



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 7, 2021

AMC condemns Pallister's comments portraying First Nations as lazy and non-contributing and calls for the implementation of TRC Call to Action 82

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) issues this statement today in reaction to the shocking and provocative statements delivered by Brian Pallister at a press conference today in Winnipeg. When he was questioned by reporters on the statues of Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth being repaired and put back in place, he confirmed they would be put back up and also doubled down on his inflammatory comments related to perceived act of vandalism and purported violence, by implying that First Nations do not work, do not pay taxes and do not contribute.

Interim Grand Chief Leroy Constant said, “While I do not condone violence, I will not condemn and throw under the bus those involved in acts of radical and righteous resistance on the streets, and those who put political pressure on elected officials responsible for the ongoing marginalization of First Nations peoples in Manitoba. The AMC cannot be directly involved with these acts of defiance and resistance, but we will stand to defend the right of First Nations to react to colonialism and defend themselves against systemic racism and racist attacks through the media and through oppressive government policies.”

“The statements by Brian Pallister this morning,” continued Interim Grand Chief Constant, “were more than abhorrent and offensive to First Nations peoples in Manitoba. Indeed, they were the worst kind of racist dog-whistling imaginable, and all First Nations across all our traditional territories from coast-to-coast, would likely find the Premier’s statements not only insulting and offensive but provocative and inflammatory. To minimize, romanticize and celebrate the settler colonialism that displaced First Nations from their ancient and sacred lands in the most brutal and heinous ways the way he did in his comments, is unconscionable and a desecration to the graves of the ancestors on which the legislature is built and on which the City of Winnipeg now lies.”

“The Premier’s dog whistle today was the size of bullhorn; and the First Nations leadership in Manitoba is angered by his continued playing to the base through the media and by the public reinforcement of racist stereotypes of First Nations as being ‘lazy’ and expecting ‘handouts.’ First Nations are thankful that most members of the media can see through this spectacle for what it is: a poorly conceived and clumsily executed public relations stunt to garner sympathy for re-erecting the statues and reinforce out of date notions of the legitimacy of the founding of the province of Manitoba.”

“We do not have to go into the archeological record, depend on colonial laws, or argue about rights related to the intermixing of First Nations, settlers and other newcomers over the last couple of hundred years. Our Elders and oral traditions tell us that we have occupied and used these lands now called Manitoba since time immemorial. These continue to be First Nations lands and it is time that everybody – including the younger nations that sprung up as a result of colonization - understands this simple fact. To paraphrase Jim Sinclair at the First Minister’s conference when Canada’s Constitution was being repatriated in the 80s, ‘First Nations owned this land, lock, stock and barrel.’

The Interim Grand Chief continued, “however, First Nations have always agreed to welcome newcomers, share the land, and to recognize the Metis as a contributing member of confederation. We have always to live in peace and friendship, but at the same time ensure that as the original peoples of these lands we are respected and not have our rights ignored. Perhaps as first step and as a sign of respect this government and the Premier can stop referring to us in paternalistic fashion as ‘our Indigenous people’ and work with the AMC to implement Call to Action #82, which calls for a highly visible monument to the survivors of the Indian Residential Schools:

We call upon provincial and territorial governments, in collaboration with Survivors and their organizations, and other parties to the Settlement Agreement, to commission and install a publicly accessible, highly visible, Residential Schools Monument in each capital city to honour Survivors and all the children who were lost to their families and communities.

“We are not anybody’s Indians. Manitoba is built on the blood and graves of our ancestors, and the underlying aboriginal title to these lands now called Manitoba has not been extinguished. The AMC calls on the provincial government to implement Call to Action # 82 in recognition of these facts and as an act of good faith,” concluded Interim Grand Chief Constant.

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