



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 8, 2020

AMC calls for Prime Minister Trudeau to guarantee First Nations are part of the COVID-19 vaccine distribution decision making tables

Treaty One Territory - The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) is calling on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Premier Pallister to ensure that First Nations in Manitoba, both on and off-reserve, are prioritized to receive the COVID-19 vaccination and are represented at decision-making tables to roll out the COVID-19 vaccinations.

AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas stated, "It is distressing that First Nations citizens are not an active partner in discussions with respect to these distribution plans, especially in Manitoba, given the current urgency, devastation and impact to First Nations. Our First Nations Pandemic Response Coordination Team (PRCT) collects evidence and data that clearly identifies the First Nations need for prioritization in receiving the vaccine once it is approved. Manitoba First Nations make up 11.8% the overall population in Manitoba and there is evidence they are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 in terms of morbidity and hospitalizations."

Data shows that the median age of death for First Nations due to COVID-19 is 66-years-old as compared to 88-years-old for other Manitobans. First Nations off-reserve has twice the number of active COVID-19 cases than on-reserve. Compared to the overall population, First Nations make up 30% of new cases, 26% of active cases, and alarmingly 31% of current hospitalizations with 49% in the intensive care unit. The evidence clearly demonstrates the inequities First Nations are facing. This is attributed to historical and colonial factors such as overcrowding, inadequate water and wastewater systems and limited access to nursing and physician care.

"While AMC was pleased to hear the Premier speak to a 15 per cent increase in vaccines being made available to Manitoba, I note that the data required to make this happen was thanks to the PRCT for their diligent data gathering and research to make this vaccine increase possible. It is because First Nations did the work that results are now being shown, thanks to the PRCT in collaboration with their health counterparts."

AMC also calls on the federal government to include representation of First Nations health experts at the highest decision making table when making life and death decisions, that is, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization.

"I understand that this table is developing national guidelines and they need to reflect First Nations needs and priorities here in our region. At a provincial level, First Nations health experts need to be at the Manitoba COVID-19 Immunization Task Force. This will help to ensure collaboration and confidence to minimize any potential racially influenced biases and to make evidenced informed decisions. Both the federal and provincial governments need to immediately plan and resource vaccine distribution to the northern and remote First Nations communities. This may include ensuring transportation is in place if members need to leave communities to receive vaccines, prepare communities for mass immunization clinics once the vaccine can be

transported, train First Nations health providers to prepare and administer the vaccine, and have workforce available.”

“Finally, I reiterate my call to have First Nations at the upcoming First Minister’s Health meeting. First Nations leadership works hard to manage, protect and prevent further exposures, despite a lack of provincial health services delivered on-reserve. Given the recent remarks by Premier Pallister, First Nations lack confidence in the provincial government to speak on behalf of the needs of First Nations citizens, leadership and communities.”

- 30 -

For more information, please contact:

Stacia Franz

Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

Email: sfranz@manitobachiefs.com

Phone: 204-292-1504

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.