



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 8, 2021

AMC and AFN Manitoba offer heartfelt condolences to the family, friends and the Sagkeeng First Nation on the passing of respected and esteemed Elder and Knowledge Keeper Dr. Dave Courchene Junior.

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Manitoba Region offer sincere condolences to the family, friends and loved ones of the late Elder Dr. Dave Courchene Jr., who passed away on December 8, 2021. A citizen of the Anishinaabe Nation, Eagle Clan, Founder of Turtle Lodge, Chair, National Turtle Lodge Council of Knowledge Keepers, and son of Dave Courchene Sr., who was the first elected leader of the Chiefs in Manitoba in 1971, *Nitamabit/Nii Gaani Aki Inini* was the spiritual leader and spiritual advisor to many First Nations leaders and organizations in Manitoba and across the country.

AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas stated, “On behalf of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, I offer our heartfelt condolences to the family, friends and loved ones of Nitamabit/Nii Gaani Aki Inini of the Sagkeeng First Nation, as we learn that he started his journey to the spirit world on December 8th, 2021. As he joins his loved ones and Anishinaabe ancestors, we will remember and honour him for his life-long work in revitalizing First Nations’ jurisdiction, and the many contributions to the AMC and to all First Nations in Manitoba, all of which has been strongly rooted through the voices of our Elders and *Wahbung - Our Tomorrows*.

Grand Chief Dumas added, “On a personal note, I wish my friend and mentor, Dave, a safe journey to the spirit world. I was honoured to have called you my friend, and I thank you for your teachings and guidance over the years. Your legacy will be strongly reflected in the ongoing AMC mandate for protecting and promoting First Nations’ rights; and in all the teachings, sacred laws, and language and cultural resources that are housed at the Turtle Lodge, and which will ensure a positive future for our children and for the next seven generations, *Ki na nas ko mi ti nan*. You will be greatly missed, my friend.”

AFN Regional Chief Cindy Woodhouse stated, “Elder Dr. Courchene has been a bridge to working with the Assembly of First Nations, Indigenous Nations around the world, and a protector and advocate for the environment and cultural knowledge keeper from whom we as First Nations peoples across the country have all sought guidance. I was honoured to have been a recipient of Dave’s profound and spiritual teachings for many years, and to have represented the AFN at his recent honouring ceremony held at the Turtle Lodge in Sagkeeng First Nation. I will remember some of Elder Courchene’s last words to me following the ceremony:

‘That special day was an affirmation of what I have been shown many times throughout my life, that it is the strength and love of the People that is the ultimate healer, which will help us to create a better future for our children. There is more work we have to do together. I know we will succeed in our efforts in working together to ensure there is a future for all our children.’

“These words reflected his philosophy of love for the people and his determination to create a better future for First Nations children. Kitchi-miigwetch Nitamabit/Nii Gaani Aki Inini, travel well and rest in power. I will endeavour to honour your words,” concluded Regional Chief Woodhouse.

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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.