



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 17, 2020

**ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA CHIEFS CALLS FOR STATE OF EMERGENCY AND ESTABLISHES
A COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE COORDINATION TEAM AND CENTRE**

Treaty One Territory, Winnipeg, Manitoba – In response to the escalating situation regarding the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the AMC Executive Council of Chiefs (ECC) calls for a state of emergency for each First Nation in Manitoba, and is establishing a regional First Nation COVID-19 Pandemic Response Coordination Team and Centre.

AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas stated “the AMC leadership has been working tirelessly with First Nations in Manitoba, the federal and provincial governments and entities, and others to ensure First Nations are not left behind, and are fully supported in implementing their pandemic plans, responses, and needs.”

On Friday, March 13, 2020, the ECC postponed all AMC-related events until further notice; encouraged each First Nation in Manitoba to complete their local pandemic / emergency plans and encouraged them to consider closing their schools; called on the Manitoba-provincial emergency incident response team to ensure that medical supplies are available to each First Nation in Manitoba; and directed the AMC to continue to meet with First Nations in Manitoba and others at the regional level, including the potentially provision of sanitation packages for each First Nation, and regularly report to all First Nations leadership.

Today, the ECC called for a state of emergency for each First Nation in Manitoba, which includes closing their borders to all non-essential travel, and ensuring that food and supplies are be delivered on reserve.

Grand Chief Dumas said, “with the rapidly escalating COVID-19, the AMC recognizes the fact that First Nations in Manitoba cannot use or apply the ongoing provincial and federal criteria. This is noted with the existing housing crisis on reserve, First Nations in Manitoba do not have the physical housing ability to socially isolate, and have unique infrastructure challenges that requires clear and decisive action for the safety of First Nations citizens, especially Elders and youth.”

The ECC also today created a First Nation COVID-19 Pandemic Response Coordination Team, headed by Melanie MacKinnon, that will consist of First Nation health professionals and First Nation organization representation that will work with all levels of Government and larger stakeholder groups that are empowered to make decisions that will assist in a responding to First Nations’ needs. This response team will also monitor daily the pandemic and inform First Nation leadership and others regularly. As well, the ECC created a First Nation COVID-19 Pandemic Response Centre at the AMC Secretariat, and directed all other AMC-mandated entities to assist with it. The Response Centre will carry out activities identified by the COVID-19 Pandemic Response and Coordination Team and assist First Nations with their COVID-19 response plans.

Melanie MacKinnon said “The most important thing First Nations can do now and moving forward is to follow all suggested social distancing guidelines. I look forward to working with the newly established Team and Centre to ensure the serious need for all First Nations in Manitoba to enact and follow the necessary public health measures.”

Grand Chief Dumas concluded “the AMC fully supports the ongoing good work of the Manitoba Chiefs and their staff in the development and carrying out their pandemic / COVID-19 plans. The newly created Team and Centre will provide regional supports to First Nations in Manitoba in a manner that respects their sovereignty and provides regional supports. I look forward to a clear process for Canada and Manitoba and others to work together with First Nations in a manner that meets their needs.”

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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), Anishinew (Ojibwe-Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate (Dakota) people.