



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AMC expresses distress about another disturbing death of a First Nations citizen

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) expresses condolences and concern of yet another death of a First Nations citizen following involvement with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). The AMC has become aware of disturbing reports that a citizen of the Tataskweyak Cree Nation has committed suicide following his arrest and detainment on charges of assaulting a police officer in Thompson, Manitoba. The RCMP in Thompson arrested Brian Halcrow, who suffered from debilitating health conditions, in June of 2019 on charges of assaulting a police officer; however, video surveillance may show that this assault did not occur, and that Mr. Halcrow did not in fact provoke the involved officer. Sadly, Mr. Halcrow committed suicide following this incident.

Grand Chief Arlen Dumas said, “this is yet another disturbing and tragic report of a First Nation citizen being brutally mistreated by officers, which may be a direct contributing factor in his decision to take his own life. I want to offer my condolences on behalf of the AMC to Mr. Halcrow’s family, friends and loved ones, on his untimely passing. I am calling for a fully independent and transparent investigation into the circumstances that have led to the death of Mr. Halcrow.”

“It seems like a day doesn’t go by in this province without reports of officers inflicting undue force on First Nation citizens. I find this latest incident particularly troubling given that the AMC Secretariat, and many other First Nations advocacy organizations, have just acknowledged and marked Aboriginal Justice Awareness Day, by calling on federal and provincial elected officials to finally implement the recommendations of the *Aboriginal Justice Inquiry*.”

“The AMC recently received the final report on the *Police Services Act, 2009*, which recommended several changes to the sections of the legislation that govern the Independent Investigations Unit (IIU). In this particular case in Thompson, the officer involved may be protected by the current provisions of the PSA that do not compel a subject officer to be interviewed by IIU investigating officers. Unless this is changed in legislation, the IIU will continue to play a part in the disproportionate rates of First Nations arrests and incarcerations and subject officers will continue to be found not responsible for acts of brutality and/or justified in the use of deadly force,” added Grand Chief Dumas.

“With current restorative justice initiatives under First Nations’ jurisdiction, AMC’s efforts to work with Manitoba Justice on reducing disproportionate First Nations arrests and incarceration, and with AMC’s advocacy to urge the Province to implement the recommendations of the final report on the PSA, I believe we can prevent and reduce the prevalence of similar tragic events from occurring in the future. Moreover, there may be more closure and better administration of justice for First Nation citizens such as Mr. Halcrow and many others, with the restoration of First Nations justice and legal systems as recommended by various Commissions and Inquires.”

Grand Chief Dumas concluded, “it is disturbing and emotionally exhausting for First Nations in Manitoba to be continually exposed to reports and alleged incidents of the use of excessive force perpetuated on First Nations by police officers, conservation officers, and correctional officers in this

province. The PSA legislation is a contributing factor and I continue urge the Province and specifically Manitoba Justice to implement its recommendations, in partnership with First Nations in the spirit and intent of reconciliation and for a measure of justice for those First Nations lives lost as a result of police misconduct.”

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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.