



Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians

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COVID-19 testing scheduled for Turtle Mountain

TESTING TO TAKE PLACE THURSDAY, APRIL 30

FOR RELEASE April 27, 2020

BELCOURT – The Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians is set to be the next tribal population in North Dakota to receive testing for the coronavirus.

The tribe will conduct a targeted testing operation Thursday, April 30 in the parking lot of the Turtle Mountain Middle School in Belcourt North Dakota. Testing begins at 10 a.m. and will continue until 3 p.m. or until the supply of test kits is depleted. The Sky Dancer Casino parking lot is an alternate location.

This initiative is a result of consistent communications with Chairman Azure, Turtle Mountain Tribal Council, Governor Burgum, and TM/IHS CEO Shelly Harris.

Tested in this initial sampling will be first responders, law enforcement, health care personnel who are most at risk in the fight against COVID-19, and other individuals who are highly susceptible. Partnering with the tribe to conduct the operation will be personnel of the North Dakota National Guard, North Dakota Dept. of Health and the Turtle Mountain Indian Health Service.


The “Drive-In” method will be used. Samples will be taken from individuals as they remain in their vehicles.

We’ve been taking the steps necessary for a sovereign government to protect its citizens from harm,” said Jamie S. Azure, Turtle Mountain Tribal Chair. “Testing will help us know more about the prevalence of the virus. And it will verify and confirm the health and safety of our first responders and front-line medical care personnel.”

The Rolette County Public Health Department recorded its first confirmed case of COVID-19 in the county on April 11. Since then, the tribe has strengthened its precautions to limit the spread of the illness among the tribal population and others who live on the tribe’s homeland in northern North Dakota.

The tribe declared a state of emergency, activated the tribe’s emergency response planning system, closed the tribal casino, instituted emergency curfew rules and closed tribal buildings. The tribe’s precautionary guidelines emphasized social-distancing with the slogan “Stand Apart to Stand Together.”

“This is an important measure,” said Azure. “We need to have the information we can learn from testing. It’s the path that will keep us safe and lead us safely through this threatening time.”



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At last report, Rolette County had previously tested 154 individuals. Thursday's testing is expected to collect between 300 and 500 samples. Results will be known within a couple of days and will be communicated to the individuals tested.

Nearly ten-thousand members of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians live on the reservation located in Rolette County; tribal headquarters are at Belcourt, North Dakota. Previous targeted testing operations in partnership with the State of North Dakota have been conducted at the Mandan-Hidatsa-Arikara Nation, New Town, ND, and the Spirit Lake Tribe, Fort Totten, ND.

The priority order established for Thursday's testing in Belcourt is as follows:

1. Indian Health Service (IHS) determined by administration
2. Law Enforcement
3. Retirement Homes (mobilization team to be on-site)
4. First Responders (Fire Dept., CHR, etc.)
5. Tribal Employees who meet criteria of High Risk
6. Employees who are in contact with community on a frequent basis will be contacted by TMBCI Human Resources
7. Community Volunteers working within the public (Meal Delivery)
8. Remaining Test Kit usage will be prioritized depending on availability of Kits remaining.

For More Information, please contact:

TM Indian Health Services (IHS) **(701) 477-8445**
Turtle Mountain Tribe: Covid-19 Hotline **(701) 477-2615**