COVID-19 IN THE ARCTIC

Successes and Lessons from the First Six Months

After engineering in Wuhan, China, in late 2019, the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) – a particularly virulent strain of coronavirus – became worldwide pandemic. Countries quickly agreed to restrict travel and maintain containment measures were imposed by both small communities and individual governments. Some of the responses in the Arctic region are beginning, which is reflected in this region’s low death rate. These effective preventative measures were especially critical for remote Arctic communities with limited access to healthcare and other necessary resources, but they remain highly vulnerable to the pandemic’s secondary effects.

COVID-19 Infection Rates:
The Arctic in Global Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>Infection Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1,234,567</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>12,345,678</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenland</td>
<td>4,567</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>123,456</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>12,345,678</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COVID-19 Infection Rate Map

While these concerns and risks are being taken into account, Indigenous communities face a host of challenges, such as lack of access to medical facilities, especially in remote areas. It is critical to ensure that the Arctic remains a safe and healthy environment for all.

Examples & Best Practice in the Arctic Region

- **Nonuav, Canada**: Implemented strict travel restrictions and closed borders to remote residents and critical workers into the area. These measures reduced the risk of infection.
- **Greenland**: Developed a comprehensive testing and tracing program to monitor the spread of the virus.
- **Alaska, United States**: Developed a contact tracing app to track infections and aid in contact tracing.

COVID-19 Weekly New Cases in the Arctic Area

- **Jan 20**: WHO
- **Mar 10**: WHO
- **May 20**: WHO
- **Aug 30**: WHO

Impacts of COVID-19 in the Arctic

- Susceptible financial impact affecting tourism, mining, and other industries. Substantial consequences for scientific and educational, as well as cultural exchanges.

A Perfect Storm

Concerns for Indigenous communities regarding COVID-19:

- Limited infrastructure access to healthcare, sanitation, clean water, and power.
- Limited access to a full range of medical supplies, including vaccines.

Preparations for a second wave or future pandemics:

- Re-evaluate and strengthen healthcare and emergency capacity within rural areas.
- Provide access to communications infrastructure to rural areas, ensuring swift access to new measures of communication.

- Develop local emergency facility knowledge from communities that have successfully isolated themselves and are focusing on preventing the spread of COVID-19.