



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS



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FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP OUTRAGED BY LACK OF EMPATHY AND RACIST BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS FIRST NATIONS EVACUEES

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba First Nations leadership are expressing their outrage at the reports of First Nations evacuees experiencing racist behavior during this difficult and stressful time.

Reports have been shared about evacuees from various locations across Manitoba, including online, about how they have encountered racism when purchasing fuel at gas stations, buying food, emergency supplies, and purchasing generators. Hotels have turned away evacuees when there are obvious vacancies, which leadership says is discriminatory and completely unacceptable.

Evacuees have been directed to lodging in Winnipeg, Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Selkirk and Dauphin where there are numerous reports of racist and unacceptable behavior from staff and management including disparaging remarks, prioritizing non-Indigenous customers, and in some instances, hotels shutting down pool access.

Chief Cornell McLean of Lake Manitoba First Nation, one of the hardest hit communities, said, "I don't want to believe the reports, but they are confirmed reports and it is so sad that our communities continue to experience racism especially during an unprecedented weather event like this winter storm. I am also encouraged that our own organizations are stepping up to support our evacuees such the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC) by providing 50 movie passes for families and also providing security at our schools while communities are evacuated."

Chief Glenn Hudson of Peguis First Nation, one of the largest First Nations in Manitoba, said, "This unprecedented winter storm that caused significant electrical and communication shutdowns, and limited road access, created a critical need during an unsafe time for immediate evacuations to take place. The most important activities we focused on was to ensure we were able to provide basic needs such as food, water, medication, and to find safe and warm places to stay. There is no place in business to treat First Nations patrons with racist attitudes, especially in a time of crisis. We call for the support of businesses to immediately address these racial behaviours with their staff. The Chiefs are calling on the Chamber of Commerce in Winnipeg, Brandon, Dauphin, and Selkirk to address this issue with local businesses."

As of this morning, more than 5,700 people are registered with the Canadian Red Cross with the vast majority staying in hotels in Winnipeg, Selkirk, Portage la Prairie, and Dauphin.

Chiefs will be following up with their local Chamber of Commerce organizations, as well as the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce, and have already shared their concerns about the racism with Minister Eileen Clarke – Government of Manitoba, and with Indigenous Services Canada and Health Canada.

AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas says, "Our First Nations citizens are already in a heightened state of distress and don't need to tolerate any additional unwarranted pressure from businesses or vendors. This is an

emergency situation and we should all be working together to ensure the safety and wellbeing of anyone affected by this winter storm. First Nations people contribute billions to the Manitoba economy and deserve equal and respectful treatment of business operators and employees. Our Chiefs have voiced their outrage at these discriminatory actions of local businesses and their staff, with the full support of AMC.”

SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels says, “It’s a double standard on how First peoples are treated every day in every aspect. It is very disheartening to hear that during a ‘State of Emergency’ our First Nations people continue to endure racist behavior by businesses and in online attacks. Let’s be clear - we will not continue to accept this and we will be proactively dealing with this very serious issue. When First Nations contribute \$9.3 billion to the Manitoba economy, it is shameful to know that this type of behavior continues. We know there are many good people out there, and we ask that if you see or hear something that isn’t right, to speak up and stop the racism.”

For more information, please contact:

Andrew Thunder

Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

Email: athunder@manitobachiefs.com

Phone: (204) 987-4139

Vic Savino

Southern Chiefs Organization

Email: vic.savino@scoinc.mb.ca

Phone: (204)946-1869