



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 20, 2020

Grand Chief Arlen Dumas statement on declared COVID-19 state of emergency

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – In line with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) declaration of a state of emergency announced March 17th, Grand Chief Arlen Dumas, and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs Secretariat Inc., are today expressing their support of the declaration of a state of emergency by the province of Manitoba as long as the measures respect First Nations’ autonomy and decision-making processes. Today, Premier Pallister declared a state of emergency in response to the escalating COVID-19 pandemic and announced special measures along with Families Minister, Heather Stefanson, to address this health and economic crisis.

Grand Chiefs Arlen Dumas said, “By invoking the emergencies measures legislation, the province is acting proactively to ensure that the COVID-19 virus is contained while the science and research is being conducted to find a cure. The AMC supports these emergency measures for as long as they need to be in place and as long as they don’t interfere with local First Nations decision-making; I commit the AMC Secretariat to working with the Premier, all Ministers, and provincial health professionals to contribute to a collective Manitoba process on preparedness, mitigation, and pandemic planning efforts. To this end, the First Nations COVID-19 strategic response team, developed in partnership with our fellow regional PTOs and affiliated entities, is in constant communication with the Premier’s Office, the Manitoba Chief Provincial Public Health Officer, and all Regional Health Authorities, to ensure Manitoba First Nations are supported and that we are doing our part to minimize the spread of the virus across the region and within our individual First Nations.”

Grand Chief Dumas went on to say, “First Nations are at particular risk due to health services inequities, pre-existing conditions and all the social determinants of health too numerous to mention here. I want to commend our provincial partners, however, especially the front line health workers who are critical to the efforts for treating Manitobans afflicted with COVID-19. The nurses, doctors, and emergency personnel will also be treating our First Nations citizens who may become ill with the virus in the future. In spite of challenges, First Nations are resilient. We are grateful that, to date, there have not been any identified cases of COVID-19 in any of our First Nations.”

“I acknowledge the special measures on the provision of childcare for healthcare workers announced by Minister Stefanson today as part of the declaration of a state of emergency, and I express gratitude to the front line health workers for their service and dedication to protecting Manitobans. We also cannot forget the grocery store workers, the transportation workers, essential staff, and the whole labour force responsible for the day-to-day operation of the services we sometimes take for granted. I offer special acknowledgement and gratitude to these workers,” concluded Grand Chief Dumas.

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About the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

The AMC was formed in 1988 by the Chiefs in Manitoba to advocate on issues that commonly affect First Nations in Manitoba. AMC is an authorized representative of 62 of the 63 First Nations in Manitoba with a total of more than 151,000 First Nation citizens in the province, accounting for approximately 12 percent of the provincial population. AMC represents a diversity of Anishinaabe (Ojibway), Nehetho / Ininew (Cree), Anishininew (Ojibwe-Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate (Dakota) people.