



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 10, 2020

AMC supports FNLC in its condemnation of ongoing and persistent racism in BC including the arrest of a First Nations Elder and his 12 year old granddaughter at BMO

Treaty One Territory, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Grand Chief Arlen Dumas of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs extends his full support of British Columbia's First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) in their condemnation of the ongoing racism in BC, and expressed his concern regarding the extent that the Canadian justice system continues to oppress and intimidate First Nations peoples in BC.

This week, the media reported that First Nations Elder, Maxwell Johnson, and his 12 year old granddaughter followed standard bank procedures when opening a new bank account for her at a Bank of Montreal (BMO) branch, yet were arrested and handcuffed by Vancouver Police Department outside of the financial institution due to what has been speculated as racial profiling. BMO has subsequently issued an apology, but has not yet explained what has happened to the BMO employee(s) who notified police. Today, FNLC issued a statement that referenced the rally which was held in front of the Vancouver BMO, while #boycottBMO went viral on social media.

In support of FNLC's statement, AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas stated, "It is sad that our youth continues to be traumatized by colonial violence from individuals within a financial institution. The basic right of each Canadian citizen - to open a bank account - is still being taken for granted." Grand Chief Dumas emphasized that although Elder Johnson seeks recourse by the same Canadian justice system that racially profile him and his granddaughter, the AMC encourages Elder Johnson to attempt to change the status quo in a manner consistent with the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action*, and the implementation of the *Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*.

Recognizing that those actions are not enough, Grand Chief Dumas affirms that, "A larger financial institutional change is crucial. This includes the development of First Nations owned and operated financial institutions as envisaged in Article 20 of UNDRIP that recognizes the right to maintain and develop our own economic systems and institutions, including financial institutions and banks."

For years in Manitoba, First Nations have been the basis for profit-making by national banks and other institutions, bolstered by intervention policies imposed by Canadian government. This has meant that non-First Nation companies, or third parties, have maintained control of First Nation's finances, resulting in bank mortgages and loans to be paid at the detriment of the First Nation's infrastructure and social situation.



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AMC recently initiated an innovative approach to enhance the financial capacities of First Nations, including no longer requiring to obtain a third party. Grand Chief Dumas added, “It should be noted that Canada and Mortgage and Housing Corporations loans are guaranteed by Canada, and by its nature, have never been in default.” Banks have provided services to northern and remote First Nations, but have also cut those services down, resulting in companies such as the Northern Stores, to provide financial services that overcharge First Nations to access their own funds.

Grand Chief Dumas concluded, “The sad reality is that individual and institutional racism exists at banks, and it appears it will only end when we finally develop our own First Nation financial institutions that will replace them. The AMC is aware of banks that have held money in trust for BC First Nations youth in foster care, yet that money has been stolen. While the province may have been negligent, so have the financial institutions involved. We cannot allow this to continue, especially with expected payments coming from the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal decision to youth that have been placed in care. In addition to having policies that address racial profiling and taking advantage of First Nations youth and others, we should be developing financial institutions that are our own.”

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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.