



May 12, 2020

Oki / Aba Wathtech / Dadanast'ada / Tansi / Hello IRCA Members,

We hope everyone is doing well at this time.

First of all, we want to thank those who have hosted the four (4) 2020 season IRCA rodeos to date. Thank you to Blood Tribe Councillor Floyd Bighead and family, for hosting the December 31, 2019 rodeo and to the Blood Tribe Ag Society for hosting the January 26, February 9, and February 23, 2020 rodeos. Also, thank you to the contestants who participated in these rodeos, the personnel, and of course our rodeo fans.

We want to provide an update on IRCA's response to COVID-19 and the future of the 2020 IRCA rodeo season. There have been numerous conversations within the IRCA Board as well with the INFR and other regions to address the 2020 IRCA season and the 2020 INFR.

The IRCA board is faced with two options:

1. Simply opt out of the season and hopefully start safely in 2021 or
2. Proceed with a modified 2020 season

The safety and wellbeing of our First Nation communities is our absolute priority. There are additional factors that we must follow and be considerate of:

1. The current First Nation, Provincial, and Federal legislation addressing COVID-19.
  - a. Social distancing could prove to be difficult to enforce in a rodeo setting.
  - b. Many First Nation's have implemented curfews and/or limited access to their lands.
2. Many First Nations and families have already canceled their 2020 rodeos or are currently in the decision-making process of postponement or cancelation all together.
3. Financial hardships are felt throughout the rodeo community. From rodeo committees, stock contractors, volunteers, contestants, sponsors, and all personnel required to host a successful rodeo.
4. Canada/USA border is currently closed for non-essential travel and it is uncertain when it will reopen and remain open.
5. The legal liability to IRCA for hosting a rodeo or finals.

The INFR has made a few changes for the 2020 season:

1. The six-rodeo minimum and four rodeo requirements have been waved and
2. There will be 1 contestant per event to qualify to the INFR from each region and
3. There will not be any jackpot rodeos (the minimum purse at a region rodeo and finals must be maintained, according to the INFR rule book).

The IRCA board will make a decision by August 1, 2020 to opt out of the 2020 season if it is apparent it is not safe or possible to proceed. If IRCA opts out, INFR has indicated that all IRCA members who have bought INFR memberships will be credited towards a 2021 membership. A 2020 IRCA champion will not be declared.

If safe to proceed with a modified 2020 IRCA season, providing there is a community prepared to host, and we have the resources to do so, the IRCA board must make a decision on if any further rodeo's will occur and the format of how contestants will qualify to the IRCA finals and the INFR. The following options take into consideration the four (4) 2020 IRCA rodeos that have already occurred and the effort that was made by rodeo committees, stock contractors, and rodeo contestants.

Some options are:

If we **cannot** have additional rodeo's or a finals:

1. Season leader of each event - based on the 4 rodeos - will qualify to the INFR.

If we **can** have additional rodeo's and a finals:

1. Top (10, 12 or 15) contestants who have attended 50% of the regular season rodeos will be eligible to enter IRCA finals or
2. All contestants who have points and attended 50% of the regular season rodeos will be eligible to enter IRCA finals or
3. All contestants who have points and did not attend 50% of the regular season rodeos will be eligible to enter IRCA finals.

- *For all options, the existing INFR rules will apply for determining the finals format and champions.*

The IRCA finals are tentatively scheduled for September 18, 19, and 20, 2020.

The INFR will be adopting the COVID-19 guidelines set by the PRCA, which is currently posted on the PRCA website. At this time, we are not completely sure if they will meet or contradict the guidelines, legislation, and enforcement adopted by First Nation, Provincial, and Federal governments in Canada.

As a board, we realize that whichever decision is made, not all members will agree with. But we must make a decision based on the safety and best interest of all our contestants, personnel, rodeo fans, families, and communities.

We look forward for our members input to assist the IRCA board in finalizing the plan to be sent to the INFR. The IRCA board will have to provide notice to the INFR of our plan of the 2020 IRCA season by June 1, 2020.

The IRCA Board is looking to hear from our IRCA Members, this update will be posted on the IRCA Website and the Facebook Page until May 26, 2020.

From the IRCA Board, thank you and we hope you all are staying safe during these unprecedented times.

