



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 27, 2021

AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas' statement on New York Times article

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) issues this response to the New York Times article published on May 26, 2021 indicating that COVID-19 is now spreading faster in Manitoba than in any other province or state in Canada, the United States or Mexico, with First Nations people hit disproportionately hard.

Figures released on Wednesday, May 26, 2021 clearly show that over the last two weeks, Manitoba reported an average of 35 new cases a day per 100,000 population. In comparison, Canada as a whole is averaging about 10 a day per 100,000; the United States, 7 per 100,000; and Mexico, 2 per 100,000. The next highest states or provinces are Alberta at 16 and Colorado at 15.

Grand Chief Arlen Dumas stated, "This is not the type of notoriety I want for Manitoba. The federal and provincial governments need to work with our First Nation leadership to stop these numbers from climbing. It is a life and death situation in our province when there is no room for patients in our ICUs and we are flying people out of the province for healthcare. One person died prior to transport this week. We have remote and isolated First Nations patients that need to make their way to Winnipeg first only then to have to be transported out again when in a life-threatening situation. This is beyond unacceptable. Particularly when variants of concern are impacting our Nations."

A May 26, 2021 New York Times article noted that "*from the beginning of the month until May 19, Indigenous people and other non-white people accounted for 61 percent of cases in Manitoba, even though they make up 37 percent of the province's population.*"

Grand Chief Dumas concluded, "We need to get people vaccinated, especially our First Nation citizens. These numbers would drop quickly if more people would accept the vaccine. Our First Nation leadership and our First Nations Pandemic Response and Coordination Team have done an amazing job of creating strategies and eligibility requirements that meet the needs of First Nations citizens where they reside so that they may get their vaccinations as quickly as possible. In the last 80 days we have given out 80,000 doses. First Nation leadership is doing what they can on reserve with curfews, community shut downs, etc. The unfortunate part, is that the Province's strategy was focused on having the least amount of restrictions in place and look where that has lead us – the COVID-19 hotspot of North America."

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