



**BCAAFC | BC Association of
Aboriginal Friendship Centres**

Media Bulletin – British Columbia

March 12, 2020

Gathering Our Voices 2020 cancelled due to health concerns with COVID-19

It is with heavy hearts and careful consideration that we cancel this year's Gathering Our Voices (GOV) event, which was scheduled to take place from March 16 to March 19 on Secwépemc traditional territory in Kamloops, B.C.

The decision to cancel GOV 2020 upholds the safety precautions recommended by provincial health authorities to best protect the health of the population with concerns around COVID-19.

GOV organizers have been in daily contact with the Office of the Provincial Health Officer and Interior Health. In B.C. the presence of COVID-19 has increased from containment to community transmission. The World Health Organization assessed that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic on March 11. The ability to predict the virus and protect our community has changed; therefore, we feel that cancelling the event is the best call to protect our families and communities.

Over the next ten days we will be in contact with all registered groups, vendors, presenters, etc. to start the process of refunds and contract cancellation. Due to the sheer volume of work with cancelling such a large event, we ask for everyone's patience as we proceed during the coming days.

A lot goes into planning for GOV each year, from youth, chaperones, Elders, staff, partners, the host communities, and all the participants who come together to learn from Indigenous youth leaders, celebrate culture, share knowledge, and foster connection. We appreciate everyone's time and energy and while we believe cancelling the event is in the best interest of our attendees and their networks, we are deeply saddened that this year's event will not take place.

Thank you for your support of Gathering Our Voices and we look forward to welcoming you next year.

If you do not hear from our team within the next ten days, or you have additional questions, please contact: gatheringourvoices@bcaafc.com

For media inquiries, please contact: Leslie Varley at 250-893-0494 or lvarley@bcaafc.com

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Source: [World Health Organization media briefing – 11 March 2020](#)