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ATTN: First Nations Communities in South Central Saskatchewan

Halloween is upon us and many kids and festive adults are looking forward to participating in activities this year. But remember that ghouls and goblins are not the only things that can scare us this year – the Delta variant is still the dominant strain of COVID-19 in Saskatchewan. It is highly infectious, spreading more easily among people and resulting in more hospital and ICU admissions.

For safer spooky activities, I advise following your local community and public health recommendations. For trick-or-treaters, this includes:

- Staying home if you do not feel well.
- Trick-or-treating with family members only or a few close friends you already spend time with.
- Wear a non-medical mask – try incorporating it into your costume!
- Physically distance (2 metres) from others and do not crowd door steps (wait your turn).
- Wash your hands, or use hand sanitizer, before and after trick-or-treating.

Individuals handing out candy should be fully vaccinated, wear a mask, and wash their hands frequently. Designate one consistent person to handle the candy and do not hand out candy if you do not feel well. Try using tongs to hand out candy and only offer individually wrapped, store-bought candy. Sanitize commonly touched areas often such as doorbells, doorknobs and handrails. If weather permits, sit outside and place a bowl of candy on a table for children to take.

Gatherings, such as Halloween parties, should be kept small, especially if there are children under 12 present. If weather permits, gather outside. If gathering indoors, limit guests to those who you already frequently socialize with and who are fully vaccinated. Keep windows open and ensure good ventilation. Avoid sharing food and drinks and maintain physical distancing (2 metres).

This year, families may want to give special consideration to children under 12 years who are not yet eligible to be vaccinated and are at an increased risk for getting sick with COVID-19. Alternatives to trick-or-treating include:

- Hosting a virtual pumpkin carving, pumpkin painting or costume contest.
- Planning a Halloween movie night.
- Making Halloween-themed food and treats with your kids.
- Trying reverse trick-or-treating, where vaccinated community members drop off candy at your door.

This Halloween, do not let the virus **trick** us so we can safely enjoy our **treats**!

Respectfully,

Dr. Ibrahim Khan, Medical Health Officer
Indigenous Services Canada, SK Region