



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AMC insulted by lack of invitation to Stefanson swearing in

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) issues this statement in response to the swearing in of Heather Stefanson as Manitoba’s 24th Premier. Ms. Stefanson was sworn in today by Lieutenant Governor Janice Filmon, and it was sadly apparent that First Nations leadership was not invited to nor present for this historic event.

AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas said, “AMC member First Nations are offended and insulted that their leadership was not invited to the historic swearing-in of the first female Premier of Manitoba. The AMC appreciated the invocation by Elder Billie Schibler and the important symbolism of the 7 teachings provided. We wish to thank the Elder for her prayer and well wishes for the new Premier.”

“However,” added the Grand Chief, “the lack of First Nations leadership at the ceremony was an affront to repairing the broken relationship and contradictory to the Premier’s stated priority for reconciliation with First Nations. In the Manitoba News Release, it stated that Stefanson was accompanied by family, friends, colleagues and community leaders. Unfortunately I was not one of those community leaders. Premier Stefanson had a great opportunity to start off on the right foot with an invitation to First Nations leadership to be present for her swearing in. Instead, the lack of calls, invites or acknowledgment, save from a one-off comment regarding her celebration on Saturday night, has become another misstep in relationship-building and does nothing to initiate or advance true reconciliation efforts with First Nations in this province.”

Stefanson was asked in her media availability about the ‘Indigenous’ relationship with the government and she cited, ‘seeing the Grand Chiefs on Saturday’ at the election results. Stefanson further stated that she wanted to ‘continue to maintain a good relationship with, and I’m going to learn from them and hear from them and listen to them as to how we can help them heal through this process, so I’ll continue to maintain those positive relationships.’

“In having to watch this ceremony and media availability through an online link, I couldn’t help but wonder: what positive relationship?” said Grand Chief Dumas. “Stefanson met with my office during her campaign, however, did not seem prepared to address a number of our priority and outstanding issues including but not limited to First Nations’ gaming and the imposition of provincial laws on matters of exclusive First Nation jurisdiction. In her previous roles as Families Minister and Health Minister, she was not willing to work with us on a number of First Nation driven initiatives and at the above noted campaign meeting, she brought no formal ideas or promises to the table to discuss.”

“Symbolically, this lack of acknowledgment or invite to this historic event today appears to be just another example of the Province either ignoring First Nations in Manitoba, or charting forward without any First Nations representation in the room or at the table. Either way, this is a very unfortunate first step for Stefanson. I cannot express how very disappointed I am and I will urge this new Premier to reflect on her comments made to First Nations leadership in various meetings and in media leading up to her election; comments that included promises of a different approach that would lead to positive change for First Nations. We need to be in the room for that to happen,” concluded Grand Chief Dumas.

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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.