health Caucus acknowledge that each community have their own Traditional and Western funeral practices that they abide by in normal circumstances. During Covid 19 we may not implement these Traditional and Western funeral practices but find unique and innovative ways to adapt our Traditional and Western protocols.

Spiritual Practices

It is important to acknowledge the spiritual journey of those that pass on and enter the spirit world by continuing our traditional practices which can still be incorporated during Covid 19. Traditional practices can be performed or offered by individuals with physical distancing in innovative ways where we can honor and respect the spirit of the individual during this unprecedented time.

Mass Gatherings Cancellation

The Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry by order cancelled mass gatherings of more than 50 people until May 30, 2020, when it will be re-assessed. This cancellation of mass gathering is to reduce the number of people being infected by Covid 19. Interaction with people contributes to the transmission of respiratory illnesses such as Covid 19 with Elders and/or individual with pre-existing conditions being most at risk for poor outcomes.

Difficult Times – Difficult Decisions

The Secwepemc Health Caucus acknowledge this is a difficult time and a funeral during this time is even more traumatic. As such, these guidelines need to be recommended to prevent the spread of Covid 19 among our community and nation members. We need to keep our people safe.

Plan to proceed with funeral during Covid 19


1. **# Of people/Physical Distancing:** Although the Provincial Health Officer states no gatherings over 50 people, best practices state 5-10 people and these people must practice physical distancing which states no contact within 2 meters of another person. As such, SHC advise to apply best practice limiting funerals to no more than 5-10 people in attendance with physical distancing measures in place. (Note: people living in same household are exempt from this 2-meter guideline.)
2. **People attending:** Those 5-10 attending to the funeral practices should not be: sick, in contact with sick people, should not have travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days, should not reside with an Elder or somebody with significant chronic disease or children. It is also recommended to reduce those travelling to limited funeral service by means of having only immediate family and/or local community individuals attend.
3. **Avoid Contact:** do not hug, shake hands, or have any human contact in order to limit transmission of Covid 19 keep 6 feet apart. Do not touch your face and cough or sneeze into tissue or the bend of your arm. Dispose of tissue in lined waste baskets followed by proper hand washing. If handwashing is not available, use hand sanitizer.
4. **Public Area Disinfected:** for those limited people taking care of funeral practices at this time, ensure all public areas (kitchen, bathroom, and common areas) are disinfected throughout the day. Disinfectant (1:50 bleach disinfectant solution). Pay particular attention to surfaces that are touched often.
5. **Plan for those who become sick on site:** Have Personal Protective Equipment on hand in case somebody becomes sick on site. Have a plan to isolate them and move them to safety to prevent transmission.
6. **Hygiene stations:** have hand sanitizer and hand wash stations with lined waste baskets, soap, and paper towel dispensers on site, hand washing signage to promote proper and constant cleansing of hands.
7. **Mourning Time:** Traditionally mourning occurs within a four-day cycle but during the time of Covid we ask that mourning take place within one day.
8. **Funeral Location:** if possible, have funeral outdoors as there is higher ventilation and greater capacity for separation between attendees outside.



9. **Cleansing the Body:** The SHC acknowledge this is a Traditional practice but due to Covid 19 recommend omitting this stage by the family if death is due to Covid 19.
10. **Viewing:** Ban viewing of the Body during Covid 19 unless strict physical distancing measures are in place and enforced.
11. **No Feast/Food –Instead have Food Offering:** Cancel feast and allow no food during Covid 19 for one day funeral practices. Consider doing a food, water and tobacco offering rather than a feast.
12. **Communication:** Ensure that those limited people (recommended 5-10 people) attending the funeral have clear understandings of the Covid 19 funeral protocols and all the precautions that are needed to ensure everybody’s safety and to reduce the virus transmission.
13. **Funeral Options**
 - a. *Spiritual Practices:* With physical distancing measures in place and/or as individuals, spiritual practices may be performed such as smudging, cleansing the home, fire keeping in shifts (for the day), offering prayers, drumming/singing individually, connect with Elder via phone, and/or offering medicines to the fire or water.
 - b. *Cremation:* SHC acknowledges that some communities may or may not believe in, and/or practice cremation but we encourage this practice until the Covid 19 Crisis is over.
 - c. *Streaming the Ceremony:* utilize technology and stream the minimal funeral services to extended family and friends so they can watch from the safety of their own home.
 - d. *Future Ceremony:* The SHC recommend that when the Provincial Health Officer cease bans on mass gatherings and it is safe for communities and nation members to gather, that individuals that have passed during the time of the Covid 19 crisis be held up in ceremony as per the direction of the community’s Traditional and/or Western funerals practices

Any concerns or questions about your health call *811 or go to www.fnha.ca/coronavirus or contact Cara Basil – Secwepemc Health Caucus Covid -19 Lead at 250-457-1808 or email twlead@secwepemchealth.ca or Vicki W. Manuel – SHC Nation Lead at 250-320-6859 or email at vicki.manuel@fnha.ca

SIGNED



Charlene Belleau – SHC Chair

DATE

March 25 2020