



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AMC calls on Province to immediately fund Northern Healing Lodge

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) along with Cree Nation Tribal Health (CNTH), Swampy Cree Tribal Council jointly release an urgent call to the Province for immediate funding the Northern Healing Lodge: a much-needed addictions treatment and recovery centre that would be used for all citizens in the region.

The Northern Healing Lodge was set to be a place of healing, based in the wholistic person-centred approaches relative to First Nations historic cultural competencies in a land-based setting. The facility was to be located on 10 acres of land near the former Guy Hill Residential School, 20 kms away from The Pas and 3 kms away from an airport. The natural, forested setting would allow participants to embrace the healing powers of nature as they reconnect with traditional ways to heal. At the start of the COVID-19 outbreak in Manitoba, the entire twenty-million-dollar, 50 bed project ground to a halt. To date, the project is stalled at the completion of Phase 1 and remains with the Province to keep momentum going at this critical time.

CNTH is the health component for the Swampy Cree Tribal Council, located in The Pas, Manitoba and offers assessment and referral services, community-based alcohol and other drug counselling, promotion of healthy lifestyles, and prevention activities in First Nations. Assistant Director CNTH Frank Turner stated, “This centre has been long overdue and currently sits at a halt. Our Nations are suffering. We are seeing young people with great potential die. We are seeing adults living lives of despair and hopelessness, despite the resilience that lives within all of us. I am tired of going to wakes. We need the Province to step up right now.”

“It is well documented that First Nations citizens are disproportionately impacted by addictions. Alcohol and drugs were introduced to First Nations persons after the coming of the Settlers to Canada. As such, the tolerance for alcohol and substance is lower than that of many other Canadians. High rates of poverty, a high proportion of displaced First Nation citizens who have also lost land, culture and language are known to be at increased risk for addictions. These negative outcomes can be alleviated with proper treatment and treatment facilities. The land for this project has been selected and designated, but that is only Phase 1 of this project. When COVID-19 hit Manitoba, this project came to a standstill. Now, we are not only seeing the needs of our citizens in general, but also see the increased need to get the Northern Healing Lodge up and running due to COVID-19. This is literally a life and death situation,” continued Turner.

AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas stated, “the Assembly is fully in support of moving this much needed project forward and calls on the Province to immediately step up with much needed funding. While the Assembly is pleased to see that Phase 1 of the project has been completed, now is not the time to sit idly by while First Nations citizens require the most support. Everyone understands that COVID-19 has made things challenging, but that is just the point. The Northern Healing Lodge is needed right now more than ever to ensure that Northern citizens have a place to seek help. Our Nations are disproportionality

affected and yet are left without a place to attend when they seek help. I urge both levels of government to immediately work with First Nations to move this forward.”

Onekanew Christian Sinclair stated, “We believe that this project is vital to continue the healing process of our people. As you know the recent opioid crisis is only adding to the stress on our existing capacity to serve those who are suffering from substance abuse issues. Current facilities do not adequately serve those in need, especially in the north. Nor do these services place the needed emphasis on traditional value and does make space for long term support and follow-up where it is needed, close to homes, schools and community services.”

City Councillor for Charleswood-Tuxedo Kevin Klein stated, “I am honoured to be involved in this much-needed addiction healing lodge. One of my disappointments in politics is that we talk about ways to help people, but we need to get to work and focus on results. The addiction healing lodge does that. It will save lives in Winnipeg and across Manitoba.”

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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 / Inineu (Cree), Anishininew (Ojibwe-Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate (Dakota) people.

About Cree Nation Tribal Health

Cree Nation Tribal Health Inc. was formed in 1992 and is committed to providing dedicated leadership in the enhancement of self-government in First Nation Health Care by:

- ADVISING, EDUCATING AND PROMOTING each member First Nation on local control of health care services by using a holistic approach.
- ACKNOWLEDGING traditional culture and values.
- INTEGRATING the knowledge and skills of First Nation members.
- COORDINATING AND ASSISTING the efforts of member First Nations to provide quality services.