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MAINTAINING HEALTH & SAFETY WHILE WORKING IN COMMUNITIES: COVID-19 UPDATE

We are entering a new phase in the course of the coronavirus pandemic where we can begin a cautious return to our offices and start planning for a return to working in communities. This will not be a return to how we completed our work before the pandemic. Firelight is committed to making this return in a safe manner.

Firelight has established a Coronavirus Incident Team in place for all matters related to COVID-19. This team is led by an emergency response practitioner with 20 years of experience and is based on principles of incident command systems (ICS). Our team implemented an Incident Action Plan that identified priority principles to guide the continuation of our business during the pandemic. These principles are:

1. Protecting elders and community members (our own, our clients', and our community's);
2. Maintaining hygienic practices, including social distancing and health monitoring;
3. Continuing to optimize our business to keep our client's priorities moving forward; and
4. Normalize our work and working environment by supporting new ways of doing work, including remote work and work from home.

Remote Work

The health and well-being of elders, community members and staff has been the first priority in the development of the work plan for all studies. Additionally, it is important that the research completed meets the high standards required by each Nation we work with, to defend the community's rights and interests. Given these requirements, Firelight proposes an approach that limits in-person contact throughout all stages of the study but maintains a rigorous approach to data collection, analysis and reporting. This approach allows us to include vital knowledge and guidance from community elders and knowledge holders while minimizing the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Where possible Firelight will conduct to conduct remote work with communities.

Community meetings will be conducted virtually. Firelight has utilized online video conferences, as well as teleconferences, virtual focus groups and a



combination of multiple methods to engage community members in virtual spaces since restrictions on gathering were implemented. Firelight will work with community staff and leadership to ensure that the format for all virtual community meetings are appropriate for the needs of the community and are respectful of culture and protocols.

All mapping interviews will be conducted remotely for this Study using remote direct-to-digital methods that have been developed by Firelight senior research staff. Training for the Community Coordinator and community members will be conducted remotely, using training methods and online platforms that have been successfully utilized by Firelight training and capacity building staff.

Return to Community Work

Some elements of our work either require in-person travel to communities or are greatly enhanced by working in the community. Travelling to the communities we work with will be guided by:

- Best practice, as highlighted by provincial and territorial governments and health authorities; and
- Priorities of and direction from the communities we work with.

Firelight maintains a list of the status of access restrictions to provinces and territories across Canada, as well as a number of key client communities. Until all restrictions are lifted on travel and gatherings, decisions regarding travel to communities will be jointly made by the Project Manager, Business Area Lead and the Chief Operating Officer (COO).

Pre-travel Risk Assessment

Before any travel to communities can commence, a risk assessment is undertaken to outline the potential risks involved with travel and to identify ways in which these risks can be managed. This includes an analysis of the nature of the work and the means of travel by answering the questions below and filling out the self-monitoring form below. Each of the following potential risks should be discussed with the client in detail prior to travel. The degree to which these risks can be managed will be considered by the client and Firelight's Project Manager, Business Area Lead and COO when making a decision on whether or not travel should go ahead.

Firelight staff would only travel on lands if the following conditions are met:



- Community leadership invite Firelight staff. Recognizing that communities have a mandate to look after the health of community members, Firelight researchers will only travel in-person if invited to do so by the community.
- Provincial and local health guidelines allow for this type of outdoor work to be completed at that time.
- Staff travelling have completed a two-week period of self-monitoring prior to travel (self-monitoring form available on request).

A joint risk assessment exercise is undertaken by the community and Firelight staff prior to travel to outline the potential risks involved with travel and identify ways in which these risks can be managed in a field safety plan. This will include an analysis of both the nature of the work to be completed and the means of travel. Each of the potential risks will be discussed in detail prior to travel, along with the degree to which each risk can be managed. The community and Firelight can then jointly determine whether or not travel should go ahead and under what conditions. Questions to be considered as part of this risk assessment will include (but not be limited to) the following:

- What are the current levels of COVID-19 in the origin and destination of travel?
- Can the work be completed remotely to the same level of quality?
- Have staff completed the required two weeks of self-monitoring prior to travel?
- Have others in staff members' household experienced any COVID-19 symptoms within the two weeks prior to travel?
- Have staff travelled elsewhere in the two weeks prior to travel?
- Have staff been maintaining social distance in the two weeks prior to travel?
- Will work be conducted outdoors?
- What tools, machinery, and equipment will staff come into contact with during the course of their work?
- Can work be conducted while maintaining physical distance from others?
- Will staff be working in close quarters with people indoors or sharing a vehicle?
- Will staff be working with vulnerable individuals?
- Will staff be taking flights or other forms of public transport in order to reach their destination?
- What personal protective equipment can be used to reduce the risk?

Means of Mitigating Risk

We have a responsibility to minimize the risk of Firelight staff bringing the COVID-19 virus into communities. In order to be eligible for travel to communities, Firelight staff will be required to follow the guidelines issued by the health authorities in



the province of origin and destination. In addition, Firelight will require a 14-day self-monitoring form be completed prior to travel.

Firelight staff will also provide support in developing hygienic practices for any community space used for conducting interviews. While interviews can be readily completed remotely using videoconferencing software, field verification would require Firelight researchers and participants to travel in-person to complete site visits. While in communities Firelight researchers will maintain physical distance. Where physical distance cannot be maintained, consider use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as masks and gloves. Masks and gloves should be used properly, according to guidelines.

While in Communities

Firelight staff will maintain hygienic practices in communities by doing the following:

- Frequent handwashing, wash hands with soap for at least 20 seconds;
- Carrying hand sanitizer, in case hand washing facilities are not available;
- Coughing or sneezing into the bend of their arm or a tissue then immediately throwing away the tissue followed by washing or sanitizing their hands;
- Disinfecting the interior of their vehicle and/or accommodations using sanitizing wipes or a bleach solution;
- Avoid frequently touched surfaces, where possible; and
- Avoid touching their face.

We commit to maintaining social distancing practices where possible and will:

- Maintain at least 2 metres in distance from others;
- Use face masks/coverings;
- Practice greetings that do not involve physical contact;
- Avoid crowded or busy areas;
- Minimize the amount of time spent in stores; and
- Avoid public transit, where possible.

Should our staff become ill when travelling in communities, we have implemented to keep them and community members safe and includes:

- A plan to self-isolate immediately if our staff experience any of the COVID-19 symptoms;
- Staff are to immediately contact provincial/territorial health authorities and seek guidance from them; and
- Staff are to contact the Project Manager to develop a plan to maintain safety following the advice from health authorities.



After returning from travel, our staff will allow a period of two-weeks between work trips. During this period, Firelight staff should be self-monitoring.

This approach can be revised and updated through conversation with community staff and leadership as the pandemic continues to evolve and health authorities issue updated guidance.